

ETHNICITY AND RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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ETHNICITY AND RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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DECLARATION:

I hereby declare that this dissertation has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at any other institution, and that it is entirely my own work.

Signed _____

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ABSTRACT

In media reports and news about violence in Nigeria what is mostly heard about is religious violence. Most of the publications have focused mainly on the contributions of religious belief and practices on such acts of violence. The argument has been that religious zealots, bigots, extremists as well as fundamentalists have continued to wreak havoc in the country. True enough many acts of violence carried out in Nigeria are perpetrated under the umbrella of religion. But the problem is more complex than simply associating the violence with religion. In these discussions and write-ups about the causes of violence an important factor has often received little attention or left out completely. That factor is ethnicity. Religious differences and political differences, the struggle for oil revenue to mention but a few do cause violence in the country but not in the same magnitude as ethnicity. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation and the ethnic diversity has not been properly managed over the years. Ethnic differences contribute to violence in greater magnitude than often discussed.

There has been and will continue to be the urgent desire to proffer solutions to the incessant acts of violence in Nigeria in order to assist the nation move forward. These solutions will be difficult to figure out unless the major causation factors are discovered, discussed and addressed. This is why it is necessary to examine the struggle among the ethnic groups in the country as a necessary factor that causes violence. In the surface it might look like religious violence, but underneath the entire episode seems to lie a strong inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic connection. This dissertation promises to explore and analyze such ethnic perspectives to the religious violence. It examines also how the various causes of violence are somehow tied and/or connected to each other.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Anno Domini
AG	Action Group
ANPP	All Nigeria Peoples Party
ANRC	Annual National Religious Conference
ATR	African Traditional Religion
BCE	Before Common Era
BCN	Broadcasting Corporation of Nigeria
Ca	Circa
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CDC	Constitution Drafting Committee
CMS	Church Missionary Society
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECWA	Ecumenical Church of West Africa
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
FESTAC	Festival of Arts and Culture
FRCN	Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria
ICPC	Independent Corrupt Practices and other Offences Commission
ING	Interim National Government
ITR	Igbo Traditional Religion
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People
MSS	Muslims Students Society
NCNC	National council of Nigeria and Cameroun

NCS	Nigerian Customs Service
NIDOPCODO	Nigeria Delta Oil Producing Communities Development Organization
NNA	Nigerian National Alliance
NNDC	New Nigerian Development Corporation
NNOC	Nigerian National Oil Company
NPC	Northern Peoples' Congress
NYSC	National Youth Service Corps
OAU	Organization of African Congress
OIC	Organization of Islamic Conference
OPC	Odua Peoples Congress
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PDP	Peoples' Democratic Party
SMA	Societas Missionum ad Afros
SNC	Sovereign National Conference
SSS	State Security Service
TC	Today's Challenge
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPGA	United Progressive Grand Alliance
USA	United States of America

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is diverse and complex in multi-dimensional ways namely in culture, ethnicity, language, and religion. There are three main religions practiced in Nigeria. They are Christianity, Islam and the traditional or indigenous religion. These religions have always had and will continue to have profound impact on the social, political and public life of the people.¹

With a population of over 140 million, Nigeria is often described as a great Islamic-Christian nation in the world. Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Egypt have huge Muslim population. But Christians are not many in these places.² In Nigeria the Muslim population is around 50 percent while Christians are 40 percent. Thus it stands out as a unique nation where there is huge population of Christians and Muslims. John N. Paden argues that Nigeria is the largest country with an approximate balance between the Christian and Muslim populations.³ The rest of the population accounts for native/indigenous worshippers and those who do not profess any religion. This reality makes Nigeria an important test case for developing patterns of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa as well as all over the world. Nigeria provides a rich context for understanding the cultural, social, economic, educational and political issues that are involved in an effort to develop a Christian-Muslim dialogue and relationship.

¹ Julius O. Adekunle, "Religion and Politics in Transition" In *Religion in Politics: Secularism and National Integration in Modern Nigeria* (New Jersey: Africa World Press Inc. 2009) 3.

² "Religion Statistics." *CIA World Factbooks*, December 18, 2003 to March 28, 2011. http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/rel_rel-religion-religions. Percentage estimates of Muslim/Christian populations in the world: Indonesia, Muslims 86.1%, Christians 2.3%, Pakistan, Muslims 95%, Others (Christians/Hindu) 5%, India, Muslims 13.4%, Christians 2.3%, Bangladesh, Muslims 89.5%, Others 0.9%, Egypt, Muslims 90%, Christians 1%, Nigeria, Muslims 50%, Christians 40%.

³ John N. Paden, *Faith and Politics in Nigeria*, (Washington D.C. United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008) 3.

Over the years, especially since her political independence from Britain in 1960, the nation has witnessed a plethora of religious conflicts, clashes and disturbances. The term religious conflict in Nigeria is essentially conflicts between various religious groups. Principally such conflicts occur between Christians and Muslims. Reasons for such conflicts are varied. The reasons include: differences in religious beliefs, struggle between different ethnic communities with different religions, vying for socio-economic, educational and political opportunities. Many lives and property have been lost. Churches and Mosques have been burned down. Schools (primary, High school, colleges) have at one point or another been destroyed, schools closed down and students roaming the streets and engaging in all sort of criminal activities. In some parts of the country people worship in secret and others go to their places of prayer and worship with fear, not knowing whether they will be attacked or when the next violence will erupt.

Given this scenario and more, the critical and elaborate study of Muslim - Christian relationship in Nigeria becomes a task of paramount importance. Many authors both within and outside Nigeria have written/discussed this problem of religious violence. But some areas still need to be further highlighted and discussed and such areas have to do with the impact/effect of ethnic differences in the religious violence. Some grounds need to be explored with regards to the ethnic role, causes, management, resolution as well as possible eradication of religious conflict in African's most populous nation. And that is what really captured my interest and motivates me to do a research in this area.

But since the scope is wide we shall endeavor to narrow our quest to a specific area. We shall focus on the role of ethnicity and ethnic differences in religious violence in Nigeria. In other words I will argue in this dissertation that ethnic and tribal factors are

responsible in a large extent to the religious violence in the country. That is expected to be the uniqueness of my approach. Often people blame religion and religious differences relating to doctrines, beliefs, practices and ritual as being responsible for the religious violence in Nigeria. Yes these aspects of religion have some roles to play but I will argue that ethnicity and ethnic disunity has more roles to play as well.

In the pre-colonial era the country called Nigeria did not exist. What did exist were hugely diverse tribes, ethnic groups and communities with their own different languages, tradition, cultures and political practices. By pre-colonial era we are referring to the days prior to the advent of British colonial administration, the era before the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. The Berlin Conference witnessed the scramble and partitioning of Africa by various European powers.⁴ The country called Nigeria was basically formed in 1914 by the British colonial administration during the time of Sir Lord Lugard as the Governor General of the Northern and Southern protectorates. For in that year the two protectorates were amalgamated.⁵ Nigeria has more than 250 tribes and ethnic groups with over 505 different languages.⁶ Could it be that the joining together of these different ethnic communities are among the factors responsible for religious intolerance/conflict? What roles have ethnicity played in fueling this persistent problem?

We shall suggest as well as explore several factors which we consider to be responsible for the religious violence. Chief among such factors I will argue is ethnicity/tribalism. But certain roles have been played or are being played by religious leaders. Muslims and their leaders have various organizations, the prominent one being

⁴ Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999) 54.

⁵ Eghosa E Osaghae, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998) 1.

⁶ Ida Walker, *Nigeria* (Philadelphia: Mason Crest publishers, 2005) 11.

Jama'atu Nasril Islamiyya (JNI). This is derived from Arabic and translated as Society for the victory of Islam. Christians and their leaders have an umbrella organization known as Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).⁷ Through these organizations, religious leaders have been playing some major roles to check/ control religious violence. It will be gratifying to see how far and how well they have fared.

Religion and politics are often said to influence one another. Religion could be used as a tool for capturing political power. Toyin Falola argues that “.... in real-world situations religion and politics are inextricably bound up with one another at least to a certain degree.”⁸ Nigerian rulers seem to not have emphasized much the separation of church and state. This is because political struggle is often carried out under the banners of religion, ethnicity/tribalism and such factors. Again since her political independence in 1960 the military juntas have been at the helm of affairs in Nigeria's leadership most of the time. It is then appropriate to say that the military has played major roles in Nigerian politics. During their regimes also there was plethora of both ethnic and religious conflicts. Such discussions will also throw much light to our analysis.

The introduction of Sharia law in about 12 States by some Muslim Governors in northern Nigeria sparked off a lot of crises and continues to cause religious crises. Some people might argue that such laws are not applied to cases/issues relating to non-Muslims. But experience shows that this has not been the case. People have raised the issue how such laws can operate in a mixed population without breeding religious conflicts/intolerance. Sharia Juridical system to a certain extent is regarded as being part

⁷ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, New York: Univ. of Rochester Press, 1998) 105-107.

⁸ Ibid. 10.

of the problem rather than a blessing to the nation. This is related to our topic because such practice promotes religious violence.

The Nigerian civil war was fought from 1967 – 1970. Basically the war was fought between the North and the South. Muslims live in the North while the Christians live in the South. It was believed that the war was fought on political grounds. But from the look of things, it could also be seen that the war was also fought for religious and ethnic reasons. The Nigerian nation has not really recovered from the effects of that war. A discussion on the civil war will throw some light to our topic, especially as it concerns the genesis of violence, religious, ethnic and otherwise in Nigeria.

Various authors have researched religious violence in Nigeria, when, where and why such violence took place. But not much has been examined through the prism of the role of ethnicity/tribalism in these crises. Authors have not also explored much the effects of civil war in religious crises in Nigeria. The civil war I would argue is the genesis of the more serious trouble that has bedeviled the country. The role and impacts of the civil war might give us some insights as we try to explore and address these issues. I intend to examine the history, development, resolution and/or management of these conflicts from the ethnic perspective. In essence I plan to look at the role of ethnicity, religion and the civil war in the current Christian-Muslim relationship in Nigeria.

Given the place and role which Nigeria (often called the giant of Africa) plays in Africa and the world, this inquiry becomes imperative. Also given the ratio of Muslim/Christian population in Nigeria, a ratio that exists in no other place in the world, this study will contribute to providing a paradigm/yardstick in dealing with Muslim/Christian relationships all over the world.

The question could be asked: what are the principal factors responsible for religious violence in Nigeria especially since the end of the civil war in 1970? Of course there are many factors. The Nigerian religious conflicts are tied and closely related to her political structure. Events in her political life like the North –South struggle for supremacy and power also helps to fuel religious conflicts. This is because northerners have a different religion which is Islam and southerners have Christianity as their religion. Whatever happens in the political arena is often interpreted and understood from religious perspectives. Political conflicts necessarily generates into religious conflicts. Just as ethnic conflict necessarily leads to religious or political conflicts. There has been incessant political power tussles between the north and the south. In similar fashion there has been also religious tussles/struggles between the north and the south ipso facto between Muslims and Christians. This tussle is also ethnic in nature since the north constitutes the Hausa/Fulani ethnic groups while the south are made up of the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups. There are also other minor ethnic groups both in the north and the south.

From the events taking place in Nigeria, one can see that it has been difficult to separate politics from religion. It has been said that Igbos/Yorubas (southerners) are deeply religious. It has also been said that the Hausas (northerners) are also deeply religious. Most political conflicts slip into religious conflict. This becomes more evident since after the civil war. The war was fought between the Biafra (south-easterners) and the Nigerian federal government. Due to the tussle and power struggle among the military leaders at the time, the military leader in charge of the south-eastern region wanted the region to secede from Nigeria and become a sovereign nation. The eastern region has the

crude oil which is the main source of the Nigerian revenue. They had also hoped that foreign oil companies will support them in exchange for oil during the civil war.⁹ On their part the federal government under the leadership of the northerners were aware of the importance of the oil revenue and could not just fold their hands and allow the south to secede, become an independent nation and control the entire oil revenue. This struggle for power and wealth can also be described as Muslim/Christian struggle for power and wealth, since the northerners are Muslims and southerners are Christians. It can also be described as Hausa/Fulani and Igbo/Yoruba ethnic struggle. It is the struggle for supremacy, economic and political control. Here lies the genesis of the Nigerian religious conflicts because these issues are connected with each other and often times are inseparable.

Ethnicity and tribalism are principal factors in Nigerian culture and polity. People are concerned and more interested with the clan and kindred where they come from instead of thinking about the entire nation. They think more of ethnic identity rather than the national identity. Mostly each tribe or ethnic group has its own language. This language difference and barrier makes the situation more complex. The other person from a different ethnic group is regarded as an outsider, as someone who does not belong. In a way people who live few miles apart see each other as different people though they might be from the same state in Nigeria. Take for instance one of the 36 states known as Edo has many languages such that people from the same state cannot understand each other. Ipso facto they might perceive each other as being different set of people.

⁹ Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, (USA: Greenwood press, 1999) 122.

Ethnicity carries with it the tendency for hostility toward the other person. It introduces the concept of us and them. As Horowitz rightly puts it, in places where ethnic identity is strongly felt, behaviors and actions based on ethnicity is the norm and that ethnicity necessarily is associated with hostility toward the outsiders.¹⁰ Jonathan Power noted that the side effects of ethnicity probably were not taken care of when the British colonial administration under Lord Lugard forced more than 250 ethnic groups involving today's 140 million people in Nigeria into one political unit. Power affirmed that on this issue it can be argued that “the colonialists went overboard in the quest for unity.”¹¹

In the foregoing we have laid out in a nutshell the scope of the task before us in this dissertation. But for the proper analysis and presentation, this work has been divided into ten chapters. Chapter one deals with the preliminary issues involved in this project. It gives the literature review, looks at the past efforts made by some authors and writers in exploring the ethnic-religious issues in Nigeria. This first chapter also gives the methodology of the work. It also deals with the location and geography of the nation.

The second chapter deals with the definition of terms. Three terms are prominent and important in following the arguments in the dissertation. The terms are: violence, religion and ethnicity. This chapter takes a closer look at them.

Chapter three discusses the Christian and Islamic religion in Nigeria. There are Traditional Worshippers in the country as well as those who profess no religion at all. But they are a great minority. Moreover the religious violence in Nigeria takes place mostly

¹⁰ Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (USA: Univ. of California Press, 1985) 7.

¹¹ Jonathan Power, May 25, 2006. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/25/opinion/25iht-edpower.html>.

between Christians and Muslims. That is why the chapter is confined to those two religions. It deals with their origin and developments.

Chapter four looks at the pre-colonial Nigeria. It analyzes how Nigeria existed and operated before being colonized by Britain. It also examines the joining together of the Southern and Northern Protectorate in 1914 popularly known as the amalgamation of Nigeria.

Chapter five examines two ethnic groups in Nigeria. Those ethnic groups are the Igbo ethnic group and the Hausa ethnic group. This chapter looks into the case that what is obtainable in intra-ethnic setting in the country tends to be different from what exists in inter-ethnic relationships.

Chapter six looks into the historical excursus of religious violence in Nigeria. It looks into places and cities that have been worst hit by such violence. The chapter raises the argument that although in the surface it might look like religious violence, but underneath the scenario is ethnic violence. The chapter also looks into the means employed in the violence as well as the perpetrators.

Chapter seven discusses the causes of religious violence. Apart from ethnicity and ethnic differences, the chapter looks into other contributory factors to religious violence in the country.

Chapter eight examines ethnic violence and grievances in Nigeria. Religious violence is often mixed with ethnic hatred and issues. But this chapter looks into the acts of violence that seem to be as a result of ethnic grievances alone. The chapter examines ethnic struggles that result from struggle for revenue from crude oil which is the major source of revenue in the nation. It raises the argument that such violence ends up being

perceived as religious violence instead of ethnic violence. But at the same time as far as such violence is concerned in the country, it is often difficult to draw a clear demarcation where ethnic violence ends and religious violence begins.

Chapter nine discusses the Nigeria – Biafra civil war. This has been perceived as the mother of all violence in the country. Apart from the political and religious issues involved in the civil war, the chapter explores the ethnic issues and differences with regards to the war.

Chapter ten, the concluding chapter looks at the way forward for the Nigerian nation. It makes suggestions and recommendations as to how the country richly endowed with natural resources can move forward in peace and progress. It suggests how multi religious groups and multi ethnic groups can co-exist.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

To analyze a problem and attempt to propose possible solutions to it, it is necessary to go to the root cause or causes. From all indications, ethnicity and inter-tribal conflicts contribute to the foundation of religious conflict in Nigeria. Therefore to address the problems of religious conflict it becomes imperative that ethnic problems be analyzed as a stepping stone to at least a reasonable solution to the issue.

Several authors have weighed in on religion, ethnicity, politics and violence in Nigeria. They have explored the interplay of politics and religion as well as the attendant violence that often emanates therefrom. This is because these two are often interwoven in many African countries especially in Nigeria. Often people tend to cast their votes on religious lines. They support politicians from their religious affiliation. Of course Nigeria may not be alone in this trend. Even advanced countries can and do vote on religious lines. But the Nigerian situation can really be different. Not only that people vote on religious lines, but their political activities revolve largely on ethnicity, tribalism and clannishness. Some authors can be categorized as belonging to this school of thought.

In their works they have tried to capture the attitude of many Nigerians with regards to the interplay of faith and culture. John N. Paden for example can serve as a good representative of those writers in this category. In his book *Faith and Politics in Nigeria* he gave instances of how sensitive the question on ethnicity/religion is in Nigeria. He observed that during the 2006 census in Nigeria the census takers did not ask questions about ethnicity or religion. The simple reason being that these are still controversial issues in a nation that has a strong history of geo-cultural regionalism, ethnic inclination

coupled with multiplicity of religious groups. He also argued that the same sensitivity had followed every census conducted in Nigeria since the time of independence in 1960.¹²

Paden's observation and analysis goes a long way in showing how regionalism and ethnicity have permeated into the fabric of all the facets of the Nigerian life and culture. That is why our guiding principle in this project is to show as well as to stress what I consider to be the obvious fact, namely, that ethnicity has not only affected the conduct of census in Nigeria, her politics, religion, sharing of natural resources (oil money), but that the phenomenon of religious intolerance, conflict/violence in Nigeria is a direct consequence of the Nigerian ethnic divides.

Paden's work did mention some effects of ethnicity in the Nigerian nation, but he was not concerned with discussing ethnicity in relation to religious conflict. And that is what we hope to explore in our research. Paden's concern was mainly to show that the seemingly even distribution of the Muslim – Christian population in Nigeria makes the country stand out as one that can serve as a model in the discussion of Christian-Muslim relationships all around the world.

Another author that seems to have similar frame of thought with Paden is Matthew Hassan Kukah. However the difference between the two authors is that Paden is not born and raised in Nigeria. Hassan Kukah on the other hand was born, raised as well as educated in northern Nigeria. So Hassan Kukah may have understood Nigerian culture and tradition more than Paden. In one of his books entitled *Democracy and civil society in Nigeria* Hassan Kukah devoted some sections to the discussion of "ethnicity, religion

¹² John N. Paden, *Faith and Politics in Nigeria*, 5.

and Nigerian politics”¹³ Be that as it may; his discussion on ethnicity was mainly centered on its relation with Nigerian politics. Specifically he was concerned with ethnicity and Nigerian nascent democratic experience. Since her political independence from Britain in 1960 Nigeria has been mostly under military dictatorship. She was under democratic governance from 1960-1966. The military came to power in the middle of 1966, stayed until 1979. Democratic leaders were again in power from 1979-1983. There was another military take-over in 1983. The military again stayed in power until 1999 when general elections were held and democratic rulers were installed and democracy has been in place ever since.

Hassan Kukah discussed ethnicity under this backdrop of incessant military intervention in Nigeria’s political experience. According to him ethnicity seems to have been misrepresented and given a bad name as the major responsible factor for the decline of democratic rule in Nigeria. Kukah argued that the reality of the situation is that ethnic consciousness did have its own benefits as a propelling force in the Nigeria polity. He cited an example that at least in some stages of Nigerian history, especially during the pre-independence days, the tribal/ethnic communities provided both civil and religious education for their people, especially where the colonial government was unable or was late in the educational provisions. More over Hassan Kukah argued that in those days some ethnic groups seem to have been favored more than others. In such cases, he further stated, tribal leaders of such communities would rally round to provide the necessary education in order to catch-up with the more favored communities.¹⁴

¹³ Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria* (Ibadan-Nigeria: Spectrum Books Limited, 1999) 97.

¹⁴ Ibid. 101.

Having said this, Hassan Kukah did not totally exonerate ethnic and tribal problems from been part of the problems of the Nigerian nation, be it in the area of politics and democracy or in the area of religion, peace and security in Nigeria. He did say that there were some positive ethnic sentiments but at the same time, he argued that at certain point after independence ethnicity assumed a new garb and in some quarters became “a weapon of battle” in areas of communal as well as national discussions.¹⁵ Again although Hassan Kukah is one of those authors that explored the ethnic issues in Nigeria, he however was more concerned with ethnicity and Nigerian political experience. In this dissertation however, our main concern will be to show that ethnicity is responsible for religious violence in Nigeria. Nigeria is divided into ethnic lines. Ethnic interests come first before national interests. We hope to show that both religious violence and other acts of violence in Nigeria mainly stem from ethnic inclinations and ethnic differences.

Toyin Falola dwelt directly on the discussion of violence in Nigeria. His book is titled *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*. In his book, he focused on the major religious violence in the nation since 1980, analyzing when, where and why such acts of violence took place. Falola also discussed the relationship between religion and politics within the Nigerian context. He argued that political actors that are at the corridors of power tend to use religion in order to acquire and hold political power. They seek to employ religion as a tool and means of achieving political ambitions, consolidating constituencies and having an edge over their political opponents.¹⁶ Although Falola in some aspects of his research did allude to the multi-ethnic and multi-religious society in Nigeria, nevertheless he was not mainly concerned

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 49.

with the role/impact of ethnic divides in fueling the religious crises. We hope to show that in the course of the dissertation. We will highlight the role that religion plays in fostering ethnic identities. It is like a two-way traffic. Ethnicity causes religious problems and in turn religious differences affect ethnic peace and progress. When people living in close proximity to each other belong to different tribes and ethnic groups, when they speak different languages, when they have different norms, religions, customs and culture, in fact when they see themselves as totally different from their “next door neighbors”, though they live in the same country and even in the same state and local government, that is what we mean by the consequences of ethnic inclinations as prevalent in Nigeria.

Could Nigeria have been three different nations, like Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba nations? Although these are the three main ethnic groups and languages, there exist also many minor tribes and groups so that the idea of three nations would still be riddled with the same problem of ethnic differences and dissension. But the merging of all these differing groups seems to be creating more havoc with regard to the Nigeria problems, be it political, social, religious or otherwise. That is why I argue that the root cause of the religious conflict in Nigeria is traceable to the problem associated with ethnic differences.

Our discussion and exposition of the religious consequences of ethnicity in Nigeria will surely involve singling out at least two major ethnic groups to use them as a case study. This is because there is a saying that from the known you go to the unknown. What I mean is that we shall use those ethnic groups as a specific example in order to understand what is obtainable in other ethnic groups. Having said this, it is important to note that all ethnic groups may not be necessarily similar in all aspects, yet there are

certain elements that run across all of them. So knowledge of what is obtainable in one will go a long way in assisting a person to understand in a nutshell what applies to other groups.

One of the ethnic groups which I am referring to is the Igbo ethnic group. Some researches have been done on this ethnic community. P.E. Aligwekwe, for instance has a book on the Igbo ethnic group. The title of her book is: *The Continuity of Traditional Values In the African Society: The Igbo of Nigeria*. Going through her book one will immediately discover that she was not concerned with the topic of our research. She was not dealing with the role played by ethnicity in religious violence in Nigeria. She was concerned with the discussion of Ndi-Igbo (People of Igbo) or Ala –Igbo (land of the Igbos). This has to do with those who are Igbos in Nigeria, their way of life and the geographical territory/space that the Igbos inhabit in Nigeria.¹⁷ On the contrary our dissertation will discuss the Igbos from a different perspective. We shall treat the different sub-groups in Igbo culture with specific attention to their religiosity. To be analyzed is how their various clans, extended families, towns, villages and lineages practice their religion and how their religious practice influence their lives but especially the lives of their neighboring ethnic community. How for example, conflicts in village and town union meetings easily translate into conflicts in various churches and religious groups.

J. Chukwuemeka Ekei in his book *Justice in Communalism: A Foundation of Ethics in African Philosophy*, went a little bit deeper to discuss the religious practice of the Igbo people. He was concerned with the native religion also known as the Igbo

¹⁷ P.E. Aligwekwe, *The Continuity of Traditional Values In The African Society: The Igbo of Nigeria* (Owerri-Nigeria: Totan Publisher Ltd, 1991) 80.

traditional religion. He was not concerned with the Igbo people who have converted to Christianity or Islam, though these converts are in greater majority than those who still practice the Igbo traditional religion. It is also worthy to note that the majority of the Igbo people now practice one form of Christian religion or another. Very few practice the native religion or Islam. Islamic religion is mostly practiced in the Northern part of the country. However J. Chukwuemeka Ekei in some chapters of his book discussed the Igbo traditional religion especially as it concerned the concept of justice, law, morality, good and evil.¹⁸ He was not concerned with the phenomenon of religious conflict. Are all religious adherents always at peace with one another? Of course the simple answer is no. And how does the conflict in the cultural society translate into religious violence? Those are the areas we hope to explore and analyze.

Abu Bakarr Bah also made interesting contribution to this discussion on ethnicity, religion and politics in Nigeria. He is a native of Sierra Leone, one of the neighboring countries of Nigeria. But he had lived in Nigeria and from his research and friendship with several Nigerians he was able to present to some degree a succinct account regarding the problems of religion, democratization and the impact of ethnic differences and diversities. He tried to capture Nigerians' effort as they try to reconstruct and shape their nation to meet the challenges of modern society. In his book *Breakdown And Reconstruction: Democracy, the Nation-State and Ethnicity in Nigeria*, Bah argued that the Nigerian situation and ethnic nature can serve as a lens through which one can "further the study of the problems of democratization and nation building in divided

¹⁸ J. Chukwuemeka Ekei, *Justice in Communalism: A foundation of Ethics in African Philosophy* (Lagos-Nigeria: Realm Publishers Ltd, 2001) 50.

societies.”¹⁹ Among other things his research dwelt on the role of ethnicity in the breakdown and reconstruction of democracy, nation-states, and challenges of multi-ethnic country like Nigeria as well as the problems of leadership in such a diverse ethnic society.²⁰

However his discussion on ethnicity is concerned mainly with regards to nation building, politics, elections and governance. He did not deal much with ethnicity as it concerns religion and conflicts/violence being perpetrated in the name of religion. Bah did point out that not only do ethnic groups fight with other ethnic groups, but there exist also conflicts within ethnic groups themselves. So there are also internal or intra-ethnic conflicts.²¹ And this arises when there are conflicts between clans, villages, towns, age grades groups, local governments within a specific/given ethnic group.

