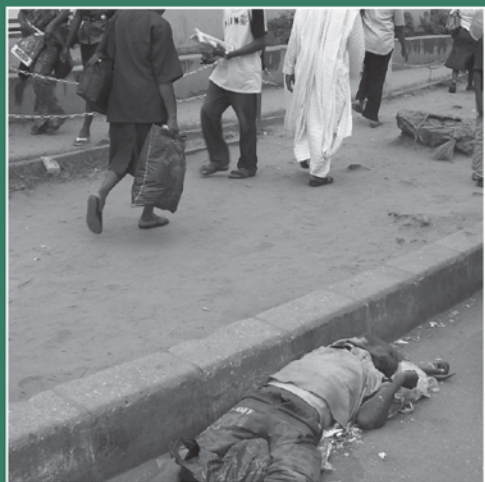# ENCOUNTERING THE

NIGERIAN STATE

EDITED BY

WALE ADEBANWI AND
EBENEZER OBADARE

Encountering the Nigerian State

Africa Connects

Garth Myers (University of Kansas) and **Martin J. Murray** (University of Michigan), *Series Editors*

This scholarly series stands at the intersection of globalization and development studies, examining the social, political, and economic effects of these processes on the African continent. For advocates and critics alike, globalization and development are inescapable "facts of life" that define the parameters of social action not just in Africa but throughout the world. Yet while academic debates and policy discussions careen between praise and criticism, too little attention is given to how these processes actually operate in African settings. Rather than simply reacting to the mainstream scholarly literature, books in this series seek to creatively engage with contemporary debates as a way of developing new perspectives that establish and analyze the linkages between globalization and development.

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 Edited by Wale Adebanwi and Ebenezer Obadare, 2010

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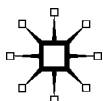 Edited by Alastair Fraser and Miles Larmer (forthcoming)

Encountering the Nigerian State

Edited by

Wale Adebanwi and Ebenezer Obadare

For Adigun Agbaje,
Teacher, Mentor, Friend.

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Contents

Acknowledgments

This book was originally conceived as a festschrift for Professor Adigun Agbaje, then the Dean of Social Sciences, and now the Deputy Vice Chancellor (academic) of Nigeria's premier university, the University of Ibadan, when he clocked 50 in 2006. Agbaje, one of Nigeria's most engaging scholars and social scientists, has been our mentor and has largely influenced our academic lives. He has played the same role to many members of our generation and remains influential among members of his own generation of Nigerian social scientists.

As is normally the case with this sort of endeavor, many of the contributors did not meet the initial deadline. The editors themselves suffered all sorts of distractions along the way, not least the battle to conclude our doctoral programs at the University of Cambridge and the London School of Economics, respectively. But we soldiered on. First, we had thought that we might end up with a festschrift much later in the year than the month of the target birthday. When we missed the year, we decided to explore other target dates. When that failed, we decided to put the project in the cooler for a while. It was revived in 2008 after we both relocated to the United States. Because we had a thematic focus, it was easy to resurrect the project even though it was already too late for the festschrift. However, in the intervening period, some of our original contributors had sought and found alternative outlets for their contributions. A few others could not meet the new deadline, while some chapters had to be dropped because of their incongruity with the volume's problematic.

It is against this specific background that we wish to thank the contributors to the volume who kept the faith for four years and endured the drudgery of the revisions. We thank our senior colleagues, Professors Rotimi Suberu, Olawale Albert and Ayo Olukotun, and our other colleagues, Drs. Bukola Akintola, Wale Ismail, Azeez Olaniyan, Remi Aiyede, Omobolaji Olarinmoye, and Sheriff Folarin and Mohammed Isa. Dr. Sarah Lincoln was invited to contribute to the volume only in 2009. We thank her for obliging us.

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Introduction: Excess and Abjection in the Study of the African State

Ebenezer Obadare and Wale Adebanwi

State is the name of the coldest of all cold monsters.

—*Friedrich Nietzsche,* Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Ours is a country in which the individual is abused and made to feel helpless by the state.

—*Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie,* News *(Lagos) January 10, 2007*

Moderation is a fatal thing. Nothing succeeds like excess.

—*Oscar Wilde*

In his excellent introduction to the volume *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship Dialogues and Perceptions*, which he coedited with Helmut Reifeld, Rajeev Bhargava underlined the need to query what analytical purchase the state and other fundamental political and sociological concepts may have (for a non-Western society) by posing the following critical questions:

How did they evolve in European societies? Does our [i.e., Indian] society follow the same trajectory? How valuable are they outside the context in which they originated? In particular, what is their usefulness in India? Do they really help us to understand our life-world? Do they illuminate our social and political reality? Or, by forcing upon us a way of looking at ourselves that is fundamentally different from the manner in which we do or should view ourselves, do they instead obstruct a proper understanding of it? Do they have a normative significance and, if they do, what is it? (2005: 13)

While Bhargava's questions may have been specifically targeted at the modern state and society in India, their ramifications for the experience of state power across postcolonial Africa can hardly be overemphasized—though our aim in the present volume goes beyond a mere attempt to answer dilemmas primarily elicited by another, though strikingly similar, social formation. In *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader* (2006b: 27), Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta make a similarly critical point about the shift in the conditions of studying the state, concluding that this calls for "a new way of thinking about the state." They invited scholars to look at "the state" by looking at its (un)constituted practices and the ways these practices are encountered, particularly against the backdrop of the cultural prisms that locate these practices and the resultant encounters within specific cultural lifeworlds (27–28).

In so far as we endorse the urgency and salience of the questions raised by Bhargava and Sharma and Gupta, respectively, for an understanding of (postcolonial) states in general, one of our aims of this volume is to engage with extant reflections on the state, that idea Karl Marx long dismissed as "illusory common interest," which, nonetheless, has been constituted as the Ur-power in modern life. We are examining this within a specific African social formation. We are primarily interested in the question(s) of how various agents/agencies within the Nigerian (African) society encounter the state, ranging from the most routine form of contact to the, shall we say, spectacular. If the state is constituted as the ultimate power in society, how, following Foucault's (1991) insight, do we understand the processes by which this power itself also constitutes, or forms, its subjects, providing the very conditions of the existence of the subjects and the trajectories of their desires and aspirations? If the state as the ultimate power forms its subjects, then the state is not merely what is opposed by elements, say in civil or political society, but strongly what they also depend on to authorize and actualize their existence. In urging a rethink of the scholarly approach to the study of the African state, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz emphasize the imperative of focusing on "the realities of the structure of political power as they are in fact to be found in postcolonial African societies" (1999: 3). Their prognosis in this work is indubitable, and our aim here is to understand the social apprehension of the realities that both Chabal and Daloz speak to, rather than "just the realities."

Therefore, how do different actors and agents encounter the state, and what are their understandings of it? What do people think of the state, and how do they act out their imagining of the state in their everyday existential materialities? How do people see the state—as hindrance, facilitator of social welfare, or neither? What are the different "spaces of encounter" with the state in institutional, noninstitutional, spatial, non-spatial, and other terms (hospitals, schools, the streets, public offices, and

the highway, within families, in anticipatory and participatory terms, in the imagination, to mention a few) and how do people's experiences of encountering the state within such spaces determine their understanding of the character of the state, its projects and possibilities? How do these encounters shape social action and social life? How do the experiences of the physicalities of the state as manifested, for instance, in its arrogation of consolidated violence, structure other (nonlegitimate?) violence? Is the state real for those who encounter it and its agencies, or is it a mere fetish, a fantasy, or even a pathology? Or should we be talking perhaps, pace John and Jean Comaroff, of the mutual intertwinning of the fetish and the fake (2006: 15)? In any case, what does it really mean to "encounter" the state in Nigeria—and in the postcolony in general?

For instance, the "state as pathology" constitutes an interesting form of subjection. The Nigerian state is such a form of subjection in its "sacred" and "inviolable" status as proclaimed by statesmen and states' men (the overwhelmingly male actors who feed off it—both literally and figuratively—and represent the state) because Nigerians arguably did not collectively and actively choose the Nigerian state: they only found themselves trapped in it; first as a colonial enterprise, and eventually, as a politically "independent" entity that had assumed a life of its own—independent of the constant and continuous reauthorization of its existence that patriotic citizenship demands and sets in motion. Against this backdrop, what such a "state" is or means for those who encounter it within the African postcolony cannot be taken for granted. But rather than strictly defining what the state is in this context, we are concerned with defining it by presenting it through its encounters with its "subjects"—through which, we hope, the assumptions of what the state is or is assumed to be are made manifest.

The postcolonial (Nigerian) "state"—in its past and present state—has initiated and sustained different forms of agencies from the collaborative through the passive to the subversive (Vaughan, 2003); the latter including, recently, the insurgent, as evident, say, in the Niger Delta, where the violence—in material, physical, and psychological senses—generated by "the twin evil of authoritarian governmentality and petro-capitalism" (Watts, 2003: 15) has been redefined by the appropriation of that logic of violence by the militants and other criminals in the creeks. Therefore, in this terrain, for instance, the fragmented, pulverized, and discredited state (17–18) can no longer claim a monopoly of violence—one of the most critical indices of its eminence. For the youths of the oil-bearing communities, banditry has become an (il)legitimate mode of accumulation (Cf. Roitman, 1998: 298). State banditry is, therefore, confronted in the Delta by the banditry of the creeks which questions or challenges not only the state's assumed monopoly of violence and entitlement to generalized obedience, but also the continued existence of that state. Indeed,

some activists have long come to the conclusion that the Nigerian state should be dissolved in its present form, if it continues to refuse to serve the interests of its constituent parts. For instance, as the popular Nation newspaper columnist Tatalo Alamu (2009: 3) reports, the Nigerian Nobel laureate Professor Wole Soyinka "catalogues the sins and remissions of the post-colonial state with avid and scatological contempt and reaches a damning conclusion. The Nigerian nation would have been better off without such a state which, in any case and at any rate, was never established for [its] benefit or beneficence. In other words, let this state die so that the nation may live." In an important public lecture in early 2009, Soyinka, the public intellectual par excellence, more or less expressed "loss [of] faith in the restorative and redemptive capacity of the state and its humanizing potential" (ibid.).

Against this backcloth, the chapters in this volume seek to capture the manifold ways in which this state is encountered, exemplified, overstated, banally appropriated, and even mortified. Immediate examples of the latter two would include the Baba-rization of power and the state under the immediate past "papa-cy" of President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007), one in which political actors encountered the state as overrepresented by a "Baba"[1]—with a capital B. What do such encounters mean for our understanding of the (African) state as a paternal abstraction and/or construction? What do such encounters imply for gender relations,[2] for instance?

While, crucially, these and similar queries help in foregrounding the all too familiar (and arguably misleading) "crisis" of the African state (a postulation with which we take issue), we are particularly interested in the trajectories and dimensions of popular responses to the crisis—empirical, informed by theoretical insights—in so far as they are shaped and determined by certain understandings of what the state is/means. We think that too many of the recent collections on Nigeria have deployed the same old paradigms—such as the perils of federalism; corruption; ethnicity. Here, we search for fresh perspectives on old problems. We approach our subject through what might be called "the productivity of violence and disorder." Thus, this volume seeks to contribute to both the sociological and anthropological understanding of the state in Nigeria (and Africa), with critical analyses informed by empirical data from its interface with the society.

To proceed, it seems necessary to comment on the specific material circumstances in which the idea for the volume was conceived. During fieldwork, on a typically sweltering day in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo state and one of the largest urban centers in Africa, in March 2006, we chatted animatedly as we made for Iya Ope (arguably the city's most popular traditional restaurant) in a Tokunbo (secondhand) vehicle recently purchased by one of us. As our car wound its way up the snaky road that leads to the

Premier Hotel (another famous architectural and cultural landmark in the city), we came across the rapidly decomposing body of a man—a fellow citizen, so to say. From experience—Nigerian dead bodies lying by the roadside have become an indelible part of our civic composition and visual geography—we could deduce that it must have been lying there for at least two days. Although we were not immediately concerned with the theoretical implications of the corpse, we would, much later, ruminate over Julia Kristeva's presentation of the corpse as the primary—and primal, we would like to add—example of abjection in its capacity to remind us of our own finitude and materiality (Semetsky, 2006: 27). Jean Baudrillard (1998: 140), following Georges Bataille, has also characterized "death as excess, always already there." If death is excess, then the corpse, as the primary abjection, is a physical embodiment of excess. Kristeva (1982: 3) uses the infinitive "to fall"—that is cadere in French, hence, cadaver, the corpse (Semetsky, 2006: 27)—to reflect the state of abjection. Abjection is thus, in a sense, the bottom; or in a more succinct term, the bottomless pit. "The corpse," writes Kristeva, is "the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything…." (1982: 3–4). In a way, every living person is a "sickening waste" waiting for his/her decomposition to happen. We were, therefore—despite the fact that, at that time, we were both domiciled in the United Kingdom—also encountering our potential fate in a home country that is constructed to infinitely fall its subjects.

Inna Semetsky (2006: 27) has argued that "the corpse indicates the breakdown of the distinction between subject and object, that is, a loss of the crucial factor in establishing self-identity: it therefore exemplifies the concept of abjection." Therefore, as citizens—or, so we assumed—of the Nigerian state, that corpse, beyond the immediately personal, reminded us of what Kristeva calls "perpetual danger" that the state that was assumedly constituted to protect its subjects (citizens), constituted to these subjects, not only indirectly—because it is an irresponsible and irresponsive state—but also actively, because it is a state that also kills its citizens. Therefore, when Iain Walker (2007: 582) argues that the "post colonial state in Africa has not been a great success," he was making the greatest understatement on the crisis of the African state. If it is true, as Wendt (2004: 291) posits, that "states are people too," "thus endowing the state with a Durkheimian existence that endures regardless of the activities of those involved in enacting it," then when we ask of the African state, "what manner of a state is this?" are we implicitly asking, "what manner of a people are this?" The latter may be a problematic question, one to which we will return shortly. However, that unidentified—and perhaps unidentifiable—corpse, which eventually led us to an investigation of the conditions of abjection in a typical postcolonial state, the excess of that abjection and of the state, was a kind of intellectually stimulating serendipity.

Julia Kristeva, in her influential book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), alerts us as much to the power of horror as well as to the horrors of (Ur) power as it manifests in social abjection. She argues that "the corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject" (4). It is not only living things that die, corporations—in a slightly modified anthropological sense, contra Maine[3]—conceived as a national association can also die. So we can speak of encountering not just the steadily decomposing body of an 'unknown man' we can also encounter—even if not similarly visible—a steadily decomposing body politic. And as Georges Bataille (1985: 142) has pointed out, we need to recognize the possibility of the "violent and excessive nature of a decomposing body." A certain corporeal locus, which, as Fillip de Boeck expresses it in the case of République Démocratique du Congo (RDC), "reflects, and reflects upon, the violence and death generated by official postcolonial cultural and political grammars" (2005: 16) characterized by scholars like Achille Mbembe as the "necropolitical," the work of death (Mbembe 2001: 640). Therefore, where citizens are in a state—in the dual sense of a "condition" or "situation" and also a "sovereign" (suffering?) territory—of "half-death" or "half-life" (2001: 197), or what we would like to call the state of existential penumbra, a form of lying-in-state—the state can become, as they say in the Congo, *Rdécès*, the "deceased," or the "dead." Thus, Congolese announce that *mboka ekufi* (the country that has died) (De Boeck, 2005: 17). Such a "vision of death" for Bataille is "a principle of excess" (Baudrillard, 1998: 140).

Therefore, it is both the (potential) death of the individual victim of the state and the state itself that translate to a primal violation. Kristeva posits that given that the abject is situated outside the symbolic order, being forced to face it is an inherently traumatic experience. In theorizing abjection as what "disturbs identity, system, order," she situates the cadaver (corpse), through the excess and ambiguity of its material state, as the most abject of objects.

For example, upon being faced with a corpse, a person would most likely feel repulsive because he or she is forced to face an object that is violently cast out of the cultural world, having once been a subject. We encounter other beings daily, and more often than not they are alive. To confront a corpse of one that we recognize as human, something that should be alive but isn't, is to confront the reality that we are capable of existing in the same state, our own mortality. This repulsion from death, excrement, and rot constitutes the subject as a living being in the symbolic order (see http://www.westga.edu/~llipoma/Abject—the%20 short%20definition.pdf; Cf. Kristeva, 1982: 70, 71, and 109).

Even the state's death-merchants, despite their inherent excesses— which, following Bataille (1985), means transgressions of

boundaries—sometimes recoil from, or are repulsed by, the cadaver. Which perhaps explains why, when Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Nigeria's iconoclastic musician, in a moment of exemplary courage took the symbolic coffin of his famous mother, Mrs. Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti, to the Dodan Barracks, then the seat of the military head of state, the ranking soldiers recoiled from the coffin. Fela's mother had died as a result of injuries sustained from the violence unleashed by "unknown" soldiers when they attacked her son's house where the septuagenarian was thrown down from the second floor. Fela, for most of his life, encountered the state as a repressive apparatus—which, as Louis Althusser (1971: 137) argues, functions only by means of violence. He eventually released a song entitled "Coffin for the Head of State" where he queries, "who go wan take coffin?" The activist musician left the coffin in front of the seat of power as a reminder not only of the power of death that was represented by that citadel, but also of the corpse—as misery and degradation—from which even constituted power recoils.

Based on his many encounters with the state and the cruelties of state agents, Fela concluded that "many leaders as you see dem, na animal in disguise dem dey o…" (many leaders that you see are animals in disguise). Indeed, Fela, who lyrically theorized social life and social formations in the postcolony, talks, in another instance, about "pafuka," which can be seen as a form of abjection. Also in his song "Overtake Don Overtake Overtake" (ODOO), he plays on the subject of military takeover in a continent that is inured to martial overthrow of democratic governments, coups, and countercoups. By using ODOO, where "odo" means zero (raised to power two?), Fela employs his mother tongue to critique the postcolonial murder tongue of power. By adding a double zero, that is raising the zero to the power of two, Fela, being a culturally conscious person, could be taken to be alluding to the double jeopardy that he always argued that Africa suffers from external domination by the Euro-American world and internal domination by African autocrats. In this metaphor of double jeopardy, in another of his lyrics he speaks, in "rotten English," of "deadi body [wey] get accident" (dead body that is involved in an accident) and exclaims, "yeepa!" (exclamatory noise). The iconoclastic musician, who, throughout his adult life, challenged what C. Young and T. Turner call "the moral entitlement of the state to legitimacy" (1984: 45) concludes that when a dead body is involved in an accident, that translates to "double wahala for deadi body and the owner of deadi body…" (double dilemma/hassle for the dead body and the relative/owner of the dead body), which can be read as excess of the abject.[4]

As a term, abjection is used primarily to mean "the state of being cast off." The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines abjection as a "state of misery or degradation" while to be abject is defined as being "brought low, miserable; craven, degraded, despicable, self abasing." Some have argued

that the concept of abjection defines a zone between the object and the subject, in which something is alive yet not. Also, in most accounts, the term, space of abjection, is used to refer to a space that abject things or beings inhabit. Elizabeth Grosz (1990) defines the abject as "that which falls between the cracks of corporeality and subjectivity, as mismatch between object and subject." As a zone, abjection is not only spatial in a physical sense, it is also spatial in a material sense. It is a state of (non) being in which one is and is not; nothingness that is disturbingly physically evident. Kristeva theorizes abjection as "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" (1982: 4). Even though she presents the zone of abjection "in mostly feminist terms, in thinking about the ways in which violence is generated and then unleashed against those implicated in the codes of the 'defiled maternal,' women, she also extends this to every class or people feminized by the dominant Western culture—Jews, people of colour, homosexuals and the faceless" (Kintz, 1991: 314–318). In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva presents the abject as human reaction (say horror or vomit) to "a breakdown in meaning caused by the generic loss of a habitual distinction" and the "breakdown of the distinction between subject and object, that is, a loss of the crucial factor in establishing self-identity" (Semetsky, 2006: 27).

The editors' instant loss of appetite as a result of the encounter with the "violently cast out" former subject, which challenged our self-identity as citizens, stimulated a hunger (anger?) of a different sort. Beyond constituting, in Kristev-esque terms, a reminder of our own mortality and the potential dangers that could dictate how we die in a particular postcolonial formation (re)marked by, and remarkable for its, cruelties, we were also reminded of Ato Quayson's argument in *Calibrations: Reading for the Social* (2003: 77), that the postcolony is a space of violence and death—thus already a space of excess and abjection. In this context, we were anxious to know, for instance, what specific governmental body was responsible for the disposal of a dead (and steadily decomposing) body—while taking it for granted that whatever institutional apparatus that was responsible for ensuring that no citizen died by the roadside in that way, in the first instance, had already been explained and made manifest in, and by, the corpse. This led us to the crucial practical questions: in a postcolonial state that constitutes "emergencies" only for, and only when, "constituted" power is threatened, to whom do people ordinarily turn when an exceptional (?) circumstance such as this arises? What emergency numbers do they call? To which institutional embodiments of the state do they turn?

In answering these three questions, we immediately recalled the experiences of two compatriots: first, the late educationist and social justice advocate, Tai Solarin, who, in the 1970s, and in an ultimately futile attempt to force the literally dead hand of bureaucracy, embarked

on a one-man crusade to remove dead bodies from Nigerian roads. In a second example, we thought of the unrequited generosity of our colleague, Akin Adesokan, formerly a Lagos-based journalist, and now a U.S.-based scholar, whose efforts to have a dead body removed from the roadside were met with indifference and buck-passing by both the police and local council officials in the Agege Local Government area of Lagos state. Tellingly, Akin had been assured by the police that when the decomposing body became a health hazard, "the people living in the vicinity" would look for a solution to it. In the matter of the dead, was the dead hand of bureaucracy wishing a social health hazard as a reminder to the citizens that they are on their own?

In both cases, the editors recalled, the question of whose normative task the jurisdiction over a dead body is had been left unresolved. And on the day in question, in the stifling midday heat of Ibadan, as vehicles zipped by and the boisterous supplication of myriad religious worshippers assailed our ears from the surrounding bush, the same question begged for resolution. As a distraction, we could have been wondering if Kristeva had anticipated this situation—in which there were no less than six "privately owned" spiritual centers, as we like to call them, or what another writer would describe as "a racket of divine extortion," in the bushes by the two sides of the driveway whose worshippers (clients?) pointedly ignored the decomposing corpse, as they prayed for a better life!—when she argues that "seen without God," a corpse becomes an abjection? Were the spiritualists and their worshippers seeing the corpse without God? Did this instance decompose the Christian ideal of "brotherhood of man" (the "sisterhood of woman"?) and the fatherhood of God? Leaving aside the spiritual aridity that this perhaps highlighted, and thinking more sociologically about it, it was clear to us that this was as much a matter of social life, and social policy, as it was a matter of academic interest.

For the avoidance of doubt, dumped or abandoned corpses are no exception to the rule in the postcolony. The political economy of death that reproduces the banality of death and the social insignificance of corpses lying by the roadside also reveals itself in many of the encounters captured in the various chapters of this book. In Lagos, black Africa's biggest conurbation and Nigeria's commercial capital, over a period of one year, 2,465 corpses were picked up off the streets by the local state agents (*Punch*, Lagos, April 9, 2009). The state health commissioner confessed that the state mortuaries were congested. Given the all too familiar actuarial poverty of the postcolonial state, it is not unlikely that many more corpses were picked or that many more were left unpicked. These corpses constitute some evidence of the fact that everyday life in the postcolony is death by other means.

Before we draw another example of the abjection signified by abandoned corpses as an indication of social crisis within the postcolony, it

is important to emphasize that the abandonment of corpses is often an indication of social neglect, rejection, or desertion. A particular instance of this, in matters of social infrastructure, is the case of the Sango-Ota Flyover in Ogun State, which was abandoned by the German construction company, Julius Berger, because the federal government had purportedly refused to pay for the project as agreed. The abandoned space became a veritable zone of abjection. It was as if people wanted to remind the state, in an extreme way, of its larger failures in the area of social welfare. By the time the company returned to the site to continue the project, no less than 24 corpses had been dumped there (*Independent*, Lagos, Sunday, August 9, 2009). A corrupt and incompetent police force did not bother to investigate how these people died. An inspection team of the House of Representatives Committee on Works led by Speaker Dimeji Bankole was told by the Deputy Director Highways, South-West in the Federal Ministry of Works, Robert Agwusiobu, that "[w]here we are standing was used as graveyard. Over 24 corpses were removed from this place. In fact, on a daily basis, should somebody drop dead in the market, they come and dump it here, so we are not talking of only refuse." Within an "economy of violence," corpses constitute refuse (trash). Therefore, it is not only the bridge that constitutes a graveyard, in many ways, the state has been entombed.

Ambivalence about who should do what, and what parts of the state are responsible for which activity, is no doubt endemic in Nigeria; we see it both as illustrative of the fog of confusion that surrounds the state and its agents in Nigeria, and as clearly indicative of the failure of the state to make itself both useful and transparent to its "citizens." Even in this, we do confess our assumptions that the (Nigerian) state has vested in it some duties—and understandably some powers, surrendered to it by the collective body—owed to those assumed to be its citizens. The question, therefore, of how a citizen (one without a "connection" to holders of state power) is supposed to link up with the state (in moments of distress, say) goes to the heart of the state-society conundrum in Nigeria and arguably the rest of postcolonial Africa. If a "citizen" constitutively lacks the modalities and social instrumentalities of demanding egalitarian intervention from the state—as it is understood and assumed to exist—and its apparatuses, institutions, and representations, can we reasonably speak of a state, let alone a state-society compact? How can this kind of state (which in practice is everything but kind) be properly and correctly conceptualized without falling into the trap of name-calling that has recently dominated academic theorizing—and, we dare add, totalizing—of the state in Nigeria and Africa at large? Given the scenario adumbrated above, are there really "citizens" in Nigeria, even though there are those who are formally called citizens of Nigeria—as Femi Taiwo (2000) competently alerts us? This antinomy—between citizens in and citizens of,

Taiwo pursues, is an indication of the ideological vacuity of the concept of citizenship in a typical African postcolony (Adebanwi, 2009: 360).

The idea for this volume, therefore, arose from a concern to lend some scholarly perspective to the above and other urgent questions; and to be sure, many of them might seem like instances of old wine in a new bottle. It might be objected, after all, that a profound alienation has historically defined and permeated relations between the impersonal abstraction that is called the state and its citizens in Nigeria, as in the rest of postcolonial Africa. If that is the case, our question is, why then have both state and citizenship been largely analyzed as though they fitted the classical Western bill? Why regard both state and citizenship as though this anomaly did not mean anything for the way in which the state or citizenship ought to be reconceptualized and redefined? Or, as though this departure from normalcy did not carry massive significations for academic understanding of the state as a social and political institution? Part of our motivation, therefore, is to refuse to take the state at its face value or determine a priori what it is, but to try to understand how that state expresses itself by using the lens of the most perfunctory (and not so perfunctory) forms of contact between it and those organized as citizens, whether in individuals or corporate senses. Thus, although this is a book about a specific African state, it is (or so we believe) not just another book on the state, about which the possibility of saying something radically new has of recent steadily declined. On the contrary, this is a book about the zones or spaces of encounter (actual and symbolic)—inherently tension-ridden (Brown, 1995)—whereby the state, which in Kristeva's words "simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject," is experienced by those subjects. It is one about state excess and the state constituted as an excess, the abjection these provoke and the consequences for citizens and groups within that abject state.

Claude Levi-Strauss once famously argued that modern civilizations are anthropoemic to the extent that they "egregate, evict, marginalize or 'vomit' their adversaries" (cited in Keane, 2004: 64). To the extent that the "modern" Nigerian state relates overwhelmingly to its citizens as though they were, at worst, adversaries, or at best, a nuisance—and thus vomits or excretes them—this insight seems poignantly applicable to the situation in Nigeria, a country whose citizens have variously demanded its dissolution (through war, armed insurgency, or intellectual argumentation) its withering away (as the United States' intelligence community predicted) or its recolonization (as one of its leading politicians infamously demanded). In executing the logic of vomit or excretion, the state naturally uses an excess of physical force to produce compliance in its subjects. Thus, while contact between the (pre- and postcolonial) state in Africa has historically been mediated through violence, the attempt by the state to enforce its primacy and supremacy in the

wake of globalization has resulted in the further masculinization of its relationship with the rest of society (see, e.g., the collection of essays in Worcester et al., 2002) One of the most important pillars of state power is evident in how it advertises itself as an overarching agency of regulation, control, and coordination. Achille Mbembe captures this as the "commandement" with which "the state" institutionalizes itself "in order to achieve legitimation and hegemony" (1992b: 3) and fetishize itself. Yet, in many instances of encounters, the regulatory and coordinating assumptions of the state—commandments—and the practices that they engender only lead to the generation and sustenance of zones that can never be regulated nor even fully patrolled by the state—zones that forbid the forbidden transgressions. In chapter 1, Olawale Ismail analyzes such a zone, "Oluwole," which he describes as "a critical component of the 'economics of dirty tricks and deception.'" The tricksters and criminals who populate this zone and the thousands of Nigerians, and even foreigners, who patronize this market of scam have already constituted the Nigerian state as a zone of organized and constituted scamming to which their own scamming only represents a fraction—and a means of survival in the context of "the systematic decay and dysfunctionality of the Nigerian state." Ismail argues further that Oluwole also "reflects the pattern of governmentality, defined as the set of attitudes towards the state, government and politics." The state's insistence on formal documentation is subverted in this space by subaltern actors through forgery and counterfeiting (Paley, 2008: 13).

As he was led (for the third time) to the gallows, famous writer and environmental rights activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, reportedly asked, "What kind of country is this?" This rhetorical question was uttered at a moment of utter abjection when an unfortunate target of state power experienced the excesses of state-organized evil. In chapter 3, Sarah Lincoln reconsiders specific modes of encountering the state by inverting the narralogical against the practical and placing the practical in the context of the narralogical. In the Saro-Wiwan encounter with state power, the fictional mimics the real, while the real imitates the fictional. Nigeria becomes a fictive real, or real fiction as the Sozaboy encounters a "rotten" state. Using Saro-Wiwa's book, *Sozaboy*, which is written in "rotten English," Lincoln picks up Claude Levi-Strauss's (1961: 386) distinction between classified societies that "consume/assimilate" and those that "remove/exclude/vomit" out their adversaries. She concludes that "[i]n Saro-Wiwa's assessment, the Nigerian state features both tendencies, vampirically consuming the bodies and resources of its micro-minorities, by exploiting their oil resources and using ethnic conflict as an ideological 'fix,' only to excrete these remainders by abandoning them to a space where the law and the political are suspended." For Lincoln, the author's narrative mirrors the real story of Nigeria as it lays bare the "chimera" that advertises

itself through the "state's 'big grammar' rhetoric of democracy, representation and national unity" and the reality of "its 'rotten' or necropolitical exercise of power in the oil-producing regions."

Lincoln deconstructs the subject and object of domination in this context by examining the ways in which the "sovereignty" of the Nigerian state in the Niger Delta is sustained by what Giorgio Agamben (1998: 8) calls "inclusive exclusion" of minority populations. This "miserable region" of Nigeria, as Allan Stoekl describes it in his important introduction to Georges Bataille's *Visions of Excess* (1985: xxi), ruptures things and thus creates an "opening to let out the 'excess' of an unmaintainable and thus delusive unity" (ibid.). The experiences of the people of Niger Delta constitute not only an abject but also a semigenocidal illustration of the peculiar logic that subtends state-citizens' relations in Nigeria—resulting from what Lincoln calls "the necropolitical exercise of power" Lincoln argues further that the specific experiences of the Ogoni constitute "excremental politics, wherein the state asserts its sovereign authority in and through a zone of exception in which citizens are subjected to the law only to be cast out (ab-jected), reduced to bare life and consigned to the status of animals," as articulated in Saro-Wiwa's narrative. She concludes that as a "geospatial [and human] expression of the critical structure of Nigerian sovereignty"—what Agamben (1998: 112) describes as "the sign of the system's inability to function without being transformed into a lethal machine"—"Saro-Wiwa's Ogoni are the inassimilable by-product of the entropic conflict that accompanies the constitution of the postcolonial nation-state, and indexical remnants of the excremental petro-economy on which that national project is constituted."

While ab-jection operates as the basis of the relationship between the Nigerian state and citizens unlucky to have the black gold flowing in their soil and waters, it also operates in different guises and manifestations across the country. Ab-jection becomes a form of re-jection of the Koma people of northeastern Nigeria (see chapter 11 by Mohammed Kabir Isa), as e-viction in the case of the denizens of Maroko (see Folarin's chapter); or de-jection in the case of students (see Akintola's chapter). We return to these later.

"Representations of the state," argues Akhil Gupta (1995: 385) "are reconstituted, contested, and transformed in public culture'" One important zone for the articulation and expression of public culture in the public sphere is the press—which also constitutes what Hall (1982, in ibid.) calls the "site and stake" of "the struggles for cultural meaning." Chapters 5 and 7 examine how the state is encountered in the institutional public media and in the rhetoric of forces organized against the state in the public sphere. The press represents "popular public opinion" to the state (Hall, 2006: 367), while the public sphere in general also exists—independent of the press, but also reliant on it—for the representation

of such "popular opinion." The idea of a "free press," one that is "not directed by, owned by, or bound to the state" based on the fundamental "equilibrium of authority and consent," is critical for a democratic public sphere because it is based on the possibility of "the people" acting as "the bulwark against the state" (367). Therefore, by its very foundational logic, a free press is a threat to "politically organized subjection." In this context, Ayo Olukotun advances that while the Nigerian situation is not as grim as that of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the country in totality has become a "postmortem," the "combination of the austere economics of the media underlined by the demise of several titles as well as the effects of political persecution which forced several journalists into exile after receiving death threats" has meant that journalists have had to "practice their craft [and craft their practices] in the shadow of death." The media and its practitioners, therefore, encounter the state as "an undertaker," one that is composed and constituted against the institutionalization of "a particular set of social and cultural relations" (367) to which the press gives expression. The cases of Dele Giwa, who was assassinated by those suspected to be agents of the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida and Bagauda Kaltho, who was killed in mysterious circumstances and then dumped at the scene of a bomb blast—of which he was accused by security agents—illustrate the tragic consequences of "combat[ing] the excesses of the authoritarian state." The press in Nigeria, in many ways, constitutes a threat to state's (wo)men not only because it tries to bring a spitefully unaccountable power to account, but also because it constantly and unapologetically creates "a space in which the grievances of the masses could be aired and the common good pursued" (Gupta, 1995: 386).

Azeez Olaniyan takes up the case of antistate groups—some of them almost on the extreme, some moving toward that. Based on their "ordeal" at the hands of the state—or what they imagine to be their ordeal—these groups are all joined in their rhetoric of condemnation for what the state represents. Many seek to exit the Nigerian state because "they have been excluded from the power configuration" and, therefore, define their encounters with the state by constantly inveighing against the state. It is as if they follow Baudrillard's (in Botting and Wilson, 1998: 18) logic that "[t]hings must be pushed to the limit, where naturally they collapse and are inverted."

The spatial dimensions of abjection are captured in Sheriff Folarin's chapter (2) on Maroko where specific sociospatial relations evident in the evacuations of slum dwellers reveal the nature of the encounters of the latter with the state. In many instances, social abjection inherently flags not only temporal, but also spatial difference and indicates spatial alienation or the spatializing of Otherness. Contemporary African cities—not to dwell here on the related rural-urban dimension—are constructed

around spatial hierarchies (for more on this problematic, see the collection of essays in Locatelli and Nugent, 2009 and Murray and Myers, 2007, respectively). This is a product of the specific colonial experiences of the different African cities. The white/colonizers did not only seize the whole colonial space as one of the most critical indices of hegemonic (European) power, but, also, and this is crucial, organized the colonial space as a reflection of the racial hierarchies that they had constructed and as the material evidence of domination and difference. Therefore, forbidden or prohibited spaces emerged in the African city as a marker of this difference between the white/colonizers and the native/colonized. However, there were different levels of prohibition. There was the extreme form in racist (apartheid) South Africa where some cities were closed off to the "undesirable native," but which partially admitted, for the purposes of time-bound labor, the "needed native" (Cf. Mamdani, 1996: 283–301)—as workers in the mines or as domestic servants. The other forms manifested in British and French colonies where the white/colonizers lived in the best, organized, well-paved parts of the cities—metaphoric and literal islands. Natives, for the most account, were not legally prohibited from living in these "islands," but they were practically forbidden by many factors, not from passing through, but from trespassing. Therefore, as a technique of regulating and discouraging dissent, among others, "violent urban displacements have been part of politics" in the continent since colonial times (Klopp, 2008: 295).

These created islands of privilege and power were enthusiastically inherited by the indigenous elite who sought to perpetuate this spatial mode of relating to the powerless and the disadvantaged. From "Operation Murambatsvina" (sweep away the garbage) in Zimbabwe, one of the largest demolition and eviction operations in recent memory (see http://www.habitants.org/zero_evictions_campaign/operation_zimbabwe)—700,000 people evicted at the last count—to the slum demolitions in Kenya in the 1990s, which reflected "the inextricability of land and the exercise of power" as evident in the attempt to use the demolitions to "punish insubordination by withdrawing access to land and, conversely...reward loyalty by re-allocating vacated land to political supporters" (Klopp, 2008: 295), slum demolition advertises the excesses of the postcolonial state and the double-abjection imposed on the poorest of the urban poor. Unlike in the colonial era, postcolonial cities are sharp reflections of the incompetence, ineffectiveness, and corruption of the postcolonial ruling elite. As the rural areas were emptied of opportunities and as economic and social crises imploded in the African polities, the mass encroached on the cities with many shanties, ghettos, and slums rising alongside oases of privilege and power. Living side by side with those who are merely surviving displeased the African elite, hence the incidences of slum evacuations in the postcolony.

The case of Maroko, the metropolitan sprawl of environmental degradation, urban hazards, poverty, informal employment arising from unemployment, and so on, reveals the social dynamics evident in the "complex psychological and geo-political spaces that contain, expel and reproduce a variety of bodies and ideologies that slip through borders and disrupt stable spatial designations and oppositions" (Brooks, 1998: 90). Hence, the postcolonial city revolves around the perpetual struggle for the expulsion of the abject from, or interdiction within, its larger space, on the precincts or outskirts of the city—where they assumedly remain invisible to power and privilege. This is because abjection creates boundaries (Cf. Weiss, 1999: 43). Yet, as scholars such as Julia Kristeva (1982), Judith Butler (1993), and Elizabeth Grosz (1990) have noted, "that which is excluded is not eliminated altogether but continually "erupts" and therefore disrupts the privileged sites of inclusion" (Weiss, 1999: 42–43). As such, the poor and hopeless of Maroko were dispersed around Lagos; they "infected" the city with their afflictions: poverty, crime, diseases, and the corollary which, in the end, further demonstrated the "impossibility of clear-cut borders, lines of demarcation, divisions between the clean and the unclean, the proper and the improper, order and disorder" (Grosz, 1990: 89, cited in Weiss, 1999: 43).

As Sheriff Folarin narrates, in 1990, the then military governor of Lagos State, Brigadier Raji Rasaki, ordered that the Maroko slum, the "eyesore" that lay at the "backyard" of Victoria Island—one of the areas of metropolitan Lagos where the super rich lived—be "bulldozed" and "leveled," leading to the forced eviction of the thousands of poor people whose only abode was the slum. In its place have since emerged two affluent areas on the island of Lagos, Lekki and the adjoining Victoria Garden City, where a plot of land is worth millions of naira. This illustrates the fact that the "clean," "proper," and "liveable" city, for those who have power and privilege in the African social formation, can emerge only after the spatially abject Other—the human marginalia—has been expelled, expunged, or evacuated. But it goes beyond this, within the larger political economy of the territorial state—not the local, as in Lagos State—the hitherto cruel existential conditions of the Maroko people are not only worsened by the expulsion, they are also consolidated in the longer spectrum. In this context, in adapting the Kristevan paradigm, James Ferguson has alerted us to the fact that while abjection "refers to a process of being thrown aside, expelled, or discarded"—say, like the case of the Maroko people, or like "shit" as Sarah Lincoln articulates in her chapter—its literal meaning "also implies not just being thrown out but being thrown down—thus expulsion, but also [systemic] debasement and humiliation" (2002: 140). The Maroko people, like some of the workers Remi Aiyede discusses in chapter 8, and the Ogoni, just to cite two examples, can be compared to the Zambian mineworkers in the Copperbelt in their encounters with the

state. Among the latter, Ferguson finds the promises of modernization betrayed, as they "were being thrown out of the circle of full humanity, thrown back into the ranks of 'second class,' cast outward and downward into the world of rags and huts…" (ibid.).

Central to Achille Mbembe's intellectual oeuvre is the unveiling, or laying bare, of the constitutive banality of power in the postcolonial state. In his magisterial disquisition, *On the Postcolony*, Mbembe, who characterizes the postcolony as a "figure of brutality" revisits the "archive of abjection…at a time when brother and enemy have become one," and in an African context in which the sovereign exercises the "right to kill" first against the people who are assumed to be the embodiment of that collective right (2006: 153). The state, in Mbembe's analysis, comes across as a caricature. Though a burlesque, Mbembe shows that the African state is a grotesque or tragic farce that "is characterized by a distinctive art of improvisation, by a tendency to excess and disproportion" (1992a: 1). However, one of the salient aspects of Mbembe's argument, and one of its most illuminating, is where he points to the "series of corporate institutions, and apparatuses" that, once deployed by the postcolonial state, "constitute a distinctive regime of violence" (ibid.). The consequent "problems of subjection" and "indiscipline" that result from this incapacity of the state to fully patrol and check the violent power exercised in its name is evident in the recent case of an extremist theocratic group, Boko Haram, that sought through violence to demobilize the Nigerian state and destroy it alongside the "pillars" of "Judeo-Christian"—and, therefore, "Western"—logic and order on which it rests. The state's apparatus of consolidated violence, the Nigerian Police Force, publicly displayed its impatience or distrust of two other important institutions of "state power," the judiciary and the penal system. Following their "capture"— not just arrest—the leader of the group and its main financier, who claimed unconfirmed linkages to Al Qaeda, were paraded before journalists to show the "victory" of the security forces, and then extrajudicially executed (for more on this incident, see the July 31, 2009 edition of major Nigerian dailies). Even though the police later made a tepid denial of the execution after some of its agents had preeningly confirmed it to the press, what this expresses is a distinctive, unaccountable, and uncontrollable regime of violence, a certain form of governmentality that advertises the inherent misconduct of conduct—that is, not the "conduct of conduct," as Foucault (1982: 220–221) defines governmentality—even within the apparatus of rule, the zone of stateness.

The public performance of the state's power of life and death, or what we would like to call the state's inherent homicidal—or, in some extreme cases, genocidal—power, is critical to the process of domination. As the ultimate zone of the appropriation of the "economy of death" (Mbembe, 1992b: 21), it is the task of governmentality to regulate conduct through

not only what Mbembe calls "the systematic application of pain" (4), but also through the discursive and practical display of the fact that anyone who is fundamentally opposed to "state power" is implicitly a condemned (wo)man waiting to be executed one way or the other. While the "judicial murder" of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his Ogoni comrades was anything but judicial, the decision on the outright unofficial public execution of government critics under the homicidal regime of General Sani Abacha speaks to ways in which those who claim to hold "state power" deploy the "economy of death." Assassination—involving not only death qua death, but something that publicly and grotesquely advertises itself as a powerful disincentive to other would-be opponents of power—therefore, constitutes an integral part of the how the state may be encountered. In this context, Olawale Albert (chapter 9) examines state-organized assassination that acts as "social-group-control vigilantism."

The confessions of the leading official assassin of the Abacha junta, Sergeant Rogers, raises questions on the internalization of the ideology of state power by its armed agents. Rogers' confessions about how he and other members of his group, acting on the orders of their superiors, assassinated or attempted to assassinate leading opposition elements, raise the questions of moral and legal responsibilities in these encounters—in Nietzschean terms. Against the backdrop of the ideology of total obedience upon which military ethics and practices are constructed as an important zone of the protection of state power, how do we approach the individual responsibility of the soldier? Fela Anikulapo-Kuti ridicules the "zombification" of the African soldiery in his popular song "Zombie." But unlike Mbembe's (1992b: 5) process of "zombification" that involves the mutual surrender of vitality that in turn leaves both the dominant and the dominated "impotent," Fela-sque zombification is one-dimensional. It imposes a regime of "no break, no jam, no sense" on its victims (African soldiers) when asked to do anything, including to "go and kill" or "go and die." In fact, Fela insists in the song that "zombie way [is] one way." Thus, when the zombie is conditioned to obey "order" (commandment), s/he may as well have been conditioned to "kill" or "die" on cue. Albert illustrates the comic-tragedy of "order" with the story of the noncommissioned officer who, before his public execution for participating in a failed coup d'etat, asked the soldier tying him to the stake to relax the rope. The soldier retorted to the condemned man that he was obeying orders, to which the latter shouted back that he was at the stake precisely because he had obeyed an "order." If the condemned man had refused the order, he would most probably have been killed; if the other soldier had also refused the order, he too would most probably have been killed. Logic: within postcolonial regimes of domination, one way or the other, commandment kills.

Almost as a rule, the encounter between the state and citizens has featured an unusual quantum of force or coercion resulting from certain forbidden transgressions and the transgression of the forbidden. Notably, some of this has resulted from citizens and groups trying to assert their agency through organized "resistance," for example students responding to official persecution with violence of their own (chapter 4), or antistate forces using the same language of force that the state has become notorious for. Either way, a situation is produced in which the "subaltern" and the state, say members of the Odu'a People's Congress (OPC) (see, e.g., chapter 6) engage each other almost exclusively through the medium and idiom of rhetorical and/or physical violence. In the rituals through which it stages, dramatizes, and exaggerates its power, specifically those of defilement, physical abuse, and torture, the state builds symbolic barricades against society and its forces, agencies, and agents. In such encounters (see Olarinmoye, chapter 6), a form of cognitive dissonance is created as the state that is constitutionally "ours" stages or performs itself as "theirs." The state is encountered in specific instances as an object of horror—such as in Odi or Zaki-Biam where soldiers attacked unarmed citizens as if they were enemy combatants—where in its attempt to reconstitute order and sovereignty, the state and horror become inseparable and united. Many of the chapters in this volume point not only to the abjection that defines the relations between the Nigerian state and its citizens—and the society at large—but also to the fact that the Nigerian state itself is abjection, writ large. It is in this sense that we attempt to understand the continued existence of Nigeria along the same lines and logics, not to mention the illogics, that have made it a sorry—or, if you will, typical postcolonial—state. Nigeria, as the encounters in this volume show, is the Kristevan abject that neither gives up nor assumes a "normal" life. In spite of all its perversions of the standard expectations of a modern state and despite the almost absolute desperation of its citizens, the Nigerian state continues to survive (Obadare, 2008). As the theorist of abjection advances, "[t]he abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them" (Kristeva, 1982: 4).

Bukola Akintola explores in chapter 4 the student movement in Nigeria that constituted, for a few decades, one of the greatest impediments to the exercise of state power. Given the dominance of the Marxian framework in the constitution and operation of student movement in Africa in the first three decades of independence, it was a truly radical social force that denied state power its required reverence. For the most part, therefore, the security agents and the student movement became mutual antagonists whose largely hostile relationship was punctuated with violent clashes. Akintola argues that the student movement is quite pivotal

to the struggles for social and political emancipation in Africa, using protests, demonstrations—and even riots—to limit the staged paramount-cy of the state. As a site for the generation and imposition of the symbolic system of the dominant on the rest of the population, as Pierre Bourdieu argues (Bourdieu and Pesseron, 1970, 1990), educational institutions represent a form of "symbolic violence." Cultural mechanisms such as education are designed to obscure the reality from the dominated classes. However, as this chapter shows, the hegemonic design, powerful as it has been, can be, and is, contested by social forces within the educational system.

In the chapter on the Koma people, we encounter one of the "diverse shapes and coding [that] abjection takes on in order to reveal the constitutive role the processes of abjection and exclusion play in the formation of the subject" (Weiss, 1999: 48), in this context among some of the most abject subjects of the postcolonial state. In this "zone of uninhabitability"—inhabited by the state's "excrement"—such as the land of the Koma people, who were "discovered" by agents of the state in 1986, arises a very interesting dimension of how the state is encountered in Africa. As Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2004) have demonstrated, analysis of how state practices are experienced by people who live at the "margins" of the state can be "especially revealing" (Gledhill, 2009: 17). When the military governor who claimed to have "discovered" the Koma people first visited the place, he found "utter and complete neglect...by the State." In fact, the first contact of the Koma people who live on the mountains with the colonial state in 1912—prior to the formation of the federation of Nigeria—was a result of an attempt at taxation. As Isa argues in chapter 12, "while the state is derelict in [its] positive duties [toward the Koma people]...the postcolonial state often manages a measure of self-interested efficiency, particularly in matters related to governmentality and surveillance. Thus, a police post was established at the district headquarters, while an area court was also constructed long before the failed re-settlements program." Isa concludes that "[t]he Koma people subsist along the fringes and edges of the Nigerian state.... They can hardly recognize the state, and the state hardly recognizes them." Yet another instance of cognitive dissonance.

Karl Marx famously denounced religion as the opium of the masses. The negative role of religion in the contemporary world, particularly fundamentalist Islam, has become the staple of many scholars of religion and politics. However, Marx was more concerned with the social paralysis that he theorized as the necessary outcome of being "drugged" by religion. In the specific case of Nigeria, fundamentalist Islam or what we might call "political Islam" that, unlike the former is not inherently violent, has constituted, due to many historical reasons (see Suberu, 1996; Ibrahim, 1991; Obadare, 2005), one of the major vectors in encountering

the Nigerian state. Rotimi Suberu examines how Islam and its adherents, particularly in the Muslim majority region of Nigeria, have responded to the nature and precepts of the state in Nigeria since the termination of military rule in 1999, and in the context of "widespread pressure for ethno-regional [and religious] self-determination in a restructured and decentralized federation." The institutionalization of what Ali Mazrui (2001) has characterized as a Shariacracy or Sharia-based governance provoked violent clashes between Moslems and Christians in Nigeria and again led to agitations for the dissolution or reconstitution of the Nigerian state. Suberu addresses what the unresolved nature of Nigeria's "secularity" tells us about the character of the state and the social forces sworn to desecularization.

Emmanuel Aiyede (chapter 8) attempts to articulate what happens when the fiscal state faces incapacitation due to a myriad of crises that in themselves were reproduced by the crises that were disguised as neoliberal reforms. The attempt to reform the economic structures of a formless or deformed state, Aiyede argues, "aggravated social conditions" and reproduced "life-threatening hardships" that, in the end, worsened the already awful relations between labor and the state. As workers agonized by seeking "new and multiple avenues for coping with survival needs" at personal levels and sought to organize at the social level to confront the increasingly irresponsible and irresponsive state, interesting transformations were witnessed at both the terrains of labor and the state. At one end, the state deployed massive "repressive measures against labor," complete with what the late celebrated political economist, Claude Ake, described as "mobilization logistics, offensive and the inevitable sense of urgency." What is again revealed in this chapter is the traditional ally that the state maintains in any conflict between capital and labor.

Final Thoughts

This volume studies the state not in institutional terms as is popular in the continent, particularly based on some assumptions of the primary legality of the state as a legitimate, even if failing, representative of the nation that also acts on behalf of the nation (Aradhana and Gupta, 2006a: 8; for a more developed critique of this approach, see, for example, Chabal, 2009). Rather, we approach the state as a zone of different and differing encounters. State-centric approaches have presented "the state" "as a clearly bounded institution that is distinct from society" while also often portraying it "as a unitary and autonomous actor that possesses the supreme authority to regulate populations within its territory" (8). But some scholars, such as Abrams (1988), Jessop (1982, 1990), Taussig (1997), Mitchell (1991, 1999), and Aradhana and Gupta (2006b: 8) have

interrogated and contested the state as "a priori conceptual and empirical object." Anthropological, as well as sociological, perspectives lead us to pay attention to the cultural construction of the state in terms of "how people perceive the state, how their understanding is shaped by their particular locations and intimate and embodied encounters with state processes and officials, and how the state manifests itself in their lives" (11). In this context, the meanings that the state has for citizens and groups within the state are often dictated by the nature of the encounters they have with the state and its representations (Cf. ibid.). In specific encounters as demonstrated in this volume, the state is not always "unitary" nor does it exist as an "autonomous actor" in every case. In some instances, even its "supreme authority" can break down—as also evident in many African countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sierra Leone, Liberia, Somalia, and others. However, we do not seek to "de-emphasize the state as the ultimate seat of power" as Aradhana and Gupta (2006a, 2006b) propose, following Foucault (1979, 1991), nor search for what Rose et al. call the "de-statization of government" (1996: 56); yet, following Abrams, we take "the idea of the state extremely seriously" (1988: 75) because it is a consequential "social fact." While power is proliferating and proliferated in the postcolony, we are concerned with the ways in which ordinary people and social institutions come across, come upon, or bump into that idea that "legitimates subjection" and masks itself as the centrally constituted and constituting power, which—despite its contradictions, incoherence, weaknesses, and the assaults on it by local and international forces—circumscribes and resists the circulation of power and goodness in the African context. We are concerned with that power that, contra Rose, attempts to statisize government—the form of power that Foucault (1983: 224) describes as one to which "all other forms of power relation" refer and relate—in its encounters with persons and groups within a specific territory. However, the important questions that Aradhana and Gupta (2006b: 11) ask are relevant here. How do people perceive such a "politically organized subjection" (Abrams, 1988: 63)—which Abrams also renders as "unacceptable domination" (76); how are their knowledge or comprehension of the state as an organized subjection contingent upon their location and the nature of the encounters; and, how does the organized subjection manifest itself in the lives of citizens?

    This volume does not take the usual line in political science and social sciences in which "the state" is treated "as an abstraction by universalizing and standardizing" what it is, does, and means (Rudolph and Jacobsen, 2006: vii; Chabal, 2009). The accounts here are, therefore, largely contingent, rather than definitive (ibid.). It is along this line that the contribution of this volume is best imagined. Part of our overall aim is to show, contra some recent discussions of the subject, that excess and

abjection are integral to the constitution and production of state power and social (re)action in the postcolony. Thus, what manifests, in many instances, are the actual exemplifications of the everyday exercise of (and resistance to) arbitrary power. In short, excess and abjection of some sort are part and parcel of the reality of the production of state power and the construction of social citizenship, respectively, in Nigeria, and the essays in this volume constitute an attempt to highlight this dynamic through an empirically grounded analysis of some of the most telling aspects of the country's recent history. In so doing, we aim to deepen collective understanding of the meaning and ramifications of stateness (the significations of the state in Nigeria, for instance) particularly from the point of view of those who are literally at the receiving end of state power. In the analyses of everyday practices required, induced, or provoked by encounters with the state, we hope that a more nuanced understanding of a typical postcolonial state might be produced.

But perhaps we take the state too seriously by paying too much attention to the encounters that reify and essentialize the state? Foucault (1991: 104) has dismissed the state as lacking the "unity," "individuality," "rigorous functionality," and even the "importance" that has been ascribed to it because, in fact, it "is no more than a composite reality and a mythicized abstraction, whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think." He encourages us to pay attention more to the "governmentalization of the state." It is the tactic of government, insists Foucault, to fetishize the state so as to "make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is not." Our task, therefore, is to unveil and then underscore the fact that survival of the state is based on the "general tactics of governmentality," defined basically as the "conduct of conduct." Thus, we can infer that in encountering the state in the specific postcolonial context, what is encountered is the total ensemble of governmentalities inscribed into the very constitution and operation of the "state," say in Nigeria. In one sense, it may mean that what are being expressed and institutionalized are the enervating impersonal apparatuses of the ruling elite primarily constituted as "the state"—against democratic social forces. Yet, James Ferguson (1990) in his important work on Lesotho, leads us away from a view of individuals and groups who "possess" and thus "benefit" from "state power" because "[t]he state is neither the source of power, nor simply the projection of the power of an interested group (ruling group, etc.)." Rather, Ferguson clarifies, "it may be fruitful to think of the state as instead forming a relay or point of coordination and multiplication of power relations…a kind of knotting or congealing power…" (2006: 281–282). Based on his examination of the Thaba-Tseba project, Ferguson points to how the "anti-political machine' masks political reality even while consciously and adroitly strengthening the paramount presence of the state. This is then revealed as a 'characteristic

mode of the exercise of power, a mode of power that relies on state institutions, but exceeds them" (282). Evidently, we cannot run away from the idea of the state in the postcolony. Even in the acts of subversion, evasion, and distance from the state, the idea of the state, directly or indirectly, is emphasized and consolidated. The state is the *it* that is being encountered, subverted, evaded, or avoided. Either by the acts of avoidance or confrontation—two contradictory attitudes—actors in the postcolony end up fetishizing the state. According to Andrew Apter (cited in Comaroff and Comaroff, 2006: 15–16), such fetishism "has come to saturate the state itself, yielding a politics of illusion that, more than just front the appropriation of resources by ruling elites, has erected an edifice of 'simulated government': government that concocts false censuses and development schemes, even hold fictitious elections."

Such dialectical readings of "the state" and "state power" invite us to consider the processes of the possibilities of the eventual subordination of the very structure of subordination that acts as the state in the postcolony—in the context of what Tatalo Alamu (2009: 3) calls the "endless struggle to humanize the…post-colonial state and make it answerable to the [people]." There is no doubt that the postcolonial state—the Nigerian version is typical—is an inherently problematic proposal. As an accomplished writer who encounters the almost absolute incapacity of the Nigerian state to ensure even the most basic of the duties it ascribes to itself stated, perhaps "the overriding lesson…is that the state is essentially hollow; that behind the bluff and the bluster there is only empty sloganeering. They [state's (wo)men] can do nothing because there is nothing there. The time is now. Let us seize it and end this slavery—which is what it is—that oppresses us with our own connivance."

But while the citizens are at that, this book is a token attempt to understand how they and other social forces attempt to perform modes of insubordination within the existing zone in which they contend with subjection.

Notes

1. "Baba" is a Yoruba word for "father" and is also used to refer to any old man. President Obasanjo was so called by most Nigerians.
2. Unfortunately, one of the scholars invited by the editors to make a specific contribution in the area of gender could not oblige.
3. Sir Henry Maine (1931) who first introduced the term "corporation," in this context, had argued that "corporations never die." It was taken up by Meyer Fortes who pointed to an important characteristic of African lineage, "its continuity, and its presumed perpetuity in time" (Fortes, 1953: 26–27). The concept eventually became muddled up in the discipline of anthropology as

it was used in two senses: the organization of groups and folk ownership or proprietorship (see James Dow, 1973.) Generally, however, scholars agree that a corporation includes many individuals, its life is independent of the individuals who constitute it and membership of the corporation is limited by the qualities that are prescribed for admission.

4. Indeed, Fela's lyrics and life are important indices of encountering the state in Nigeria and beyond. Unfortunately, our chapter contributor on this topic failed to resubmit his chapter after the rounds of external reviews.