A.O. Omotosho represents yet another important strain of thought. His work was not actually a book but rather an article published in a scholarly journal. In his article he spoke of the intra –religious violence as well as the inter-religious violence. Intra-religious violence is the violence between members of the same religious sect while inter-religious violence involves different religious sects. His analysis showed that intra-religious violence seems to have been witnessed mainly within the Islamic group more than in the Christian sects. Omotosho mentioned the Maitatsine Islamic religious disturbances in the Northern part of Nigeria. He cited examples of disturbances in the northern states like Kano, Gombe, Gongola and Kaduna. According to him, beginning

¹⁹ Abu Bakarr Bah, *Breakdown and reconstruction: Democracy, the Nation-State and Ethnicity in Nigeria* (USA: Lexington Books, 2008) ix.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

from 1980 upwards intra-religious conflict became a frequent occurrence among the member of the Maitatsine Islamic sect.²²

Again Omotosho raised another interesting point regarding religious violence in Nigeria. He alluded to the fact that some prominent religious leaders often make inflammatory speeches and statements that help to fire up religious conflicts both within and outside their particular religious groups. He opined that in the real sense of the word most ordinary Nigerians do not know or even care much about religious rivalry and disputes except when they become incited or encouraged by their religious leaders.²³ This point of view brings up a necessary question. And that is: what roles do religious leaders play in fuelling religious conflict in Nigeria? In other words, while tracing the root causes of religious violence in Nigeria as well as in searching for the solution to the problem, adequate attention should be paid to the role being played by the religious readers. Governments and the law enforcement agents also ought to pay particular attention in this regard so that religious leaders are held accountable for their inflammatory utterances especially as it concerns inciting one ethnic group against another.

It is also necessary to note that Omotosho was not concerned with the effects of ethnic divergences/differences with regard to religious violence. He did not pay much attention in that regard. However he did give a detailed account and analysis in the area of the history of intra/inter -religious violence in Nigeria.

²² Omotosho, A O. "Religious violence in Nigeria - the causes and solutions: an Islamic perspective." *Svensk missionstidskrift* 91, no. 1 (2003): 1 *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost*.

²³ Ibid.

Simon Davou Mwadkwon was also one of the authors who attempted to discuss the phenomenon of ethnic violence in Nigeria. His scholarly article was entitled “Religion, the settler Question and the Emergence of Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria: A survey of Jos.” His specific study was focused on the city of Jos. This city is one of the mega cities in the northern part of Nigeria. Part of his analysis was that people are prone to giving religious interpretation to any ethnic conflict in Nigeria. According to him both foreigners and the indigenous people can be guilty of this offence. He writes: “Given the nature of ethnic and political conflict, most foreigners and some Nigerians who are not well informed about the local situation, are inclined to immediately give a religious interpretation to these conflicts.”²⁴ In brief he was simply arguing that not all ethnic and political conflicts in Nigeria are religious in nature. But my argument is that most if not all religious conflicts in Nigeria have an ethnic bent and connotation. Either the conflict is started on ethnic bases or it quickly turns into an ethnic religious conflict once it has been started. Just as I stated at the beginning of this paper, my argument can be framed thus: whereas not all ethnic or political conflicts are of religious nature, religious conflicts are necessarily ethnic in nature, in execution as well as in operation.

Mwadkwon also hinted at another striking problem which I think, falls within the scope of our discussion. This concerns the problem of tribalism as well as nepotism. He argued that: “In recent decades religious and ethnic affiliations have become major criteria for appointments to key government offices, the military, the police force, the

²⁴Simon Davou Mwadkwon 2001. "Religion, the settler question and the emergence of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria: a survey of Jos." *Svensk missionstidskrift* 89, no. 1: 56 *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

civil service, enrolment in schools, colleges and universities, and so on.”²⁵ This may not be a unique problem to Nigeria alone. It can also exist in other nations. But the type of ethnic make-up of Nigeria, I will argue, makes her own case different as well as outstanding. The entire idea of rotational presidency²⁶ stems from this issue of people clinging or emphasizing their individual ethnic groups at the expense of the Nigerian nation. In other words instead of people championing the course of one Nigeria they would prefer to emphasize their ethnic origin to the detriment of the entire nation. We shall explore this in more details in subsequent chapters and try to show how patriotism is far from the minds and hearts of many Nigerians. We will then articulate some ways forward in building the one indivisible entity known as Nigeria where Nigerians can see themselves as one nation in spite of their ethnic, religious, political, cultural differences.

Another school of thought that discussed Nigerian religious and ethnic problems dealt with the aspect of inter-religious dialogue. Often a distinction is made between inter-religious dialogue and ecumenism. Ecumenism is used to refer to the religious dialogue between different Christian sects, like dialogue between Catholics, Protestants, Pentecostal churches. Inter-religious dialogue is used mostly in reference to dialogues between different religious bodies like Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism. In other words ecumenism is an aspect of religious dialogue which specifically concerns the Christian denominations. Most of the inter-religious dialogues and ecumenical interactions being done in Nigeria with the view of ameliorating the problems associated with religious violence have not yielded much dividends. The central problem being that

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Rotational Presidency is a system adopted by the major political party in Nigeria (People’s Democratic party) where by Nigerian leadership is rotated among the various ethnic groups. The aim is to make it possible for all the ethnic groups to participate in the leadership of the country.

those discussions on religious tolerance, unity, collaboration and co-operation are not usually approached with the spirit of give and take, by this I mean with open minds. Most religious groups have the agenda of claiming superiority or trying to proselytize and convert members of other groups into their own fold.

Nathaniel Ndiokwere discussed these problems of religious dialogue in Nigeria. A way forward toward the control of religious violence in Nigeria will necessarily involve people of different religious traditions being able to come together for dialogue free of leadership struggle, superiority or inferiority complex and coming to the conference table without any hidden agenda of trying to convert any person to one's own religious affiliation.²⁷ Ndiokwere dwelt more on ecumenism as an aspect of inter-religious dialogue. He hinted at what he prefers to call the "enemies of ecumenism."²⁸ These enemies of ecumenism constitute also enemies of religious dialogue and co-operation in Nigeria. In turn these problems of religious co-operation also constitute a stumbling block to the entire effort to tackle religious conflicts in Nigeria. Ndiokwere and other authors like him raise some important points that are related to our topic of discussion. What remains for us is to look at this issue of religious dialogue from the ethnic perspective.

Elochukwu Uzukwu seems to share a similar frame of thought with Ndiokwere. Both authors discussed ecumenism as it is being practiced in Nigeria. Uzukwu however went into more details on the relationship between Catholics and Protestants. He observed that the interaction between the two groups has not been cordial as far back as

²⁷ Nathaniel I. Ndiokwere, *The African Church Today and Tomorrow Vol. 1: Prospects and Challenges* (Onitsha-Nigeria: Effective Key Publishers Limited, 1994) 324.

²⁸ Ibid.

the time of the missionaries and evangelizers who came to Nigeria around 1857. He noted that even before coming to evangelize Nigeria Catholics and Protestants had conflicts in some Western Nations. A case in point will be the Protestant-Catholic conflict in Ireland that lingered for years. And coincidentally most of the Catholic missionaries who evangelized Nigeria came from Ireland.

For Uzukwu it seems that the missionaries carried over or exported their seemingly hostile approach to religion and brought such to the mission lands that they had come to evangelize.²⁹

Of course there is the possibility that the religious conflict in Ireland could also be understood within the ethnic-tribal context just as the Nigeria scenario seems to portray.

Although Uzukwu in his work made allusions to religious conflicts in Nigeria, he was mainly concerned with the missionary activities and effects of their approach on the Nigerian Church. He observed that the major task that preoccupied the missionaries was the conversion of the traditional religious worshippers to Christianity in southern Nigeria. Uzukwu also observed that the major problem that challenged the missionaries was the disunity amongst them. This is because if they presented a disjointed and disunited Christianity it would be difficult for them to win converts from the native worshippers. He writes: “How could the non-Christians in Nigeria be interested in the Gospel, if it is presented by churches which are divided and competitive. The scars of disunity sap a great deal of the life-blood and strength from the church.”³⁰ His analysis of the Nigerian churches and religious conflicts was from the perspective of the nature and type of

²⁹ Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *Religion and African Culture: Inculturation and A Nigerian Perspective* (Enugu-Nigeria: Snaap Press Ltd, 1998) 116.

³⁰ Ibid. 118.

Christianity inherited by the Nigerian Christians from the Western missionaries who came to introduce Christian religion on Nigerian soil. However I do believe that the ethnic diversity was already present in Nigeria even before the arrival of the missionaries. That is why we hope to seek for the balance between the activities of the missionaries and the problems being caused by the ethnic differences in Nigeria.

Then how about the effects of the mass media on Nigerian religious practices? It is not uncommon that the media in many nations, Nigeria inclusive, search for news items that are sensational, which can improve their ratings and brings in more finances. The mass media have played major roles in the religious conflict in Nigeria. Some of their roles have been constructive while some have also been inflammatory in the already worrisome situation. An elaborate input and exploration of the contributions of ethnic diversities in Nigerian religious conflict will necessarily include an examination of the roles of the media on these issues including their negative and positive contributions.

This examination of the roles of the media becomes more important given the fact that some of the religious sects depend mainly on the mass media in order to disseminate their information. The Pentecostal movement or the Charismatic Pentecostal movement is a classic example. Each time you turn on your television, radio or peruse through the pages of the print media you will see big captions/headings of one Pentecostal church or another advertising and marketing their religion. Rosalind Hackett has an article on the Pentecostals and the mass media. Her essay was entitled “Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of media Technologies in Nigeria and Ghana”. Among other things she tried to show that the Pentecostal churches were involved in a highly competitive religious market in Nigeria and Ghana as well as in other African

countries. For her, the main focus of these religious sects is on the area of “healing, prosperity and experience.”³¹ Hackett was trying to show that the Pentecostal brand of Christianity especially as practiced in Nigeria and Ghana dwell more on healing ministry. They dwell also on preaching about prosperity and that their main source of spreading their information is the mass media. She highlighted the importance of the mass media to these Pentecostal Churches as they try to advertise their brand of Christianity.

As a priest who ministered in several places in southern part of Nigeria, I would argue that the Pentecostal movements flourish not only in the urban areas as alluded to by Hackett, they also operate in the rural areas. However they are more in the urban areas for certain reasons. I will quickly offer two. One is that the mainstream Churches like the Roman Catholics and the members of Church Missionary Society C.M.S, have dominated the rural areas. And in the rural areas everyone knows each other so it becomes difficult for them to win converts. More importantly it is often difficult in some places for the Pentecostal churches to acquire land in order to erect their places of worship. I have a personal experience in a place where the town people refused to sell lands to any Pentecostal sect even when they are ready and willing to pay a higher price for such lands. People would not sell lands to them simply because they do not want such church groups in their property or in their area. Some believe that the evangelizing method of these Pentecostal groups brings chaos and sectarian fights between villages and various ethnic communities. And that these Pentecostals do this through their preaching and the

³¹ Rosalind Hackett, “Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies in Nigeria and Ghana” *Journal of Religion in Africa* vol. 28 Aug (1998) 259.

use of the mass media. Again the refusal to sell lands to the Pentecostal churches has some ethnic undertone. Each clan, village or town is already affiliated to a particular religion, namely Catholics or C.M.S (Anglicans), so they will not want a new religion (especially Pentecostals with their vibrant nature) to be introduced in their area to avoid the possibility of converting their members.

Jan H. Boer has questions for both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria with regards to why they engage religious violence. Boer has many books on Christian-Muslim violence in Nigeria. Some of these books include *Christians: Why this Muslim violence*, *Muslims: Why the violence*, *Nigeria's decade of blood*. In these books Boer examined the possible reasons why Christians and Muslims in Nigeria are aggrieved. He proffered reasons why they end up engaging in violence. Boer also chronicled the history of religious violence in the country, when and where such violence occurred. Boer did an elaborate work on the issue of religious violence in Nigeria, especially on how both Muslims and Christians contribute to such violence. He however, was not much concerned with the contributions of ethnic differences in these conflicts.

After an elaborate reading of the grounds already covered with regards to religious conflict in Nigeria, it seems to me that the role played by ethnicity/tribalism demands serious attention and many authors have not really paid much attention in that aspect. Authors both within and outside Nigeria focused their research mainly on the Muslim-Christian relationship and the conflict that often times emanate from such relationship. I will argue that there is need to delve deeper into the role or impact of ethnic differences in fostering these conflicts. That is where our research hopes to make some contribution as we move deeper into this project.

1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

First of all the methodology for this research will be drawn from my own personal experiences as a Nigerian. I was born and raised in Nigeria. I also had most of my education in Nigeria. Both during my philosophical and theological studies in Nigeria, I attended as well as participated in seminars, symposia and inter-religious conferences where discussions were carried out regarding ethnic and religious violence and possible ways for a solution to the problem. As a religious minister who worked in various places in southern Nigeria, I also was opportune to attend several conferences dealing with the way forward in tackling the persistent problem of religious and ethnic issues in the country. I will draw from my wealth of experiences and personal involvement on these ethno-religious issues during the course of this research. But at the same time my experiences will be complemented by documentary and verifiable evidence.

An important aspect of our undertaking will include a discussion on two major ethnic groups, namely the Igbo ethnic group and the Hausa ethnic group. These will serve as a paradigm as well as a stepping stone in trying to understand what goes on in other Nigerian ethnic groups. Our study of the ethnic communities will necessarily include its towns, villages unions/groupings, its age grade systems, ethnic and cultural values. It will also include religious activities within the ethnic groups. We shall highlight how conflicts in town unions for example or even within the clans translate into religious conflicts. This discussion will give us a picture of how events and activities within individual ethnic communities can escalate and become a major factor in fueling religious

misunderstanding in the Nigeria populace. Individual ethnic groups tend to be at peace amongst themselves. In other words intra-ethnic relationship is not much problem in Nigeria. Conflicts and violence emanates mainly in inter-ethnic relationships.

During my years of religious ministry in the south-eastern region of Nigeria, I have been involved in settling disputes. I have participated in committees mediating between umunna (clans), villages unions, town unions, age grade disputes within the Igbo ethnic group. The ethnic groups are made up of different religious traditions – Catholics, Protestants, Pentecostals, Traditional Worshippers and Muslims. Often conflicts within the town or villages unions are carried over into various places of worship and it translates into religious conflicts. My personal and first hand involvement in these issues has been a valuable asset in this effort to examine the issues at stake in the research, namely how ethnic differences contribute to religious violence in Nigeria.

To enrich as well as to reinforce the phenomenological observations resulting from my personal knowledge and experience, I have consulted a substantial body of current literature. Many Nigerians as well as African authors have written on issues concerning religion in Nigeria. Their works, which I believe are borne out of their individual and personal experiences, will have much to offer to us in our research. There are some Western Authors - Scholars and researchers from Britain, America, Australia - to mention but a few who have lived, studied and worked in Nigeria, some for almost half a century. These people have also written about Nigeria, its politics, religion and ethnic characteristics. The research of these groups are very important as well as informative, the reason being that these researchers have dual citizenship. They are Nigerian citizens as well as the citizens of the Nations where they come from. And many of them have

done a lot of travels with varied experiences. Their discussion on Nigerian issues provides an interesting comparison from their own background and the Nigerian situation. Their works have the added advantage of presenting an alternative perspective regarding the issues of Nigerian nation especially as it concerns religion, politics and ethnicity.

My method for this research includes much of library research, especially perusing through the library archives to search for journal articles and essays, consulting sites like Justors, Ebsco, online encyclopedias. The use of the other internet sources like Google, Nigerian Newspaper websites also provides up to date information. Current and recent information are important because the religious crisis in Nigeria seems to be an everyday event. No day, week or month passes without new stories regarding ethnic clashes or religious uprising in a specific part of the country. This is why we have to very often consult the daily newspapers in Nigeria to keep ourselves abreast with the recent happenings.

I have also watched many Nigerian and African Movies. These movies are drawn from people's way of life in the society. The movies are also being put together by the indigenous people who have personal as well as field experiences in the cultural milieu of the Nigerian society. Take for instance the movie about the Nigerian civil war. This war was fought on the basis of tribe and ethnicity. The North (Hausa-Fulani tribe) fighting the south –east (Igbo tribe). It was also fought on religious ground – Muslims (North) fighting the Christians (South – East). Such movies, CD, films and videos are very informative and educative. They constituted a valuable asset in this research.

1.3 LOCATION/GEOGRAPHY OF NIGERIA

Ethnic diversity, geography, language and culture play major roles in shaping and/or facilitating violence in Nigeria. Nigeria is characterized by ethnic differences, religious diversity and language differences. Not only that it has a lot of differences within the population, the country being multi-ethnic has also a lot of inequalities and uneven territorial developments. Osita Agbu writes:

This is a country, which apart from its ethnic diversity, is frequently susceptible to religious violence especially in the Muslim dominated north. Ethnic and religious differences are solidified by geographical contiguity coupled with sectorial economic considerations. Being multi-ethnic and characterized by deep-seated social inequality, uneven territorial development, and a variety of other forms of potentially destabilizing popular identity, including religious identity.....the country is susceptible to conflicts....³²

However, in terms of size and land mass, Nigeria is a large county in the West of African continent. According to Toyin Falola and Matthew Heaton in their book entitled the *History of Nigeria*, the country is said to be roughly twice the size of California and about three times the size of United Kingdom. Nigeria is bordered on the east by the Benin Republic, on the west by Cameroon, on the north by Niger and on the south by the Bights of Benin and Biafra, which are on the Gulf of Guinea.³³ There are two distinct seasons in Nigeria namely the rainy/wet season and the dry season. The rainy season lasts from May to October in the south, while in the north it lasts from May to September. The

³² Osita Agbu, *Ethnic Militias and the Threat to Democracy in Post-Transition Nigeria* (Sweden: Elanders Infologistics, 2004) 6.

³³ Toyin Falola & Matthew E. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 2.

wettest months are around May and June and driest/hottest months are around March and April.³⁴ With regards to vegetation and/or forestry:

There are two vegetation types: the forest and the savanna. The former is in the south where rainfall is heavy, while the latter is farther north. Soils of good quality are abundant, although some areas suffer from erosion, as in the east, or desert encroachment, as in the far north.....Settlement patterns and cultures are partially affected by vegetation. In the coastal zone, including many creeks and the Niger Delta, fishing and farming cultures developed among such groups as the Ijo and the Kalabari, who exchanged salt and fish with their neighbors. Settlements tend to be smaller in the coastal zone because of the scarcity of extensive dry land. In the forest zone, home to such groups as the Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, and Ibibio, agriculture is the main occupation with emphasis on roots and tubers.....In the savanna zone, livestock rearing is combined with farming (notably cereal) to produce a viable economy. The Hausa city-states and the kanem-Borno empire emerged, sustained by a productive peasantry, powerful kings and highly developed commercial transactions, and the mobility provided by cavalry.³⁵

In terms of natural resources and sources of revenue, Nigeria is rich in oil. Oil is the major source of revenue to the nation. Often the rest of the world might think that Nigeria is doing well economically because of the fact that it has oil deposits. This assessment is far from the truth. The Nigerian populace is poor. This can be attributed to corruption and mismanagement of her natural resources by those at the helm of affairs of the nation. Ida Walker writes:

Because Nigeria is rich in oil, many people mistakenly think it is a prosperous nation. However, the economy has suffered from years of corruption and mismanagement.....In addition to oil and oil products, Nigeria's industries process tin, palm oil, peanuts, rubber, textiles, and chemicals. The country's major exports are the products from these industries. And its primary trading partners are the United States, Brazil, Spain, Indonesia, France and India.³⁶

³⁴ Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999) 2.

³⁵ Ibid. 3-4.

³⁶ Ida Walker, *Nigeria* (Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers, 2005) 39.

Although Nigeria is rich in oil often ethnic violence, crime, tribal clashes and labor strikes lead to suspension of productions. Again sales from the oil bring in much revenue to the Nation, but still many of the citizens are poor and many remain below the poverty level. Ida Walker continues:

Although oil brings in a great deal of wealth, the general population of Nigeria does not benefit directly from the oil industry. The unemployment rate was reported by the country's Federal Office of Statistics to be over 40 percent in late 2002. According to other 2002 estimates, 60 percent of the Nigerian population fell below the poverty line....As the oil industry has grown, environmental challenges have also developed. Oil spills, deforestation, and gas flaring have long been problems associated with the industry.³⁷

Agriculture used to be the mainstay of the Nigerian economy prior to the discovery of oil in 1970. But once oil was discovered agriculture was so to say abandoned. And the focus from then was placed on oil. Tom Mbeke-Ekanem observed: "By 1970 Nigeria had entered an era of oil boom. Oil replaced agriculture as the mainstay of Nigerian economy."³⁸ However, apart from oil, agriculture and peasant farming are the other means of livelihood common to many Nigerians. The nation's agricultural products include yam, cassava, maize, rice, cocoyam, peanuts, palm oil, etc. Keeping and rearing of livestock is also common to the Nigerian populace. Such livestock include cows, goats, pigs, poultry, cattle etc. After the discovery of oil young and able bodied people began leaving the rural areas for the cities seeking for white collar jobs. Droughts in the Hausa ethnic region have also affected agriculture in recent times.³⁹

³⁷ Ibid. 42-43.

³⁸ Tom Mbeke-Ekanem, *Beyond The Execution: Understanding the Ethnic And Military Politics In Nigeria* (USA: Writer's Showcase, 2000) 16.

³⁹ Ida Walker, *Nigeria* p.43.

Nigeria has nice geography and good climatic conditions. Nigeria has beaches. The Atlantic Ocean flows all the way from western Nigeria down to the eastern part of the country. There is almost no cold weather. Very minimal cold weather can be experienced around the months of December and January. There is no snow in the country all the year round. The climate is warm but the heat is not severe. With this conducive climate one could have thought that the tourism industry will be booming in Nigeria. But unfortunately this is not the case. Part of the reason I will argue stems from ethnic clashes and religious disturbances. However it is not only ethnic or religious clashes. Other forms of unrest stem from politics, crime, kidnapping etc. These causes of conflicts and insecurity continue to hinder the tourist industry in the country. Ida Walker argues:

Political and ethnic unrest, carjackings, thefts, kidnapping, murders. Reports of these crimes and events don't find their way into many tourist brochures, nor are they the kinds of events that draw visitors to a country. Because they have been very common in many parts of Nigeria, the tourist industry has struggled and contributed only minimally to the national economy.⁴⁰

In terms of state creation in Nigeria, the nation moved from two protectorates (North and South) to three regions (Northern, Western and Eastern). Next the country was later divided into twelve states, then nineteen states and finally into thirty six states which is its present state structure. The federal capital territory was formerly in Lagos, but has since been moved to Abuja.

In 1976 Nigeria federal government decided to begin moving the capital from Lagos to Abuja and to establish the surrounding region as the Federal Capital Territory. The area was inhabited by an ethnic group known as the Gwari, who had to be removed from

⁴⁰ Ibid.44.

their land to make room for the new capital. Most government operations moved to Abuja in 1991.⁴¹

Some Nigerians perceive that this change of the capital of Nigeria from Lagos to Abuja has both ethnic and religious connotations. Lagos, the former capital is in Yoruba ethnic group and the inhabitants of Lagos are mostly Christians. The new capital Abuja is in Hausa ethnic group and Hausas are mostly Muslims. The argument is that because most of leaders of Nigeria had come from the Hausa ethnic group and they are also Muslims, they wanted the Nation's capital to be in their ethnic region. Other ethnic groups see this as another aspect of domination and marginalization. They see it also as marginalization by Muslims who have constituted the majority in the leadership of Nigeria since her independence. Religion, ethnicity and politics are usually mixed up in the country.

For administrative purposes, each of the thirty six states in Nigeria is divided into local government areas. And each Local government area is governed by a chairperson and the councilors. These local government officials also contest for elections just like a governor of a state. This is possible only recently because the country returned to civilian rule in 1999. At other times the country used to be under the military administration. There were no elections at those times. The military head of state appoints state governors and the state governors in turn appoint the officials at the local government level. The states in Nigeria seem to have been created along religious affiliations. Some states are mostly Muslims while some are mostly Christians. Again some states have a mixture of Muslims, Christians and Traditional Worshippers. Religious violence occur more in those states that has a mixture of different religious

⁴¹ Ibid.59.

groups. Again most states in Nigeria are made up of a specific ethnic group. But still there are some states where three or four ethnic groups live side by side. There are some states like Edo, Delta, Rivers etc where there are people speaking many different languages. Ethnic clashes can be more frequent in these areas.

Having discussed the geography and location of Nigeria, we present below, both the African map and the Nigerian map. These maps provide in a nutshell the geographical location of Nigeria. The Nigerian map shows the thirty six states and where those states can be located. Almost all the states in the northern part practice the Islamic religion while the states in the south are mostly Christians. The Traditional Worshippers and those without any religious affiliations are in great minority. They are scattered in various parts of the country. In terms of the ethnic groups, the three major ethnic groups are located in different parts of the country. In the north are the Hausas, in the west are the Yorubas and in the east is the Igbo ethnic group.



Figure 1. "Map of Africa Countries." *Eco-Friendly African Travel*, Accessed June 5, 2013. <http://www.eco-friendly-africa-travel.com/map-of-africa-countries.html>.

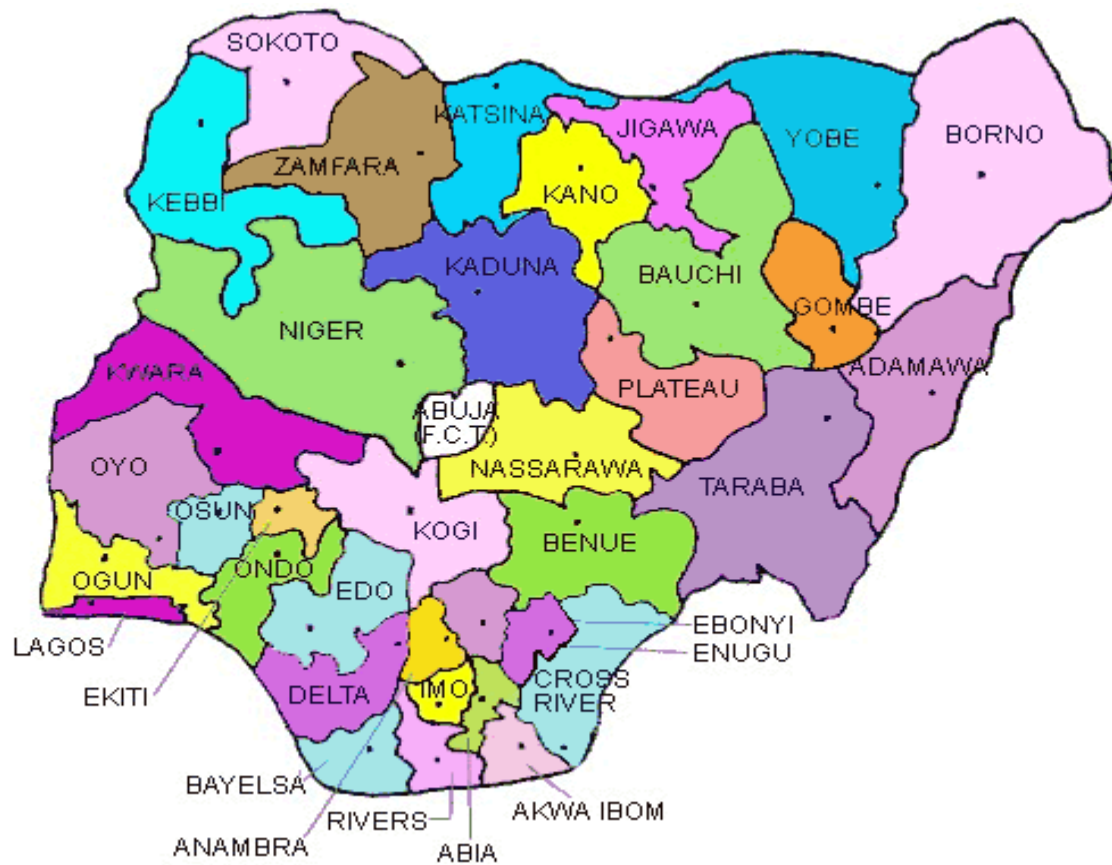


Figure 2. "Map of Nigeria." *Liberty Report*, June 9, 2012.

<http://myondostate.com/w3/nigeria-and-the-peril-of-this-time-by-remigius-akinbinu/map-of-nigeria-2/>.

CHAPTER TWO

DEFINITION OF TERMS

2.1 VIOLENCE

The topic of this dissertation makes it imperative for us to discuss the meaning of violence. Violence is one of the key terms in this work. Its explanation will help in the understanding of the issues involved in this project. People talk about violence, write about violence and some believe also that they witness acts of violence in their lives. Sometimes also some people use the word strike, industrial action or conflict as acts of violence. Strikes or industrial actions designate a situation when workers boycott their jobs in order to make protests, like when they are demanding for increase in wages. Some people can also say that employers have conflicts with their employees. Conflict can also be used when people disagree with each other. It is also used when people engage in actual fight with one another, or when an ethnic or religious group is fighting each other. Some can also talk of all these scenarios as being acts of violence. It becomes then necessary for us to explore the meaning of violence since the term can mean so many things to so many people.

Longman Advanced Dictionary explained the term violence as a type of “behavior that is intended to hurt other people physically.”⁴² Nona H. Cannon described violence as those dangerous kinds of conditions that cause physical and/or psychological harm. The term is used to include any type of harm to people/creatures. It can include

⁴² *Longman Advanced American Dictionary*, (England: Pearson Education Limited, 2000).

force, punishment, humiliation, degradation, injury, hurt, exploitation and pain.⁴³

Cannon went further to describe what she called Direct Violence and Indirect Violence.

Direct violence includes bodily harm such as murder, rape, wars, spousal battering and child battering. Indirect violence involves other types of harm that do not involve

physical injury. Indirect violence may include economic, political, governmental, social policies and practices that cause psychological harm and that are incompatible with

peace.⁴⁴ Karen Cerulo gave what I consider to be a good example of direct violence in a story:

On Saturday April 19 1997, pizzeria owner Georgio Gallaro and his employee Jeremy Giordano agreed to make one last delivery before “calling it a night.” Their decision proved fatal. The delivery led Gallaro and Giordano to an abandoned home in Sussex County, NJ. When the men ventured out of their car, they were ambushed, shot eight times, and left to die in the road. Within 36 hours, police made arrests in the case. Teenagers Jason Vreeland, 17 and Thomas Kaskovich 18, were charged with murder- a murder reportedly motivated not by theft or vendetta, but rather for the thrill of killing.⁴⁵

The story of the two teenagers Jason and Thomas was probably one of the most famous of the decade, an unusual and brutal act of the times. Such murder story represents just one of the many acts of violence that have become a routine in contemporary society.⁴⁶

We may never know whether the teenagers were victims of indirect or even direct violence in their personal lives. However, even if they were victims of violence in their personal lives that is not a reason or license for them get involved in horrible acts of

⁴³ Nona H. Cannon, *Roots of Violence, Seeds of Peace In People, Families, and Society* (California: Miclearoy Publishing, 1996) 17.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Karen A. Cerulo, *Deciphering Violence: The Cognitive Structure of Right and Wrong* (New York: Routledge, 1998) 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

violence. Be that as it may their violent act reminds us of the multifaceted violent actions in the society.

For Anthony Storr it all boils down to human aggression. He argues that the human person is an aggressive creature. Storr contends that human beings do harm to their own kind more than other animals. He writes: “That man is an aggressive creature will hardly be disputed. With the exception of certain rodents, no other vertebrate habitually destroys members of his own species. No other animal takes positive pleasure in the exercise of cruelty upon another of his own kind.”⁴⁷ Storr believes that the aggressive side of the human person (which more often than not gives rise to violence) is not only an important safeguard against his enemies, it is also the bedrock to human achievements in the world. Without the aggressive side of *Homo Sapiens*, humans may be less able to direct the course of their lives and/or influence the environment around them.⁴⁸ “In fact, it is obvious that man could never have attained his present dominance, nor even have survived as a species, unless he possessed a large endowment of aggressiveness.”⁴⁹ In response to Storr one could point out that humans also possess the character of co-operation among themselves. This may be made possible through ethnicity. In any given ethnic or tribal community people do cooperate with each other. The drawback being that sometimes non-members of the ethnic group are often seen and treated as outsiders.

The aggressive and striving instinct has led human beings to succeed and excel in so many facets of life. But it becomes then an apparent paradox that the very qualities

⁴⁷ Anthony Storr, *Human Aggression* (New York: Murray Printing Company, 1969) ix.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

that have led to human success in almost all the facets of their endeavors might also be their Achilles' heel. The propensity to dominate and to conquer the world does not stop at one's own fellows. Storr seems to argue that humans appear to lack the built-in safeguards which prevent most animals from killing or destroying their own kind.⁵⁰ Although humans have intelligence and reasoning faculty their violent and aggressive side continues to pose a challenge to peace and progress in the society.

It might be plausible to state that violence and/or aggressive behavior is part and parcel of the human nature. Such aggressive and violent nature can also manifest itself in ethnicity and tribal conflicts. If violence is so characteristic of humans, one then wonders what could be the source or origin of such a trait. Since violence is as old as the human species one then wonders aloud whether the origin/source has been established and/or agreed upon. According to Anthony Storr, psychotherapists and pscho-analysts have been increasingly preoccupied about human aggression and violence, trying to figure out whether human beings are naturally aggressive and violent or not. For Storr there seems to be divided opinion on the subject. Some psychotherapists and pscho-analyst would accept the idea that human beings are not naturally violent or aggressive. Those who hold this view accept the idea that humans became violent and aggressive out of frustration, life disappointment or any of such factors. Some also would subscribe to the view that at least some persons are aggressive by nature. They argue that some humans have what has been described as "innate aggressive impulse."⁵¹

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid. 1.

Nona H. Cannon puts the same discussion in form of questions, inquiring about the roots of violence and aggression in the life of the human person. In fact she summarized the content of the one of the chapters of her book in these questions:

Are humans, especially men, biologically predisposed to be aggressive and violent? To what extent do gender, instincts, hormones, genes, endorphins, the brain, XY Chromosomes, and other biological, neurological, chemical, and physiological factors induce violent behavior? Or are people innately loving and non-aggressive? Are there potentialities to behave in many different ways? How are overt violent behaviors related to underlying feelings, beliefs, and ways of thinking? Is the use of violence a behavior that is learned? If so, from whom or what?⁵²

The UNESCO Seville statement of 1986 disagreed with the idea that humans are genetically wired to be violent and to make wars. They put forward five points in this regard: 1. It is scientifically incorrect to say that humans have inherited a tendency to make war from their animal ancestors. 2. It is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behavior is genetically programmed into human nature. 3. It is scientifically incorrect to say that in the course of human evolution there has been a selection for aggressive behavior more than for other kinds of behavior. 4. It is scientifically incorrect to say that humans have a 'violent brain.' 5. It is scientifically incorrect to say that war is caused by 'instinct' or any single motivation.⁵³ The UNESCO Scientists asserted that biology does not condemn humans to violence and/or war. And that humanity should be freed from such bondage of biological pessimism. They opined

⁵² Nona H. Cannon, *Roots of Violence, Seeds of Peace In People, Families, and Society*, 32.

⁵³ Non Violent Education: "Seville Statement on Violence, Spain, 1986" Accessed May 29, 2013. http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3247&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

that just as wars often begins in the human mind, peace also begins in human minds. The same humans who are capable of inventing wars are also capable of inventing and fostering lasting peace and say no to acts of violence.⁵⁴

As for what the principal factors are that often give rise to violence or violent behavior, such factors are varied, depending also on the nature, type or extent of the violent act or behavior. Terrorist type of violence for example has been attributed to factors like religious extremism or poverty. It is more probable that people especially young adults who are jobless, poor, and single can easily be co-opted and paid sums of money and other incentives so that they can perpetrate terrorist acts. Sometimes huge sums can also be paid to relatives so that their young ones can perpetrate atrocious acts like suicide bombings. Oliver McTernan expressed the view that some people would argue that religious violence is in some sense being carried out by young, jobless, unmarried, socially marginalized males who see no means of escaping the daily feeling of hopelessness that they experience at the hand of a feckless and/or indifferent government.⁵⁵

Granted that poverty can be among the factors that cause religious violence, McTernan argues that there are some other factors:

Poverty is undoubtedly a factor but in itself it is not the prime cause for the rise in religious fundamentalism and the indiscriminate use of violence in the name of religion. Faith-based terrorism stems mainly from how the advocates of such violence interpret their foundational texts, sacred scriptures and own religious traditions and history. None the less, if we fail to acknowledge at least an indirect causal link with poverty and

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Oliver McTernan, *Violence in God's name* (New York: Orbis Books 2003) 124.

illiteracy, we risk misjudging the complexity of dealing with religiously justified or inspired violence.⁵⁶

The religious fundamentalist may have been pre-disposed to read their sacred texts from violent perspective. Further McTernan suggested other possible factors:

Inequality does matter and needs, therefore to be addressed to avoid the danger of communal strife in multi-faith/multicultural societies as well as to lessen the risk of global terrorism. Extreme poverty, social injustice, unemployment, illiteracy all contribute to the milieu that can provide both a trigger and a fertile recruiting ground for high-minded and idealistic young religious entrepreneurs who believe that it is their sacred or religious duty to act on behalf of the downtrodden and to spearhead social and economic change.⁵⁷

I am not sure whether anyone would claim to have complete answers to these nagging questions. Human aggression and violence is as old as humans themselves. And the search for its origin and the possible panacea continues to elude our grasps and continues to be an object of ongoing discussions and explorations.

Ronald B. Miller noted that often we use the word violence to describe occurrences and actions such as beatings, shootings, riots and wars. Terms such as acts of violence, violent acts, use of violence are of common usage by people including the media. Miller talked about three related but different terms such as violence, coercion and force. He contended that not all acts of force involve violence or are acts of violence.⁵⁸

But an act of force can include violence and coercion. Miller writes:

To use force is to attempt to physically overpower another person or an object. One may overpower someone in order to make him do what one wishes, which is coercion, or one may physically overpower someone in order to punish or injure him. Objects are

⁵⁶ Ibid.125.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ronald B. Miller, "Violence, Force and Coercion" In Jerome A. Shaffer ed. *Violence* (New York: David McKay company Inc. 1971) 31.

overpowered in order to bend them to the will and purposes of man.⁵⁹

For Miller force, coercion and violence are closely related to each other. Force and violence have to do more with physical contact while coercion seems to operate on the verbal, emotional and psychological level.

Violence comes in various shapes and forms: murder, wars, ethnic/sectarian violence, violence against women and children, terrorism, domestic violence, sexual violence, religious violence, violence in films. Commenting on violence in films or movies Devin McKinney observed that violence seems to have proved to be a hot sale in films. He was of the view that even films that focus on something else in one way or another brings in violence through the back door. He writes: “More than ever, violence has emerged as thematic matter, the true meat even of movies that claim to be about something else.”⁶⁰

Carl Plantinga asserts that violence is a common feature of both American and other Western cinemas and films. He argues that “Although screen violence is common in many genres of American cinema, the Western film provides a useful entry point to its study.”⁶¹ Violence can also occur at any time and at any place, in various shapes, magnitudes and sizes. Granted that some people may never be directly victimized by violence, the indirect exposure to acts of violence often is increasingly difficult to avoid. Media analysts and scholars estimate that on any given day, average people living in the world experience or witness at least three acts of violence on the television. Even Saturday mornings dominated by child viewers are not spared. Most of these perpetrators

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Devin McKinney, “Violence: The Strong and the Weak” In *film Quarterly* Vol.46 No.4 Summer 1993.

⁶¹ Carl Plantinga, “Spectacles of Death: Clint Eastwood and Violence in *Unforgiven*” In *Cinema Journal* Vol. 37 No.2 (Winter, 1998) 65.

of acts of violence in televisions, movies or films are of course celebrities. Their names become common and are usually the most popular names or household words in some families and places where kids are being raised.⁶²

Charles Tilly categorized three varieties of violence. He argued that whenever young, single men, like cowboys, congregate for a long period of time without stringent supervision and discipline, violence is most likely to be the end result. This is most likely the case especially if the congregation has access to alcohol, guns, gambling etc. Tilly referred to this description as “cowboys shoot cowboys”.⁶³ The second variety he referred to as struggles and fights between local village peasants in some remote places in the world. In some remote places of the world ethnic communities fight each other for one reason or another with whatever means/tools at their disposal. Such disputes often arise as a result of farming or planting disputes in farms, rice mills and other such places. The third variety of violence according to Tilly is the more serious ethnic/tribal violence that often leads to civil war or ethnic cleansing. He captioned this variety as “Rwandans slaughter each other”. By this he was referring to the bloody Rwandan massacre of 1994 when a lot of Hutu and Tutsi tribes were killed in unprecedented ethnic violence.⁶⁴ I can to certain extent agree with Tilly that the massacre in Rwanda was as a result of ethnic clashes. But at the same time I would argue that there might as well be religious elements in it. The struggle between the Muslim majority and the Christian minority has always reared its ugly heads and often ends in violence and bloodshed.

⁶² Karen A. Cerulo, *Deciphering Violence*, p.1-2.

⁶³ Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 1-3.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Yet another disturbing aspect of violence in present day society is gun violence. Day by day in the media we are being barraged by a plethora of incidents in various places where gun violence has taken place. A saying goes that as there are many people, there are also many opinions. On this problem of gun violence, opinions vary as to why the problem exists as well as on ways and means to proffer solutions to the problem. For some folks, such tragic incidents as gun violence signal a disturbing trend/approach where communication has failed and gun violence becomes the means of communication, the means of expressing somebody's intention and of settling differences. To those who oppose fire arms and advocate for gun control, the fact that a lot of people, including minors/teenagers, have access to fire arms goes beyond the limit.⁶⁵ Minors still depend much on their parents or care givers. They are exempted from a lot of things/issues in the society because it is believed that they cannot make right judgments in certain areas because of their age. For serious weapon of destructions like guns, to be easily available to minors calls for a lot of concern with regards to the safety of the society.

Gun violence abounds in every corner of the globe. Those who support the legalization of the use of guns would argue that gun is an effective method/means of self-defense as well as a good method of crime prevention. So to outlaw the possession of guns by individuals will give a free rein to criminals who will then operate freely and unchallenged in cities and neighborhoods. For in some places the police are not easily available or cannot arrive in time to deter the onslaught of criminals. In this case possession of guns by families and individuals can help to ameliorate crime in the society. The issue at stake here is for the law enforcement agencies to decide who is

⁶⁵ Ibid.

capable of owning a gun and who is not. This will go a long way to prevent guns getting into wrong hands.

Another common aspect of violence is what has been termed family violence. Often the word abuse is used instead of violence. But efforts to distinguish such terms as violence, abuse or maltreatment have not led to much consensus.⁶⁶ “Defining family violence is problematic.....We know that family violence kills, injures, and mutilates its victims physically and psychologically”⁶⁷ There are various opinions as to what would constitute family violence. However, The American Academy of Family Physicians in 2004 described family violence thus:

Family violence can be defined as the intentional intimidation or abuse of children, adults or elders by a family member, intimate partner or caretaker to gain power and control over the victim. Abuse has many forms, including physical and sexual assault, emotional or psychological mistreatment, threats and intimidation, economic abuse and violation of individual rights.⁶⁸

While referring to violence in the family, some sociologists would prefer to use the term maltreatment as a term that is more embracing and inclusive. Denise Hines and Kathleenn Malley-Morrison seem to favor the idea that the term maltreatment is pretty much more inclusive. They would argue that maltreatment includes corporal punishment, wife beating, spousal abuse, elder abuse and other acts of domestic violence. They argued that some forms of maltreatment are more serious than others. For instance a child who received a single slap on the hand during childhood cannot be said to have been maltreated to the same level or degree as a minor who was raped or beaten every day.

⁶⁶ Denise A. Hines and Kathleen Malley-Morrison, *Family Violence in the United States: Defining, understanding, and Combating Abuse* (USA: Sage Publications, 2005) 5.

⁶⁷ Dean D. Knudsen and JoAnn L. Miller ed. *Abused and Battered: Social and Legal Responses to Family Violence* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1991) ix.

⁶⁸ American Academy of Family Physicians (2004) cited in Denise A. Hines & Kathleen Malley-Morrison, *Family Violence in The United States*, 5.

Slapping on the hand once during childhood is not at the same level as a child who is constantly reduced to nothing through verbal criticism and humiliated by parents and/or care givers.⁶⁹ I would argue that whichever way we wish to describe these actions in families they all boil down to the same issue. Whether we want to use the term maltreatment, abuse or violence, we are basically alluding to the same thing.

In the Nigerian scenario I will argue that indirect violence necessarily contributes to direct violence. The wealth of the nation is in the hands of few rich people. There is virtually no middle class. It is either you are rich or you are poor. There is massive youth/graduate unemployment. The political and governing elite seem to be completely unconcerned about the needs of the masses. Such unfavorable economic system can push people especially young people to crime and other acts of direct violence. What exists in Nigeria as well as in most of other African nations is a situation where those at the corridors of power are not much concerned to work for the common good and promotion of the welfare of the people. Matthew Hassan Kukah tried to articulate the scenario in these words:

Gradually the common good gave way to personal aggrandizement.....The result is that citizens were alienated, everyone had to fend for themselves and the bureaucracy suffered a psychological dent. Policemen began to extort money by erecting illegal checkpoints, civil servants began to charge for processing files, and everywhere became a battlefield of wits. The result is the collapse of national life and the phenomenal rise in national corruption.⁷⁰

From our discussion it can be seen that the term violence has many connotations. There are also various causes of acts of violence. Violent actions are as old as the human

⁶⁹ Denise A. Hines & Kathleen Malley-Morrison, *Family Violence in The United States*, 7.

⁷⁰ Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria* (Ibadan-Nigeria: Spectrum Books Limited, 1999) xvii.

person in the face of the earth. And we may not fully understand the possible reason or reasons why people engage in acts of violence. The next key term to examine is religion.

2.2 RELIGION

Just as there are various understandings, various views and opinions about the word violence, the word religion also share similar fate. The word religion means so many things to so many people. The Nigerian Nation which is the central focus of our research has three main religious groups namely the Christians, Muslims and the Traditional worshippers. Religion therefore is very much part of Nigerian life, culture and tradition. A better understanding of the term “religion” will facilitate a better understanding of the project.

In the Igbo traditional religion (one of the religions in Nigeria) people often say *chi bu ndu* (God is life), *Okwukwe amaka* (faith is good), *Okwukwe na Chineke na enye ife* (faith in God gives meaning to life), *Okwukwe bu mmeri* (faith helps someone to overcome the problems of life), *Ekpere amaka* (prayer is good). Nigerians are very passionate about religion and religious issues. There are religious symbols displayed in various places. Buses on the streets can have some inscription like “God is the answer” written boldly in front and at the back of the vehicle.

Religion deals with faith-experiences of an individual or group. A lot of people believe that religion gives meaning and purpose to their lives.

Alfred North Whitehead observed that “There is no agreement as to the definition of religion in its most general sense, including true and false religion; nor is there any agreement as to the valid religious beliefs, nor even as to what we mean by the truth of

religion.”⁷¹ Jonathan Smith also made a pertinent point when he said of religion that “It describes human thought and action, most frequently in terms of belief and norms of behavior.”⁷² I will argue that throughout the recorded history of humanity that most humans have the inherent tendency to seek and/or search for the divine whatever that means. Some people call this divine or Supreme Being God. Others may not have any nomenclature for it. Marcus Bach argued that: “Every culture and every people seek for divine truth, sing of their beliefs, and have their rites and rituals. No conviction is more fundamental, than this: Life must have its origin in a divine spirit or source”⁷³ Bach’s statement is over generalized in some sense, since some people do not believe that there is any such supreme being out there. In Buddhism, for example, the concept of God is not important. For them God has no functional role in human life. In Hinduism the concept of God is multifaceted. There are those also known as atheists or agnostics. But I will argue that atheism itself can as well be a form of search for what is ultimate. It is a form of belief and arguably can be considered as a form of religion. This view point of course can be highly debatable.

Roger Schmidt began his discussion on religion by first of all recognizing as well as acknowledging the obvious fact that to define the term ‘religion’ is loaded with problems. Religion is an ambiguous term and that raises the issue of hermeneutics (interpretation). Schmidt observed that a nice way to begin a discussion on religion might be to set some characteristics and/or boundaries that might help to highlight religion’s

⁷¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1974) 14.

⁷² Jonathan Z. Smith “Religion, Religions, Religious” in Mark C. Taylor ed. *Critical Terms in Religious Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 269.

⁷³ Marcus Bach, *Major Religions of the World: Their Origins, Basic beliefs and Development* (USA: Graded Press, 1977) 9.

basic and distinct features, if those basic and distinct features are at all easy to pin point.

Schmidt raised some pertinent questions for instance:

Is there a set of characteristics that distinguishes religion from other aspects of human experience? What principles do we employ when we assert that something is religious or nonreligious? Prayer and belief in deity are regarded as religious. Is a mother's love for her children or a person's intention to act justly religious? It has been said that "God is love" and that "God is truth;" are those who love and those who seek truth religious, whether they are scientist, theologian, or skeptic?⁷⁴

Obviously religion is a complex word. It is a word which different people understand in different ways. Schmidt again argued that religion is a collective term which applies to a wide variety of phenomena. The word religion is akin to the words beauty, truth or love which have multiple meaning and different connotations.⁷⁵ Beauty it is very often said lies in the eyes of the beholder. What is beautiful for an individual may not necessarily be beautiful for another person. I think that this can also be applied to religion. What is considered to be religious or a religious act by an individual may not appear or taken to be religious by another individual. This might account for why there are varied understandings of what is taken or considered to be a religious action.

However the search for what is holy is deeply rooted in the human mind such that greater population of the world has one form of religion or another. Humans live in a world of change. The human person is constantly trying to find unity, meaning and purpose amidst all the opposites witnessed in this material universe, amidst all the changes of this life. There seems to be the constant search in the human mind for the one who is, the search for the alpha and the omega, the longing for the one who is the

⁷⁴ Roger Schmidt, *Exploring Religion* 2nd edition (Belmont California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1988) 9.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Almighty (Revelation 1:8)⁷⁶ The origin of religion has been attributed to the sense of the mystery which the ancients found in the things of extraordinary nature like big trees, mountain, oceans, rivers and so on. Human beings have often been described as *Homo religiosus*, religious beings. Jesus observed in the bible that humans do not live by bread alone (Matthew 4:4).⁷⁷ I will argue that there is always a spiritual component in the life of the human person. For Schmidt, religion can be understood as a meaning - giving activity. It is also an expression of the human person's need to make the world more meaningful as well as purposeful.⁷⁸

Since the word religion has several meanings and connotations, we have to bear in mind the purpose of the project which we have at hand and then think of the definition of religion that can help us in some manner to better deal with our topic of inquiry. Paul J. Griffiths understood the broad nature of the meaning/definition of religion. That is why he favored the idea that in doing research on religion or aspects of religion the definition/explanation used "should also be such that it will serve the needs of the enterprise for which it is constructed...."⁷⁹

I think that Schmidt's definition of religion as "a human seeking and responding to what is experienced as holy"⁸⁰ brings out the general essence of religion. Such a definition will also serve our need in this paper. Our topic of discussion is to challenge the notion or seemingly popular concept that religion causes violence. Our main argument will be that at least in the Nigerian nation ethnicity and tribal differences are the major contributory factors in the violence perpetrated under the umbrella of religion.

⁷⁶ *New American Bible* (New York: American Bible Society, 1991)

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Roger Schmidt, *Exploring Religion*, 8.

⁷⁹ Paul J. Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity* (USA: Blackwell Publishers Inc. 2001) 7.

⁸⁰ Roger Schmidt, *Exploring Religion* 11.

However religious differences will not be totally exonerated with regards to the violence in Nigeria.