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Deconstructing "Oluwole": Political Economy at the Margins of the State

Olawale Ismail

Introduction

In July 1999, following charges of age falsification and forgery of university certificates, the Speaker of the Nigerian House of Representatives Salisu Buhari was impeached from office. What a section of the press called "Buhari-Gate" is emblematic of a wider phenomenon of document forgery, one that continues to be replicated in different forms locally and nationally, and in the public and private sectors in Nigeria. Underlying the numerous scandals is the "Oluwole" phenomenon. While the phenomenon predates 1999, its regularity and currency in the public domain in the aftermath of the return to civilian rule warrants further investigation (Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou, 1999: 109). With a few scattered exceptions, "Oluwole" has on the whole attracted an embarrassing silence from the criminological enterprise,[1] except for occasional media sensationalism (13). The lack of systematic research raises suspicions that even members of the intelligentsia could perhaps be caught in the web of the Oluwole phenomenon.

Oluwole is a district comprising about six streets in the Central Business District (CBD) of Lagos Island. It is host to a local police post; overlooks the Lagos (Nigerian) stock exchange and the former headquarters of the Nigerian Central Bank; and is circumscribed by several banking and insurance offices and major retail outlets. Yet, the practice of "Oluwole" embodies the crisis and contradictions of the Nigerian state in several intriguing ways, not least in its strategic, yet befuddling, proximity to major state (formal) institutions. From being an area named after a nineteenth-century Lagos king,

Oluwole has transformed into a phenomenon of forgery and counterfeiting, which commodifies statehood through the marketing of official paraphernalia—documents, seals, signatures, and so on. Oluwole has become the site of Ruggerio's (2000: 12) "Dirty Economy" where the overlaps, exchanges, alliances, and various forms of consortia and interaction involving the legal, semilegal, and illegal take place in urban contexts. Oluwole is at the interstices between the real and abstract, official and unofficial, local and international, and the legal and illegal identity and manifestation of the Nigerian state. Oluwole embodies the "Nigerian factor" (corruption) in acute ways, especially in paradoxically reinforcing the centrality of the state (its official and unofficial instrumentality) in wealth creation; and in societal ambivalence toward it contributing to its mutation as a normalized mode of economic extraction (Smith, 2007: 14–27). It poignantly defines the complex channel of encountering, accessing, (mis)appropriating, and interaction between the dysfunctional Nigerian state and the agency (and artistry) of its citizenry.

This chapter uses a combination of conventional and unorthodox ethnographic methods, including participant observation, interviews, insiders' accounts, life histories, and the use of whistle-blowers to discuss the phenomenon of Oluwole—specifically in terms of its evolution, the range and agency of actors involved, and their dynamic relation to the Nigerian state. I point to the inadequacy of branding Oluwole or each episode of certificate forgery as an isolated event in which "scandals are exposed rather than examples of sustained deviant or criminal activity" (Davies et al., 1999a: 23). Oluwole becomes a metaphor through which concepts, beliefs, and relationships that contextualize the means and exercise of power (by the state) are formed, reviewed, challenged, and recomposed. It is a metaphor used by citizens to question their relationship with the state in terms of its legitimacy, representation, and regulatory power; and used by people to challenge the concept of wealth as a public versus private good (Roitman, 2004: 8–9).

In doing so, I develop four interrelated arguments: first, that "Oluwole" is not an isolated phenomenon, but part of a larger phenomenon, alluded to by Migdal's "Politics of Dirty Tricks" (cited in Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou, 1999: XV). "Oluwole" is best understood as a critical component of the "Economics of Dirty Tricks and Deception" where "the quest for money and wealth is organized in ways which are original and in part according to the mode of games of chance" (112). This is underlined by the linkages between "Oluwole" and headline-grabbing crimes, including falsification of official records, prostitution and human trafficking, international trade in narcotics, Internet-based scams and other forms of business fraud. Hence Oluwole, with its specialization in "document crime," symbolizes a form of "invisible crime"

that constitute the "service sector" for larger, more political and politicized crimes (Davies et al., 1999).

Second, this chapter argues for a more nuanced historical and contextual understanding of "Oluwole" as a product of the systematic decay and dysfunctionality of the Nigerian state. As such, Oluwole represents a form of Crawford Young's "instrumentalities of survival" (cited in Joseph, 1987: 7), an active exit or disengagement strategy by the citizenry in the face of socioeconomic decline and institutional collapse by formal (state) institutions.

Third, "Oluwole" reflects the pattern of governmentality, defined as the set of attitudes toward the state, government, and politics (Clapham, 1994: 434), prevalent in Nigeria. This governmentality, often described as neopatrimonialism or shadow state practices, is encapsulated in the view and use of the state as the gateway to sociopolitical and economic excellence (accumulation) by ruling elites, is replicated by Bayart's "little-people" through "Oluwole," with the only difference being the relative legitimacy of Foucaultian "discipline"—the process of transforming mundane processes into institutional, legal, and state processes (Kortright, 2005: 10). It is the same logic of using the paraphernalia of the state and officialdom (documents, signatures, stamps, and seals) as a means to an end. In fact, "Oluwole" exists by virtue of active collusion with public office holders in a bid to short-circuit formal state institutions. The concept and practice of Oluwole becomes a form of Roitman's (2004: 22) "uncivil fiscal"—a context for contesting, subverting, and abetting state regulatory authority. Similar to the floating population of the Chad Basin region, Oluwole actors can "generally be interpreted as existing beyond the state or even anti-state, [but] their tactics of mobility and misdemeanour are essential to the reconstitution of state power today" (16).

Finally, the organizing logic of "Oluwole" is rooted in Belasco's (1980) idea of "pre-adaptation to capitalism" where divine values collapse in a passage toward a profane standard of exchange (cited in Barber, 1995: 206). Hence, "Oluwole" operates as an unregulated market for "documents" that is increasingly becoming a channel and mode of engagement and participation, however morally questionable, in the global economy by "glocalized" actors. After all, "informal and illicit trade, financial fraud, the systematic evasion of rules and international agreements could turn out to be a means, among others, by which certain Africans manage to survive and to stake their place in the maelstrom of globalization" (Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou, 1999: 116).

The rest of this chapter is divided into five sections; in section one, I focus on the historical trajectories of Oluwole as a district, concept, and practice with a view to tracing its institutionalization in the larger socioeconomic and political milieu. Through this, I establish the concept and

practice of Oluwole as a variant of urban criminality in Lagos, footnoted in the evolution of juvenile delinquency in preindependence Lagos. The second section presents an ethnographic account of the internal dynamics of "Oluwole" in terms of its organization, the range of actors and services on offer, and an elaboration of its logic. The third section examines the extent of Oluwole's "transnational autonomy"—the exercise of state or class power without hindrance by international actors (Fatton, 1988: 262)—by looking at the increasing exportation (internationalization) of "Oluwole" services beyond the Nigerian state. The fourth section examines the methodological and theoretical challenges the commoditization of statehood and officialdom (through the marketing of ceremonial symbols and paraphernalia of office) poses to the understanding of the state in Africa. Does "Oluwole" undercut or reinforce Abrams's (1988) idea of the unreal and imaginary state? The final section summarizes the entire chapter.

The Evolution of the Oluwole District and the "Oluwole" Phenomenon

The contemporary Oluwole district is at the heart of the age-old CBD in Lagos Island. Oluwole is named after the nineteenth-century king of Lagos—Oba Oluwole—who ruled between 1836 and 1841 (Fasinro, 2004: 60–61; Folami, 1982: 29). Following the death of Oba Oluwole in mysterious circumstances,[2] his retinue of unpopular *Ilaris* (palace servants) were resettled in the area now known as the Oluwole district (interview with Chief Adekunle Alli, a commentator on Lagos history, July 18, 2006). The area then was at the edge (border) of the traditional Isale Eko quarters that measured only about five miles in circumference, with about 30,000 inhabitants in 1859 (Baker, 1974: 24). The resettlement was in consonance with the traditional Yoruba practice of confining the least desirable people to border regions to limit their presence, participation, and influence in mainstream society. Following the formal annexation of Lagos by the British in 1861, and the massive resettlement of freed slaves from Sierra Leone (Saros) and Brazil and Portugal (Amaros) in the mid-nineteenth century, and Egba refugees (following the Christian purges) in 1867, the boundaries and settlement patterns of "Old Lagos"[3] expanded considerably so that the Oluwole district became the center or "waist area" of Old Lagos. The district, with a 60-meter radius, is surrounded by the traditional Isale Eko quarters in the north, the Olowogbowo quarters (for Saros) in the southwestern corner, the Aguda quarters (for Amaros) toward the east, and the European quarters (Onikan, Marina, and Ikoyi) along the southern and eastern plains (Baker, 1974: 26–29; Peil, 1991: 7).

The trajectory of Oluwole is best understood in the context of the history of crime and the invention of juvenile delinquency in urban Lagos. Although the phenomenon of Oluwole could be said to be qualitatively different from "real crimes" (the dominant, violent forms of criminality), however, it is foregrounded in similar dynamics. Oluwole qualifies as a "social crime"—illegal activities considered legitimate by a section of the population (Fourchard, 2003: 1). In fact, Heap (2000: 18) notes deception as part of the repertoire of tricks used by Boma Boys[4]—"Boma Boys seized the opportunity to dupe schoolboys out of money on the promise of jobs onboard. Youngsters parting with their schools fees only to discover they had been deceived, became afraid to go home and face punishment, began to loiter about, gradually degenerating to Boma Boys themselves." Fourchard (2006: 129–131), citing Faulkner, identifies four factors that shaped the youth crime milieu from the 1920s: poverty and unemployment; breakdown of traditional family system; rapid urbanization; and lack of parental control and stable home. To this must be added official complicity and failure of public policy in urban renewal, economic planning, and policing. These factors cumulatively preconditioned the emergence of a criminal enterprise (including Oluwole) in Lagos with the appearance of "Jaguda Boys" in the 1920s,[5] "Boma Boys" in the 1940s, and "thugs" and "touts" from the 1950s. The district, concept, and practice of Oluwole encapsulates these factors in interesting ways, especially as it contextualizes issues of migration, population explosion, unemployment, loss of traditional forms of social control, and public policy failures.

The commercial and financial boom in twentieth-century Lagos, especially following the dredging of the Port in 1917, led to massive migration and a population explosion in Lagos (Cole, 1975: 4–10). For example, from a modest 25,083 inhabitants in 1866, the population rose to 126, 108 in 1931; 267,407 in 1952; and over 665,246 by 1963 (Baker, 1974: 33). More importantly, the more than 900 percent increase in population between 1911 and 1963 also increased the habitation density; from 25,000 per square mile in 1901, to 87,000 and 125,000 by 1950 and 1963 respectively (35–36). By the 1950s, the Oluwole district, still heavily populated with a residential average of four people to a room, was strategically overlooking the central government district housing the court, key government offices, central police station, banks, and other financial institutions (Peil, 1991: 24–25).

The preparation for Nigeria's independence and the designation of Lagos as the capital in the 1950s led to the proposition of the Central Lagos Slum Clearance Scheme (CLSCS) in 1951. The scheme was designed to prepare Old Lagos for its capital status by getting rid of slums, through the clearing and redevelopment of a 70-acre triangular block of land in the Central Business (Oluwole) district, home to over

30,000 inhabitants (Baker, 1974: 98). This made the Oluwole district the natural target for the scheme, not least because of its proximity to key government institutions. The scheme was designed and executed by the Lagos Executive Development Board (LEDB), originally created in 1929 by the colonial administration in response to the 1924 bubonic plague, to clear swamps, and drain the lagoons to free up more land for the expansion of Lagos (Peil, 1991: 167). Under the CLSCS plan, the LEDB was to purchase the designated area, redevelop it into open spaces, wider streets, and new plots and resell at 120 percent of the acquisition cost to the original owners who were expected to rebuild according to modern standards (Baker, 1974: 98). The scheme was intended to stimulate the regeneration of Lagos, relieve traffic congestion, and improve health and sanitary conditions.

The CLSCS eventually failed for a number of reasons. First was the serious opposition by the inhabitants of the designated area and the traditional Isale Eko quarters (Lagosians). The commencement of work in 1956 led to violent clashes, with work continuing to stall until the deployment of policemen. The local opposition to the scheme was linked to the rise of "Lagosianism," the scheme being regarded as another instance of migrants, settlers, and non-Lagosians trying to usurp land from indigenes (Peil, 1991: 168; Baker, 1974: 99). A second factor was the poor planning of the scheme, especially the LEDB's failure to foresee the majority of the problems associated with the scheme—for example, its failure to secure enough capital for its projects and accurately estimate the scale and complications of compensation and resettlement involved. Third, there was friction between the Lagos City Council (LCC) and the Kofo Abayomi–led LEDB owing to their ambiguous and overlapping roles in town planning and urban development. For example, while the LEDB, on the basis of its enabling the Town and Country Planning Acts of 1932, 1946, and 1958, made decisions regarding zoning, demolition, rehousing, redistribution, payment of compensation, and compulsory acquisition, the LCC granted approval for building plans and the acquisition of public land (Baker, 1974: 187). The friction led to disagreement, delays, and inaction and loss of property and income by real estate investors.

The most serious obstacle to the scheme was its politicization; the LCC was elected and accountable to residents (Lagosians) and as such subjected to pressures from the electorate, while the LEDB was an appointed body controlled by the central government through the Ministry for Lagos Affairs. Hence, while the LCC sought to protect the interest of Lagosians (sympathetic to the Action Group), the LEDB was "ostensibly" protecting national interests (as defined by the Northern People's Congress party [NPC]). The scheme, especially the reallocation of redeveloped land and shops, and the payment of compensation, and rehousing under the Ex-gratia Compensation Committee constituted by

the Ministry of Lagos Affairs, actually became a channel for rewarding political patronage with supporters of the ruling NPC at the center (mostly nonindigenes) becoming major beneficiaries[6] (Baker, 1974: 100). By the 1960s, although the scheme succeeded in demolishing up to approximately 70 percent of houses in the district and resettling a majority of house owners in "New Lagos" (Surulere) and later in "Ogba Oluwole" (Ikeja), it nonetheless failed to regenerate the district—only about 25 of the 70 acres were redeveloped, with the rest converted into temporary (now permanent) retail shops and markets for itinerant traders (101).

By 1970, Oluwole district was a mixture of redeveloped and undeveloped plots, with some vacated (emptied) but not demolished houses that were surrounded by retail shops, and the offices of banks and other financial institutions. The families who owned the houses, having been paid compensation and rehoused, had abandoned the buildings that were expected to be acquired by the LEDB. These abandoned residential buildings, which came to be regarded as the "Free Houses" of Lagos Island, are the epicenter of the contemporary Oluwole district and Oluwole activities. Thus, the failure of the CLSCS is a key consideration in understanding the evolution of the "Oluwole" phenomenon—as the ejection of traditional land-owning families from the district limited the scope for traditional social control of activities and residents in the district. From the mid-1970s, the fact that the houses were circumscribed (protected) by retail shops and had a sophisticated network of hidden multiple entry and exit points made them a secure-base (hideout) for "*Omo-Jagudas* [robbers] and *Oles* [petty thieves] who operated in the surrounding sprawling retail outlets on Broad Street, Nnamdi Azikwe Street, Balogun and Ereko Markets, and Tinubu and Mandilas shopping areas" (interview with a community elder in Isale Eko, Lagos Island, July 10, 2006).

Furthermore, the introduction of the dual exchange rate by the Gowon administration in the mid-1970s catalyzed the development of the "Oluwole" phenomenon by turning the free houses in the district (devoid of social control and already converted into criminal uses) into a center of document forgery. The use of an official and autonomous exchange rate system for the purchase of foreign exchange (forex) in Nigeria led to the development of the "*arrangee*" form of business and financial fraud whereby people buy forex at the official rate (limited to £2,000 per person, per trip) and resell it at the parallel ("black") market to exploit the over 300 percent price differential.[7] This explains why the Bristol hotel area, on the edge of the Oluwole district, is the pioneer parallel forex market in Lagos. The arrangee fraud, reported to have been pioneered by government officials (including civil servants and top military officers),[8] and bank workers before it became widespread, was connected to the Oluwole district following the need for multiple passports, visas, and

airline tickets (the three requisites for the purchase of forex at the official rate) to increase forex purchased at official rate, and to enhance the profit margin over the "*Kapo*"—rented capital or short-term loan (interview with a retired police chief, Lagos, July 20, 2006). Unsurprisingly, the Oluwole district, given its immediate history, became the meeting point for contracting all aspects of arrangee fraud—including forgery of passports, airline tickets, visas, and reselling of forex in the black market.

The clampdown on arrangee fraud and improved security features on visas, airline tickets, and the Nigerian passport (through the use of serial numbers and in-house photo taking by the immigration office) in the early 1980s did very little to stop the crystallization of the Oluwole district as the country's center for document forgery *tout court*. The onset of economic crises in the formal sector and the introduction of austerity measures across Africa from 1980, including Nigeria under the Shehu Shagari regime (1979–1983), served to induce the people to diversify their social economic portfolios, income generating activities and create alternative access to wealth (Berry, 1995: 309). The reality of the decade as that of "disenchantment, given the reality of profligacy, fragility, and non-performance of the African state and its manager" (Agbaje, 1991: 723) was evident in Nigeria with the gradual withdrawal and exit from formal state institutions and activities. This disengagement, a politically safe coping mechanism, took the form of a retreat to the informal economy, booming parallel (illegal) economic activities (smuggling, crime, currency counterfeiting, etc.) and outright "checking-out" (relocation to Western countries) in the context of harsh socioeconomic conditions (Fatton, 1988: 254–258; Thompson, 2004: 208–213). The practical demonstration of the consensual view of the state as the conduit of self-enrichment during Nigeria's Second Republic (1979–1983) through the blurring of the private and public realm, the use of state institutions for blatant, corrupt rent-seeking activities (Joseph, 1987) and the descent into Ayittey's "Vampire State" (government hijacked by gangsters, con-artists and scrofulous bandits) entrenched the "profiteering from the state" governmentality across the Nigerian society (1999: 343). Oluwole emerged as a key component of this exit strategy by meeting the extra-legal documentation needs of the parallel economy and the withdrawal from and mirror-imaging of formal processes.

The growth of the "Oluwole" phenomenon is also intrinsically tied to the collapse of formal state institutions of the 1980s, indexed by the decline in living standards of civil servants and the general population, the disappearance of operational budgets, delays in the payment and the outright nonpayment of salaries, socioeconomic insecurity, and the climate of total impunity and corruption by the ruling class, all of which led to a "get-rich-quick" syndrome and the increasing "shadowization" and subversion of formal processes by those at the middle and lower echelons

of state institutions (Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou, 1999: 91). Oluwole boomed with the active collusion of workers in the formal sector, not least by the surge in corrupt practices under successive military regimes wherein state officials used "Oluwole" to sidestep the very institution they supposedly represent, defraud the state, and corruptly enrich themselves (interview with a key informant, Lagos, July 16, 2006). "Oluwole" thus validates the claim that illegal activities are developed in close connection with formal procedures and actors (Nuijten, 2003: 3). Ideologically, the shift from the political domain and the increasing emphasis on the market mechanism in the 1980s, tellingly under the structural adjustment policies, led to a redefinition of interest for the citizenry (Chazan et al., 1999: 88). By the end of the 1990s, the Oluwole district was already institutionalized as the market for alternative document needs across Nigeria.

Inside Oluwole

Ijoba[9] is a man of average height born on the eve of Nigeria's independence. He managed to complete secondary education before migrating to Lagos in the early 1970s where he lived with his parents in a two-room apartment in the Oluwole district. Ijoba has hardly done any "paid work" during his life, having taken to routine business in Oluwole since his arrival in Lagos. He's a father of 10, from multiple partners (wives). He qualifies as an "Olu" (entrepreneur) within Oluwole's hierarchy because of his specialization in facilitating contacts within government establishments (offices) and producing forged government-related documents.

White House is a tall man (over six feet), an indigenous Lagosian in his early forties. He attended one of the flagship Federal Government Colleges in the 1970s, but his education stalled after secondary school owing to family-related issues arising from his polygamous background. He was gainfully employed as a store attendant with one of Nigeria's biggest department stores in the 1980s, until the store closed down in 1990 following worsening economic conditions and declining sales. In the 1990s he expended his (and family) savings on several failed attempts to "travel out" to the United States (using conventional and illegal means), but thereafter, he paradoxically transformed his adversity into a resource by using his extensive knowledge of "travelling out" as a money spinner. He now specializes in marketing stolen travel documents and producing forged travel documents to the United States.

Express is a middle-aged man who earned his nickname from the speed of his thought, typing on the keyboard, and imitation of signatures. He migrated to Lagos in the 1980s in search of greener pastures, but was able to hawk only locally made belts, shoe laces, and polish in the retail markets around Oluwole. The sight of an ever-busy typist in a corner of

Oluwole in the mid-1980s and his own average education convinced him to learn typewriting. Over time, he graduated into a "draughtsman" in Oluwole, becoming computer literate, and he now specializes in producing forged letters of credit, contract papers, bank statements, and Local Purchasing Orders (LPOs).

These three brief life histories provide anecdotal illustrations and evidence of the internal dynamic, and the organization and range of actors and services offered at Oluwole. "Oluwole" comprises a three-tiered hierarchy; at the apex of the pyramid are the *Olus*—the entrepreneurs and most senior actors. The *Olus* are either shop owners or freelancers, but both groups almost invisibly and collectively regulate and oversee the security of operations in Oluwole. The former own a majority of the hardware, including computers, printing machines, special printing paper, and the copyright of forged printing plates, seals, and stamps. They also actively infiltrate (network) and build contacts within major institutions, such as banks (including the Central Bank), insurance firms, the country's Security Minting and Printing firm (to obtain information about the security features and design of government documents), Immigration Service, Customs and Exercise Departments, Tax Office, and the Security Service (police). The *Olus*, because of their high-level contacts, undertake more sensitive operations relating to the needs of high-level officials and ruling elites (and their families)—such as the production of forged university education records and certificates, tax clearance certificates, import and export licences, and contract papers. They also take strategic decisions regarding operations in Oluwole—for example, "the ban on currency counterfeiting in Oluwole, and monitoring of changes in personnel, signatures, design and seal in key institutions, including the Central Bank, Security Minting and Printing office, Immigration office, and the Ministries of Finance amongst others"[10] (interview with Ijoba, July 19, 2006).

Similarly, the *Olus*, numbering about 20 in all, actively infiltrate and "oil" their contacts within the security services, especially the police command to get advance tip-offs of planned raids, intelligence reports, and changes in strategy. In fact, *Olus* actively ensure that "cooperative" officers are posted to the *Kester Police Post* located at the edge of the Oluwole district—this explains why members of the Oluwole syndicate are hardly ever arrested or detained at the Kester police post and others across Lagos Island. A member of the "Oluwole" syndicate, radiating with confidence and a sense of security, remarked that "we settle [bribe] any official [police] that comes here [Oluwole]. So everything will still end in settlement," following a police raid in 2005 (EFCC, September 1, 2005). The *Olus* factor the cost of some of these activities into the prices charged for the use of their hardware, and "often impose special levies on members of the syndicate whenever the need arises—for example, to

ward-off impending police raids, and to secure the release of detained members" (interview with *Express*, July 16, 2006).

The second and most crucial actors are the draughtsmen and draughts-women, comprising sign-writers, fine and copy artists, stationery experts, and computer typists and operators who constitute the *Irin-ise* (skilled workers) of Oluwole. This group is at the core of the Oluwole output by producing forged documents, signatures, official stamps and seals, letterhead designs and papers, travel passports and visas, airline tickets and boarding passes, education certificates, and contract papers whether an *Orijo* or an *Authe* (genuine copy). Members of this group make their money from jobs contracted to them by *Olus*, street vendors, and those secured directly by them. The draughtsmen and draughtswomen use the hardware provided by, and operate under the protective umbrella of, the *Olus*. In certain instances, a few draughtsmen are "double-hatted" as *Olus*. This group, together with the *Olus*, are the least visible and more protected members of the syndicate because they operate from offices (shops) hidden in a complex network of safe rooms, corners, and hide-outs in the district. During police raids, they either get advance tip-offs or use the network of multiple exits to escape before the police arrive.

The shops or operating theaters are mostly small rooms or corners with computers, printers, scanners, air conditioners or fans, a few chairs and stacks of stationery materials (pens, ink, printing plates, etc.). There is no doubt that Oluwole, as part of the cybercrime network in Nigeria, takes advantage of new technologies that enable ordinary companies to improve their efficiency, output, and profit (Thomas and Loader, 2000: 2). The shops are accessible only to draughtsmen and *Olus* because of their extremely sensitive nature and for security reasons. Street vendors send emissaries, notes, or telephone draughtsmen whenever they need to contact them for jobs.

The last group consists of male and female street vendors, the most visible members of the syndicate. This group consists of people who line the streets within the Oluwole district, constantly enquiring passers-by about any kind of need. They are usually the first line of contact for any visitor and first-time customers to the district. They derive their income from "commissions" paid for bringing customers to draughtsmen and a shop manager, and gains for acting as middlemen between a customer, and a draughtsman and shop manager. This category, usually the entry point into the syndicate, also runs errands for draughtsmen and draught-swomen, shop managers and *Olus* to build a positive profile, earn trust and higher commissions, and look for early release in case of police arrest. Some street vendors end up becoming draughtsmen and shop managers after years of apprenticeship. The relative visibility of this group makes them the most liable to arrest and detention by the police during raids. Although a majority of members of the Oluwole syndicate are male,

females can also be found among the street vendors and draughtswomen (typists and stationery dealers). As such, the phenomenon is neither gender specific nor gender biased or based; its market logic transcends the gender divide.[11]

The state-related activities offered in Oluwole include the forgery, identity-changing, and marketing of stolen travel documents (especially passports); fake licenses and contract papers (LPOs); court orders and arrest warrants; identity cards of any kind (including military and police officials); signatures of public office holders, official stamps, letterheads, and seals; tax certificates, title deeds, and Certificate of Occupancy; vehicle clearing papers (Bill of Lading) and registration papers; and educational records and certificates. The activities connected with the private sector include forged cheques, bank statements, letters of credit, and money orders; fake invoices, receipts, and promissory notes; forged signatures, stamps, seals, and contract papers; replica airline tickets and boarding passes; and fake insurance certificates. In 2007, the Nigerian Central Bank reported a total of 741 cases of attempted fraud and forgery involving over 6 billion naira, of which 438 were successful, costing nearly 2 billion naira (Vanguard, November 27, 2007). The other kind of service on offer is "gazetting"—"forging documents and arranging with (bribing) officials at the point of confirmation to authenticate it" (interview with White House, July 18, 2006). This service is exclusive and not as widespread as those listed above because it is limited to the scope and quality of contacts available to the *Olus* at a particular point in time.

The high-level raid on Oluwole by a special team of the police and the country's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in August 2005 confirms the aforementioned account of Oluwole, but also appears to have altered the organization and operations of Oluwole. The raid was said to have been ordered personally by the president "following discoveries that his official seal and signature, and that of his deputy had been forged and used for local and international fraud (419)" (ibid.). As such, a sting operation was planned, coordinated, and executed by the Police Highest Command, under the personal supervision of the Inspector General of Police (IGP), thereby bypassing the Lagos police command because of concerns that the confidentiality of the operation may be compromised. The inventory of seized items from the raid included over 40,000 official and fake Nigerian passports, and over 1,500 official and fake foreign passports for countries such as Libya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Cameroon, Senegal, Switzerland, Gambia, South Africa, United States, Jamaica, Costa Rica, and Ghana (*ThisDay*, September 1, 2005). Other items included over 50,000 assorted foreign cheques and 10,000 American postal money orders; 500 printing plates and 500 computers; 10,000 blank travel tickets for British Airways, and blank certificates of occupancy (ibid.). The police also revealed the confiscation of

fake certificates of educational institutions and various official stamps of government parastatals, corporate bodies, federal ministries and government agencies (EFCC, August 30, 2005).

This raid apparently intensified the process of decentralization of operations that had commenced earlier. Many of the *Olus* and draughtsmen and draughtswomen now appear to work from their individual homes scattered across the densely populated residential quarters of Northern Lagos Island and other locations across Lagos state—Ikeja, Apapa, Shomolu, Ajao Estate, and Festac Town (interview with *Express*). The new centers appear to be specialized in particular aspects of the Oluwole phenomenon—for instance, the Apapa annex, given its proximity to the country's two largest seaports (Tincan and Wharf), is reputed to be into forgery of documents relating to imports and exports, bills of lading, and vehicle registration. The Ikeja axis is associated with tax certificates, education records and certificates, vehicle and driving licensing, and forged cheques. The Ajao Estate and Festac Town segments, following the notoriety of the two areas for Internet scams, are unsurprisingly specialized in forged foreign cheques, money orders and bank statements (ibid.). Still, Lagos Island retains its "headquarters" status, with its retinue of highly skilled draughtsmen and *Olus*, and sophisticated equipment.

Oluwole as a Translocal Enterprise

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC) adopted by the General Assembly under Resolution 55/25 of November 15, 2000 and which came into force on September 29, 2003 list the major transnational crimes to include people trafficking (women, children, and illegal migrants) and body parts, arms, narcotics, nuclear materials, money laundering, green crime, and cybercrime (Carrabine et al., 2004: 101; www.unodc.org/crime_cicp_convention.html). A more recent addition is the booming advanced-fee fraud and Internet-based scam popularly called *419* and *Yahoo-Yahoo* in Nigeria. While international trade in illegal narcotics boomed and was closely associated with Nigeria in the late 1980s and 1990s, 419 (named after the relevant section in the Nigerian criminal code) fraud has become closely associated with Nigeria and Nigerians since the late 1990s. Clearly, the extant focus on the above-listed transnational crimes is justified on the basis of their political and politicized nature, their clearer and more sensitive moral and social implications, and even their increasing threat to national and transnational security. In March 2006, for instance, the Dutch-based Ultrascan Advanced Global Investigations that studies international scams, reported that individuals in the United States, United Kingdom,

and Japan were defrauded of about $720 million, $520 million, and $320 million respectively in 2005 alone. The combined total losses for 37 Western countries added up to $3.2 billion (*Financial Standard*, July 2006). Peel (2006: 9) also notes that spot checks carried out on packages originating from Nigeria during a single day at Heathrow Airport in 2005 revealed more than £20 million worth of forged cheques and other financial instruments. Beneath these recognized transnational crimes lies the "Oluwole" phenomenon that supplies the document needs of human traffickers, 419ers and Yahoo-Yahoo boys (Yahooligans[12]), and money launderers.

From the earlier account of the range of services offered at Oluwole, and the inventory of seized items from the police raid, it is possible to discern how human traffickers and pimp rackets in Western Europe exploit Oluwole services (travel visas and international passports) to advance their corporate interests. The 419 and Yahoo-Yahoo fraudsters appear to even exploit Oluwole services in the defrauding of victims. The Nigerian Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offence Decree 13 of 1995 (Section 2), defines a 419er as "A person who by false pretence, and with the intent to defraud, induces any other person, in Nigeria or in any other country, to confer a benefit on him or any other person by doing or permitting a thing to be done on the understanding that the benefit has been or will be paid for …" The Yahoo-Yahoo scam is a refined form of 419 in which unsolicited e-mails are sent to Internet-mail addresses generated using specialist software programs. The two most popular proposals involve the transfer of some supposedly dormant funds belonging to either a dead family relative or business partner, with potential victims asked to supply their bank details in exchange for a share (usually between 25 and 40 percent) of the funds; and a proposal for securing and funding a lucrative business contract with key government agencies in Nigeria—the Central Bank and the National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) (Smith, 2007: 20). Once the "Muguns" (victims) supply the required bank details, biodata, and address, the bank account is emptied (*Saturday Independent*, August 5, 2006). A variant of this is "phishing"— soliciting for victims' sensitive details like account numbers, pin codes, and passwords (through e-mail) or hacking into computers to get people's bank details after which forged documentary evidence are used to empty bank accounts (Peel, 2006: 5). Other proposals include "hooking" victims on Web dating chat rooms with promises of marriage, love, and sex; or through impersonating religious (Christian and Muslim) clergymen and making false appeals for charity donations; or through bogus job offers that involve potential employees attending self-sponsored training, the cost of which will be reimbursed upon eventual recruitment; or through false notices of international conferences that will facilitate the easy procurement of visas for victims. In such correspondence, there is

always a clear evidence of a proposal, request for specific information (financial details, address, biodata, telephone numbers, etc.), and promises of reward (money, business opportunities or contracts, love, marriage, sex, travel visas, jobs, etc.).

Upon receipt of the requisite information from victims, the syndicate uses its international contacts to obtain prototype copies of documents required that are forwarded to Oluwole to produce forged copies bearing the details of their victims. In other instances, members of the 419 syndicate based in foreign (Western) countries source and transfer the financial and biodata details of victims to partners based in Nigeria, South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, or Ghana for further action. In addition, Oluwole is central to the forged letterheads, official seals and signatures, and contract papers of key government agencies (CBN, NNPC, the Presidency, etc.) that usually accompany business proposals bandied around by 419ers and Yahoo-Yahoo fraudsters. As such, Oluwole draughtsmen are able to forge or transpose pictures on international passports, and produce fake copies of international money orders, bank cheques, invoices, and bank statements. This explains the presence of over 10,000 American money orders among the items recovered from the August 2005 police raid of Oluwole. Oluwole also uses the links with Yahooligans to acquire sophisticated equipment, including laptop computers and software, scanners, specialist stationery materials (pens, ink, and paper), and printers.[13] Sometimes, the services of Oluwole are paid for with the supply of these material items by 419ers.

The second dimension of "exporting" Oluwole involves its servicing of the document needs of Nigerians (and other nationalities) living illegally in foreign countries, including, but not limited to, the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Spain, South Africa, and Ireland. This involves producing either completely fake copies of foreign birth certificates, entry, and work permits (discs, seals, or signatures), or reproducing forged copies of an original version (with an original name and details but a different identity picture). This process is often facilitated by former street vendors who have relocated to other (Western) countries and who have continued the trade from there, or directly by customers (as opposed to victims because they are fully aware of, and deliberately seeking, forged documents) using their contacts (friends and families) back in Nigeria. Once the forged documents are ready, they are transported to places of need using a highly complex and secret channel involving human and institutional couriers (interview with White House). This informs Maier's (2000: xviii) conclusion that "to most outsiders, the very name Nigeria conjures up images of chaos and confusion, military coups, repression, drug trafficking and business fraud." Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou (1999: 107) make a similar observation that "false documents are a Nigerian speciality, although forgeries are to be found throughout Africa, in such

quantity that banks will no longer accept title deeds as loan guarantees, while European immigration services routinely suspect African passports of being forged, including diplomatic passports."

From the above description of the local and transnational dimensions of the Oluwole phenomenon, three important observations can be made—its "invisible" nature, its exchange value, and its contributions to contemporary understanding of the state in Africa. I address the first two in this section, and the third in the subsequent section. According to Davies et al.. (1999: 3–5), invisible criminality linked to the market economy includes crimes by employees against their employers and vice versa, fraudulent behavior (converting institutional properties and monies into private uses), green crimes (pollution and dumping of toxic waste), and cybercrime. The varying degrees of invisibility of these crimes is illustrated and underscored by the lack of adequate and correct statistics, lack of control or regulation by formal institutions, absence of moral panic about it across society, and their exclusion from the public political agenda (5). "Oluwole" qualifies as a "visibly invisible" crime because it encompasses the classical invisible crimes listed above, and also because of its location for Ruggerio's "Dirty Economy" straddling the official and unofficial, legal, semilegal, and illegal, and the state and society divide. More importantly, it harbors the "normalization" feature defined by Davies et al. as a condition in which victims and perpetrators, and in turn the larger society, are aware of the criminal and illegal nature of particular actions, but have acquiesced and taken it for granted as "normal," as opposed to "criminal," in the social consciousness (7). This results in Oluwole also exhibiting the "collusion" feature in which people (customers and victims) often collude with their victimizers and in their own potential victimization given their often foreknowledge and choice of Oluwole (8). Combination of all these leads to the absence of a moral panic—"public reaction, especially media and political reaction, to particular types of crime" (22)—concerning Oluwole, with even suspected 419 kingpins paradoxically being elected into law making assemblies, regularly having their names being praise-sung by popular musicians and regularly being invited to popular luncheons, and bagging multiple traditional chieftaincy titles.

The huge profitability of Oluwole for *Olus*, draughtsmen, and street vendors[14] raises questions about the extent to which it has an exchange value. I suggest that Oluwole possesses an exchange value and operates a capitalist commodification logic in which money (market) is the *ultima ratio*. According to Ake (1985), the exchange value of an individual's output (product) is possible and useful to him only to the extent that it is useful to someone else. Reciprocal outputs are valuable and useful to the extent that they are alienated to opposing parties, and "the person who realizes the use or value of the product of another does so only in

so far as his own product is similarly alienated and belongs to another" (reprinted in Nnoli, 2000: 58). Oluwole has become a "full time crime or occupation" (Carrabine et al., 2004: 187) with a pervasive "economics of crime" logic—crime as a function of constraints and opportunity costs, involving rational calculations of costs and benefits relative to other available alternatives (Rubin, 1997: 1). Oluwole's extensive activities covering the private and public sectors, local and international, and legal and illegal dimensions show that it is representative of Croall's (1999: 34) combination of Sutherland's (1949) "elite crime" or "crimes of the powerful," and Shapiro's (1990) "white collar crime" involving the collusion of victims, especially the role of workers in the formal sector and ruling elites, in the abuse of trust inherent in occupational roles at any level of the hierarchy.

While the disruptive influence of the money (market) logic of Oluwole where "everything becomes saleable and buyable, and relationships formerly based on sacred value become motivated purely by commercial interest" (Barber, 1995: 205) can hardly be denied, this represents just one aspect of interpreting its impact, especially in the Yoruba sociocultural trajectory. Equally, Barber's argument that the money (market) logic constitutes a social relationship, self-realization, and an enabling and energizing force for fulfilling human potentials is also partly correct (207). A more nuanced analysis is the reality that Oluwole's money logic underlines its dynamic nature that advances commercial interest, thereby enhancing efficiency and growth, and also constitutes a valuable channel for self-fulfilment that could be simultaneously constitutive and disruptive (Akanmu, 1999: 146).

Oluwole and the Nigerian State: Theoretical Implications

In seeking to explore the epistemological and methodological consequences of Oluwole for the understanding of the state in Africa, it is appropriate to preface it with how Oluwole advances existing knowledge about the criminality or criminalization of the state in Africa. Standard accounts, reflected in the works of Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou (1999: 1–17) link criminality to the "mafialization of state," indexed by the legal and extralegal use of violence, oppression, and dubious state-related activities, including drug trafficking, dumping of toxic waste, and unregulated exploitation of natural resources by state agents and rebel forces. In defining the criminalization of the state along the tenure of political power, extant logic reinforces the age-old Marxist functional, top-down, elite focused, and linear account of the criminal use of the state.

However, "Oluwole" challenges this assumption in three important ways: first, the instrumentality of the state (defined in terms of its materiality) is neither restricted to ruling elites nor foreclosed to the masses; it is equally being reaccessed by excluded and disempowered classes (groups) through alternative channels (through Oluwole, as opposed to collective violence) and deployed to private and corporate ends. Hence, the criminal use of the state and officialdom is not solely from "above," but also from "below." Second, ruling elites, in spite of access to formal state apparatus of power, still use "nonofficial," parallel methods and means (Oluwole) to foist Young's "Derelict Integral State" in Africa. This underlines Fatton's (1988: 257) conclusion that the informal and parallel economy exists in much of Africa because "it serves the material and political purposes of the ruling class." Third, Oluwole invokes the spectacle of the criminal use of state apparatus in subtle, nonviolent ways that straddle the official and unofficial, domestic and international, and institutional and societal contours. Oluwole signposts how people who wander and wonder, hopeless and vulnerable because of failures of state policy, could and have become arrowheads and inventors of wealth creation techniques founded on alternate or parallel ideas and ideals of the state. The concept and practice of Oluwole typifies "how the citizen's relationship to the state is being transformed by certain, increasingly prevalent practice of wealth creation...manners of signifying licit wealth...and the exercise of power over such wealth (regulatory authority)" (Roitman, 2004: 17).

On the substantive challenge of Oluwole to the theorization of the state in Africa, especially on the contentious institutional-society divide, three observations are crucial: the first relates to the reality of the enduring importance of state institutions, even in the context of Callaghy's "Lame Leviathan." Defining the state as "the organized aggregate of relatively permanent institutions of governance," discharging decision-making, decision-enforcing and decision-mediating functions (Chazan et al., 1999: 39), but whose existence is largely rooted in juridical as opposed to empirical attributes, calls attention to its instrumentality (even when it is side-stepped) in sociopolitical and economic consciousness. "Oluwole" is, rightly, an exit strategy; yet a more critical analysis reveals its doubling as an access strategy, even if for another form of institutional (or extrainstitutional) arrangement that is loosely connected with, and replicating (mirror-imaging) formal state institutions (Nuijten, 2003: 3). The "exit-re-entry" logic of Oluwole underscores the near-permanence of institutional-like structures in human socioeconomic and political arrangement (state) where Weber's bureaucratic rationality unites individuals and provides an autonomous set of interests (Kortright, 2005: 2).

A second observation, a corollary of the first, is the reality that the ubiquity and instrumentality of state institutions hardly alienates it from its societal cocoon. It underscores an important paradox—the plausibility

of engagement and appropriation within the process of subverting the state. On the one hand, the pattern of organization of state institutions is determined by the specific historical milieus in which they evolve and the societal dynamic (Chazan et al., 1999: 39). On the other hand, the state and its institutions derive their legitimacy not only juridically, but also from their links (evolution) with society, encapsulated in particular forms of governmentality. Accordingly, the state and its institutions are neither a singular object exercising Weberian monopoly and autonomy, nor are they insulated from social dynamic relations and societal evolutionary trends, but are constituted by the interactive ambience of society and institutions (Kortright, 2005: 2). The state becomes "an organization within society where it coexists and interacts with other formal and informal organizations from families to economic enterprises or religious organizations" (Bratton, 1989: 408). Oluwole provides a window for interrogating how specific groups (society) have evolved their own survival strategies that may compete, conflict, or overlap with those espoused by the state; and how transactions, exchanges, and coalitions between social groups and state and extrastate institutions are effected and the reciprocal impact of this on public governance and social formations (Chazan et al., 1999: 41).

The third observation relates to the applicability of Foucault's decentered notion of power and discipline to the reality of the state-society interface in Africa. According to Foucault, the state (and its institutions) is hardly essentialist in character, given that its development and functions are contingent outcomes of specific practices that are not necessarily located within or openly oriented toward it. Moreover, rather than reify the juridical basis of the state and political power and legitimacy, it is important to pinpoint the dispersed and multiple nature of institutions and practices (including those extrajuridical in nature) involved in the exercise of state power. Besides, Foucault reveals an alternative "bottom-up" approach to understanding the state, wherein political and institutional power emerge from diffused power relations—the microphysics of power (Jessop, 2003: 6). He argues that power is not inherent in, or peculiar to, the state, but rooted in the strategic interplay of social forces within and beyond the state—it is ubiquitous and immanent in every social relation (7).

Foucault uses the notion of "disciplines" to capture the foundation of the state. Disciplines involve the transformation of daily activity into transitive social processes that are broken down into specialized functions to improve efficiency and powerful combinations. Disciplines produce state bureaucracies that are the constitutive elements of government, defined in terms of organizing ethos and methods, as opposed to its institutional ontology (appearance). Through this, government becomes a process that is "at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of

government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not…" (Foucault quoted in Kortright, 2005: 10). Empirically, on the one hand, "Oluwole" becomes a by-product of a defective and weak discipline and governmental rationality occasioned by the peculiar forms of state organization that partially conditioned and aided the parallel exercise of comparable (state-like) disciplines outside of formal state structures. On the other hand, considering that the state is one institution among many within a society that is emergent, partial, and an unstable system that is interdependent with other systems in a complex social order (Jessop, 2003: 14), "Oluwole" becomes an element of that "order," often competing with or complementing the state. "Oluwole" represents loosely institutionalized or uninstitutionalized (at least in the context of the state) mundane practices and processes. In fact, "Oluwole" may be the Tillyan route to state-making, constituted by a continuum of racketeering, war-making, banditry, and organized crime (Tilly, 1985: 170). More importantly, "Oluwole" challenges Abrams's neostatist stance by virtue of the manufacturability and commodification of state and official paraphernalia (materiality of the state) by the agency of its citizens, and its demonstration of the structural and empirical ties (web of interdependence) between the state and social networks. The state may still be an ideological idea or ideal, yet its material foundations are key constitutive elements.

Conclusion

This chapter traces the evolution of the contemporary Oluwole district and social modality to state-related factors, including failed urban planning; centralization (that encourages the neopatrimonialism that resulted in the shadowization of state institutions and the peculation of state governmentality); and collapsed state institutions and the emergent exit and survival strategies of citizens. It is argued that "Oluwole" is part of the complex root system of Bayart's "rhizome state" that is representative of a larger economy of deception and dirty tricks. Oluwole compares with the unethical practices of formal actors (including ruling elites) and governments in Africa. Nigeria typifies this in several intriguing ways: a country where the convicted ex-speaker of its legislative chamber (on proven charges of age and certificate falsification) is granted a state pardon within a week of a derisory judicial sentencing, and then made the head of the country's Education, Research, and Development Council; where the elected president of its Senate (highest law making chamber)—Evans Enwerem—is indicted for biodata irregularities and falsification; where state officials (including governors) are constantly trailed by allegations of age falsification, education certificate forgeries, and jumping

bail (Olukotun and Seteolu, 2001); where state officials continue to corruptly enrich themselves through overinvoicing, payment of remunerations to "ghost-workers," and phoney projects; and members of the security forces (including the police) are themselves active participants in the Oluwole social modality.[15]

Moreover, Oluwole's superficial notoriety camouflages the agency (artistry) of its actors, and "it is probably better to interpret them less in terms of a tendency to criminalize *per se*, than in terms of the widespread use of deception and 'dirty tricks,' represented by games of chance, pyramid schemes and other adventures...for economic ends" (Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou, 1999: 105). As such, Oluwole provides an empirical basis for Fatton's (1988: 256) claims that "authoritarianism coexists with a definite lack of authority" and credible evidence that actors and practices assumed to be at the margins (outside the reach) of the state, are actually at the center, the site of state-society exchanges in Africa. Finally, Oluwole echoes the call for a holistic and inclusive theoretical understanding of the African state that puts the outstanding creativity of individuals, institutional building, inter- and intragroup dynamics, and the opportunities and constraints on development resulting from international economic and political changes at the core of its analysis (Stark, 1986: 346).

Notes

1. According to Gibbon (2000: xiv), this refers to those involved in the production of criminological knowledge.
2. There are two accounts of the death of Oba Oluwole—one says he died in a gunpowder explosion, while the other links his death to lightning. Both accounts, however, agree that he died in explosive circumstances in which his corpse was recognized only by the royal beads in his mutilated hands (Fasinro, 2004: 64; Folami, 1982: 29).
3. The old Lagos, popularly called "Eko," covers the present political entities of Lagos Island, Lagos Mainland, and Eti-Osa Local Government Areas.
4. Boma Boys were pools of unlicensed guides for sailors, pimp agents, beggars, petty thieves, and destitute who were highly visible in urban Lagos from the 1940s (Fourchard, 2006: 123–125; Heap, 2000: 13–20).
5. The Jaguda are historical predecessors of contemporary "area boys" in Lagos. Jaguda boys were essentially pickpockets and petty thieves—"destitute street boys who operated in small groups in order to frighten their victims" (Fourchard, 2006: 124).
6. For example, the proposed resettlement scheme for evacuees from Oluwole in Southwest Ikoyi was taken over by the NPC government in 1961, and was subsequently allocated to friends and supporters of the NPC, including civil servants and party supporters. The same fate befell evacuees in the allocation of temporary shops in the CBD, as a considerable number of NPC/NCNC supporters received shop allocations (see Baker, 1974: 100–101).

7. This form of fraud is said to have been reinvented as "round tripping" in Nigeria's banking system (interview with a retired banker, Isolo, Lagos, July 19, 2006).

8. The use of dual exchange rates and extensive profiteering (fraudulent enrichment) continued well into the 1990s under different guises, including "round tripping," "equipment importation," and "contract execution" (interview with a retired bank executive, Lagos, July 20, 2006). The former military ruler (General Abubakar Abdulsalam) confirmed the involvement of senior military officers, acknowledging it was the most visible way many military officers corruptly enriched themselves (see *The Economist*, 1998: 52).

9. All names used are pseudonyms but have logical semblance to the original names to retain and convey the organic connections to the activities (roles) of actors inside Oluwole.

10. The extent to which members of the Oluwole syndicate are involved in currency counterfeiting is unclear. While a few respondents recall that members of the syndicate agreed not to deal in currency counterfeiting, available evidence indicates otherwise. For example, one Taiwo Badmus, convicted for unlawfully spending fake currency is reported to have confessed during his trial that Oluwole was the source of the fake bank notes (Vanguard, March 4, 2006).

11. The list of people arrested and convicted following the August 2005 police raid of the Oluwole district confirms the participation of females in the syndicate. For instance, of the initial 76 people arrested, 17 were female, and of the 19 Oluwole suspects convicted in April 2006, 1 was a female (EFCC, April 27, 2006; September 2, 2005).

12. Yahooligans is a feature of Yahoo created to serve the informational needs of children and yôung people, but has been reinterpreted to mean young people involved in Internet scams, popularly called Yahoo-Yahoo in Nigeria's social consciousness in recent times.

13. An aspect of Yahooligans includes using the financial (credit card) details of their victims to order (buy) different wares over the Internet, with laptops and other computer hardware being the most popular items (*Nigerian Tribune*, January 4, 2006).

14. For instance, a draughtsman earns between $1,200 and $1,500 per month, an amount that is not earned by the highest paid civil servant or even the most senior university professor in Nigeria.

15. For instance, in 2002 and 2005, scores of cadet officers of the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) and the Police College were dismissed for certificate forgeries (see *Daily Times*, November 23, 2002).

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The Spatial Economy of Abjection: The Evacuation of Maroko Slum in Nigeria

Sheriff Folarin

Introduction

For several days after it had happened, "all the cover pages of newspapers bore searing images of pain and despair reflected on the faces of residents struggling to come to terms with (the) reality" (*ThisDay*, July 29, 2006: 11). That *reality* was the leveling by government bulldozers of an entire community, home to over 300, 000. Maroko, in Lagos state, was part of those areas that Harvey (2000: 152) would describe as a "sea of spreading decay" spatially located by the side of "a patchwork quilt of islands of relative affluence" that struggle to secure themselves against the urban squalor, misery, and poverty that dominate the spatial margin of the city.

It can be argued that government policies in relation to ownership of landed property, acquisition of estates and tenancy, have exacerbated the problems of poverty and spatial abjection in Nigeria. This chapter *re*considers the spatial economy of abjection in Nigeria with a specific focus on the evacuation of people, usually the poor and powerless, from shanties, slums, and other gloomy sites in the major conurbations around the country. This chapter uses the case of evictions from the Maroko slum in Lagos as a typical example of the disempowerment that is invested, reflected, and institutionalized in slums particularly in terms of their spatial, social, economic, and political relations with the state and persons, groups, and institutions that control or have access to the state and its resources.

Whether considered from the "traditional" urban political economy paradigm or from the paradigm of postmodern urbanism—which places

emphasis on the spatial dynamics of urban landscapes stressing their contested nature, particularly in terms of who belongs where and with what entitlements or citizenship rights (Murray and Martin, 2004: 139)—the case of Maroko reveals interesting perspectives on the spatial encounters of disempowered social *forces* with the typical postcolonial state.

Indeed, the economy of abjection in Nigeria is an expanding one, with government policies at the three levels concerning the ownership of landed property, the acquisition of estates and tenancy exacerbating poverty and abjection. This chapter sets out to examine how abjection pervades the nation as a result of the evacuation of communities, with particular reference to the Maroko slum in Lagos state.

The State, "Sedentarization," and Widening Gaps between Opulence and Squalor

Is the postcolonial or developing state an accomplice of the wealthy in mortgaging the well-being of the poor? Could that be the reason why the state parades "good conscience" by instituting the policy of resettlement as a smokescreen to provide free passage for the privileged to acquire strategic estates and lands? Or does the state initiate grand policies of creating a sedentary livelihood for the people at a very high price, thus risking the trust of the masses? Marxist scholarship that celebrates the perspective that the wealthy class controls the instrumentalities of the capitalist state would more probably submit that because the rich class controls the state, there may never be a state policy with the ultimate goal or sole purpose to bail out or benefit the masses. Lenin (1939) had even regarded the state as a "product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms" with the privileged class gaining final control. However, pondering the social and economic policies even in socialist states that have not fared better in repositioning the poor compels the perspective that there is a peculiar problem with the grandiose policies of the state (capitalist, socialist, or welfarist)—from conception, articulation to implementation.

The paradox in the welfarist intentions of the developing state explains its pitiable parody and the characterization of its so-called people-centered policies as either fantastic or viciously orchestrated to further ennoble the wealthy (Ake, 1983), which has stimulated studies on governments' inadequacies in land, estate, and tenancy related policies. James Scott (1998) exhumes in a theoretical postmortem the remains of the *Ujaama*; Nyerere's peculiar socialist principle—which attempted a villagization of the Tanzanian society, and x-rays the impact of this and other related policies on the society—which according to Nyerere must be village-centered.

Scott interrogates governments' "perennial efforts" to settle or resettle mobile and homeless people, which he categorizes as sedentarization. Reflecting on the premodern state without standard measures or roadmaps for development programs that ended up in self-defeatist and crude interventions in masses' affairs, Scott wonders at the manner of the departure from the premodern to the postmodern times with all the standardization that should allow for simplification and legibility, ending up in "fiascos" because of the rigid and complex approaches to development programs (2–3). Hence, the more modernized statecraft became—just as the more state simplifications unfold—the more the tragic outcomes of developmental state projects. Scott (3–4) ascribes this paradox to the fact that the state simplifications "did not successfully represent the actual activity of the society they depicted, nor were they intended to; they represented only that slice of it that interested the official observer." It is these factors that are inherent in some lousy "white elephant projects" in the old "Third World," which have constituted examples of huge agricultural schemes and new cities that have failed their residents. These include the Great Leap Forward in China, Collectivization in Russia, and the compulsory Villagization in Tanzania already mentioned.

However, apart from these transformative state simplifications, three other factors central to the defeat of good state intentions to better the lot of their people include the following: high modernist ideology—an expression by the state of overconfidence in what science and technology can do leading to an uncritical, unskeptical, and an unscientifically optimistic belief about the possibilities for the comprehensive planning of human settlement; authoritarian state—which uses its coercive power to bring these high modernist constructs into being with the faith and conviction that what is being done is in the best interest of the people; and a prostrate civil society that lacks the capacity to resist these plans. Scott sums up that

> the legibility of a society provides the capacity for large-scale social engineering, high modernist ideology provides the desire, the authoritarian state provides the determination to act on that desire, and an incapacitated civil society provides the levelled social terrain on which to build. (5)

The forced villagization in Tanzania under Nwalimu Julius Nyerere explains how "schematic, authoritarian solutions to production and social order inevitably fail when they exclude the fund of valuable knowledge embodied in local practices" (223–261). The project, the Ujaama Village Campaign from 1973 to 1976, was borne out of great motives, and being the pet African-socialist agenda of Nyerere, was a massive attempt to permanently settle most of the country's population in villages, of which the layouts, housing designs, and local economies were planned, partly

or wholly, by officials of the central government. It remains the largest forced resettlement scheme in African history with about 5 million relocated. The project was welfarist, but it was capital-intensive and overbearing on the economy of a weak state, which partly explains its failure. The other factors included its *forced* approach in which farmers had to take orders from the state on what to plant, how, and when to cultivate the lands with the state also assuming the position of arbitrary and cruel landlord .

State Excess and Sedentarization Exercises: Nigeria's Experiments

A common thread running through all resettlement schemes in the postcolonial state is the use of state excess in evicting tenants, debasement in the process, and abandonment of the relocation schemes leading to more abjection. However, a distinguishing factor between Nigeria's sedentarization experiments and those of other developing nations is that it has always been difficult to place the backdrops or inclination of the former: welfarist or punitive; ideological or political-economic; sedentarization or deprivation. The 2007–2009 demolitions and reconstructions in the blighted cities of Oshodi, Mushin, and Lekki in Lagos by the Raji Fashola administration may, however, be a rare exception as they appear to form part of a larger agenda to beautify and transform Lagos into another Dubai. These recent exercises come within the purview of what Scott has called sedentarization.

However, from 1990 to date, the federal government has demonstrated a keen interest in the reacquisition and sale of its old properties, including land and residential estates: settling the fact that the state and local governments have no claim to properties, taking them back by force, evicting "tenants," evacuating them without proper relocation, and rendering them homeless, destitute, and impoverished in the process.

The 2006 forceful evictions of all the tenants of the 1004 flats in Ikoyi, Lagos, by security operatives on the orders of the federal government expanded the space of abjection as over 2,000 residents, including children, were socially dislocated. They had nowhere to go, slept in the open with property scattered everywhere, while the government ignored the children and families in their makeshift homes outside the premises as it commenced the renovation of the edifice (Vanguard, 2006).

Forceful evictions, characteristic of the landlord-tenant relationship in Nigeria, began to occur in the early 1990s. On July 14, 1990, over 300,000 members of the Maroko community in Lagos (Victoria) Island were forcibly evicted by the military administration of Raji Rasaki. They had been given only seven days' verbal notice to evacuate the place. The

troops that carried out the evictions bulldozed houses, looted, raped, and killed residents in the process and 16 years after the event, two-thirds of the Maroko community evictees are still awaiting redress (COHRE, 2006: 3).

In January 2002, about 1.2 million people were forcibly evicted from their homes in Rainbow Town, Port Harcourt. The evictees, who had not received an eviction notice, were stunned on January 21 as security agents invaded the town, demolished houses, beat and flogged the residents and damaged their property, without any form of compensation from the government. In 2004 alone, more than 30,000 households and over 150,000 people were evicted by force in the country (ibid.).

In the same year, the government planned to evict thousands of families living on railway land, a seemingly inevitable consequence of the proposed privatization of the Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) and the Railway Property Companies Limited (RPCL). The reason given by the government then was that illegal tenancy deals had been entered into (Daily Champion, 2004).

That there was a capitalist motive involved becomes evident in the report by the Nigerian Bureau of Enterprises (www.bpend.org):

> It is expected that RPCL has immense potential of generating revenue from land, which could even generate as much revenue as NRC…The quality, value and location of land and buildings under RPCL control makes it a worthy investment to any investor…RPCL has a vast land mass spread across the Federation and most of the land and buildings are strategically located for any kind of business the would-be owner needs it for.

This line of thinking, which has as its compelling undertone the deployment of market forces in a floating capitalist economy, predetermines the recourse to the deliberate but recrudescent government policy of mass evictions from 1990 to date. In addition to Maroko, Rainbow Town, and 1004, other evictions included Maitama village in 1990 (in which those 3,000 persons were evicted), Banogoi in 1994, Ijora—Badiya and Ijora—Oloye in 1996 (2,000 people), Ilubirin in 1996 (220,000 persons), Kado village in 2000 (2,000 persons), Ijora—Badiya again in 2003 (5,000 people), Wari in 2003 (6,000 people), Ifiayang Usuk and Mbiakong in Akwa Ibom state in 2003 (200 households), and several other minor cases (COHRE, 2006: 4). In April 2005, there was the Makoko eviction in which 3,000 residents were involved. Those forced out included remnants of the 1990 Maroko evictees who found solace in other growing shanties and were allowed by their hosts to live in makeshift shelters in the surrounding area.