A pertinent aspect of the discussion on religion in today's society is the argument that religion causes a lot of violence in the world. Some might even argue that religion was responsible for most if not all the violence ever perpetrated in human history. And that religion and/or belief in God is false as well as dangerous.⁸¹ This assertion of is a highly debatable issue. This is because for someone to talk about religious violence or whether religion causes violence you have to first of all understand what religion is. The definition of religion is not a straight forward issue. So-called religious violence can as well be called economic violence or violence emanating from corrupt practices. This is because those acts of violence could probably have been perpetrated for economic reasons or in pursuit of certain corrupt endeavors. Making a sort of analogy between religion and violence as well as religion and corruption, Keith Ward stated that: "Religion does not lead to corruption. Human nature leads to corruption."⁸² In a similar fashion I will argue that to a certain degree religion per se does not lead to violence. It is human beings that generate acts of violence and often blame religion or hide under religious cloaks, most probably because of the sensitive and passionate nature of religious beliefs. Again the issue of interpretation is important here. This is why I will argue that often it is human biases, self-interests and/or prejudices that are at the root of most of if not all human activities including acts of violence.

Sometimes aspects or passages from some religions holy books tend to suggest that violence in the name of religion can be tolerated if not legitimized. Let us look at

⁸¹ Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008) 47.

⁸² Keith Ward, *Is religion dangerous* (England: Lion Hudson plc, 2006) 40.

some passages from the Christian bible. Some of these ‘questionable passages’ can be found both in the Old Testaments as well as in the New Testaments. I put questionable passages in quotes because for many Christians these passages that tend to suggest violence do not constitute any problem to their belief or relationship with their fellow human beings. Such Christians will argue that such passages do not promote or encourage violence. They understand those passages within the overall context of the Christian message which is that of virtues not vices, a message of love of God and love of fellow human beings. But some non-Christians who read those passages might see them in a different light. Here are some of those bible passages that often raise much discussion and debate:

If your own full brother, or your son or daughter, or your beloved wife or your intimate friend, entices you secretly to serve other gods, whom you and your fathers have not known, gods of other nation.....do not yield to him or listen to him, nor look with pity upon him, to spare or shield him, but kill him, Your hand shall be the first raised to slay him; the rest of the people shall join in with you. You shall stone him to death, because he sought to lead you astray from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. (Deuteronomy 13:7-11)⁸³

The third book in the Old Testament, Leviticus, contained death penalty for offences which in today’s world might be considered light and not meriting much or any punishment at all. One of such examples is: “Anyone who curses his father or mother shall be put to death; since he has cursed his father or mother, he has forfeited his life.”(Leviticus 20:9).⁸⁴ Some Christians might argue that the Old Testament is different from the New Testament that Christ came in the New Testament in order to give a more clear perspective of the Old Testament. The flip side of the discussion will be that Christ

⁸³ *New American Bible* (New York: American Bible Society, 1991)

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

said in the Gospel according to Matthew: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill (Matthew 5:17).⁸⁵ Somebody who blames or wishes to blame religion for the violence in the world might then argue that actually Christ did not come to rectify wrong teachings of the Old Testament which includes the Laws which were given through Moses and the teachings of the ancient prophets but rather to fulfill them. Again even Christ himself in some passages in the New Testament tends to suggest and/or encourage violence. Few examples of such passages may include: “I have come to set the earth on fire and how I wish it were already blazing.....From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three, a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother....”(Luke12:49-53).⁸⁶ A Similar passage is: “Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into fire and they will be burned” (John15:6).⁸⁷

It is interesting also to observe that Jesus made opposite statements that call for ideas like peace, love, mercy, kindness, gentleness and so on. Jesus on some occasions said: “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy..... Blessed are the peace makers for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:6-9)⁸⁸ The way and manner in which one unpacks these bible passages and other similar ones might depend on one’s understanding of sacred texts as well as one’s attitude toward religion in general and

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Ibid

probably a specific religion in particular. A person's modus of understanding of such seemingly controversial texts will go a long way in contributing to their understanding and interpretation of religion as to whether it causes and/or encourages violence or not.

Many Christians will argue that although there exist some passages in the Bible that seem to suggest/encourage acts of violence, Christians generally do not interpret such texts literally. However Sam Harris questioned this position/viewpoint when he said: "If we are going to take the God of the Bible seriously, we should admit that He never gives us the freedom to follow the commandments we like and neglect the rest. Nor does He tell us that we can relax the penalties He has imposed for breaking them."⁸⁹

Be that as it may, there are arguments and counter arguments with regards to the apparent controversial statements contained in the sacred texts of many world religions Christianity inclusive. But whether such passages incite people to violence or encourage violence is a different question. Religion has no clear cut meaning. It has no clear cut definition. Religion and religious practices are often intermingled with politics, ethnicity, culture, economy, struggle for oil money as is the case in Nigeria, to mention but a few. When an individual for instance says that she is engaging in violence on account of religious belief or that she is fighting for Allah or God, that person might even be fighting for some other reasons like money, power or politics. That is why I have undertaken to examine the role of ethnic and tribal struggle in what has often been labeled as religious violence in Nigeria. I would argue that just like in other places in the world the so called religious violence in Nigeria may not actually be only religious violence.

⁸⁹ Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, p. 22.

William Cavanaugh critically questioned this popular assumption that religion causes violence in his book entitled *The Myth of Religious Violence*. He argued that some ideologies, practices, institutions exist in the world such as Islam, Marxism, Capitalism, Christianity, nationalism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Americanism, Judaism, the nation-state, liberalism, Shinto, secularism and Hinduism, and that all these groups had been known to have supported an act or acts of violence in one form or another and under certain conditions.⁹⁰ He argued that these ideologies are often divided into secular and/or religious and often those considered as religious are said to cause violence and those considered as non-religious are exonerated. For Cavanaugh such division is simply very difficult to prove if not unprovable to say the least.⁹¹

The argument that religion causes violence has always been and most likely will continue to be a debated proposition. Cavanaugh summarized the reasons usually adduced by people who maintain that religion causes violence into three reasons: that religious adherents are (1) absolutist, (2) divisive and (3) insufficiently irrational. Cavanaugh argued that although many authors mentioned other arguments to support their claim that religion causes violence, such arguments can be summed up in the above mentioned three reasons.⁹² However Cavanaugh found most arguments that religion causes violence to be problematic and lacking a lot of merit. He writes: “There is no reason to suppose that so-called secular ideologies such as nationalism, patriotism, capitalism, Marxism and liberalism are any less prone to be absolutist, divisive, and

⁹⁰ William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideologies and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 16.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid. 17-18.

irrational than belief in, for example, the biblical God.”⁹³ After all Cavanaugh further observed there are secular objects like a nation’s flag, the singing of a national anthem or pledge and even the demand for patriotism from countries such as the United States that might look pretty much like a civil religion. According to Cavanaugh secular nationalism of such kinds can be as absolutist, divisive and irrational if not fanatical as some types of religious militants and extremists found in some world religions.⁹⁴

The discussion on religion in Nigeria can have many underpinnings. Christianity and Islam have greater number of adherents than the traditional religion. But the traditional religion is more cultural and more at home with the people. Nigerians as well as most African nations are community oriented. Christianity and Islam are considered as foreign religions to Africa, Nigeria inclusive. Christianity was introduced in Nigeria by European nations. Europe is more or less individualistic and Christianity was introduced with such a frame of thought. Christianity came and met the already existing traditional religion. This traditional religion, as Mbiti pointed out, functions more on a communal rather than individual basis, beliefs are held by the community. An individual may accept such beliefs or not. Ceremonies are performed in groups by families, relatives as well as the entire community.

Religion permeates most aspects of life of Nigerians. Children are taught through proverbs, stories, myths, conversations, folklores and by their participation in rites, ritual and various cerebrations.⁹⁵ In other words, religion helps to initiate people into the values of the community. Cultural values, social norms, rules, modes of conduct

⁹³ Ibid. 55.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* 2nd Edition (Great Britain: Heinemann Publishers, 1991) 15.

and behavior can be transmitted from generation to generation through the medium of religions teaching and practices. In this aspect of initiating the young people into the cultural community I will argue that there is not much difference between religion and ethnicity. Religion and ethnicity tend to operate together. This is because when you are teaching the young people proverbs, parables, myths and folklores you are handing over to them both religion and ethnic cultural values. Religion and ethnicity in the Nigerian context, from time immemorial has had as part of its function the role of initiating individuals especially the young people into the obligations of religious, community and social life. In the Nigeria situation, various religious traditions endeavor to teach their belief or practices in their churches, seminaries, mosques and shrines. Some even teach on the streets and give hand-outs and flyers to whoever is willing to receive them. Their major target is very often the young people bearing in mind that the young ones are the future of the society and leaders of tomorrow. This targeting of young people is an interesting point. If the young people are raised with the idea that it is okay to perpetrate violence in the name of religion then the society will be in greater danger. Violence can permeate their life activities. It will affect their political, ethnic and social lives.

There should be freedom of religion. Various faith-based initiatives and charitable organizations should be encouraged by various nations of the world. Religion, religious bodies and institutions do much good works in the world. For example, during times of wars, natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, fire and in various other occasions, many faith-based organizations do really take up the challenge and responsibility to alleviate the sufferings of the people. Here the Biafra-Nigerian civil war easily comes to mind as a good example. A detailed discussion will be done on this civil war in the course of this

dissertation. The contributions of faith-based organizations will also be addressed.

Religious bodies and institutions have also excelled in the building and management of hospitals and schools as well as in many other aspects of human enterprise. The importance of religion as a force to reckon with in community building seems to far outweigh any negative effect of religion in the human society.

From this examination of religion, it is clear that religion is important in the lives of many people. Same applies in the Nigerian context. The argument that religion causes violence has always been controversial. This is because religion has no simple or clear-cut definition. In the Nigerian situation, religious practices and ethnic practices are interrelated. You can confuse one for another. Ethnic disturbances often degenerate into religious disturbances and vice versa. The Nigerian nation is divided into ethnic lines. Ethnic groups have different forms of religious belief. Even when some ethnic groups have similar form of religion, still the way they practice such religious belief often differs.

2.3 ETHNICITY

In Nigeria, ethnic clashes often lead to religious riots and religious disturbances also often turns into ethnic clashes. Longman Advanced dictionary states that ethnicity is related to the race or national group that an individual belongs to.⁹⁶ It can then be understood that ethnicity is associated with race, tribe, and nationality. A discussion on ethnicity or ethnic group will therefore include race, tribe, nationality, language group, culture, tradition etc. Nigeria has three main ethnic groups namely Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. But also there are around two hundred and fifty minor ethnic groups. Martha

⁹⁶ *Longman Advanced America Dictionary* (England: Pearson Education Limited 2001)

Laferriere observed that the term ethnicity is a social factor of importance, but that unfortunately the term has not received much systematic study. Further she noted that ethnic identity/group often contains some implicit values which are sometimes difficult to quantify.⁹⁷

Ethnicity is akin to what has been described as basic group identity. This identity is derived from ethnic group. These basic group elements associated with where someone was born and raised can be related to what Francis Bacon called “the idols of the tribe,”⁹⁸ a situation where one sees the world from the prism of one’s own environment, or ethnic origin. Harold R. Isaacs observed:

Such are the holdings that make up the basic group identity. How they are seen and celebrated has provided the substance of most of what we know as history, mythology, folklore, art literature, religious beliefs and practices. How the holdings of others are seen has provided most of the unending grimness of the we-they confrontation in human experience. Raised high or held low, these are the idols of all our tribes.⁹⁹

Rafael Perez-Torres observed that the word ethnic is derived from the Greek word *ethnos* denoting nation or group and *ethnikos* denoting national or foreign. Perez-Torres argued that the word ethnic or ethnicity seems to be a term that came from problematic roots in terms of denoting or at least suggesting division between groups.¹⁰⁰ Perez-Torres stated that: “The distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is already inscribed in the very term of ethnicity.”¹⁰¹ A given ethnic group has feature or features as well as cultural values

⁹⁷ Martha Laferriere, “Ethnicity in Phonological Variation and Change” In *Language* Vol. 55 no.3 Sept. 1979, 603.

⁹⁸ M. Hall, “The four idols of sir francis bacon & the new instrument of knowledge.” Accessed December 11, 2012. <http://www.sirbacon.org/links/4idols.htm>.

⁹⁹ Martha Laferriere, “Ethnicity in Phonological Variation and Change” In *Language* Vol. 55 no.3, 33

¹⁰⁰ Rafael Perez-Torres, “Ethnicity, Ethics and Latino Aesthetics” In *American Literary History* vol. 12, no.3. (Autumn 2000) 535.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

that mark them out or that distinguish them from another ethnic group. Things like language, mode of dressing and cultural practices. Stephen Stern noted that ethnic folklore for example is among the significant indicator of a group's traditional values. Stern further observed that ethnic groups can be seen as living laboratories which can showcase the process of enculturation, acculturation as well as assimilation of cultural values and practices.¹⁰²

Melvin Tumin, a sociologist, defined an ethnic group as “a social group which, within a larger cultural and social system, claims or is accorded special status in terms of a complex of traits (ethnic traits) which it exhibits or is believed to exhibit.”¹⁰³ Martin Merger argues that ethnic groups therefore are groups within a larger society that displays some unique cultural traits. They can also be a subculture that maintains certain behavioral characteristics. Such unique traits set them apart from other communities. Again such cultural characteristics like religion, language and mode of dressing, form fundamental features of their social life and mode of living.¹⁰⁴ More over unique cultural traits alone may not be sufficient enough to explain or define an ethnic group. That is why Martin Merger identified sense of community as another important aspect of an ethnic group. He argued that ethnic groups usually display a sense of community among members. Within an ethnic community there is a consciousness or an awareness of close affinity or association. Ethnic members view themselves as coming from the same root,

¹⁰² Steven Stern, “Ethnic Folklore and the Folklore of Ethnicity” In *Western Folklore* Vol.36 no.1 (Jan 1997) 7.

¹⁰³ Melvin Tumin “Ethnic Group” p.243 in Martin N. Marger *Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives* 4th edition (USA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997) 12.

¹⁰⁴ Martin N. Marger *Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives* 4th edition (USA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997) 12.

ancestry or the same heritage. There is usually a sense of togetherness and a kind of common bond among members.¹⁰⁵

Further on the characteristics of an ethnic group, Merger talked of ascribed membership as another pertinent feature. He writes:

Ethnic group membership is ordinarily ascribed. This means that one's ethnicity is a characteristic acquired at birth and not subject to basic change. Being born a member of an ethnic group, one does not leave it except in unusual circumstances. One might change ethnic affiliation by "passing"- that is, by changing one's name or other outward signs of ethnicity- or by denying group membership. But it is extremely difficult to divest oneself completely of one's ethnic heritage. Through the socialization process, individuals come to learn their group membership early and effectively and to understand the differences between themselves and members of other groups. So well internalized is this group identification that one comes to accept it almost as naturally as accepting one's gender.¹⁰⁶

Another basic trait of an ethnic group which Martin Merger identified is that of territoriality. By this he means that ethnic groups usually occupy a unique/specific territory within a larger community. "Ethnic groups often occupy a distinct territory within the larger society. Most of the multiethnic societies of Europe consist of groups that are regionally concentrated. Basques and Catalans in Spain, Welsh and Scots in Britain, and Flemings and Walloons in Belgium are groups that maintain a definable territory within the greater society."¹⁰⁷ Merger continued:

When ethnic groups occupy a definable territory, they also maintain or aspire to some degree of political autonomy. They are, in a sense "nation within a nation." In some societies, the political status of ethnic groups is formally recognized. Each group's cultural integrity is acknowledged, and provision is made for its political representation in central governmental bodies.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.13.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.15.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 16.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Somebody's citizenship depends on your place of birth or where you live. Often people might have citizenship in more than one place. Your religion involves your beliefs and attitudes. One's culture encompasses values and behaviors. Somebody's race suggests physical appearances and other biological characteristics. Ethnicity or ethnic group embraces all these qualities to varying degrees. Members of an ethnic group have shared lineage. They see themselves as having a common root which can be traceable to a similar ancestry.¹⁰⁹ The ancestral link of an ethnic group does not consist only of blood relation. Stephen Worchel writes: "But the ancestral bridge of ethnic identity is not composed only of blood and genes. There is also the bond of a common history. Belonging to the same ethnic group implies that our ancestors fought together, worked together, played together and prayed together."¹¹⁰

Sometimes race and ethnicity can be closely linked or connected. Bob Blauner writes that: "In the American consciousness the imagery of race – especially along the black-white dimension – tends to be more powerful than that of class or ethnicity. As a result, legitimate ethnic affiliations are often misunderstood to be racial and illegitimate."¹¹¹ Making a subtle distinction between race and ethnicity Blauner opines:

Thus race is an essentially political construct, one that translates our tendency to see people in terms of their color or other attributes into structures that make it likely that people will act for or against them on such a basis....The dynamic of ethnicity is different, even though the results at times may be similar. An ethnic group is a group that shares a belief in its common past. Members of an ethnic group hold a set of common memories that make them feel

¹⁰⁹ Stephen Worchel, *Written in Blood: Ethnic Identity and The Struggle for Human Harmony* (New York: Worth Publishers, 1999) 15-16.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.16.

¹¹¹ Bob Blauner "Talking Past Each Other: Black and white Languages of Race" In Fred L. Pincus and Howard J. Ehrlich ed. *Race And Ethnic Conflict* (USA: West View Press, 1994) 24.

that their customs, culture, and outlook are distinctive. In short, they have a sense of people hood.¹¹²

However Adalberto Aguirre and Jonathan Turner in their book entitled *American Ethnicity* stated that: “The term ‘race’ connotes biological differences among peoples - skin color, facial features, stature, and the like – which are transmitted from generation to generation. As such, these biological differences are seen as permanent characteristics of people.”¹¹³ But in trying to figure out the relationship of race to ethnicity Aguirre and Turner tend to subordinate race under ethnicity. In some way they tend to show that ethnicity is broader than race. They argued:

How, then, should we conceptualize the notion of “race”.....Our answer is to subordinate and incorporate the idea of race into a broad definition of ethnicity. When a subpopulation of individuals reveal, or is perceived to reveal, shared historical experiences as well as unique organizational, behavioral, and cultural characteristics, it exhibits its ethnicity. For instance, when country of origin, religion, family practices, inter-personal style, language, beliefs, values and other characteristics are used to demark a population of individuals from others, then ethnicity is operating.¹¹⁴

I tend to believe that race can be much more than a political construct. Again often people from the same ethnic make-up tend to have the same skin color and similar attributes. These might account to why there seems to be apparent difficulty in trying to draw a clear cut difference between race and ethnicity. Ethnicity and race seem to be different sides of the same coin.

Robert L. Craig observed that other features that are noticeable and that are peculiar to specific ethnic groups include cultural artifacts, skin color, ethnic dress,

¹¹² Ibid. 24-25.

¹¹³ Adalberto Aguirre Jr. and Jonathan H. Turner, *American Ethnicity: The Dynamics and Consequences of Discrimination* (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc. 1995) 1-2.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 2-3.

dialects, hair style and other traits.¹¹⁵ Someone reading an advertisement in a magazine or newspaper who sees a group with a particular type of attire might be able to guess or figure out which group dresses in such fashion. Craig referred to these features as “symbolic diacritica” and argued that these marks are the markers of ethnicity both within and outside a given ethnic community.¹¹⁶ Again I will argue that these qualities/traits can as well be applicable to people from the same race, thereby buttressing the argument that a clear-cut distinction between race and ethnic group may be hard to define.

Ethnicity or ethnic group sometimes has strong emotions attached to it. By this I mean that sometimes people place more emphasis on their ethnic make-up, that is, the ethnic group they come from, than their achievements in life, like their education, wealth, political affiliations and other such things. In a given community somebody’s ethnic group might give him more prestige, honor and/or recognition than his other personal achievements. Laferriere writes: “The standing of one’s ethnic group in a community may be more of a determinant of social class and self –image than one’s income and education”¹¹⁷

Since our major goal in the dissertation is to examine ethnicity with particular reference to conflicts, it might be germane that as we try to articulate what ethnicity is all about, we also endeavor to explore some possible reasons why it is important to study ethnic conflicts. Stefan Wolff writes: “Thus ethnic conflicts are a form of group conflict in which at least one of the parties involved interprets the conflict, it causes, and potential

¹¹⁵ Robert L. Craig, “Designing Ethnicity: The Ideology of Images” In *Design Issues* Vol.7 No.2 (Spring 1991) 34-35.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Martha Laferriere, 603.

remedies along an actually existing or perceived discriminating ethnic divide.”¹¹⁸ Wolff maintains that it is relatively easy empirically speaking to figure out which conflict is of an ethnic nature or not. He argues that few people will disagree or dispute that Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Cyprus, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the genocide in Rwanda, the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Kashmir and Sri Lanka disputes are all in one way or another ethnic in outlook as well in operation.¹¹⁹ But I would argue that often times there seems to be some difficulty in determining in the strict sense of the word what can be considered an ethnic conflict. This is because in such so-called ethnic conflicts there might as well be other factors that may have given rise to the conflict. It might be religious or economic factors. Take for instance the Nigerian-Biafra civil war (1967-1970). This civil war I would argue was a mixture of ethnic, political, economic and religious factors. Wolff shares similar ideas when he states that: “Power and material gain can be equally strong motivations, for leaders and followers alike, to choose conflict over cooperation, violence over negotiation.”¹²⁰ On the other hand, one can argue that the Northern Ireland dispute as alluded to by Wolff can be both an ethnic and religious conflict if not more religious than ethnic. It can be argue that the conflict between Catholics and the Protestants in Ireland was part of the factors that triggered off the entire dispute. There seems to be always some overlap and not so clear-cut distinction as to the nature, cause and type of these conflicts. Michael Brown on his part enumerated five reasons why an analysis of ethnic conflict as well as nationalistic conflict is an important object of study. He stated:

¹¹⁸ Stefan Wolff, *Ethnic Conflict: A Global perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) 2.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.3.

Nationalistic and ethnic conflicts are important for five main reasons. First, they are widespread. Most of the approximately thirty-five armed conflicts that rage around the world today have nationalistic or ethnic dimensions. Second, nationalistic and ethnic conflicts usually cause tremendous amounts of suffering because they often involve direct, deliberate attacks on civilian populations. The numbers of people displaced or killed in such conflicts are frequently counted in tens and hundreds of thousands, and sometimes even in millions. Third, nationalist and ethnic conflicts almost always involve neighboring states, thereby undermining regional security. Fourth, these conflicts often engage the interests of distant international powers and the attention of regional and international organizations. Fifth, policymakers at the national level and in regional and international organizations are currently in the process of reassessing their efforts to deal with such conflicts.¹²¹

These problems that emerge as a result of ethnic issues seem to be common phenomena around the world. Ethnic conflicts or violence therefore are not rare, occasional or isolated occurrences. They should be high on the list of contemporary international security issues and concerns. Policy makers, people responsible for national or international securities, scholars and all who care about war and peace issues ought to be interested about the causes and consequences of ethnic conflicts as well as all other conflicts.¹²² Oliver McTernan argued that by the year 1993 most of the thirty different conflicts raging in the world were ethnic and sectarian in nature and that such conflicts were having devastating impacts on the lives of the people.¹²³ Such wide spread of ethnic conflicts, clashes and wars and the devastating and negative impacts they have on the lives of the people pose a real challenge to world peace, security and progress. This has given rise to interests to undertake studies and to proffer solutions. McTernan writes:

¹²¹“Preface” in Michael E. Brown ed. *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict* (London: The MIT Press 1997) xi.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Oliver McTernan *Violence in God's name* (New York: Orbis Books, 2003) 1.

“This notable rise in ethnic and sectarian clashes prompted a greater interest on the part of academics and political powers to study the causes of such widespread conflict.”¹²⁴

Causes of ethnic conflicts can be multifaceted. Neighborhood issues or what has been called bad neighborhoods, political factors and the manipulation of the media especially by those at the corridors of power. Land tussles and boundary issues can often generate into ethnic conflicts. Michael E. Brown supports the notion that such factors as belligerent leaders and hostile masses can combine to create ethnic conflict in a given area.¹²⁵

“When belligerent leaders stoke mass hostility, hostile masses support belligerent leaders, and both together threaten other groups, security dilemmas are created which in turn encourage even more mass hostility and belligerence on the part of elites.”¹²⁶ Again ethnic conflicts have also been attributed to age-long hatred or rivalry between neighboring communities. This hatred or animosity may have been held in check by an authoritarian leader or by some other factors. But at a certain point in time such old hatred might explode and the result will be conflict and violence. On this idea that sometimes old hatred is the driving force of ethnic conflict, Brown argues:

The driving forces behind these violent conflicts, it is said, are the “ancient hatreds” that many ethnic and religious groups have for each other. In Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and elsewhere, these deep seated animosities were held in check for years by authoritarian rule. The collapse of authoritarian rule, it is argued, has taken the “lid” off these ancient rivalries, allowing long-suppressed grievances to come to the surface and escalate into armed conflict.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ “Preface” in Michael E. Brown ed., *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, xiii.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ “The Causes of Internal Conflict” in Michael Brown ed. *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, 3.

One of the common features of ethnicity is ethnic affiliation. It is a common occurrence that people will put their ethnic interests first before the national interest. In Nigeria ethnic interests and identity are stronger than religious identity. Probably that can emanate from the popular aphorism that “charity begins at home.” The possible reason why ethnic identity is often stronger might be that ethnic/tribal activities are much closer to the people and so the populace is knit together and often more united. Again people from the same ethnic group mostly speak the same language and so can understand each other better. Reasons such as these and more might account for why ethnic identity is usually strong. Donald Holowitz, discussing how strong ethnic identity/affiliation is, stated that in some countries like the Philippines, children as young as six are already aware of their ethnic identity and by the time they get to the age of ten they can already provide reasonable and often passionate ethnic answers to questions.¹²⁸

Holowitz also stated that in Nigeria, a person’s allegiance is first of all to the ethnic group or the tribe before any other thing. In Ghana Holowitz stressed that a similar situation applies. People expect favorable treatment at the hands officials from their own ethnic groups.¹²⁹ I think that there is no gainsaying the fact that ethnic identity and affiliation are strong components of human life and experience. In some places someone outside an ethnic group may be treated in an unfriendly manner or even with some form of hostility at the least provocation. There seems to be this concept of us and them. The issue of identity seems to feature prominently in ethnic related cases.

Holowitz seemed to have captured the ethnic sentiments in Nigeria when he stressed the fact that ethnicity and ethnic identity is a strongly felt phenomena. Behaviors

¹²⁸ Donald L. Holowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995) 6-7.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

based on ethnicity are often normatively sanctioned, and ethnicity and ethnic inclination can sometimes be accompanied with passion and hostility toward outside groups.¹³⁰

These finding about the strong attachment to ethnicity by human beings is strongly applicable in the Nigerian situation. In Nigeria, a lot of violence and disturbances occur on ethnic issues. Some Nigerians hide under the umbrella of religion in order to carry out ethnic violence. People or families can move from one religious group to another. Nigerians can decide to change their religion at any time, but they may not change their ethnic group. Attachment to ethnic group is a strong phenomenon in the country.

These three terms: violence, religion and ethnicity which we discussed in this chapter are relevant terms in this dissertation. They can have several meanings to several people. The central word among the three is violence. And the issue in our discussion is to explore how far religion and ethnicity contribute to the incessant acts of violence in Nigeria. As we move further we hope to also look into whether violence in Nigeria can result from some other factors like, struggle for oil resources and politics.

¹³⁰ Ibid. 7.

CHAPTER THREE

RELIGION IN NIGERIA: CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

3.1 CHRISTIANITY

3.1.1 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY – AN OVERVIEW

An overview of religion in Nigeria, with special reference to Christianity and Islam, is necessary to understand whether there are elements in their belief, teaching and/or doctrine that encourage/promote acts of violence. The discussion of Christian religion in Nigeria, will be preceded by a brief history of Christian religion in general and an account of how Christianity came to Africa before it finally arrived in Nigeria. There are many Christian groups and denominations in Nigeria. So we shall take a sample of just one of them, namely the Catholic Christian religion, which is also the largest Christian group in the country.

Thomas F. Torrance articulated a succinct description of the Christian understanding of God in these words:

The Christian doctrine of God is to be understood from within the unique, definitive and final self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, that is, from within the self-revelation of God as God become man for us and our salvation, in accordance with its proclamation in the Gospel and its actualization through the Holy Spirit in the apostolic foundation of the Church.¹³¹

Christians believe in one God. This God is regarded as the creator of the universe. The Roman Catholic Christians for example and some other Christian groups believe that the desire for God is written in the human hearts. This is because human beings are created by God. God never ceases to draw humans to himself. For it is only in God will the

¹³¹ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (New York: T&T Clark, 2001) 1.

human person find the truth and happiness that the human soul longs for.¹³² Christians generally believe that this one God is made up of three persons in what is known as the mystery of the Trinity, namely God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Christians believe that God the Son, Jesus Christ took flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary. And as Torrance puts it: “It is in the Lord Jesus, the very Word and Mind of God incarnate in our humanity, that the eternal God defines and identifies himself for us as he really is.”¹³³

Some Christians believe that Jesus Christ has dual nature, that he is both God and a human person, that he was crucified on the cross, that he also rose again from the dead on the third day, appeared several times to his disciples, then ascended into heaven and will come again in glory to be the judge of the living and the dead. The teachings of Jesus are contained in Christian holy book known as the Bible. The Bible is divided into two sections namely the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament is also considered sacred in Judaism and Islam. The Old Testament chronicles the lives of Jews and others who lived before Jesus, who had been promised a savior by God, and were waiting for him. This text contains many stories about people demonstrating faith in God and also provides historical information about the era. The New Testament is unique to Christianity, for it centers on the figure of Jesus. Christians believe that Jesus is the one that the Old Testament foretold. They believe that Jesus came to save the world and to be the mediator between God and the human person. Christians believe that God has entered into the human history in the person of his son

¹³² *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York : Image Books, 1995) 19.

¹³³ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 1.

Jesus Christ. They also believe that the Bible narrates the history of God's revelation as well as God's relationship with the human person. Justo Gonzalez writes:

From its very beginning, the Christian message was grafted onto human history. The Good News Christians have proclaimed through the ages is that in Jesus Christ, and for our salvation, God has entered human history in a unique way. History is crucial for understanding not only the life of Jesus, but also the entire biblical message. A good deal of the Old Testament is historical narrative. The Bible tells the story of God's revelation in the life and history of the people of God. Without that story, it is impossible to know that revelation.¹³⁴

Jesus Christ is the founder of the Christian religion. He was believed to have been born around 4BCE and that he was crucified and died on the cross around AD 33.

The early Christians did not believe that the time and place of the birth of Jesus had been left to chance. On the contrary, they saw the hand of God preparing the advent of Jesus in all events prior to the birth, and in all the historical circumstances around it. The same could be said about the birth of the church, which resulted from the work of Jesus. God had prepared the way so that the disciples, after receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, could be witnesses.....¹³⁵

According to the Bible, Jesus after his resurrection from the dead gave his followers the task of spreading his message.

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshipped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, 'All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.' (Matthew 28: 16-20)¹³⁶

The Bible recorded other passages where Jesus commissioned his disciples to go and spread his message. The Gospel according to Mark stated that Jesus addressed his

¹³⁴ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity vol. 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1984) xv.

¹³⁵ Ibid. p.7

¹³⁶ *New American Bible*, (New York: American Bible Society, 1991)

disciples saying: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16: 15).”¹³⁷ Further the book of the Acts of the Apostles recorded that Jesus addressed his disciples and said: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”(Acts 1: 8)¹³⁸

The term Christian was first used in the Bible in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. That particular passage stated referring to Paul and Barnabas who were Christian missionaries travelling from place to place spreading the Christian message: “For a whole year they met with the church and taught a large number of people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.”(Acts 11:26).¹³⁹ Justo L. Gonzalez observed: “The first Christians were first-century Jews and it was as such that they heard and received the message. Then the faith spread, first among other Jews, and eventually among Gentiles both within and beyond the borders of the Roman Empire.”¹⁴⁰

3.1.2 VIOLENCE IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY: AN OVERVIEW

Jesus the founder of the Christian religion died a violent death on the cross. The Bible recorded that Jesus was crucified on the cross of Calvary. About his crucifixion the Bible stated:

They brought him to the place of Golgotha (which is translated place of the Skull). They gave him wine drugged with myrrh but he did not take it. Then they crucified him and divided his garments by casting lots for them to see what each should take. It

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity vol. 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* p.7.

was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. (Mark 15: 22-25)¹⁴¹

Narrating about the death of Jesus, the Bible also stated:

At noon darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *Eloi, Eloi lema sabachthani*, which is translated, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Some of the by-standers who heard it said, 'Look he is calling Elijah.' One of them ran, soaked a sponge with wine, put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink saying, 'Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to take him down.' Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. (Mark 15: 33-37).¹⁴²

Acts of violence and persecution were rampant in the early Church. Gonzalez observed:

From its very beginning, Christianity was no easy matter. The Lord whom Christians served died on the cross, condemned as a criminal. Soon thereafter Stephen was stoned to death following his witness before the council of the Jews. Then James was killed at Herod Agrippa's order. Ever since then, and up to our own days, there have been those who have had to seal their witness with their blood. Yet, the reasons for persecution, and the manner in which it has been carried out, have varied. Already in the early decades of the life of the church there was a certain development in these matters.¹⁴³

The history of Christianity was replete with documentations to show that Christians were persecuted, that they suffered acts of violence and that many of them were killed because of their belief. Justo Gonzalez noted that the Roman Empire began persecuting Christians from the time of the Emperor Nero in the first century.¹⁴⁴ There were also evidences that Christians themselves committed acts of violence against a lot of people, as in the act of inquisition, Crusades and the forced conversions in certain places. It is a process whereby people are tortured and/or killed because they refused to accept or

¹⁴¹ *New American Bible*, (New York: American Bible Society, 1991).

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity vol. 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, p.31.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*37.

practice the Christian faith. Those who refused to get converted into the Christian faith were seen as enemies. Although the violent act of inquisition and forced conversions took place many centuries back, some Christian fanatics still have such frame of thought in this twenty first century.

Some Christian extremists perpetrate violence in order to punish those who refused to be converted. In the early church there was a time when the state, namely the Old Roman Empire carried acts of violence against Christians. We refer to this as the persecution of the early Church. But in the Nigerian case it is not the state that persecutes or engages in violence against Christians; rather it is now Christians themselves who engage in violence against their fellow Christians as well as non-Christians.

There are divisions in the Christian religion. This division contradicts the will of Jesus Christ its founder as recorded in the Bible. For in the Bible Jesus prayed for his followers saying: "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me." (John 17:20-21).¹⁴⁵ According to Alex Ekechukwu:

Christians of goodwill view this disunity with regret. In their groping for reunification, they see a fundamental unity in the common faith in Jesus Christ, and in the one baptism and the one basic Apostolic Confession. From this theological vantage point, perspectives for ecumenical dialogue have been opened. Dialogue in this context, presupposes a pluralism of attitudes, convictions and aims in the partners to the discussion¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ *New American Bible*, (New York: American Bible Society, 1991).

¹⁴⁶ Alex Ekechukwu, "Religious Intolerance Or Ecumenical Dialogue: Roman Catholic and Anglican Case" In *Religion And African Culture*, Elochukwu Uzukwu ed. (Enugu – Nigeria: Snaap Press Limited, 1988) 102.

The division in Christendom, no doubts affects religious peace in a negative way. Such divisions no doubt contribute to acts religious violence that has plagued the world in general and Nigeria in particular.

3.1.3 CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA

Africa by the mid of seventh century had a flourishing Christian population in the northern part. This was as a result of some great African missionaries. Such great African Christian thinkers include Origen (185-254), Tertullian (160-230 and St. Augustine (354-450).¹⁴⁷ By the time Augustine died, the Vandals were already besieging the cities of North Africa. Their activities eventually led to the demise of Christianity in that part of the world.¹⁴⁸ Christianity in North Africa did not survive for a long time. Due to religious violence and the invading Islamic forces from Arabia, Persia and Palestine, most North Africans got converted to the Islamic religion.¹⁴⁹

New efforts to re-Christianize North Africa has yielded some dividend. About 6 to 8 percent of the population are today Christians, mostly of a mixed European African descent, or pure aliens working in the region. But the glory of a flourishing Christian civilization had gone. Today all the countries of North Africa are both officially and in terms of a massive majority Muslim. The Sharia is the prevalent Islamic legal code.¹⁵⁰

The reasons for the disappearance of the Christian faith in North Africa can be as a result of many factors, including the ferocity of the religious violence, the jihads and religious war that occurred between Christians and Muslims. The end result was the disappearance

¹⁴⁷ Pantaleon Osondu Iroegbu, *Appropriate Ecclesiology: Through Narrative Theology To An African Church*, (Owerri – Nigeria: International Universities Press Ltd, 1996) 75-76.

¹⁴⁸ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity vol. 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* p. 217.

¹⁴⁹ Pantaleon Osondu Iroegbu, *Appropriate Ecclesiology: Through Narrative Theology To An African Church*, p.76.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

of Christianity.¹⁵¹ Jihad by Muslims and Crusade by Christians had in many occasions been a weapon for conversion and for spreading of religion.

In the southern part of African Continent, the Catholic Church succeeded to establish itself after several trials. The Calvinists and Lutherans were first to arrive, together with merchants, explorer and colonizers. Catholics began their process of conversion. They had to deal with the large population of traditional worshippers. The arrival of Catholics was in the later part of the 19th century. The evangelizers had also to deal with the apartheid regime and domination that was already in place in that part of Africa. Apart from the apartheid there seemed to be peaceful co-existence among the religious groups. Religious violence was not much pronounced in this part at those initial periods.¹⁵²

In the East Africa, the Islamic religion had gained ground before the arrival of Catholics. The Muslims had penetrated from the Northern part of Africa into the Eastern part. By 1879 Catholic Missionaries from France labored in Uganda and Tanzania. Much evangelization success was also recorded. Religious violence was prevalent. The story of the Ugandan Martyrs is still popular in the Catholic World.¹⁵³ Pantaleon Iroegbu observed:

The martyrs of Uganda (1885) are now world-famous. Uganda experienced such spectacular growth in Catholicism that merited it the designation: 'The pearl of the African mission.' Later however, the negative forces of communism, nationalism and in part racism did a lot of harm to the Christian Church in East Africa.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid. 77.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Nigeria is one of the countries in West Africa. And in the western part of Africa the Catholic evangelizers who brought Christianity were mainly the Holy Ghost Fathers and the members of the Society of African Missions popularity known as the SMA Fathers. The Irish Missionaries were also popular in spreading the Catholic faith in West African especially in Nigeria. These Missionaries and evangelizers established churches in countries such as Senegal, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Cote-d'Ivoire, Benin Republic, Ghana and Nigeria.¹⁵⁵ "From the growing mission in the Benin Republic (formerly Dahomey), the SMA missionaries proceeded to Nigeria in 1863. But their final settlement in Lagos was five years later in 1868."¹⁵⁶ However prior to this period there has been an unsuccessful attempt by the Portuguese missionaries to introduce Catholic faith in Nigeria. Iroegbu writes:

Early but unsuccessful attempts to Christianize Nigeria were as far back as the 15th-17th centuries. Portuguese missionaries arrived Benin and Warri by 1487. Their work though initially successful, was not sustained. There were changes of fortune, bad climatic conditions and insufficiency of their number to continue the huge and difficult task of evangelizing Nigeria. That stage phased out.¹⁵⁷

3.1.4 THE NIGERIAN CHRISTIANITY

The Protestants represented by the Church Missionary Society were already doing their evangelizing work in Nigeria before the arrival of the Catholic Missionaries. The members of the Church Missionary Society through Bishop Ajayi Crowther were the first Christian groups to begin their evangelizing work in Nigeria. From 1868 onwards the full evangelizing work began in Nigeria by the Catholic missionaries. The tactics or method of evangelizing involved the conversion of the traditional worshippers. The

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 78.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 79.

Missionaries also would want to win converts from each other. In other words Catholics would want to convert Protestants to their group and vice versa. This led to religious clashes and conflicts. Christian evangelizers also would endeavor to convert the Muslims who were already established especially in the northern part of the country. This also was a source of violence and conflicts.

However it is evident that the early Christian evangelizers met a population inhabited mainly by the traditional worshippers. They went through a lot of difficult experiences like difficult climatic conditions, mosquito bites and hostile natives in some places, as they carry out their evangelizing activities. Speaking of the Christian Missionaries in Nigeria, Peter Dong observes:

Before the Christian missionaries came to this area, it was primarily occupied by indigenous religious worshippers. The few Hausa-Fulani people, who are Muslims, were found in the trade centers and townships. Because of the absence of any organized faith groups, early church planters forced themselves into the deadly mosquito territory to win the inhabitants to Christ.¹⁵⁸

Abiodun Oladiti observed that prior to the coming of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria, native or traditional religion was the faith tradition prevalent in the country. Traditional religion was fully integrated in the political systems of Nigerian society. Traditional religious principles helped to maintain law and order in the various communities. Institutions such as Kings, age-grade systems, guilds and associations helped to suppress tension and clashes of interest among the populace.¹⁵⁹ Christianity however became a force to reckon with in the nineteenth century when the Christian Missionaries penetrated

¹⁵⁸ Peter M. Dong ed, *The History of The United Methodist Christ in Nigeria*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000) 18.

¹⁵⁹ Abiodun Akeem Oladiti, "Religion and Politics in Precolonial Nigeria" In Julius O Adekunle ed. *Religion in Politics: Secularism And National Integration in Modern Nigeria*, (New Jersey: Africa World Press Inc., 2009) 21.

most of the southern part of the country.¹⁶⁰ This was not without conflicts. There were clashes between the native cultures and the new Christian culture that was being planted by the Christian Missionaries. On the arrival of Christianity in the Benin area, Uyilawa Usuanlele observed that Christianity first made its debut in Benin City with the arrival of Portuguese explorers and later with traders and missionaries. But the religion did not take root because of its conflict with the Benin indigenous culture and restrictions on Portuguese activities by the Benin ruling aristocracy. The missionaries withdrew and returned after a long period of time. They were later invited by the British Consul-General Ralph Moor. And in 1901 Bishop James Johnson moved into Benin to accomplish his dream of Christianizing the area.¹⁶¹

The leadership and management of the Catholic Church in Nigeria were in the hands of the foreign missionaries for a long period of time. From around 1897 – 1954 most of the key positions in church administration were manned by foreigners. Gradually however the church leadership entered into indigenous hands. In 1954 Bishop Dominic Ekendem was ordained the Catholic auxiliary bishop of Ikot-Ekpene diocese. From being an auxiliary bishop he became the substantive bishop of the same diocese. Later he became the first Nigerian Cardinal in 1976.¹⁶² Catholic Church in Nigeria has Cardinals, bishops, priests as well as religious men and women. The Christian population in Nigeria is about 40 percent. Catholics are about 25 percent.

The church has achieved some measure of success since its debut in Nigeria. But a lot of challenges still lie ahead especially with the rate of religious violence and crises

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Uyilawa Usuanlele, “Evangelization and Inter-ethnic Conflicts: The Benin Diocese 1995-2002” In In Julius O Adekunle ed. *Religion in Politics: Secularism And National Integration in Modern Nigeria*, p.118

¹⁶² Pantaleon Osondu Iroegbu, *Appropriate Ecclesiology: Through Narrative Theology To An African Church*, p.82.

prevalent in the country. The church had used the school system in order to impart morality and discipline into the lives of young generation. The government had encroached into Christian religious education through the government takeover of church schools. Iroegbu observed: “The school system that used to be the bastion of Christian morality and general education are no longer for the most part in Catholic hands. Governments are not often encouraging vis-à-vis the mission of the church.”¹⁶³

The church has administrative hierarchical structure. This has done a lot of good in terms of stability, unity and continuity in the church. Human society needs to have a structure and pattern. The hierarchical nature of the church has been a nice example in this regard. But there have been problems and dangers as well. There have been cases when some church officials became corrupt, tyrannical, despotic and act as unyielding monarchs. When this happens the mission of the church suffers and religious conflicts can be the end result.

3.2 ISLAM

3.2.1 ORIGIN AND SPREAD OF ISLAM - AN OVERVIEW

Many people believe that the spread of Islamic faith has been a success story in history. Islam is one the religions in the world with the highest number of adherents. The origin and spread of Islamic tradition is a fascinating story. Nathaniel Ndiokwere writes:

And this story began in Arabia, a country which from time immemorial had been inhabited by nomadic tribes. Among its important towns were Medina and Mecca. It was precisely in this city of Mecca that Muhammad, the prophet and messenger of Allah was born in the 570 A.D. Mecca, as known from history, from the earlier times had been a holy city containing a temple called the Kaa’ba, the most important part of which is a black meteoric stone, which was at one time regarded as the chief of many of the gods which the Arabs worshipped. Like Christianity

¹⁶³ Ibid.

which took a new look when it came to the old pagan Rome, Islam came to birth in an idolatrous environment. Where the black stone from heaven is enshrined today, is known to have housed chief deities of the pagan Arabs. It is today one of the principal objects for which Moslems make pilgrimages to Mecca.¹⁶⁴

Islamic religion came into being as a result of revelation which Prophet Muhammad believed to have received when he was around forty years old. Mecca at the period in history was a great city. Just like the founders of the Christian religion, the Prophet Muhammad also suffered persecutions.

Mecca at the time of Muhammad was known to be a great caravan center. It is probable that Muhammad became acquainted with the monotheistic beliefs of the Jews and Christians when he accompanied caravans to Syria and Palestine. It was not until he was 40 years of age that a new religion, Islam was revealed to him in vision. Like many prophets of the Hebrew religion who came before him, Muhammad was not well received by his people and after persecutions and a series of wars, Muhammad was victorious and entered Mecca as its master. The Prophet of Allah, the divinely chosen interpreter of his will, Muhammad's teaching were carefully recorded in the Holy Koran.¹⁶⁵

The Qur'an or Koran is the Islamic holy book just the like Bible is the Christian holy book. Muslims believe that God is the author of the Qur'an and that Muhammad was simply the means of the revelation of God's word. Amir Hussain writes:

The word Qur'an translates as "the recitation." (Koran is a less accurate but acceptable transliteration of the Arabic word). For Muslims, the only thing that can be called the Qur'an is the Arabic original, which they believe was revealed to Muhammad from 610 to 632 CE. For Muslims, God authored the Qur'an and Muhammad was simply the channel of revelation. It makes perfect sense, therefore, that the revelation would be sent down in the language spoken by Muhammad and those who first heard God's message. Very quickly, however Islam spread to places where Arabic was

¹⁶⁴ Nathaniel Ndiokwere, *The African Church Today And Tomorrow Vol. 1.* (Onitsha-Nigeria: Effective Key Publishers Limited, 1994) 62.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

not the dominant language. Over the centuries, Muslims have translated the Qur'an into many languages.¹⁶⁶

According to Amir Hussain, the city of Mecca is an important city for Muslims. It is in that city according to Muslim belief, that Abraham, together with his son Ishmael built a place of prayer and worship to the one true God. The city of Mecca is also the place where Prophet Muhammad was born and lived for most of his life. In 622 Muhammad moved to Medina where he lived the rest of his life until his death. Amir Hussain also observed that Muhammad's tomb is a holy site for Muslims.¹⁶⁷

Islam continued to spread after the death of Prophet Muhammad. Amir Hussain writes that within a century of the death of the Prophet, Islam expanded far outside the confines of Arabia. Islam spread into North Africa, Europe, India, China and other places.¹⁶⁸ Through all the centuries of its existence, Islam has expanded to become one of the world greatest religions. It is more confined in the Middle East and Northern part of Africa. However Islamic tradition is gaining influence as well as acceptance in most places around the world.

3.2.2 ISLAMIC FAITH IN NIGERIA

Islam arrived in Nigeria through the activities of traders and merchants plying the trans-Saharan routes. Such traders mainly from the northern part of Africa made contacts with traders from the Western part of Africa. Gradually through the Kanem-Borno Empire and through the north east of Lake Chad Nigerian merchants were first exposed to the Islamic faith.¹⁶⁹ Some accounts indicate that the first introduction of Islam in

¹⁶⁶ Amir Hussain, *Oil & Water Two Faith: One God* (Canada: Copper House, 2006) 70.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 37-38.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 37.

¹⁶⁹ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria* p.24.

Nigeria dates as far back as late eleventh century.¹⁷⁰ The Islamic faith continued to make progress through subsequent centuries. However, records indicate that Islam had become a well-established religion in many parts and cities of northern Nigeria by early seventeenth century. Islamic merchants, Scholars as well as political leaders enhanced their careers, had successful jihads, built mosques and saw to the introduction of Qur'anic school systems.¹⁷¹ Islam used to be the minority religion in Nigeria when compared with Christianity. But the trend has since changed and Islam has seen a tremendous rise in the number of its adherents. Toyin Falola writes:

Islam has a longer history in Nigeria than does Christianity. At the beginning, Islam was a minority religion, but it spread gradually and became the dominant faith in the north during the nineteenth century; the present century has witnessed phenomenal growth in Nigerian Islam. The original expansion of Islam was made possible by the activities of merchants, missionaries, brotherhoods, and political leaders. Its spread was also facilitated by its appeals to new converts and by the jihads of the nineteenth century.¹⁷²

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw an impressive progress and advancement in the expansion of Islam in northern Nigeria. Kings and Emirs strengthened their devotion and commitment to Islam. Islamic Scholars enjoyed certain privileges and great number of the populace began to be converted to the Islamic tradition. Islam then began gradually to permeate other part of Nigeria, such as the central Nigeria and the Oyo Empire in the western part of the country. More progress in the spread of Islam came also during the nineteenth century. This can be attributed to the successful jihad led by Usman dan Fodio. Through the jihads (Islamic Holy War) various

¹⁷⁰ Toyin Falola, *A History of Nigeria* p. 29.

¹⁷¹ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria* p.24.

¹⁷² Ibid.

Islamic administrative structures such as the caliphate and emirates were established in the northern Nigeria. Usman dan Fodio became a popular name in the Sokoto area of northern Nigeria because of his contribution in the expansion of Islam. Sokoto University was later named after him.¹⁷³

From the northern part where it first arrived, it began to spread, and found adherents in other parts of the country. This was through evangelization and the activities of the Islamic Missionaries. More converts were gained especially in the Yoruba area of the Western Nigeria. The spread of Islam in the eastern part (Igbo area) of Nigeria is a different story. The East is the strong hold of Christianity. One can say that the East is free from Islamic influence.¹⁷⁴ However those who practice Islam in the East are mainly the Hausa people who have migrated from the North. But indigenous Easterners have not really embraced the Islamic faith. Rather they are mostly Christians.

There are extremists in Islam in Nigeria who are ready to pursue violence. There are also extremists in the Christian tradition. Muslims preach peace just like their Christian counterparts. However Toyin Falola observed that some people in Islam believe in the tradition of religious militancy. He argued that also in Islam there are those who prefer the quiet approach to make conversions or engage in missionary activities. He writes:

While many take a quiescent approach to gaining converts and fortifying the faith, some believe that jihad is the only way to purify Islam and overcome paganism entirely. To Muslims bent on jihad, coexistence and accommodation are unnecessary, and even unacceptable. There have been jihadist periods in Nigeria's history, when Muslim leaders preached radicalism and the need for an ideal Islamic state. Revivalism has been a constant thread in Nigerian

¹⁷³ Ibid. 26.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 26.

Islam. But even among change-seeking Muslims, there is no consensus as to whether gradual reforms, missionary work, or swift revolution is the best approach.¹⁷⁵

In these acts of violence in Nigeria religious and ethnic violence are tied together. The north is inhabited by the Hausa ethnic group and majority are Muslims. There exist also in the north some Christians who came from the Hausa ethnic group. However the majority of the Christians living in the north migrated there from other ethnic groups in the southern part of the country. In other words there exists a mixed creed as well as a mixed ethnic group in the northern area. And this is what makes the scenario complicated.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 46.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRE-COLONIAL NIGERIA AND THE AMALGAMATION

4. 1 PRE-COLONIAL NIGERIA

Here we shall examine Nigeria in her earliest days. By this I mean before the coming of the British colonial administration. That will help to give us a more balanced perspective about the Nigerian people, religion, ethnicity as well as culture. The story of Nigeria as it is known today goes back to more than two thousand years. Much of the earlier history of its peoples is contained in myths and legends. However in some parts of the north, where the Kanuri and Hausas came into contact with the Arabs, there are some written records with regard to the historical developments of the Nigerian nation.¹⁷⁶ Such records will give some hint with regard to their interactions and dealing with their outside neighbors as well as their internal developments.

It is important to know how Nigeria operated, how they were ruled, what type of administration they had prior to the partition and scramble for Africa in the Berlin conference of 1884-1885 which brought in the British colonial masters to oversee the affairs and governance of Nigeria.¹⁷⁷ The colonial masters began to arrive in Nigeria from 1886 with the creation of the Royal Niger Company. They engaged in trade and administered the Sokoto Caliphate and Borno.¹⁷⁸ Some authors have blamed the woes of Nigeria on the British colonial administration. But whether the colonial administration is

¹⁷⁶ Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1978) 15.