This chapter focuses on the Maroko evictions: an account of the incident, the motives for the evacuation, the manner of the evacuation,

the plight of the victims, and the consequences. The analysis identifies the increasing space of the economy of poverty caused by this excess of evacuations.

Conceptual and Theoretical Constructs

Spatial Abjection

According to Michel Foucault, the twentieth century began the "epoch of space," an epoch in which scholars—and even social activists and movements—came to see location, "juxtaposition," and (spatial) network of relationships as key to understanding social dynamics and social phenomenon (Martin and Miller, 2000: 143). In the context of this, scholars across the social sciences and humanities have been contending with the role and meaning of space and spatial processes for human action, particularly in terms of how spatial dynamics and relations shape identity, grievances, economic, and social opportunities and resources (ibid.). As Massey (1984: 4) contends,

> Spatial distribution and geographical distribution may be the result of social processes, but they also affect how those processes work. "The spatial" is not just the outcome; it is also part of the explanation…(It is therefore crucial) for those in the social sciences to take on board the fact that the processes that they study are constructed, reproduced and changed in a way that necessarily involves distance, movement and spatial differentiation.

Human beings exist as much in time as in space. Indeed, it has come to be accepted in the literature that there cannot be a separation between "the spatial" and "the social," both in theory and in practice. Space is a social phenomenon and social life involves social relations. As Martin and Miller (2000: 144–145) competently put it,

> space constitutes and structures relationships and networks…; situates social and cultural life including repertoires of contention; is integral to the attribution of threats and opportunities; is implicit in many types of category formation; and is central to scale-jumping strategies that aim to alter discrepancies in power among political contestants. In short social relations are spatial as well as historical, and altering the spatial or historical constitution of social processes will likely alter how they play out.

Lefebvre (1991) has argued that even though space has ontological reality, it is *produced* through social relations and structures. Therefore, it can be observed that contemporary economic arrangements with its "ever-greater locational flexibility," but also, paradoxically, locational

rigidity, point to the importance of space as power (political, economic, or social) move people and things from or into different spaces, expel, evict, or evacuate people from spaces, acquire or repeal rights over lands and spaces.

Lefebvre's perspective is very illuminating in our understanding of the spatial economy of abjection. He argues that there are three types of socially produced space. These are *perceived*, *conceived*, and *lived* spaces. The first involves "the material spaces of daily life where social production and reproduction occurs." As Martin and Miller develops this form of space, it is a "tangible form of space that provides a degree of continuity and cohesion to each social formation. It is also shot through with power relations" (147). For Lefebvre *prohibition* is the operative logic in this space, given that, for example, "the effectiveness of private property as a basis for allocating and controlling resources ultimately rests upon the ability to exclude others from the occupation and use of property they do not own" (ibid.). *Conceived space*, or representations of space, refers to the constructed discourses, signs, and meanings of space and is "tied to the relations of production (and reproduction) and to the 'order' which those relationships impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs and to codes" (Lefebvre, 1991: 33). This is the space *governed* by urban planners, technocratic subdividers, social engineers, and even political decision makers who *use* the experts. *Lived space* is a combination of the other two spaces. According to Lefebvre, this is

> space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of "inhabitants" and "users"…This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. (39)

The term abjection literally means the state of being cast down. According to Robert Barnhart (1996: 4), abjection refers to abasement. Put differently, it is "to bring down," to lower rank, condition, or character, or more succinctly put, to degrade. In contemporary critical theory, it is often used to describe the state of often marginalized groups, such as women or homosexuals. The term originated in the work of Julia Kristeva (1980; 2005) to describe the state of being rejected, cast out, or brought down, which inevitably results in a low, downcast, or meanness of spirit.

The connetion of abjection to spatial economy is the habitation of the former in the compelling outcome of the latter. A growing number of the abjected naturally increases an empty economic space of poverty that the abjected or socially and economically debased essentially occupy. In other words, the spatial economy of abjection refers to a vast, increasing but unprofitable space that abjected human beings occupy. Spatial connotes

more than ordinary space; it denotes a large habitation with no expected economic rewards or leverage vis-à-vis the privileged other. A spatial economy of abjection finds multitudes, including the downtrodden, social outcasts, economically deprived, unprivileged, weather-beaten, tattered, and battered; competing for space and scarce resources.

It is, however, pertinent to note that the spatial economy of abjection is not physical like Maroko town itself, but structural in the social and economic sense. The abjected are found everywhere—in, shanty towns, villages, suburbs, and others; but they are frequently the destitute on the streets, hawkers on highways, garage touts, living in abandoned buildings and under the bridges and are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed.

The link between excess-abjection and spatial economy works out in the following way: an excess is already at work in the emergence of the subject, arising from one's embodied relations to the other and to the everyday world that resists symbolization and remains enigmatic, that is, beyond the disavowals in egocentric theories of the subject (Laplanche, 1999). In their separate studies, Santner (2001) and Lyotard (1990) also examine the phenomenon of excess and abjection. Lyotard in his reflections on "the Jews" posits that the trauma of racism—the violence of such forms of exclusion and abjection—introduces another excess that cannot be translated, for the monolingual discourse of "identity" has no place for the excluded, except as remainders, or as supplements; the other is thrown into forgetting the disavowal. The social levels of disavowal produce a double mutism encrypting a double excess. Equally, the domain of the invisible and thus of what one must approach in working through and anamnesis is also doubled.

For the abjected and minoritarian other, the identity mirrored in the gaze misses or misrecognizes its fantasized ideal and must recognize its lack-of-being at both levels of the psychic and the social. There are compulsory stratagems, of course, that take different forms, including disavowals, depending on circumstances of class, status, gender, and so on.

The inevitable results of the spatial struggle in an economy of abjection is the further engraving of disempowerment and divides that erode the possibility of a united front to engender change in status, prevail on policy, or compel favorable outcomes. Such deep-seated divides and disarray are perpetuated by the hegemonic class through systematic policies of divide and rule and the ultimate preponderance of the power and privileges of the hegemons. Adebanwi, in a study on ethnospatial politics in colonial Lagos (2003), acknowledges the spatial struggle for hegemony between two or more classes, with each using any means or resources at its disposal to establish its primacy in Lagos politics, including the text (media), and political and economic institutions. In postcolonial Nigeria, there is a perennial connetion, or a conspiracy, between the military

class, the political class, and the bourgeoisie, with the military elite using the monopoly of the instrument of state coercion, to complete the age-long goal to disempower the poor, evict them from lands and territories considered to be the exclusive reserve of the economically privileged class for the appropriation of surplus value, and thus paving the way for the unrivalled and easy establishment of economic and political hegemony in Lagos and indeed elsewhere in Nigeria.

In law, eviction is an action that deprives a tenant of the use of leased premises, such as an apartment or an office. An eviction occurs if the tenant or landlord violates the lease. Eviction, thus, as Krier James (1999: 425) sees it, takes place when there is a breakdown of agreement between two contracting parties. The two must have had a legal contract to back the arrangement. What this means, therefore, is that eviction can take place only for concrete reasons and be carried out under the auspices of the law with appropriate legal steps taken before, during, and after the act of eviction. During eviction, the use of civil and not military forces is tenable and should be for the purpose of supervising.

To reflect on James (1999: 426) once again, eviction can affect not only the tenant, but the landlord too. The landlord can forfeit his property if he violates the lease. Hence, in a situation in which the government fails to fulfil its duties as a landlord, through poor maintenance of the building or estate, for instance, then, by law, control of the property can be taken away.

The government does not always have to be the one spelling out the terms and wielding the big stick like it has done in Maroko and other places. Moreover, if the government wants to "evacuate" a people from the land they inherited from their forbears for the sake of national development, it should do so with compensatory measures such as decent and affordable relocation. It has, however, been posited that the fundamental weaknesses in the law on land tenancy in Nigeria are responsible for the arbitrariness over land policy and issues (Meek, 1957; MacAuslan, 2003).

An appropriate theoretical framework for this paper is relative deprivation. It is an apposite tool to explain the emergence of the slum(s) on the one hand, and the spatial economy of abjection resulting from the military-oriented evacuation on the other. Relative deprivation connotes socioeconomic denials that ultimately culminate, particularly in the Third World, in abjection. According to Lea and Young (1984) who see relative deprivation from the group perspective, relative deprivation occurs when a group feels deprived in comparison to other similar groups, or when its expectations are not met. Deprivation is in diverse manifestations, but Townsend (1970: 11) identifies two typologies, namely material deprivation and social deprivation. For him, material deprivation covers the deprivation of diet, clothing, housing, home facilities, environment, location,

and work. Social deprivation, on the other hand, covers lack of employment rights, deprivation of family activity, lack of integration into the community, lack of participation in social institutions, recreational deprivation and educational deprivation. Townsend contends that poverty can be defined objectively and applied consistently only in terms of the concept of relative deprivation, rationalizing this claim on the grounds that society determines people's needs, including the amount of energy that different sections of the population habitually expend on work, community, and family pursuits. Townsend posits that poverty involves the inability to participate in approved social activities that are considered normal, such as visiting relatives, friends, having birthday parties, and going on holiday. It is Townsend's belief, therefore, that individuals suffer deprivation if they cannot afford even the cheapest of such activities (11–12) as was the case of the Maroko people before and after the 1990 eviction.

Flowing from the above is the culmination of social alienation. While gored by the existentialist principle in his abject state of capitalist exploitation, the individual (or group), according to Varma (2005: 299–302) aggressively pursues vacation that yields small returns and yet has no time to look within himself and think of the quality of his own life. "Meeting each other in factory, or a crowd, commuting or agitating, he finds himself more and more isolated and alienated from society, an alienation not only from his work, but alienation from society, state (and) from those with whom he is working and alienation even from himself." In the final analysis, for Varma, such an individual or group is haunted by an inferiority complex and remains in a state of perpetual anxiety, fear, and worry (300). This is symbolic of the completion of the process of subordination by the powerful class that has always schemed to consign him to the abject background.

The duo of Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1971) in agreement with the postulates of Dollard et al. (1939) reason that the ultimate consequence of the displacements, dislocations, deprivations, and alienations is usually aggression or conflict, which represents the explosion in cumulative frustration—it becomes a battle of wits between two unequal classes, but with the weaker evictees losing in the power-play. This, incidentally, has not characterized the action of the displaced indigent settlers of Maroko, nor of any such displaced people in Nigeria.

X-Raying the Maroko Incident: Some Preliminary Observations

The Maroko eviction of 1990 was the first major case of the forceful evacuation of slums in Nigeria. This was carried out during military rule,

precisely at the twilight of the status of Lagos as the federal capital and three years before the exit of the General Babangida regime. Brigadier Raji Rasaki, then the Lagos state governor, ordered the "levelling" of Maroko, an area his administration regarded as an "eyesore" in the "high brow" neighborhood of Victoria Island (Otchet, 1999: 50).

Before going into the details of the Maroko evacuation, it is pertinent to examine the peculiarity of the Lagos urban climacteric and Third World situation of slums. Lagos, a growing city as a colonial capital in 1950 with only 300,000 population, now has a total population of 10 million (it is sometimes speculated to be about 13 million or more), half the size of the total population of hypercities in the world as at the time of the French Revolution in 1789 without a corresponding increase in geographical size but only the development of available spaces (UN-Habitat, 2003: 3). About two-thirds of the total landmass of Lagos of 3,577 square kilometres is made up of shanties (Daily Times, 2003: October 20). As the UN observes, Lagos, like other Third World megacities, has little or no planning to accommodate the people or provide them with services. It is a case of urbanization without growth, which, according to Davis (2004: 4) is more obviously the legacy of a global political conjuncture—the debt crisis of the late 1970s and subsequent IMF-led restructuring of the Third World economies of the 1980s. Third World urbanization, he observes, continued recording a 3.8 percent increase per annum from 1960 to 1993 "through the locust years of the 1980s and early 1990s in spite of failing wages, soaring prices and skyrocketing urban unemployment" (Gugler, 1997: 43). A major development in this peculiar urban climacteric is the upsurge of slums. In the classic Challenge of the Slums (UN-Habitat, 2003), urban poverty and the emergence of slums was associated with bad governance in the Third World. This was a departure from the aforementioned old theory that only neoliberalism, such as the IMF's structural adjustment programs (SAPs), causes it. It is indeed instructive to note that

> The primary direction of both national and international interventions during the last twenty years has actually increased urban poverty and slums, increased exclusion and inequality, and weakened urban elites in their efforts to use cities as engines of growth. (6)

Slums, sometimes referred to as shanties or ghettos, are also characteristic of what is called superurbanization. Slums are informal settlements characterized by sprawl, environmental degradation, urban hazards, poverty, informal employment arising from unemployment, and so on. They remain essentially an amalgam of dilapidated buildings, overcrowded houses, and neighborhoods with many social vices including petty theft, quarrels, sexual immorality, and such other crimes, featuring

prominently. Also, unsanitary conditions, inadequate access to safe water and sanitation, and insecurity of tenure are common phenomena (ibid.).

Slums are problematic for population and housing censuses and as a result, development becomes hampered. This is due to their nature, namely, informal and illegal settlements with, in most cases, improvised shelters and the impermanence of the residences. Hence, slums create a situation of undercounting and, by extension, inaccurate planning.

New slums in the twentieth and twenty-first century are rather more typically located on the edge and are a product of urban spatial explosions. Lagos is described by a UN writer (Otchet, 1999: 50) thus:

> Much of the city is a mystery . . . unit highways run past canyons of smouldering garbage before giving way to dirt streets weaving through 200 slums, their sewers running with raw waste . . . no one even knows for sure the size of the population—officially it is 6 million, but most experts estimate it at 10 million—let alone the number of murders each year or the rate of HIV infection.

While this researcher makes the whole city appear to be a slum, it nevertheless underscores the exacerbation of urban explosion and attendant uncontrollability and poverty. Winter King (2003: 471) identifies the aspect of uncontrollability in his Harvard Law Review article when he claims that 85 percent of the urban residents of the developing world occupy property illegally because of the indeterminacy of land titles and lax state ownership—these are cracks through which a vast humanity has poured into the cities. In agreement, Davis (2004) asserts:

> Indeed, national and local political machines usually acquiesce in informal settlement as long as they can control the political complexion of the slums and extract a regular flow of bribes or rents. Without formal land titles or home ownership, slum-dwellers are forced into quasi-feudal dependencies upon local officials and . . . by shots. Disloyalty can mean eviction or even the razing of an entire district. (10)

The phenomenon of slums in Nigeria, like elsewhere, is, therefore, politically produced and sometimes explicable by the political economy of poorly implemented neocolonial economic programs. Balogun (1995), for instance, believes that the advent of the Structural Adjustment Programme in Nigeria in the mid-1980s was the socioeconomic equivalent of a great natural disaster, "destroying forever" the old soul of Lagos, reenslaving Nigerians and opening a grave chapter of mass urban poor in slums scattered all over the cities. This slum crisis began when the urban poor pervaded everywhere, settling on hazardous and otherwise unbuildable terrains such as steep squats in the deadly shadows of refineries, chemical factories, toxic dumps, and more prominently in

the margins of railroads and highways. Poverty has thus constructed an urban disaster problem as typified by a munitions plant explosion in Lagos in 2000 whose fringes were "home" to many urban poor and in which hundreds of people perished in a canal. A slum, therefore, is more of a reflection and manifestation of poverty, than poverty being a reflection of the slum.

The Maroko incident in Lagos, from the foregoing analysis, was probably the result of three basic factors: political, economic, and social. Put differently, or rather more succinctly, these were politicization and political corruption; economic factors; social discrimination and irresponsibility; all part of the interplay in the government's ruthless decision to pull down the slums in 1990.

Maroko: Before the Demolition

In his study of Lagos, Otchet (1999), in explaining the fundamental underlying reason for the 1990 bulldozing of the Maroko beach slum in Lagos, alludes to the fact that the beach slum was considered an eyesore for the neighboring community of Victoria Island, a fortress for the rich. On the site of Maroko is now Lekki and the adjoining Garden City (VGC) where the super-rich buy land and construct beach-side edifices overlooking adjoining bourgeois estates, underscoring the probability that a conspiracy was reached between the military/political elite and the financially privileged class, those who Marx calls the actual owners and controllers of the state and its instruments of coercion by virtue of their firm hold on the modes of production, to mesmerize and displace the sizeable hoi polloi in Maroko.

Maroko itself is one of the 43 blighted areas identified in the Lagos metropolis by a World Bank project in 1981 (Chatterjee, 1983). Today, about 100 slums are present (Vanguard, 2006). The problem with Maroko was multifaceted. One was the overcrowding of urban low-income residents of Lagos, with unsanitary living and pollution that came to be of much concern to the Lagos authorities, both local and state. Maroko and the adjoining slum settlements are located within the Eti-Osa local government area of the state. Other settlements include Aja, Okota, Ilasan (in Eti-Osa), and Okokomaiko in Ojo (Agbola and Jinadu, 1997). Maroko fits the picture of Thelwell's description (1980) as a place with mountains of trash stretching very far and an ubiquitous, jumbled, and pathless collection of structures. There were also cardboard boxes, plywood and rotting boards, rusting and glassless shells of abandoned vehicles scattered around: all these, including the heaps of rubbish, constituted a major nuisance and eyesore during the rainy season when the place is waterlogged and becomes a health hazard.

Closely related to the above was the fact that Maroko, with such unfortunate structural and sanitary conditions, was exposing the "rich" neighborhood of Victoria Island not only to medical danger, but also to vice. The area is considered to be a stretch of Victoria Island with little or no geographical delineations. The only factor of demarcation is structural, that is, the beauty of the well-arranged and well-built houses and the clean environment of V.I. as opposed to the sprawling quarters of Maroko. Yet, the expanding neighborhood of V.I. had no other place to stretch to than Maroko. The displacement of the "rag-tag" was thus only a matter of time.

Maroko was typical of most blighted areas. Despite its closeness to high brow Victoria Island and Ikoyi, Maroko had no good roads, drainage system, pipe-borne water, electricity, hospital, or communication system. The houses and buildings were drab, reeking with decomposing refuse. Unsafe water was rationed, human waste disposal inadequate, and the litter of human waste a common sight in the neighborhood (Vanguard, 2006: 2). The degree of environmental pollution from such a level of squalor culminated in epidemics of cholera, typhoid fever, and dysentery (3). The government justified the inevitability of these problems in Maroko by claiming that it was an illegal settlement unprovided for in the Lagos master plan. The reason specifically given for the demolition in 1990 was illegal occupation and little wonder that there was no compensation given immediately to the displaced persons (Agbola and Jinadu, 1997: 275). However, resettlements were provided but they were delayed, unaffordable, ill-equipped, and not available to all. This was 16 years after the demolitions.

The Demolitions

Evictions and the demolition of settlements (slums or not) in Nigeria date back to the colonial period. Indeed, the first time Maroko was demolished was not in 1990. There had been two earlier cases, but Maroko kept growing back because demolition was not a solution to the problem. No wonder that after the third demolition in 1990, the government (military or civilian, federal or state) had to contend with another major evacuation in 2005.

Slum demolitions started in the 1920s when the Lagos Executive Development Board dismantled the Lagos slums as a result of the bubonic epidemic of the period. Again, in the 1950s, shortly before independence, the demolition of slums was carried out to give Lagos a "face-lift" that resulted in the infamous Isale-Eko clearance to provide a pleasant view of Lagos Island for the visiting Queen Elizabeth II. Between that time and 1995, 36 forced evictions had been carried out. In 1982, the Lagos

state government of Lateef Jakande evacuated Maroko to enable road construction. A year later, Maroko was again evacuated in October, with 60,000 residents evicted because the area was considered "a setback for the lagoon" by the state government. In both instances, there was neither compensation nor an offer of an alternative site (Agbola and Jinadu, 1997: 274)

The July 14, 1990 evacuation was, however, the most decisive and cruel. This episode marked the zenith of cumulative threats and dress rehearsals expressed in the minor clearances of the 1980s. What further distinguishes the 1990 evacuation from the earlier ones was that the 1990 eviction was at the instance of the military administration at the center with the Lagos state government under Colonel Raji Rasaki acting to protect the interest of the federal government. In actual fact, Lagos, the seat of power at the time, had dual control and it is important to maintain that such high brow areas as Victoria Island and Ikoyi the government had used as political bases in the past were regarded as federal government properties.

The government itself attempted to rationalize the forced eviction. Before Governor Rasaki ordered his troops of soldiers and town-planners to pull down the slum, a seven-day verbal notice had been given to the residents to quit in their own interest and that of the state. The government claimed that the residents were squatters on the land that the government had acquired in 1972, that the occupied land was 1.5 meters above sea level, making it vulnerable to flooding and eventual submergence and that the environment was generally filthy and susceptible to plagues and epidemics that could spread rapidly into other parts of the state (Agbola and Jinadu, 1997: 279). The evacuation was thus presented as engendered by social responsibility.

There was a political economy paradigm to the action, which was not as explicit as the government claims. As earlier mentioned and as corroborated by Agbola and Jinadu (279–280), Maroko's location was an important factor. Maroko was unbearably close to the highly priced lands and properties of Ikoyi and Victoria Island and was regarded as an eyesore by these high-income neighborhoods. Also, the fear of epidemics, and the high crime rate in Maroko, did not endear its residents to its wealthy neighbors. What was probably worse for the wealthy residents, who were also influential in the politics of Lagos and the government itself, was the reduction in property values in Ikoyi and V.I. due to Maroko's proximity. In addition, there was "land hunger" in Ikoyi and V.I. The only alternative available was Maroko, which must be evacuated and partitioned (Newswatch, 1990: 14).

Although the social responsibility and discrimination and political economy paradigms have been highlighted, it is important to look at the purely political variable. This paradigm also has security as a factor. It

explains the fact that the security report received by the military government of Ibrahim Babangida after the Gideon Orkar Coup of April 1990 indicted Maroko as the place where the coup had been plotted. Probably acting on this development and capitalizing on a 16-day rainfall that flooded the town, on July 7, 1990, Governor Rasaki simply announced on state radio a seven-day notice to quit after which it would be levelled (Newswatch, 1990: 19). Although the illegality of occupancy has been repeatedly adduced by government for the 1990 demolitions, this may not be factual as revealed in a study by Agbola and Jinadu (1997: 280). Indeed, most of the occupants were not squatters but legal tenants. Some had been resettled in Maroko by the Lagos state Environmental Development Board between 1958 and 1964 and were paying rent annually to the Oniru Chieftaincy family, which owns Marokoland. Others were found to be investors who had purchased 40 by 80 foot (12 by 24 meters) or 50 by 100 foot (15 by 39 meters) plots of land from the Oniru and Elegusi Families on 99-year leaseholds. Though many of the owners had acquired their property prior to the government's land acquisition in 1972, their properties also fell within the private portion of Marokoland that was released to the Oniru family after a Supreme Court judgment in 1976 (cf. ibid.; 180). According to them, it was nonsense to attempt to justify the evictions by saying that Maroko was below sea level as Victoria Island was in exactly the same position and as such

> it would seem that the evicted population were simply victims of the greed of the Nigerian ruling elite and of an inappropriate urban development policy. (280)

On July 14 (precisely seven days after the verbal notice was issued on radio by the military governor himself), a demolition team arrived to bulldoze the settlements, with no relocation or resettlement policy arranged. This only goes to show that the demolition was spontaneous, and probably politically motivated. Six days after the demolition and after much pressure on the government, a Resettlement Committee led by Lt. Col. Tunde Buraimo was set up, which demonstrated great social irresponsibility through its haphazard and discriminatory allocations. For instance, only residents with evidence of property ownership before 1972 were considered and hence, out of about 41,776 landlords affected in the dislocation, only 2,933 were considered for resettlement, with 1,766 relocated at the government housing estates at Ilasan, 917 in the Ikota estate, and 250 at the Epe estate (Newswatch, 1990: 14–20; Lagos Horizon, 1990).

It is important to note that these relocations were carried out only in principle, because in actual fact, most of the housing estates and units were not habitable. At Ikota for instance, of the 2,000 one-bedroom flats

allocated, only 4 blocks were in a condition to be occupied. It was the same in Ilasan with only 1 habitable block of flats out of the 2,000 units. Like the slums from where they came, there was no water supply, electricity supply, sanitation, toilets, markets, hospitals, schools, postal service, or other facilities that meet the minimum standard for human habitation (Newswatch, 1990: 14–20).

In addition to these problems at the early stage, there were also economically motivated allocations. Individuals and groups paid through the "backdoor" to have two or more allocations. For instance, some who had not been landlords before the demolition succeeded in securing allocations. They had brought receipts of land ownership from the Oniru and Elegusi ruling houses with which allocations were obtained. Even those who were not victims of the eviction, the Lagos land and estate hunters, surfaced to acquire houses on production of illegally acquired receipts or evidence (Agbola, 1994).

The postdemolition resettlement was, therefore, a sham—the politically and economically induced action in Maroko was completed by acts of irresponsibility on the part of government and political corruption. The relocated persons were at the receiving end. Housing continued to be the major problem of the evictees, as did lack of access to food and clothing, health, education, and employment. As for overcrowding, it became worse with an average of 14 persons per household. In Ikota and Ilasan in particular, two or four households shared a three- or two-bedroom apartment. It is more graphically illustrated by Agbola (1994)—with cases of 9 people in one room and 26 people in one flat. Despite these harsh conditions, coupled with a deteriorating environmental situation and lack of basic facilities, the rents were still prohibitive. Residents in Maroko who had hitherto been paying between 10 and 40 NGN (about US$0.2) monthly began to pay between 70 and 120 NGN (about US$0.7) per month in their posteviction settlements. It was more prohibitive in Ilasan where residents paid between 1,000 and 1,500 naira per flat monthly (Agbola and Jinadu, 1997: 282).

The educational facilities provided in the resettlements were as inadequate as they were appalling. There was only one nursery school in Ikota estate; primary education was available in Ikota village and Ilasan; a secondary school was located in Maroko-Sandfill, which meant students would have to travel long distances to and from school. It is instructive to note that the government-community Development Association that sponsored schools up to the late 1990s still had no permanent structures, only improvised classrooms (ACHPR, 1995).

All in all, the purpose of the relocation or evacuation, which ostensibly was due to economic planning for development, appears to have been defeated by the unchanged hardship of the life of the Maroko evictees; the exploitation in the hands of government and all the social service

providers of the private sector; and worse sanitary conditions than in the Maroko slum. The final analysis may, therefore, be that upgrading the living standard of the evictees was not the aim of the government; getting rid of the "pests" from land that could be exclusively enjoyed by the bourgeois class, and probably ridding the area of a hideout for capitalists, was the real intent.

Other Evacuations Up till 2006

What explains forceful evictions to the point of brutalization and massacre is the lessons of the failed rehabilitation or resettlement exercises such as the Maroko experience of 1990. With the benefit of hindsight, residents of areas marked down for demolition become resistant and the government moves security agencies in to pull down residences or settlements. In some cases, demolitions have been effected on purely political or personal grounds. The demolition of the Kalakuta Republic of the late Afrobeat musician Fela Kuti in Lagos in 1978 by government soldiers was the culmination of interpersonal acrimony between him and the military ruler of the time. In the case of the "official" evacuation of Aja and central Lagos, where 390 structures were demolished in 1995, a lot of physical force was applied. The degeneration to using coercion, however, is a demonstration of the lack of confidence in the government's ability to be socially responsible for the people.

The government has provided reasons for the over 36 evacuations to date. They range from "road construction" (Idi Oro, Agege Motor Road, 1973), "urban development" (Metropolitan Kano, 1979), "urban renovation" (Central Lagos, 1976), "illegal occupation" (Oba Akran, Ikeja, 1976), "encroachment on school land" (Elekuro, Ibadan, 1976), "city clean up" (Ketu, Lagos, 1976), "channelization programme" (Shomolu, Bariga, 1981), "structure under NEPA high tension cables" (Badagary Expressway, Lagos, 1985), to "urban beautification" (Shomolu, Lagos, 1986) and "FCT Development" (Maitama Village, FCT, 1990) and so on (*Daily Times*, 1995).

In addition to the pains of eviction from a land considered part of one's heritage, and beyond the financial and economic implications for the evictees, there is also the psychological trauma that evictees face in the course of the eviction process. Incidences of murder, torture, rape, and battering by the soldiers and policemen were recorded in Maroko. The recent 2005/2006 evictions in 1004 flats at Ikoyi Lagos represented the susceptibility of the privileged class to abjection. But it also demonstrated the government's lack of concern about its policy of impoverishment arising from a lack of foresight and poor planning and as a result of the prevailing political interests.

The Makoko Lagos evictions in April 2005 are evidence of this perspective. Amnesty International (2005) published an account of a woman thus:

> My baby boy is 4 days old. I delivered him here after my house had been demolished. Only my mother was here to help me, and the (baby) has not seen a doctor or nurse yet. My husband (ran) away after the bulldozers came in on Thursday. Now I spend the night in the classrooms in the school with many other families. I have no money.

The Makoko evictions took three days to complete. Three thousand residents were forcibly evicted from their houses after which bulldozers demolished houses, churches, clinics, and schools. However, like the Maroko incident, the evictions were neither predated nor followed by palliative measures. None of the evictees has been supplied with adequate alternative housing and many were deprived of schooling or the means of earning a living. Those evicted claimed that they were neither given prior notice nor consulted on the planned evictions. Some of them, including children, were beaten up by law enforcement officials and suffered injuries as a result of the disproportionate use of force, others had their houses and all their belongings destroyed by the government forces (HRI, 2001).

Interestingly, the Olusegun Obasanjo administration and Lagos state government of Bola Tinubu carried out the evictions to execute a court judgment from 2000 that granted ownership of the area to a private landowner. The government of Lagos state continues the military-like demolitions of urban settlements designated as slums because of its fears that these areas are increasing the reputation of Lagos as one of the most dangerous cities in the world (Otchet, 1999). The city is one of the fastest growing in the world. The UN estimates that it will reach 24 million inhabitants by 2010 and could possibly become the world's third largest city (The Guardian, London, 2005). Stretching over roughly 300 square kilometres, it is a city with many deprived communities, called "blighted areas," and the population of these places as at 2002 was estimated at 957,365 (LMPD, 2002).

Makoko, like Maroko, was a victim of the interplay of economic and political ambitions in Lagos. Land in Lagos is increasingly sought after by property developers. Makoko is next to a big bridge and thus has easy access to one of the main thoroughfares for transport around the city. Such land with a high value for government and private developers is a target for fortune hunters. Makoko was one of the 43 blighted areas of Lagos in the area of Yaba/Ebute Meta. The forced evictions were undertaken in the larger Makoko slum area, one of nine areas selected for upgrading under the Lagos Metropolitan Development Project (LMDP)

proposed for World Bank funding. On Wednesday April 27, 2005, bull-dozers and armed police moved in without notice and demolished houses, displacing over 3,000 people in the process (HRI, 2006: 5). Many of the residents had been living in the slum for over a decade and had receipts of agreements of usage of the land from land-owning families. Such agreements entitled them to build temporary wooden structures. After the demolitions, however, materials like wood, planks, and iron sheets were burnt by the operatives, probably to prevent reconstruction. The residents instantly became destitute, many of them sleeping in the open and their property scattered in the homes of friends or relatives in neighboring communities, while some found provisional shelter in school buildings or stayed with family or friends (Amnesty International, 2005).

After two days of nonstop demolition, the Makoko community put up a protest organized by the Social and Economic Rights Action Centre (SERAC). Representation was made to the Lagos state Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development and the Project coordinator for the Lagos Metropolitan Development and Governance Project, who were impelled to visit Makoko. The commissioner denied ordering the demolitions or evictions, and expressed shock that this was carried out without the knowledge of his office. He, however, admitted that he had instructed that some specific buildings be pulled down in May 2005 in compliance with a court order regarding a land claim by one of the land-owning families (HRI, 2006: 6).

In a similar vein, the LMDP project coordinator of the state government also denied any knowledge that police and government bulldozers had been deployed and dismissed the commissioner's claim of having ordered the demolition of some houses only in compliance with a court injunction as a "careless statement by some government officials." She denied that Makoko was part of the LMDP project and confirmed that the state government was taking a critical look into the evictions (HRI, 2006: 6). One year after the demolitions, Makoko evictees are yet to be relocated and the state government has neither made known the findings nor taken action after its investigations.

Conclusion

The Maroko experience, like many others in Nigeria, are examples of state excess in so-called populist programs or rehabilitation or sedentarization of the citizenry. The Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights has defined forced eviction as the permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families, and communities from the homes or lands that they occupy, without the provision of, or access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection. Forced

evictions deprive people of their homes and constitute a gross violation of the rights to health, education, earning a living, privacy, and the right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment (UNCESCR, 1997: 4). If evictions must be carried out, they should meet the criteria of consultation with the affected people, adequate and reasonable notice, provision of legal remedies and reasonable alternative settlements, among others (4).

Evictions in Nigeria have constructed greater "slums" in social living than the physical slums demolished. Compensation has not, in many cases, followed evictions and while many have lost what they struggled to acquire from the pittance of daily earnings, some resettled "fortunate" ones have to contend with harsher social realities. In both cases, evictees have had to face worse conditions with worse shelter, worse roads, no schools, no clinics, no running water, poor or no electricity supply, untidy surroundings, bad sewage systems, and few available pit-latrines in their ramshackle government resettlements. Out of the 300,000 evicted from Maroko, only 2,682 have been "fairly" resettled, without any form of compensation. They pay for all the "available facilities" in the new areas.

The problems created by evictions in Nigeria, like other parts of the Third World, have increased the attention of the United Nations and other international organizations in recent times. The UN now considers forced eviction as a gross violation of human rights. Sixteen years after the evacuation of Maroko, Ajegunle, Ajiran, Ajangbadi, Okokomaiko, Abule Egba, Igbo-Efon, Agege Motor Road, and Ipodo, many other slums are still in existence. This simply corroborates the fact that the "policy" of evacuations was selective and had political economy undertones. But the poor and their children have had to resort to petty trading, hawking water, renting out wheelbarrows as beds, hawking food, beverages, wristwatches, and puff-puff along the busy Lagos express roads, underage children washing pedestrians' feet in the muddy markets of rainy Lagos for a token, black market sales of petroleum products, and such other menial work. The evictions and abandonment of evictees to their own plight by the government thus expands the spatial economy of abjection in Lagos state and, indeed, Nigeria. The ultimate effect of this is the exposure of Lagos to housing, environmental, economic, and social dangers. Lagos keeps increasing in size as a result of the migration of fortune seekers into it, thus overcrowding the city and encouraging the upsurge of slums. Crime escalates as a result of evacuations without preventive measures or resettlement policies.

The outright demolition of slums is not developmental, but antidevelopmental because it only increases the problem of housing and the associated challenges and creates new ones as evident in the Maroko and Makoko resettlements. A redevelopment of slums into habitable towns

is more reasonably economical. The residents might be temporarily relocated to a nearby neighborhood for rapid work to commence after which they will be resettled on their old land. The Lagos state government needs to update its master plan. The one it used in the Maroko and Makoko demolitions was not only antiquated, but was also inaccurate as it still designates some developed areas like Agidingbi, Ikotun, Egbe, Oworonsoki as slums (Vanguard, 2006: 3).

Finally, the state government, like other governments in Nigeria, can seek the assistance of the World Bank to carry out pilot upgrading schemes during which slums can be turned into habitable settlements through the construction of blocks of low cost flats (it may even be the typical Nigerian "face me, I face you" housing), provided with pipe-borne water, sewage and refuse disposal systems, electricity, and good roads. This is like redevelopment, but it involves more upgrading, which may not result in temporary relocation of residents.

However, while the political situation is unpredictable, a stable urban planning and development policy is required for a growing city like Lagos state and Nigeria generally. Such a policy should defy changes in government and, in actual fact, succeed them.

Finally, the Maroko case and the associated cases of evictions showcase the mutual constitution of "the social" and "the spatial" as underlying Lefebvre's understanding of contention. Argues Lefebvre:

> Sociopolitical contradictions are realized spatially. The contradictions of space thus make the contradictions of social relations operative. In other words, spatial contradictions "express" conflicts between sociopolitical interests and forces; it is only in space that such conflicts come effectively into place, and in doing so they become contradictions of space. (1991: 365)

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"Rotten English": Excremental Politics and Literary Witnessing

Sarah L. Lincoln

This chapter explores the language and literature of abjection in Nigeria. In his 1985 novel *Sozaboy*, writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa experimented with a form of literary language that he thought could best articulate the experiences, sufferings, and desires of those populations constituted as excessive, useless, and disposable by the Nigerian state. This language, which he called "Rotten English," expresses linguistically and narratologically the ways in which the Nigerian state fails to adequately "represent" all its citizens. Claude Levi-Strauss (1961: 386) classified societies as "anthropophagic" or "anthropoemic," depending on whether they "consume" and assimilate, or remove, exclude, or "vomit" out their adversaries. In Saro-Wiwa's assessment, the Nigerian state features both tendencies, vampirically consuming the bodies and resources of its micro-minorities, by exploiting their oil resources and using ethnic conflict as an ideological "fix," only to excrete these remainders by abandoning them to a space where the law and the political are suspended. Critically indicting the disjuncture between the state's "big grammar" rhetoric of democracy, representation, and national unity, and its "rotten" or necropolitical exercise of power in the oil-producing regions, Saro-Wiwa argues that the fate of minority populations, like his own Ogoni, can be productively read as an exemplary case (the *example* as that which is *taken-out*) for understanding the nature and effects of sovereignty in his country.

Reading Saro-Wiwa's work, which bears witness to the abject conditions in which the Ogoni and other minorities suffer in the Nigerian state, it becomes clear that Nigerian sovereignty depends on the constitution and "inclusive exclusion" (Agamben, 1998: 8) of its minority populations,

those who are encompassed within its jurisdiction but refused recognition as political subjects and citizens. This excremental politics, wherein the state asserts its sovereign authority in and through a zone of exception in which citizens are subjected to the law only to be cast out (abjected), reduced to bare life and consigned to the status of animals, is articulated in Saro-Wiwa's view through the fragmented, "spoiled," and "rotten" language of testimony and the "rotten bodies" of its witnesses. Like these populations, subject to the law but not subjects of it, Rotten English "thrives on lawlessness, and is part of the dislocated and discordant society in which Sozaboy must live, move and have not his being" (Saro-Wiwa, 1996: "Author's Note"). It speaks, like Saro-Wiwa himself, in the voice of Nigeria's political minorities (ethnic and otherwise), confronting the state with its own excremental remainders in a gesture at once cathartic (in the original, excremental sense of that word) and melancholic. This is the work of literature in the context of Nigerian abjection: finding ways to *represent* what is otherwise *unrepresentable*, to speak in the voice of those who have no place from which to speak.

In 1985, it was *Sozaboy*'s narrator and protagonist who would serve as witness to this lawlessness; a decade later, the dismembered witness would be Saro-Wiwa, executed by hanging and doused with acid before being buried secretly in an unmarked grave. The 1995 execution of Saro-Wiwa and eight of his activist comrades by General Sani Abacha's military regime demonstrated with brutal and shameless intensity the necropolitical basis of Nigerian sovereignty: its claim to rule based on "the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die" (Mbembe, 2003: 11). Though best known in the West before his case drew international attention as the author of *Sozaboy*, Saro-Wiwa had spent the years leading up to his death as a vocal activist for social and environmental justice in the Niger Delta. Particularly concerned with the fate of his own people, the Ogoni, a "micro-minority" of 500,000 in a nation of 100 million, Saro-Wiwa deployed his status as a public intellectual to inspire national and international awareness of the genocidal effects of the "unconventional" ecological war being waged against the Ogoni by the joint forces of multinational capital and what he called "domestic colonialism" (Saro-Wiwa, 1992).

Oil, Sovereignty, and the Supplement in Postcolonial Nigeria

Oil was first discovered in the Niger Delta by Shell in 1958, a most significant year in Nigeria's postcolonial history. The launch of commercial oil exploitation in the Delta coincided, appropriately enough, with what appeared to be a "coming-together" of "some place called

Nigeria" (Saro-Wiwa, 1995: 237). After years of agitation, negotiation, and often violent conflict, Britain agreed in November of that year to acknowledge Nigerian independence, effective from October 1, 1960. Furthermore, 1958 also saw the publication of the first "postcolonial" Nigerian novel, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, which depicted the devastating effects of British legal, political, and cultural imperialism in southern Nigeria. This extraordinary coincidence of political, economic, and literary "developments" highlights—exemplifies, we might say—the entanglement of these forces that would shape postcolonial experience in Nigeria over the following half-century. The hanging of Saro-Wiwa in November 1995 brought these strands together again, in the desecrated corpse of the writer who was killed by the "emergency" government for his ecological activism against oil exploitation in the Delta. In the abject figure of this hastily buried body, we can identify the contradictions and crises that have shaken Nigerian sovereignty since its very beginnings, signifying (despite the executioners' last-ditch attempt to prevent the corpse from signifying) the impossibility of political subjectivity in a state that is fuelled by petroleum.

The exploitation of Delta oil resources by Shell, Chevron, and other transnational energy corporations over the past five decades has accrued unprecedented financial wealth to the Nigerian government, making it at times one of the richest in Africa. The oil "boom" of the 1970s flooded the country with "petro-dollars," conjuring shiny new buildings, ambitious infrastructural projects and social programs, and stimulating grandiose fantasies about Nigeria's imminent status as the very representative of African modernity (see Apter, 2005).[1] But the oil discovery has also fueled genocidal conflict, caused unimaginable environmental degradation, and provoked repetitive, increasingly brutal struggles over the access to the state apparatus and the nature of postcolonial citizenship within the country. Like any entropic system, the Delta oil industry produces a remainder, an *excess* that cannot be absorbed back into the system. Along with variously toxic "waste" products, which coat the surfaces of local soil and water and saturate the air, the process of oil extraction and global accumulation also produces "waste peoples" whose superfluity to the global economy is systemic and irreducible, and whose disposal constitutes what Giovanni Arrighi calls an "immanent organizational barrie[r]" to the continued "smooth" operation of energy corporations in indigenous regions throughout the world (2002: 330). The oil-producing regions of the Niger Delta are also, as it happens, among West Africa's most densely populated, largely by minority ethnic groups who subsisted for centuries on the periphery of Nigerian society by farming and fishing, and who now suffer the full effects of the "surplus" value extracted from their land by a coalition of global capital and domestic repression. Like their counterparts in Equatorial "third worlds" around the globe,

these most marginalized communities, excluded effectively from either political participation or economic advancement, yet impacted directly by both, in fact represent the "remnants" of postmodern global society, the subjugated nonsubjects upon whose bodies the new forms of sovereignty are most visibly inscribed.

By the 1990s, five decades of environmental degradation attendant upon the drilling ventures—including oil spills, gas flaring, acid rain, and erosion, among many others—had destroyed the traditional subsistence economies of the Ogoni and their neighbors, forcing communities off their land and provoking widespread malnutrition, disease, and destitution. The contamination of soil, air, and water by the "by-products" of oil exploitation translates, therefore, into an assault on the integrity of the group itself, which is thereby constituted, in Saro-Wiwa's analysis, as the abject site to and upon which the contradictions of modern citizenship and postmodern modes of accumulation are displaced. Though Nigeria's 1960 constitution allocated 50 percent of oil revenues to the regions from which they derive, Ogoni has seen virtually none of the approximately \$35 billion earned by Shell from Delta oil since 1958.[2] Despite the extraordinary surplus wealth extracted from its earth, most parts of the region have no schools, no hospital, no electricity, and still lack piped water, roads, and basic housing, though these are commonplace throughout much of the rest of the country—particularly regions that contribute little or nothing to the common purse. By 1995, almost 2,000 Ogoni had been killed directly and tens of thousands displaced by Nigerian military and police forces seeking to assure the "smooth" operation of the multinationals, whose activities had been interrupted by increasingly strenuous opposition from local communities. The suppression of local resistance (including assassinations, mass executions, and the wholesale burning of villages) became increasingly virulent during the mid-1990s, when the price of oil plummeted on the world market and the military regime faced growing illegitimacy at home.[3] Comprised largely of ethnic majority representatives from the north, west, and east, the Abacha regime had much at stake in resisting local claims for political and economic autonomy in the minority regions of the Niger Delta, and responded with growing viciousness to agitation by Saro-Wiwa and his Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) after 1993.

This was, however, more than simply an economic war. Nigeria had been, as Saro-Wiwa (1998: 334) noted, "put together by force and violence," and its survival had depended since its inception on the constitution of an internal other, a "micro-minority," upon whose exclusion, exploitation, and brutalization the ethnic majorities might exorcise their own antagonisms and sublimate the dangerously tentative foundations of Nigerian national citizenship. Though constituted as a federal system, in an effort to "integrate and mediate" the ethnic conflict that had grown

in virulence since the territory's circumscription in 1914 (see Graf, 1988), a succession of military regimes had sought, since 1966, to centralize and unify political and economic authority in the hands of the federal state. The virtually continual "state of emergency" under which military rule was declared and maintained effectively undermined the constitutional decentralization of power within Nigeria, assuring the unification and embodiment of political sovereignty in the figure of the military dictator.

As Saro-Wiwa makes clear, however, the Ogoni had long resisted being subsumed and assimilated by invasive outsiders, from slave traders to British imperialists, and so fiercely maintained their independence that they were labelled "cannibals" by their Delta neighbors. Though finally conquered by the British colonial government in 1914, the same year that "Nigeria came into being," the Ogoni never "ceded their sovereignty," remaining an inassimilable and troublesome element within the colony right up to independence (Saro-Wiwa, 1992: 15–17). The persistence of local and traditional forms of government and economy within the Nigerian nation-state, especially under military rule, thus at once undermined the process of imaginary transcendence ("nationalism") and individual interpellation by the central state ("citizenship"). Seen as "saboteurs" bent on destroying the nation by withholding essential oil resources and wilfully proclaiming their continued independence from the rest of Nigeria, the Ogoni were scapegoated in political and popular discourse, ethnically typecast as "scarcely human...Pygmies of a lower evolutionary order," and subjected to continued assaults. During the civil war, when the Ogoni found themselves caught between the Biafran secessionists and federal troops, the residents of oil-rich lands were subjected to ethnic violence from both sides; thousands were forced into refugee camps or military camps en route to the war front, where, as Andrew Apter describes, they were "used as cannon fodder" (1998: 126). The necropolitical warzone depicted in *Sozaboy* persisted after the war in Ogoniland, where military occupation made manifest the federal government's ongoing state of war with the minorities of the Delta. By the 1990s, the Ogoni were "reduced to virtual inmates" (149) on their own land, stripped of rights, legal or political recognition. Displaced from their land, and, "unlike the international corporation, [with] nowhere else to go" (Nixon, 2000: 111), poisoned by the pollution of their air, land, and water, and brutalized by the repressive apparatus of the federal state, they and other Delta communities were rendered superfluous to, unrepresentable in, and finally disposable to, the political economy of Nigerian nationhood.

Like most such struggles, however, the plight of the Ogoni and other micro-minorities in the Niger Delta passed for decades largely unnoticed, both in Nigeria and in the international media. The invisibility of

"the Ogoni tragedy" demanded a witness, and Saro-Wiwa assumed this "responsibility" as "*l'homme engagé*" (1995: 81) to deploy his status as public intellectual to bear witness to this "unconventional war." Like Pita Dumbrok in his 1988 story collection *Prisoners of Jebs*, Saro-Wiwa shares his people's imprisonment within the apparatus of the Nigerian state, yet manages to establish a kind of internal exteriority, a "shadow"-space, that allows him to observe and comment critically upon the conflicts that surround him (in Jebs Prison, a satirical allegory of military Nigeria, the journalist Dumbrok is suspended in a cage from a pole on the prison's parade ground).[4] The power of his testimonial efforts derives in part from his unique position as a member of this silenced minority *and* as a public intellectual with an international reputation—that is, in Agamben's (1999: 17) terms, as simultaneously *terstis* (a "third party" witness) and *superstes* ("a person who has lived through something, who has experienced an event from beginning to end and can therefore bear witness to it"). This juncture is itself a traumatic and traumatizing position from which the writer/witness must, nevertheless, speak:

> Writing this book has been one of the most painful experiences of my life. Ordinarily, writing a book is torture, a chore. But when, on every page, following upon every word, every letter, a tragedy leaps up before the eyes of a writer, he or she cannot derive that pleasure, that fulfilment in which the creative process often terminates.
>
> What has probably worsened the matter is that I have lived through most of the period covered by this sordid story. I knew, as a child, that period from 1947 when the Ogoni saw, for a few brief years, the possibility of extracting themselves from the cruel fate that seems to have been ordained for them. I watched as they went into decline.... Since then I have watched helplessly as they have been gradually ground to dust.... (Saro-Wiwa, 1992: 7)

Ken Saro-Wiwa speaks, therefore, from a *location* (in its earliest English sense of "marking the limits of a place") at once inside and outside this traumatic space, as a returned traveler (to invoke Walter Benjamin) whose recursive journeys beyond—and back to—the local facilitates his *translation* of that experience into "a struggle emblematic of our times" (Nixon, 2000: 110).[5]

Sozaboy: Necropolitics and the Excremental Subject

The question of witnessing to such an untranslatably local experience is one that Saro-Wiwa took up in his literary work before assuming the

responsibility in his person, and it is to such a literary example that we will now turn. *Sozaboy*, provocatively subtitled *A Novel in Rotten English*, engages the ambivalence of minority authorship and postcolonial citizenship through the narrative structures of an individual bildungsroman, a personal story with, we might say, allegorical resonances. Though published a decade before its author's execution by hanging, and although it is not explicitly concerned with the Ogoni struggle for political and environmental justice, the novel expresses many of the insights and preoccupations that would come to define Saro-Wiwa's political priorities. Reading *Sozaboy* today, more than a decade after its author's voice was silenced, we find that the novel proleptically voices—echoes—Saro-Wiwa's political philosophy, serving, like the activist himself, as another allegorical voice for the "drowned" victims of necropolitical sovereignty. *Sozaboy* contends, with melancholic prescience, that becoming a witness, in this context, entails becoming a sort of ghost: speaking as one who is neither fully alive nor completely dead. At the novel's end, its protagonist and narrator is accused of being a ghost, haunting his hometown out of melancholic grief for the loved ones he has lost; reading the novel in a certain light, we can see this "living dead" remnant, the one who lives to tell the tale but must become an exile to do so, as indeed a kind of melancholic ghost—a literary revenant that speaks in the voice of another, keeping alive in suspended, literary time the hopes, struggles, and expectations of Saro-Wiwa himself.[6]

The story tracks the journey of a young, semiliterate apprentice driver from youthful idealism to disillusionment alongside the nascent Nigerian democracy's descent into military dictatorship and genocidal civil war in the late 1960s. Mene's decision to leave his small rural community, Dukana, and to join the Nigerian military, motivated largely by an admiration for the uniforms and the social prestige accorded "sozas" in the new regime, initiates a traumatically recursive series of departures and returns, each punctuated by increasingly extreme encounters with violent assault, liminal survival, and the diasporic disintegration of organic communities. On his journey through the underworld of the civil war, as he tries to return home and searches fruitlessly for his mother and wife who have been displaced by the conflict, Mene narrowly survives many situations—air raids, sniper attacks, exposure, torture, and mass executions—that gradually kill his friends, neighbors, comrades, and family. By the novel's end, Mene has lost everything: his wife and mother are reported killed; his home and village have been destroyed by federal troops; and his traumatized surviving neighbors, fearing that he is a "ghost," have driven him away into a state of permanent exile. His narrative functions as a testimonial account of this devastating entry into the modern, traumatic time of the nation-state and the excessive, entropic *loss* that it produces.

Mene dreams of becoming a lorry driver, an occupation that he expects would provide not only financial security (and attendant social status) but also the mobility and epistemological sophistication he associates with urban modernity. The truck that carries passengers and cargo between Dukana and Pitakwa is christened "Progres," a moniker that points simultaneously to the expectations for "development" stimulated by petroleum-fuelled economies, and, with its abbreviated (mis-)spelling, to the impossibility of ever arriving at that destination. And indeed, while his work gives Mene the opportunity to learn English and many other "new things," his dream of attaining his license and becoming a fully qualified driver is perpetually deferred, even before the outbreak of war interrupts his apprenticeship. The *bildungs*-plot he envisions for his life is, like his country's own "development," perpetually suspended and even degraded: instead of upward mobility, self-knowledge, and self-possession, the novel closes with Mene having lost everything, feeling less sure about the world and his place in it, and conscious only of the way that modernity "spoils" as much as it improves. The novel hints at this early on: the truck "Progres," the literal and figurative vehicle for Mene's great expectations, frequently "spoils" (12) and sits idle in the garage much of the time, leaving the now-unemployed apprentice driver to fend for himself as a freelance porter, loading "other people motor" (12): an ironic reminder of the domestic petroleum shortages and increased foreign dependence that resulted, instead of the promised "progress," from Nigeria's oil "boom."

In this introductory episode, we are also introduced to a figure that will feature repeatedly in Saro-Wiwa's narrative: petro-modernity's figurative, and ultimately ideological, transformation of human beings into animals, a move that eventually serves to justify their genocidal extermination. While waiting for his truck to be repaired, Mene often visits the "African Upwine Bar" in Diobu, a district of Pitakwa known as "New York" because it is so densely populated. In fact, Mene muses, the "plenty" people who live in Diobu are "Like cockroach. And true true cockroach plenty for Diobu too. Everywhere. Like the men. And if you go inside the African Upwine Bar, you will see plenty cockroach man and proper cockroach too" (13). The bar itself is nicknamed "Mgbaijiji, which mean to say the place can bring plenty fly" (13), and indeed the infestation of scavengers—human and animal—often makes it impossible to eat or drink during the day, when the flies are awake. But this witty reflection on the sordid conditions in the overcrowded slum also anticipates, more ominously, the genocidal assault that will soon be launched on the residents of Pitakwa and the rest of the Delta region, after the Biafran secession has rendered these populations ontological "enemies" of the federal state. The light-hearted abject imagery of this section, with flies and cockroaches feasting on the overcrowded poor who are

themselves designated as parasitical vermin, becomes increasingly serious and overpowering as the novel progresses. By the end, Mene's wartime experiences lead him to reflect bitterly on the necropolitical devaluation of Delta communities, designated saboteurs, parasites, or simply bodies to be exploited. Having watched hundreds "die just like ant or goat or chicken" (164), he himself fears being killed "like goat or rat or ant" (181) and at one point longs for death, "[b]ecause it is better to die and buried than to live like maggot as I am living now" (160).

This recognition of himself as a "maggot" not only acknowledges the absolute reduction of his humanity from "citizen" to "enemy" (158–159) and then to what Giorgio Agamben calls "bare life," but also indirectly signals the guilt and shame that Mene feels as a survivor—and as a Nigerian. Maggots survive by consuming the dead flesh of other living beings; Mene survives the war in part, to his shame, because of his mastery of the very petro-economy that has caused the war, destroyed his house, and killed everyone he loves (he is spared execution after his capture by federal forces once they learn that he can drive a truck). Moreover, the Nigerian state itself is similarly sustained, both in Mene's time and in Saro-Wiwa's, by its consumption of the "devil's excrement"[7] and its vampiristic exploitation of the land, resources, and physical bodies of Delta populations. Once again, we find Mene ironically serving as an allegorical correlative for the very state or nation that has cast him out: this "maggot," whose very existence poses an ontological threat to the Nigerian political economy, in fact represents—speaks for, and emblematizes—the abject failure of the national experiment. In contemplating the value of life as this sort of "maggot," Mene indirectly asks the anguished question posed by Saro-Wiwa himself, as he was led away from a third botched attempt to execute him: "What sort of a nation is this?" (Soyinka, 1997: 149). Is maggoty Nigeria itself worth saving, or would it be "better" for it "to die and be buried"?

While this is thus in certain respects a "national allegory"[8] that takes the form of an antibildungsroman—tracing a plot not of development (*bildung*) but degradation, abjection, and dislocation—*Sozaboy* is also explicitly framed as a work of testimony. Though he struggles with language and with the difficulties of representing the unprecedented traumas he undergoes, Mene constructs himself, throughout the novel, as a *witness*, the one who "see[s] all these things. And...other things" (103). He meets Agnes, his future wife, in the squalid African Upwine Bar, where she catches him looking at her "with the corner of my eye" (13). This looking "for corner-corner eye," a way of surreptitious seeing *from the side* (i.e., from the margins), is the constitutive gesture in a novel that struggles to find ways to represent the impossibility of witnessing to total war, excremental politics, and radical desubjectification: "Oh Jesus Christ son of God, the thing wey I see my mouth no fit talk am.... Oh, I

can never never forget what I saw that morning" (111). This is, in short, an experience that demands new ways of *seeing*, as well as new linguistic and representational strategies, as the basis of a new epistemological framework:

> If you *see* how all their eyes have gone inside their head, and all their hair have become palm oil colour and they have dirty dirty rag shirt and all their bones are shaking inside their body, *I am telling you*, if you see all these things, and you *think* about them very well, you will *know at once* that war is a very bad and stupid game. (151; emphasis added)

Mene's capacity as a witness—the one who returns from the grave to tell his story on behalf of those who cannot—is, like Saro-Wiwa's, a function of his status as outsider, one who is never fully at home. His hometown Dukana is itself a marginal community, "far away from any better place in this world" and relatively unaffected by the modern political and economic developments at work in the rest of Nigeria ("All the houses in the town are made of mud. There is no good road or drinking water. Even the school is not fine and no hospital or anything. The people of Dukana are fishermen and farmers. They no know anything more than fish and farm. Radio sef they no get. How can they know what is happening?" [4]). Mene himself is consistently identified as its similarly marginal representative, whose ability to bear witness rests precisely upon his abject liminality—the single, isolated survivor who escapes, time and again, the destruction of his companions. He is, of six siblings, "the only one still alive" (56), and his mother's "only son." He narrowly survives the annihilation of his army unit, the execution of his fellow prisoners-of-war, and, finally, the destruction of Dukana itself, driven away from the village "like person wey get leprosy because I have no town again" (181). He comes to see himself as inhabiting what Agamben (1999) calls a "grey zone" between life and death, repeatedly returning from the "dead" ("I don't know how long I die. But I think I die for very very long time" [113]) and causing great consternation among his former neighbors, who think he is dead, when he finally returns to Dukana after the war. Though they had urged him to "return" when he first joined the army, the villagers are unable to reassimilate the melancholic "living dead" and plot to kill him "proper" in an effort to appease his ghost, who, they fear, "must move round like porson wey no get house until they bury him like proper man" (180).

The course of Mene's life from his youthful dreams in his remote fishing village, to his state of permanent exile at novel's end, thus describes the contradictions of postcolonial citizenship for minority subjects like Saro-Wiwa's Ogoni. He is drawn irrevocably into the jurisdiction of nationalist sovereignty, interpellated by the "big grammar" and spectacular

uniforms of the soldiers who visit his village, but finds in the end that he is incorporated only to be excluded and once again cast out. (Similarly, as Andrew Apter explains, the Ogoni were refused neutrality in the civil war; rounded up and deported to camps, thousands of these "disposable" people were sent to the front as "cannon fodder"). Having become disillusioned with the army and its nationalist ideals (whether Biafran or federal), he understands that his status as a soldier has as little value as the civilians who are being massacred. Like them, and like the natural resources that are fueling the war, he is simply more fodder for the rapacious sovereign regime, ready to be devoured and then excrementally discarded: "And then I will remember that war is useless nonsense and all this uniform and everything is just to cause confusion and make porson fine like goat that they have make fat and ready to kill for chop during Christmas" (127). This excremental tendency is expressed in the novel in figures like the federal bombers ("As the aeroplanes shit, na so porson wey die" [31]), and in the corrupt commanding officer of Mene's unit, who not only steals food and other consumables intended for the soldiers, but also forces Mene's friend Bullet to drink a bottle of urine as punishment for his insubordination. The shame this inflicts on a formerly dignified soldier destroys Bullet as effectively as the "shit" bomb that later ends his life. After this, Mene's "life begin spoil" (111), confirming his early suspicion that the foxholes he and his comrades are made to dig are symbolically, and perhaps literally, their graves: that becoming a soldier merely materializes the minority's status as the living dead. It is this recognition that confirms Mene's status as the "enemy" of the Nigerian state, regardless of which side he finds himself on. The ideological arguments swelling the ranks of Biafran and federal troops at the beginning of the war have fallen away by this point, revealing the starkly necropolitical forces at the heart of the conflict: who belongs and who is an enemy; who can be "at home," and who must be banned? In the state of exception that is the civil war, everyone is potentially an enemy, "everyone is bare life and homo sacer for everyone else" (Agamben, 1999: 106). As one compatriot warns Mene, "everybody is enemy in this our war" (137).

The model of sovereignty depicted in *Sozaboy* reflects Saro-Wiwa's analysis of Nigeria as an excremental state, one that displaces its fundamental contradictions onto the very micro-minorities that it consumes and then eliminates. In the absence of any historical, identitarian, linguistic, or consensual foundation, the Nigerian sovereign depends, in Saro-Wiwa's shrewd assessment, on its right to exception—to except, ban, and abject those that it declares to be its enemies. In *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Agamben identifies the werewolf as a crucial figure for understanding modern sovereignty, describing the werewolf's origins in the bandit whose expulsion from the polis marks him as a "man without peace," one considered already dead and thus available for harm (104–105). Expelled

from villages, camps, and other spaces of sovereignty, Mene repeatedly takes refuge in the "bush," a space of geographical alterity that terrifyingly embodies, in the Nigerian popular and literary imaginary, the "state of nature" to which the nation threatens to return, and the "bare" animal life to which humans are reduced in such a state. The ban effectively *abandons* the citizen to the state of nature beyond the city walls, rendering him neither human nor fully animal, subject to the law but excluded from its jurisdiction ("lawless"), alive but not fully *living*: "every soza man life is ye ye. Every soza is a dead body" (109). The terror provoked by Mene's return to his village stems from false reports of his death in the war: villagers regard him as a "ghost," and he sees himself on several occasions as having returned from the dead, only to face the prospect of imminent death once again. Like the werewolf, or another constitutive figure for Agamben—the Muselmann of Auschwitz—Mene's living body belies the fact that he is politically dead: "zombified" (see Comaroff and Comaroff, 2002). Like those he encounters in the refugee camp, which he first fears is "the town of ghost, or ghost town" (148), he is "rotten," "dirty," "rubbish," a man without peace regarded by the state alternately as a "goat" to be consumed, a "cockroach" to be exterminated, or a "wolf" to be hunted down.[9]

But unlike Agamben's Muselmänner,[10] and unlike the "rubbish people" of the refugee camp, Mene has a voice and a story to tell. Like Saro-Wiwa himself, being a witness reclaims Mene's humanity, his sense of himself as a subject, both of which the necropolitical state refuses him. It is impossible for him to be a "man" as a minority subject. Before he joins the army, the humiliation of civilians at the hands of female soldiers leads Mene to ask "Am I a man or what?" (54); later, federal troops threaten to cut off his tongue along with his genitals, an implicit acknowledgment of the state's symbolic castration of those subjects who are denied a voice (124). But if "all the Dukana people are like beetles fighting slow slow with one big piece of smelling shit," a fight expressed in the absolute, deathly *silence* of the refugee camp at night (157), Mene too has an excremental struggle to articulate, and it is his refusal to stay silent that prevents his complete subsumption by the "compost pit" of minority life. The testimonial imperative that sustains Mene after his loss of everything and everyone that has given meaning to his life is explicitly identified, in the novel, as an excremental act. Having returned to his village, which is attempting to rebuild itself while shamefully repressing memories and traces of its wartime experiences (like the bodies of those who are dying of cholera or dysentery, buried secretly at night outside the boundary of the community), Mene is viewed as an unwelcome and indeed dangerous reminder of their own reduction to abject bare life in the "compost pit" of the refugee camp from which they have recently returned. His plaintive calls for his lost mother and wife and insistence on returning to his

home despite reports of his death—his refusal to let the past die and be "bury proper" (180)—contrasts strikingly with the constipated silence of his former neighbors on the subject of the war. Fearing the consequences of cathartic testimony, they accuse him of bringing a "new juju disease [that] will just make porson go latrine plenty times and then the porson will die" (180).

Rotten English: National Allegory and the Language of Abjection

While Benjamin differentiates "storytelling" as an organic, communal narrative form, from the novel's modern "isolation," *Sozaboy* can be seen as an attempt to reconcile the two, or, at least, as a meditation on the social, political, and economic contexts that inform the historical translocation of story into novel. Dukana is, from the start, presented as a community in which storytelling performs a vital social function. The town's four elders—Dukia, Bom, Kole, and Zaza—we learn, do not work in any traditional sense but exist on the fringes of the precapitalist economy, dependent on the generosity of the villagers: their "work in Dukana is to talk and knack tory [tell stories]" (23). Their stories serve as the community's memory[11] ("Anything [Kole] sees he cannot forget" [23]), as commentaries on current events, and as speculations about the future, which seems positively utopian at the novel's start:

> All the nine villages were dancing and we were eating plenty maize with pear and knacking tory under the moon. Because the work on the farm have finished and the yams were growing well well. And because the old, bad government have dead, and the new government of soza and police have come.
>
> Everybody was saying that everything will be good in Dukana because of the new government....Everybody was happy because from that time, even magistrate in the court at Bori will begin to give better judgement. And traffic police will do his work well well. Even one woman was talking that the sun will shine proper proper and people will not die again because there will be medicine in the hospital and the doctor will not charge money for operation.... (1)

Saro-Wiwa's glossary to *Sozaboy* translates "knack" as both "talk" and "throw," and it is clear from these early narrative encounters that traditional storytelling in Dukana is in fact a form of projection, of casting what Benjamin calls the "communicability of experience" (1969: 86) across time and space. It is, in other words, a form of *translation*, in its etymological sense, a way of carrying experience from one *place* to another.

As the civil war devastates Dukana, however, these storytellers prove increasingly ill-equipped to "translate" these new experiences via traditional narrative forms. Bom and Duzia escape forced evacuation and remain in Dukana, where Mene finds them hiding as scavengers on his first return to the village. He is desperate for information about his wife and mother, but receives from these elders only "different stories," conflicting accounts that destroy his faith in traditional storytelling and its power to mediate the traumas of the new world. They are, like the "big grammar" speeches he heard on the radio and from military commanders before the war, "all lies. Many many lies" (146). Duzia and Bom are isolated, left behind in their rural village, while their neighbors are transported with brutal intensity into the sphere of modern sovereignty—the refugee camp—and their stories are, therefore, unable to render truthfully the "incommensurable" gap between tradition and modernity. Zaza, whose account of his wartime experience in Burma helped inspire Mene's decision to join the army, is similarly marginalized, and his stories no longer contain the explanatory or proverbial power they once had. They are now simply descriptions of horrific suffering, exile, and death that cannot provide the "counsel" that Mene seeks: "what he was telling me truly make me want to cry because I cannot know why Dukana people will suffer like say God have sent them punishment because of some bad thing that they have done before this time" (146).

Mene's oral-novel, therefore, emerges from the ruins of community-based storytelling as a response to the failure of traditional narrative, like Bom and Duzia, to account for modern, traumatic experience. The constituent moment being depicted by Saro-Wiwa here is not only political, but aesthetic as well; *Sozaboy* depicts the emergence of Nigerian novelistic discourse—a process that, as Walter Benjamin points out, necessitates the traumatic deracination of the storytelling subject.

> The birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual, who is no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concerns, is himself uncounselled, and cannot counsel others. To write a novel means *to carry the incommensurable to extremes* in the representation of human life. In the midst of life's fullness, and through the representation of this fullness, the novel gives evidence of the profound perplexity of the living. (Benjamin, 1969: 87, emphasis added)

Though the narrative begins with "knacking tory under the moon" and with Mene's "naive relationship with the storytell[ing]" elders (Benjamin, 1969: 97), it ends on a distinctly writerly note ("Believe me yours sincerely" [181]), marking the shift from traditional to modern forms of narrative that has been necessitated by the thoroughly modern "perplexity" of contemporary experience.

This new narrative form demands a new representational language. As its "Author's Note" suggests, *Sozaboy* is a novel deeply concerned with language and its implication in forms of power and resistance. Saro-Wiwa describes "rotten English," the unusual linguistic register in which Mene tells his story, as "a mixture of Nigerian pidgin English, broken English and occasional flashes of good, even idiomatic English. This language is disordered and disorderly.... It thrives on lawlessness, and is part of the dislocated and discordant society in which Sozaboy must live, move and have not his being." This is, in short, a language of the margins, a synthesis of two dominant linguistic forms (pidgin English, the creole lingua franca of colonial and postcolonial West Africa, and "good, even idiomatic English") with an intangible supplementary element that is related, but irreducible, to either: namely, "broken English." The slippery signifying power of this hybrid form, its "disorderl[iness]," serves as a counter to the repressive regimentation of formal linguistic registers, the "big big grammar" associated in the novel with modern state authority and nationalist ideology: "Before before, the grammar was not plenty and everybody was happy. But now the grammar begin to plenty and people were not happy. As grammar plenty, na so trouble plenty. And as trouble plenty, na so plenty people were dying" (3).

Though figured by outsiders as babble, as nonspeech, the "rotten" English that is Mene's unique invention, a response to the traumatic collision of indigenous and imported linguistic forms, in fact functions as an unconscious, even bodily, language of testimony:

> "Well, we found you in the bush. You have almost dead because of hunger and tiredness, and your body have blown up like big dead fish floating on water and you cannot talk." […]
> "True?" I asked.
> "Oh yes. You were talking mambo-jambo like stupid idiot goat." Mambo-jambo. I like that word. Mambo-jambo. And this is what I was talking when I came to the hospital the first time.
> "Terrible," I said. (119)

"Rotten" language, or "mambo-jambo," is, as this passage suggests, the only appropriate way to bear witness to the "terrible" destruction, the "rot and shame" (Saro-Wiwa, 1993: 18) that pervades postcolonial Nigerian society.

It is also, importantly, a language of the refugee camp, a form of expression that testifies in its very form to the "compost heap" of "useless" people who have been "thrown off" (to return to Marx and Engels) by the competing forces of nationalist modernity and the oil economy that underwrites it. Like Saro-Wiwa's own Ogoni, who suffered terribly during the Biafran war, Mene's people have no stake in the conflict that

consumes them. They are neither "friend" nor "enemy," simply disposable nonsubjects gathered together by the competing war machines in order to be cast out—abjected. If the "big grammar" of sozas and politicians speaks the language of national allegory, Mene's "rotten English" testifies on behalf of the politically abject, those who are unseen and unrecognized by the state and its literary tongues. Once again, Mene must find the words to represent the unrepresented—indeed, the unrepresentable. Searching in vain for his wife and mother, whom he believes to have been driven away from Dukana by the approach of war, Mene wanders through a series of refugee camps populated by a seemingly infinite ("incalculable") mass of "people that they have throway like rubbish" (148). Though the sight of so much suffering defies even Mene's expressive abilities, he is once again compelled to journey, almost against his will, "from one camp to another," "looking and looking," and forced thereby to confront the *limits* of his capacity to see and to articulate.

After two years of searching for his family, Mene's eventual encounter with the limit point of modernity, this "human compost heap," is—like the natural world that marks the boundary of human (civil) society in Nigerian discourse—thoroughly sublime: "If I think I have seen black forest or black swamp before, it is lie. Because the only black forest or black swamp in this world is Urua [refugee camp]. So many people, oh God! And all of them put together in one wide open space" (150). As a sublime, the problem of the refugee camp is also, of course, distinctly linguistic, and the camp indeed constitutes a new and disorienting "Babel" ("And everybody was just talking different different language as I was going around looking and looking and asking" [150]) that finds expression in Mene's "rotten English." Like his language, these refugees are pinned between dominant political forms and antagonistic majority ethnic groups, wrenched from their traditional communities into brutal modernity and rendered "useless," "rotten," literally *abject*: "It is like all the Dukana people are like beetles fighting slow slow with one big piece of smelling shit" (157). They have been reduced, along with Mene and his fellow "sozas," to animals ("By this time, I am like dead goat only I never begin smell" [122]), their humanity punctured and transformed by the penetrating power of modern sovereignty. This "novel in Rotten English" is, therefore, a national *allegory* in the deepest sense of that word: a way of speaking the postcolonial nation in and through the "voice of its other," its abject, excluded inclusion.

Though it is, finally, isolating, exilic, and traumatizing, his very supplementarity is in fact what enables Mene to bear witness, to look "for corner-corner eye" at what could not be seen either from within or from outside the experience. This includes not only the material signs of destruction, exploitation, and unprecedented suffering, but the *gaps*,

the empty spaces that attest to untraceable loss, and which appear to go unnoticed by the other survivors: "As I was going, I looked at the place where my mama house used to stand. And tears began to drop like rain from my eyes" (181). He testifies, therefore, like Saro-Wiwa, as simultaneously *terstis* and *superstes*—as, quite literally, the remnant, who mediates the irreducible disjuncture between living and dead, survivor and victim, through a new form of "rotten" narrative.[12]

The refugee camp, then, and its ethnic-minority occupants, marks in the novel a complex node of limit points—the failure of traditional narrative, dominant linguistic forms and ways of seeing, as well as the boundary of postcolonial citizenship as it is constituted in modern sovereignty. It is, in every sense, a space of *exception*, populated by exceptional subjects inscribed by power yet, once again, relentlessly excluded from it. Giorgio Agamben (1998) theorizes the camp as the paradigmatic form of modern sovereignty; the refugee camp, like the civil war that produced it, is here an expression of the crisis into which the postcolonial state entered soon after "independence" and from which it has, in Nigeria's case, never really emerged. The *nomos* of the camp in this novel exemplifies the exceptional status of the Delta region more broadly, with its "dirty people" who are "inmates" in their own land. This refugee camp is in short a geospatial expression of the *critical* structure of Nigerian sovereignty, "the sign of the system's inability to function without being transformed into a lethal machine" (112). The "rubbish people" of these camps, like Saro-Wiwa's Ogoni, are the inassimilable by-product of the entropic conflict that accompanies the constitution of the postcolonial nation-state, and indexical remnants of the excremental petro-economy on which that national project is constituted.

Notes

1. For more on the cultural effects of the petro-dollar (or "petro-naira") boom and its inflationary aftermath, see also Barber (1982); Wenzel (2006); and Lincoln (forthcoming). The work of Michael Watts also provides an essential introduction to the political, economic, and cultural crises induced by Nigeria's oil economy; for one valuable example, see Watts (2008).
2. The Delta region's share of the oil revenues decreased steadily once commercial exploitation began, reaching a low in 1992 (the year Saro-Wiwa published his *Genocide in Nigeria*), when the formation of the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) reduced the state's allocation to 1 percent. The 2000 constitution restored the Delta share of oil revenues to 13 percent. See Edevbie (2000).
3. The price per barrel of oil reached a 20-year low in 1994, sinking under $15 for the first time since 1973.

4. Dumbrok's story ends rather more happily than Saro-Wiwa's: when Jebs Prison sinks beneath the weight of its own corruption, Dumbrok is the only survivor to return from the sea to a "new Nigeria."

5. Saro-Wiwa traveled frequently abroad, including several trips to plead the Ogoni cause before the United Nations and other nongovernmental activist bodies.

6. This melancholic effect arises, in part, from the temporal disjunctures that frame the novel and its reception. Though written in the mid-1980s, *Sozaboy* is set almost 20 years before, between 1967 and 1970. It not only anticipates the events of 1993–1995 that culminated in Saro-Wiwa's death at the hands of the Nigerian military but also looks back to two other crucial moments in the history of Nigerian statehood: the oil-fueled civil war of the 1960s, and the return of military dictatorship in 1985 (the year of *Sozaboy*'s publication), at a time when the collapse of world oil prices was cementing the increasingly evident failure of the country's grand aspirations for itself as the vanguard of African modernity. The novel thus embeds, within its deep structure, the simultaneity of expectation and disillusionment, belonging and exile, that defines Nigerian experience after 1958.

7. "I call petroleum 'the devil's excrement.' It brings trouble.... The [oil money] hasn't brought us any benefits.... We are drowning in the devil's excrement." Juan Pablo Perez Alfonso, founder of OPEC, in 1976. Cited in Watts (1994: 406).

8. In 1986, Fredric Jameson controversially claimed that "all third-world texts are necessarily...allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*" (69).

9. Saro-Wiwa's depiction of minority subjects as "cockroaches" to be exterminated eerily anticipates a later necropolitical crisis of African sovereignty. Before the outbreak of genocidal violence in Rwanda during 1994, the state-sponsored media, including Radio Mille Collines and the newspaper *Kangura*, prepared the way with its campaign of genocidal rhetoric, calling for the "extermination of all Tutsi cockroaches" and their Hutu sympathizers. See, among other sources, Mamdani (2002: 212).

10. Significantly, the figure known in Auschwitz as the "Muselmann" was known in Majdanek camp as "*Gamel*," possibly from the German *gammeln*: rotten or dead (in the sense of wasted: "dead time").

11. "Memory is the epic faculty *par excellence*. Only by virtue of a comprehensive memory can epic writing absorb the course of events on the one hand and, with the passing of these, make its peace with the power of death on the other." (Benjamin, 1969: 97).

12. In this sense, we could say that Mene's—and Saro-Wiwa's—testimonial narrative functions as the kind of liminal rite identified by Arnold van Gennep and theorized by Victor Turner. In their terms, and like other subjects undergoing less life-threatening "threshold" experiences (like marriage, birth, and death), Mene the exile or werewolf here occupies a "liminal" symbolic space outside of "society" as he had previously known it. Storytelling here, therefore, functions as one form of ritual practice that helps manage and *economize* the instability and indeterminacy associated with threshold experiences. See Van Gennep (2004) and Turner (1995).

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The Perils of Protest: State Repression and Student Mobilization in Nigeria

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The cost of liberty is less than the price of repression.

—*W.E.B. Dubois*

Introduction

Student protest is not unique to Nigeria. Students are one of the most vocal groups in countries all over the world, and student protests and demonstrations are experienced in all the continents of the world. Students, especially university students, carry out protests and demonstrations to show their dissatisfaction over diverse issues (Smith, 1968; Brickman and Lehrer, 1970; Ericson, 1975; Lipset, 1993). In various parts of the world, their protests have even resulted in ousting or shaking up governments. In 1968, violent protests by students in France almost ousted the government of President Charles de Gaulle, and in fact, he eventually had to step down from office the following year. In July 1988, the prime minister of Burma had to step down after 26 years in power as a result of 2 months of student protests (Lintner, 1988: 18–19). Also, in South Korea in 1987, student protests forced the government to conduct elections, which resulted in a significant political change.

In Africa, student bodies have been a significant political force, evident in the roles that they play either individually as student bodies or as part of civil society groups in various struggles for social and political transformation in Africa. In fact, much of the success of democratization in Africa is owed to the pivotal role played by civil society groups including university students through the use of protest, demonstrations,

and debates about issues that are considered out of bounds by the state. Therefore, the state appears to feel threatened by their protests and repeatedly overreacts in suppressing demonstrations, often using lethal force as well as large-scale arrests.

Furthermore, during the 1980s and early 1990s, the African continent witnessed an immense clamor for political, social, and economic changes by civil society groups in the face of oppression and repression. University student associations were at the forefront of this clamor serving as a major source of pressure and protest against various authoritarian regimes in Africa. In Nigeria, due to a combination of factors including size, internal cohesion, good organization and networking, and its status as a "social-layer-in-transition, the student body constituted the most powerful group in the political life of Nigeria since juridical independence, and it has usually been the most feared by successive governments" (Amuwo, 1995: 12). The students have been at loggerheads with state security agencies on issues that concern the well-being of the whole nation, and have maintained a notable degree of independence from the state. However, this opposition to the state usually comes at a price. February 1, 1971 will go down in the history of Nigeria as the watershed of organized protest in Nigerian universities, as it marked the beginning of killings during student protests in Nigeria.

Anchored on the grievance theory, this chapter aims to explore the manifestation, nature, and consequences of student protests in Nigeria during the military regimes. It examines the dangers students are exposed to as a result of organized student protests in Nigeria, particularly during the military regimes of the 1980s and 1990s. The main focus is on military regimes because state repression during military regimes is usually greater than under civilian administrations largely because the military in power is able to freely utilize the state as machinery of coercion and is able to suppress and repress dissent more successfully. The chapter analyzes the various encounters of the students with the state as it relates to the excesses of the Nigerian state, and also examines the changes in the effectiveness of mobilization of Nigerian students by the student movement over the years.

Conceptual Clarifications: Protest, Student Protest, and Repression Protest

The Random House Dictionary (1967)[1] defines protest as an expression or declaration of objection, disapproval, or dissent often in opposition to something a person is powerless to prevent or avoid. It connotes an airing of grievance(s), with the implication of an objection to specific issues. To Brown and Lewis (1998), "protest is a significant form of political

participation for many citizens, a recurring dilemma for political authorities, and a potential source of countervailing power for the least powerful in society."

All over the world, the instrument of protest is frequently employed in expressing grievances and as indicators of dissatisfaction. The grievance theory is, therefore, useful in analyzing student protests in Nigeria, as it views protest as a response to societal problems and unmet citizen grievances (Dalton and Sickle, 2005: 6). The theory argues that deprivation and dissatisfaction stimulate protest. According to Boulding (1967: 50),

> Protest arises when there is strongly felt dissatisfaction with existing programs and policies of government or other organizations, on the part of those who feel themselves affected by these policies but who are unable to express their discontent through regular and legitimate channels, and who feel unable to exercise the weight to which they think they are entitled in the decision-making process.

Thus, an act of protest includes the following elements:

- the action expresses a grievance, a conviction of a wrongdoing or an injustice;
- the protestors are unable to correct the condition directly by their own efforts;
- the action is intended to draw attention to the grievances;
- the action is further meant to provoke ameliorative steps by some target groups; and
- the protestors depend upon some combination of sympathy and fear to motivate the target group on their behalf. (Turner, 1969: 816)

Thus, in the case of student protests in Nigeria, the deplorable state of university infrastructure that is manifested in overcrowded lecture and residential halls, and a myriad of other problems facing the university as a result of underfunding often spawn the incessant protests that have come to characterize the nation's universities.

Protests can manifest themselves in various forms. These include lecture boycotts, processions, civil disobedience, legal challenges, strikes, sit-ins, and cessation of public activities. Protests are most often peaceful, but sometimes, they do degenerate into riots, particularly if the protesters are not satisfied with the response received from the concerned authorities.

Student Protest

Nkinyangi (1991: 158) defines student protest as "any incidents of student revolt or unrest, which constitute a serious challenge or threat to

the established order or to sanctioned authority or norms." There are broadly two causes of student protests. The first relates to campus-based issues, usually due to dissatisfaction with material resources and infra-structural facilities. These include food supply or provision, hall accommodation, water and electricity on campus, teaching and examination facilities, and proposed introduction of various fees in the universities. The second relates to reactions to the wider environment. These could be reactions to government policies and actions, the insensitivity of government to national issues, as well as in solidarity with other civil society organizations on societal issues.

Generally, student protests start off peacefully and as a reaction to campus-based issues, and they usually escalate due to a lack of proper handling by the university authorities. The protests are frequently unpredictable and can become highly confrontational, aggressive, and even violent, within and outside the campus. Looting and damaging of university property sometimes occur, and most often, the response of the university authorities or the government would be to call in security forces (police or armed forces as the case may be) to quell the unrest. On arrival, the security forces invade the campus to drive out the students from their lodgings. Confrontations between students and the security agents often result in bloodshed and significant damage to property often leaving a considerable number of students wounded, raped, or dead (Balsvik, 1998: 306).

Repression

Repression refers to "the use of governmental coercion to control or eliminate actual or potential political opposition" (Duff, 1976: 24–25). Also, Poe and Tate (1994: 5) define it as "coercive activities on the part of the government designed to induce compliance in others." And, according to Goldstein (1978), repression involves state actions manifested through official regulatory measures designed to discriminate grossly "against persons or organizations viewed as presenting a fundamental challenge to existing power relationships or key governmental policies." Thus, repression denotes the circumstance whereby the government is willing to use harsh, sustained force against ostensible domestic opponents and even the general population. Its manifestation includes the arrest of opposition leaders, torture, and murder.

Some studies argue that there is often a tendency for the state to respond to protest with repression (Skocpol, 1979; Meyer and Minkoff, 2004; Almeida, 2003) ostensibly because student protests in particular are seen as a direct threat to the political system. It is assumed that student protests are often a result of intense eagerness for social

transformation as well as their perceived role in society. These protests usually encounter resistance from the state and the university authorities, and this resistance greatly increases the militancy and force with which students push their protest thereby increasing the likelihood of violence both on the part of the students and the state.

The period this chapter is concerned with was characterized by gross suppression and violent repression. Each successive military regime employed security agencies to hunt down opponents and critics who dared to question the programs and actions of the government. Vocal members of civil society organizations were constantly harassed, arrested, and detained for varying lengths of time, and many were subjected to various inhuman treatments. Many associations were proscribed and deproscribed at will.

The Repressive Nature of the Nigerian State

As mentioned earlier, the various military regimes that have taken over power in Nigeria were synonymous with repression. However, this is not to suggest that civilian regimes were any better in the matter of human rights violations and repression in Nigeria. Under any type of regime in Nigeria, civil society organizations are subjected to oppression and repression as a result of the pressure they put on the state especially in their demand for the opening up of democratic space as well as in ensuring the well-being of their members. But under the military, repression is more glaring and vicious.

The repressive nature of the Nigerian state can be traced to the legacy left to the postindependent leaders by the British colonial masters. Like many other African states, the colonial state came into being through the instrumentality of foreign military force, and was administered by a combination of coercion and co-option. Its hegemony was excessively coercive so that it enjoyed little legitimacy. Given its primary objectives of subjugation and exploitation of the people, the colonial state relied on force and violence, especially due to its monopoly of the instruments of violence for the realization of its imperialist objectives (Olayode, 2005: 3–4). According to Alemika (1988: 164),

the colonial objectives were (to varying degrees during the phases of colonialism in Nigeria) prosecuted through organized governmental violence, vandalism and plunder on the part of the colonizers....The sundry administrative, coercive and surveillance organs (police, prisons, courts, tribunals, "native" authorities, Residents and District Officers) were established to prosecute, promote, and defend British imperialistic interests in Nigeria.

At independence, the Nigerian state underwent no qualitative or transformative restructuring (Enemuo and Momoh, 1999: 76). It remained "just like its colonial progenitor, an instrument of exploitation and suppression of the popular classes and a tool for primitive accumulation and class consolidation for the hegemonic groups."

The various military regimes that came into power since 1966 subjected the masses to intimidation, harassment and repression. The members of the academic community especially the academic and students were severally harassed by the military governments. The lackadaisical attitude of the military to education and members of the academic community has been attributed to lack of education among the military elite. Oyebade (2003: 258–260) pointed out that among the first crop of soldiers in the Nigerian military, only a handful of them, mostly from the south and the middle belt were educated. A large majority of the soldiers were not even high school educated, and many of them found themselves in the military, not because they had joined voluntarily, but because they were conscripted. Unfortunately, a large majority of those that directed the affairs of the nation came from the uneducated group. This largely accounted for the neglect of, and blatant disregard for, education.

Also, as a result of their inadequate education, the soldiers' understanding of power was simply the use of the gun to silence the public, most especially the lecturers and university students. Intimidation, harassment, disenfranchisement, and blackmail were the weapons used to suppress and repress them. The state also planted agents within the institutions to spy on students and university staff, and members of the university community pointed out by them were subjected to various forms of oppression. The state saw the university students especially as an obstacle to achieving its objectives. According to Adejumobi (2000: 205),

> the state and the dominant class perceive the student movement as an "irritant," "saboteur" or "anarchists," which must be daily controlled and if need be, ruthlessly suppressed. The state under SAP, with a heightened authoritarian profile, came to regard the students' movement as one of the vested interest groups which constitute an obstacle to the implementation of SAP, and all tactics must be deployed to attenuate its political strength and alter its popular identity. These tactics include repression, infiltration, co-optation and decimation.

Student Protests in Nigeria: Some Case Studies

Nigerian students have a long history of activism and protests dating back to the colonial period. Students have played an active role in influencing government actions and policies. During the colonial period, students

agitated for Nigeria's independence and subsequently have been a major force on Nigeria's political landscape. One of the earliest coordinated student protests after independence was against the Anglo-Nigerian Defence pacts in 1960. The pact would have meant the establishment of British military bases in the country, to restrict Nigeria's sovereignty and independence, to hamper her from assuming a more dynamic role in African and world affairs, and also to make Nigeria a tool of neo-colonialism. According to Idang (1970: 229), public opposition to the Defence Pact was strong and spontaneous:

> Protesting groups and individuals included labour organizations, particularly the two factions of the Nigerian Trade Union Congress; ideological groups such as the Zikist National Vanguard, the Nigerian Youth Congress, the Nigerian Socialist Group, the Nigerian Council for Africa, Pan-African Youth Movement, and the NCNC-NEPU Youth Association; university students' organizations, particularly the Nigerian Union of Great Britain and Ireland and the National Union of the Nigerian Students (NUNS); political parties and specific individuals.

According to Osita Okeke, the president of NUNS during the period,

> The Defence Pact granted Britain unlimited over flying rights across Nigerian territory. It did more, it also allowed British troops to be stationed in Nigeria and to be guaranteed landing rights within hours of the placement of a telephone call by the Prime Minister of Defence [*sic*] requesting such…What is more, the colonial masters now had an avenue for re-emergence-neo-colonialism and imperialism par excellence. (Obasanjo and Mabogunje, 1991: 35)

Hence, the student body organized a strong protest, which eventually led to the abrogation of the pact in 1962.

The student body also coordinated various demonstrations, boycotts of lectures, and protests over issues regarding government policies on education, the general welfare of Nigerian students, and some other issues that affected the society at large (Akintola, 2002: 95). For instance, in August 1963, the federal government initiated a proposal for a preventive detention measure and the abolition of the independent Judiciary Service Commissions, which had previously controlled the appointment of Nigerian judges. The move generated an outcry, and was denounced by the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) as a measure to starve out liberal democracy in Nigeria. In the absence of an independent judicial commission, it would be easier for the government to influence judicial processes, as well as to appoint its own stooges as judges. Students and other youth groups protested against this proposal, thereby forcing the government to abandon it (*West Africa*, 1963: 853–854, 871).

At this point in time, students were able to carry out protests without much fear of repression, largely because protests then were often peaceful, and they were usually able to reach a compromise with the relevant authorities without resorting to violence. Although, at one point, Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa stated that his government was determined to maintain law and order in the country at all costs and to use force where necessary (*Sunday Times,* November 6, 1960). This was in reaction to the protests that followed the proposed Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact.

However, as noted above, the killing of students during protests started in 1971. Since then, there have been many incidences of high-handedness of security forces in handling student protests in Nigeria. Below are some case studies for illustration.

1971 Student Protest at the University of Ibadan

The killing of students by law enforcement operatives called upon to control student protests started with the killing of Kunle Adepeju in 1971 at the University of Ibadan. The students had been protesting over feeding arrangements in Nnamdi Azikwe Hall, one of the university's halls of residence. The students had written a petition to the Vice Chancellor Prof. Adeoye Lambo, demanding that the manageress of the Hall cafeteria (Mrs. G.C. Apampa) be removed for alleged corruption, inefficiency, poor productivity, and poor public relations.

Dissatisfied with the nonresponse of the school authorities, the students decided to embark on a two-day hunger strike. When this proved ineffective, they embarked on a protest. The students claimed that because of Mrs. Apampa's close ties with the vice chancellor, he ignored their demands. The vice chancellor's response was to call in security forces to contain the protest. However, the security operatives handled the issue with extreme force using live ammunition against the protesting students, resulting in the death of Kunle Adepeju, a second-year agricultural science student and leaving many others injured. Vice Chancellor Prof. Lambo was alleged to have remarked after the incident:

> What exasperated me was the major complaint that they (students) were not given enough beer to drink with their meals. My reaction was most unsympathetic, considering the modest and sometimes poor homes from which many of the students had come and the fact that many young people of their age remained underprivileged. (Famuyiwa, 2004)

Despite the fact that a student was killed, no security agent was ever prosecuted. The manner at which the university authority handled the crisis demonstrated its high-handedness and authoritarian nature. Instead of dialoguing with the students in finding solution to the problem at hand, the university authority chose to ignore the students, and promptly invited the police to help in dispersing the protesting students.

1978 Student Protests

In 1978, the National Union of the Nigerian Students (NUNS) under the leadership of Segun Okeowo led Nigerian students in confrontations with the military government on a number of key issues: the funding of education, an increase in tuition and accommodation fees, and the presence of soldiers in schools to enforce discipline (Abati, 2005). The minister of education at the time, Col. Ahmadu Ali,[2] proposed a policy, whose implementation meant an increase in tuition, feeding, hostel, and administrative fees, and the scrapping of car loans for graduating students. According to Anise (1979: 75),

> A university room is now to cost N360 or N90 per student assuming four students per room—which cannot be said to be the most convenient way to live and study. The cost of food went up by 200 percent from N0.50 to N1.50 per day. In all, the cost of room and board alone rose to N495…This cost is now higher than the amount students used to pay to attend any university even before the government introduced free university tuition.

The demands made by NUNS included

1. The reformation and democratization of education;
2. Education should be a right and not a privilege;
3. Education should be made a popular commodity and not an exclusively elitist luxury;
4. Education should be compulsory and free at all levels.

There was a series of consultations between the students and the government between January and April 1978. However, no agreement was reached. When negotiations broke down between the two parties, the students embarked on a nationwide demonstration in 1978 tagged "Ali must go," calling for the removal of Col. Ali. The military government perceived the protests as an effrontery. It proscribed NUNS[3] and ordered the arrest and detention of Segun Okeowo. In the course of the protests, soldiers were deployed to the university campuses and they shot

and killed many students. One of those killed was Akintunde Ojo at the University of Lagos.

The effective mobilization activities of the NUNS ensured massive participation of Nigerian students and other members of the public especially youths in the protests. The association was able to effectively link educational issues with national issues making it possible for the public especially youths who were not in institutions of higher learning to identify with the students, perceiving the students as effectively articulating their interests, frustrations, and aspirations.

1986 Student Protests at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

On April 21, 1986, students of the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria embarked on a procession to commemorate students killed during the "Ali must go" nationwide protests of 1978. The fall out of the procession was a misunderstanding between the school authorities and the students, leading to the rustication of some student union leaders and the suspension of some others. In solidarity with those affected, the students organized a rally in protest on May 22, 1986.

The response of the school authorities was an invitation to the police to come and contain the protest. The clash between the police and the students resulted in the killing of 11 students by the police (*The Guardian [London],* May 27, 1986; *West Africa,* June 30, 1986). As a result of these killings, students embarked on nationwide solidarity protests in honor of those who had lost their lives. These protests enjoyed the support of various groups of people in the cities. The government's response was to ban the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), as well as to close down 9 of the country's 15 universities, which were not reopened until about 2 months later.

Anti-SAP Protests

The period between 1986 and 1991 was characterized by widespread protests, much of which was directed at the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) prescribed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The justification put forward for the introduction of SAP was that the program would stabilize the national currency; restructure and diversify the productive base of the economy and reduce overdependence on the oil sector; reduce the dominance of unproductive public sector investment and enhance the growth potential

of the private sector (Ibhawoh, 2000: 162). In fact, the Babangida regime promised that by the end of two years, SAP would have fundamentally transformed the national economy from a crisis-ridden, decadent, dependent, and disarticulated economy to a dynamic self-reliant and productive economy.

However, this dream proved far-fetched because instead of improving, the economy took a turn for the worst. The result was a drastic cut in educational budgets and funding to universities, increased inflation, devaluation of the Naira, and high rate of unemployment. The deepening crisis in education induced by SAP generated a serious contradiction. It reproduced various forms of resistance by staff and students in the schools, with the staff struggling against their deteriorating welfare and working conditions and the students embattled by their despicable accommodation facilities and learning environment (Adejumobi, 2000: 212).

As the nation's economy deteriorated, more and more anti-SAP protests were witnessed from various segments of civil society. They protested against an increase in the price of petroleum products, the excruciating effects of SAP, and the deteriorating conditions in the educational sector. In conjunction with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the students also protested against a loan of $120 million, which the Babangida regime negotiated for the universities with the World Bank. The secrecy of the negotiations and the terms on which it was to be disbursed were criticized, and also, the loan was perceived as an attempt to "recolonize" the Nigerian higher education system (Olukoshi, 1997: 464). The loan was to be for staff training, the purchase of equipment and books, and physical rehabilitation. However, part of the conditions attached to the loan were tough rules and policy prescriptions for educational reforms in Nigeria, which included the introduction of school fees as a means of raising revenue from nongovernmental sources, staff and course rationalization, and the phasing out of subdegree programs in Nigerian universities.

The students justified the protest against the loan by contending that SAP had brought untold hardship to them and their parents, and that accepting the conditionalities of the World Bank would totally destroy the already collapsing educational system in Nigeria. They saw the crisis being experienced in the universities as a direct consequence of the collapsing socioeconomy of the country. NANS noted that

> The people of Nigeria have witnessed consistently and almost on a yearly and continuous basis, protests, demonstrations, and other forms of crises. However, none has been as endemic and perennial as the crises in institutions of higher learning. Between 1985 to 1992, for instance, there occurred over three hundred major uprisings in various schools in the

country. In fact, only an Ostrich would argue that the crises in the educational institutions are not direct manifestations of the collapsing socio-economic structure of our time. (September 24, 1992)

Subsequently, the demand for the termination of military rule and a call for the restoration of democracy became the high points of these protests. The reaction of the state to this was to unleash repression on the students and other vocal civil society organizations. NANS was banned, and many student leaders were arrested, tortured, and detained. Some student leaders and vocal students were suspended for several years. Under Decree No. 2 of 1984, the NANS president Olusegun Maiyegun was arrested and arraigned, along with some prodemocracy activists before an Abuja magistrate court on charges of treason in 1991. Maiyegun was alleged to have been distributing leaflets calling for the return of the country to civil democratic rule.

Between 1985 and 1992, there was a series of protests, but the one with the highest death toll was that of May 1989. Although there is no accurate data on the number of people killed, many reports put the number at 50 (see *Newswatch,* June 12, 1989: 18). These demonstrations were interpreted by the regime as an "excuse to wage war against the government in order to destroy the credibility of the military" (*Guardian,* June 6, 1989: 1–2). The 1989 protests are one of the most profound and well coordinated popular uprisings by NANS. Virtually all parts of the country were touched by serious disturbances, especially the cities of Lagos, Ibadan, Ife, Zaria, Port Harcourt, and Kaduna (Adejumobi, 2000: 218).

The government's response to the crisis was to close down six universities (all located in the southern part of the country, whose students were believed to have spearheaded the riots) to forestall further unrest by the students. The institutions were shut down for about six months and were only reopened after appeals to the government by traditional leaders (Akintola, 2002: 138). In addition, several leaders of NANS were arrested and incarcerated for several months, and many students were expelled from various universities.

Also, in 1994, at a NANS Senate meeting held at Auchi Polytechnic, it was resolved that students nationwide should take practical actions ranging from lecture boycotts to demonstrations to support the efforts of prodemocracy organizations like the National Democratic coalition (NADECO) and the Campaign for Democracy (CD) and trade unions, particularly the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN) who had taken the lead in the struggle to terminate military rule in Nigeria and actualize the June 12, 1993 mandate. The NANS directive was heeded and implemented in the universities of Ile-Ife, Ibadan, Calabar, Benin, Edo, and Delta State and in some colleges

and polytechnics (Adejumobi, 2000: 222–223). This only incurred the wrath of the Abacha government. Many of the students' leaders were arrested and detained.

From the foregoing, it could be inferred that since the killing of Adepeju, the level of repression by the state increased. The high-handedness of security agencies during protests was such that the safety of students in Nigeria during protests could not be guaranteed. Also, the incessant closure of universities as a result of protests became a tool used by the state for suppression. In addition, a culture of authoritarianism gradually crept into the educational institutions, especially at the tertiary level, under SAP. There were three angles to this incipient despotism in the campuses. First, due to declining financial resources, the ability of the school authorities to meet the basic welfare needs of both staff and students began to decline. Many school administrators chose to adopt strong-arm tactics to suppress those demands. Second, given increasing financial dearth, there was blatant corruption and mismanagement by most administrators of tertiary institutions, who saw such posts as an avenue for financial upliftment for themselves. Authoritarian rule was required to instil fear in the community and cover up such fraud. Third, the general atmosphere of militarism that constitutes the flip side of SAP was gradually being reproduced in the tertiary institutions (Adejumobi, 2000: 213).

The Impunity of the Security Forces

In the 1980s and 1990s, because of the commitment of the government to the SAP conditionality, the military regimes resorted to high-handedness and repression to maintain its stand and suppress student protests. During this time, decrees were rolled out to contain dissent. Examples include Decree No. 2 of 1984, which facilitated detention without trial for up to six months for "acts prejudicial to state security"; the Student Union Activities (Control and Regulation) Decree No. 47 of 1989, which made national student unions illegal, membership of student unions voluntary, and the unions in individual universities subject to proscription if found to act contrary to national interests, security, public safety, morality, and health. Violators of the decree were subject to prosecution by the Special Miscellaneous Offences Tribunal, and could be imprisoned for a five-year term, and or fined N500,000 if found guilty. Also, under Section .3(1) of this decree,

> the minister is empowered, whenever he is of the opinion that public inter-est or safety so demands, to suspend for any specified period of time, remove, withdraw, or expel any student, undergraduate or post-graduate,

from any university, institution of higher learning or similar institution. This power here conferred on the Minister could be delegated under Section 3(2) (a) and (b) to any person or body authorized by the Minister to do so on his behalf or the governing council, Vice-Chancellor or any authority or person in charge or of in control of that institution. (Cited in Ojo, 1995: 28)

To bolster its powers, the state used security agencies as its instruments of suppression. Security forces are usually dispatched in droves to the campuses once there are protests. They frequently overreact, and sometimes use live ammunition in dispersing the protesters. Even when they kill students, justice is never done and they get away with various atrocities, whereas students who are caught as "scapegoats" after the crisis are often suspended or expelled from their universities. For instance, after the student protests in 1978, the state set up a commission of enquiry into the crisis headed by Usman Mohammed. The report of the commission was critical of the students, the vice chancellors of the University of Lagos and Ahmadu Bello University, as well as some of the university lecturers with radical or socialist tendencies who were believed to have influenced or collaborated with the students to organize the protests. Based on the commission's report, the government found the Vice Chancellor of the University of Lagos, Professor J. Ade Ajayi and Professor Iya Abubakar, Vice Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University, some lecturers, and students alleged to have taken part in the protests, guilty of lawlessness and social disorder. The students indicted were expelled from the universities and forbidden from enrolling in any Nigerian university for two years. Also, student unions were banned in all universities across the country; the said lecturers were sacked with immediate effect, while the two vice chancellors were dismissed with 30 days' notice, effective from September 30, 1979. None of the people accused was allowed to defend themselves, thereby constituting a gross violation of their human rights. However, as noted by Anise (1979: 82),

The commission was not allowed to probe any role played by the police and the army in the crisis. The rationale for the failure was that the terms of reference set by the government did not cover any investigation of police and army conduct, the latter was to be investigated separately by the government itself under the secrecy of national security considerations.

To date, there is no record to indicate that the security forces' role in the crisis was ever investigated. The failure to punish those responsible for student killings and other acts of brutality on Nigerian campuses has reinforced a culture of impunity and excesses by the security forces in handling student protests.

It has also been argued that the police lack adequate understanding of the significance of protests in crisis management. To the students, protest is an inalienable right. It is a way of expressing their grievances to the appropriate authorities. It is regarded as a potent vehicle through which their feelings, perception, and grievances can be expressed and felt. In contrast, the police regard protest as contravening law and order, and it is an unacceptable way of challenging the right of security agents. In defense of their high-handedness against demonstrating students, the police have cited the law proclamation, which enables them to disperse by force, all persons who have unlawfully assembled for demonstrations. Their action in curbing demonstrations is, therefore, in defense of the law (Adebayo, n.d.).

Transformation of Student Mobilization in Recent Years

It could be argued that the sharp decline in social and economic conditions, especially in the 1980s, provided avenues for protests and demonstrations on the various campuses across Nigeria. As a result of the ever-increasing student population, the facilities available were overstretched, providing a breeding ground for discontent among the universities' teeming populace.

The structural adjustment regime impacted greatly on education, prompting a downsizing of education on the state agenda, thereby causing a shift from *caring for education* to the exercise of political control over education (Adejumobi, 2000: 204). The period witnessed a plunging of education budget: from 8.2 percent in 1983 to 6.4 percent in 1984 to 5.4 percent in 1985. This led to the transformation of the universities from citadels of learning into places where both staff and students had to resort to various means of defending and protecting their rights either as groups within the universities or in collaboration with other groups in the society in opposition to the state.

The 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s witnessed collective actions by the Nigerian students as one body. The various leaders of the student movement successfully mobilized the Nigerian students to fight what was believed to be injustice to the Nigerian students and also to the masses in general. The students mobilized to campaign for educational reforms and also combined forces with several associations to struggle against authoritarianism and to challenge various policies and programs of the government. For instance, despite the fact that many students did not own vehicles in the 1980s, the students mobilized and joined many civil society organizations to confront the state on issues of fuel price increase and the removal of petroleum subsidy.

However, since the late 1980s, the collective identity of Nigerian students has changed dramatically. The effectiveness of student mobilization and collective identity has waned. The students as a body have since become a less formidable force. What explains this radical change? The repressive actions of the various regimes since independence took a toll on the student movement since the 1990s. But one may wonder why the student body, which was before then so resilient, should succumb to oppression and repression at the time it did. Whatever happened to the student movement that has been variously described as the "barometer of public opinion," "the vector of social change," "the conscience of the society," and "the voice of the voiceless"? This was the same movement once eulogized by Maiyegun (1992) who himself was once a NANS president with a sense of mission: "what NANS demonstrated during its struggle, was that an organisation with a mission, correct tactics and sufficient will, can earn the right not just to exist, but exist on its own terms." Now the sense of purpose and mission have vanished, with the associations divided into many factions.

In recent years, NANS have lost the radical fiber that it used to be known for. The student body that used to be seen as a platform for change and informed activism has since succumbed to the politics of co-optation. Abati (2005) notes:

> What was on display in the 25th anniversary of NANS was opportunism, if not infantilism; perfidy of the highest order and gross irresponsibility. It is either the students' leaders were suffering from amnesia or they were under a spell. The celebration of NANS at 25 ought to have been prefaced by a return to the circumstances and ideals that produced NANS in 1980.

At the said anniversary celebration, NANS, under the leadership of Kenneth Orkuma Hembe, endorsed "the third term" bid of President Olusegun Obasanjo, a bid that was contrary to the provision of the Nigerian constitution. Hembe had declared: "we make bold to say that until the elites bring somebody better than President Obasanjo, we will not let him go in 2007." The movement then decorated Obasanjo with the award of "Defender of Democracy"! Obasanjo then publicly donated the sum of five million naira to the association, which was publicly acknowledged. It showed how the student body had turned into a sycophant cabal. In other words, the president was able to buy the conscience and intelligence of the Nigerian students. The students who were supposed to be the vanguard in opposing the third term bid now publicly endorsed the move considering that under the presidency of Obasanjo (1999–2007), education in Nigeria had deteriorated so badly. Instead of agitating for a total reformation of the educational sector, the association

was busy using the student platform to canvas for the elongation of the tenure of the president in exchange for money.

Also, the banning of student unions on the campuses of many universities has made the articulation and mobilization of students when necessary very difficult. The university authorities start to ban and un-ban the student union governments on campuses at will. And when this is done, the student union leaders suffer victimization and harassment from the university authorities. Thus, when there is a need for the students to show their dissatisfaction on certain issues, for instance, increases in school fees, they often do not have a common front to dialogue with the university administration.

One negative effect of the apparent demise of the student movement on campuses is the emergence of new forms of group and social identities and centers of power in the universities; the deadliest of these groups being secret cults. Secret cults, defined as a set of practices, belief systems, or ideas whose essence is known only to the inner members and excessively admired and defended even to the point of laying down one's life (Opaluwah, 2000), has caused Nigerian universities to be portrayed as "citadels of violence." The doggedness and strong conviction demonstrated by members reinforces the importance of, and awe for, these groups especially among nonmembers. Although the intentions of the founding fathers of the secret cults was not to engender violence on the campus,[4] the proliferation of secret cults in universities has led to a struggle for territorial control, leading to clashes and the unleashing of terror on innocent students. Secret cult in tertiary institutions started at the University College, Ibadan, in 1953 with the formation of the Pyrates confraternity. Others have since emerged including the Buccaneers, Mafia, and Vickings. By the early 1990s, many vicious cults were formed. These included the Black Axe, Black Cats, Trojan Horse, Black Panthers, the Twelve Disciples, Mgba Mgba Brothers, Eiye, Maphites, Temple of Eden, The Jurists, Klu Klux Klan, The Executioners, Black Beret, Dreaded friend of friends, National Association of Adventurers, Black Scorpion, Eagle Club, Termites, Red Sea Horses, Knight Cadet, Sonmen, White Angels, Amazons, Daughters of Jezebel, and the Black Brassieres. The absence of a viable and potent students' union to articulate, negotiate, and defend the collective interests of the students is partly responsible for students having to seek succor and protection in these groups (Alubo, 1996).

The Nigerian State and the Future of Student Mobilization

Protest is a universal tool used by aggrieved individuals and groups to press home their demands. As noted above, students have had to pay a

heavy price for their discontent. The consequences of student protest and state repression are numerous. These can be classified as short-term and long-term effects. The short-term effects include

- High casualty rate as a result of intervention by security forces;
- Closure of schools for long periods of time;
- Disruption of the academic calendar;
- Large dropout rate.

The long-term effects include a rise in crime rate, and a fall in educational standard.

Although incessant student protests culminate in poor educational standards as a result of frequent closures of the universities, there is a need to understand the rationale behind these protests. Inadequate funding to meet the physical and educational needs of the students, over-crowded residence halls as well as lecture halls (especially during the 1980s) increasingly play a significant role in the initiation of the chain of events that lead to these closures. Allocations to the universities are grossly inadequate and are not commensurate with the increase in student enrolments yearly. This affects infrastructure provisions by the universities. For instance, in many universities in Nigeria, in principle, only first year and final year students are entitled to accommodation in the halls of residence. However, the rooms, which were originally designed to accommodate two or three students, are now officially allotted to about six students with bunk beds replacing single beds. Sometimes, the students allotted these rooms accommodate other students (called *squatters*) to share with them.

Furthermore, the lecture hall spaces are grossly inadequate for accommodating students attending lectures. For instance, at the University of Ibadan, during the 2008/2009 academic session on a course for which 332 students registered and eventually sat the examination, the hall allocated for classes could only accommodate 70 students. Thus, students who cared to show up for the lectures had to scramble for sitting spaces, some had to stand throughout the lectures, while some had to stay outside the hall. This has led to a considerable decline in the quality of teaching. In addition, the libraries are full of outdated books and journals and the morale of staff is at its lowest ebb.

Therefore, the implication is that the more visible the rate of decay in the infrastructure on the university campuses, the greater the likelihood of student protests. Consequently, the greater the number of students protests, the more the likelihood of closure and disruption to the academic calendar. As a result of the closures, when the schools are reopened, there is a tendency to rush to conclude the semester or session as the case may be thereby many syllabi are not completed, which further erodes the level

of educational standard in the country resulting in the universities turning out half-baked graduates .

The stress put on the universities in terms of demand and the limited expansion in physical facilities and academic staff to cater for this demand has taken a great toll on the quality of programs in the institutions. The incessant strikes embarked upon by university staff as well as the numerous protests by students and the incessant disruption of academic calendar in many instances have eroded the quality of graduates of Nigerian universities. In many situations when required to take qualifying examinations usually for employment purposes, many of these graduates have failed woefully. In addition, on several occasions, many employers are forced to retrain newly recruited graduates as they often turn out to not have the necessary skills for their positions.

As in almost all protest situations, students carry out protests when it is necessary, although they have been accused of protesting over "bread and butter" issues (Nkinyangi, 1991: 158). However, most of the time, student protests serve as a reflection of the general feeling of frustration within the larger society. This is because once their parents and guardians are affected by, for example, economic hardship, they are directly affected, as it impacts on their comfort and general well-being, and the average student population, once mobilized, is ready to protest on issues that affect their comfort and general well-being. In other words, the various crises experienced on Nigerian campuses are a reflection of the problems being faced by the larger Nigerian society. Things have taken a turn for the worse in every sector of the Nigerian society, coupled with the inability of the Nigerian state to adequately provide the basic needs of members of the society. The Nigerian students as part of the Nigerian society have had to contend with the myriad of problems being faced by the average Nigerian. For instance, recently, University of Ibadan students had to protest over erratic power supply and lack of potable water on campus (Adesina, 2009). Yet, the problem of power supply is a national one and the issue of potable water in the country is a mirage.

While it cannot be argued that student protests are generally peaceful, nonetheless, there should not be any justification for the use of live ammunition in controlling protesting students, or even any group of protesters. Student protests sometimes do get out of hand and degenerate into riots, usually due largely to the protests being kidnapped by miscreants. Proper means of managing the protests need to be devised to prevent loss of lives. The families of students who lose their lives during protests will forever bear the scars of these losses.

State repression in relation to student protests is an indication of the state's uneasiness about the possibility of these protests spreading to other sections of the society. Governments usually see the protests as destabilizing and showing the state to be weak in the eyes of the populace.

However, the right of the students to use the instrument of protest still needs to be respected.

What should be of utmost importance to the Nigerian state is initiating measures that would see to the repositioning of the Nigerian educational sector to its former glory. Nigerian universities used to be very highly rated such that students came from different parts of the world to study in the country. It is unfortunate that because of the poor state of education in today's Nigeria, many prefer to send their children and wards to universities outside the country for education, even to nearby West African states like Ghana and Togo, where academic calendars are stable and the quality of teaching, research, and instructional facilities is believed to be better. The global consequence of this is the inability of the students to compete favorably with their counterparts in other parts of the world. A Nigerian university certificate used to be tenable anywhere in the world, but in recent years Nigerians have been subjected to qualifying tests and their certificates subjected to regrading to ensure their compatibility with those of other countries.

There is an urgent need for the Nigerian educational system to flow with the tide of globalization. The rise of a global society, driven by technology and communication developments, are shaping students into "global citizens," intelligent people with a broad range of skills and knowledge to apply to a competitive, information based society. The future of countries often lies within their ability to compete in a global market where industrial based economies are giving way to knowledge based industries, realizing the importance of knowledge, skills, and the intellectual capacity to meet the challenges of accelerated change and uncertainty (Chinnammai, 2005). In most developed countries and some developing ones, the introduction of technology into the classroom is changing the nature of delivering education to students gradually giving way to a new form of electronic literacy; more programs and education materials are made available in electronic form; teachers are preparing materials in electronic form; and students are generating papers, assignments, and projects in electronic form. Video projection screens, books with storage device servers and CD ROMs as well as the emergence of online digital libraries are now replacing blackboards. Even exams and grades are gradually becoming available through electronic means and notebooks are starting to give way to laptops. Also, students can be examined through computer managed learning systems and do tutorial exercises on a computer rather than in a classroom. Nigeria is far away from this reality. Even if the technology is introduced, the incessant power failures would render the facilities useless. There is an urgent need to find a lasting solution to the electricity problem.

Furthermore, it is also imperative that university libraries are stocked with up-to-date materials and to extend internet facilities to all faculties

and libraries for the students and lecturers to keep abreast with current literature and happenings in the world.

Although the situation in Nigeria looks very bleak from the periphery, the youth of Nigeria have not remained silent and totally complacent. The apparent problems the student movement have encountered in recent years have caused them to lose their potency as the vanguard of social change. To this end, the student movement in Nigeria needs to get its act together by providing the much needed leadership for the effective mobilization of not only its members but also the entire population of the country for a meaningful and positive resolution of issues that concern Nigerian students as well as society at large.

Notes

1. Quoted in Turner (1969).
2. Col. Ahmadu Ali is one of the former chairmen of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) of Nigeria.
3. The students formed another association called the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) in 1981.
4. See Fabiyi (2002) and Eguavoen (n.d.) for an exploration of secret cults in Nigerian universities.

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Vocalizing Rage: Deconstructing the Language of Antistate Forces

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Introduction

Doomsday scenarios couched in the harshest of language have become regular features in the description of the Nigerian state in the print media as well as many academic papers and discourses. This is graphically depicted in the samplers: "Now, Nigeria is finished" (*Tell*, December 6, 1993), "I see bloodbath ahead" (Fawehinmi, *Tell*, November 9, 1992), "Break up imminent" (*Tell*, March 20, 2000), "Nigeria: waiting for the Worst" (*Tell*, July 20 1993), "Nigeria is falling apart" (*News*, June 27 2005), "Like a badly mauled elephant suffering from a thousand cuts, Nigeria lurches about in wild disorientation, stomping and stamping as life drains away and the earth quakes in terminal expectation" (Williams, 2003). Antistate language appears to fascinate Nigerians as is evident in the continued patronage of antiestablishment newspapers and magazines compared with those perceived to be progovernment. In a way, therefore, such statements could be said to represent the view of most Nigerians about the Nigerian state. Individually or in groups, many Nigerians readily display their skepticism, ill feelings, and disaffection about the state in unprintable words.

Specifically, after its capture by the civil-military elites, the Nigerian state has grown powerfully in the use of naked force against its own citizens (Diamond, 1988). Yet, opposition to it continues to grow. Thus, decades of military brutality and militarism have not quietened opposition forces. On the contrary, they appear to have been energized. This raises some pertinent questions: Why does hatred for the Nigerian state seem to grow on a daily basis? Why do those against the Nigerian state

freely make inflammatory statements as well as employ words that are not only abusive but also abrasive? This chapter advances concrete answers to these questions.