¹⁷⁷ Matt Rosenberg, "Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 to Divide Africa." Accessed December 12, 2012. <http://geography.about.com/cs/politicalgeog/a/berlinconferenc.htm>.

¹⁷⁸ Ade J.F. Ajayi and Toyin O. Falola. "Nigeria: The Arrival of the British." Accessed December 12, 2012. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/414840/Nigeria/55316/The-arrival-of-the-British>.

blameworthy as regards to the problems of the present day Nigeria is still a debatable issue. Eghosa Osaghae argued that the problems of Nigeria are direct consequences of the colonial rule. He writes:

Like most other modern African states, the country (Nigeria) was created through the expedient acts of British colonial administration. In a profound sense, many of the post-independence socio-political and economic formations and malformations are a direct consequence of the state-building and economic integration processes begun under colonial rule¹⁷⁹

This position expressed by Eghosa has been and will continue to be a contentious issue in Nigeria. Should the colonial administration be blamed for all the problems and failure of the Nigeria nation? There is a popular aphorism that as there are many people so there are different opinions. There are arguments on both sides of the debate. Some believe that the British colonial administration is the cause of the Nigerian problems or at least contributed much to such problems. On the other side of the debate is the argument that the country was better-off during the colonial administration than after Nigeria had gained her political independence. Some people believe that during the colonial rule Nigeria has constant electricity, better roads, running water, better security of lives and property. Those who hold such view are of the opinion that things started to fall apart after independence when Nigerians came to be in charge of the affairs of their nation. During the post-independence era there began the culture of corruption, nepotism and inefficiency that has characterized the Nigerian political administration ever since. Again before the coming of the British colonial government Nigeria already had many languages and many ethnic groups. The British government was not responsible for this.

¹⁷⁹ Osaghae E. Eghosa, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence*, 1.

The multi-ethnic and multi-language characteristics of the country are a part of the challenges affecting its peace, progress, unity and solidarity.

But the issue now is to figure out how Nigeria existed and was governed prior to the first time the colonizers stepped into the Nation. We shall call this the prehistoric period. This period can be divided in two namely the Stone Age and the metal age. The Stone Age was the period associated with hunter-gatherers who moved about for food and means of sustenance. Subsequently also they made transition into agriculture and farming.¹⁸⁰ Evidence of Stone Age people and sites in Nigeria were in areas like Jos in Plateau state, Okigwe in Imo State, also in areas north of Niger, Taraba and Benue River.

The Metal Age began with the use of iron, copper, brass and bronze. Metal age became pronounced in places like Igbo –Ukwu in the South-Eastern Nigeria around the ninth century, Ile-Ife and Benin in the Western Nigeria from tenth to around fourteenth century. The metal age was seen as advancement over the Stone Age. This is because the use of iron and metals brought about a considerable improvement in agriculture as well as in the lives of the people. The metal age/iron age also brought about progress in the use of sculpture and instruments of warfare.¹⁸¹

With regards to the pre-colonial political structure, Nigeria was categorized into two regions namely the northern region and the southern region. Each of these regions has smaller units of administration within it. Northern region was controlled by the famous Kanem-Borno Empire. This empire adopted Islam as its religion. The Northern region was powerful in its commercial enterprise and military might, engaging in inter-tribal wars and conquering neighboring communities. The ability of this empire and its

¹⁸⁰ Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, 17.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 18.

dynasty to thrive and expand was due to the quality of its leadership and political system as well as its engagement in trans-Saharan trade coupled with its military strength. There was also the use of Islamic religion in order to promote unity among the people.¹⁸²

In the southern region was the Yoruba/Oyo Empire. The history of this empire dates back to the ancient period connected with Oduduwa, the progenitor of the Yoruba people. The Christian religion was in operation in the southern region since the arrival of the Christian Missionaries in Lagos in the South- Western region (Yoruba Land) around 1868. They spread the Christian message in Lagos and its environs extending to Abeokuta, up to Benin City.¹⁸³ While the Muslim Missionaries were busy spreading the Islamic religion in the northern region, the Christian Missionaries were also busy spreading the Gospel message in the southern region. One can already see how Nigeria is being divided on religious and ethnic lines. The Hausa ethnic group in the northern region was evangelized by the Muslim Missionaries. On the other hand, the Yoruba and Igbo ethnic groups in the southern region were evangelized by the Christian Missionaries.

There is also a distinction between centralized and non-centralized administration. An important feature of the northern (Hausa) ethnic administration was that it had a centralized political structure. In the Hausa region, there was a powerful king with the Chiefs who exercised control over their subjects. The large political area was divided into provinces and each was manned by a loyal chief who is accountable to the king. A province was divided into smaller sub-units of towns and villages. A system of indirect rule was in operation in the area. It is a system whereby towns and villages have village

¹⁸² Ibid. 19.

¹⁸³ Pantaleon Osondu Iroegbu, *Appropriate Ecclesiology: Through Narrative Theology To An African Church* (Owerri-Nigeria, International Universities Press Ltd, 1996) 79.

and town heads who are accountable to the chief and the chief in turn is accountable to the king who is considered to be the supreme leader. The village and town heads did the bulk of the administrative work. They were responsible for the collection of taxes, levies, tributes as well as gifts for the chiefs and ultimately the king.

The chiefs and the kings can really be wealthy while the town/village leaders and majority of the populace remain poor and engage in small scale subsistence farming. Examples of the places with centralized and organized administrative structure include the Kanem-Borno, Oyo and Benin.¹⁸⁴ When the British came and began their colonial administration they were to rely heavily on the contributions of the kings and chiefs. Lord Lugard, the British colonial master made use of the indirect rule that was already in place before the arrival of the colonial administration. It is often argued that Lugard laid claim to the fact that he invented or introduced such system in Nigeria. But Nigerian historians and scholars believe that the system had been in operation at least in some parts of the country namely in areas where there were centralized political and administrative structure.

In these areas the king was at the center of the administration. In *Kanem-Borno* he was known as the *Mai*, in the Oyo area you have the *Alaafin* and at Benin you have the *Oba*. These powerful and influential kings came to the throne by succession. When they die their first male child will be crowned as the next in the throne. However some kings also had come to the throne by other means like war and conquest. Somebody might arise, form an army with a group of able bodied young male followers and engage in inter-tribal war with a neighboring community and defeat them. Groups of chiefs, village

¹⁸⁴ Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, 22.

heads can also cause an insurrection and stage a coup and dethrone the king and in that case their leader or one of the organizers will emerge as the next king. All these can be said to have given the background for the ethnic conflict and violence that had been prevalent in Nigeria ever since.

Richard Henry Stone, a Christian missionary who lived within the Yoruba ethnic group for about six years, chronicled the life and activities of one of the powerful kings in the Yoruba kingdom. This King's name was Kumee, chief of Ejahyay. He later received the title *Areh* which was a much honored title in the Yoruba kingdom in the pre-colonial days. Chief Areh as he was popularly called, according to Richard Henry Stone can be regarded as a typical African Despot.¹⁸⁵ For Stone, this King and Warrior might be considered to be a despot, but Stone however maintained that actually that type of leadership was what was needed by such a community at that material time. He writes:

He was haughty, despotic, ambitious and cruel, yet he was just such a ruler as these people needed to keep them in order; for he was also firm, just and reasonable on most occasions. I never saw better order anywhere than I saw in Ejahyay while Areh was its ruler. But he was a bloody usurper. When he was a young man, he was a notorious free-booter and slave hunter. With a number of followers, who had attached themselves to his fortunes, he would go out from Ejahyay into some distant province on predatory excursions. By kidnapping in the farms and by plundering caravans he became rich and powerful and the leader of a party which favored his ambition to become the ruler of the city.¹⁸⁶

Chief Areh according to Richard Stone, came to the throne in the way and manner characteristic of the ruler of that time. And that was by killing the ruling King and usurping power from him. Chief Areh had become powerful as a notorious warrior with

¹⁸⁵ Richard Henry Stone, *In Africa's Forest and Jungle: Six Years Among the Yorubas* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010) 20.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

some followers. One night he invaded the palace of the ruling monarch and attacked him.

Stone continued:

So one night, with a number of his most daring and reckless adherents, he entered the chief's compound, slew him and all who attempted to defend him, seized everything that was his, and then proclaimed himself the ruler of Ejahyay. Through the terror of his name, all submitted to him, but many continued to hate him in their hearts while pretending to be very loyal.¹⁸⁷

Richard Henry Stone narrated how he discovered that some of the so-called supporters of Chief Areh were not actually faithful supporters. Stone one day expressed concern on hearing that Chief Areh was very ill and asked his informant/interpreter who seemed to present himself as a faithful follower of the King, whether he would be sorry if the Chief happens to die. In response, the informant placed one hand into the palm of another hand and uttered in a very low tone using an adage “if a fox dies, the chickens will not cry.”¹⁸⁸ We know that the relationship between the fox and the chicken is not usually a pleasant experience for the chicken. King Ajeh was a typical monarch in the pre-colonial Nigeria. He engaged in inter-ethnic wars in order to acquire more lands and more power.

As opposed to the centralized political units, there were also non –centralized units in the southern –eastern region of the country, namely the Igbo areas. There is a saying in the Igbo area: *Igbo enwe Eze* (Igbo tribe has no king). This means that the Igbo ethnic group in the pre-colonial era had no centralized administration. Other places without centralized political units include the Isoko, Urhobo and Ibibio ethnic groups all in the southern part of Nigeria.¹⁸⁹ “These societies were small-scale in size, generally organized around a village or small town, or into chiefdoms, as among the Isoko and

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, 22.

Urhobo. The exercise of power was distributed among elders and associations of young people.”¹⁹⁰

In the Igbo tribe, hundreds of villages existed, united by one language with some slight accents. Each has its own administration made up of council of elders (*Ama –ala*). These elders are heads of different families who form the village assembly. In this assembly they engage in free speech and debate with regards to decision making regarding the affairs of their *obodo/ogbe*, (town/ village). The administration of justice was by democracy. The elders will discuss offenses and the nature of punishment that was to be received by the culprit/offenders.¹⁹¹

The groups and political units in the pre-colonial Nigeria whether centralized or non-centralized operated as autonomous units, taking care of its own affairs and striving to meet the needs of its people. These political units were referred to as the northern and the southern protectorates. The northern protectorate consists of the Hausa ethnic group with other minority groups. The southern protectorate comprised two major groups namely the south west (Yoruba) and the south east (Igbo) ethnic groups. There are also other minor ethnic groups. The northern and southern protectorates were joined together in 1914. The nomenclature Nigeria came with the amalgamation.¹⁹²

4.2 AMALGAMATION OF NIGERIA

The nation, Nigeria came into being in its present form in 1914 when the two British protectorates of Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated by Frederick Lugard during his tenure as the British colonial master in Nigeria. The Hausa

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 23.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. 24.

¹⁹² Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria* P. 11.

ethnic group is the dominant ethnic group in the north as well as the largest ethnic community in Nigeria. In the south, the dominant ethnic groups are the Igbos and the Yorubas. Several years back, the name Nigeria was first suggested in an article in the *The Times* by Flora Shaw (who later became the wife of Lord Lugard) that the British Protectorates on the Niger be known collectively as Nigeria.¹⁹³

Recounting the problems associated with the colonial administration with specific reference to the amalgamation of 1914 Eghosa argued that Nigerians disenchanted with the post-colonial state of affair have “continued to refer to ‘the mistake of 1914’ i.e. the decision by the British colonial authorities to amalgamate the North and South, whose groups had little in common.”¹⁹⁴ Historians and political pundits in Nigeria believe that the central reason for the amalgamation was economic. The northern part of Nigeria had fewer natural resources and had to rely on the financial subsidy from the Southern protectorate and an imperial grant from the British government.¹⁹⁵

The Lugard colonial administration believed that bringing the Southern and Northern protectorates under a single administration would be economically necessary and beneficial. Such would allow the administration to divert funds and resources as it deems fit. In that case, the revenues generated in the southern can be used to govern both the north and the south. The south has oceans and rivers, green vegetation; the climate is conducive for agriculture. The south has the crude oil which remains the major source of revenue for the country. The Lord Lugard administration hoped that the amalgamation

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Osaghea E. Eghosa, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence*, 1.

¹⁹⁵ Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria* (USA: Greenwood Press, 1999) 68.

would also allow for the centralization of infrastructure as well as developmental schemes.¹⁹⁶

The ostensible reason for amalgamating the Nigerian protectorates was economic. Despite the efforts of Lugard and his successors to reorganize the finances of northern Nigeria, the economy of the northern protectorate had floundered under indirect rule and had not become fully self-financing as of 1914. Taxation had not produced enough revenue to cover the administrative needs of the protectorate, and commerce had not grown sufficiently to make the region profitable¹⁹⁷

However the other side of the amalgamation debate will be that the amalgamation of Nigeria was a milestone and a watershed in Nigerian history. It gave Nigeria its present large size and shape. It also gave Nigeria its present complexity, one measure of which is the diversity of cultures, ethnic groups and traditions. This diversity may have necessitated the adoption of a federal system of government for the country.

Plausible as this argument in favor of amalgamation might sound, there still seems to be stronger argument that the amalgamation was simply marrying incompatibles together. That it is like bringing people who are different in many aspects together, people with different cultures, language and religion. The British colonial administration may have embarked upon the amalgamation agenda in order to solve an immediate economic need at that time. But one wonders whether they thought about the long and lasting implication of such amalgamation. The negative effects of the amalgamation can be part of the reason why many facets of the Nigerian society seems not to be working since fifty years of political independence. I will liken the amalgamation like a forced marriage where people who have no love for each other are brought together to be life

¹⁹⁶ Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (New York: University of Cambridge press, 2008) 117.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

partners. The amalgamation had contributed to the incessant ethnic conflict in the country. Each ethnic group governs their area and there is the struggle for who should govern the central government. Whichever group that happens to be at the helm of affair at the center tends to amass as much wealth as possible in order to develop their own ethnic community while the rest of the ethnic communities suffer. That is why ethnic groups struggle at all cost to govern the center. The idea of governing and working for the welfare of entire Nigerians seems to very far from the mind of Nigerian leaders since her independence.

Amalgamation helped to fan into flame the ethnic disturbances in Nigeria. And an important perspective in this ethnic conflict is that it manifests itself under the umbrella of religious conflicts. There are cases where ethnic groups engage in violence against each other. A good example is the Nigerian civil war that took place between 1967 and 1970. It was a war fought between the Hausas and Yorubas on the one side and the Igbos on the other side. One of the subsequent chapters in this dissertation will discuss the civil war in more detail. Beneath the so called religious conflict in Nigeria is one ethnic group fighting another ethnic group.

The problems of the Nigerian nation can be described as complex. Chinua Achebe suggests that leadership is part of the problem. He writes:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, 1.

I agree with the views of Achebe but to a certain degree. This is because the problem and trouble with Nigeria is not simply that of leadership. The problem with Nigeria is also not simply that of corruption, lack of patriotism and indiscipline. Of course some Nigerians including the leaders are guilty of these problems. Many nations in the world can be guilty of corruption or bad leadership as well. My argument is that ethnicity and huge tribal differences are to a great extent part of the Nigerian problems. And amalgamation of 1914 contributed to it by bringing these different ethnic groups together. Achebe also alluded to tribalism as a cankerworm plaguing the Nigerian nation. He writes:

Nothing in Nigeria's political history captures her problem of national integration more graphically than the chequered fortune of the word tribe in her vocabulary. *Tribe* has been accepted at one time as a friend, rejected as an enemy at another, and finally smuggled in through the back-door as an accomplice. In the life-time of many Nigerians who still enjoy an active public career, Nigeria was called "a mere geographical expression" not only by the British who had an interest in keeping it so, but even by our "nationalists" when it suited them to retreat into tribe to check their more successful rivals from other parts of the country.¹⁹⁹

Still on the problems created by the amalgamation, one wonders whether the British colonial administration took into consideration the tribal nature of Nigeria before bringing the entire entity together into one Nation. Sir Arthur Richards who was at one time a British Governor General of Nigeria after Lord Lugard was credited to have recognized and acknowledged this problem associated with amalgamation. In 1948 Arthur Richards while making his reports regarding his administration in Nigeria informed the British administration in London that:

It is only the accident of British suzerainty which has made Nigeria one country. It is still far from being one country or one nation socially or even economically....socially and politically there are

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 5.

deep differences between the major tribal groups. They do not speak the same language and they have highly divergent customs and ways of life and they represent different stages of culture.²⁰⁰

This observation by Arthur Richards has information regarding the problems associated with amalgamation. It gives credence to the argument that bringing the ethnic groups and tribes together may not have been the best way forward in the administration of Nigeria. That is part of the reason why ethnicity is a big problem in the country and may probably remain so for a long time.

Other argument in the amalgamation debate is that amalgamation was a ploy by the colonial government to administer the entire nation with minimal administrative personnel and resources. Some Nigerians believe that after all, the business of colonizing another nation is mostly for the interests and benefits of the colonizers rather than that of the colonized. The colonizers, who are usually economically advantaged nations, are searching for natural resources and raw materials for their industries back home in their own country. Those in this camp of the debate would argue that colonialism is not simply a political tool designed to groom and train the less privileged and less developed nations to stand on their feet politically, economically, educationally, culturally, religiously and otherwise. But that it is first of all an economic enterprise designed for the advantage and benefits of the big nations.²⁰¹ In Nigerian situation, Richard and Akin in their article argued that:

There is evidence that amalgamation was first and foremost proposed to ensure that the imperial possession in Nigeria yielded the maximum benefit to the Crown and its government in Britain. Perhaps this explains why British attitude and policies did not take

²⁰⁰ Adiele E. Afigbo, "The Amalgamation: Myths, Howlers and Heresies" cited in Richard A. Olaniyan, ed. *The Amalgamation and its Enemies: An interpretative History of Modern Nigeria*, (Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2003) 48.

²⁰¹ Ibid. 49.

into consideration the peculiarity of Nigeria, its land and people. The various constitutional and administrative arrangements were never informed by any altruistic intention.²⁰²

Again some people have perceived amalgamation of Nigeria as a superficial unity established by the British colonial administration.²⁰³ Foreigners looking at the nation externally might tend to believe that the geographical entity known as Nigeria has so many things in common that can enable it to survive as one nation. But a closer study and deeper analysis tend to suggest otherwise. There seems to be more differences and divergences in the nation. That is why I tend to believe that the amalgamation had done more harm than good. There are some benefits that Nigeria gained during the colonial administration, but amalgamation of the country may not be one of such benefits. On the other hand I think that the greater and more important point is for all Nigerians to move forward and endeavor to co-exist harmoniously despite their ethnic and religious differences.

²⁰² Ibid.19.

²⁰³ Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, p.191.

CHAPTER FIVE

IGBO AND HAUSA ETHNIC GROUPS IN NIGERIA

This chapter will examine the Igbo and Hausa ethnic groups. Conflicts with regard ethnicity and religion have different effects and impacts among the ethnic groups than the effects they have in Nigeria as a nation. Each ethnic group wants to protect themselves, nurture their group and to be at peace with each other. But often they see people from other ethnic groups as outsiders. Nigerians talk of one Nigeria, but it is a different story when they begin to deal with or interact with people from different ethnic groups. Some state governors have fired teachers and government workers that came from other areas in Nigeria. Some of such teachers have worked for a long time in those states only to be fired because according to the governors those teachers do not belong. Ethnic groups segregate other ethnic groups. The idea of us and them is still in operation. But within an ethnic group they have many cultural values and norms through which they nurture each other and work to encourage harmony and progress within their group.

Part of the solutions in ameliorating ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria will be for all Nigerians no matter their individual ethnic group to think of the entire Nigerian nation as a single entity made up of many parts. Such will be a better way forward. Abu Bakar Bah writes:

The central question for us is to identify the forces that drive the breakdown as well as the reconstitution of democracy and the nation-state in Nigeria. Indeed such forces include a variety of economic, social, cultural, political and external factors. However, given the manner in which the Nigerian state was formed, the pattern of violent conflicts that continue to undermine democracy and the stability of the nation-state, and the form of corruption and

discrimination that characterize Nigeria, I will argue that we need to focus more on the issue of ethnicity.²⁰⁴

5.1 THE IGBO ETHNIC GROUP

5.1.1 IGBO ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

It is necessary to give a general overview of the administrative apparatus and divisions within the Igbo ethnic group. The Igbos are bound together by a common heritage. They tend to be united when it comes to preserving their Igbo culture and tradition. They are also referred to as the *Ibos* or *Ndi Igbo*. A native of Igbo ethnic group is called an *Igbo* or *onye Igbo* (An Igbo person). The adjective for qualifying things or items is *ihe Ndi Igbo* (Things that belong to the Igbo). As a community the Igbo people call themselves *Ndi Igbo* (The Igbo people). The language spoken by the Igbo people is known as the *asusu Igbo* or *asusu ndi Igbo* (Igbo Language). The territory where the Igbo people live is called the *Ala Igbo* or *Ala Ndi Igbo* (Igbo Land). The Igbo ethnic group is located in the south eastern part of Nigeria. According to P.E. Aligwekwe:

The Igbo call their ethnic group *Ala-Igbo* (the land of the Igbos). To distinguish themselves as a people they call themselves *Ndi-Igbo* (those who are the Igbos) that is, the Igbo people. The first term *Ala-Igbo* comports also a sense of territorial delimitation including the sum total of the Igbo clans as a people living in the same geographical-territorial unit.²⁰⁵

Within the Igbo ethnic group there are some subsections that make up the entire ethnic group. These are the various administrative structures or units. The nomenclature for these divisions and subdivisions slightly differ from one Igbo area to another.

Igbo Ethnic group administrative units Include:

²⁰⁴ Abu Bakarr Bah, *Breakdown and Reconstitution: Democracy, the Nation-State and Ethnicity in Nigeria* (New York: Lexington Books, 2005)38.

²⁰⁵ P.E. Aligwekwe, *The Continuity of Traditional Values In The African Society: The Igbo of Nigeria* (Owerri-Nigeria: Totan Publishers Limited, 1991) 80.

Ezi na Ulo (Family)

Ndi – Mbara (extended family)

Umunna (Clan)

Ogbe (Village)

Obodo (Town)

Otu Ogbo (Age grade)

Umuada (Daughters from the same area)

The *Ezi na ulo* (Family) is the traditional family of husband, wife and children. The husband is regarded as the head of the family. The *Ndi – Mbara* is the extended family. It includes the parents, grand or great –grand parents of the husband. The parents of the wife are not usually included in the Igbo understanding of the extended family. This is because the wife was married from some other families. And often the place where their wife was born might be quite some distance away. But it has still to be within the Igbo ethnic group. This is because it is a common practice to marry within the ethnic group. Also included in the Ndi-Mbara are the sisters of the husband who may not have married. If the sisters of the husband are married close to their home they also form the members of the extended family. Also included within the extended family are the brothers of the husband. The husband being referred to here is the *di-okpara* (first son).

The *di-okpara* lives in the father's compound. His brothers, if he has any will receive a portion of land from their father, often close to their father's house where they will build their own house and live there with their own family. This process is called *Idu -obi* (settlement). This concept of *Idu-obi* can be a source of conflict in the community if

not handled properly. During major celebrations like the *iri –ji ofuu* (new yam harvest festival), families gather together for joint celebration.

In Igbo society it can be difficult to find a clear difference between the immediate family and the extended family. This is because they can visit each other any time. Such visits can be without prior information. They sleep over, go to farms and markets together. A visitor will hardly know any difference. That is why in Igbo traditional society people talk more about the extended family system rather than the traditional nuclear family system. John Ekei observed that the extended family “is elastic, sympathetic, coexistent, and communalistic. Some of these characteristics are not seen in modern-Christian-nuclear-family of husband, wife and children.”²⁰⁶

After the Ndi – Mbara (extended family) comes the Umunna. Umunna is a combination of two words, Umu which means children and Nna which means father. So Umunna means children of the same father. As Pantaleon Iroegbu puts it “Umunna literally means children of father. The father in question here determines the level of closeness of kinship.”²⁰⁷ After Umunna comes the Ogbe (village). The Ogbe is the combination of several Umunna. Then comes the Obodo (Town). Obodo is several Ogbes (villages) put together. In some cases it might range from five to twenty Ogbes that can make up the Obodo. These different divisions have their various administrative systems that help to enforce law and order within the community. The leader of the Obodo (town) is known as the Eze or Igwe (Traditional Ruler/Chief). The leader of the Ogbe (village) is known as Onye Isi Ogbe (Leader of the village). Similarly the leader of the Umunna is

²⁰⁶ John Chukwuemeka Ekei, *Caring: Understanding an Aspect of African family Ethics* (Lagos – Nigeria: Smagh & Co Ltd, 1999) 9.

²⁰⁷ Pantaleon Osondu Iroegbu, *Appropriate Ecclesiology: Through Narrative Theology To An African Church* (Owerri – Nigeria: International Universities Press Ltd, 1996) 89.

called Onye Isi Umunna (Leader of the Umunna). The head of the family is known as the Di bi uno (the man who owns the house). Each of these leaders maintains peace and harmony in their area of jurisdiction. But the Eze or Igwe and his cabinet have the overall final say in the settlement of conflicts within the obodo.

Despite these apparent segments and subdivisions, the Igbo ethnic group is linked together. They see themselves as people who have a common bond and unique identity. Aligwekwe opined that the Igbo ethnic group might appear to be segmented, but in reality the various sections are “indissolubly linked one to the other.”²⁰⁸ They see themselves as one large family. That is why ethnicity is strong in Nigeria. There is a saying that blood is thicker than water. In Nigeria ethnic interests come before the national interests. This is why most of the religious violence in Nigeria stems from ethnic differences and rivalries. But this unique identity within the Igbo ethnic group can be problematic especially when it comes to the issue of Nigerian unity. The Igbo ethnic group is not alone in this problem. Other ethnic groups in the country have similar problem of being closed society. It is a society where non-members feel alienated. This is as a result of language and cultural differences. This negatively affects peace and harmony in the country. It rather facilitates conflicts instead of mutual and friendly interactions within the larger Nigerian society.