State, Antistate, and Language: A Conceptual and Theoretical Linkage

Particularly, antistate feelings and actions are not region-specific, societies, being generally "blessed" with those who challenge the establishment, and in so doing, refuse to conform to the established order. In fact, the history of the state system since its debut is replete with suspicion (Stirk and Weigal, 1995: 5), condemnation, ill feeling, disaffection, denouncement, and denouement. Such antistate statements include such harsh words as

> The state is the name of the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly it tells lies too, and this lie crawls out of its mouth: "I", the state, "am the people!" That is a lie! It was creators who created peoples and hang a faith and a love over them…It is annihilators who set traps for the many and call them "state"…The state tells lies in all the tongues of good and evil; and whatever it says, it is lies—and whatever it has it has stolen. (Nietzsche, quoted in Karriel, 1964: 15)

or sweeping denunciations such as

> The state is nothing more than the form of organisation, which the bourgeoisie, by necessity adopt to both internal and external purposes as a guarantee of their property and interests. The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie. (Marx, 1848)

or the accusation that

> The state is an instrument for the expansion of the exploited class.

or the resentful assertion that

> The state is the most flagrant, the most cynical and the most complete negation of humanity. (Bakunin, cited in Heywood, 1995: 43)

Beyond verbal condemnation and denouement, states have been exposed to threats of sabotage, actual sabotage, and sacking. Many a state has

been dismembered only for new ones to emerge. For various reasons, groups have warred endlessly against the state. Nevertheless, the state continues to grow not only in importance as "the pre-eminent political institution" (Oyeoziri, 1982: 1), or the most sought after and major determinant or definer of individual and group activities (Miliband, 1969: 1), but also in terms of the accumulation of coercive power, captured in the Weberian definition of the state as a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical power within a defined territory

The contemporary global order features a state system that continues to exercise tremendous power and influence on the individual. Indeed, usually, there has been a price for challenging the state, ranging from jailing, maiming, and exiling to outright extermination. The judicial murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa, and eight other Ogoni activists by the Abacha military regime in November 1995 illustrates this assertion. Yet, as powerful as the state has become, especially in its use of coercive power, it seems incapable of stopping challenges to its laws and actions. Thus the paradox: as the state continues to grow in importance and in accumulating power, so also has the resilience of forces opposed to it.

In reality, the state is an abstract idea (Johari, 1989: 63), which exists basically in the consciousness of the people. It is human beings who act for the state, making the behavior of a state nothing more than the behavior of the people who make decisions for it (Synder, 1963: 106–171). These people, referred to as the government, which Edmund Burke (1790) regarded as a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants (cited in Stirk and Weigal, 1995: 9), are charged, on behalf of the state, to "do for the people what needs to be done but which they cannot, by individual effort do at all, or do so well" (Lincoln, 1834, cited in ibid.) as enshrined in the constitution. In the event that the government is found wanting in performing the duties on behalf of the state, the people reserve the right to stand up to it.

But history shows that, perhaps with the exception of the French Revolution, the masses seldom rise in totality to do that. It is usually some groups and individuals, who always stand up, on behalf of the people, to call the government to order; and in the process, become, in the estimation of the managers of the affairs of the state, "antistate." In this context, the concept of antistate would mean those groups challenging the constituted authority of the state. Such groups often employ unconventional means to achieve their aims.

Both the establishment and the antiestablishment forces require the capturing of the minds of the people. Here comes the imperative of information driven by language. As a veritable weapon of expressing feelings

and actions, man, over the years, has perfected the art of using and "abusing" language to suit his purpose; and this, in the name of propaganda, has become an integral part of politics. According to Andrew Heywood,

> Language is not simply a means of communication. It is a political weapon. It is shaped and honed to convey political intent. Thus, government expenditure is portrayed favourably when it is described as "public investment," but unfavourably when we are reminded that it is tax payers' money' that is being spent. Similarly, the invasion of a foreign country can be described either as a "violation" of its sovereignty or as the "liberation" of its people. In still more sinister fashion, civilian causalities of war can be dismissed as "collateral damage," and genocide can appear almost excusable when it is referred to as "ethnic cleansing." (Heywood, 1995: 2)

The foregoing fits into two types of theories: political opportunity and framing theories of protest movements. The political opportunity places a premium on the political climate in explaining the emergence and preponderance of antiestablishment feelings and movements. This perspective theorizes protest actions in relation to the state with the argument that the nature of antiestablishment actions is a function of the political system, in terms of opportunity for political participation (Lipsky, 1968; Gamson, 1975; Tilly, 1978; McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 1998; Apter and Adrian, 1995; Chandler, 2005; Costain, 2005). In its two-pronged analysis of participation in terms of openness or closeness, it offers what could be regarded as a win-win justification for protest movements: If a system is closed, it will breed protestation. Likewise if a system is open, it will encourage protestation.

The difference here is the style and system of protestation. In a closed system, participation is foreclosed and protestation suppressed. But rather than stop, such actions eventually do exacerbate antiestablishment feelings in the hearts of the people. Such a society risks implosion with far more dangerous consequences. Likewise in an open system, the ensuing freedom will likely give the people the leeway to challenge the system. This may also be a problem, especially when such opportunities give rise to a plethora of antiestablishment movements that seek to carry the feelings too far. This is what Francis Fukuyama was alluding to when he claimed that "societies of which permanent criticism is an integral feature are the most liveable ones, but they are also the most fragile" (1992: 9). In general, the political opportunity perspective offers an inevitability of protestation in a political system.

The framing (or construction) perspective answers the question of how antiestablishment elements converge and use extreme language.

The theory offers pull and push factors behind protestation. Originally espoused by Irving Goffman and articulated by David Snow and his team, the word frame, according to Goffman (1974), refers to the "interpretive scheme that individuals adopt in order to make sense out of the world around them and to situate themselves within it." According to Snow et al., it "underscores and embellishes the seriousness and injustice of a particular social condition or redefine as unjust and immoral what was previously seen as unfortunate but perhaps tolerable" (1986: 461–481).

It sees protestation as a product of construction, the process of which entails three stages: diagnostic, prognosis, and motivational. In order to attract members, movement leaders must interpret and represent existing social conditions in a way that convinces potential recruits that social change is desirable (diagnostic framing), that it is possible (prognostic framing), and that their participation is required to produce the desired change (motivational framing) (McVeigh, 2005). The combination of the three processes translates vaguely felt dissatisfaction into well-defined grievances and motivates people to join movements to do something about the perceived anomalies (Buechler, 2000: 41). This is the pull element of framing.

The push aspect is that recourse to action is also a product of framing. This is akin to what Karl Marx refers to as the movement from class in itself to class for itself. A veritable ingredient of the framing process is the media and it does this in a number of ways: first, according to Todd Gitlin (1980), it frames grievances through selection, emphasis, and the presentation of news items to the populace. Second, it acts as the mouthpiece for the antiestablishment actors. Third, it seeks to perform its role as the watchdog, the fourth estate of the realm, by striving to keep government responsible and accountable. Finally, it pursues its own basic agenda of profiting as more antiestablishment reporting attracts more readership and patronage.

As politics is said to be concerned with the struggle for the allocation of resources and about "who decides" what constitutes the resources and how they should be distributed (Onyeoziri, 1982: 2), it suggests that the parties, both the government and those opposed to it, would want to mould the minds of the people: mostly, through the media. But in this unequal "contest," the government, given its vast resources, has the advantage. In that wise, the "weaker" party would resort to unconventional methods of driving home their point, which may include high sounding, hyperbolic and aggressive words. Therefore, the usage of unconventional words becomes part of the weaponry of the "antistate" elements, to, on the one hand, get at the managers of the state and, on the other, capture the attention of the people.

Surveying Antistate Forces in Nigeria

Research findings show that antistate forces come in different shades. Some seek to opt out of the entire Nigerian polity and go their own way. The main examples are the Ralph Nwazuruike–led Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Asari Dokubo led Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), and the motley crowd of militias in the Niger Delta. Some also seek opting out but from the domination of other ethnic groups, and not from the Nigerian state. Examples include the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC), the Sayawa of Bauchi state, the Berom of Plateau, Tiv, Jukun, and Bachama groups of Taraba state in the northern part of the country. I regard this group as *exiting seeking* antistate forces.

Some inveigh against the state because they have been excluded from the power configuration. Their exclusion may be a product of their party losing in an election or their inability to secure appointments. The motive behind their antistate posture is, therefore, to "get settled" in the usual Nigerian parlance. This group includes politicians and other individuals, who continually use hyperbolic words against the state and the managers of the state. We may describe them as *rent-seeking* forces.

There are also groups operating under the banner of panethnic movements, whose basic aim is to champion the cause of their ethnic groupings and act as the mouthpieces of their ethnic groups in the contestation for power and redistribution of national resources. Examples include panethnic movements such as the Afenifere, Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Ijaw National Council (INC), and the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF). They direct their battle and their utterances both against one another and against the state as the situation dictates. I refer to this group as *redistributive-seeking* forces.

Some others emerged at the height of military repression to seek the termination of military rule and the enthronement of civil rule in the country. This category includes the Campaign for Democracy (CD), the Joint Action Congress of Nigeria (JACON), the Democratic Alternative (DA), the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), and some privately owned media outfits in the country, especially the ones euphemistically referred to as "guerrilla papers," for example, *News*, *Tempo*, *Tell*, *Razor*, *Radio Kudirat*. To the extent that they seek the termination of dictatorship and the enthronement of democracy, they could be grouped as *good-governance* seeking forces.

What runs through virtually all of them is that they have some grudge against the Nigerian state, and in their encounter with the state, they are united in their usage of what passes for uncouth language. A survey of the language of antistate forces in some selected Nigerian newspapers

and magazines shows how little regard for finesse actually exists. What exist in abundance are words of intimidation, defiance, altercation, aggression, militancy, threat, and abuse of the Nigerian state and the managers of the state. This is elaborated in the following section.

A Barrage of Bashing

All the antistate forces in Nigeria see the bashing of the Nigerian state as a pastime. In the process, they use harsh language, which, more often than not, tends to be a mixture of dismissal, threat, intimidation, and invective. Examples are provided here.

In the September 20 edition of the *News,* Ralph Nwazuruike, the leader of MASSOB was reported as saying that

> There is no alternative to Biafra. There will be no time we shall even if they give us the positions in Nigeria leave Biafra. Even if they give Ndigbo President for 100 years from today, we shall not stop the issue of Biafra. This is because the issue of Biafra means permanent freedom. We are in Nigeria. Nigeria is a **slave nation**…We shall never cooperate with Nigeria until we get Biafra. (*Tell*, 2004: 22 and 26, emphasis added)

In what is obviously a mixture of invective and dismissal of the Nigerian state, Asari Dokubo, the leader of the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), said:

> I would like Nigeria to know that the basis of this struggle is very simple and that is that Nigeria as a state is *illegal*. (*News*, September, 2004: 37, emphasis added)

Also as part of an interview under the caption "I will bury Nigeria," Nwazuruike was quoted as saying that

> Whether they like it or not, we are saying that Nigeria is a whole gamut of injustice. The name Nigeria is synonymous with injustice. Nothing good can ever come out of Nigeria…We don't want to be part of the *evil*. (*News*, April, 2000: 14 and 16, emphasis added)

In the September 20, 2004 edition of the *News* Magazine, Asari Dokubo was reported again as saying that

> There was nothing like the amalgamation of northern and southern protectorates. There is nothing like 1960 independence. Nigeria, as far as we are concerned, is a dubious geographic expression. We must have a

Sovereign National Conference because Nigeria is a *nullity and does not exist*. (37, emphasis added)

In another instance of unbridled bashing, Dokubo boasted in the same edition of the paper: "The war is against Nigeria…We have 168,000 fighters and more are coming" (18). Equally in the September 7, 2004 edition of *The Mirror* Newspaper, he had this to say:

People should realize that the law Nigeria derived its survival from was illegal…Nigeria was concocted by force of arms rather than the free will of the nationalities. We must fight to win back our freedom. (*The Mirror*, 2004: 22)

When he was asked to react to the U.S. intelligent report on the likely collapse of Nigeria, Asari Dokubo said:

I don't need America to tell me that. I know Nigeria will inevitably collapse. It just exists like something hanging on a thread. I pray to Almighty God everyday for the collapse of Nigeria. I pray five times a day and in all the five times, I say God, you are a God of justice. This country is satanic. Oh God, if you love the people, let this evil entity collapse. Nigeria will surely collapse. I don't believe in Nigeria. I have never seen myself as *a* Nigerian. *I hate Nigeria as I hate Satan.* (*News*, 2005: 23, emphasis added)

Overdose of Aspersions

Apart from bashing the Nigerian state, there is also the language of insult and aspersions heaped on the leaders. The following are some examples.

From General Olusegun Obasanjo way back in 1993, long before he took his turn, in what is increasingly turning into a musical chair, comes this:

IBB is Nigeria's greatest problem…There is no leader that has been credited with so great a capacity for mischief, for evil as Babangida. His administration is deficient in honesty, deficient in honour, deficient in truth. The only thing it has in surplus is saying something and doing something else. (*Tell*, June 5, 1993: 13–14)

Also from Gani Fawehinmi to Sani Abacha:

This government is *mad*, it has no respect for humanity or humanism. For eight solid years, we saw abuses of all kinds under IBB. Then came the demise of his regime. We did not know we are going from frying pan

to fire. And then a **madder** man became the head of state. (*Tell*, April 18, 1994: 13–18, emphasis added)

In an interview with the newsmen shortly after having a meeting with President Obasanjo, Dokubo said:

> I don't think there was any meeting. The President called his students to come and lecture them. And when he finished his lecture, he left without giving us the opportunity to ask questions. I think he had gone to his former self when he displays *stupid arrogance*. (*News*, December 20, 2004: 27, emphasis added)

In the April 17, 2006 edition of the *News* magazine, Alhaji M.D. Yusufu, the former leader of the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), and an avowed Obasanjo critic, says under a screaming headline "Obasanjo has lost its sanity":

> I will tell you, I believe he is **insane.** That is why I will run away. How can Obasanjo be behaving in this way except for reasons of insanity? He has lost his *sanity.* (*News*, 2006: 33, emphasis added)

In the same vein, Chief Sunday Awoniyi, also a one-time leader of the ACF, says of President Obasanjo:

> Obasanjo loves Nigeria. I agree…but he loves Nigeria in his own peculiar way, in *the peculiar way that you love turkey for Christmas!* (*Tell*, January 23, 2006: 8, emphasis added)

Radical Lagos lawyer Gani Fawehinmi's was even more vitriolic in an interview with the *News* of June 20, 2005. In his words,

> I have always opposed Obasanjo because there is *something sinister in the man,* which I don't like…Why? He takes delight in inflicting pains on people. He loves it. He relishes it and he hates the masses of our people so much. (*News*, June 20, 2005: 24, emphasis added)

In a the same interview, he adds:

> "…*He is so stupidly stubborn*…He is a weak leader, incompetent, does not read, has no ideological vision, he is only browbeating and intimidating his opponents and misusing power. (25, emphasis added)

In an ideal situation, the president or the leader of a country holds the most exalted office in the land, which deserves respect and courtesy. But

what is clear from the foregoing is that criticism of the leadership and the office is often couched in the harshest of language.

An Avalanche of Threats and Intimidation

In this particular regard, "opposition" figures rank highly as they appear to relish using intimidating words in articulating their grievances. One example is the statement by Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu, leader of the self-declared Biafra Republic during the Nigerian civil war (1967–1970). Protesting the continued marginalization of the Igbo, he vowed:

> "I'll Wage War Again!" Though I am now old and will be 60 this year I will lead an army to fight all over again. (*Tell*, March, 1993: 12)

Continuing in the same vein, a youth activist with the NDPVF as reported by *Tell* was quoted as saying to the soldiers who had been drafted to restore law and order in the region:

> By now, they would have realized that the time for talks is over! Now it is time for bang, bang, bang! We will hit them and smoke them out from every part of our fatherland. We will not spare them. Our rivers will be reddened with their blood. Our fishes and birds of the air will feast on their flesh. If they attempt any Odi or Odioma style invasion, we will not sit idly by. We will give to them the way they have given us. (*Tell*, January 30, 2006: 29)

Repeating the threat, Onengiya Erekosima, the spokesperson for the NDPVF said:

> The elders told us that peace and dialogue are the best options to get results. We listened to them and handed over our guns and look at what they had done to us. *We now know that only violence can get results. And my brother, nobody will listen to that nonsense (peace and dialogue) again…We are capable and determined to destroy the ability of Nigeria to export oil*…So many of us are running out of patience; they don't believe that peace is yielding results. A lot of people call me and say that they are volunteers; they say that the peace we are building is a waste of time…I think they have a point. (27–31, emphasis added)

It is not only militants who use the language of threats and intimidations, however. The labor unions also freely resort to it. For example, in response to an attempt by the government to increase fuel prices in 2005, John Odah, the secretary general of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), threatened: "We won't take the increase…we are ready for another

battle…We would wear a protective shield when confronting the *dictatorial government of President Olusegun Obasanjo*" (*Tell,* September 2005: 50, emphasis added).

In some cases, such words take the dimension of countervailing (checkmating). For example, in the heat of the Shari'ah controversy in the northern part of Nigeria, Odumegwu Ojukwu, addressing a group of Igbo people in Kaduna, said:

> What I am saying here as I stand before you is that we are tired of being threatened. No religion has a monopoly of violence. If, for instance, you tell me about the Jihad, know that we had our crusades too and you did not fare better. (*Tell*, March 2000: 25)

Within this dimension of checkmating is the threat contained in the communiqué issued by the Arewa Consultative Forum in October 31, 2000, in response to the activities of the OPC, which led to the death of some Hausa people in Lagos, that

> Those who resort to taking innocent people's lives in the name of cultural exclusiveness and ethnic Puritanism as well as those who have built a reputation in advancing such other philosophies of ethnic hatred, that all life is sacred and that henceforth, attack on Northerners in any part of the country will not as was the case in the past, go un-avenged. Henceforth, it will no longer be taken lightly. (*Tell*, November 2000: 25)

Reporting at the Top of Their Voices

I want to suggest that Nigerian newspapers, especially the "antiestablishment press," publish headlines that could simply be considered alarming. Examples of such headlines and news stories would confirm this suggestion:

> "Hell is here!"

This was the cover page headline of the April 13, 1992 edition of *Tell* Magazine. The story is a simple analysis of the effects of the Structural Adjustment Programme on Nigerians.

> "Now Nigeria is finished!"

This was the screaming headline of *Tell* Magazine in its December 6, 1993 edition. This story is about the coup d'état, which brought General Sani Abacha to power in November 17, 1993. The paper feared that the

coup would worsen the economic situation of the people, and this was the basis for its less than optimistic headline. Also, in the July 20, 1993 edition of the same paper, a caption "Nigeria: waiting for the Worst" was used to capture the activities of the military president Ibrahim Babangida's regime, following the stoppage of the results of the June 12, 1993 presidential election before its final annulment on June 23, 1993.

The April 6, 1993 edition of the same *Tell* magazine came out with another screaming headline: "IBB, Nigeria's Greatest Problem." In the May 3 edition of the paper, the headline "Peoples Verdict: Go, IBB, Go" was used to analyze the result of an opinion poll conducted across the country. In fact, this soon became the standard way of condemning Nigeria's leaders. In the November 22, 1993 edition of the same *Tell* magazine, the paper's cover story on Ernest Shonekan, the Head of the Interim National Government (ING) was titled: "Shonekan Must Go!" In the June 21, 2004 edition of the *News* Magazine, the same pattern was followed with the caption: "Go, Obasanjo, Go," with a rider: "President's Popularity at Zero Level."

"We will make Nigeria ungovernable"

This was how *Tell* captured the lead story of its March 11, 2002 edition. In it, the paper alleged the presence of some shadowy groups in the police and the army as threatening Nigeria's democracy. The magazine did not identify the groups in question.

A review of the foregoing reveals a pattern of strong words being used by the antistate forces in Nigeria. This persistent description of Nigeria as evil, a nullity, an illegal "contraption" among others, is what is captured in this chapter as the language of excess. In the following section, an attempt is made to explain how such strident language might have come into being.

Accounting for Verbal Excess

The recourse to ill feeling, aversion, and the employment of a language of threats and insults by opposing forces in Nigeria is arguably part of what Adigun Agbaje described as the "monotonous and notorious ebb and flow of Nigeria's political history," which invariably shows that "the presence is captive of the past and the future not likely to be less so" (2003: 1). In other words, the present state of antistate feelings and actions arguably had its roots in the colonial mission and the nature of British colonial rule.

The colonial project in Africa rested on a philosophy of vainglory and valorization: the former being a belief in the moral and historical duty

of one "superior" race to bring the "inferior" race out of the dark pit of barbarism to the light of civilization; and the latter essentially the greed of capturing and cornering the sweat and resources of the captured and expropriating them to the "civilized" world. In this system, the educated elites were excluded, which eventually triggered off the nationalism that thrived on attacking the colonial state. Again, the British colonial state, in comparison with other colonial systems such as Belgian and Portuguese, was liberal to some extent (Coleman, 1958). This accounts for the early emergence of newspapers in Nigeria, which became the launching pads for the nationalist's vitriolic attacks on the colonial state.

The capture of the Nigerian state first by the turncoat nationalists who did not behave differently from the foreign colonialists and later by the military careerists who not only contributed to the failure of the Nigerian state in the discharge of its basic duties, but also turned the whole country into a battle field, seemed to leave the antistate elements with no option other than to continue their attacks. In that wise, the battle shifted from fighting external colonialism to internal colonialism. The point here is that the Nigerian state has not been there for the people, and as such has failed to elicit involuntary respect. The people see the state as an enemy that must be fought. As Nicholas Van de Walle has observed,

> With a handful of exceptions, the postcolonial states in Africa have been largely anti-developmental, parasitic, self-seeking and inept. It has been simultaneously very coercive and extremely weak, forced to prey on the economy and civil society with devastating effect just to survive. The bureaucracy's effectiveness has typically been undermined by a patrimonial logic in which state assets are routinely plundered for the political advantage of the regime and states society relations have been characterised by clientelism rather than citizenship. The state, powerless to elicit respect or loyalty from the society, has typically used threats and cohesion to achieve minimal, usually passive acquiescence. (Van de Walle, 1995: 132)

Apart from this, there is also the issue of the elite manipulation of ethnicity. Each time they (the elite) face exclusion from power, which determines their means of survival, the trump card is to appeal to ethnic sentiment and chant marginalization, using aggressive and hyperbolic words.

Added to this is the survival instinct of the Nigerian media. As a result of the disenchantment of Nigerians with the Nigerian state, anti-state reporting fascinates and, therefore, sells. A paper that is patently proestablishment will soon face liquidation, unless subsidized. Therefore, screaming and sensational reporting is the in-thing, since that is what the "audience" loves to see. Perhaps this is a simple deference to the natural characteristic of news and the law of reporting that sees the most bizarre as being the most worthy.

Conclusion

At independence, Nigerians were very proud of their country and quite optimistic about its future. Indeed the immediate postindependence period and up until the 1970s was marked by a display of love and affection for the Nigerian state. However, from the 1980s, instances of anti-state feelings, skepticism, ill feeling, and despair became prevalent and indeed have been on the increase since the early 1990s.

A combination of constriction of participation, repression, intimidation, and prevalence of corruption under the military governments triggered off these feelings. Conversely, the democratic space, created by civil rule, also provided a leeway for protestation; resulting in the gushing forth of "wrath of all ages," hitherto constricted by the military, "like an overflowing dam" (Adebanwi, 2004: 328). The failure of the managers of the "new" democratic order must, however, be seen as a contributory factor in this regard. Accompanying the tradition of opposition in Nigeria has been the use of hyperbolic and uncouth language, the bright side of which is the demonstration of defiance to the system. The other side is the notoriety that it gives the state, especially to outsiders. In sum, the encounter of the opposing forces with the Nigerian state has been interpreted as one of fighting jungle warfare, one in which anything goes.

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The Subaltern Encounters the State: OPC-State Relations 1999–2003

Omobolaji Olarinmoye

Introduction

Between 1999 and 2003, the southwestern region of Nigeria experienced a series of ethnic clashes that shook both state and society in Nigeria (Akinyele, 2001: 264–265). The clashes were so intense that the president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, described them as "complete madness" and gave a shoot-on-sight order to the police and threatened to declare a state of emergency in Lagos state, the epicenter of the ethnic disturbances *(Nigerian Tribune,* October 20, 2000: 1*; Guardian* January 14, 2000: 1).

The violent ethnic clashes were mostly ascribed to a faction of the urban-based Yoruba organization, the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC), formed in 1994 by a medical doctor and prodemocracy activist Dr. Fredrick Fasehun (2002). The OPC, which derives its name from that of Oduduwa, a mythical ancestor of the Yoruba, was established by Yoruba elites with the primary aim of defending, protecting, and promoting Yoruba culture. Its activities have ranged from political agitation for Yoruba autonomy and culture to ethnic militancy, vigilantism, and crime-fighting with one set of activities reinforcing the other.

In addition to its broad aims, the OPC was formed to contest the annulment of the June 12 presidential election results that had elected a Yoruba, M.K.O. Abiola, by the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida, in collaboration with the "Hausa-Fulani power elite," as most Yoruba believed. From the annulment, the Yoruba concluded that the Hausa-Fulani had resolved on emasculating the other ethnic groups in Nigeria, particularly the Yoruba.

This conclusion, that the Hausa were intent on denying them equal status within the state and its institutions, was further reinforced by the repression the Yoruba faced under the succeeding government of General Sani Abacha between 1994 and 1998. The OPC was formed to challenge such perceived political and economic marginalization of the Yoruba within the Hausa-Fulani dominated Nigerian state. Hence the actions of the OPC were directed at the Nigerian state that was considered to be oppressive and hostile to the interests of the Yoruba.

The OPC considered its actions emancipatory as they were aimed at correcting an injustice done to the Yoruba and Yoruba political marginalization within the Nigerian federation since the mid-1950s (Adebanwi, 2004: 344–345). Its actions, therefore, constituted a new chapter in Yoruba political mobilization, in the *politics of opposition,* led by the mainstream political elites in Yorubaland organized around the politics and ideas of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the first Premier of the Western Region and a man generally regarded as the leader of the Yoruba.

While the OPC was created by Yoruba elites to pursue elite objectives presented as group interest, the OPC differed from the Awoists (followers of Awolowo) in its emphasis on the use of violence as a means of redressing Yoruba grievances against the state as its activities took on a violent antielite, prosubaltern dimension under the leadership of Gani Adams. How does one explain the actions of the OPC-Adams faction? Did the new direction contradict or advance the Yoruba cause?

This chapter argues that the antielite, prosubaltern activities of the OPC under Gani Adams should be seen as the latest in a series of subaltern generated actions aimed at questioning the dynamics of elite politics within Yorubaland and Nigeria in general. In other words, we argue that the OPC actions should be seen within the context of an ongoing process of subaltern generated "sociopolitical critique" of the nature of power within the postcolonial African state with such critique constituting one of the many ways in which groups and individuals have sought to engage with and transform the state in Africa. Understanding the dynamics and the twists and turns implicated in such a process is the main objective of this chapter.

The Subaltern and the Politics of Transformative Resistance in Nigeria

Transformative politics refers to politics that is egalitarian and participatory. It uses power to create change, to develop people, and to build communities; it is nonhierarchical and participatory in its structures and processes; and it accords priority to the disadvantaged sectors, such as the poor grassroots women in rural and urban areas and indigenous women

(Jahan, 1997). It is about changing the values, processes, and institutions associated with "conventional politics" as shown in table 6.1.

One possible way of generating transformative politics, especially in the light of obstacles such as vested interests of dominant groups, problems of co-optation, weakness and fragmentation of protransformation organizations (Jahan, 2000: 10), is through transformative resistance (Woodling, 2008), that is, resistance that seeks to challenge and transform dominant power structures by which subaltern groups are subordinated. Transformative resistance can include organized resistance, social movements, left-wing groups, and all traditionally conceived forms of resistance staged in civil society.

The quest for transformative politics in Nigeria has been the explicit goal of Nigerian civil society since the late 1980s (Edigheji and Momoh, 2005) in the face of the ethnic security dilemma generated by Nigeria's "political economy of predation."[1] The ethnic security dilemma arises

> When ethnic categories become the primary lens through which the public views political events, thereby constraining and aggravating the choices of political elites. In the absence of other viable social categories for the protection of group interests, one ethnic group's apparent political gain is viewed by others as a potential loss. This zero-sum prospect creates an incentive for elites to maximize their ethnic group's position, which in turn makes other groups feel insecure and forces them to follow suit.

Table 6.1   The Feminist Vision of Transformative Politics

Traditional Politics	*Transformative Politics*
Values	**Values**
• Power as domination	• Power as liberation
• Win/Loss	• Win/Win
• Conflict and war	• Peace and co-existence
• Authoritative control	• Stewardship and service
• Homogeneity	• Diversity
Processes	**Processes**
• Top down	• Participatory
• Secretive	• Transparent
• Corrupt	• Clean
• Burdensome	• Empowering
• Selective	• Inclusive
Institutions	**Institutions**
• Hierarchical	• Egalitarian
• Autocratic	• Accountable
• Bureaucratic	• Responsive

Source: Jahan, 2000.

> Consequently, Nigerian politics occurs within a broader context of ethnic insecurity and an ethnic calculus of "Who's up, who's down?" in terms of relative power within the federation. (Sklar et al., 2006)

The dilemma that zero-sum politics generates and the need to challenge and change such politics—to engage in transformative resistance—motivated the formation of the Odua Peoples Congress. As an organization formed to address the marginalization of Yoruba within the Nigerian state, the OPC sought to challenge a state that was against any form of social and political reform but also "decidedly anti-Yoruba" as reflected most especially in the annulment of the results of the presidential elections 1993 adjudged to have been won by a Yoruba, Moshood Abiola (Sesay et al., 2003: 30).

Specifically, "the OPC was created to break an existing violence. In its political dimension, it has sought to break the violence of irresponsible and inefficient power that has been integral to the logic of the Nigerian state" (*Nigerian Tribune,* October 25, 2000; Adebanwi, 2005: 361). Thus from inception, the OPC set out to right the wrongs of the annulment of June 12. It also went on to concomitantly agitate for a Sovereign National Conference (SNC), as a vehicle for, among other things, restructuring the country, writing the people's constitution, institutionalizing an economic derivation principle fair to the peripheral and central powers in the spirit of true federalism system that will ensure the continued existence of Nigeria (Sesay et al., 2003: 31).

While it emerged initially as a sociocultural organisation under the leadership of Dr. Fredrick Fasehun, the OPC, in the wake of the arrest and imprisonment of Fasehun by the military government and under the leadership of his deputy Gani Adams quickly evolved—by embracing vigilantism—into a populist organization. It was able through vigilantism to "address widely held fears that the Nigerian government was using extra-judicial political and economic tactics to undermine Yoruba speakers in Nigeria" (Nolte, 2008: 88).

The increased popularity of the movement within the Yoruba public sphere quickly became associated with a division within the organization over the best approach to adopt in pursuit of transformative resistance and transformative politics. A moderate faction under Fasehun argued for engagement with the Nigerian state under the leadership of a Yoruba, while a faction, led by Gani Adams, argued for a more confrontational posture vis-à-vis the Nigerian state. The Adams stand in no small way drew from the acclaim a militant stance, as reflected in the engagement with vigilantism, had brought the OPC within the Yoruba and Nigerian public space. It also reflected a fear of the hijack OPC activism for change by politicians as was the case with the wider civil society activism for change in the early 1990s.

In other words, the differences in the OPC reflected and were influenced in a great manner by differences within the wider civil society movement over the question of what should come first: "the struggle for democracy and transformation of Nigerian political system" and "human rights" activism or "whether the two should be pursued simultaneously." Such inability led to the breakdown of the "activism as catalyst for change" spirit that had motivated the movement and the subsequent control of the movement by politicians (Edigheji and Momoh, 2005: 29–30).

The differences proved irreconcilable and the OPC split into moderate (Fasehun) and militant (Adams) wings. The militant faction had the additional feature of being subaltern in composition for, as argued by Fasehun, Gani Adams had recruited highwaymen, hooligans, and miscreants into the OPC, during his (Fasehun) detention and introduced various "superstitious weapons," fetish practices, oaths to himself, brigandage and "training in militancy" (Sesay et al., 2003: 33; Nolte, 2004: 71; Maier, K. 2000)

It was to counter such "rabble" and reverse the situation in which the "elite class had been scared away" that Fasehun sought to establish "an elite directorate" that was to place individuals "in positions commensurate with their individual background" (Fasehun, 2002: 230–1; Adebanwi, 2005: 249). The rabble reacted by sacking Fasehun on March 1, 1999 and proclaimed Gani Adams as president in a process they described as "the rebirth of our political movement and an affirmation of self-determination and social emancipation" (Sesay et al., 2003: 36). Fasehun retaliated by expelling the Adams group for "hooliganism, anti-party activities and unnecessary terrorism" (*Tempo,* March 11, 1999, Nolte, 2004: 17)

The term subaltern refers to "the people, those who constitute the demographic difference between the total population and that of the elite, who operated within a zone autonomous of that controlled by the elites and characterised by idioms, norms and values that are rooted in the experience of work and social exploitation" (Pouchepadass, 2000: 165). For Guha, the people are "the classes and subaltern groups which constitute the mass of the labouring population and the intermediary classes in the towns and the countryside" (Guha, 1982: 4)

Subaltern politics is, therefore, oppositional politic or transformative resistance. Given the all pervasive nature of hegemony, the agency of the subaltern can take only a critical, oppositional form. Since it is not allowed free expression within the structures of the dominant hegemony, its expression will mostly be violent and sporadic. It can take the form of riots, strikes, and demonstration. In other words, through the actions of OPC-Adams faction 1999 and 2000, the subaltern engaged the Nigerian State. The forms, dimensions, logic, and consequence of such engagement are the focus of the following section.

The Nature of
Subaltern Transformative Resistance

Ranajit Guha (1983) identified six key features of subaltern political action:

1. *Negation*, where the peasantry rejected the identity of subalternity that was imposed upon him by other classes, castes, or official standing;
2. *Ambiguity*, whereby a peasant ambivalently engaged in criminal behavior that serves an "inversive function," a way of turning the tables on society, as a common form of insurgency;
3. *Modality*, where the peasant selectively chooses confrontation with his target, usually a dominant superior;
4. *Solidarity*, or "corporate behavior," that finds strength in a unified approach against a common enemy;
5. *Transmission*, where the spread of peasant violence is, in a preliterate society, communicated through signs and symbolism; and finally
6. *Territoriality*, where the peasantry seeks to defend their sense of territory—a construction of "the local"—a sense of belonging to a common lineage and habitat that give them a sense of advantage (History Blogger, August 25, 2007; Dhanagare, 1988: 22–26).

These six features of subaltern politics have also characterized the activities of the OPC-Adams faction during the period under review.

Negation: Terms such as "highway men, hooligans, and miscreants" were used by elites and agents of the Nigerian state to characterize the members of the OPC. Such terms had the consequence of criminalizing the OPC and legalizing their repression of the Nigerian state and its agents (Momoh, 2000: 183). For example, Fasehun described Adams as a "29 year-old Okada rider who has failed to make headway from being a carpenter", and one "with very modest and humble background," lacking "educational acumen [and] political enlightenment." Similarly, former police commissioner for Lagos state, Sunday Aghedo, once alleged that the OPC had been "hijacked by criminal, hoodlums, rogues and vagabonds whose only stock in trade is to foment trouble" (*Punch*, April 11, 2002: 3, Akinyele, 2001: 632)

In opposition to elite/state discourse of criminal marginality, the OPC projected a counterdiscourse of "patriotism" (Yoruba and Nigerian) arguing that "members of the group should be seen as committed patriots sworn to the emancipation and defence of Yoruba nationality" (Adebanwi, 2005: 348). In other words, members of OPC-Adams Faction presented themselves as "patriots, law-abiding and qualified to talk on-behalf of the Yoruba." For example, on Fasehun's characterization

of Adams as an illiterate, Adams replied:

> I am a carpenter by profession but I am not a stark illiterate as Dr Fasehun claimed. As I am speaking now, you can draw your own conclusions whether I am a stark illiterate or not. I can address the Queen of England inside the Buckingham Palace and she will understand what I am saying. (*Guardian* January 13, 2000: 1; Adebanwi, 2005: 250)

Images of the subaltern as patriot were portrayed in statements an example of which is the following:

> We note with utter dismay the hue and cry of some selfish and mischievous people whose political machinery has for long been exhausted. These gangs of self-centered people always hide under the needless fear of disintegration to oppose restructuring of the nation. This same set of criminals are the first to complain of been marginalized when the head of state, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, was ensuring fairness in federal appointments, which is likely to be reversed at the expiration of his regime…President Obasanjo`s administration is achieving what the so-called administrators could not achieve in 39 years of misrule. To this effect, we warn all evil planners to steer clear of any attempts on the life of this emerging patriot. (quoted in Adebanwi, 2005: 350)

Or in songs such as

> Ijangbara bo, ko ni pe de mo
> Ijangbara bo lati wa gba omo Oodua
> Ti Ijangbara ba de Ibo a fi ere ge
> Ijangbara bo la ti wa gba omo Oodua
>
> [Liberation (Yoruba) is coming; it won't be long
> Liberation to free the children of Oodua
> When liberation comes, Hausa will run away
> When liberation comes, Ibo will run away
> Liberation to free the children of Oodua]
>   (Olarinmoye, 2007)

Or by acting as *community gatekeepers* (Pratten, 2008: 3) through vigilante action. Thus a report on the violence in Sagamu, circulated by the Gani Adams faction of the OPC, states that the OPC

> Is seen to have been the saviours of the town, as their members, also known as the Oodua Warriors, did battle to save the town. (HRW, 2003: 12)

Ambiguity: In the hands of the OPC, criminal violence served an "inversive function," a way of turning the tables on those who dominated and

misused society. In other words, "discourses on disorder, law and order, social practices are mobilized as a response to, and a protection against, the state" (Gore and Pratten, 2003). The OPC engaged in activities that were conventionally classified as criminal such as the killing of persons (HRW, 2003: 10–30), either during "ijangbara" (liberation) or during vigilante acts (and both often merged), attacked and burnt police stations (Nwanguma, 2000; HRW, 2003: 30) and in the process freeing detainees and seizing police arms,[2] and carried arms in public. These activities of the OPC were a clear indication of their resistance against the political system dominant in Nigeria. As attempts to shock and turn the tables against the established political order they certainly worked.

Modality: OPC-Adams privileged a modality of selective confrontation with identified targets of which three were of special interest (1) elders and the elite in Yorubaland; (2) "native strangers" such as Hausa-Fulani and Ijaws; and (3) State security agents.

Confrontation with Yoruba Elites and Elders: Violence was used by OPC-Adams to challenge elite-elder hegemony in Yorubaland, especially as it was expressed in the form of moderate OPC-Fasehun faction that was seen as an example of the collaborations at the base of Yoruba marginalization in Nigeria—in which the elders are implicated.

Confrontations with "Native Strangers": Violence was directed against groups seen as hostile to Yoruba nationalism and development such as the Hausa-Fulani and the Ijaw because as expressed by Adams:

> Definitely, you don't expect me to fold (my) arms, when some people want to exterminate our race; they want to turn us into second-class citizens on our own soil. (Adebanwi, 2005: 358)

The attacks against the Hausa-Fulani were directed at wresting control of major economic locations from them who were seen by the OPC as having converted their control of federal government into the economic domination of Yorubaland in the form of control of markets,[3] lorry and bus terminus,[4] fuel depots, and other such places. OPC attacks against the Hausa-Fulani in Yorubaland concentrated on supporting, through the use of violence, attempts by Yoruba traders, drivers, and stevedores to wrest control of economic associations controlling the markets, and other places, from the Hausa-Fulani.

Therefore, most OPC-Hausa clashes centered on markets and major trading points in Yorubaland. OPC actions against the Ijaw were to stop Ijaws from "encroaching" on sites of major natural resources such as petroleum deposits (Ilaje in Ondo state) or to eject them from any other economic sites that they may have controlled in Yorubaland before May

1999 (Apapa Ports in Lagos state[5]). The OPC saw the Ijaws as "economic opportunists" who had exploited Yoruba hospitality and weakness—due to state oppression from 1994 to 1998—to advance claims to resources in Yorubaland.

Confrontations with State Security Agents: OPC directed violence at the police because they saw them as oppressors and tools in the hands of the Hausa-Fulani and hence legitimate targets in order to protect Yoruba interests. OPC views of the police were borne out of the way the police was used by the Abacha regime between 1994 and 1998 to repress Yoruba agitations for the deannulment of the June 12 presidential elections (Nolte, 2004: 70). Their distrust was further heightened when it was discovered that Hausa-Fulani policemen had attacked the Yoruba during clashes between Yoruba and Hausa in Sagamu (76). OPC security action also focused on vigilante action against hoodlums on Yoruba territory who were seen as a threat to the peace and prosperity of Yorubaland and whose unchecked actions could lead to the encroachment of the federal government in the form of an imposition of a state of emergency and suspension of Awoist controlled state governments in Yorubaland.[6]

Solidarity: OPC-Adams displayed a deep interest in creating and maintaining a unified front against those it considered its common enemy: the oppressors (elders, elites, Nigerian state). The solidarity of the group mostly manifested in the chastisement of "traitors," principally, members of OPC-Fasehun and members of OPC-Adams factions who rebelled against the leadership of Gani Adams, such as the Alaka faction[7] and political-cum-ethnic leaders seen as opposed to Afenifere, the political grouping considered by the OPC-Adams faction as legitimate leaders of Yoruba.[8] Such chastisements of traitors are usually severe and bloody as clashes with the OPC-Fasehun group show (HRW, 2003: 5; Nolte, 2004: 78–81).[9]

Solidarity was also reinforced through administering oaths (Nolte, 2004: 72). The oath ritual or what Gani Adams called "protocol" (Adebanwi, 2005: 354) involved members swearing allegiance, depending on the individual's preference, by the principal traditional Yoruba gods (Sango, the god of Thunder, Ogun, the god of iron and war, and Yemoja, the water goddess). For example, it was believed that anyone who swore falsely by Ogun or broke an oath or covenant made before the god would come under his severe judgment: he would die or be mutilated or deformed by a gun-shot, a machete, an engine or machine accident.

The Yoruba are often reminded—"bi omode ba dale, ki o ma da Ogun, oro Ogun l`ewo"—if one breaks covenant at all, it must not be

with Ogun, the matter is strictly taboo where Ogun is concerned. The severity associated with the sanctions of covenant breaking is a reflection of its central role in Yoruba ethics. A covenant breaker is regarded as not only a worthless person. He who is given to falsehood, the Yoruba believe, cannot ultimately prosper (Idowu, 1994).

During the oath-taking ceremony the new member is armed with charms that are believed to prevent bullet, cutlass, or knife wounds, a handkerchief soaked in a concoction deemed to prevent gun wounds, a small gourd with a black powdery substance, native rings which have also been soaked (Oruka ere). Incisions (gbere) are made on the body of the new member to prevent harm from befalling him or her. The charms are called "Panadol" or "Phensic" or "self-defense drugs" (Adebanwi, 2005: 355).

Group unity is forged in a negative manner, by emphasizing what distinguishes, differentiates, and isolates the group from its immediate environment and creates fidelity and solidarity bonds between its members. It is in the rupture and the opposition with the outside, created through the use of the oath, which embodies what constitutes the essence of the Yoruba, which crystallizes the idea of the group and reaffirms the sentiment of belonging to a group.

The idea of negative solidarity is complemented by the affirmation of a community of shared interest between the members of Yoruba society and the OPC, based on shared interest as expressed through the oath. The common link established through the oath helps to present the divergent interests between the various Yoruba groups as nonantagonistic and capable of being subsumed within the pursuit of a collective project.

Transmission: Various instruments were deployed by OPC-Adams to propagate its philosophy the most important of which were songs and religion. The Yoruba worldview that takes different religions as resources for coping with the social, economic, and political conditions encountered in everyday life gave the OPC an invaluable instrument for transmitting its resistance ideology and having it normalized within Yoruba social psyche. Thus Adams encouraged Christian and Muslim prayer bands within his movement while at the same time promoting the use of rituals charms and oaths. The familiarity of the OPC with all the dominant religions within Yorubaland acted as an introduction to all segments of Yoruba society as the religions acted as "languages" that ensured mutual comprehension between the OPC and its audiences in Yorubaland.

Mutual comprehension and transmission of OPC philosophy were also achieved through the use of songs, some good examples of which are the following:

"Ganiyu, Oro mi f`amo juto"
"Ko ye ki baba mi j`iya
« k`e mi omo tun je"
        (Adebanwi, 2005: 356)

"Ganiyu—(Adams)"
"My situation calls for redress"
"It is improper for my father to suffer"
"and for me to follow in sequence."[10]

Territoriality: The actions of the OPC-Adams factions displayed a clear logic of territoriality, a desire to protect or defend a sense of territory. For such territorial desire is clearly expressed in the OPC anthem:

Ile ya, ile ya o, Omo Odua, ile ya.
Ti a ko ba mo ibi a nre, nje ko ye ki a pada sile.
E jaw o lapon ti o yo, ko lo gbomi ila kana.
Ile ya, ile ya o, Omo Oodua ile ya.

[Home beckons, children of Oduduwa
Heed the call for a return
If we do not know where we are going
Shouldn't we return home?
Leave the apon soup that does not draw and go for okro
Home beckons, children of Oduduwa]
                (Akinyele, 2001: 626)

The desire to protect a sense of territory is also expressed through the goals of the OPC-Adams faction such as self-determination and social emancipation for the Yoruba, regional autonomy, self-government and self-management, economic reconstruction and control, reconstructed, reconstituted, and genuinely federal Nigerian union, reunion of all Yoruba in Kwara and Kogi states (in the north) with their kith and kin in the southwest, an independent army, police, and judiciary, and Sovereign National Conference.

Protecting the Yoruba territory of southwestern Nigeria as a goal of the OPC-Adams political action. This is reflected in attacks on Hausa-Fulani being justified by a claim to regain control of Yoruba economic space. Similarly, the attack on the police and hoodlums was justified by the need to restore to the Yoruba the control of the use of force within Yoruba public space. The clearest expression of the territorial logic of OPC-Adams actions was its involvement in the age-old struggle by the Yoruba of Ilorin for restoration of their ancestral control of the town lost during the Fulani jihad of the late eighteenth century. The OPC saw Fulani control of Ilorin as a very visible expression of the oppression that

the Yoruba were suffering in the hands of an oppressive Nigerian state dominated by the Hausa-Fulani.

The Logic of the Subaltern Encounter with the State in Nigeria

From the above analysis of the features of the OPC-Adams political action, the following logic of the subaltern encounter with the state in Nigeria can be deduced:

- It starts off with a process of negation of dominant political relations and deployment of a modality of violence and criminality intended to serve an "inversive function," of turning the tables on those who dominated and misused society (negation);
- The creation of an alternative political framework based on tradition, religion followed by an active attempt to operationalize the new model within the movement (solidarity);
- An active attempt to apply the political model across a clearly identified geographical and political space (territoriality) through use of symbolism and specific language registers (transmission).

Limitations and Contradictions of the Subaltern Encounter with the Nigerian State

To a great extent, the logic of subaltern political action or transformative subaltern resistance worked because during the period under analysis there was certainly a change in the nature of state politics that reflected the demands of the subalterns for transformed politics. For example, the pressure of subaltern action as described above can be linked to changes instituted by Obasanjo regime such as transformation of the police, the federal bureaucracy, the armed forces, and the Federal Executive Council into organizations that reflected the federal nature of Nigeria.

Oppositional action can be motivated by positive concerns, and to be successful, it has to be creatively deployed. Thus the inability of grassroots movements to act as agents of positive change lies in their inability to transit from a culture of confrontation to one of creative engagement with the state once their often violent actions have secured from the state an acknowledgment of the validity of their cause. The actions of grassroots movements are simply the catalyst for change. For positive change to be brought to term and reinforced, the process initiated by local movements has to be properly managed and this is severely lacking in subaltern encounters with the state. The actions of the OPC-Adams faction, as described

above, could be bewildering and self-contradictory to any observer without knowledge of the political agenda of the group. The lack of proper management meant that while the majority of Yoruba agreed with their objective of revitalizing Yoruba identity, the violent manner in which they went about it soon became abhorrent and they quickly lost favor.

Furthermore, subaltern consciousness is always embedded within the confines of the dominant elite culture, drawing upon it for sustenance and meaning and so suffers from a "limited nature as against the versatile and dynamic nature of elite consciousness so its challenge to hegemony of the elites can at best only be partial and fragmentary." Thus, the decidedly ethnic character of subaltern mobilization in Nigeria has proved to be more of a limitation, to subaltern efforts to reform politics in Nigeria. This is why

1. The benefits that derive from subaltern revolts against dominant power structures are often short term in nature—by 2002 the Adams faction had lost its revolutionary fervor;
2. There is a high rate of fragmentation and attendant vicious infighting among and within subaltern movements (Fasehun faction versus Adams faction, Adams faction versus Alaka faction);
3. Easy incorporation of subaltern positive actions into dominant elite zero-sum struggles for political power and further entrenchment of ethnic insecurity dilemma and the various inequalities it generates in society (OPC anti-Sharia stance, OPC support for anti-Olowo faction in Owo, OPC support for Alliance for Democracy governors in their struggle with PDP-controlled federal government over restructuring of the federation/true federalism, revenue allocation reforms, electoral bill 2001).

As the subaltern revolts have all sought for changes within existing social-cultural power relations in Yorubaland within the ethnic nation and so have not been able to transcend the false consciousness of ethnic nationalism and the lure of manipulative populism when deployed by hegemonic elites, it has been unable to fulfil its progressive potentialities. This is so because Yoruba subalterns have been unable to articulate effectively a critique that is comprehensible to subalterns in other parts of the country who share similar conditions of marginality.

The inability to transcend the confines of ethnic consciousness has led to the fragmentation of subaltern movements and the rapid incorporation of its leaders into the broader zero-sum politics at the state and national levels. Thus, rather than constituting a drawback to Yoruba politics, the fact that the subaltern revolt subscribed to the ideal of Yoruba unity made it easy for elites to incorporate their activities into the wider frame of Yoruba politics, reinforcing those of the Afenifere and Alliance for Democracy and its flexibility and manoeuvrability, in terms of the response to changing political contexts of Nigerian zero-sum politics.

Consequently, the subaltern, even though unwilling, becomes part of a larger ethnic power agenda or, as expressed by Hausa-Fulani intellectuals, "part of a larger Yoruba conspiracy and agenda to neutralise the dominant other, the Hausa-Fulani and other ethnic nationalities and then take over the country" (Adebanwi, 2005: 360).

Conclusion

The innovative use of identity, subaltern and ethnic, by the OPC-Adams faction between 1999 and 2003 tested state-society relations in Nigeria, especially state-subaltern relations, and succeeded in drawing the attention of the state to the need and desire of Nigerians for transformative politics. The activities of the OPC-Adams faction highlighted the importance of transformative resistance as a means of actualizing the goal of transformative politics. While the positive impact of subaltern engagements with the state is acknowledged, the limited nature of subaltern consciousness, its embeddedness within the confines of dominant elite culture, need to draw upon the dominant culture for sustenance and meaning and most especially "ambiguity": criminal violence serving an "inversive function" of turning the tables on those who dominate the state and abuse their privilege in society proves to be a major limitation to the transformative potentials of the of subaltern in its encounters with the state.

Notes

1. Which "manifest in an apparent institutional monopoly of violence and rampant prebendalism which reflects the extractive nature of the state and the accumulative base of ethno-regional commercial and bureaucratic classes."
2. Police stations in Okota, Alakara, Mushin, Area B, Apapa, ApapaWharf, Sango, Ifo, Isolo, and Idiroko areas of Lagos state were burnt in 1999.
3. Ketu/Mile 12 (major food market in Lagos state, November 25 and 26, 1999), Ajeromi-Ifelodun, Ojodu and Oko-Oba abattoir and Ajegunle September–October 1999, October 2000, Bodija market (major food market in Ibadan, September–October 1999, October 2000.
4. Sagamu, southern terminus of the kola trade, mid-July 1999.
5. September 1999.
6. Akala, Lagos, vigilante operation December 1999, Ojo local government, Lagos, vigilante operation, October 2000.
7. Alaka was Gani Adams' right hand man. He was the "actor" to Gani Adams' role as "Boss," interview with OPC member, April 16, 2005
8. On the December 12, 2002, Governor Ahmed Bola Tinubu's motorcade was shot at by OPC militants at Racecourse, Lagos. Governor Tinubu was involved in a struggle with the Afenifere for control of the political machinery of the ruling political party in Lagos state, the Alliance for Democracy.

9. Fasehun was branded as a traitor by the Gani Adams faction; there were allegations that he had been involved in corruption and had accepted money from senior federal politicians and others, and that he had helped the police track down Gani Adams and his supporters. At one time, Fasehun had even requested police protection against further attacks on him by Gani Adams' supporters.

10. The effectiveness of OPC songs as transmission mechanisms lies in the language registers they contain of which five can be identified: *The language of religion* (and of sorcery), used to ensure group compliance and unity and encapsulate sanctions; *The language of the family*, which invokes group authority, privileges, and responsibilities to the individual and of the individual to the group; *The language of nutrition*, which can take two forms, 1. *"eating" to signify prosperity, abundance, and fecundity, signifying equal access by all social groups to national resources* and 2. *"eating," used to signify selfishness*, lack of redistribution of social resources and domination; the *language of tradition* used to reconstruct the golden age of the Yoruba and the *language of success*, used to insist on the possible achievement of the group's objectives and the reconstruction of its golden age.

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Newspapers/News Magazines

Guardian
Nigerian Tribune
Punch
Tempo

The State as Undertaker: Power and Insurgent Media in Nigeria

Ayo Olukotun

Introduction and overview

A distinct feature of the military and civilian dictatorships that have ruled Nigeria since the mid-1980s is the build-up as well as deployment of a repressive state infrastructure that has constituted a decided obstruction to free expression, the media, and civil society. Whether this phenomenon is viewed as a transition from a prebendal to a predatory state (Castells, 1998), the rise of a felonious state (Bayart, 1999), a police state (Tlemçani, 2005), or as a shadow state (Szeftel, 1998) that is employed both as a terror machine and as a vehicle for the personal appropriation of state resources, the unfailing motif is that of an awesome security machine, ready to maim, torture, kill, and lay siege on an increasingly insurgent media, which, in the crucible of repression, were forced to develop quasimilitary tactics to oppose the harshly authoritarian state.

Hence, for journalists and cultural workers, who experienced the traumas of imprisonment, a sudden loss of jobs due to the closure of newspapers, torture, the destruction of newspaper offices in mysterious fires, assassination attempts and the actual death of colleagues, death was not a distant metaphysical entity but an ever-threatening possibility. Alluding to the pervasiveness of death in Kinshasa, following the break-up of the Zairian state, De Boeck (2005: 16) states that "not only has death thus become a metaphor to speak about certain areas of daily life in Kinshasa—but the country in its totality has become a 'post-mortem' a place in which one constantly inhabits two worlds that of the dead and that of the not so alive."

The Nigerian reality was, of course, less dismal than the Congolese one in that all-out war was at least narrowly averted; yet the combination of the austere economics of the media underlined by the demise of several titles as well as the effects of political persecution that forced several journalists into exile after receiving death threats meant that they had to practice their craft in the shadow of death. Of course, for journalists like Dele Giwa and Bagauda Kaltho, who were murdered because of their efforts to widen the discourse beyond the official straitjacket, the state as undertaker assumed a concrete and ultimate form. It is important to grasp, however, that the martyrdom of these two journalists is only a dramatic illustration of the fray in which the media sought to combat the excesses of the authoritarian state.

This chapter employs narratives of survival and heroism to underline the very brutal context of state-media relations in the years between 1996 and 2006 in Nigeria, hoping thereby to illuminate conceptualizations of both the Nigerian state and a crucial segment of civil society, namely, the Nigerian media in the contemporary period.

Theoretical Framework: Between the Repressive State and the Insurgent Media

Agbaje's (1992) seminal book on the Nigerian press is an abiding reminder that attempts to conceptualize the role of the media in contemporary politics, outside of the state, economic forces, international relations, and social movements are prone to futility.

Indeed, several contemporary authors such as Hyden (2002) and O'Neil (1998) posit that the relationship between the state and the media ought to be a major analytical preoccupation of students of the developing world. Therefore, if, as Chabal and Daloz (1999: 1) argues, issues regarding the state, civil society, and the place of leaders or elites constitute "three key areas of classical political analysis," then it is all the more pertinent to map the trajectories of state-media relations for the clues and insights they yield regarding political enterprise. As is well known, the bulk of theoretical writing on the state and civil society in Africa ranging from the modernization theories of the 1960s through to the dependency approaches of the 1970s to the postmodernist perspectives of the 1980s either simply ignored the media or treated them as peripheral to political outcomes, and certainly secondary to such factors as intraelite battles, for example. Despite the emergence of comparative democratization or transitology as a distinct subfield in American universities in the 1990s (Tlemçani, 2005), the role of the media in the process of democratization constitutes a virtually invisible chapter.

Efforts to close this lacuna within critical scholarship are traceable to the rediscovery of Gramsci's insights and their application to the study of state-media relations in Nigeria in a trail blazed by Agbaje's 1992 work. This student of the media considers the framework of hegemony as productive of insights, which help us to clarify the peculiar context of state-media relations in Nigeria from the mid-1980s up to now. Derived from the Greek word *hegemon,* which simply means chieftain, hegemony draws attention to the manner in which a social class within a national polity or preeminent power in the international system legitimates its role without constantly resorting to force.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx postulated that control over the means of material production would translate into control over the means of mental production (Milliband, 1973). Drawing on this insight, the Italian radical thinker and socialist, Antonio Gramsci, argued that the normal exercise of hegemony is characterized by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally without force predominating excessively over consent. Indeed, the attempt is always made to ensure that force would appear to be based on the consent of the majority expressed by the so-called organs of the public—newspapers and associations—that, therefore, are artificially multiplied in certain situations (McClellan, 1979: 185).

In contrast to the pluralist notion of a free market of ideas expressed through the media, the hegemony theory informs us that there is a struggle over the discourse space that the ruling classes use their political and economic clout to dominate. If the task of the establishment media and ancillary popular culture institutions are to *police the parameters of legitimate dissent by presenting citizens with a view of the world consistent with the maintenance of the status quo* (McNair, 1999: 64), the duty of the subaltern classes is to throw up subversive motifs in the bid to restructure the discourse map. Hence we have a division in the media between those who legitimate the ruling class, and those who subvert it, with a few standing in between the broad divisions that could swing either way. In times of crisis, however, described in neo-Gramscian terminology as moments of negation, individual journalists, from the establishment, and status quo culture artists may make common cause with repressed groups and classes by offering, through critical productions, a breeding ground for the "reproduction of legitimation crisis for a given system, under concrete empirical circumstances" (Ninalowo, 1999: 76).