Nigeria has 36 states. Five of these states are the core Igbo ethnic group in the nation. These states are: Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi States. They all have the Igbo Language as their first/native language. Some other states like Rivers, Cross River

²⁰⁸ P.E. Aligwekwe, *The Continuity of Traditional Values In The African Society: The Igbo of Nigeria*, 80.

and Delta states also have some Igbo speaking people residing there. Nicholas Awde and Onyekachi Wambu tried to articulate where the Igbos can be located in Nigeria:

The Igbo are one of the three largest ethnic groups in the West African country of Nigeria. They number between 12-16 million people, and are predominantly located in the five states of Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi, Abia and Enugu in South Eastern Nigeria, although significant numbers of Igbo communities can be found in neighboring states such as Rivers, Cross Rivers and Asaba as well as the commercial center of the country, Lagos. As traders and entrepreneurs, Igbos have also traveled widely in Nigeria, where they have established vibrant communities. Their traditional territory cuts across the Equatorial forest in the South and the Savannah in the North. It includes areas both East and West of the River Niger. Their neighbors are the Igala and Tiv in the North; Ekoi and Ibibio in the East, Ijaw and Ogoni in the South; and the Benin and Isoko in the West. Through the ages, Igbos have influenced and been influenced by these neighbors.²⁰⁹

5.1.2 IGBO RELIGIOUS VALUES AND PRACTICES

It is often said that Africans are notoriously religious. According to John Mbiti: “People take their religion with them and in them, wherever they go. In many countries of Africa, vehicles.....carry religious slogans, and sometimes the slogans are needed, when drivers speed or drive recklessly.”²¹⁰ In the Igbo community religion is cultural. There is not much separation between religion and culture. What was said of Africa in general can also be said of the Igbo ethnic community. Within the Igbo community religion is part and parcel of everyday life. Religion and culture help in the ordering and fashioning of the mode of living.

What Bolaji Idowu stated regarding the Yoruba ethnic group in the Western Nigeria also applies to the Igbo ethnic community in Eastern Nigeria. According to Idowu: “

²⁰⁹ Nicholas Awde & Onyekachi Wambu, *Igbo Dictionary & Phrasebook: A Language of Nigeria* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 2010) 5.

²¹⁰ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 1.

With the Yoruba, morality is certainly the fruit of religion. They do not make any attempt to separate the two; and it is impossible for them to do so without disastrous consequences.”²¹¹ Similar statement can be applied to the Igbos. Their religion permeates all that they do. Their religion is called the Igbo traditional religion. Children grow up with it. Parents and grandparents pass it on to the younger generation. The Igbo traditional religion is an effective instrument for inculcating moral and traditional cultural values from generation to generation within the community. Newly introduced religions like Christianity and Islam may not be as effective as the traditional religion. Elechi Amadi argued that the imported religions, namely Christianity and Islam, do not have the same powerful hold on the people as the traditional religion. Their use as ethical and moral instruments may not be as effective as the traditional religion.²¹²

Religion offers to the Igbo people a unique way of perceiving and understanding the universe. It supplies to them answers to pertinent questions which affect the human person. Elechi Amadi writes:

Over the past two centuries man has made impressive advances in science. He can fly, cure diseases, reconstruct living creatures through genetic engineering, arrest time through picture, tapes and films, transmit his voice across vast spaces, explore nearby planets and commit mass murder of harrowing proportions in a matter of seconds. It is a long road indeed from the largely instinct-controlled ape-man to the creature that can now grasp the concepts of quantum mechanics and relativity. But he is still deplorably ignorant and the universe is largely a mystery to him. He does not understand the nature of space and time; he does not know what matter is made of, if indeed it is made of anything; above all, he does not understand himself. Some of these puzzles are, by their very nature, impossible to unravel, and this is one of the main reasons why man resorts to religion.²¹³

²¹¹ E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare - God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longman Press, 1962) 146.

²¹² Elechi Amadi, *Ethics in Nigerian Culture* (Ibadan – Nigeria: Heinemann Press, 2005) 6.

²¹³ Ibid. 1.

Elechi Amadi is an Igbo man, born and raised in Igbo culture. He articulated the sentiments of the Igbo person when it comes to the discussion on religion. The Igbo man simply put, believes that religion is an important aspect of the human life. The Igbo man will disagree with people like Sigmund Freud, who speaking about religion stated:

“Having thus taken our bearing, let us return once more to the question of religious doctrines. We can now repeat that all of them are illusions and insusceptible of proof.”²¹⁴

The Igbo people have different view from Karl Marx who argued: “Religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world and the soul of the soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”²¹⁵ The words of Bertrand Russell will also be contested by the Igbo people. Russell writes: “Religion is based, I think, primarily and mainly upon fear. It is partly the terror of the unknown and partly, as I have said, the wish to feel that you have a kind of elder brother who will stand by you in all your troubles and disputes.”²¹⁶ Similarly, the Igbo people will disagree with atheists who have argued and continues to argue about the irrelevance of religion.

Bertrand Russell’s assertion that religion is a form of “elder brother who stands by you”²¹⁷ might somehow apply to the Igbo people. For the Igbos understand the object of religion namely God, as a senior and powerful figure who loves them, who is interested in their welfare and well-being. So in that sense God can and does play the role of a senior/elder brother within the Igbo context. But it is not as a result of fear as alluded to by Russell. Rather it is as a result of reverence to something beyond their power. For the Igbo people religion provides answers when you cannot help yourself, when you are in

²¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *The future of Illusion*, Trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton Co. 1961) 40.

²¹⁵ Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, Trans. and ed. T.B. Bottomore (London: Watts, 1963) 43-44.

²¹⁶ Bertrand Russell, *Why I am not a Christian* (New York: Nobel Prize Library, 1971) 276, cited in Elechi Amadi, *Ethics in Nigerian Culture*, 1.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

need and when human power has failed to articulate solutions in a given situation.

Religion to the Igbo people is a strong element that helps to sustain life. In moments of pain, difficult or incurable sickness or disappointments, religion acts as a source of support and morale booster in helping the individual to keep striving in the face of various odds and challenges that weigh down the human spirit.

The Igbo people believe that religion has some important role to play in the life of the human person. This is because no matter how intelligent humans are, no matter somebody's efforts or power there still remain some unanswered questions confronting the human person. The Igbos know this and they also understand that their brothers and sister all over the world face similar challenges. In modern times, science and technology have done a lot to advance knowledge and improve human life in the world, but still science has not been able to provide answers to some important questions facing humanity and the world. John Mbiti writes:

Today science has become the main source of our knowledge of the physical universe. But for all its great contribution to human knowledge and learning, science has its own limitations. There are questions which it cannot answer. For example, the question of whether or not God exists, the question of suffering and pain in the world, the problem of what happens after death and the destiny of the soul, the question of the purpose of human life, and so on. These questions are left to religion to answer, and sometimes philosophy helps in supplying answers. But most people in the world cannot understand philosophy or science, whereas almost everyone is able to follow or obtain something from religion. It is religion, therefore which tries to solve these profound questions for everyone. Without it we certainly would be more ignorant than we are concerning these and many other problems.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 198.

Religion takes care of the spiritual aspect of human life. At the same time it does not neglect the physical aspect. This plays out well in the Igbo cultural context. By means of rituals, incantations, offerings, marriages, child dedications, funerals, dances, beating of drums, harvest festivals and pouring of libations religion helps to address both the spiritual and physical needs of life in the Igbo ethnic group. According to John Mbiti:

In many religions of the world.....it is recognized that people have both physical and spiritual parts. It is only religion which nourishes the spiritual part of man. That does not mean that religion ignores the physical side. In fact true religion is concerned with both the physical and spiritual welfare of man. To feed the spiritual half of man, religion provides spiritual insights, prayers, rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices and offerings, dedication, devotion, trust in God, and other religious exercises. We saw thatreligion has many rituals of every kind. These are the channels for the contact between men and the spiritual world, between men and God. Through them men stretch out their spiritual parts towards the invisible world and the things of the spirit. This spiritual hunger for peace, joy, comfort, security, hope, love and so on, can only be satisfied by religion.²¹⁹

However there exists a troubling aspect of religion in Igbo land. That aspect concerns the belief in the *Dibia* (medicine man). They are also known as *Dibia afa*. The *Dibia* can also be called the herbalist or native doctor. The *Dibia* much power and influence within the community. They are believed to have the power to see the future or to recall what happened in the distant past. It is believed that the *Dibia* is closer to the gods by their special gifts and so they have special and supernatural powers. Many Igbos believe the predictions and decisions of the *Dibia*. The decisions of the *Dibia* often tear families apart and create much crisis in the community. It is a source of intra-ethnic violence. Take for example within the Igbo culture, it is difficult for people to believe that somebody can die of natural causes. Anytime someone dies it is believed that such a

²¹⁹ Ibid. 198-199.

person must have been poisoned by his or her enemy. Even when someone died at old age, there is the feeling that the death must have been as a result of poisoning. So the relatives of the dead person will go to the Dibia to find out who the enemy was that must have poisoned the dead person. The Dibia usually starts by asking his visitors to narrate the history of their family, whether they are in dispute/conflict with any of their neighbors. The Dibia will take money or gifts and then gives them a name of someone who must have been responsible in causing the death of their relative. These relatives of the dead will go home and begin to plan on how to retaliate in secret. They may not even confront the person whose name was mentioned by the Dibia. In this way violence and conflict continue to escalate in the community. This is a negative aspect of the Igbo religious practice.

5.1.3 IGBO CONCEPT OF *CHUKWU* (SUPREME BEING)

The Igbo traditional religion (ITR) is closely related to the African traditional religion. However as the Africa traditional religion situates itself from one culture after another there emerge slight variations and differences. These traditional means and ways of worship in various cultures and traditions together make up what has been termed the African traditional religion (ATR). They have the concept of the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being has various names in different parts of Africa. The pattern of reverence or worship offered to the Supreme Being differs from place to place.

The Igbo people have the concept of *Chukwu*. This means the Supreme Being. Other terms used to explain the Supreme Being include *Olisa*, *Oseburuwa* and *Chineke*. The Supreme Being is regarded as the creator of the universe. The Supreme Being is referred to as *chukwu onye okike na onye nwe ihe nile*. This means God the creator and

owner of all things. This God is written with capital 'G' instead of the small 'g'. The small g is used when referring to the *obere chi, umu alusi* that is, the deities or what is referred to as small gods in Igbo land. Describing the Chukwu (Supreme Being) as the creator of the universe, Mbiti observed:

First and foremost God is said to be the Creator of all things. This belief is common everywhere in Africa. For that reason there are many names which describe him as Creator, Creator of all things, Moulder, Begetter, Bearer, Maker, Potter, Fashioner, Architect, Carpenter, Originator, Constructor, and so on. There are also hundreds of African myths which tell about God's work of creation.²²⁰

Although it is believed that *Chukwu* is the creator and sustainer of the universe, there are varieties of opinions within the Igbo ethnic community as to how God actually carried out the act of creation. Mbiti writes:

Some.....people say that God created the universe out of nothing. Others believe that he first created certain things, and then used their substance to create more things. God created when there was nothing, and he continues to create new things. He has never stopped his work of creation. He also continues to shape and reshape what he has created. It is believed in some societies that when God was in the process of making all things, he made helpers or assistants whom he put in charge of making certain things under his supervision and direction. But in most.....societies, people believe that God alone was responsible for making everything without a helper and without an assistant. What he made included the visible and invisible universe, the heavens and the things thereof, the earth and things thereof. He also established the laws of nature to govern the world, and gave people laws, customs and gifts by means of which they could live.²²¹

Igbo tradition has the concept of *Chineke ji ike nile* (God as omnipotent). It is believed that God is all powerful, all knowing, everlasting. Sometimes when there is great thunder or lightening, people interpret it as Chineke manifesting his power. Big

²²⁰ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* 2nd edition, 49.

²²¹ Ibid.

rivers, oceans, mountains or trees can also be perceived as the manifestation of the greatness of the Supreme Being. *Chineke ebuka* (God is great) is a popular slogan in Igbo tradition. *Chukwu mazu ihe nile, O na afuzu ihe nile, O na igwe ogodo ya na-akpu na-ala* (God knows everything, sees everything, God is in the sky but his clothing touches the earth). Such are the Igbo expressions that manifest the immensity of *Chukwu*.

The Igbo people believe that *Chukwu bu ofu* - Supreme Being is one. The oneness of God is an important concept. Christians, Muslims and Jews also believe in the oneness of God. Amir Hussain writes:

For Muslims, the cardinal principle of faith is the oneness of God. In Arabic, this is known as tawheed (unity). Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam is monotheistic, and Muslims believe they worship the same God worshipped by Jews and Christians. Jews, Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Muslims have differences in their understanding of God, but none would confess to a plurality of gods. For Muslims, the greatest sin is to give anyone but God the status of God.²²²

The Igbos also believe that this great God has helpers known as the Deities. *Ha bu Ndi ozi na ndi enyemaka nke Chineke*, (Deities are the messengers and servants of God).

These helpers are compared to the angels in the Christian and Muslim traditions. Amir Hussain speaking of angels in the Islamic tradition, observed:

In our modern world, angels have made something of a comeback. Guardian angel pins and pictures of angels are everywhere. In the Muslim tradition there is no such comeback, because angels have never left. Muslims believe that God's angels surround us at all times, recording our deeds. The angels perform other functions as well, such as supporting the throne of God and bringing down God's blessings to the world.²²³

²²² Amir Hussain, *Oil & Water, Two Faiths: One God* (Canada: Copper House, 2006) 102.

²²³ Ibid. 103.

In the Christian tradition the angels are believed to be servants of God. In the Bible there abound many stories of angels who assist before the throne of God and who are messengers of God. The Bible narrates the story of the angels Raphael:

I will now tell you the whole truth; I will conceal nothing at all from you. I have already said to you, 'A king's secret it is prudent to keep, but the works of God are to be made known with due honor.' I can now tell you that when you, Tobit and Sarah prayed, it was I who presented and read the record of your prayer before the Glory of the Lord; and I did the same thing when you used to bury the dead. When you did not hesitate to get up and leave your dinner in order to go and bury the dead, I was sent to put you to the test. At the same time, however, God commissioned me to heal you and your daughter-in-law Sarah. I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who enter and serve before the Glory of the Lord. (Tobit 12: 11-15)²²⁴

The Igbo people believe that without the help of God human beings cannot accomplish much in the world, *ewepu Chukwu uwa enweghi isi* (without God the world is be meaningless). Igbo manifest their dependence on God in the names given to their infants. Most of the Igbo names are derived from God and/or religion. Chukwuma Ezeobah observed:

Reading through Igbo personal names, expressions and meanings, one finds out that Igbo people are deeply religious, they believe in the Supreme God; the Creator (Chineke, Chukwu); they believe in the personal protective god (Chi) or guardian angel; the people believe in the spirits or their ancestors; in spirits in general – both good spirits and bad spirits (mmuo, alusi, agwu).²²⁵

Ezeobah continued:

The belief that Chukwu is the creator of all things both visible and invisible, is all powerful, is the source of all knowledge, is reflected in the names Igbo people give their children. These names manifest the people's beliefs, feelings, concepts, faith and

²²⁴ *New American Bible* (New York: American Bible Society, 1991).

²²⁵ Chukwuma Ezeobah, *Personal and Title Names Expressions of The Igbo People of Nigeria* (USA: Haboknarf Books, 2006) xiii.

confidence in the Almighty God. In the expressions of Chukwu in Igbo names, Chukwu is a prefix or suffix of the full name.²²⁶

Here are some list of Igbo names derived from the concept and understanding of *Chukwu (God)*. *Chukwuma* – God is all knowing. This name is often shortened as *Chuma*. *Chukwuka* – God is all powerful and mightier than all. This is shortened as *Chuka*. *Chukwunwendu* – God is the owner and sustainer of all life. This name connotes that all life belongs to God. No one therefore has the right to take his own life or the life of another person. This name is often shortened as *Chinwe*. It is mostly given to females. *Chukwukadibia* – God is more powerful than medicine men or doctors. Within the ethnic community there is a belief that God has the power to heal someone when the doctors fail. *Chukwudi* – God exists. This name acknowledges the existence of God. The name Chukwudi is often shortened as *Chidi*. *Chukwunonso* – God is close to all. This name suggests that God is a personal God. It connotes that God did not just create the world and abandon it to random fate or chance. It stresses that God runs the day by day business and activities in the world. This name is shortened as *Nonso*.

Chukwukelu – God the creator. This name expresses the belief that God made everything in the world. It means that God is the creator and sustainer of life. This name is meant to remind the child that God created him and that he has to make the effort as he grows to behave and act as a child of God.²²⁷ This is shortened as *Chikelu*. *Chukwunedu* or *Chinedu* – God leads and guides. *Onye buru chi ya uzo O gbagbue onwe ya na na-oso* – if you go faster than your *chi* (God) you run the risk of running aimlessly. The

²²⁶ Ibid. 100.

²²⁷ Ibid. 100-101.

lesson is to remind the Igbos to recognize the power of God in their lives. This name is often shortened as *nedu*.

The Igbo belief in the Supreme Being helps in intra-ethnic unity and harmony. But at the same time has negative effects in the community. Seeing God in everything can be dangerous. It can impede someone's reasoning ability, trust and having confidence in oneself. Extreme religiosity leads to belief in the Dibia (fortune teller or Herbalist). The Dibia makes false predictions and prophesy. Because of peoples' extreme religious practices they easily believe these Dibia or Socererers. Their predictions are taken as verdicts from God. Attributing everything to the action of God can make people to be religious fanatics and extremists.

This problem becomes more complex given the fact that not many people are educated in the Igbo community (though in recent times education has improved). With education comes more reasoning ability and critical thinking. Also due to extreme religious practices people believe unnecessarily in dreams. Next they rush to the Dibia or Soothsayers to seek the interpretation. The interpretation might be that their next door neighbor has been the cause of their problems. The individual might decide to retaliate and the end result will be violence. One act of violence easily leads to another.

5.1.4 IGBO COMMUNITY LIFE

The Igbo ethnic community is a rural community where everybody knows everybody. When you walk through the streets you see kids playing together. Often you see elders gathered in the *ama – ogbako* (village square) chatting and discussing. There is an Igbo proverb which says *Gidi –Gidi bu ugwu Eze* (united we stand but divided we fall). The village square or community center is a meeting place of ideas for the welfare

and wellbeing of the community. It is a place where political ideas are raised and discussed, a place where people who grew up together and live together gather to discuss and find solutions to the problems affecting their lives. Onwubiko writes:

The community is the custodian of the individual; hence he must go where the community goes. In the material term of reference, the individual must go to the 'community center' or village square which is a social, political, judicial and religious center. It is the communal meeting place for political discussions, communal tribunals, sports and games. It is therefore a traditional place of congregation for the entire community.²²⁸

The community square is the place where each village has their *chi* (deity). This was applicable before the coming of Christianity in Igbo land. Even with the coming of the Christian faith, those community squares still exist in many places. In the present day Igbo culture what is seen in most squares is village hall on one side and shrine for the deity on another side. Many people have been converted to Christianity though some still practice the traditional/native religion. Prior to the coming of Christianity village squares were the centers for communal religious worship, sacrifices as well as festivities. In contemporary society, the town or village square still serves as a place for meeting and dialogue for the people. Traditional worshippers use the squares as their place of worship but the majority of the population who are now Christians worship in churches. However the community center still serves as a place for festivities and a cultural center for the community.

Individuals come and go but the community remains. The community offers the people a sense of security, cultural identity and sense of value.²²⁹ There is strong ethnic identity. Visitors are welcomed by still in some sense they do not belong. It is believed

²²⁸ Ibid. 21.

²²⁹ Ibid.

that visitors will surely go some day. There is a saying in Igbo culture *Obiara bem abiagbunem onaba mkpu-mkpu apu na ya na-azu* (let my visitor not bring me ill luck or pain, when he leaves let him go without sickness or pain). Visitors do not attend village square meetings. If they happen to visit any of such meetings they have to leave or stay outside when important confidential issues are being discussed. It would be difficult for visitors to stay in the community. This is because of the language barrier. Discussions are done in Igbo, the native language. Neighboring ethnic groups have their own different languages. That makes the entire scenario complicated.

If you are a member of an ethnic group, you are *nwadi-ala* or the *ama –ala* (a native or son of the soil to use Igbo parlance). There is sense of oneness within the Igbo ethnic group. There is a sense of communalism. As J. Chukwuemeka Ekei puts it, this communalism emanates from the Igbo concept of human beings. The human being in Igbo language is called *mmadu*. *Mmadu* is a combination of two words *mma* and *ndu*. *Mma* means beauty. *Ndu* means life or creation in general. The notion of *mmadu* means that human beings are the beauty of creation. There exists in Igbo culture the belief that humans thrive better within the context of a collective enterprise.²³⁰ Igbo people understood the human person within this concept of collectivity. There is the concept of ‘I am because we are’. It is the concept of *biri kam biri* (live and let live). This concept of collective effort helps the human person face the challenges of day to day difficulties and the predicaments of life. Ekei writes:

It is from this ontological ambients that man’s behavior is better manifested, and studied. It is as if his social condition helps man to cope with his existential predicaments, giving rise to the evolution

²³⁰ J. Chukwuemeka Ekei, *Justice in Communalism: A Foundation of Ethics in African Philosophy* (Lagos-Nigeria: Realm Communications Ltd, 2001) 140.

of ‘common good’, ‘common welfare’, ‘participation’ ‘sharing’ as well as consensus ethical tendencies.²³¹

There are limitations surrounding human existence. These limitations necessarily call for human co-operation. Without mutual co-existence and relationship human life can be a burden or drudgery. The aphorism that no person is an island is in practice in Igbo culture. The Igbo people express this in a proverb: *Onye oke amamihe lie onwe ya ofu aka ya ga ese na –elu* (if a selfish person decides to bury himself, it is likely he will not do a good job, for one of his hands might remain visible.)

There is the concept of *Ikpu-alu* (cleansing) in the Igbo community. *Ikpu-alu* connotes the belief that what happens to any member of the community affects other members. When someone commits a heinous crime like murder there is a need to cleanse mother earth. The Igbo people would say that such a person *melulu ala* (spoiled the earth). *O mere ihe ala na-aso nso* (He did what the earth abhors). There is a ritual cleansing of the entire community by the *Onye isi nchu aja* (Chief Priest). It is not only the cleansing of the residence of the victim or the perpetrator, but the cleansing of the entire community. This is because it is believed that the crime has polluted the entire community. If this ritual cleansing is not done there is a belief that the gods will be angry and that the gods might send punishment to the entire community for its moral laxity. Failure in moral actions is believed to attract the anger of the gods upon the community, hence the need for propitiation and offering of libation to the gods. John S. Mbiti writes:

In some places it is believed that certain diseases or accidents come only from God in punishment for unknown or unconfessed moral offences. If there is a large-scale natural calamity such as a serious drought, flooding, or a devastating earthquake, people often interpret it as a punishment from God upon the community or

²³¹ Ibid.

society concerned as a result of increased moral offences. This interpretation means that natural calamities are believed to be caused by society itself because of its falling moral standards. God brings these calamities to punish the people and bring them back to a proper observance of their morals. There are legends and stories in many societies which tell how people were punished by God in the past for failing to observe morals and for falling into vice. The myths which speak about the separation of God and men, or of heaven (sky) and earth, and the coming of death, have often the same idea. In these myths everything would have gone well for men if only they had obeyed certain rules given to them by God.²³²

There is the belief that personal evil is in some sense a societal evil. The entire community is affected by individual misdeeds and hence a collective effort is needed to appease the gods and cleanse the land. In the positive sense, if a son or daughter of the land achieves something great, it is also an achievement for the entire community. For example in times of war between two ethnic communities those men who showed great valor in the field of battle are accorded special respects and given special titles. Such names like *Dike na agha* (warrior in battle), *Agu na eche mba* (Lion that protects a clan) are given to such heroes by the community. During wrestling contests between different communities those who are victorious bring honor not only to themselves but to the entire community. Chinua Achebe in his novel *Things Fall Apart* narrated the story of how Okonkwo brought great honor to his clan by defeating his opponent Amalinze, nicknamed the Cat. Achebe writes:

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed

²³² John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (South Africa: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1991) 179.

was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven day and seven nights.²³³

In the traditional Igbo world-view community spirit is encouraged. Individual achievements are celebrated but such achievements are seen within the context of the entire community. Somebody who is wealthy is expected to share his wealth with the community. The community expects him to sponsor community events. Members of the community do not need his invitation in order to visit him in his house and celebrate. Although individualism is not necessarily encouraged in the community, but at the same time individualism is not destroyed.²³⁴ These words of Steve Biko captured what is obtainable in the Igbo community:

We regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap warranting endless competition among us but as a deliberated act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to the varied problems of life. Hence in all we do we always place man first and hence all our action is usually joint community oriented action rather than the individualism.....”²³⁵

There is a popular proverb in the community which says *aka nri kwoo aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwoo aka nri* (let the right hand wash the left hand and vice versa). This proverb connotes that every Tom, Dick and Harry should put hands together to develop the community and work for the welfare of the community. The spirit of friendship is encouraged. The aphorism *nwanne na oge nsogbu bu ya bu ezigbo nwanne* (a friend in time of need is a friend in deed) is prevalent in the community. These help to foster unity in the community.

²³³ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (USA:Anchor Books, 1994) 3.

²³⁴ Oliver Onwubiko, *Wisdom Lectures on African Thought and Culture*, 22.

²³⁵ Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like* (Chicago, University of Chicago press, 2002) 42.

The Igbo ethnic community inculcates the sense of community into their young ones. This is not unique to Igbo culture alone. It is a human value which people of various cultures share. The difference being that each culture, tribe, nationality or ethnic group carries out these values in their own unique way. The Igbo ethnic group pass on these values to their younger generation through *akuko ifo* (stories), *Ilu Igbo* (proverb/folklore), *nkuzi amamihe* (wise sayings).

In Igbo land the sense of community also is manifested in personal names like *mmaduka* (humans are priceless). It is highlighted in Igbo expression *mmadu ka eji aka* (having good friends is a great asset). There is the philosophy that each person has something to contribute to the society. Encouraging the community spirit helps especially those who may be thinking that they are helpless or not needed in the community. They are to know that the community needs them and that no one may be completely useless to the community.²³⁶ The challenge for the Igbo community will be to be more inclusive to non-members of the ethnic group. Ethnic and religious conflicts can be ameliorated in Nigeria when citizens care for everyone and not just people from their ethnic group. It is necessary to break through the confines of ethnic group and have a national perspective. Such will make for a more peaceful and progressive society.