Hegemony is conceptualized, therefore, as a framework, following Ericson et al. (1991), that addresses how "superordinates manufacture and sustain support for their dominance over subordinates through dissemination and reproduction of knowledge that favours their interests and how subordinates alternatively accept or contest their

knowledge" (Ericson, 1991: 12). Sometimes, as in the case of state civil society struggles in Nigeria during the military dictatorships of the 1980s and 1990s, radical civil society and dissenting journalists widen the discourse space by creating novel outlets to spread subversive messages, especially given the fact that the formal media were tightly censored. Thus, in a recent book I have drawn attention to the counter-hegemonic use of an underground media and traditional protest auspices by sections of civil society during antimilitary struggles (Olukotun, 2004b).

There are, of course, debates as to whether a "hegemonic bloc" in the Gramscian sense exists in Nigeria, with scholars such as Ihonvbere (1994) arguing that ethnic identities among the ruling class mediate hegemonic consciousness. While granting the frailties imposed on the use of the concept, and by the problems associated with the Nigerian project, it is argued that it is a useful organizing rubric for analyzing contemporary politics. The opportunistic deployment of ethnic identities in intraruling class struggles, which are also reflected in the media, does not substantially alter the picture of hegemonic contestation.

At the global level, what one scholar has described as the "cultural-ideological project of global capitalism" (Sklair, 1991: 41) is related to the dominance of a neoliberal agenda that celebrates market forces, electoral democracy, and is purveyed by *Mordoch's Sky TV, CNN, the BBC*, as well as the *Voice of America*. Hence, while the international media may facilitate antiauthoritarian struggles, on account of an efficient transmission of liberal ideology and images, the transition to substantive, as opposed to procedural democracy, is a project that only the domestic media, acting in tandem with sections of civil society, can undertake.

Concerning the state, it is very much the unreformed descendant of its colonial prototype, whereby an army of occupation, alienated from its citizens, administered, rather than governed, a subject population. Unable to transform the inherited state, the nationalists were forced to rely on a mixture of coercion and consent, with coercion often predominating, especially in times of crisis and popular protests when newspapers were closed down, opposition leaders were jailed or assassinated, and such other activities that used force or violence. As Claude Ake made clear, the State in Africa is plagued by a crisis of legitimacy because of its external dependence, the decision of the political class to inherit the colonial socioeconomic system instead of transforming it, the massive use of state violence to deradicalize the nationalist movement and impose political monolithism in the face of deep-rooted social pluralism, and the use of force to repress a rising tide of resentment against the failures of the nationalist leadership, especially the mismanagement of development and the impoverishment of the masses (Ihonvbere, 2000: 20).

In this context, the struggle to legitimate the state through media-friendly images, as well as resistance to it, becomes frantic and obsessive. The state employs several strategies to corrupt the media and, failing that, to repress them.

It is interesting too to note that the "nonautonomization" of the Nigerian state, that is, the lack of hegemony in civil society, forces it to rely on the repressive mechanisms of maintaining hegemony at the political level. In Althusserian terms, this means that "ideological state apparatuses" (ISA) are underdeveloped, forcing the state to rely on the coercive and repressive power of the state (1971). As Ihvonbere (1994: 44) has usefully enunciated on this score,

> The state is not dominant in civil society—rather [it is dominant] at the political level. There is extensive reliance on the police, the secret service, foreign military bodies and the armed forces to maintain order, discipline and control. There is also extensive reliance on the use of threats, violence, repression and intimidation in order to contain popular pressures and retain control over social forces in society.

This process may involve the creation of personality cults and rites of leadership adulations or, in the graphic phrase of the concept paper for this project "the Baba-rization of power"; it may involve, too, the deployment of "bottom power" exemplified by the first lady syndrome as in the Babangida and Abacha regimes; it may also involve the radical restructuring and refocusing of the security agencies to protect the leader, spy on, ambush, detain, or assassinate critics as well as the creation of a climate of fear, targeted at muzzling dissent.

As one report informatively asserts,

> if there is any institution that needs reorientation for the defence of democracy, it is the coercive apparatus. The components of this apparatus are the police and the various security outfits, notably the state security service created and disbanded according to the whims of the dictators. Atrocities such as the parcel bombing of Dele Giwa and the assassination of elder statesman Alfred Rewane and Mrs. Kuidrat Abiola indicated that the raison d'être of these agencies had changed from promoting the security of the state to securing the lives of the dictators. (IDEA, 2000: 141)

It is this context of weak hegemony accentuated by legitimacy deficits stemming from poor performance, corruption, and the monumental pillage of the public purse that accounts for the overt use of coercion and censorship, and in which during high tides of repression and public protest, the state becomes the undertaker for courageous journalists and for free expression.

Capacity Profile of the Media[1]

Nigeria has the biggest and most virile press community in Africa followed by South Africa and Kenya. A census of the Nigerian media published in the 1999 edition of the Media World Yearbook puts the number of regular newspapers at 78, magazines at 45, television stations at 52, and radio stations at 39, although it should be mentioned that a number of these are shoe-string enterprises, at the margins of survival.

The period since 1999 has witnessed a mushrooming of sorts in the newspaper industry with new titles such as the *Anchor,* the *Sun,* and the *Daily Independent* springing up as well as the relaunch of moribund or prostrate titles such as the *National Interest.* We should also take on board the recent proliferation of *NTA* relay stations under the democratic government that has considerably added to the number of television stations in the country. One consequence of the economic downturn of the 1980s and 1990s, and specifically a result of hostile authoritarian economic policies toward the media, was that the combined circulation of all newspapers reaches barely half a million in a country of close to 140 million people. If we add the circulation figures of magazines and other publications, to those of newspapers, they barely hit the 1 million mark.

Punch, a privately owned newspaper, is perhaps the most widely read newspaper and its print run is between 60,000 and 80,000 copies per day. The *Guardian,* a favorite of the intellectuals and respected for its independent, sober views, had a print run in 2004 of between 50 and 60 thousand copies per day.

Other newspapers such as the privately owned *Nigerian Tribune*, *ThisDay, Post Express,* the *Vanguard,* the *Comet* as well as the until recently state-owned *Daily Times*, and the *New Nigerian* do less well in circulation terms than the *Punch* and the *Guardian*. The magazine market is dominated by three giants, namely, *Tell Magazine,* the *News,* and *Newswatch*, and had circulation figures in 2004 of about 40,000, 20,000, and 15,000, respectively.

One underreported, but increasingly assertive newspaper genre, is that of vernacular newspapers, which in the Yoruba speaking region made a resurgence in the closing years of military rule. A rash of vernacular newspapers have sprung up in recent years trying to build on the success of *Alaroye* whose circulation competes favorably with the most successful national dailies. In broadcasting, 10 or so television stations are in private hands; of the 40 or so radio stations, a handful are privately owned following the deregulation of broadcasting by the state in 1994. The most successful private electronic media are *Galaxy, AIT, Minaj, and Silverbird* television station*s* as well as *Raypower Radio*, all of which offer refreshing contrasts to the heavily state-controlled contents of state electronic media.

As in Kenya, Ghana, and much of Africa, publications rise, fall, and are sometimes reborn with dizzying regularity. This is particularly true of the genre of afternoon newspapers, soft-sell magazines as well as newspapers owned by subnational authorities. Take the *Diet* newspaper, for example. It was founded in 1997 by Mr. James Ibori, a close ally of the late dictator, General Sani Abacha. In 1999, most of its staff had walked out as a result of the nonpayment of salaries for several months—a typical syndrome in the Nigerian press culture. The paper had virtually ground to halt by late 1999. In 2000, its publisher, now governor of Delta state, relaunched the *Diet* as an attractive, multicolored publication. The paper, however, remained in distress and in 2001 it was relaunched under a new title and auspices, namely the *National Independent*. Between 1999 and 2003, several prominent titles such as *The Concord, National Interest, Tempo* (which survived underground under the Abacha dictatorship), the *Anchor, Post Express,* and *Eko Today* have gone off the streets, although one of them, *National Interest,* was relaunched in February 2005.

The imposition of value added tax on input into newspaper production by both the Abacha and Abubakar administrations, and the consequent skyrocketing cost of production, forced many newspapers to downsize, cut back on circulation, increase the cover price, or simply cease trading. The years between 1994 and 1999 were harsh ones for the press, not just because of censorship decrees and frequent detention, but because of hostile economic policies. The imposition of 5 percent value added tax on newspapers in the 1999 budget by General Abubakar and their retention under the civilian government stiffened further the climate in which many newspapers found themselves. An increase in cover price and advert rates by the *Guardian* and other publications, in recent years, has made the press even more of an elitist product in the period since 1999.

As of February 2005, various newspapers—state-owned and private—owed their staff several months' salary, ranging from 3 to 12 months, as a result of the problems in that sector of the economy. One senior journalist observed correctly that

> The Nigerian journalist goes out to work armed minimally despite today's electronic age. Side by side with his foreign counterpart he is equipped like a stone age communicator amidst the clusters of sophisticated gadgetry presided over by his Japanese equivalent. Under these conditions, the Nigerian journalist is an unsung hero—deplorable low wages and delayed salary payments are common (*Daily Times*, April 15, 1994: 20)

Many journalists are not computer literate, even fewer own personal computers, in spite of the arrival on the Internet of the *Punch,* the *Guardian,* the *Vanguard,* the *Comet,* and several others. The situation with regard to computer literacy and adaptation appears to be improving slowly,

however, despite infrastructural hitches such as fitful electricity supply and frequent computer breakdowns.

Interestingly, some of the antimedia decrees promulgated by Generals Babangida and Abacha were still on the statute books as of March 2005 in spite of several promises to expunge them, although they are not being enforced. Although the Senate has recently expunged some of these decrees, there are others that remain on the statute book, surviving reminders of the long night of dictatorship.

The international press and the emergent telematics sector constitute part of the multiplicity of media types present in Nigeria. To this we can add the alternative press consisting of indigenous artists, orature, and social criticism. *BBC, VOA,* and *CNN* are quite popular, in view of an esteemed higher credibility rating. They in fact increasingly shape the content of Nigeria media. There is also a tiny but growing telematics sector featuring e-mails, Internet messages, and a whole province of new information technology in which the country remains peripheral. Only an estimated 400,000 Nigerians surf the Internet while the problems of unreliable power supply and infrastructure constrain a wider diffusion of these services.

It should also be mentioned that the media can broadly be divided into state-owned and private. The state-owned media as mentioned earlier include the majority of the broadcast media: newspapers such as the *Daily Times*, which has been recently privatized, the *New Nigerian,* and a broad array of newspapers owned by state governments.

These are the ones usually deployed in hegemonic contests by the state. The propaganda bent of the Nigerian Television Authority in successive civilian and military regimes is notorious. For example, during the impeachment crisis involving the legislature and President Obasanjo, between August and November 2002, the *NTA* considerably downplayed the issue. In contrast to this posture, private television stations such as *African Independent Television (AIT)* and *Channels Television* give balanced coverage to both government and opposition. Of course, the constraining regulatory environment under which private televisions are allowed to operate prevents them from becoming oppositional. But they are certainly less easy to use for propaganda by government.

In the print media as mentioned earlier, a tradition of lively outspokenness, dating back to the nineteenth century when the first indigenous newspapers castigated the colonial authorities, is in evidence. The *Guardian,* the *Punch, ThisDay,* the *Vanguard,* the *Concord* (currently rested) to varying degrees keep this tradition alive. Sometimes, however, private newspapers deliberately market government views and state security agents have been known to provide funds to start some nominally independent newspapers.

Of interest, too, is the concentration of media institutions in southwest Nigeria where a developed newspaper and advertising culture going back several decades exists. This has led to charges of the media not being pluralistic, but a regionally based instrument for promoting largely Yoruba interests.

An earlier formulation of this viewpoint was made by Peter Enahoro, former managing director of the *Daily Times,* who argued that

> Many of today's so-called national newspapers emanating from the southwest are in fact regional publications whose loyalties are to the personalities and causes espoused by the apparent majority of the people of that area—it is tantamount to a monopoly of a vital resource with a crucial bearing on the democratic process. (*Daily Times*, April 15, 1994: 21)

It should be noted that the preponderant location of media in southwest Nigeria does not dovetail with ownership patterns. For example, 10 out of 12 major media institutions are located in Lagos, out of which only 2, the *Punch* and the *Comet,* have Yoruba proprietors. Indeed, the emerging trend is a preponderance of media owners from the Niger-Delta area, a fact that may not be unrelated to the petroleum-driven political economy of Nigeria and the incorporation of the elite from the Delta area into a national framework of spoils sharing.

Furthermore, the recruitment pattern of journalists in these media institutions is fairly diversified in terms of ethnic origin of personnel. What is true, however, is the relative activism of civil society in the Ibadan-Lagos area as a result of a higher level of education, a pronounced history of political struggle, Yoruba protest epistemology manifest in oral cultural productions condemning oppressive rulers as well as the existence of an advertising and commercial infrastructure conducive to media growth. All of these, however, do not mean that ethnic and other divisions can be wished away. They are real but should not be overplayed.

Concerning the work environment of journalists, it is pertinent to mention that low remuneration, delayed salaries, frequent job changes, all related to the crisis of viability of media, are the order of the day. A fragile macro-economy, underpinned by the escalating cost of imported newsprint and other input into newspaper production, the rapid demise of media, and low demand for newspapers, translate into a harrowing work culture for Nigerian journalists. The fragility of media in economic terms results in corruption in the media, a rapid turnover of personnel and the participation of journalists in public relations projects as survival strategies. Such practices are fuelled by the distress in the media sector, although they have not prevented critical and independent media from championing reform and democratic causes.

Finally, in ending this section, it should be noted that advocacy journalism is a dominant trend in a section of the media. In the First and Second Republics, newspapers sometimes closed ranks, in order to promote an accountable government or struggle against unjust laws such as the Newspaper Amendment Act of 1964. As Larry Diamond has informatively noted, concerning the media during Nigeria's Second Republic,

> These positive contributions were counterbalanced but not outweighed by some continuing tendency toward irresponsible sensationalism and the proclivity of some newspapers to reflect and accentuate the polarizations of partisan loyalties. More effectively, but at greater risk to its practitioners, the press has kept alive the commitment to democracy and sought to establish some kind of accountability during periods of authoritarian rule. (1990: 1)

Narratives of Survival, Heroism, and Martyrdom

For reasons explained in the theoretical section, the forcible suppression of dissent and cruelty toward independent-minded journalists are distinct features of Nigeria postcolonial history. Hence, Adekanye (1997: 51) pertinently reminds us that "all of Nigeria's military regimes have at one time or another resorted to proscription or closure of newspaper houses and presses and arrest and imprisonment of journalists."

Segun Sowemimo, a television journalist based in Ibadan, was severely beaten on the orders of Colonel Adeyinka Adebayo—the military governor of the western region—for covering a party the Colonel was attending. Sowemimo later died from the wounds inflicted on him by the soldiers. This was in the late 1960s.[2] In 1973, Minere Amakiri of the *Nigerian Observer* was stripped naked and given 24 strokes of the cane for writing a story that embarrassed the then military administrator of Rivers state, Navy Commander Alfred Diette-Spiff. Cruelties of greater or lesser degrees dot our history books.

The death of Dele Giwa in October 1986 as a result of a parcel bomb constituted a seminal departure and a watershed in state-media relations, more so as it had all the overtones of a state murder. It was the end of innocence as the honeymoon in state-media relations occasioned by the liberalizing gestures of the first year of Babangida's rule went awry. The gestures include the annulment of Decree 4 of 1984 that had been employed to muzzle dissent and detain journalists by the Buhari government; the release of political detainees; the overhaul of the National Security Organization and the appointment of star technocrats with a human rights visage into the cabinet. In retrospect, the appointment of such leading lights of civil society as Bola Ajibola, Tony Momoh, and

Olikoye Ransome Kuti into Babangida's cabinet constituted a corporatist arrangement to shore up Babangida's personal rule.

Dele Giwa founded the combative *Newswatch* magazine and his death was preceded by an invitation by state security on October 16, 1986, to a meeting in which he was told to clear himself of allegations of inciting students and labor unions against Babangida's government. The journalist died in a horrific explosion after he opened a letter, which turned out to be a parcel bomb, reportedly marked "From the Office of the Commander in Chief." Evidence of an official cover-up of what looked like state involvement in the murder was provided by Abubakar Tsav, the police officer who was assigned to investigate the case. First of all, Tsav alleges that a preemptive visit to the scene of the event by senior military officers had somewhat prejudiced the outcome of any investigations. According to him,

> When this Dele Giwa incident happened, the first set of people that went were some Senior Officers like Kaltungo and others. They went to the scene first. It was when they came back that they asked us to investigate the case. Normally, people who visit the scene should be the investigators. (*Saturday Punch*, October 21, 2006: A22)

More importantly, the investigations carried out by Tsav never saw the light of day. In his words,

> I investigated this case to a certain level and made my recommendations in an interim report and forwarded the case file to the officer in charge of CID at the time, Mr. Victor Pam, who is now the Gwom Gwom Jos. Soon after I passed the file to Mr. Pam, Mr. Omeben came in and took over from him. Since then I did not get the file back. In my recommendations I suggested that I should be allowed to conduct domicile searches in the houses of some security officers in order to clear some allegations that we had on ground. Since the case file went and didn't come back to me, I could not ask them to bring it back to me. If I did, they would say I had a special interest in the case. (*Saturday Punch*, October 21, 2006: A22)

In a pattern that is familiar to students of Nigerian political murders, efforts were made to ensure that security agencies and the general public could not get to the bottom of the case. Chief Duro Onabule, Chief Press Secretary to Babangida from 1986 to 1993, volunteered that the information supplied to the security agencies about Dele Giwa was the handiwork of "fifth columnists within the Babangida administration who were trying to foment crisis" (personal interview, Lagos, March 2001).

In the public perception, Babangida's refusal to appear before the Justice Oputa Panel, which was set up by the Obasanjo government to investigate such atrocities, meant that he had a lot of explaining to do regarding the Giwa murder and other such incidents.

As hinted earlier, Dele Giwa's murder altered the pattern of state-media relations and represented a foreboding of the very fractious and confrontational terrain in which journalists would operate in the twilight years of the Babangida presidency and beyond.

According to Professor Sam Oyovbaire, Minister for Information under the Babangida government,

> I think the period leading to sour relations between IBB and the media may have started with the death of Dele Giwa. Before then, there was nothing the media held against the regime and there was nothing the regime saw bad about the media. When Dele Giwa was bombed, the brilliant journalist was a model to many up and coming journalists and *Newswatch* which he published was the most vibrant journal around at the time—Given popular perception of the people that this was a state terrorist murder, I can see that the accord between state and media began to wane from that time. By the time the transition program was inaugurated, you already had a media that was becoming suspicious. (Personal interview, Lagos, February 2002)

In other words, things were never the same between Babangida and the media after a very successful journalist was murdered while working on a story related to Gloria Okon, a drug courier who died in prison under mysterious circumstances and who is believed to have been connected with high state officials. Many journalists empathized with Dele Giwa who was as Oyovbaire suggests, a role model for many of them. Several editorials were written calling on government to get to the bottom of the matter. For example, even the government-owned *Daily Times* on October 22, 1986 advocated in its editorial that

> The Federal government should act quickly to nip the development in the bud. Our security outfit should move very fast, immediately, to dig into the circumstances surrounding the murder of Dele Giwa. The mystery must be unravelled and persons behind the dastardly plot brought to book—our security agencies must realize that except they dig out the facts on the parcel bomb killing with minimum delay, a precedent must have already been set and before Nigerians know it, a culture of violent crime would have crept in.

Guardian was more blunt in its editorial of October 28, 1996 as it argued that:

> The appointment of a special prosecutor will be a dramatic demonstration by government that it has nothing to hide, and is as interested as the public is, in discovering Giwa's assassins. And it will achieve public credibility without sacrificing professional seriousness.

In spite of an initial flurry of activity that suggested that investigations with the highest official backing were being made, the so-called search for Giwa's murderers led nowhere and was, as shown in Tsav's remarks quoted earlier, frustrated by the same government that claimed to be carrying out the investigations.

It was suggested that Giwa's death is a metaphor, albeit an extreme one, for state-media relations under Babangida, who, according to one report, "has closed down more newspapers than any previous ones even in war-time" (cited in Agbaje, 1999: 120). The general's instrument for laying a siege on free expression was a greatly enhanced and revitalized security apparatus consisting of three overlapping security agencies, namely, the State Security Service (SSS), the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), and the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA).

Their chief executives reported directly to Babangida who was the first military ruler to adopt the title of president and commander in chief and to jettison the collegial format of decision making adopted under previous military regimes. In 1989, two years after Giwa's murder, several editors and publishers were arrested and detained for publishing stories critical of the government. The list included Dele Alake, editor of *Sunday Concord*; Lewis Obi, editor of *African Concord*; Paxton Idowu, editor of the *Republic;* Chris Okolie, publisher of *Newbreed* magazine; and Tunde Agbabiaka, London editor of *African Concord*. One of the detainees, Dele Alake, narrated to this researcher that his ordeal was on account of a story published by the *Sunday Concord*, on the displacement of thousands of residents of Maroko, a Lagos shantytown, to make way for some army generals, including Babangida, who were building luxury houses in the area. After initially fending off security men looking for him the day after the publication of the story, Alake explained that

> Sensing that the team of security operatives ostentatiously on my trail would sooner or later call at my house, I picked up the phone to warn my wife to be on her guard. It was too late, they were already at the house, waiting for me. Indeed, when the leader of the team realized, I was the one calling, he grabbed the phone and ejaculated: Mr. Alake, we are already here and would remain here waiting for you until you come back. Bravely, I answered that I would soon be at home to answer their queries. I did this in the knowledge that my family could be subjected to harassment if I did not show up early enough. (Personal interview, Lagos, April 2005)

Alake spent the next 48 hours with his "visitors," an experience intended to purge him of his investigative acumen.

The arrest of Paxton Idowu in the same year carried a touch of sadism. According to one report,

> When the police, in the process of trying to arrest Paxton Idowu, went to his house and could not find him, they arrested his wife, who was 8 months pregnant in lieu of her husband. She was thrown into a stinking, narrow and dark police cell, which she shared for the night with a male suspect held for felony, until the next morning when her husband appeared. (Crisis of Press Freedom, Constitutional Right Project, 1993: 39)

In a similar vein, in 1993 security men arrested Aramide, the one-year-old child of Dapo Olorunyomi, editor of the *News* and Aramide's mother Ladi Olorunyomi, when they could not find Dapo Olorunyomi. The period between 1990 and 1993 was one in which journalists operated in the terrifying shadow of death, a fate shared with his or her family members (Olukotun, 2002a, 2002b).

Abacha's reign from November 1993 until June 1998 was a more brutal and sadistic version of Babangida's, and under him a section of the media was forced underground. At the height of his rule, in 1997, he had 16 journalists detained as political detainees under extreme and horrifying conditions.

As table 7.1 demonstrates, at least 16 journalists were being held in detention at the end of 1997. The manner of their arrest was as harsh as

Table 7.1 Journalists Held by the State Security as Political Detainees as of December 1997

Name	Status and Publication
1. Mrs. Chris Anyanwu	Publisher, *The Sunday Magazine* (TSM)
2. Mr. Kunle Ajibade	Editor, *The News Magazine*
3. Mr. George Mbah	Assistant Editor, *Tell Magazine*
4. Mr. Ben Charles Obi	Editor, *Classique*
5. Mr. Jenkins Alumona	Editor, *The News Magazine*
6. Mr. Onome Osifo-Whiskey	Editor, *Tell Magazine*
7. Mr. Babafemi Ojodu	Editor, *The News Magazine*
8. Mr. Tokonbo Fakeye	Defence Correspondent, *The News Magazine*
9. Mr. Salawu Rafiu	Administrative Manager, *The News Magazine*
10. Mr. Bagaudo Kattho	Kaduna Correspondent, *The News Magazine*
11. Mr. Mohammed Adamu	Abuja Correspondent, *African Concord*
12. Mr. Moshood Fayemiwo	Editor, *Razor Weekly*
13. Mr. Soji Omotunde	Editor, *African Concord*
14. Mr. Niran Malaolu	Editor, *The Diet Newspaper*
15. Mr. Akin Adesola	Correspondent, *Tempo Magazine*
16. Mr. Hamid Danlami	Publisher of *Al-Mazzer*, a Muslim newspaper

Source: Adapted from Annual Report 1997, A CLO Report on *The State of Human Rights in Nigeria*, pp. 68–69.

their stay in prison, both of which were aimed at breaking their spirit. Soji Omotunde, editor of *African Concord* who was abducted on October 28, 1997, said that he was accosted on his way to church by a 505 saloon car that overtook him dangerously. In his words,

> Two men jumped down from the intruding car and asked me to confirm if I was Soji Omotunde. A third person stayed at the steering. I sought to know who they were and their mission. They responded by flashing an incomprehensible card across my face and demanded that I should get down from the car. They claimed they were on instructions to bring me along with them. I then offered to drive my car after them to their undisclosed office. They refused and instantly turned violent. They forced me out of the car dealt some slaps on me, kicked me and dragged me across to their own car. I was forcefully kicked and dragged across the road, roughly bundled into their car, which sped off at break-neck speed, blaring a siren to clear the road. I was sandwiched between two captors at the back of their car, with their sub machine guns drawn. That was the beginning of my six-month journey to captivity incommunicado. (Personal interview, Lagos, February 5, 2002)

The journalist's arrest on October 27 was a result of a publication by the *African Concord* magazine earlier that month, entitled "Al-Mustapha: The Ruthless Iron Man behind Abacha."

If Omotunde's arrest was brutal, the conditions of the prison in which he was held were harsh and harrowing. According to him,

> The cell in which I was dumped at the State Security Service office in Asokoro, Abuja was dirty and unkempt. Evidently earlier inmates had defecated in the room. Only once was a disinfectant applied to douse the stench. There was no bed in the cell, only a ragged mattress thrown on the bare floor. No light in the cell, not even electric wiring. It was pitch darkness at night, a situation that impaired my eyesight. The cell was without a window only a small hole which served as an inlet for mosquitoes. (Personal interview, Lagos, February 5, 2002)

Interviews held with several other journalists who were abducted in this period suggest that Omotunde's harrowing experience was characteristic of the treatment of journalists captured by state security. To cite one more example, Onome Osifo-Whiskey, managing director of *Tell,* whose name featured in the table displayed earlier, narrated that

> On November 9, 1997, on my way to church, I was waylaid by over 8 vehicles which trailed me from half a kilometre away. State Security men jumped down from the vehicles and abducted me and carried me into exile. At the Abuja headquarters of State Security Service, I spent six months, a period during which I never saw the sun. I was kept in isolation, fed with starvation rations, subjected to threats, accused of wetting the ground for

the alleged Diya Coup of December 1997; and denied even a bath for a period of three months. (Personal interview, Lagos, February 6, 2002)

Bagauda Kaltho, whose name appears on the list in table 7.1, did not survive the ordeal of harsh imprisonment and torture in Abacha's gulag. He had been abducted in 1996 by state security agents who had been trailing him in connection with stories he had written about the alleged coup of 1995. The shock and reality of Kaltho's death came to light on August 19, 1998, when Zakari Biu, a senior police official, alleged that James Bagauda Kaltho, senior correspondent of the *News/Tempo* magazines was the person who had died in a bomb explosion in Kaduna in January 1996, while trying to set off a bomb.

This version of Kaltho's death was vigorously contested by his employers, *TheNews/Tempo* argued that it could not reconcile the police's statement on January 24, 1996, that they could not identify the body of the man charred to death in a bomb explosion, with Zakari Biu's revelation that it was Bagauda Kaltho who died in the bomb explosion.

According to one report, "the management of ICNL urged the head of state to order the immediate production of the body for forensic and DNA tests to enable Nigerians, local and international journalists, to get to the root of the matter" (*The Media Rights Agenda Twelfth Activity Report,* 1998: 64). Despite this, the *News* and civil society had to reconcile themselves to the news that Bagauda Kaltho had been murdered, or had succumbed fatally to harsh maltreatment at the hands of Sani Abacha's terror machine.

Five journalists who survived to tell their stories are Kunle Ajibade, Ben Charles-Obi, Chris Anyanwu, George Mbah, and Niran Malaolu, all senior journalists arrested, tried, and convicted in the coup frame-up of 1995 and 1997. One of them, Kunle Ajibade, narrated that

I was taken captive in May 1995, by State Security Service but was handed over to the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) a fact which concealed my whereabouts for a while. I was with DMI until I collapsed in the cell and was rushed to the military hospital, Ikoyi. It was while in hospital that forms were brought from the special investigating panel for me to fill. (Personal interview, Lagos, November 1999)

After a farcical trial, Ajibade was, as the title of his published account of his prison years notes, "jailed for life" (2003). He was subsequently

Huddled into one of the worst prisons in the country which I shared with armed robbery suspects. Markudi is one of the worst prisons in the country. I was consigned there to die instalmentally but I survived partly because I said to myself that I should not give them the pleasure of having me die. (Personal interview, Lagos, November 1999)

Interestingly, too, in the period of the Fourth Republic, in spite of having a constitutional democracy at least in name, one report informs us that

> During the years 2002 and 2003 security agents and aides of senior public officers of government routinely harassed, threatened and even barred journalists from covering government functions and activities. Journalists were also summoned by state and federal legislators or charged with malicious libel, over news items published or broadcast by the media—in addition, police and security agents harassed and detained vendors for selling publications that are considered offensive. (*Media Foundation for West Africa*, 2004: 36)

In other words, there has been more continuity than change in state-media relations in the period since 1999 (Olukotun, 2004a).

Underlining the harsh tenor of state-media relations in what is ostensibly a civilian democracy are the persecution and high handedness visited by the Obasanjo government on the admittedly combative but certainly not reckless *Insider*, a weekly magazine located in the Ogba area of Ikeja in Lagos. After a series of low-handed and subtle intimidation tactics by state security directed at silencing *Weekly Insider*, the government completely went overboard in September 2004 by sealing up the premises of the magazine and arresting some of its key staff on Saturday, September 4, 2004, when a team of security personnel laid siege to the journal's premises as early as 6 a.m. Raphael Olatoye, one of the production editors, had visited the office very early that day to ensure that the printers had promptly delivered the week's edition of the magazine, only to walk into the dangerous embrace of the waiting state security. A volley of questions were directed at Olatoye, who at first tried to dissemble and fend off the men.

To emphasize their mood and mission, the heavily armed security men dealt Olatoye a few slaps forcing him to simmer down and admit that he was on an editorial assignment for *Weekly Insider* (*Tell,* September 20, 2004: 16–211). Soon, the security men would lead a captive Olatoye to the office of the printers of the magazine where the entire print run for the week was impounded. Ralph Olatoye would later spend a few days in detention. Olatoye was not the only one hounded into confinement. On September 6, security personnel, apparently acting on clues, visited the office of the *TheNews* magazine, which was a neighbor of *Weekly Insider.* There, they arrested *Insider*'s security guard as well as the circulation officer, Cyril Mbanomu, who had both taken refuge in the *TheNews* office. They would both spend the next one week in very harrowing circumstances.

A report of the siege in *Tell* magazine (September 20, 2004) details its comprehensive and fear-inducing nature:

> All through last week, the 36 Acme road, Ogba Lagos of the magazine was firmly secured by a padlock supplied by the SSS, denying entrance to both staff and visitors. A peep through the glass doors and windows reveals an ugly spectacle of broken drawers, upturned chairs and tables with files and documents strewn all over the place. Before the seal-off computers, printers and waste paper baskets had been carted away by the security men.

Hence, we have here a narrative of official sadism that evolves state-media relations in the years of military tyranny. Equally interesting was the way in which the Obasanjo government in its twilight years and in the context of seeking to squelch opposition to its abortive third-term agenda persecuted the media. For example, in what was certainly not an isolated event, the government shut down Freedom Radio Kano belonging to Alhaji Bashir Dalhatu on account of the Radio's opposition to the third-term agenda of General Obasanjo.

In an editorial entitled "Shutdown of Freedom Radio," the *Saturday Punch* (April 12, 2006: 16) maintained that

> The official clampdown on the vocal media can be misconstrued by the public as part of a wider plot to silence the opposition. Indeed it has been alleged that there are plans to "contain" the media as part of the thickening plot to elongate the tenure of some elected officials.

Indeed, as the plot thickened and vocal opposition by the media increased, Rotimi Oyekanmi of *Daily Independent* newspaper and Gbenga Aruleba of AIT were arrested in connection with stories they filed, which were critical of the government. Under President Yar'Adua, who came to power proclaiming the rule of law as a defining bedrock of his administration, state-media relations had not been completely devoid of the intimidation of previous years, even if it had not been as overt as it was under his predecessors.

Illustrative of the repressive strain is the recent abandonment of his duty post in Yenagoa, Bayelsa, by Segun James, the state correspondent of *ThisDay*, after his office was visited by "unknown persons" who refused to identify themselves. A report in *ThisDay* (May 29, 2009: 9) informs that the strangers who visited the newspaper's office three times between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. asking for the whereabouts of the correspondent did not disclose their names or mission. The visit may not be unconnected with the report carried in the May 27, 2009 edition of *ThisDay* on the arrest of Ken Niweigha, the militant warlord who was identified by *ThisDay* as the elder brother of Duoye, the current aide-de-camp (ADC) to Governor Timpre Sylvia.

In sum, despite neocorporatist practices of buying off our co-opting dissent, the unfailing tenor of state-media relations between 1986 and 2006 is one of harsh conflict, and for which the martyrdom of Dele Giwa and Bagauda Kaltho serve as chilling and evocative metaphors.

Conclusion

In an illuminating essay, Helge Ronning (1994) posits that African states, because of their inherent weaknesses, seek to monopolize the discourse space in view of its perceived potential for subverting the state. This chapter, employing neo-Gramscian concepts, argues that the Nigerian State became an undertaker, not just for free expression, but for independent-minded journalists like Dele Giwa and Bagauda Kaltho in the years between 1986 and 2006, in a process in which the overt and political aspects of legitimacy building were substituted for cultural and ideological aspects. In other words, lacking "hegemony" in civil society, the state under military and civilian messiahs, having failed to unite the nation under a neocorporatist framework, resorted to brutal repression. As pointed out, the martyrdom of journalists was a metaphor for a discourse space besieged by rampant censorship, economic denial, hostility toward cultural production that did not glorify the custodians of power, as well as sundry atrocities such as the harrowing and harsh imprisonment of journalists. In a bizarre development, five journalists were framed and sentenced to life imprisonment allegedly for being accomplices in phantom coups. Their tormentors did not hide their contempt and disdain for what the journalists stood for, nor would they have cared if they died in the dungeons into which they threw them.

Of course, there was a contest in the discourse arena between the authoritarian state as undertaker and journalists with a critical bent who, forced underground, resorted to guerrilla tactics in getting across subversive messages. In this bid, they were buoyed up and assisted by new technologies, globalization currents, and the international civil society (Adebanwi, 2005).

Generals drew upon indigenous repertoires of legitimacy building and leadership adulation to create a mystique of apparent invincibility that could not be questioned or challenged without consequences. A tribe of praise singers and ritual eulogists as well as a formidable security ring shielded them from public opinion. As discussed, too, even under Nigeria's wobbling semidemocracy, several of the autocratic features of the military era, in particular, its repressive tactics toward the media, have been deployed to stifle free expression. The concept of the state as undertaker also partly explains the prevalence of unresolved political murders, especially those of Kudirat Abiola, Alfred Rewane, and Bola Ige

who were becoming magnets of an alternative, reformist agenda, critical of the government of the day, or who at least were insisting on reparations for injustices and blatant misrule.

Notes

1. Much of this section draws substantially on my research report cited as Olukotun (2004a).
2. For details, see Ajibade (2003).

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From Corporatist Power to Abjection: Labor and State Control in Nigeria

Emmanuel Remi Aiyede

Introduction

The Nigerian state has intervened massively in labor relations since the 1960s in an effort to institutionalize collective bargaining as a mechanism for conflict resolution in industry. Its actions, irrespective of existing policies, were informed by the need to minimize conflict in industry in order to accelerate the process of development. These efforts have, however, yielded limited returns (Ananaba, 1969; Cohen, 1974; Fashoyin, 1980; Ubeku, 1983; Otobo, 1988; Adesina, 1994, 1995).

Under neoliberal reforms in the 1980s, the state was compelled to intervene even more strongly. The aggravated social conditions of work and other life-threatening hardships that accompanied Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the 1980s and 1990s constrained workers to seek new and multiple avenues for coping with survival needs. As the government rationalized its work force, salaried employees invaded the informal sector and the farming sector. The response of organized labor unions to these reforms has been one of vehement opposition. Unable to manage the social contradictions of reform, the state increasingly resorted to coercion, stretching the limits of the labor unions' resilience and leading to a crisis of institutional failures in the sector and abjection on the part of workers and their unions.

This chapter examines the character of labor control from the late 1980s onward, especially in the context of the economic downturn and subsequent reform. It argues that while military rule is generally authoritarian, economic conditions fundamentally affect the nature of the relations between the state and the labor unions. Accordingly, the level of

authoritarian expression is particularly grave in the context of the adverse fiscal crisis of the state. Under this condition, the state is under pressure to make efficient use of available resources, particularly the workforce— that is, the creation of conditions conducive to higher labor productivity. But state regulation is constrained by the labor unions' resistance to the effort at improved productivity performance through the intensification of exploitative conditions (Bonefeld et al., 1995: 2–3). As the state resorts to repression, its legitimacy is progressively undermined and the state is impeded in carrying out its functions. But because of the dependent nature of the Nigerian state it is able to deal more ruthlessly with organized labor unions. This is all the more so because of the disarticulated nature of the economy. It operates in spite of its own citizens, thereby creating a state of abjection. Nowhere is this state reflected as it is with workers and their organizations.

State-Labor Relations during the Economic Boom of the 1970s: The Labor Aristocracy Thesis

The issue of the role of workers in the development process has always been of interest to academics. This interest has been furthered by the development crisis that has gripped the continent in the past two decades. In the early years of independence (1960s) workers were commonly viewed as obstacles to development (i.e., economic growth). They were perceived to possess political power through their organizational ability, with which they could press for higher wages and consequently hinder economic growth (Sufrin, 1964; Karl de Shewintz, 1959). Frantz Fanon's work *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965) and Giovanni Arrighi and John Saul's series of articles in the 1960s crystallized this view, which was conceptualized as the Labour Aristocracy Thesis (LAT). In the 1970s and 1980s, variants of this thesis appeared in the World Bank's effort to explain the crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. "High wage-salary structure" was mentioned as one of the obstacles to "early industrialisation in Africa." African workers were viewed as overprotected, overpaid, underproductive and disproportionately favored when compared to peasants and other rural dwellers (World Bank, 1981; Lipton, 1977 Bates, 1981). The development crisis was then perceived to be caused by the activities of powerful unions engaged in rent-seeking, distorting the labor market, and hampering the efficient allocation of resources. These views have underlined fundamental aspects of SAP prescribed by the World Bank/ IMF.

In *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*, the World Bank (1981: 4) averred: "African wages are too high compared with those of Asia...government wage policy in many countries sets industrial wages

above the level they would otherwise be." The World Bank stated that African labor productivity tended to compare unfavorably with that of other regions of South America. It had earlier in the 1978 *World Development Report* maintained that low productivity slowed development by undermining the drive for industrial efficiency in Africa (50).

This view of labor also found a home in the urban bias and rent-seeking theses popularized by the works of Lipton (1977) and Bates (1981). For Lipton, African states are dominated by a coalition of urban-based interest groups. These groups are particularly strong not because of their economic role alone, but more importantly, due to their capacity to organize and control. They are, as a result, able to extort preferential treatment from the state to the detriment of the rural poor who are less able to organize themselves. This urban coalition, in which labor unions feature prominently, has been able to corner most of the state's expenditure for its constituencies. In Lipton's opinion the "trade union movement has developed before mass urbanisation...(therefore it constitutes) a 'Labour Aristocracy' in parts of the public service and modern urban industry" (1977: 35).

Bates, for his part, uses the agricultural policies of Nigeria and other states in Africa to drive home his point. He argues that pressures on the state agricultural policies aimed at food supply are put in place to reduce the cost of living in place of wages, in order to pacify a restive urban population. They are as such by-products of the political relations between governments and their urban constituents (Bates, 1981: 33). What is more, the vested interest of these powerful urban groups falls into the zero-sum, rent-seeking activities at which the state throws resources. These groups are, therefore, parasitic and derisive, their activities cause rigidities, which impair the efficient allocation of resources perpetrating and reinforcing the crisis in Africa. The World Bank puts it this way:

> ...the primary cause of this perverse and generalised outcome has been the myopic, venal and misguided behaviour of a self-seeking, urban African elite that has pursued its own short-term interests at the expense of both efficiency and welfare...(1984: 24)

These views have found resonance in research on the role of labor in the development process in Nigeria by those whom Adesina (1994: 106–107) has described as the "organic intellectuals of the emergent indigenous bourgeoisie." Damachi and Fashoyin (1986), for instance, refer to the role of unions not as that of a bargaining adversary but as an institution trying to influence government action. They strike too frequently, thereby putting excessive pressure on the government, subjecting wage-setting to political considerations; retarding the development process the state wants to accelerate (see Adesina, 1994, especially Chapter 1). Thus,

the neoliberal explanation in emphasizing the primacy of the monetary problem and perceiving workers as the main cause of the economic crisis was embraced by local policymakers. At least that protected them and their class from blame and criticism from the left. Besides, it was obvious that the brunt of the particular form of SAP called for was to be borne by classes and groups that were less able to defend themselves. Above all, it saved them from taking responsibility for the crisis and its consequences by providing a scapegoat in the labor unions. Measures taken to address the crisis from the austerity program adopted by the Shagari administration from 1982 to the comprehensive SAP package introduced by the Babangida regime in 1986 have been underlined by this view.

But the brazenly asymmetrical distribution of the gains and burdens of SAP has intensified conflicts in Nigeria, thus worsening the crisis of state legitimacy and capacity. The SAP experience has emphasized the fact that for any form of economic adjustment to be effective, it has to be underwritten by a specific configuration of social relations and behaviors. Economic adjustments insofar as they involve burdens and gains and winners and losers will be deeply contested. The contest of adjustment measures has demonstrated that issues of equity and social justice cannot be papered over in this process. Indeed, where economic transformation becomes life threatening to any class or group, as has been the case under SAP in Nigeria, society becomes pervaded by social and political tension. But insofar as economic adjustments worsen working conditions, threaten jobs, and diminish the general quality of life, they would be vehemently contested by the labor unions. Responses from the labor unions have been very creative, spontaneous, organized, collective, and individualistic. There were public demonstrations, strikes, sit-ins, a proliferation of civil rights, and prodemocracy protests. Also, moonlighting, corruption, brain drain, and so on became common features of the public service. These responses impacted the capacity of the state as well as the ability of the regime to press on with the reforms. The contradiction between the aspirations of wage earners in the public sector and the policies they were expected to carry out led to institutional failures. Deep alienation and abject poverty pervaded the society. The fact that the weak do have an incentive to undermine such processes demonstrates that it is in fact naive or malevolent to expect regimes to simply ride rough-shod over groups in implementing adjustment policies.

Economic Crisis, Adjustment, and the Road to Abjection

At the inception of the crisis in the early 1980s, a series of austerity measures, such as the imposition of import duties on certain categories of

commodities, were introduced in order to reduce government expenditure and curtail imports by the Shagari administration. The civilian administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari used a Productivity Prices and Incomes Board to impose a wage freeze and provide strict supervision of salaries and wages in both the public and private sectors. Although the Shagari administration granted a minimum wage of N125 to workers in 1981, the incomes policy guidelines for 1982 and 1983 required all establishments employing 50 or more persons to submit productivity schemes drawn up with their employees and full information on wages, salaries, and fringe benefits paid to all categories of their employees in each occupation group to the Minister of Employment, Labour, and Productivity. The revision of fringe benefits and the introduction of new ones were subject to the express approval of the minister. All structural adjustments in salaries and wages were limited to workers on salaries below N3,000 per annum, while bonus payments were to be submitted to the minister for approval.

When General Muhammadu Buhari overthrew the Shagari government in December 1983, he blamed the defunct administration for plunging the country into a deep economic and social crisis. He accused it of corruption and ineptitude, and placed hundreds of politicians in detention. Many of them were tried and imprisoned for mismanaging the economy. The new government deplored the processes of administering the economic stabilization measures introduced in 1982, which rendered them ineffective, and it outlined actions to reinforce those measures.

It placed a ban on borrowing by state governments, raised bank interest rates, and froze new projects. The regime moved to reduce the massive dependence on imports by Nigeria's ISI industries by encouraging manufacturers to source their materials, particularly raw materials, locally. It also exhorted business groups to invest more of their profits in order to accelerate the process of capital accumulation.

The Buhari regime believed that "indiscipline" was largely responsible for the Nigerian crisis, particularly workers' indiscipline, manifested in the form of unpatriotic disruptions and strikes that caused a loss of productivity. A War Against Indiscipline (WAI) was, therefore, launched to stop forms of inefficiency, such as lateness and absenteeism at work, embezzlement and corruption. Apart from a unilateral wage freeze for all sectors of the economy, other cost-cutting measures taken included a retrenchment exercise that cost 250,000 public servants their jobs (30 percent of the workers in the civil service). To avoid any court action by affected employees, Buhari promulgated the Public Officers (special provisions) Decree No. 17 of 1984, which denied retired or dismissed employees the right to seek redress in a law court (Fashoyin, 1990). It introduced a policy of "no work no pay" to preempt any industrial action.

Workers who went on strike to press for improved working conditions were promptly dismissed and their organization proscribed.

It was however, the subsequent regime of General Ibrahim Babangida that adopted a supposedly home-grown SAP in 1986. The key features of SAP included

- strengthening of the hitherto strong demand management policies;
- adoption of a realistic exchange rate policy (devaluation);
- further rationalization/restructuring of the customs tariffs to aid the promotion of industrial diversification;
- simplification of the regulations and guidelines governing industrial investment and commercial banking activities; and
- adoption of appropriate pricing especially for petroleum products and public enterprises.

It was believed that these measures would help to

- restructure and diversify the productive base of the economy in order to reduce dependence on the oil sector and imports;
- achieve fiscal viability and balance of payments viability over the medium term;
- lay the basis for a sustainable noninflationary growth over the medium and long term;
- lead to a reduction of the dominance of unproductive investments in the public sector, the improvement of that sector's efficiency, and the enhancement of the growth potential of the private sector (Babangida, 1986: 135).

SAP was designed and executed in conjunction with the IMF and the World Bank (Davies, 1990). Adjustment measures such as currency devaluation and a wage freeze eroded real wages while exacerbating inflation. Rising prices coupled with retrenchment and unemployment sharpened inequity and increased desperation and frustration within society. Hostility to the regime, disillusionment with its policy, and public opposition to SAP began to be felt. Evidence of this became apparent early in the first year of adjustment when the labor minister was jeered during a May Day rally in Lagos, 1987. In April 1988 when the regime increased the price of fuel from 39.5K to 42K (35 cents) per liter, transport fares went up and student riots, academic dissent, violent clashes between police and civilians and public demonstrations and strikes greeted the increase. The regime had to soft pedal in its demand for management measures.

In the years that followed, the opposition to SAP intensified just as the living standards of workers, the professionals, and the masses fell dramatically. Aside from the increase in repression, the state diversified strategies and measures to subordinate civil society. The regime resorted to "political manipulation, populist side-payments, elite dispensations,

expansion of the parallel economy and overt repression . . . others include guile at critical moments, diversionary tactics, frequent alterations in the transition timetable," and so on (Lewis, 1997: 88). Repressive measures included the use of decrees and presidential orders to strengthen the hand of the state and its agents to regulate unionism, and to determine the internal organization and structure of unions, their international affiliation as well as the activities of individual union leaders and workers. These decrees and orders empowered state agents to detain individuals without trial for up to six months. In 1989, life sentences were passed on nine National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) union officials for participating in a strike over inadequate wages and poor conditions of service (Isamah, 1994). The powers of the National Industrial Court (NIC) and the Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP) were strengthened to enable them to be used to harass and deal with workers. Workers and union leaders were routinely arrested, detained, and intimidated.

SAP was not only contested. Alternatives were proffered by various groups such as the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA), and other groups. Proffered solutions ranged from the democratic to the radical and revolutionary (Olashore, 1991). Economic adjustments, as we have observed in Nigeria, involve life and death issues like poverty, personal security, distributive equity and justice. They had to be pursued with speed backed by repression. Those who were made worse off also demonstrated means to undermine them. This contradiction comes out clearly in Klitgaard's (1989) view on the organizational failure of the state in Africa resulting from the erosion of incentives to the public service and the consequent brain drain, moonlighting, demoralization, and corruption. There is also the thesis of institutional failure as espoused by Bangura (1991).

The personal rule agenda of president Babangida, his political chicanery, the opposition to the regime and its policies, and the resultant social tension reached their peak in 1992. From then onward the nation moved in fits and starts. When, on June 23, 1993, the presidential elections conducted earlier on June 12, 1993 were annulled, the nation was engulfed in a deep crisis. The elections were generally seen as the freest, fairest, and most peaceful in the country's electoral history. The widespread strikes, public demonstrations, resurgence of ethnic tension, and fear of disintegration that characterized the period reflected the general lack of motivation and hopelessness that the political and economic adjustments had inflicted on the Nigerian people. Economic paralysis and the pressures from the political crisis forced President Babangida to "step aside" on August 27.

He left the management of the state in the hands of an Interim National Government (ING) headed by Ernest Shonekan, a civilian and former managing director of UAC Nigeria, a British multinational. But the fragile peace the ING tried to maintain caved in barely three months after civil unrest erupted again, following an increase of more than 600 percent in the pump price of petroleum. The ING was declared illegal by a Lagos High Court, headed by Justice Dolapo Akinsanya on November 10, 1993 and was eventually supplanted by General Sani Abacha, its defense secretary, on November 17, 1993. Thus, after going through one of the most tortuous, manipulated, and protracted transitions to "democratic" rule ever experienced, and after almost a decade of right-wing economic programing, Nigeria was plunged into its gravest crisis since the civil war of 1967–1970. In the crisis year of 1993, budget deficits stood at N90 billion, external debt was almost 30 billion dollars, industrial capacity utilization was below 40 percent and the inflation rate hit 100 percent.

General Sani Abacha promptly demolished all democratic structures and instituted a constitutional conference to consolidate his rule. In the early months of the junta's life, the direction of economic policy was largely determined by the effort to consolidate Abacha's personal power. The 1994 budget effectively returned the country to another round of statist and nationalist economic management. But the junta's pretence at populism could not prevent the political convulsions of 1994 precipitated by the resurgence of prodemocracy and pro-Abiola protest, galvanized by the protracted oil workers' strike that paralyzed the economy for three months. Thereafter, the junta increasingly resorted to more repressive labor-focused measures to consolidate, control, and maintain social and economic stability.

On August 18, the regime of General Sani Abacha finally got its act together to restore order. The oil workers' strike had virtually paralyzed the economy. On that day it promulgated the National Union of Petroleum and National Gas Workers (NUPENG) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN) (Dissolution of Executive Councils) Decree No. 10 of 1994. The decree (1) dissolved the National Executive councils of NUPENG and PENGASSAN, and (2) dissolved the executive councils of the unions in all the states of the federation and in Abuja. The preamble justified the decree on the grounds that (1) the unions embarked on strikes over political matters; (2) used their union funds contrary to their constitutions; (3) failed to observe conflict resolution processes; and (4) directed the strike at sabotaging a vital and essential sector of the economy that resulted in untold hardship to law-abiding citizens and damage to the economy contrary to the trade disputes (Essential Services) Act. The decree ousted the power of the courts to review them.

Decree No. 9, promulgated on the same day, also dealt a heavy blow to the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC). The NLC (Dissolution of National Executive Council) Decree dissolved the National Executive Council of the Congress and empowered the Minister of Labour and productivity to appoint a sole administrator to run the affairs of the congress. It also dissolved the Central Working Committee (CWC) of the congress. The decree in its preamble claimed that the

> NLC has intermittently embarked on, and persistently kept threatening to call for a nation-wide strike action over political matters, and used the congress fund to carry out the same, contrary to clear provisions and objects in its constitution and enabling law without the endorsement of its constituent affiliates and failure to follow prescribed dispute resolution processes and also embarked on strikes calculated to sabotage a vital and essential sector of the economy…(which)…resulted in calculable damage to the economy contrary to the trade dispute Act.

As part of the whole process of increasing its hold on the individual citizens and groups, the regime simultaneously promulgated the State Security (Detention of persons Decree Amendment) No. 11 of 1994 to amend the 1984 decree. The new decree empowered the Inspector General of Police (IG) in addition to the Chief of General Staff (CGS) to detain any person for security reasons, and extended the period of such detention from six weeks to three months. It also provided for a review of the case of every person detained not later than three months after the date of order made under the decree. The decree came into effect from November 18, 1993.

A week later, on August 24, it promulgated the Federal Military Government (Supremacy and Enforcement of Powers) Decree No. 12 of 1994. A decree of general application, it placed the government above the law. Section b (i) states that

> No civil proceedings shall…be instituted in any court for or no account of or in respect of any act, matter or thing done or purported to be done under or pursuant to any Decree or Edict and if such proceedings are instituted before or after the commencement of this decree the proceedings shall abate, be discharged and made void.
>
> (ii) the question whether any provision of chapter iv of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is being or would be contravened by anything done or purported to be done in pursuance of any decree shall not be inquired into in any court of law and accordingly, no provision of the constitution shall apply in respect of any such question.

The decree also carried a retroactive commencement date, November 18, 1993.

The State Security Decree No. 11 was reinforced by another amendment on October 1, 1994. The new amendment, the State Security (Detention of Persons (Amendment) (No. 2) Decree No. 14 of 1994 denied citizens the right of *habeas corpus*. It prohibits the issuance of a writ of *habeas corpus*, orders of prerogative by courts for the production of any person detained under the decree.

On January 5, 1996, the government intervened in the effort by unions to restructure. Decree No. 4 justified government intervention on the need to (a) check the overlap and duplication in union jurisdiction, amorphous structures, and inter union disputes; and (b) respond to the effort by the NLC on behalf of its affiliates to restructure by setting up a number of committees for that purpose.

The decree that was to restructure unions began by requiring employers to make deductions and pay 10 percent of their total check off directly to the NLC. Section (c) provided for the condition of a trade union merger. Two or more trade unions may merge based on a resolution signed by the president or secretary of each of the merging unions, and the rules proposed for a merger have been forwarded to the registrar. The decree, therefore, denied union rank-and-file members the right to initiate a merger of unions, through the delegates' conference. The decree provided for 29 unions out of the 41 that were restructured. The third schedule contained the list of the 29 unions while part B described the jurisdictional scope of the 29 restructured unions. The decree failed to include senior staff association on the list of trade unions. The restructuring processes were guided by the "Trade Union (Amendment) decree Merger/Delegates Conferences Policy Guidelines" issued in March 1996 by the minister of Labor. The high point of the guideline is the emphasis that only members of trade unions, as distinct from officials, qualify to enter and participate as delegates at all union conferences.

On June 7, 1996, the 1994 amendment to the State Security Detention of Persons Decree, which denied a person detained under Decree No. 2 the right of *habeas corpus,* was repealed. Yet another amendment was made on August 14. The new amendment, the State Security (Detention of Persons) (Amendment) Decree No. 22 of 1996, set up a Detention of Persons Review Panel to review the cases of persons detained under Decree No. 2, and made appropriate recommendations to the head of state. The panel was made up of (1) the Inspector General of Police (Chairman); (2) Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice; (3) The National Security Advisor to the Head of State; (4) the Director of State Security; and (5) the Special Adviser (on legal matters) to the head of state.

On August 21, 1996, the Trade Disputes (Essentials Services Deregulation, Proscription and Prohibition from participating in Trade Union Activities) Decree No. 24 of 1996 was purportedly enacted to

remove all "obstructions" and disruptions to the provision of teaching and educational services and provide an avenue for a quicker resolution of conflict and disputes in the educational sector. The decree dissolved the executive councils or national bodies of the unions or associations situated or operating in all universities in Nigeria. It removed the officers of such unions and confiscated union property. Contravention of the provisions of the decree carried a fine of N100,000 or 3 years' imprisonment or both. Offenders were to be tried by the special military tribunal constituted under the Special Tribunal (Miscellaneous Offences) Decree No. 20 of 1984. The supporting order identified the Non-Academic Staff of Universities (NASU), the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), and the Senior Staff Association of Universities, Teaching Hospitals, Research Institutes and Associated Institutions as proscribed and deregulated.

The Trade Union (Amendment) (No. 2) Decree No. 26 of 1996 promulgated on October 16 empowered the minister to revoke the certificate of registration of any trade union. It required employers and unions to insert a "no strike" clause in their collective bargaining agreement. It added among other things that the automatic remission of check off ceases when a union embarks on a strike or when the union is dissolved or its certificate of registration is revoked by the minister or its registration is cancelled by the registrar. Subsections 8, 9, and 10 add to section 33 of the Trade Union Decree of 1973. Subsection 8 prohibited non–card carrying members (Union Officials) from participating in or taking up a functional role in the policymaking or decision-making organs, committees, or formations within the union or central labor organization. Any contravention of the provisions of the decree carried a fine of N100,000 or five years' imprisonment or both. A union that committed such an offense would have its certificate revoked by the minister. Subsection 8(7) of the first schedule was amended to remove officials of the unions, secretary, deputy secretary, assistant secretary, or similar posts from membership of the general management committee. Subsection 8(8) stated that for a person to be a member of the union, he/she must be engaged in the trade or industry, which the trade union represents. Thus, the decree literally deunionized all administrative employees of unions. It violates the right of a trade union to determine through its constitution and rules, the functions of its appointed officers. Commenting on Decree 4 and 26 of 1996, the *Guardian* argued in an editorial thus:

> Those provisions…violated the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention 87, Article 3. The convention empowers workers and employers' organisations to draw up their constitutions and rules, to elect their representatives in full freedom, to organise their administration and activities, and to formulate their programmes. It also enjoins governments

> to refrain from any interference, which would restrict or impede the fore-
> going right of unions. Nigeria is a signatory to the convention. Other than
> to intimidate trade union officials as part of the Abacha administration's
> emasculation of human rights, no proper value can be assigned to the
> contentious provisions of decrees 4 and 26. (*Guardian*, November 10,
> 1998: 16)

Finally, the Trade Union (International Affiliation) Decree No. 29 of 1996
promulgated on October 23 regulated interactions between trade unions
and international organizations. The decree prohibited trade unions from
affiliating with international organizations or trade secretariats without
the approval of the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC). It required unions
already affiliated to international organizations to sever such links. But
section 3(i) allows trade unions to affiliate with (a) the Organisation of
African Trade Union Unity (OATUU); (b) the Organisation of Trade
Unions for West Africa; and (c) any other international organization in
respect of which a specific application has been made and approval given
by the Provisional Ruling Council. Contravention of the provision of the
decree carries a fine of N100,000 or imprisonment for a term of five
years or both 4(i). Where a trade union contravenes the provision it will
have its certificate revoked by the minister.

The sudden death of General Sani Abacha on June 8, 1998 provided
an opening for democratic reforms. The new Head of State, General
Abdusalam Abubakar, released nine detainees in a major move to ease
tension and pave the way for national reconciliation on June 13, 1998.
The two oil workers' union leaders, Milton Dabibi and Frank Ovie-
Kokori, who had been locked up by General Abacha, were among those
released. Abubakar also released several hundred political prisoners held
by General Abacha. He also announced the repeal of notorious mili-
tary decrees used against opposition including Decree 2 of 1984, which
allowed detention without trial. Abubakar went further and executed a
transition to civil rule program that returned the country to democratic
rule on May 29, 1999. The return to democratic rule also coincided with
the restoration of relative independence to the central labor organiza-
tion, the NLC. The Government had relinquished direct management
of the NLC in 1998 as part of the transition to democratic rule process
under General Abdulsalam Abubakar. Adams Oshiomole became the
president. The NLC under his leadership was very visible in the public
policy arena.

The Obasanjo government began with piecemeal reforms aimed at
government processes and a program of liberalization and deregulation
of the Nigerian economy to promote efficiency and effective service deliv-
ery. Obasanjo also showed his commitment to the welfare of workers
with an effort to cushion the effects of deregulation through raising the

salary of public sector workers. The government provided the NLC with 80 buses in 2002.

The president introduced anticorruption legislation and suspended controversial oil contracts awarded by the Abubakar government on the eve of its departure from office. Obasanjo had vowed that there would be "no sacred cows" in his bid to root out corruption, which affects almost every aspect of life in Nigeria. The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission was inaugurated on September 29, 2000, as the hub of Nigeria's fight against corruption. Since then the ICPC has been able to prosecute only a few public officers and has several cases pending in court (Ogbonna, 2004). It is collaborating with anticorruption NGOs and has established anticorruption clubs in schools. It has also set up anticorruption and transparency monitoring units in ministries and parastatals across the country (Akanbi, 2004). The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is the second anticorruption agency set up by the Obasanjo government. Its focus is to combat financial and economic crimes. The EFCC has been a remarkable anticorruption organ in Nigeria. It has recorded successes in convicting and sentencing individuals, including men in high places, who have been involved in economic and financial crimes. It has also made significant progress in the assets recovery drive. In fact, it is reputed to have been working with several international policing and intelligence organizations to deal with money laundering, including cases involving some state governors in Nigeria (Aiyede, 2008).

These piecemeal reforms were later given shape in an articulated comprehensive public sector reform agenda, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). According to the NEEDS document, public sector reform consists of seven main goals. These are to rightsize the sector and eliminate ghost workers, restore the professionalism of the civil service, rationalize, restructure, and strengthen institutions, privatize and liberalize the sector, tackle corruption and improve transparency in government accounts, reduce waste and improve efficiency of government expenditures, and enhance economic coordination (FRN, 2004).

Given the breadth of the reform and the general consensus on the appropriateness of some aspects of it, it is not surprising that the government enjoyed some measure of support from labor unions at the level of implementation.

Indeed, in 1999 the NLC besieged the National Assembly with one thousand protesters, to protest against the government's decision to provide huge allowances for senators and members of the House of Representatives to purchase furniture.

The NLC later catalyzed and galvanized a series of public protests against price increases in petroleum products as a result of the

government's policy of deregulating the downstream sector of the petroleum industry. Between 1999 and 2004 there were six protracted general strikes. By 2004 the strikes and opposition to elements of the Obasanjo reforms had become so worrisome that the government temporarily detained the NLC president. As the NLC became more and more visible as the veritable single opposition, the government had to seek subtle means to delegitimize its public interest image and to clip its wings. With an impending general strike in late 2003, the president made a national broadcast in which it accused the NLC of plotting to bring down the government. According to him,

> The NLC has constituted itself into an opposition political movement rather than a labour organisation to advance the interest of its members contrary to the provisions of the law establishing it. The tactical move by the NLC to mislead and recruit some opposition political parties evidence of an attempt not only to politicise what otherwise is an economic issue, but also to promote its avowed objective of bringing down a democratically elected government. This new alliance appears designed to attain power through undemocratic means. The leadership of the NLC has engaged in series of subversive activities, deliberately misrepresenting government policies to the public and its members, and using every opportunity to blackmail the government and others who hold contrary opinions or views. Of more serious concern is the fact that the NLC leadership is conducting itself as a parallel government in Nigeria, and brazenly breaks the law of Nigeria regarding the conduct of strikes which stipulates a mandatory 15-day notice before embarking on any legitimate strike in the interest of the *conditions of service of workers.... it continues to warn and* threaten the police. It not only enlists the services of other political parties, but also the services of hoodlums and drug addicts who are used to harass, intimidate, disrupt and destroy the lives and properties of innocent Nigerians. Government has sufficient evidence that the NLC has provided cash to hoodlums to distribute subversive materials and act against the Nigerian state. (Obasanjo, 2003, emphasis added)

The government went on to amend the trade union law that had made the NLC the only legitimate federation of labor organizations. Membership of labor unions that had hitherto been automatic for junior workers was made voluntary. This was an attempt to weaken the NLC by rendering it one of the voices of labor rather than the only voice of labor. Although the NLC has remained the single central labor organization for junior workers, it has maintained its position at the expense of sustaining a strong presence in the policy arena. The opportunity for schism is usually linked to a decision to embark on a general strike, and the NLC has refrained from taking such a decision since the Trade Union Act was amended in 2005. Whether the NLC will remain the only central labor organization for junior workers remains to be seen as it confronts the challenges

in the post-Adams Oshiomole charismatic leadership era. Currently, the monopoly of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), and the Senior Staff Association of Universities' Teaching Hospitals, Research Institutes and Associated Institutions (SSAUTHRIAI) have been challenged by new unions that have been registered by the Minister of Education (see Komolafe and Ahiuma-Young, 2006).

Given the present state of things, it is clear that the labor movement has become weakened as a strong force against unpopular policies. This is largely because two decades of struggle has taken its toll on the creative abilities of the movement. Over two decades of struggle against governments persistent on market reforms and the clear implication of official corruption in economic failures has weakened the view that the problem is one of market reforms. The current government's anticorruption war has also served to show that the government is well-meaning, with men in high places being imprisoned for corruption. The government has also succeeded in accumulating huge reserves as a result of the upturn in the international oil market, part of which it has used to buy back a Paris club debt of over $18 billion in 2006. The government's proactive measures such as monetization have rendered rightsizing, which involved loss of membership on the part of the unions, to be a legitimate reform agenda. The labor movement is faced with a cocktail of reform some of which benefits workers. Supporting what is favorable and opposing what is difficult creates an image of opportunism. Thus, the labor movement must reinvent itself in order not to remain in abjection.

The Nature of Labor Abjection

The massive inflow of funds from petroleum provided enough room for maneuver for the Nigerian state within the ambit of global capitalism in the 1970s. The state was able to promote capitalist accumulation and sought to establish a corporatist framework of labor control. This period marked the deliberate effort by the state to create a class of workers and their organization within a corporatist framework of development. However, the accumulation crisis that became apparent in the early 1980s weakened the state and reinforced its dependence.

All efforts to resolve the crisis nationally were complicated by pressures from the hostile international political economy that had become dominated by right-wing doctrines. In the end, the state yielded to the neoliberal programing of the Bretton Woods Institutions. The iron fist required to ride rough-shod over interest groups, in the process of enforcing neoliberal policies, matched the temper and ambitions of the ruling military regimes. While the reforms provided opportunities of accumulation for the compradoral elements that have dominated the state, they

were markedly antiworker. They have worsened the fortunes of workers and their organizations and threatened the very subsistence of many. The challenge and opposition to the reforms and the supporting repressive regulations were, therefore, complex and spirited. The state in turn has exploited every avenue to contain labor. The battle has been fierce. Once organized labor was baptized as a rent-seeking group and SAP pushed forward as Hobson's choice, repressive measures against labor became justified in the eyes of its promoters both internally and externally.

The state as the chief source of capital, the major investor and employer, and the "social gendarme" became enmeshed in the crisis. In the face of dwindling resources resulting in rapid deterioration of physical and social infrastructures and widespread redundancies and retrenchments, state legitimacy reached its nadir. What is more, the configuration of forces in the struggle over economic adjustment by weakening the state and engendering a near state of anarchy promoted the agenda of personalized rule. The availability of oil rents helped to sustain personalized regimes against popular pressures.

State control measures attacked workers' collective rights and upturned existing frameworks of labor relations and reflected the change in the balance of forces over global accumulation. The deployment of repressive measures against labor was massive. It was carried out with all the trappings of military campaigns "complete with mobilization logistics, offensive and the inevitable sense of urgency," to borrow the words of Claude Ake, Nigeria's foremost political economist. They constitute the flip side of market hegemonic programing.

The labor movement became disorganized, characterized by internal divisions, opportunism, and purposelessness. But the state was neither able to engender industrial peace nor achieve economic growth. The state's occupation of the NLC and other unions choked bipartism and tripartism. The institutional processes of labor relations were undermined. Under the military, rules were made, disregarded, and altered arbitrarily. State crises then manifested most graphically as industrial relations crises. Industrial relations crises reflect the failure of the peripheral state to exercise systematic control as regimes struggle to stem internal opposition, ensure local accumulation, and meet its responsibilities to external creditors.

Under democratic rule, the pursuit of painful market reforms ensured that labor unions remained opposed to certain government policies, such as retrenchments and increases in the price of refined petroleum. The state has refrained from arbitrary and repressive measures in its bid to cow labor. But it has altered the institutional framework of labor relations by deregulating the process of forming and registering labor unions. This has expanded the possibilities and effectiveness of divide and rule strategies, and stunted the progressive reconsolidation of the

labor movement into an independent and effective nongovernment center of power. The challenge of survival during a protracted economic crisis took a great toll on worker solidarity and mutual trust. Pragmatic coping decisions sometimes involved resorting to corrupt and sharp practices. At the plant and industry levels, union undercover deals between individual branch executives, zone officers, and management in private establishments were common. Many workers suspect union leaders of making compromises as a result of financial inducements by management and government. Differing income and life styles between ordinary workers and labor leaders provokes antagonism and alienation of the rank-and-file. What is more, union successes in achieving wage increases were often undermined by runaway inflation. Workers tend to discountenance such successes as inflationary pressures make it impossible for such increases in nominal wage to translate into improved purchasing power or well-being. Thus, union leaders found their positions and relevance in question, especially at the house union levels. Strikes became ineffective. Things came to a head in the textile workers' union in 1993 when a group of workers laid siege on their union headquarters building in Kaduna over rumors that their leaders had sold out in negotiating an agreement to increase wages. In the event, the union building, vehicles, and office equipment were burnt. Some union staff were beaten. When the crisis ended, the workers had to pay levies to reconstruct and rehabilitate the building and offices they had destroyed with their own hands (see Andrae and Beckman, 1998; Lakemfa, 1998).

Retrenchment and casualization are major characteristics of labor market practices that continue to decimate membership of labor unions. At the individual level, workers had to face declining wages in the face of runaway inflation and constant unemployment. The economic downturn has led to the phenomenal growth in the number of unemployed who gather daily at the urban road junctions in search of daily paid casual jobs. They gather to be picked by building contractors for bricklaying, digging, gutter clearing, decking, and other manual jobs. Thus, many factory workers have become building site laborers who carry blocks and water for bricklayers. Among these workers are to be found the educated, uneducated, skilled, semiskilled, and unskilled (Aladekomo, 2004: 207–208). In the face of persistent and severe unemployment, some workers have had to support the decisions of employers to sack their colleagues based on intraunion disputes and manipulations. The absence of alternatives in a situation in which the entire economy was in crisis confined workers to factories in ways that they never envisaged when they first entered the industry. Employers take advantage of workers for fear of being retrenched using the "sweating system" to improve productivity and profit. Some of these factory workers had hoped to pursue other careers. Some took to factory work to accumulate capital

to set up their own business or to move on to clerical work or to further their education. These aspirations were dashed (Andrae and Beckman, 1998: 64–68).

The invasion of the informal sector by those made redundant only served to worsen situation as demands for services and goods produced soon fell short of supply as the number of entrepreneurs in that sector swelled. Many had to return to rural areas in great humiliation to subsistence farming. Resorting to informal sectors activities was on such a massive scale that Bangura (1994) talks about "the conquest of the formal economy by forces acting informally. A small and truncated formal sector rests uneasily on a vast network of informal and traditional activities." There is an intensification of competition for available opportunities in rural areas due to an appreciable increase in return migration mainly of retrenched urban workers into rural areas. As workers lose their jobs and find it impossible to secure new ones, they have had to return to their "homes" to farm and seize any available opportunities in the countryside. The erosion in real wages pushed minimum wage workers below the urban and rural poverty lines. "Senior state managers and academics found their living standards shattered by the meagre real wages, reduced or cancelled benefits, and the end to subsidies on, and erosion of, public services" (Kraus, 1996: 185). Specialized hands continue to leave the country's shores for greener pastures where they get satisfaction and good pay for their skills. Indeed, the issue of brain drain has been a major feature of the battle to save the university system from collapse by the Academic Staff Union of Universities.

Wage earners now engage in multiple jobs during and after working hours to supplement their income. Official and private roles and duties are increasingly combined so that income is generated from both sources. Workers connive and organize to come to work in turns; they engage in selective absenteeism to save costs in performing official tasks and to secure time for private money making activities. They attend to private business with official resources like telephones, stationery, and so on. Others extort money from clients in order to perform official duties.

The responsibility for income generation within the household no longer rests on the shoulder of a single bread winner. Each member of the household has been forced to engage in one or more income generating activities. This has transformed the role of women and children within the household. Women have been particularly active in the informal sector and there is a growing incidence of child labor and child trafficking. Some have taken to scavenging in order to meet their basic needs for food and clothing. Those involved in scavenging are "found in all ages with the bulk of them in the active population including both single and married persons" (Olashore, 1997: 85–71).

Conclusion

Although the return to democratic rule witnessed an improvement in balance of payments as a result of the increasing demands for oil in the international markets, this did not translate into a more worker-friendly labor relations environment. This is because the framework of neoliberal reforms requires a flexible labor market that involves shrinking the space of trade union activities. But the expansion of the democratic space has made it impossible for the state to use repression as was the case under military rule. The state, therefore, adjusted the rules of the game to deal with the labor challenge. That labor was unable to prevent the amendment of the trade union law as well as other antilabor practices within the private sectors and this demonstrates the space of abjection in which labor unions operate. In the face of rising inflation, wage freezes, job cuts, harsh labor and civic laws, the balance of power that in "normal" times is skewed in favor of capital is decisively altered. The labor movement's organizational strength is weakened drastically and its leadership vulnerable.

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When the State Kills:
Political Assassinations in Abacha's Nigeria

Isaac Olawale Albert

…since January 12, 2000, when he opened the Pandora's box revealing gory tales of terror, Rogers' confession has continued to be the longest and the most talked about event in the country. His confession was a catalyst to the unveiling of the masks of the dastardly killings under the Gen Sani Abacha regime which had remained, before Rogers, in the realm of myth, imagination, rumour, half-truths and guesses.

—National Interest, *December 30, 2000: 12*

Introduction

Assassination, the calculated murder of a significant person, typically someone of high political or social consequence, is derived from the Arab word *Hashshashin*—also *Hashinshin* or *Hashashiyiyyin*—the pejorative name given by some Muslim and Mongolian detractors to Ismaili Muslims from the Nizari subsect in the eighth and fourteenth centuries. This secret society was said to have specialized in the brutalization and killing of the Abbasid elite opposed to its tenets. Following this historic experience, assassination is commonly used to denote a subset of murder, committed against individuals or groups, most especially if the victim is a prominent public figure and if such killing is politically motivated. Political assassination is usually directed against well-known individuals (Jazsi and Lewis, 1957: 150–151). The victim, according to Havens, Leiden, and Schmitt,

> …must be singled out as *an individual*, not merely as a member or representative of some larger group against which general terrorism is being

directed…In addition, the relationship between the assassin and his victim tends to be different from that in common murder. In the latter the killer-victim relationship is more apt to be a personal one—that is, the murderer and target are more likely to know each other and the motive for the act is more likely to be personal—than in the case of assassination. In assassination the assassin [whether the actual killer or the author of the crime] is less likely to know his victim and less likely to derive immediate personal benefit from his act. Of course, if the killer has been hired he will be paid or if he has acted on his own initiative he will derive emotional and psychological benefits from his deed. (1970: 3)

Most assassinations have political motives and are better understood within the political contexts in which they occur. The motives for assassination or assassination attempts are readily suggested by the subsisting political climate of the society, the personality of the victim, and the role of the person in the political community.

A political assassination could be organized in support of, against, and by, an incumbent in power. The assassin as well as the sponsor of the act usually has an ideological or political agenda, which the victim of the assassination is perceived to be obstructing. Sometimes assassins attribute to their victims political significance that they never had or the evil qualities they never possessed. Killing such victims, therefore, might not produce the desired impact.

The Nigerian case studies examined in this chapter compel us to differentiate at this point between assassinations carried out by individuals and by groups. The two are not the same in terms of motivation, planning, execution, and impact. Assassinations organized by a group usually involve complex tissues of public and private interests and needs and specialist collaborators. They are also usually more carefully planned and are geared toward attaining longer-term objectives. The *actual* assassin in this case might, in fact, not have much detailed information about the crime other than the specific assignment given to him—rarely her—the raison d'être for the killing, and probably the immediate reward for partaking in the act. In this case, the assassin acts "not merely in accordance with his own selfish feelings, but as the agent of something much greater than himself. He conceives himself as the saviour of his people…In such a mental condition he does not think too seriously of his own personal preservation" (8). We must not blind ourselves to the fact that there are some moments where the killers kill for money and are not usually concerned with who they have to kill. Nigerians refer to the latter situation as a "hired assassination." A hired assassin does not have any messianic mission; he is primarily a mercenary.

Assassinations organized by a group requires careful planning. The time and place has to be carefully chosen, weapons must be carefully procured, and the assassins carefully selected, while the assassination

has to be carefully coordinated. Assassinations planned and executed by individuals are different. The assassin could have a larger political objective but his basic motives might not be anything but selfish. The planning of the assassination might also not be as complex as that executed by a group. President Garfield of the United States was assassinated in 1881 by a "disappointed office seeker." No complex planning or conspiracy was involved in the process. The man who assassinated Senator Robert Kennedy in 1968 provided an emotional justification that was selfish. President Kennedy's assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, committed the act to "acquire notoriety proportionate to the victim's prominence." Oswald had earlier tried to kill another prominent American, Major General Edwin Walker (7).[1] The assassination of Prime Minister Verwoerd of South Africa in 1966 has also been characterized as "the handiwork of an insane man with a grudge against his society."

Why do groups or governments resort to the assassination of prominent figures? The simple answer that one can advance here is to get rid of political opponents whose activities are considered threatening but who cannot be checked, stopped, or removed through civilized, legal, or due process, such as prosecution and imprisonment. To this extent, political assassination is a criminal self-help method for dealing with political or social conflicts. It could be organized by an individual or a group to eliminate an opponent who has come to be seen as a "nuisance."

The kind of assassinations and assassination attempts to be discussed in this chapter fall under what Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1976) categorized as "social-group-control vigilantism."[2] But these cases constitute a criminal form of official vigilantism, through which agents of government patrol the political environment, constitute, and identify "enemies of the state" and then neutralize and eliminate such constituted and identified enemies. This kind of *establishment violence* targets groups that are competing for, or advocating a redistribution of, values within a system. The most typical example of this kind of illegitimate violence is the one directed against the opposition of a specific regime that constitutes itself as *the* state. The main objective is to keep the "troublesome" groups or individuals in check or neutralize them. It can be directed against a communal group or individuals who are perceived as attempting to acquire far more power or significance than the "assassin-complex" would rather that such groups or individuals have. In other words, social-group-control vigilantism is "often the response of those who feel threatened by upwardly mobile segments of society or by those who appear to advocate significant change in the distribution of values."

General Sani Abacha ruled Nigeria from November 1993 to June 1998. One of the problems inherited by the regime was the need to

deannul the June 12, 1993 presidential election the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida annulled. Throughout Abacha's regime, the human rights groups in Nigeria fought for the deannulment of the election that Chief M.K.O. Abiola was popularly believed to have won. The vanguard of the struggle included the Campaign for Democracy (CD), the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), and the National Liberation Coalition (NALICON). They all fought the Abacha regime, among others, by campaigning for international sanctions to be imposed on Nigeria as a way of curbing the excesses of the country's military junta. None engaged in any physical violence though there were several moves by the regime to implicate them in the many bomb explosions that took place in Nigeria during the Abacha regime (Albert, 2005).

Many of the prodemocracy activists and their sympathizers were placed in detention. Some of them were forced into self-exile, while many others were assassinated. Those assassinated by agents of the Abacha junta include Rear Admiral Babatunde Elegbede (rtd.), Admiral Olu Omotehinwa, Alhaja Kudirat Abiola, Chief Alfred Rewane, Chief (Mrs.) Bisoye Tejuosho, Alhaja Suliat Adedeji, and Dr. Shola Omosola, to name only the most prominent. Those who narrowly escaped assassination included Chief Abraham Adesanya, the leader of *Afenifere*—the pan-Yoruba cultural group; the late Chief Bola Ige, who later became the minister for Justice under the Obasanjo regime and was ultimately assassinated in 2001; Chief Alex Ibru, a former minister for Internal Affairs under General Abacha; General Alani Akinrinade, a retired army officer, considered to be the "military commander" of NADECO; Chief Gani Fawehinmi, a prominent human rights activist; Air Commodore Dan Suleman (rtd.), one of the few northern Nigerian members of NADECO; Professor Omo Omoruyi, the former Director of the Centre for Democratic Studies, Abuja; Justice Omotunde Ilori; Mr. Ayo Opadokun, the Secretary of NADECO, and so on. A number of serving military officers were also targeted by agents of the Abacha regime. The most prominent included Colonel Buba Marwa, who was by then military administrator of Lagos State and Lt. General Oladipo Diya, the chief of General Staff.

The Abacha regime blamed most of the assassinations on the prodemocracy groups in the country—most especially NADECO and NALICON. Several members of the groups were, therefore, arrested and placed in detention. The personality and political activities of those targeted by the assassins made many Nigerians suspect that they were carried out by agents of the Abacha regime. A media interview granted by General Buba Marwa, who was himself targeted by a bomb attack in December 1996 while serving as the military administrator of Lagos State, suggests that even within the Abacha regime, some people knew

that the prodemocracy groups were not responsible for the terror attacks. He observed that

> …with a fair degree of certainty I was pretty certain it was not NADECO. That was why I never accused them throughout the period the thing happened. I have been a student of revolutionary warfare…In a revolutionary campaign, those who are supposed to be the revolutionaries, people who are trying to change the system, in general try to separate the bourgeoisie from the proletariat…Now, the position of NADECO has been along those lines whether rightly or wrongly and within the military establishment they were determined also to gain the support of the soldiers who in this wise represent perhaps an equivalent of the masses…And so, when the bombings started hitting at the soldiers, it was clear to me that this was not a NADECO strategy because they will not be hitting at soldiers. If they want to assassinate people, it will be the officers and if the buses carrying the soldiers from the cantonment in Ikeja to Lagos always pass the route, why single out the soldiers? You expect NADECO instead, to bomb the officers rather than the men…*These bombings would have been either from within the establishment itself*, or they could have been by some arrangement, may be with some foreign supporters…or they could be from the retired cadre. (*News*, May 24, 1999: 16, emphases mine)

Sgt. Rogers' Confessions

A better picture of what happened during the Abacha regime came to light immediately after the former Nigerian head of state died in June 1998. There were several people within and outside the Nigerian military who felt some of the killings that took place during the Abacha regime should be probed by General Abdulsalami Abubakar who succeeded Abacha. The government acceded to the request of such people by arresting some "Abacha boys" believed to be involved in some of the killings. The two most important of those detained by the government were Major Al-Mustapha, Abacha's Chief Security Officer (CSO) and Barnabas Msheila Jabilla, a sergeant. Jabilla, who worked directly with the CSO and used the code name "Rogers" throughout Abacha's tenure. Sgt. Rogers was not arrested until August 1999 (*News*, December 20, 1999: 19). Major General Ishaya Bamaiyi, one of the senior officers implicated by Rogers, was arrested in October 1999; that is, many months after he had been allowed to voluntarily retire from the Nigerian army. It was clearly evident that the succeeding military junta, which was well aware of what happened earlier, was not willing to prosecute their serving colleagues. The intention of the regime, as suggested in an earlier work (Albert, 1999), was to suppress the issue.

Sgt. Rogers confessed he was an active member of the Abacha killer squad. He, however, claimed to have acted on the instructions of his

superior officer, Major Hamza Al-Mustapha, the CSO. He implicated several other military and police officers in the process. The most senior of those implicated was Major General Ishaya Bamaiyi, the former chief of Army Staff, who at the time of the alleged crime was the commander of Lagos Garrison of the Nigerian Army. Rogers confessed to have led the murder attempt on both Chief Abraham Adesanya and Alex Ibru, a former minister under General Abacha and publisher of the *Guardian* newspapers. The latter narrowly escaped but lost one of his eyes in the process. Madam Kudirat Abiola was not so lucky. She was attacked and killed by Rogers and his boys on June 4, 1996. Rogers claimed to have been part of the team that also burnt the premises of the *Guardian* newspaper and also a number of other failed missions.

Sgt. Rogers was born on November 3, 1969 in Askira local government area of Borno state. He joined the army on January 7, 1987 and was invited to join the personal security detail of General Sani Abacha as an instructor in 1993 on account of his marksmanship. How did Sgt. Rogers become part of the strike force? He claimed to be working with the airborne wing of the Command and Staff College Jaji as an instructor of shooting and rigger, before he was seconded to State Security Service (SSS) training school in September 1994 from where he was posted to the presidential villa. He was provided with a three-phase training that lasted three months: phase 1—orientation; phase 2—counterterrorism; and phase 3—bodyguard. He received further training in North Korea on escorting tactics using martial arts. He returned to the presidential villa as an instructor after his training. He instructed on escorting tactics, weapons training, and counterterrorism. He was the fourth in rank of the dreaded "strike force." The SF, which consisted of both soldiers and State Security Services operatives, was described by Sgt. Rogers in his evidence at the Lagos High Court as a "a terrorist outfit" (*National Interest*, December 2000: 13) in the security department of the presidential villa. The SF was coordinated by Lt. Colonel Yakassai, who, contrary to military hierarchical practice, took orders from a major, Hamza Mustapha, the CSO to the head of state.

Sgt. Rogers shot into prominence on January 11, 2000 when he came before the Lagos High Court to confess that he was one of the people used to advance the interests of the terrorist regime of General Sani Abacha between 1995 and 1998. He claimed to be the person who had killed Madam Kudirat Abiola. He claimed to have been sent after several other prominent Nigerians and claimed responsibility for the burning of the premises of the *Guardian* Newspapers in Lagos. How did all this happen? Sgt. Rogers claimed to have received all his instructions from Al-Mustapha, the CSO to the head of state. He confessed that, though he regularly abducted and tortured the enemies of General Abacha, his first major killing took place in 1996.

He claimed to have been instructed around January 1996 by Al-Mustapha to get some arms and boys from SF ready for an assignment to be directed by General Bamaiyi in Lagos. The latter was at this time the Lagos Garrison Commander (1993–1996). He was promoted the chief of Army Staff on April 24, 1996, perhaps in appreciation of his loyalty. The team was allegedly provided an aircraft and accommodation by the CSO and later went to Bamaiyi for the assignment. Rogers tells the story further:

> We went and met Gen Bamaiyi and I said the CSO said we should meet you and that you would give us assignment. He (Bamaiyi) said that there were two terrorists coming into Nigeria to kill Gen Abacha. So he said I should go and meet the fourth accused Lt. Col. Jubrin B. Yakubu commanding 26 Battalion who is going to tell us the whole situation. When I met Yakubu he told me that there were two terrorists coming and that he was going to give us additional men for training to help in our assignment...I can remember he sent some of his officers and men. I can only remember few who joined us for training at Dodan Barracks...Yakubu later joined us...to see how far the training was going on...Lt. Col. Yakubu said we should not be afraid, that we should kill them and that there was some money with the terrorists...They (the terrorists) did not come. He (Yakubu) said that there was a leakage somewhere. I now phoned Abuja to tell Mustapha.

Sgt. Rogers alleged that Al-Mustapha asked him to remain in Lagos for some other assignments that Bamaiyi might want to give him. The next assignment came immediately:

> Then Bamaiyi sent two officers, Najaja Nasiru, a captain and CSP Maichibi from (SARS) Special Anti-Robbery Squad. Then Najaja and Maichibi came to tell me that Bamaiyi said that there was an assignment at Makurdi and Bamaiyi said I should give him some men...so I gave him the two boys but insisted I have to find out from Bamaiyi because I was the most senior men (sic). So I went to Okotie-Eboh in Ikoyi to Bamaiyi's house. Bamaiyi said there was a man in Asaba. He was a member of armed wing of NADECO. He is said to be a commissioner of sports, Porbeni. Bamaiyi now said I should go and assassinate him (Porbeni)...So the boys went and they could not do it and the two officers Najaja and Maichibi came back and grumbled that why should you give us boys that couldn't do it (kill). I phoned the former CSO and told him what happened. He was annoyed and said we should come back immediately. That Bamaiyi wants to see me in his house. Bamaiyi briefed me and Najaja to go back for the man. (He gave me) his bodyguard plus N10, 000 as ration allowance. So we carried our arms and ammunitions. We reached Asaba at night. Then Najaja said we should proceed to officers" mess at Onitsha. We proceeded to Asaba in the morning. Najaja knows Mr. Porbeni's house...After dropping Najaja at the junction, we went back. I do not know the man so I *played* (deceived) Abubakar that I could not enter just as Najaja had *played* us. I went back

to meet Maichibi and Najaja at the junction and told him that the man knew me so I could not go. So we went back to Lagos and told Bamaiyi that the man was not in and Bamaiyi said next time we were going to try again...we went back to Abuja.

The next assignment given to Sgt. Rogers and his team was to burn down Rutam House, which houses the *Guardian* Newspapers:

Communication people at Abuja called me that CSO wanted to see me. On my way I met OC Mopol who confirmed it...On reaching there, he said we should wait for Musa Garuba and Sumaila Shuaibu. So, OC Mopol, who led us to Lagos, was given some money by Mustapha...Mustapha gave the instruction to burn down Rutam House. On reaching Lagos, Abubakar Waziri and Musa Usman Phillip joined us. Our number was now six. OC Dodan Barracks now sent vehicles to collect us to the CSO Guest House in Dodan Barracks. Rabo Lawal said we were going on surveillance to see Rutam House. When we got there, he now sent me to go inside the Rutam House and ask for Ibrahim Adamu. I was scared because I was carrying a pistol and wearing a tight T-shirt and I might be lynched as a security man. I asked them of the name. They said there was someone like that but not in. So, I ran out. We went back to Dodan Barracks. The following day, we went to see the Commissioner of Police (COP), Lagos State, Mr. James Danbaba, whom we met in his house...We told him our mission. He said, 'okay, no problem' if there is any assistance he can render. We then moved back to Dodan Barracks getting ready for the burning of Rutam House.

The burning of Rutam House would have been impossible for the team but for the logistical support that the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Danbaba, provided to the arsonists:

When we reached Rutam House, we saw police patrol vehicle at the junction. We said this thing cannot be possible. OC Mopol now said that he knows what to do that we should go to James Danbaba, COP, Lagos' House. He was not in when we got to his house and we were told he had gone to the Bar Beach where he enjoys himself. He had a radio set...the COP said no problem. The COP called the policemen at Rutam House to move to Oshodi that there were armed robbers there. Danbaba told us that we should go that there was no problem...On reaching Rutam House, truly we did not meet police there. We packed [*sic*] our vehicles. OC Mopol said we should come down. At that time there was nobody.

They poured petrol into the building and set it ablaze:

When we reached Dodan Baracks (after the operation), we cleaned up and then came back to Obalende. The next day, we went back to see the COP to tell him how far we have gone. From COP Danbaba's house we went

back to Rutam House to see the damage we caused and we saw that just one section of the house was burnt. We returned to Dodan Barracks to prepare to take off to Abuja. We reported to former CSO, Major Mustapha who was not so happy. Mustapha gave OC Mopol some money to share N4, 000 each. But he took N5, 000.

The team was given another assignment a month later.

There was a call on the radio set from central control at Villa, Abuja. He said we are going to Lagos…We see [*sic*] former CSO who said we are going to Lagos to assassinate four people who are mainly owners of *The Guardian* newspapers, Mr. Alex Ibru, Chief Segun Osoba, Mr. Bola Ige and Pa Abraham Adesanya, while Mustapha gave us some money, to our OC Mopol. The remaining two—Sumaila Shuaibu and Sanni—joined us. Among the money gave us (sic) was N25, 000 to give to COP James Danbaba for a job well done…He, Mustapha, said we should go to Lagos and meet Bamaiyi. We went to Bamaiyi's house to inform him of our mission to assassinate four people. Bamaiyi said one of his informants told him the opposition was going to import five bombs into the country. He then said, "I do not know their houses." He took us from his house, but we could not locate Segun Osoba's house at Dolphin Estate. Then the fifth accused, OC Mopol, Rabo Lawal, came with a Yorubaman who speaks Hausa well. Alhaji Lateef now took us to the houses of Segun Osoba. Some times we waited there from morning till night, we could not see anybody, everyday like that. Lateef took us to Alex Ibru's house on Victoria Island. From there we went to COP James Danbaba. We told him our assignment.

Sgt. Rogers and his team tracked Ibru down, shot, and wounded him. He was quickly rushed overseas. He narrowly survived the attack.

The most phenomenal of the "assignments" given to Rogers and his team was the murder of Madam Kudirat Abiola, the wife of Chief M.K.O. Abiola, the main figure in the June 12 crisis. Her offense was that she consistently canvassed for the deannulment of the election and did everything she could to make her husband the president of Nigeria. Rogers alleged that the assignment to kill Kudirat was given by Al-Mustapha to Rabo Lawal, who was in charge of the mobile police (Mopol) at the presidential villa. The team, according to Rogers, was provided with Uzi rifles with silencer and some money for the operation in the presence of Mohammed Abacha, General Abacha's son. He claimed to have directly participated in the operation along with Lawal. The team was able to penetrate into the security network of the Abiola family through Alhaji Lateef Shofolahan, Madam Kudirat's personal assistant. Two attempts were made to kill Kudirat. The first would have taken place right inside the compound of Chief Abiola. It was aborted when found to be too dangerous. The team retreated and later resumed their surveillance on their

target and trailed her to the 7UP Depot area of Ikeja, and shot her. She died shortly afterward. Al-Mustapha was alleged to have given N50, 000 (US$591) to the team immediately after he heard about the success of the operation (*News*, January 3, 2000: 17).

All the senior military and police officers implicated by Sgt. Rogers denied knowledge of what he claims. Al-Mustapha, in particular, claimed that not even once did he order Rogers to kill anybody (*News*, January 3, 2000: 13). General Bamaiyi too claimed that none came to him with the plan to kill anybody. He extricated himself from whatever blame that might be attributed to some of his personal staff implicated in the killings by saying that there was no time he asked any of them to engage in any "illegal operations." Mohammed Abacha claimed to have once seen Al-Mustapha giving some weapons to Sgt. Rogers for an operation. He claimed not to be aware of what the operation was and claimed not to have participated in planning anybody's assassination (*News*, January 3, 2000: 17). In other words, most of those implicated by Sgt. Rogers wanted him (the person who made the confession) to bear the full burden of his claims.

Issues in Sergeant Rogers' Confessions

Is it possible for Sgt. Rogers to have committed all the heinous crimes he confessed to on his own without the express command of his superiors? Is it sensible for him to have made the confessions? Is it ethical for his superiors to have denied their roles in the whole set-up? What lies ahead for Sgt. Rogers having implicated himself in crimes to which others are not ready to confess?[3] What are the implications of his superiors' denials? What is the implication of all these for military discipline? If Rogers, for example, was found guilty and sentenced to death as Nigerian law specifies, what should other Nigerian soldiers of his rank and professional responsibility do? Do they start questioning the orders given by their superiors? This last question is the most important.

The primary duty of a soldier is to protect the territorial integrity of his country. A soldier also has the responsibility for carrying out other duties that may be delegated to him by the head of government. For effective performance of these duties, every soldier accepts to be bound by military obligations. Above all other things, he is duty bound to obey superior orders. A soldier has a number of civil obligations as well. The latter include "liability for ordinary breach of a civil contract, liability in tort for trespass, and criminal responsibility for an offence prescribed under the Criminal Code" (Achike, 1980: 48). Soldiers, most especially those of junior ranks, often find it difficult to reconcile their military and civilian obligations. A soldier gets into trouble when the superior orders

he is expected to obey expose him to criminal responsibility under the law. The dilemma here is whether or not to obey an unlawful order. As Achike observed, a military man who fails to carry out the order of his superior "exposes himself to an offence triable by court-martial and on the other hand if he obeys it he may infringe the criminal law for which the civilian court may punish him" (50).

It is paradoxical that implicit obedience of a superior order is recognized under military law. A soldier could even be condemned to death under the Mutiny Act for disobeying a superior order. Commenting on this, Lord Mansfield and Lord Loughborough noted that "A subordinate office must not judge of the danger, propriety, expediency, or consequence of the order he receives: he must obey, nothing can excuse him but a physical impossibility...the first, second and third parts of a soldier is obedience" (cited in Achike, 1980: 50).[4] These pronouncements have been dismissed by Achike to be sweeping and capable of causing superior military officers to instruct their subordinates to commit criminal acts. He argues that subordinates are allowed to carry out only "lawful" orders of their superiors unless such command "is expressly limited to times of military stress." This fact is contained in section 34 of the (Nigerian) Army Act of 1955. He thus concluded that "If an order is contrary to the law of the state, not only is the soldier under no duty to carry it out, his disobedience of it will be commended and on no account will he be punished. *Further, it may be added that a lawful command must not be against international law*" (Achike, 1980: 51, emphasis added).

The type of state crimes discussed above is part of international law. They affect a significant international interest. They constitute an egregious conduct deemed offensive to the commonly shared values of the world community. Because they are based on state action or policy, their international criminalization would ensure their prevention, control, and suppression (Bassiouni, 1992: 46).

What Rogers did, therefore, contravened not just the Nigerian criminal law but also some fundamental elements of international law. The state crimes that characterized the Abacha era can also not be supported by any section of the Nigerian law. The security situation of Nigeria at the time when these crimes were committed did not in any way warrant such state crimes. If any of the people targeted by Abacha were found to have contravened any sections of the law, the normal thing would have been for them to be tried in a properly constituted court of law.

It is common in an authoritarian state for people like Rogers to feel that their actions had the backing of "the law." In an authoritarian state, security operatives know no other law than that pronounced by their commanders who have chosen to hold the entire society hostage. In such a state, security officials become inured to reality and constitute a law

unto themselves. This was the Nigerian experience between 1993 and 1998. Abacha and his boys (military commanders) constituted the law. Rogers claimed to have received the orders to kill Kudirat and others from Al-Mustapha the CSO to the head of state (who was perceived to be acting for Abacha). He also claimed to have received his weapons in Lagos from General Bamaiyi, the Lagos Garrison Commander, and was provided "cover" by the Lagos State Commissioner of Police who had to divert a police patrol team away from the premises of the *Guardian* newspapers, which the junta had penciled in for violation. This must have made the sergeant to think that he had the entire apparatus of government behind him. Rogers was also assured by his bosses that he was serving Nigeria's national (security) interest by doing what he did. What are the implications of such conceptions of the national security interests for citizens and disparate social groups, particularly the political opposition? We will return to this in the conclusion.

Why would a man charged with criminal conduct make the kind of confessions and incriminating statements that Rogers made? When this kind of situation arises, the first suspicion is that the confessions were made under duress, probably under a harsh interrogation method. Every democratic society of the world has rules governing interrogation practices and admissibility of statements. Statements made under duress usually do not carry much weight in criminal trials. However, Rogers noted in his confessions that he did not make any of his statements under duress.

The second possible explanation was that Rogers probably had some mental problems. But, the many recorded confessions of Rogers that were aired on television channels showed clearly that he was mentally balanced. He was neither insane nor did he make the statements he made under the influence of alcohol. What then could have explained his saying so many incriminating things about himself and his former commanders? He claimed to have made the confessions simply because of his *second birth*. The period of detention provided him with ample opportunity to revisit his past. He seemed not to have been unhappy with his roles under the Abacha regime and on this account he chose to become a "born again" Christian. Throughout the proceedings at the Lagos High Court and the seating of the Oputa Commission in Lagos and Abuja, Rogers was always seen clutching a Bible in his hands.

These confessions and the denials raise issues of moral and legal responsibility. Nietzsche has offered a controversial account of this form of acceptance or disavowal of responsibility in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in terms of "how we become reflective at all about our actions and how we become positioned to give an account of what we have done" (Butler, 2005: 10). Nietzsche argues that "we become conscious of ourselves only after certain injuries have been inflicted" (ibid.).

Two things are possible: we ascribe responsibility either to the regime or to the individuals sent to carry out the criminal act. How do we then make the regime take responsibility? How do we make individuals accept blame for their actions? One can, however, deduce from Rogers' statements that he was fully conscious of the criminality of the actions he partook in. Yet he went ahead. Those who are familiar with the highly regimented nature of the Nigerian military will not find it too difficult to understand why junior officers would not mind carrying out the illegal orders of their seniors. Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, the late Nigerian afrobeat musician, made a record in the 1970s on this. He described the average soldier as a "Zombie" on the account of the way junior ranks carry out the order of their superiors without question. Fela sings:

Zombie no go think, unless you tell am to think.[5]

A visiting diplomat once wrote in a letter to the editor of the old *West African Pilot* on February 8, 1956:

I have visited many countries in my life, but none have I seen soldiers being treated with such discourtesy as I have in Nigeria, and especially here in Lagos. What I see in Lagos is abuse, insult and derision, amounting to causing some minor degree of dissatisfaction among the rank and file…(cited in Jemibewon, 1998: 5)

Reacting to the content of this letter, the *West African Pilot* did an editorial in which the following points were raised:

If the present state of affairs exists simply because our soldiers are drawn mainly from the illiterate class and do not compare favourably with their counterparts in the outside world, then a case has been made for Government to answer, but certainly on no account should soldiers be molested or abused. Such epithets as "afamako", and "abobaku", whatever they mean, must be stopped. (Ibid.)

Nigerian army officers hide behind the military mantra of "obey the last order" to make their juniors engage in different kinds of illegal activities. There was a tragicomic incident in 1976 when those involved in the Dimka coup against General Murtala Muhammed regime were to be executed. One of the noncommissioned officers (NCOs) wrapped the rope too tightly around a condemned coup-plotter who requested a lessening of the tension. When the NCO retorted that he was obeying a simple order given to him, the convict was reported to have shouted back: "Release this rope my friend, I am in my present condition too on the account of obeying the last order. You need to learn the lesson of not obeying inhuman last orders."

The "last order" issue in the Nigerian army became more problematic during the Abacha regime. He promulgated the "Armed Forces Decree 105 of 1993," which gave army officers limitless powers to punish those who disobeyed their orders. Commenting on the enforcement of this decree, Olise noted inter alia that "officers are court-martialled and a senior officer can mete out any type of punishment on his subordinate without the due process of law" (*Guardian*, April 16, 2003: 80). This decree was promulgated to give Abacha and his "boys" the power to carry out their carefully planned acts of state terrorism. Many military men lost their lives, appointments, and ranks as a result of this decree.

Sgt. Rogers probably had this decree in his mind when obeying all the last orders he received from his superiors. The use and misuse of the decree created problems for the Nigerian military immediately after General Abacha's death in 1998. The junior ones no longer had much respect for their seniors for being so brutal during the Abacha era. To restore law, order, and discipline in the armed forces, military authorities had to seek the assistance of the National Assembly in April 2003 for the draconian Decree 105 to be amended in line with the human rights provisions of the Nigerian constitution (ibid.). The editorial of the *Guardian* of June 1, 2003 entitled "Obnoxious Laws and the Military" focused on the same issue. The paper noted that

> We must place our entire military on a pedestal where it can appreciate the beauty of democracy, a system of government most often dramatised by confusion in the process of equilibrating the contending, confusing and conflicting forces. A military that cannot find justice within its domain cannot but mistake the confusion outside its barracks for a failed structure of governance, and therefore a mistaken patriotic call for intervention. That was in part the dilemma of the first military intervention in this country and it is one strong reason why the laws governing our military must be sanitised to recognise the values of justice and democracy...This is the time to also examine the extent to which the rank and file of our military is aware of its rights and duties within a democratic nation...The objective should...not merely be the repeal of the Armed Forces Decree 105 of 1993 but recognition of the peculiarities of the past for an amendment reflecting current realities as we seek find threads of democracy for our socio-economic framework.

Therefore, Rogers' implicit obedience of the "instructions" given to him by his superiors to commit state crime is not alien to the military system in Nigeria. The question is: could a sergeant in the Nigerian army have been able to fault his bosses' (the CSO to Abacha, the Lagos Garrison Commander, the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, etc.) definition of national security? Given that this was unlikely in view of the existing decree, Rogers could, therefore, not have disobeyed the

order purportedly given to him in Nigeria's national interest. This does not suggest, however, that he is not liable for his actions. The outcome of the trials of the people accused by Sgt. Rogers is bound to be a fascinating one for those interested in knowing more about how perpetrators of state crimes should be punished in posttraumatic societies, most especially in Africa.

Conclusion

The foregoing narratives highlight a number of features that marked the Abacha state in relation to the central instrument of statecraft utilized by the regime. That instrument was assassination. In tracing the origin of the word "assassination," we see that it was supposed to be the *modus operandi* of the militant underdog trying to undermine the complacency of a powerful elite. This organizing principle of the semantics of the term may appear lost now that rulers resort to the strategies of the (unruly) ruled. The contrary is, however, the case. Revelations on the mentality of the Abacha caucus provide the evidence in which to conclude that the regime felt not complacency but paranoid insecurity.

Therefore, the impunity of the regime might well have been a species of terrorism grounded on the fear that power was increasingly being lost by it; and that, having no shred of legitimacy left, violence was the only means for confronting the opposition and bringing the populace into alignment if not allegiance. The vigilance with which state violence was executed by Abacha's strike force bespeaks social control. The pool of targets expanded to encompass alongside the opposition, renegades as those whose loyalty was in doubt. For the regime, there was a political axiology to preserve. To contest that was to make oneself guilty of the crime of treason. But such was the weakness of the Abacha axiology that those who contradict it were not to be given the chance of trial.

The confessions of Sgt. Rogers, hit man in the assassination squad of Abacha's strike force, bears a lot of insight for us. Rogers evinced of an extreme of human technical precision fitted with no critical component— the human killing machine. There is no indication that Rogers felt himself to be on to a long-term messianic mission. He knew he was not salvaging anything, just savaging whoever it was he was asked to eliminate.

What are the implications of the conception of the national security interests in the Abacha era for citizens and disparate social groups, particularly the political opposition?

It has been agreed by most critical observers that the Abacha regime was Nigeria's worst regime, one that used assassination as a directive principle of state policy. The state under Abacha was under the grip

of a criminal martial cabal that defined its preservation in power and the elongation of its privileges as constitutive of the national security interests of the state. Against this backdrop, prominent citizens who opposed the regime in one way or another, including even ordinary citizens who were involved in public protests, were seen as random targets for elimination. Given that much of the opposition to the regime was concentrated in the south of Nigeria, particularly the southwest, Abacha regime was thus liable to the accusation of an attempt at "ethnocide" in its maniacal struggle to neutralize opposition and dominate the whole of the country.

It is paradoxical, however, that the eight-year rule of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo witnessed more high-profile assassinations in Nigeria than was witnessed under General Abacha. Those killed under "the democratic dispensation" included Chief Bola Ige, a minister for Justice who was generally regarded as the leader of the Yoruba people and the main force behind the opposition party, AD. He was assassinated at his Ibadan residence on December 23, 2001. As obtained under the Abacha regime, his killers are yet to be found and the Nigerian Police seemed to have closed the case. Several other politicians lost their lives in different parts of Nigeria. One of the most prominent is Chief Harry Marshal whose death caused widespread anger and anguish across the nation. He was assassinated on March 5, 2003 at a time he was leading a project entitled the "Campaign for the Realization of a South-South Presidency" (CRESSOP). He was initially the national vice chairman of the ruling party, PDP, for the south-south zone. Following the political crisis in Rivers States where he comes from, he decamped to ANPP and became the national vice chairman for the south-south zone.[6] The inability of the Nigerian police to identify his killers and those responsible for the other high-profile assassinations in the country suggests that what happened to all these people is probably not too different from the experience under General Abacha. It would take another "Sgt. Rogers" to tell the true story.

Notes

1. It must be noted, however, that there are conspiracy theories that have since emerged on the assassination of President Kennedy.
2. "Vigilantism" is understood here to mean summary "justice" dispensed by angered crowds or a person against "criminal" elements in society. It is an act of taking the law into one's own hands by punishing "crimes" outside the law.
3. He is believed to have been secretly released from detention by the Obasanjo administration and sent back into the Nigerian army. This does not analyze

this issue as the circumstance under which Rogers was released is yet to be made public by Obasanjo's regime.

4. *Johnstone v. Sutton*, 1 East Rep. At 548 or [1786] I.T.R.
5. Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, "Zombie."
6. For more detailed study of this problem see P.E. Igbinovia, "The Criminal in All of Us: Whose Ox Have We Not Taken," University of Benin Inaugural Lecture Series 17, 2003, p. 143; A.A. Igbafe and O.J. Offiong, "Political Assassinations in Nigeria: An Exploratory study, 1986–2005," *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 1, 1 (2007): 9–19.

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The Sharia Challenge:
Revisiting the Travails of the Secular State

Rotimi Suberu

Introduction

In November 1990, the *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* published an article by Adigun Agbaje entitled "Travails of the Secular State: Religion, Politics and the Outlook on Nigeria's Third Republic." The article analyzed the explosive debates on Islamic Sharia law that preceded the promulgation of the 1989 Constitution for the proposed (and eventually aborted) Third Nigerian Republic. Some of Agbaje's main arguments in the article can be outlined as follows:

- The concept of the secular state, which is ambiguous and contentious almost everywhere, is especially problematic and explosive in the Nigerian setting. This is because of the interventionist role of the state in Nigeria and other developing societies as a "differentiator and distributor"; a long-standing history (from precolonial through colonial to the postindependence eras) of state entanglement in religion; the demographic bipolarization of the country into politically competitive, ideologically antagonistic, and often ethnoregionally concentrated, Christian and Muslim communities; and the sharply divergent positions of the two religious communities on the relationship between the state and religion in general, and the constitutional status of Sharia, in particular.
- The centralization of the Nigerian federation since the onset of military rule in 1966 has contributed to the transformation of the question of the constitutional status of Sharia law from a regional to a national issue. In the First Nigerian Republic (1960–1966), for instance, the establishment of parochial Islamic and customary judicial institutions, outside of the federation-wide common law tradition, was largely left to the regions, each of which had its own constitution. Consequently, while the constitution of the

Muslim majority northern region included elaborate provisions on Islamic law, the Sharia did not feature in the constitutions of the other regions, and also "was not a federal issue affecting the public's perception of and interaction with the federal administration and the Nigerian state" (Agbaje, 1990: 298). All of this changed, however, with the postmilitary constitutions from 1979, which incorporated the basic laws and institutions of the federation and its component units in one single, relatively centralized, constitution.

- Military rule has aggravated the mobilization, politicization, and polarization of religious identity issues in a more fundamental sense, however. This relates to the absence under military governments of the constitutional guarantees and democratic checks and balances that could serve as a break on the partiality and recklessness of state elites in the management of interreligious and other intergroup relations. Specifically, the flagrant sectarianism of the Muslim-led military administrations that governed Nigeria after the collapse of the Second Republic (1979–1983) was a key source of the religious contentions and conflicts that engulfed the Nigerian polity in the late 1980s.

- Democratic governance, on the other hand, is "likely to witness a lessening of tension over religion and politics" (Agbaje, 1990: 288). This has to do with the mediating role of democratic institutions and processes, including the constitutional mandates in Nigeria for political elites to incorporate and balance diverse ethnic, regional, and religious constituencies in electoral party politics as well as governmental administration. Specifically,

  …Constitutional requirements over the spread of electoral support…have created conditions…in which parochialism and narrow political, religious or social platforms will be difficult to subscribe to…Parties within the political process would be under pressure to formulate platforms that would appeal to the broadest possible spectrum of voters. This could rule out or minimise political campaigns along religious lines, at least in elections at the federal level. And although an appeal to Islam alone could cut across ethnic divisions, it is likely to fall short of the constitutional requirements on the spatial spread of electoral support and fall foul of constitutional provisions. (Agbaje, 1990: 305–306)

An immediate confirmation for Agbaje's thesis and prognosis was provided by the broad multiethnic, cross-regional, and interreligious electoral support for the Moshood Abiola-Babagana Kingibe Muslim-Muslim Social Democratic Party (SDP) ticket in the 1993 presidential election, whose results were cancelled by the Ibrahim Babangida military junta in a blatant and reckless demonstration of the government's ethnoregional partisanship. Yet, the resurgence of heated debates and violent conflicts over Sharia in the immediate aftermath of the 1999 transition from military to civilian rule would seem to belie Agbaje's arguments that democratic rule in Nigeria is likely to result in a deescalation or depolarization of religious politics.

The rest of this chapter will attempt to do three things. First, an overview of four decades of Sharia debates in Nigeria will be provided. This spans the period from 1959, when the northern region instituted landmark reforms that substantially ousted Sharia from the domain of the criminal justice system, to 1999, when Zamfara state pioneered the reintroduction of Islamic criminal law in the Muslim north. Second, the chapter will try to illustrate how Nigeria's federal democratic institutions and processes have more or less mediated and moderated the crisis over the reintroduction of Islamic law, thereby confirming Agbaje's thesis regarding the capacity of the country's democratic federalism to cauterize religious divisiveness. Finally, the chapter will provide some concluding reflections and recommendations on the Sharia issue, religion, and politics in Nigeria.

The Sharia Debates: Continuity and Change, 1959–1999

Debates and conflicts about Sharia implementation have dominated constitutional politics in Nigeria for several decades. These conflicts have their roots in the gradual subordination of the elaborate Islamic institutions of northern Nigeria following the onset of British colonial occupation of the country in the second half of the nineteenth century. Reflecting the legacy of the Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio from 1804, Islamic law was more extensively followed and rigidly enforced in northern Nigeria, at the time of the British colonial incursion, "than anywhere else outside Arabia" (see Anderson, 1970: 219). While proclaiming a policy of indirect rule and noninterference in the precolonial Islamic heritage of the Muslim north, however, the British progressively abridged the scope of Sharia implementation until it was largely confined, by the time of Nigeria's independence in 1960, to matters of personal and family law.

In the course of colonial rule, the British government ousted Islamic criminal penalties (such as amputation) that it considered "repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience," subjected the procedures and decisions of native authority Islamic courts (the Alkali and Emir's courts) to review and reversal by colonial administrators and English-style courts, relegated Islamic law to the status of inferior native laws and customs, permitted non-Muslims in Muslim-dominated emirates to opt out of the jurisdiction of Islamic courts or claim the right to be dealt with in a non-Muslim court, and closely crafted Nigeria's national legal system along the model of English common law (see Ostien, 1999: 37). Finally, during 1959–1960, a uniform penal code, modelled after the largely secular but multicultural Indian and the then Sudanese codes, was established in the northern region. Certainly, the code included some

concessions to Muslim sensibilities, including the criminalization of alco-
holic drinks and illicit sexual intercourse for Muslims, who may also be
liable to the Islamic punishment of lashing for these two offenses and for
the offense of defamation. However, as claimed by A.G. Karibi-Whyte
(1993: 213–223), "Despite the wish to draw up a Criminal Code with
Islamic bias, the basic groundwork of English law remained in the Penal
code . . .[The] result was a veritable loss to Moslem aspirations for the
preservation of their way of life. Neither in form nor content is the code
essentially Moslem."

At the same time, while it virtually expunged Islamic criminal law
from the penal justice system, the 1959–1960 settlement involved impor-
tant judicial arrangements designed to guarantee the effective application
of Sharia civil (especially personal) laws. These arrangements revolved
around the powers and status of the Sharia Court of Appeal of the north-
ern region. The Court had a status equal to that of the highest regional
court, namely, the High Court. It was effectively the final appellate court
on all matters of Islamic personal law, and was subject to the appellate
jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Nigeria in appeals involving consti-
tutional issues only. In addition to its jurisdiction over matters of Islamic
personal law, the Sharia Court of Appeal was empowered by the con-
stitution of the northern region to exercise jurisdiction over "any other
question where all the parties to the proceedings (whether or not they
are Muslims) have by writing under their hand requested the Court that
hears the case in the first instance to determine the case in accordance
with Muslim law" (Constitution of northern Nigeria Law, 1963: section
53). Finally, the powers and prestige of the Sharia Court of Appeal were
further enhanced by the establishment of the Native Courts Appellate
Division of the High Court, which consisted of two judges of the High
Court and a judge of the Sharia Court. The Division was specifically
designed "to hear all appeals coming to the High Court from the Native
Courts—including those decided under Islamic law that did not go to the
Sharia Court of Appeal. . . . Some of the sting, therefore, was taken out of
the fact that not all cases decided under Islamic law in the lower courts
went on appeal to the Sharia Court of Appeal; Muslim legal expertise
was still assured [by the participation of the Sharia Court judge] in the
decision of such cases by the High Court" (Ostien, 2003: 6). The very
first Sharia controversy in postindependence Nigeria involved this aspect
of the 1959–1960 settlement.

The 1961–1962 Sharia Controversy

Strictly speaking, a Sharia court judge, who is mainly required to have
some certified expertise on Islamic law, is technically unqualified to sit
on a High Court. Rather, a High Court judge is constitutionally required

to be someone who previously had been a judge of a court with unlimited civil and criminal jurisdiction, or who has been qualified for at least 10 years as a professional modern lawyer. Although the northern Region High Court law had been appropriately amended to allow for the Sharia Court judge to sit on the High Court, this amendment was not reflected in the 1960 Constitution of the northern region. Consequently, in 1961 the Nigerian Supreme Court struck down the amendment to the High Court law as unconstitutional. Thereafter, the government of the northern region proceeded to amend its constitution to allow "a member of the Sharia Court of Appeal…sit as an additional member of the High Court in such manner and under such conditions as may be prescribed by any law enacted by the Legislature of the Region" (Constitution of northern Nigeria Law 1963: section 51). However, under the Nigerian constitution, any amendments to the regional constitutions would require the supporting resolution of each house of the federal parliament, namely, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Although legislators from the northern region dominated the House of Representatives, the South dominated the Senate, which comprised an equal number of members from each of the then three existing regions (in the north, east, and west).

The Federal House of Representatives did not approve the required constitutional amendment, which had been passed and ratified by the northern regional legislature and executive by May 1961, until November 1961. What is more, the Senate voted against the amendment on the grounds that extending the privileges of Sharia court judges would hurt non-Muslim minorities in the north (Mackintosh, 1962: 228). This enraged the northern Muslim political class, including the northern regional premier, Ahmadu Bello, who "thundered that the nation's unity was at stake" (Schwarz, 1965: 49). The Senate, however, subsequently approved the amendment in March 1962 "after northern Senators had made some concessions on bills which interested [the southern] regions" (Mackintosh, 1962: 228).

Although it was comparatively less dramatic and intense than future controversies over Islamic law, the Sharia controversy of 1961–1962 presaged many of the features of these subsequent debates, including the political vulnerability of the northern Muslim Sharia lobby at the national level, and the assimilation of the Sharia issue into a wider game of interregional political entrepreneurship and brinksmanship.

The 1975–1978 Sharia Debate

This round of the Sharia debate focused on the proposed establishment of a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal (FSCA) under what eventually became the 1979 Constitution for the Second Republic (Laitin, 1982). Following apparently heated debates, the 49 Nigerian "wise men" on the 1975

Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) recommended the establishment of the FSCA as a replacement for the Sharia Court of Appeal of the northern region. The latter had ceased to exist following the 1967 dissolution of the region into several states, each of which then established its own Sharia Court of Appeal. The proposal for the FSCA was, therefore, designed to reestablish a single appellate court on Islamic personal and family law cases in the federation. The FSCA would harmonize conflicts of decisions from the state-level Sharia Courts of Appeal, as well as serve as a specialized intermediate appellate court between these courts and the Supreme Court.

The proposal for the FSCA polarized the federation along religious lines when the CDC's recommendations were released for public debate in 1976. Non-Muslims contended that the FSCA was a recipe for northern Muslim domination of Nigeria and for the Islamization of the federation, beginning with the federal judicature. The mainly Muslim supporters of the FSCA, on the other hand, argued that the court would guarantee the fundamental human rights of Muslims to practice their faith, resolve an administrative anomaly arising from the creation of states, and promote interreligious equity as Christian interests were already adequately protected under the country's "Anglo-Christian" common law institutions.

These contending positions dominated debates in a 232-member Constituent Assembly (CA), which met during 1977–1978 to discuss, improve, and ratify the recommendations of the CDC. Following a solution crafted by a subcommittee that the Assembly set up to resolve the issue, a majority of the members voted to delete the FSCA from the draft constitution. Instead, the CA approved a provision that would permit the Federal Court of Appeal to ask three of its justices who were learned in Islamic law (but who may not necessarily have been Muslims) to decide appeals emanating from state Sharia Courts of Appeal.

The Assembly also enshrined the rights of any state that so desired to establish, among other courts, a Customary Court of Appeal and a Sharia Court of Appeal. The Customary Court of Appeal would "exercise appellate and supervisory jurisdiction in civil proceedings involving questions of customary law," while the Sharia Court of Appeal would "exercise appellate and supervisory jurisdiction in civil proceedings involving questions of Islamic personal law…in addition to such other jurisdiction as may be conferred upon it by the law of the state…" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979: section 242).

This solution was unacceptable to the Sharia lobby in the CA, who consequently boycotted the proceedings of the Assembly, returning to the body only after a passionate plea for national reconciliation by the then military head of state, General Olusegun Obasanjo. Indeed, the 1979 constitutional settlement on Sharia reversed the modest

concessions to Islamic law under the settlement of 1959–1960 in significant respects.

First, as recognized under the 1979 Constitution, the state-level Sharia Court of Appeal lacked the prestige and powers of the defunct Sharia Court of Appeal of the northern region. Not only had the regional Sharia Court been dissolved "into…smaller and more obscure state courts," but the jurisdiction of these state-level Sharia Courts of Appeal was now effectively restricted to "questions of Islamic personal law" and fully subject to appellate review at the federal level, while the right of Sharia judges to sit on the High Court was eliminated (Ostien, 2003: 10). Second, by failing to replace the defunct Sharia Court of Appeal of the northern region with a fully fledged Federal Sharia Court of Appeal (or a Sharia Division of the Court of Appeal), the 1979 settlement did not ensure that appeals emanating from the now diminished State Sharia Court of Appeal would be decided at the federal level by Muslim jurists with greater expertise in Islamic jurisprudence than the state-level Islamic judges. Finally, the relative centralization of intergovernmental powers under the 1979 Constitution entailed further encroachments on the autonomy of the northern states to implement Sharia. For instance, unlike the 1960 and 1963 Federal Constitutions, the 1979 Constitution did not give the federal subunits the powers to craft their own constitutions, make laws on evidence, or maintain independent local police departments, all of which would be critical to the design and enforcement of any autonomous subfederal laws.

Indeed, the basic decision of the makers of the 1979 Constitution to abandon the idea of separate constitutions for each constituent unit, and to incorporate all constitutional matters (federal and subfederal) into a single constitutional document, drastically limited the capacity of the Muslim north to retain or obtain important concessions for the Sharia. This was a major reason behind the multiple losses to Sharia implementation under the 1979 Constitution, which deeply displeased the pro-Sharia lobby, who vowed to reopen the issue at an opportune time in the future. This opportunity came with the collapse of the Second Republic in 1983 and the subsequent efforts to craft a revised constitution for the Third Nigerian Republic.

The 1988–1989 Sharia Debate

The Constitution Review Committee (CRC) that produced a draft of what eventually became the 1989 Constitution for the proposed Third Republic included two changes to the preexisting constitutional status of Sharia. First, the draft constitution provided for the establishment of a Sharia Court of Appeal, along with a Customary Court of Appeal, for the new federal capital territory of Abuja. Second, in line with a

1986 military decree, the jurisdiction of the Sharia Court of Appeal was extended to all Islamic civil proceedings, rather than just civil proceedings involving questions of Islamic personal law.

In a virtual reenactment of the Sharia imbroglio of 1975–1978, both these changes provoked intense controversy at the CA, which met during 1998–1999 to debate and approve the draft constitution for the Third Republic. Alleging that the changes were part of an agenda for the gradual Islamization of the country, non-Muslim members of the Assembly pushed vigorously for the deletion of *all* references to Sharia from the constitution. Their Muslim counterparts responded by calling for the constitutional entrenchment of parallel Sharia Courts of unlimited jurisdiction up to the level of the Supreme Court. These disagreements paralyzed the proceedings of the Assembly, creating an impasse that, once again, required the intervention of the military government. However, whereas the military's intervention in 1978 came after the defeat of the Sharia lobby, in 1988 the military government decided to suspend any further debates on the Sharia and to write its own compromise solution into the 1989 constitution.

The solution upheld both the establishment of the Abuja Sharia Court of Appeal and the extension of the jurisdiction of Sharia appellate courts to all civil proceedings involving questions of Islamic law. However, as a concession to non-Muslims, the military government decided that the Sharia Court of Appeal could exercise jurisdiction only in proceedings "where all the parties are Muslims" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1989). This reversed a long-standing constitutional rule that permitted consenting non-Muslims to appear before Sharia courts.

The Sharia provisions of the 1989 Constitution were maintained under the unpromulgated 1995 draft constitution that emerged from the uncompleted transition program of General Sani Abacha (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1995: sections 264–268 and 279–283). Following Abacha's demise in June 1998, however, the administration of General Abdulsalam Abubakar launched a hurried, restricted, and opaque process of constitutional review, which fuelled Christian allegations of a plot by the administration to extend the scope of Sharia law. The result was the 1999 constitution that, contrary to the aforementioned insinuations, actually "reduced the potency of the Sharia" by giving "the narrowest interpretation yet" to the jurisdiction of the Sharia Appeals Court (Yadudu, 2002: 2; Quinn and Quinn, 2003: 54). This is because the constitution limited the jurisdiction of the Sharia Court of Appeal "to civil proceedings involving questions of Islamic personal law…where all the parties to the proceedings are Muslims" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999: sections 262 and 277). At the same time, however, the 1999 Constitution, like all the Nigerian constitutions since 1979, contained a somewhat ambiguous clause that empowered a state assembly

(or the National Assembly in the case of the Abuja Sharia Court of Appeal) to confer additional jurisdiction on the Sharia Court of Appeal. Until 1999, this clause had received little or no attention, partly because it was generally assumed that the constitution had effectively limited the jurisdiction of the Sharia Appeals Court to questions of Islamic personal law only. This was confirmed by various decisions of the federal courts, which ousted the jurisdiction of the Sharia Court of Appeal in matters other than Islamic personal law. Yet, the clause in question could also "very plausibly be read as delegating to the states the power to give their Sharia Courts of Appeal any jurisdiction they please…" (Ostien, 2003: 17). Following the termination of military rule in 1999, and amidst widespread pressure for ethnoregional self-determination in a restructured and decentralized federation, the northern Muslim states invoked the aforementioned constitutional loophole to legislate the wholesale reintroduction of Sharia into the domains of criminal justice, thereby instituting what Ali Mazrui (2001) has characterized as a Shariacracy or Sharia-based governance.

Shariacracy since 1999

There are three primary pillars, and several subsidiary features, to the extension of Sharia law since 1999. The three fundamental features of Shariacracy are (Ostien, 2003: 18) as follows:

- The enactment of explicitly Islamic penal codes applicable to Muslims and consenting non-Muslims only. These Sharia codes prescribe what are generally regarded as unusual or stringent punishments for a variety of offenses, including flogging for fornication and consumption of alcohol, amputation for theft, stoning to death for adultery, crucifixion for armed robbery, retaliation for causing grievous hurt, and the payment of blood price in homicide cases. Meanwhile, the old northern Nigerian penal code (inherited by the successor states to the region) remains applicable to non-Muslims generally.
- The establishment of lower tiers of Islamic courts (variously called lower, higher, and/or upper Sharia courts) beneath the Sharia Court of Appeal to apply the full range of Islamic civil and criminal law to Muslims and consenting non-Muslims.
- The conferment of unlimited appellate jurisdiction in Islamic civil and criminal causes on the Sharia Court of Appeal.

Some of the subsidiary features of Sharia implementation have included the development or establishment of agencies like the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria, official State Councils of Ulama, Sharia commissions, departments of religious affairs, and joint aid or monitoring committees (Hisbah), to promote Sharia implementation; the formal recognition and

expansion of the Islamic Zakat (alms) or charity system; and a general ban on the distribution and consumption of alcohol, gambling, prostitution, and other forms of immorality.

The expanded Sharia system, its Muslim proponents claimed, would enable Muslims to fully exercise their religious freedom and obligations, without violating the religious freedom of non-Muslims in the Sharia-implementing states. It would also promote federalism or states' rights and legal pluralism, fulfil existing constitutional provisions regarding the competence of the states to establish and prescribe the jurisdictions of subfederal courts, promote the efficiency and accessibility of the criminal justice sector, redress Muslims' marginalization under the country's British-oriented legal system, curb societal immorality and corruption, and ultimately contribute to national unity and democratic stability.

The mostly non-Muslim critics of Sharia implementation, on the other hand, denounced the extension of Islamic law as politically motivated, a violation of the Nigerian constitution's prohibition of a state religion and inhumane or degrading punishment, and a recipe for sectarian violence and national disintegration. Indeed, plans to extend Sharia law in the religiously diverse and volatile northwestern state of Kaduna led to bloody clashes that claimed some 2,000 lives in February and May 2000. There were subsequent outbreaks of religious violence, directly or indirectly related to Sharia, in the northern states of Bauchi, Gombe, Niger, Sokoto, Kano, Borno, Jigawa, Plateau, as well as Kaduna. However, by creatively designing and utilizing elaborate processes of postconflict interfaith consultation and mediation, the Kaduna state government ultimately succeeded in crafting a benign compromise version of Sharia implementation that eased tensions between its majority Muslim and minority Christian communities. Rather than destroy Nigeria's nascent democracy, the "Sharia bomb" was more or less defused by the country's federal democratic institutions.

Democracy, Federalism, and the Management of the Sharia Crisis

As Alfred Stepan (2004, 325, 347) has shown, the reassertion of subnational rights in previously overcentralized or moribund federal polities can, depending on key contextual variables, lead to state dissolution, or to democratic transition or consolidation, or to polarization and partial democratic breakdown. Below is a discussion of five closely intertwined factors contributing to the federal democratic management, depolarization, moderation, or mediation of Sharia conflicts in Nigeria.

The Constitutional Context of Sharia Implementation

Perhaps the most important general factor contributing to the containment of the Sharia crisis is the implementation of Islamic law within, rather than without, the framework of a liberal constitutional democratic system. It is of great moment that the Sharia is being implemented by democratically and constitutionally elected leaders at the constituent state level, as distinct from extremist Muslim clerics or social movements advocating the transformation of Nigeria from an aspiring Western-style democracy into an Islamic theocracy. The products of a putatively competitive electoral process, these leaders have adopted the Sharia to maintain democratic legitimacy in their Muslim majority societies, and not as part of a theocratic agenda. Their strategy is not to subordinate the democratic constitution to the Sharia but to implement as much of Islamic law "as they possibly can within the constitution and laws of the federation" (Ostien, 2003: 3). The following remarks from the introduction by the Zamfara state attorney general to the state's Sharia penal code law (Zamfara State of Nigeria, 2000) are instructive:

> The advent of Constitutionalism and Democracy in 1999, which allowed for the [local] majority to have its way in a federal set-up where the jurisdiction of state laws is restricted to [subnational] territorial confines, became the catalyst for adopting the Sharia…Penal Code and…Criminal Procedure Code Law…The Codes however are not applicable to non-Muslims as a crucial accommodation…to…safeguard…the…legality of the adoption…[and] the constitutional and peaceful methods followed….

In essence, the implementation of Sharia within a constitutional framework sets important limits or rules within which the Sharia-practicing states could act. Consequently, as the statement of the Zamfara attorney general suggests, the Sharia-implementing states have sought to respect the constitutional prohibition of a state religion by preserving the secular, common law, political, and judicial institutions in the states and by substantially excluding their non-Muslim residents from the application of Islamic law. They have similarly been careful not to adopt aspects of Islamic law, such as the criminalization of apostasy, that are in obvious conflict with the guarantees of fundamental human rights in the Nigerian constitution. What is more, with very few exceptions, the Sharia-practicing states have rigorously followed the constitutionally prescribed procedures regulating the development and implementation of state criminal laws, including the explicit legislative codification and ratification of the laws and the guarantees of judicial review.

Federalism and the Decentralization of Sharia

Sharia implementation in Nigeria has taken place not only within a democratic constitutional context but also within a federalist framework. The federalist context ensures that the issue at stake in the Sharia conflict is not the imposition of Islamic law on the entire country, as in Sudan or as advocated by proponents of an "Islamic Republic of Nigeria," such as El Zak Zaky's Muslim Brothers and other Nigerian Islamist groups. Rather, the Sharia conflict has involved the rights of some Muslim majority subunits to extend Sharia implementation in response to the overwhelming demands of the Muslim electorate in those jurisdictions. As such, Sharia implementation has not violated the religious neutrality and plurality of the federal government, or undermined the cultural autonomy of other constituent states. Indeed, some Muslim-dominated northern states like Adamawa, Kogi, Kwara, and Nasarawa have resisted the extension of Islamic law, thereby charting a politicoreligious course that is independent of the Sharia-implementing core northern Muslim Hausa-Fulani states. And there are no official Sharia courts in the six Yoruba southwestern states, where Muslims, who constitute at least half of the Yoruba population, have traditionally practiced their faith with legendary moderation.

Another impact of the decentralization of Sharia implementation is the creative innovation in the development of the Sharia system from state to state. Although Zamfara's pioneering Islamic Penal Code has provided the model for Islamic criminal legislations in the 11 other Sharia-implementing states, there are significant interstate differences in the structure, institutions, and practice of Islamic penal justice (Paden, 2005). Indeed, while some Sharia-implementing states (notably Zamfara) have made the use of Sharia courts mandatory for Muslims, others have often given their Muslim residents the option of using secular magistrate courts (U.S. Department of State, 2005: 2–3).

Unlike Zamfara and most of the Sharia-implementing states, Niger state did not adopt a new Sharia criminal code, but rather opted to amend the existing penal law to conform more closely to Islamic principles. Similarly, Sokoto state, unlike Zamfara, has explicitly deemphasized the public segregation of the sexes. The Kano state Sharia penal code, unlike the Zamfara code, prescribes rigorous conditions, including the evidence of four credible witnesses and the confession of the accused, for establishing guilt in sex-related offenses involving married persons. These exacting conditions more faithfully reflect traditional Islamic legal principles that are designed to discourage or preclude the application of the extreme capital punishment of death-by-stoning prescribed for these offenses under the Sharia.

Most remarkably, Kaduna state has adopted a uniquely liberal approach to Islamic law implementation in order to conciliate its large

non-Muslim communities. This has involved the simultaneous development of Islamic and customary non-Islamic courts, the exemption of religiously mixed parts of the state (including several areas of the state's capital city) from the application of any religion-based laws, and restrictions on the activities of the *Hisbah* or Islamic religious aid, enforcement, or vigilante groups.

Indeed, Mohammed Ladan (2004) and Daniel Plang (2005) have identified three different models of Islamic law implementation and judicial organization in Nigeria's Sharia-practicing jurisdictions. These are what they call the Kaduna/Gombe model, the Niger/Kebbi model, and the Zamfara model.

Under the Kaduna/Gombe Sharia model, the preexisting area (local or native) courts have been abolished and replaced with Sharia and customary courts designed to apply Islamic and customary laws to Muslims and non-Muslims respectively. These two systems of parochial courts coexist with the federation-wide common law court system. The ensuing tripartite court structure is expected to respond adequately to the relatively high levels of ethnoreligious heterogeneity in the two states.

In Niger and Kebbi states, on the other hand, the area courts have been retained, but their jurisdiction is now limited to persons professing the Islamic faith as well as non-Muslims who consent to be tried under Islamic law. The common law magistrate and high courts serve other non-Muslims in the two states. However, while Kebbi, like most other Sharia states, enacted a substantive Sharia penal code for Muslims, Niger (as already indicated) merely amended the pre-Sharia penal code to more fully incorporate elements of Islamic criminal law.

The Zamfara model, which has been adopted by most Sharia states, has involved the abolition of area courts and their replacement with Sharia courts as part of a fully fledged program of Sharianization. But even under this model of Sharia practice, as in the other models, the common law magistrate and high courts have been preserved for non-Muslims who do not consent to the jurisdiction of Sharia courts.

By highlighting different versions of the same Islamic vision, such innovative interstate variations in the implementation of Sharia have helped to depolarize Sharia-based conflicts, while promoting the federalist roles of the Nigerian states as creative laboratories of local democracy (Ostien, 2001).

Federal Character, National Integration, and the Regulation of Sharia

By definition, federalism not only enshrines the principle of self-rule or subnational autonomy, but also upholds the norm of shared rule or nationwide integration. Since overcoming the civil war of 1967–1970, Nigerian leaders have sought to build a strong and ethnically inclusive

central government as a counterpoise to the centrifugal tendencies inherent in the federation's cultural fragmentation. The construction of this integrative federal architecture has involved the concentration of critical powers and resources (executive, legislative, juridical, and fiscal) in the federal government and the requirement that key public institutions, including the federal executive and political parties, reflect the country's cultural diversity or "federal character." These integrative features of Nigerian federalism have been powerful moderating factors on Sharia implementation.

Federal government control of police and prisons, for instance, has worked to rein in potential excesses on the part of the Sharia-implementing states. Lacking independent police departments, the Sharia states have been constrained to rely significantly for the enforcement of the Sharia on the unitary secular police force, which has usually contained the abuses of Sharia vigilantes or Hisbah. Similarly, the subordination of state courts, including the Sharia Court of Appeal, to the appellate jurisdiction of the federal Court of Appeal and Supreme Court has been an implicit factor in encouraging the Sharia states to act "carefully and judiciously" so as to avoid the litigation or invalidation of the Sharia system in federal courts (Ostien, 2001).

An even more decisive moderating influence on the behavior of the Sharia-practicing states is the centralization of the political economy of Nigerian federalism as evidenced in the dependence of all governments in the federation for an average 80 percent of their budgets on centrally collected and redistributed oil revenues. Indeed, the financial dependence of the Nigerian states on federal revenue devolutions has been most acute in the resource-constrained Muslim north, where some states derive up to 99 percent of their budgets from central financial transfers (Federal Office of Statistics, 1999). The Sharia states, therefore, have very powerful economic incentives to implement Sharia cautiously in order to avoid the disintegration of the federation and the potential loss of access by the Muslim north to the centrally controlled oil revenues.

A corollary to the creation of centralized governing institutions in Nigeria, to reiterate, is the constitutional requirement that these national institutions reflect the cultural diversity or "federal character" of the country. The federal character principle has been applied to the formation of political parties, the rules for electing the federal president (and state governors), and the composition of the federal executive, among other institutions.

The Nigerian constitution requires political parties to recruit their executive or governing councils from at least two-thirds of all the states of the federation and to "avoid any ethnic or religious connotation," thereby effectively prohibiting the formation of explicitly Islamist parties (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999: sections 222–223). Although

ethnoregional and religious loyalties have invariably infused inter-party and intraparty politics in Nigeria, the absence of sectarian parties has curtailed partisan mobilization around the Sharia issue. Even the northern-dominated opposition All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), which is seen as a pro-Sharia party locally in the north, has not endorsed Sharia implementation at the level of the party's national organization, as this would antagonize its many non-Muslim members and state branches and hurt its aspirations to win the federal presidency.

The presidential election rule, which requires a successful candidate to win at least one quarter of the vote in two-thirds of the states, effectively discourages religious mobilization in the contestation for the all-important federal presidency. The rule has functioned as a disincentive to religious extremism on the part of the northern Muslim governors, many of whom have presidential or other federal-level political ambitions. A comparable rule, which requires a candidate to win one quarter of the votes in two-thirds of local government areas in a state to be elected as governor, has functioned to reinforce moderation on the part of state chief executives in the more culturally heterogeneous states.

The federal presidential election rule and the constitutional requirement that the president appoint at least one federal cabinet minister from each state of the federation have worked to create a culturally inclusive federal center that has been more inclined to manage or mediate, rather than manipulate or aggravate, the Sharia crisis. The federal government has played a largely neutral and conciliatory, if often ambivalent and ambiguous, role in the Sharia crisis. While it has sought to encourage the Sharia states to reverse the extension of Islamic law, and has rejected the role of Hisbah and other sectional vigilante groups, the federal government has resisted calls by non-Muslims for a federal clampdown on the extension, which would have deeply antagonized the Muslim north and possibly destabilized the federation. It has also resisted calls to challenge the constitutionality of Sharia implementation in the Supreme Court, preferring to avoid the premature insertion of the court in sectarian conflict and to seek a political, rather than legal, solution to the conflict. In fact, the federal government has conceded the competence of the states to enact criminal laws, while contending that the rights that are threatened by Sharia implementation are strictly not those of the center but of Muslims, who should be encouraged to enforce their rights in the courts.

Judicial Oversight of Sharia

One important factor that has directly alleviated domestic and international outrage at the implementation of stringent Sharia law in Nigeria has been the role of Sharia appellate courts in overturning some of the more controversial and draconian sentences emanating from lower Islamic

courts. Reflecting its close regulation by the constitution and its staffing by more professionally qualified *kadis* (Islamic judges), the Sharia Court of Appeal, in particular, has consistently overturned some of the more outrageous sentences pronounced by subordinate, newly established, Islamic criminal courts. Invoking diverse procedural and technical arguments, for instance, appellate Sharia courts have overturned sentences of death-by-stoning that lower Sharia courts imposed on some Muslims for adultery and other sex-related offenses. The more widely reported instances of these acquittals have involved Safiya Huisseni in Sokoto state, Amina Lawal in Katsina, Sarimu Baranda in Jigawa, and Yunusa Chiyawa, Jibrin Babaji, Daso Adamu and Hajara Ibrahim, all in Bauchi state (Human Rights Watch, 2004, U.S. Department of State, 2005).

To be sure, legal purists have persuasively questioned the constitutional competence of the Sharia Court of Appeal to exercise jurisdiction in other than personal Islamic cases. Indeed, the High Courts of at least two Sharia-practicing states (Borno and Niger) have already declared the expansion of the jurisdiction of the Sharia Court of Appeal to be unconstitutional (Ostien and Dekker, 2009). However, disallowing the Sharia Court of Appeal from adjudicating in criminal causes would merely mean the direct arbitration of Islamic criminal law appeal cases by the High Court, Court of Appeal, and/or the Supreme Court, which are most certain to uphold the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Nigerian constitution. Indeed, any judicial review of Sharia cases at the federal level would invariably move beyond a narrow examination of procedural and technical points in Sharia implementation to a consideration of the broader question of the constitutionality of the expanded Sharia system. In the 2006 case of *AG Kano v AG Federation*, for instance, the Supreme Court was summoned to arbitrate a conflict over the authority of a Sharia-implementing state to establish the Hisbah. The court threw the suit out on the grounds that this was not a constitutional conflict between the Kano state and federal governments, but an administrative dispute between the Kano Hisbah and the Nigerian police, which suit should have been initiated at the federal High Court, rather than the Supreme Court. Despite the Supreme Court's seeming sidetracking of the Sharia issue, *AG Kano v AG Federation* clearly underscored the authority of secular federal courts to scrutinize the legality of Sharia implementation, which could lead potentially to a more extensive liberalization and modification of the Islamic criminal justice system in its present form (Human Rights Watch, 2004: 19).

Islamic Civil Society

The implementation of Sharia within a federal democratic rule-of-law context has combined with the inherent heterogeneity of the northern

Nigerian Muslim community to promote robust and critical debates on Sharia rule within the Islamic public sphere, despite the initial attempts by extremists to discourage or denounce such discourse as anti-Islamic. Although Sharia implementation enjoys broad support in the mostly Sunni/Maliki-oriented Muslim north, there are divergent positions on the appropriate strategies and methods of Sharia rule among the different "crosscutting tendencies" within this community (Paden, 2002: 2). These tendencies, which ultimately reflect what Alfred Stepan (2000: 44–52) has characterized as the inherently multivocal (rather than univocal) nature of Islam and other major religions, include the mainstream emirate-based authorities, the sufi brotherhoods of Qadiriyya and Tijanniya, the conservative Saudi-influenced Izalla or "anti-innovation legalists," the Muslim Brothers or so-called Shiites, the scholarly reformers and councils of Ulama, the "rootless" poor and youthful students of itinerant Muslim preachers, and Muslim women's rights' groups, especially the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) and the Muslim Sisters Organization (MSO) (Paden, 2002: 2–5; Gwarzo, 2003: 310).

These Muslim organizations and networks, some of which have been implicated in flagrant acts of rhetorical and physical violence against ethnoreligious minorities in the Muslim north, are often characterized as fundamentalist, chauvinistic, inward-looking, uncivil, illiberal, and, therefore, as a part of parochial society, rather than of the civic public sphere. Their civic credentials are further undermined by such organizational deficits as personality-oriented leadership structures, lack of internal democracy, weak gender representation, extreme fractionalizations, and economic dependence on state largesse or a few rich patrons (Gwarzo, 2003). Yet, for all their sectarianism and organizational vulnerability, these Islamic networks, groups, or movements have a long history of resisting or restraining the abuse of state power and acting as a "vanguard for the reclamation and reassertion of people's power in northern Nigeria" (289). More specifically, they have performed several civic roles such as promoting gender rights (including education for Muslim girls and female empowerment), protecting the integrity of the electoral process (via so-called "mandate protection" campaigns), engaging "in social provisioning, advocating good governance, and acting as pressure groups that seek to influence government " (298). The civic role of these otherwise parochial organizations is not surprising because, as claimed by Larry Diamond (1999: 224), "Frequently, organizations and networks pursue multifaceted agendas that straddle the boundary between parochial and civil society, or between civil and political society, or even between all three sectors (as with religious organizations, when religion gets politicized)." In other words, the roles of these Islamic organizations, movements, or networks belie the presumed polarity or

binary between Islamic and civil society precisely because the groups are "open to a wide range of participants and a broad range of social projects," including the largely civic or secular agenda of promoting societal oversight of governmental conduct (Gwarzo, 2003: 315).

With specific reference to Sharia extension, the key impact of the interplay between the various groups or tendencies within the Islamic public sphere in northern Nigeria has been to generate a powerful and profound, yet theologically sympathetic, critique of Islamic law implementation as practiced by the Sharia enforcing states. This robust internal critique has affirmed the legitimacy of Sharia, but inveighed against the Sharia-implementing governments for the hurried, haphazard, and politically motivated manner in which they have instituted the Sharia system; for failing to provide adequate training for Sharia court judges; for emphasizing the punitive aspects of Sharia at the expense of the welfarist or socioeconomic aspects; for instituting a penal system that has disproportionately punished subordinate and vulnerable groups in society (women, the poor, rural people, and illiterates) while leaving corrupt and greedy elites unpunished; for failing to adapt Sharia law effectively to contemporary realities in line with the Islamic principle of *ijtihad* or creative intellectual reasoning; for trivializing the "safeguards which exist within Sharia against harsh and unfair sentencing" (Human Rights Watch, 2004: 2); or for generally failing to live up to the more humane and generous principles and traditions of Islamic law, including the notions of justice, equity, compassion, fairness, and "forgiveness and mercy, where repentance is sincere" (Iman, 2002: 69).

This nuanced internal critique, along with the aforementioned judicial surveillance as well as broader domestic and international strictures against the enactment of Islamic criminal law, has effectively restrained the Sharia-practicing states from enforcing the more controversial and stringent aspects of the Sharia penal system. Thus, no amputations have been undertaken since the surgical removal of the right hands of three petty thieves in Zamfara and Sokoto in 2000 and 2001; none of the death-by-stoning sentences imposed by Sharia courts have been carried out; with the possible exception of Kano, the activities of the Hisbah enforcement groups have progressively decreased in the Sharia states; and there is an increasing tendency in the Muslim north generally to "shift focus away from the criminal law aspects of Sharia law to its tenets of social justice and charity for the poor" (U.S. Department of State, 2005: 6).

Conclusions

Extant academic writings on the Nigerian state have copiously documented its many pathologies and failures. Drawing on Adigun Agbaje's

seminal 1990 article on the "Travails of the Secular State," and the unfolding of the Sharia controversy since 1999, this chapter has sought to highlight a redeeming feature of the Nigerian state in terms of the capacity of its federal democratic institutions and processes to dilute ethnoreligious threats to the integrity and continuity of the state. Thus, although it was described as a "ticking time bomb" that could cause Nigeria's violent dissolution in a sectarian bloodbath, the extension of Sharia by Zamfara and other northern Muslim states since 1999 has followed a relatively more benign trajectory (Herbst, 2005). The study has identified key features of the Nigerian state that have contributed to such an outcome, including the nascent national liberal democratic constitutional framework, decentralist federal structures, integrative federal character rules, effective judicial surveillance, and the influence of critical civic voices within the Muslim community.

Certainly, the Nigerian federal state continues to exhibit several dysfunctional or pathological attributes that promote, rather than ameliorate, political disintegration and disorder. Examples include (1) constitutionally inspired and politically entrenched discriminatory policies and practices against nonindigenes (Nigerians resident in constituent state units outside their presumed ancestral communities), which have engendered a monumental crisis of internal citizenship in the country, while producing lethal communal conflicts across the federation in general, and the north, in particular; (2) oil revenue sharing practices that have promoted the "decentralization of corruption" (Ottaway, Herbst, and Mills, 2004: 5), while generating increasingly incendiary distributive conflicts among oil-bearing sections, nonoil producing regions, and the central government; and (3) pervasive electoral corruption and brigandage, which has become the single most important and immediate impediment to democratic consolidation, economic development, national integration, and robust federalism in Nigeria. Yet, despite the increasing debilitation and perversion of Nigeria's evolving federal democracy by electoral and economic corruption, there can be little doubt that the basic institutional architecture of the system is comparatively judicious and remarkably effective in crosscutting major ethnoreligious identities, fostering interregional integration, promoting intergroup equilibrium, and generally cauterising centrifugal challenges (like the Sharia campaign) to Nigeria's continuity or survival as a multiethnic political community (Suberu, 2006).

To contend that Nigeria's democratic federalism has mediated and moderated the Sharia issue is not to suggest, however, that conflicts over Islamic law in Nigeria have been, or will be, resolved. Indeed, the Sharia issue, and the broader question of the nature of Nigeria's secularity defy easy resolution, and will most likely remain a recurrent flashpoint of intergovernmental or intergroup conflict in Nigeria.

As we have seen, conflicts over Islamic law are significantly rooted in deep-rooted Muslim perceptions of the marginalization of Sharia within the Western-based (and presumably Christian-oriented) constitutional architecture, legal infrastructure, and multilayered judicature of the Nigerian state. In fact, despite the extension of Sharia since 1999, Muslims continue to exhibit a deep sense of insecurity and vulnerability regarding the constitutional status of Sharia. This is evident in continuing Muslim demands for constitutional and political reforms to guarantee and consolidate Sharia implementation. The reform proposals include the restoration of subunit autonomy to the level attained under the premilitary 1960/1963 Constitutions, including provisions for independent state constitutions, local government police departments, and subfederal competency in matters of evidence; creation of Sharia courts in all 36 states of the federation to meet the needs of the Muslim communities resident in those states; removal of the existing constitutional restrictions of the jurisdiction of the Sharia Court of Appeal to Islamic personal causes; establishment of the Federal Sharia Court of Appeal; restrictions of the appellate powers of the federal common law courts in Sharia matters to constitutional issues only; and a broad constitutional recognition for Sharia as a "legal and ideological system of its own, and as an alternative to, or coequal with, the imposed western legal and ideological system" (see Ladan, 2004: 95; also Tabiu, 2001; Haruna, 2003; Ahmed, 2003; Dambatta et al., 2005).

Many non-Muslims in Nigeria, on the other hand, have continued to argue for official policies, judicial interventions, or constitutional changes that would circumscribe or even eliminate the existing recognition for Islamic courts and reaffirm the secularity of the Nigerian state. At the same time, however, it is quite obvious that the notion of secularity in Nigeria is profoundly ambiguous and intensely contentious. This is partly because the Nigerian constitution does not explicitly describe the Nigerian state as secular, but merely prohibits the adoption of a "state religion" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999: section 10). What is more, the constitution actually underwrites religious institutions and practices by enjoining governments in the federation to direct their policies "towards ensuring that…there are adequate facilities for social, religious and cultural life," by explicitly recognizing that religious education and ceremonies will be conducted in public schools, and by elaborately providing for judicial institutions for the adjudication of civil proceedings involving questions of Islamic personal law (ibid.: sections 17, 38, 275).

In essence, the notion of state-faith relations or "secularity" that has developed in Nigeria is not synonymous with the American-style "wall of separation" between government and the church/mosque. Rather the constitutional theory and political practice of state-faith relations in Nigeria emphasize religious pluralism or the multireligious character of

the state, and the equitable (but not necessarily equal or identical) treatment of each religious order according to its specific needs or preferences, "so long as no one sect succeeds in going so far as to establish its religion as state religion" (Ostien and Gamaliel, 2002). As explained by William Miles (2000: 231),

> Strength of religious conviction and affiliation among virtually all Nigerians precludes the separationist model of church and state as it is applied in the West. In the Nigerian context, "secularism" more accurately refers to an understanding that the government will not favour one organized religion over another, while tacitly permitting (if not encouraging) religious activity within the nation's various faith groups. (Christian, Muslim, and animist)

The problem with such an interpretation of secularity (as implying equitable state entanglement with religion, rather than state disengagement from religion) is that it encourages an unrelenting competition among diverse religious groups for state preferment and resources, thereby accentuating and complicating the role of the state as differentiator and distributor in the religious domain, while encouraging the ongoing mobilization and politicization of religious identities. As claimed by Abdulkader Tayob (2005: 49) "…the competition between Muslims and Christians is not restricted to the competition over individual souls in Nigeria," but extends to a struggle "over the national soul of the state."

What then are the options and prospects for stability and political development of the Nigerian state, given the continuing religious competition, divisions, and tensions over the status of Sharia and the secularity of the state? Elsewhere (Suberu, 2006), we have identified the potential for religious conflict-mitigation in the Nigerian setting of democratic consolidation, justice sector development, interfaith dialogue, propoor socioeconomic governance, constitutional change, and federalist nonconstitutional renewal.

The development of democracy will enhance the space not only for the constitutional expression and competitive representation of religious identity issues, but also for their political accommodation and peaceful mediation. Robust judicial institutions are indispensable to such mediation. Specifically, an independent and competent judiciary at federal and state levels, as well as within and outside the system of Sharia courts, is crucial to the clarification and arbitration of the multiple contestations over Islamic law, including the ongoing controversies over the legitimate scope of human, intergroup, and intergovernmental rights under Sharia rule.

Interfaith dialogue and mediation have been critical to the deescalation of the Sharia crisis in Kaduna. Such dialogue should be entrenched

locally and institutionalized nationally as a systematic framework for interfaith cooperation and accommodation and conflict preemption, prevention, and intervention. To be effective, however, such dialogue must also address the imperatives of accountability in governance and propoor socioeconomic development as potentially robust strategies for mitigating the corruption, poverty, inequality, and insecurity that often feed, drive, or underpin religious extremism, conflict, and violence.

Democratic constitutional change in Nigeria holds the promise not only of promoting public participation in the crafting of the country's basic law, but also of addressing and correcting any imperfections, contradictions, or loopholes in the current constitutional framework, including the constitutional provisions on Sharia and state-faith relations. Yet, as underscored by recent experience in Nigeria, the process of constitutional reform can highlight the fault lines that vex a deeply divided society, while producing a constitutional deadlock instead of delivering constitutional change. This would seem to recommend, at least in the short term, an approach to conflict management and political development that is based on nonconstitutional renewal, or working through the country's current institutional framework to resolve political problems.

In the specific context of the conflicts over Sharia and the secular state in Nigeria, nonconstitutional renewal would involve the continuing mediation of religious tensions through democratic electoral bargaining, the strengthening of the existing institutions for the administration of Islamic and non-Islamic justice, governmental and nongovernmental support for interfaith mediation and reconciliation, investment in propoor policies that reduce the vulnerability of mass constituencies to violent sectarian manipulation and mobilization, and the deepening of the evolving federal processes of self-rule and shared rule.

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Koma: A Glimpse of Life at the Edges of the State

Muhammad Kabir Isa

> *The more incompetent the state…the wider grew the gap between the state and society, including the gap between town and countryside, and the wider this gap became, the more frantic and unbridled were the subversions of "tribalism," as people sought for self-defence in kinship ties or their equivalents. The circle of negation seemed complete.*
>
> *—Davidson, 2005: 230*

Introduction

Can a people who have lived for centuries in a particular location that was appropriated by European powers in the late nineteenth century and later by the postcolonial state from the middle of the twentieth century be newly "discovered" in the late decades of the twentieth century? This is the question that the "discovery" of the Koma people—acknowledged openly by a military governor and strongly echoed by the media and the "civilized" public—raises. That this discovery came many decades after the conceited "discoveries" of rivers, lakes, mountains, and other elements of nature—which had been long harnessed and enjoyed by indigenous populations—by European explorers perhaps signify that the successor (post)state is yet to shed itself of the imperial logic of the preceding (colonial) state. Despite this similarity, however, the Koma case points us to a context in which the margins of the postcolony escapes the "patrimonial autocracy" (Young, 2004: 23) of the state. This margin is thus left to exist in its primitive conditions that challenge, in fact,

disgrace, the acknowledged underdevelopment of the postcolony. In this example, the "fatal shortcomings" of the postcolonial state come into bold relief.

In his observation on "the Northern tribes of Nigeria," C.K. Meek (1971: 24) noted that within a great belt of the Sudanic live are semi-Bantu speaking nations or ethnic groups, many of whom were initially head hunters. They stretched from across Yolaand to Kontagora. Amongst them are the Koma, Margi, Jukun, Hona (Kona), Lala, Longuda, Jarawa, Tangale, Ankwe, Montoil, Angas, Berom, Rukuba, Mada, Ninzam, Gwari, Basa, and Kambari. To the south of the Benue are the Basa, Igara, Munshi (Tiv), Jukun, Mumuye, Bata, Vere, and many other smaller tribes.

The achievement of independence by the African state was supposed to be what Crawford Young (2004: 23) describes as "a defining historical moment, the culmination of an epic struggle." Political freedom, the shedding of the "colonial chrysalis," was rooted in "visions of liberation, transformation and uplift." However, as Basil Davidson (2005: 290) argues, the postcolonial nation-state became an impediment to progress, liberation, and transformation. Its gross effects were constricting and exploitative; the postcolonial state simply failed to operate in any social sense. State-society relations have continued to grow apart since independence rather than converge.

The Koma people are a minority group that subsist along the fringes and edges of the Nigerian state; they had no *independence* from pristine life prior to the European contact and have had none since Nigeria's independence. The Koma people are found in the northeastern part of Nigeria, along the northern border with Cameroon. The question that the condition of the Koma people raises is this: If the state issues from the people, were the Koma people part of *this* state? Are the Koma people aware of the *existence* of the Nigerian state? Since they were reportedly "discovered" by agents of the Nigerian state, have they also *discovered* the state? Or can a people who live in such abjection and who are constituted as "human excess" in an abject state be truly "rediscovered"? What can such a "rediscovery" consist of?

Most groups, social forces, and citizens often encounter the typical postcolonial state as a predator, a pirate, or even a vampire (Young, 2004: 37). Yet, this is an account of a people who have hardly encountered the state at all—in any positive sense. This chapter is based primarily on secondary sources such as archival materials, books, journals, newspapers and news magazines, as well as pamphlets. I also interviewed people from the Koma district resident in Yola town, and others who had had the opportunity to visit and study the district of Koma land.

The Koma People: History and Alienation

Much of what is known of the Koma people was not committed to writing until the early 1980s and is largely sourced from oral tradition. It is not true to claim that the Koma were "discovered," even though they were made famous by the military governor of the now defunct Gongola state in 1986. As far back as 1950 the British colonial officials dug a well in one of the Koma villages, Tantile. In 1965, the first primary school was built in Koma Nassarawa and, in 1976, six others were opened in different parts of Koma land (CAPRO, 1992: 223).

The Koma occupy the southeast of Adamawa state. They dwell in the mountains of the Koma district of the Ganye local government area, mainly on and under the Atlantica mountain ranges on the eastern-middle belt borders of Nigeria and Cameroon. The first census conducted by the colonial government in 1929 put the Koma population at 704 men, 697 women, and 631 children in 7 villages (Nass, 1996: 6). The people form the present Koma district of Jada local government area of Adamawa state. The Koma district is located about 80 kilometers southeast of Yola town, the Adamawa state capital. The Koma tribe has three subgroups that include the Koma Beiya around Tantile, Choncha, Sukal, and Mangal; the Koma Vomni around Beti and Tuli; the Koma Damti around Wari-Jabbe, Gbagi and Suli. Most people refer to them as the Koma but they call themselves Gaunu. In 1992, the CAPRO Research Institute estimated the population of the Koma to be around 26,000–30,000 people. It was estimated in a report by the Ganye local government that around 17,000 people paid taxes; as such, it would not be out of place to estimate the Koma population at 30,000 people (CAPRO, 1992: 223). However, one important point that this raises is that the payment of taxes is the major way by which the people of Koma have historically encountered the Nigerian (colonial and postcolonial) state.

The Koma people live in an agrarian society where everybody farms and hunts in a land area with big ponds and rivers running through. Some of the people also combine farming with trading. The social and religious activities of the Koma are tied to farming, hunting, trading, and fishing. They practice shifting cultivation, and farms are changed every five years. The major crops are Guinea corn, groundnut, millet, rice, maize, and Bambara nuts. Root crops like cocoyam, cassava, and a reddish species of yam are also grown by the Koma, while food crops like mangoes and guavas are grown with banana found on the hill tops. Labor is a very important factor in the life of the Koma peasant farmer, and it is normally supplied by members of the family or through their community members who help during the harvest period (Alfonsus, 1984: 15–17)

In the dry season, women collect and make rolls of grass for roofing new rooms or renovating old ones. The master of the house is responsible

for thatching or roofing the house, aided by their grown-up male children. The female children assist their mothers at home and with the collection of grass from farms for roofing, firewood from the forest, and corn stalks for cooking. The women also make local beer for the family, for commercial purposes, and use during communal activities.

The Koma people keep cattle that are left to wander around in communally built stone-fenced or wood fenced cattle pens. During farming or planting season goats and chickens have separate huts. The people are good hunters; they also engage themselves in various handicrafts such as making mats, working tools, drums, tambourines, traditional bags, hoes, pots, and other basic necessities. The economic life of the Koma people greatly influences and determines their sociopolitical religious and moral life (Alfonsus, 1984: 17–20).

As to be expected, Koma people are social and political beings. First, they enjoy celebrations of all types, and like most ethnic groups in Africa, they celebrate various moments and events in their lives at both the individual and community levels. These occasions include births, marriages, circumcisions, and funerals. Once a male child is married and creates his own home not too far from his family, he is considered almost equal to his father in social status. The Koma people are more monogamous than polygamous. They trace their descent through their patrilineal line than the matrilineal line. Circumcision is carried out on both male and female children amidst of feasting and celebrations. The father in a Koma family unit is the head and the source of power. He is the main arbitrator of all conflicting situations and in his absence the eldest male child takes charge of major decisions, behaves in a manner expected of him, and sanctions any erring member of the family. In matters affecting the community in the areas of boundary disputes, theft, adultery, and murder, the chief takes charge in consultation with his assistants and other elders of the community.

The Koma traditional structures were dismantled by the expansion of the Adamawa Fulani Emirate. It was with great resentment and resistance that the Koma fell under the Adamawa Emirate. The Koma people within the Fulani Emirate had their chiefs appointed by the emirate and after becoming the vassal state of the Adamawa emirate, the Koma district was partitioned into seven village areas with appointed village heads who report to the district head that is also under the jurisdiction of the Ganye traditional council, from where the Koma chiefdom was administered (Alfonsus, 1984: 78–80).

"Neoslavery"?: Alienation and Primitive Isolation

In the 1990s, it was shown that there were more than 30 Koma settlements, both uphill and downhill, and that the Koma people were spread

across the borders of Nigeria and Cameroon. However, beyond living at the borders of two typical, dysfunctional postcolonial states which are themselves on the margins of the global order, the Koma people live on the extreme margins of the global margin.

The scant literature on the Koma people points to the fact that the Germans visited the Koma area under the German-Cameroon controlled territory as far back as 1912 for taxation purpose. However, when Germany was defeated in the First World War in 1918, it lost control of its colonial territory to Britain and France. The area of Koma both in Nigeria and Cameroon later fell under the British colonial control, much to the displeasure of France (Alfonsus, 1984: 78–80).

The 1958/1959 plebiscites brought the Sardauna province under Nigerian control, and thus the Koma district and indigenes also came under Nigerian control. As a result, the Koma district was mapped out clearly in 1963, and the international border that was demarcated in the uphill settlement runs through the Koma area indicating the border between Nigeria and Cameroon. The Koma district was gazetted in the laws of Gongola state long before the then military governor came to serve the state in 1986. The first primary school was built in Koma Nassarawa in 1965, and in 1974 six others were opened in different parts of Koma land.

The Koma people made the headlines and became famous in 1986, when the then governor of the former Gongola State, Col. Yohanna Madaki, visited the area to witness the utter and complete neglect of the people and land by the state (CAPRO, 1992: 223). He claimed to have "discovered" the mountain people of Koma in their uphill settlements.

The Koma people were promised settlements down the hills by the government as a face-saving scheme to make up for its historical failure. The announced plan was that the Koma people would be resettled down the hills in order to make modern amenities available to them. The state claimed through its agents that settling the Koma people downhill would make it easier to get them to participate in the activities of government. However, all this became just media propaganda and charade of the state. Social amenities, ostensibly, do not climb mountains. To draw a comparative, metaphoric contrast, in the everyday expression of the subjects of Belgian Congo, the state was personified as *Bula Matari* (crusher of rocks). It is not that the postcolonial state in Nigeria was not capable of "crushing rocks," but it only crushes "rocks" of opposition or dissent and not "rocks" of poverty and underdevelopment.

The Koma district was created in the early 1960s. Most districts created along with Koma in this period are now local government areas while Koma still remains a district. An indigene of Koma told this researcher that when the then governor Madaki was invited by the missionaries to visit the Koma district, the essence was to point out the utter

neglect suffered by the people and the area, and not to "discover" the people. Missionary (Salvationist) Christianity, therefore, can be said to have "*re*discovered" the Koma and sought to bring this "rediscovery" to the attention of a largely irresponsible postcolonial state and perhaps encourage it through this "embarrassment" to discharge its duties to its citizens in the Koma district. It would seem from this point that Salvationist Christianity had paid greater attention to a people (citizens) on the margins of modernity than the (secular) state that was notionally constituted to work and care for the good of all.

Andrew Sanda, a Koma and broadcaster, dismisses the discovery thesis. The rejection of the notion is founded on the fact that the missionaries who were there first and had the earliest contacts are the only ones who can claim a form of "rediscovery." Most of the schools and hospital structures and facilities that exist in the district were first established by the missionaries, and then followed by the colonial state—from the taxation it generated in the district. However, from the period of the Fulani Jihad of the nineteenth century when an Islamic order was imposed over the Adamawa area through the period of British colonial rule after the defeat of the Fulani rulers, to the present postcolonial state, the fate of the Koma people has progressively worsened.

However, when Governor Madaki made his promise, some of the hill dwellers migrated down the hills. Those who came down the hills to live believed the promises made to them of houses, schools, hospitals and maternity centers, as well as other facilities. They found to their disappointment that the promises were not meant to be kept. According to a government source, the failure to provide these facilities even after 20 years justifies and explains the anger of the migrated, downhill Koma dwellers toward visitors in recent times, particularly those keen on interviewing them or taking their pictures.

The state government over the years had established several resettlement committees to ease the migration and movement of the uphill Koma dwellers down the hills. As of 1986, the resettlement committee received 1 million naira (approximately \$900,000 at 1986 rate). The committee, according to an official, used this huge sum only to "map out the area." More monies were allocated for other projects related to the Koma resettlement. At the current rate, the total allocation by the state government to the project is estimated at several millions of dollars. However, the resources have gone down the drain of corruption by state officials in what Crawford Young (2004: 39) recently described as the "atmosphere of venality surrounding patrimonial politics." Rather than resettle the people of Koma from uphill to downhill, state officials have used the money to "settle" themselves. In fact, a state official recalls how the entry into the resettlements committee was viewed in the late 1980s and early 1990s as an avenue to corruptly enrich oneself.

The demarcation of the area, which was carried out by the resettlement committee in 1986, included a mini census that indicated a population of 32,000 people. The resettlement areas so demarcated—Samlo, Tuli, Mani, Tantile, and Choncha villages—lack basic modern amenities and the people continue to live in abject poverty. The only existing structures are a dispensary at the district headquarters in Nasarawa, and a "health" center built by the local government at Beti. Although the structure at Beti is called a center, it cannot be truly qualified as a "health" center because there are neither basic health equipments nor drugs. There is also a block of offices for the development project, which has been unoccupied for years. While the state is derelict in such *positive* duties as these, in its *negative* duties, the postcolonial state often manages a measure of self-interested efficiency, particularly in matters related to surveillance. Thus, a police post was established at the district headquarters, while an area court was also constructed long before the failed resettlement program.

As stated earlier, the various resettlement committees established in the past have turned out to be ventures for the primitive accumulation of capital for the members if the dominant class and bureaucrats in the state. In fact, an official of the state interviewed in respect of the resettlement issue informed us that any attempt to reopen the issues or discuss the resettlement of the Koma people or even audit or probe the activities of the various committees could lead to "opening up of a Pandora box of massive corruption and unlawful enrichment of individuals which may lead or result in murders and political assassinations because of the large-scale corruption involved" (anonymous respondent, interview, July 2006). Evidently, even when the postcolonial state springs into action over its publicly advertised inaction, irresponsibility, and irresponsiveness, it does so only on the condition of this becoming yet another avenue for corruption. In the Koma case, as illustrated by the position of the respondent above, the postcolony is a perpetual space of potential and unending consumption, violence and death.

The demarcated land area has become something of a taunt to those who have accepted to settle down the hills. Most of the hill dwellers who knew that these resettlement promises were false and not feasible now taunt those who accepted to settle downhill. By taunting one another, the Koma can be said to be actually taunting the Nigerian state—an impersonal abstraction that is as alien to them historically as it has again proved to be in contemporary times. This explains why the Koma dwellers who have settled down the hills are very angry toward strangers who they perceive as agents of the state out to taunt them further with questions only to depart without making any positive impact on their appalling situation.

Machek Iliya argues that the state (local, state, and national) has done nothing to integrate the Koma people with other people in the local state.

He charges that the Koma people who are "regarded as premitives [*sic*] suffer from neo-slavery by the people Adamawa State who see [the Koma] as a source of cheap labor, as they are employed as domestic servants with little exposure to the importance of education" (Iliya, 2008). Yet, this was a state that produced the vice president of Nigeria, Alhaji Abubakar Atiku (1999–2007), a fabulously rich politician and businessman.

The only "state" the Koma people have come to know over the years are the churches and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). However, the church and the NGOs as "the state," that is, as the instruments for the performance of some of the basic functions of the state, can be problematic. For instance, in October 2008, there was a controversy over a suspicion among the Koma people that some missionaries were perpetrating child-trafficking. The Koma people claimed that about 89 children who left their mountain homes for an "excursion" with missionaries almost a decade ago are yet to return (*ThisDay*, October 12, 2008).

Even though the accused proprietor of a private school in the Jada local government area of the state, Mr. Kayode Momolosho, stated that the children were in various schools all over the country, not many Koma believed him. The state government, which ought to have provided schools for the children so that there would have been no need to take them away from their communities, reacted by handing the matter over to the State Security Service (SSS) "for proper investigations." The commissioner for Education added that "security agents were keeping vigil, to ensure that the remaining pupils do not fall victims, pending conclusion of investigation" (*ThisDay*, October 12, 2008).

In the face of utter double-neglect—that is the negligence of the very process of negligence—of the people of Koma from the period of Nigeria's independence to date, and the absence of access to modern amenities, including primary health care and potable water, how have they been able to cope with childcare? How are they able to cope with the absence of infant immunization—provided for their fellow citizens by governments in the other parts of the federation—against the six killer diseases.

Childcare in Koma

Childcare is one of the most complicated aspects of human life, particularly the upbringing of children. This is even more complicated and challenging in socially and economically backward communities. Experts say that nurturing an infant to childhood is the most engaging, difficult, tiring, and yet interesting aspect of parenthood, especially for mothers. In many ways, the modern state is expected to help in ensuring that

this process is made easy and healthy. The state does this through many means and structures: laying down the rules and the regime of health, providing an affordable health care system, creating awareness on breast-feeding, childcare, and hygiene, and providing access to potable water, affordable food, and so on.

Nina Papeh, a female journalist with the state newspaper the *Scope,* undertook a study visit of the Koma district in May 2005, to investigate how the Koma coped with children on the mountain tops far away from government programs on baby-friendly childcare and immunization against child killer diseases. Papeh noted that

> Childcare is the primary responsibility of all parents, generations, peoples and as such governments have increasingly found it necessary to concentrate and consolidate the campaign on childcare. This is so largely due to the fact that the type of early childcare a child gets at birth may determine his or her future. If a child is to attain the desired future that parents and communities always hoped for, it must be healthy and strong through healthy feeding of the child with feeds that contains vitamins necessary for the child's physical and mental growth and development .

The fundamental question here then is what happens to a child born on the mountain tops of the Koma hills who is estranged from modern health care—such as prenatal and antinatal care—education, and other services? The Koma child is often exposed to the vagaries and harsh effects of the windy mountain top weather, without the warmth of a modern blanket and the comfort of a modern bed. A Koma child has rocks for bed, and knows only the warmth of the naked skin of its mother at breast-feeding and that of her body when carried on her back, and the warmth of a cave or a small hut built on a mountain top. The Koma child has no modern education, modern maternal care, child care, or safety from the vagaries of disease and insecurity.

Papeh raised a question as to what happens to such a child or better still what the future holds for such a child. It can also be asked what manner of citizens can be produced in the mountains of Koma? Does the state remember or recognize the Koma child?

A Koma child, from conception, depends upon basically two things: traditional medicine and traditional house or family idol worship. The child from its mother's womb receives "antenatal" care from a traditional medicine man. The child is also protected by the traditional house or clan idol from spiritual attacks. A modern child born in the cities and urban centers is protected from the killer diseases through immunization, while herbs are administered to the mother of the Koma child right from the womb to birth. It is the traditional medicine man, for the most part, who ensures the child's safety—except in a few cases when

missionaries visit Koma communities with modern medicine. This ritual often takes the form of rubbing the mother's stomach with red earth mixed with cedar oil.

At birth, the child and mother are washed with herbs to reinvigorate the mother before initial breast milk is given to the baby. The mountain tops are often chilly hence special herbs are prepared for the child to protect against the cold weather. This herbal treatment provides a sort of covering for the child against cold weather. After delivery, infants are kept indoors until permission is granted, usually after the umbilical cord falls off three days after birth. Then a naming ceremony follows with the sacrifice of a cock. As the child grows up and is further exposed to sickness, he/she is treated by the chief priest, who is consulted for cures and sources of the sickness. These extreme poverty , abject conditions and medieval "health care" practices exist in Koma, a "secluded" portion of a postcolonial state that was said to be flowing with the proverbial milk and honey. To take one example of this criminal contradiction: where the Koma child cannot get basic health care, General Sani Abacha alone, as military head of state (1993–1998) stole more than 3 billion U.S. dollars.

In the country of petro-dollars, the Koma child hardly knows any other "state" than his or her community and the Christian organizations and NGOs that occasionally visit. The Koma child, therefore, from birth through infancy to adulthood is largely an "alien" or "outsider" to the state and vice versa. Such a child grows to pay allegiance to his or her deity and community, rather than the state at large—where he/she is aware of the existence of the state at all. If the state is not totally absent for the Koma child, it is a void.

Conclusion

The Koma people subsist along the fringes and edges of the Nigerian state. They hardly recognize the state, and the state hardly recognizes them. Yet, even when they recognize that they are not *in* the state, they cannot withdraw from the state.

However, if through any organized resistance to their abandonment by the state the Koma people constitute a threat to the sovereignty of the state, there is no doubt that the mountains will be militarized and they will encounter the power of the state—which was initially uninterested in them. The postcolonial state can deploy and mobilize its negative, violent resources much more easily than it can mobilize them for good. This Koma example illustrates that.

The Koma people are unlikely to share other Nigerians' sense of being part of a state mainly because of neglect and false promises. On the

whole, this chapter points to the extent to which the Koma people are alienated by and from the state. We have also described how the Koma people have been subsisting along the fringes of the state in Nigeria and how they are able to sustain their abject lives on the mountains.

However, it must be stated that the living conditions of the Koma people represent a great embarrassment to the Nigerian state and the state elite, a critical section of which comes from the same (local) state as the Koma people. It is noteworthy that in eight years in office, Vice President Atiku Abubakar never once drew attention to, let alone took any action, to address the challenges of the people who dwell in subhuman conditions on the mountains in the twenty-first century.

In addressing the Koma question, the activities of the previous resettlement committees should be revisited by setting up a panel to investigate why the Koma people have suffered these long years of neglect and alienation in spite of government resources deployed toward the resettlement project.

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