5.1.5 IGBO SENSE OF HOSPITALITY

Closely related to the Igbo sense of community is the sense of hospitality. It is expressed in Igbo sayings like *enyi di ka nwanne*, (friend better than a brother) Chieka Ifemesia describes it as “a way of life emphatically centered upon human interests and

²³⁶ J. Maurus, *It's Human Relations That Count* (Bombay: St. Paul Press, 1994) 10.

values; a mode of living evidently characterized by empathy and by consideration and compassion for human beings.”²³⁷

The concept of hospitality and human relation in Igbo ethnic community emphasize friendship both in good and bad times. It can be expressed with the analogy of the ferryman’s story. The ferryman would like his friendship with people to be both during the dry season as well as in the rainy season. The ferryman is important in the rainy season because he has to help people to cross the stream/river. In the rainy season everyone would want to be the ferryman’s friend because everyone depends on him and needs his services. But the ferryman would want such friendship also during the dry season when the ferryman apparently has no job.²³⁸

In the Igbo community, the elderly, less fortunate or the sick are cared for and are accommodated by the members of their family. There are no retirement homes. Whether a member of the family has a job or not the members of the family take care of each other. It is often difficult to find beggars on the streets. This concept of care for others in times of need in no way encourages laziness or indolence. Laziness is frowned at. A man is supposed to be hard working in the farm and be able to provide food for his family. A woman is supposed to be hardworking as well, helping the man and taking care of the home. The children are encouraged to be hardworking and to do their chores. When a man is perceived to be lazy and/or careless about the important things that he is supposed to do he does not have respect within the community. Chinua Achebe in one of his books

²³⁷ Chieka Ifemesia, *Traditional Humane Living Among The Igbo* (Enugu-Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1979) 2.

²³⁸ Oliver Onwubiko, *Wisdom Lectures on African Thought and Culture*, 26.

portrayed the character of a lazy and care free man who goes about eating and drinking and being in debt. Achebe talked about such a fellow in the character known as Unoka:

In his day he was lazy and improvident and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow. If any money came his way, and it seldom did, he immediately bought gourds of palm-wine, called round his neighbors and made merry. He always said that whenever he saw a dead man's mouth he saw the folly of not eating what one had in one's life time. Unoka was, of course, a debtor, and he owed every neighbor some money, from a few cowries to quite substantial amounts.²³⁹

In the Igbo community, just like in many other communities around the world, hard work and industry is encouraged.

The sense of hospitality is manifested in the concept of *Oji Igbo* (kola nut). *Oji Igbo* is a fruit or seed. *Oji Igbo* is a little bit bitter in the mouth. The *Oji Igbo* is a rich symbol in the community. It is important during Igbo meetings and gatherings. Richard Mbachu writes: "This custom is at the top of the agenda for all meaningful gatherings of Igbo people. The kola nut yields lobes which contain caffeine, a stimulant. The stimulant can serve the purpose of keeping people awake while talks go on."²⁴⁰ An apology needs to be offered by the organizers of meetings or celebrations for being unable to offer kola nut. Igbo kola can be found any place in the world. Wherever you have Igbo people you will always find kola nut. Being far away from Igbo land may not be adequate reason for not having kola during meetings and Igbo occasions. Mbachu continues:

Apology for non-availability of Igbo kola nuts could be offered, but the nature of the response depends on whether the error is culpable or could have been avoided. That is why even in faraway foreign countries or cities such as Chicago, Illinois, Igbo Kola nut are imported from Igbo land in Nigeria and sold in African stores. There are various types of kola nuts, but the Igbo species carries at

²³⁹ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994) 4.

²⁴⁰ Richard Mbachu, *African Tales in Igbo Proverbs* (Illinois: Omenala Africa Network, 1998) 127.

least three lobes, sometimes up to ten. A kola nut containing an even number 4, 6, 8 etc., is said to be a sign of possible successful talks since it will be shared by as many people as possible. To dramatize the value of Igbo kola nuts, the natives usually say, no kola nuts, no talks....²⁴¹

Kola nut is a great symbol of welcome in Igbo land. Once a visitor comes into a home the first part of entertainment is to offer such a guest *Oji Igbo*. Offering of kola nut goes with blessings, some wise sayings and prayers. The host will present the kola on a plate or dish to the guest. The guest will touch it and then give it back to the host (homeowner) for him to do the benedictions and to break it. If there are many guests in the room, the kola nut will have to be passed around and shown to everybody. It might take some time because each person might say few words of blessing before passing the kola nut to the next person. After the kola had travelled round the room as the Igbo people would say, it would come back to the presenter (land lord). Igbo people has the saying *oji Eze di Eze na-aka*, (the King has the right to break the kola). This saying means that the homeowner and presenter of the kola has the right to break the kola. When broken the kola nut usually falls into four parts or two parts. Then the kola is split in bits to make sure that everyone partakes of it.

In some parts of Igbo community some other items are presented together with kola nuts. Such items might include: *aku oyibo* (coconut) *mmanya oku* (traditional gin), *nzu* (chalk). What is presented vary from community to community. But kola nut is the item that is common in all parts of Igbo land. The presentation of kola is a unique sign that the guest is appreciated and that such a person is safe within the household and the community. It is a crime for one to harm one's guest who has come with good intention.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

The slogan of being a nice host is important in the community. There is a proverb which says: *Achina ugbo na enwe nsogbo na oke osimiri ochi maka na nwa nne gi nwere ike ino na ime ya* (Do not laugh at a distant boat being tossed by the waves on the sea, your relative may be in it).²⁴² The Igbos also say: *Oje mba enwe iro* (A traveler has no enemy).

5.1.6 RESPECT FOR HUMAN LIFE IN IGBO COMMUNITY

The Igbo ethnic community respects human life. They believe that life is sacred and that life comes from God. They celebrate life through rituals, festivals, sacrifices as well as ceremonies. They are active people. They are vivacious. The Igbos know that they are alive and they manifest their alertness in various ways. Their dancing style is lively. They have active dancing rhythms. In their singing style, beating of drums, *ekwe* or *ogene* (gong), in their festive life styles, they manifest the fact that they value life and that they want to be alive²⁴³

Homicide is considered a crime crying to the gods for vengeance. In times of inter-ethnic clashes the story is different. Whenever ethnic war erupts those who destroy their opponents are considered as heroes. Under normal circumstances, in the Igbo community whoever is convicted of taking an innocent life is likely to pay for it with his own life. The traditional means of justice is that the culprit would be tried by the *Igwe* (Traditional ruler) and *Ndi Ichie* (Council of elders or cabinet). If one is found guilty of murder, one either receives a capital punishment or is banished from the community. Members of the *Otu ogbo* (age grade) would be designated to secretly carry this out. Those who receive capital punishments are buried in the bad forest. A bad forest is

²⁴² Oliver Onwubiko, *Wisdom Lectures on African Thought and Culture*, 28.

²⁴³ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* 200-201.

believed to be the place where evil spirits live. What often happens however is that someone who suspects that he would be found guilty, by his own volition, escapes into self-exile. The problem with this kind of justice system is that an innocent person can be executed. Often enough time is not given for a thorough investigation before capital punishment is meted out. At the same time one can argue that even in developed countries where someone convicted of murder stays for a long time in prison before execution, an innocent person can still be executed.

Acts of violence are prohibited in Igbo culture. Oliver Onwubiko writes:

This is because shedding of blood is abhorred. People who were killed were those whose continued existence was a threat to the life of others and to the peace of the community. In such cases, the principle that it is better for one man to die than for all the community to perish, applied. War was only taken to as a last resort, that is when all formal and normal courses of action to search for peace had failed. Murder was not encouraged, especially within the clan. If a man conscientiously killed another man within the community, he was killed himself. But if he killed a kinsman inadvertently, he was exiled for some long period. When murder is committed officially that is during war, or in self-defense, the murderer is not expected to eat until he has ritually washed the blood of the slain man off his hands.²⁴⁴

When someone willfully commits murder, it is believed that the wrath from such calamity does not rest only on the culprit alone. The effect it is believed extends to the members of his family. It is believed that the anger of the gods will follow the family members as well. E. Amadi observed that the killing of a human person is the opposite of caring for human life. It is not a simple crime. After the culprit had been executed and

²⁴⁴ Oliver Onwubiko, *Wisdom Lectures on African Thought And Culture*, 29.

buried in the evil forest or after the person had gone into exile, the family will have to do some purification and sacrifices in order to appease the gods.²⁴⁵

The respect for human life which is embedded in Igbo culture is a good asset that can help to reduce ethnic and religious violence in Nigeria. If the Igbos especially the younger generation will go back to their roots or listen to the voices of their elders then much progress can be made toward peaceful co-existence in the country. Same can also be said of young people from other ethnic groups. If they can listen to the wisdom of their elders violence will be controlled. Ethnic groups in Nigeria abhor acts of violence within their group. This should be translated to embrace the entire country. That is the best way forward.

5.1.7 IGBO RESPECT FOR SENIORS

Within the Igbo culture there exists a deep honor and respect for seniors or elders. There is a feeling within the Igbo culture that if you respect and assist elders you will have the reward of old age. This notion tallies with the fourth commandment in the Christian Bible which talks of honoring one's father and mother. According the Bible, the fourth commandment states: "Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land which the Lord, your God is giving you."²⁴⁶ The Bible talked about Ten Commandments. But it is interesting to note that only the fourth one which talks about respect and honor for parents has a reward of long life attached to it. In some sense what is obtainable in Igbo culture agrees with what exists in the Christian moral code. This might account for why many Igbo people were easily converted into the Christian

²⁴⁵ E. Amadi, *Ethics in Nigerian Culture* (Ibadan: Heinemann Press, 1982) 58.

²⁴⁶ *New American Bible*, (New York: American Bible Society, 1991).

faith. They seem to have transferred their fervent religiosity from their traditional religion into their new found religion namely, Christianity.

In Igbo culture people say that grey hair is a sign of wisdom. Some seniors make jokes to young people by telling them *oburugo na inweghi nsopuru, ikwesiri isopuru isi awo m* (if you do not want to respect me, just respect my grey hairs). William Conton has this to say regarding Africans and their respect for elders: “Africans generally have deep and ingrained respect for old age, even when we can find nothing to admire in an old man, we will not easily forget that his grey hairs have earned him right to courtesy and politeness.”²⁴⁷ Longevity is what most human beings long for. The Igbo people are not an exception. Most human beings seem to have this inherent desire to live long life and to see their children’s children.

The Igbo people explain the importance of respect for the elders/seniors with the proverb *Onye fee Eze, Eze elue ya* (if you respect a king, chances exist that you might become a king). If we apply it to the respect for elders, the idea is that if you respect an elderly person you will also be respected if you happen to attain old age. It is also believed that respect for elders is pleasing to the ancestors and the gods. It is a belief in the culture that people who respect and honor elders will most likely be granted long life by the ancestors and the gods.

There are idioms in the culture that supports this concept of respect for elders. One of such says: *nku onye kpatara na okochi ka ona anya na udu mmiri* (the firewood that one gathered and saved in the dry season is what he will use during the rainy season). If you respect an elder when you are young, you are indirectly gathering, earning or

²⁴⁷ W. Conton, *The African* (London: Heinemann Press, 1960) 26.

saving the respect that will be your due when you get old. The Igbo people believe that the gods make this possible in a way that human beings might not be able to comprehend. The Igbo people believe in the concept of *ometelu buru* (karma). They believe that what you sow is what you will reap. If you respect elders or seniors you are sowing the seed of long life as well as the seed of respect for yourself when your time comes. Conversely if you do not respect seniors, you are also sowing the seed of disrespect for yourself when your time comes and chances are that the gods may not grant you long life.

Our discussion and analysis of some aspects of life and activities of the Igbo ethnic group is to show how the community is bound together by certain cultural values. These cultural values or ways of living unite the Igbo ethnic community. Most of the struggles and activities of Nigerians are viewed from the ethnic perspective. Tell me your name and I will tell you your ethnic group. This is because somebody's name easily tells his ethnic group. Giving of names at birth goes on ethnic lines. If you are born and raised in Nigeria, once you hear the name of another person from Nigeria, you will most probably be able to say the part of the country where that individual comes from. You will be able to know which ethnic group, most especially if that person comes from one of the major ethnic groups. This tells a lot about the ethnic divisions in Nigeria and to transcend such divisions remain a challenge to many Nigerians. The various ethnic groups are more peaceful within their ethnic communities. There is less intra-ethnic violence in the country. What is more rampant is inter-ethnic violence. Ethnic groups work together to preserve unity within their community. Cultural values help them to work for such unity.

5.2 HAUSA ETHNIC GROUP

The Hausa people are the largest ethnic community in Nigeria. There is a lot of difference between the Hausa people and the Igbo people discussed earlier. That is why some Nigerians feel that it might be better if the amalgamation had not taken place. Each ethnic group could have been a separate nation. The Hausas live in the northern part of Nigeria and they are predominantly Muslims. Islamic faith and rituals have been incorporated into village systems and as such Islamic religion becomes part and parcel of the Hausa culture and tradition. It is believed that Islam entered the Hausa ethnic community around 1085. Liman writes: "Historically, the first place Islam penetrated in northern Nigeria was Kanem Bornu. It came through Muhammad ibn Mani during the reign of Umme Jilmi(ca.1085-1097)."²⁴⁸ With regards to the origin and historical background of the Hausa ethnic group, a mythical analysis proffered an answer:

Hausa myth tells of a young Berber named Abu Yazid, who came from the north to the Hausa town of Daura. The people of Daura were having trouble finding water because a large snake lived in the town well. Abu Yazid came to Daura and killed the snake. He became the town hero and in time he married the queen. They had seven sons who became the founders of the seven Hausa city states.²⁴⁹

Ethnic groups in Nigeria are known by their languages. In the Hausa ethnic group, the language spoken is known as Hausa language. Hausa language is not only spoken in Nigeria. There are some other countries where sections of the population speak Hausa Language. Such countries include Ghana, Niger, Chad etc. Frank A. Salamone writes:

The Hausa of Nigeria are chiefly found in the provinces of Kano, Katsina, Sokoto and Zaria.... When one adds other Hausa speakers

²⁴⁸ Sa'adatu Hassan Lima, "Shari'a and Politics: Crises, Conflicts, And Resolutions" in Julius O. Adekunle ed. *Religion in Politics Secularism And National Integration in Modern Nigeria* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc. 2009) 160.

²⁴⁹ James E. Plueddemann, "Resistance and Change Among the Hausa" *Missology* 3 no1 Ja 1975 p. 79.

in Niger and communities in Ghana and throughout West Africa, the figure is about 50 million. The Hausa language is a branch of the Chad group of the Afro-Asiatic language family, serving as a lingua franca in West Africa.²⁵⁰

The number of Hausa language speakers in Nigeria has increased tremendously over the years. In terms of their occupation, the Hausa people are mainly farmers. They engage in planting of crops and rearing of livestock.

Almost all Hausas farm at least part-time and the Maguzawa are full-time farmers. Muslim Hausa are also at least part-time occupational specialists. Agriculture is scheduled around the May-October rainy season with millet, maize, Guinea Corn, and rice supplying the bulk of the diet. However, peanuts, cowpeas, sweet potatoes, cotton, sugarcane, bamboo, tobacco, cassava and other crops are also grown. Hausas also raise livestock including horses, donkeys, goats, sheep, and poultry.²⁵¹

The Hausa city-states engage in commercial activities. These activities are mainly productive peasantries. James E. Plueddemann writes that the concept of peasantry is helpful in the understanding of the historical process. He argued that in recent times interests have developed in the study of rural population which form part of larger, more complex societies. These people form the rural population and are considered as peasants. There are many outside forces acting on them but they are not isolated. As a group they are part of a larger complex society. They are cultivators who live in relation to market towns, which, in turn are related to larger urban centers. They may be considered peasants but they are however related to a great tradition.²⁵²

The Hausa ethnic group has the advantage of having powerful kings and leaders who made sure that law and order are maintained. The actions of their powerful kings

²⁵⁰ Frank A. Salamone, *The Hausa of Nigeria* (New York: University Press of America Inc, 2010) 2.

²⁵¹ Ibid. 2.

²⁵² James E. Plueddemann, "Resistance and Change Among the Hausa" *Missiology*, 3 no. 1 Ja 1975 p.77.

help to check acts of violence in the area. This curtails the nefarious activities of robbers and marauders who specialize in attacking traders and merchants there by disrupting the free flow of business activities. Toyin Falola writes: “The Hausa city-states and the Kanem-Borno Empire emerged, sustained by a productive peasantry, powerful kings and highly developed commercial transactions, and the mobility provided by cavalry.”²⁵³

One of the problems that disrupt the keeping of livestock within the Hausa area is the incidence of tsetse flies. Falola notes:

Tsetse flies, the carriers of trypanosomiasis, are deadly to livestock. Where these flies are common, in the rain forest, cattle and horse keeping has been difficult. Interaction between the zones is fairly common, including long distance trade to distribute products from various ecological areas.²⁵⁴

5.2.1 HAUSA SOCIAL/FAMILY STRUCTURE

Frank Salamone writes about the Hausa household:

The compound, made up of a man, his wife or wives, and their children is the smallest social unit. Other family members, clients and their families may also inhabit the compound. Therefore, patrilocal extended families or joint fraternal families often inhabit a compound. The *mai-gida*, or male head of the family, rules the compound. The compound forms a joint agricultural unit. Occupational specialties, however, are at the discretion of the individual. As Muslims, each Hausa male may have four wives and as many concubines as he can support.....Division of labor is a basic principle. Men are responsible for agriculture, collecting activities, marketing, sewing, laundry, building repairs, and transport. Women cook, own their husbands one cooked meal a day, clean house, take care of children, pursue their craft specialties, and sometimes engage in trade.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999) 3.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Frank A. Salamone, *The Hausa of Nigeria*, 2-3.

The Hausa pride themselves as being organized as well as civilized. They have village organizations which is under the leadership of the village heads. The Emir is the overall leader of a vast area such as a state. And the state is made up of several villages. The Emir oversees the cluster of villages and maintains law and order in his area of jurisdiction.²⁵⁶

In the Hausa community a good deal of business transactions can be conducted simply with handshakes and verbal agreements with or without witnesses. The system of markets, traders and families bind the various part of the ethnic group together. Villages markets in remote rural areas meet periodically. These rural markets are connected to the markets in large settlement areas regarded as urban areas. These markets in the urban areas serve as daily markets. In turn these daily markets are tied to yet other bigger and central markets in the regional centers. Various officials see to the smooth running and operation of these chains of markets.²⁵⁷

Hausa community members teach their children to be loyal and obedient to their parents. The same pattern of loyalty is given to leaders of their communities. Frank Salamone observes:

Occupation, wealth and patron-client relationships play a part in the system but birth is at its root. Family is a key factor, perhaps the key factor in the hierarchical ladder. Sons are expected to follow their father's occupation and his wishes. Society, in theory and ideally, is held together by filial loyalty. The patron-client relationship is patterned on the father-son relationship and loyalty to the sultan and emirs, indeed to all officials, is that of family members to one's father.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Ibid. 3.

²⁵⁷ Ibid. 3-4.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. 4.

5.2.2 RELIGION IN HAUSA ETHNIC GROUP

The Hausa ethnic society has a lot of influence from the Islamic religion. Both the political and legal systems are influenced by Islamic beliefs and rules. For Plueddemann “Islam did not make any serious attempt to change the whole Hausa cultural system. It first replaced the political and legal system. The change in cultural practice came later.”²⁵⁹ Trimingham observed that Islamic daily activities and practices were incorporated and/or assimilated into the Hausa culture without much change in the cultural practices and rites. The introduction of the Islamic practices was gradual without many changes during the early stages. The next step was the formal acceptance of Islamic faith and the discarding of fetish practices which were considered to be forms of paganism by the Islamic missionaries. With time the tenets and sanctions of Islamic faith became the norm. For Trimingham, the Islamic missionaries were gradual and methodical in their approach and missionary work.²⁶⁰ Adekunle writes:

Islam was the first of the foreign religions to infiltrate Nigeria. It was introduced through trade and since its penetration Islam has established a relationship with the people and their culture. Some aspects of Islam agreed with the cultural beliefs and practices of the Nigeria societies, and assimilated well into their pre-Islamic political system. Thus Islam appealed to some rulers and gradually became a major influence on politics. It displaced the Habe indigenous rulers and installed a religiously based political system. The establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1808 under the leadership of Usman dan Fodio brought about a political and religious reconfiguration of the Hausa states.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ James E. Plueddemann, “Resistance and Change Among the Hausa” 81.

²⁶⁰ Spencer J. Trimingham, *A History of Islam in West Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959) 43.

²⁶¹ Julius O. Adekunle, “Religion and Politics in Transition” in Julius Adekunle ed. *Religion in Politics: Secularism and National Integration in Modern Nigeria* (New Jersey: African World Press Inc. 2009) 5-6.

The bond between Muslims tends to be stronger than the influence Christianity has on its adherents in various parts of Nigeria. The reason being that the Christian faith as practiced in Nigeria has various versions and divisions more than what is obtainable in the Muslim tradition. The unity and/or togetherness witnessed among the Nigerian Muslims might stem from the fact that most of them belong to a particular brand of the Muslim tradition namely, the Sunni. Adekunle underscored this point: “ Among the Muslims there are the Sunni, who make up approximately 99 percent and Shi’ites who are about 1 percent of the Muslim population.”²⁶² What is interesting to observe is that whenever religious conflict erupts between Christians and Muslims, the sub groups within Christianity or Islam are not noticed or mentioned. What is said is that Christians and Muslims are in conflict. People do not say whether the Sunni Muslims are fighting with Catholic Christians or Protestants Christians. In times of conflicts Christians or Muslims tend to be together in fighting for their common goal.

Education of the young people is an important means that the Hausa ethnic community uses in bringing their community together and for transmitting their cultural values to younger generation. Most of the Nigerian leaders since independence have come from the Hausa area. Other Nigerians tend to believe that those leaders have promoted education in the Hausa community than in other communities. Such view brings the mindset of division and conflict among the populace. Rosalind Hackett observes:

The majority of the country’s political leaders have been from the North (although not always Muslim). Thus, while the various governments have employed differing quota strategies to try to reflect a ‘federal character’ Nigerians have every reason to be

²⁶² Ibid. 6.

doubtful of the concept of fair play, with nepotism and corruption rife at every level of Nigerian life.²⁶³

The cultural differences coupled with the level of corruption in Nigeria make it possible for leaders to think more of their own ethnic community and background more than the general welfare of the nation. After all leaders are not prosecuted and/or held accountable for their corrupt leadership style and actions. A statement credited to a former presidential aspirant from the northern region captured a prevailing sentiment among some folks:

Everyone has a gift from God. The Northerners are endowed by God with leadership qualities. The Yoruba man knows how to earn a living and has diplomatic qualities. The Igbo is gifted in commerce, trade and technological innovation. God so created us individually for a purpose and with different gifts²⁶⁴

Any leader who comes to power with such frame of thought may not be work for the unity of the Nigerian nation. This shows why Nigerian unity continues to suffer. Patriotism and the building of strong Nigerian nation seem to be far from the consciousness of many Nigerians.

Education among the Hausa community incorporated high degree the Islamic tenets. Islamic subjects including Arabic Language were established at different levels of the educational system. When the Nigeria federal government introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 some Hausa Muslims perceived such system as a conspiracy to disrupt the Islamic education. This gave rise to protests and conflicts within their communities. They thought that such program will bring down the moral standard

²⁶³ Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "Conflict in the Classroom: Educational Institutions as Sites of Religious Tolerance/Intolerance in Nigeria" *Brigham Young University Law Review* 1999, Vol. 1999 Issue 2. 540.

²⁶⁴ Alhaji Maitama Sule, Tell, Nov.14, 1994 p. 13 In Rosalind Hackett "Conflict in the Classroom: Educational Institutions as Sites of Religious Tolerance/Intolerance in Nigeria" *Brigham Young University Law Review* 1999, Vol. 1999 Issue 2. 540.

obtainable in their schools. The universal primary education was geared toward encouraging many children to avail themselves of the opportunity of education. The system was criticized for being inadequately prepared for it brought about massive influx of students in schools, sometimes without commensurate resources to deal with the large number of students.²⁶⁵

Nigerian leaders (who have been mostly Muslims) were blamed for giving a preferential treatment to Muslims/Hausas when it comes to education. It was believed that they have been backward in education when compared with their Christian counterpart. Nathaniel Ndiokwere writes:

Muslim leaders in Nigeria find reasons to justify their discriminatory attitude in favor of the Muslims. Christian education and Christian missionaries are blamed for Muslim backwardness in education, especially during the pre-independent period.²⁶⁶

Babs Fafunwa, who was at one time a Federal Minister for education in Nigeria, blamed the Christian Missionaries for the low level of education among the Hausa ethnic community. Such can constitute a source of conflict in the country. Fafunwa argued:

Muslim education in Nigeria was retarded not because the Muslims were unprogressive or because their religion was opposed to formal education, but because 'education' in those days tended to mean Bible Knowledge, Christian Ethics, Christian moral instruction, Christian literature, some Arithmetic, language and crafts – all geared to produce Christians who could read the bible. When the Christian missions started converting animist and a few Muslims, the majority of Muslim parents barred their children attending the free Christian schools' for fear of conversion²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Roselind I. J. Hackett, *Brigham Young University Law review*, 543.

²⁶⁶ Nathaniel I. Ndiokwere, *The African Church Today And Tomorrow Vol. 1: Prospects and Challenges* (Onitsha-Nigeria: Effective Key Publishers Limited, 1994) 81.

²⁶⁷ Babs Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (London: HarperCollins, 1974) 72.

When it is said that Muslims are backwards in education, it also implies that the northern region is backwards in education. Furthermore it implies that the Hausa ethnic group is backward in education. These are all tied together. On the other hand when you speak of Christians in Nigeria you are also speaking the Igbo ethnic group and the Yoruba ethnic group. You are also referring the people living in the southern part of Nigeria. When Muslim educationists were demanding for more school and educational opportunities for Muslims, they are by that fact also demanding it for the people of the Hausa ethnic community. Since after the Nigerian civil war in 1970, efforts have been made to improve education in the north. It was also hoped that such would help to check discontentment, protests and violence among the people. Ndiokwere observed:

.....Since then efforts have been made to build Muslim schools to compete with Christian mission schools in number and quality. But this does not seem to have solved the problems of the worried Muslim educationist. Many strategies were brought into the scene to achieve the desired objectives. One of these was instrumental to the government's take-over of mission and voluntary agency schools at the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970. Long before that action was taken, Muslim educationists had suggested a long term measure for equalizing or leveling up of the educational imbalance between Christian and Muslim schools.²⁶⁸

For Babs Fafunwa (a Muslim scholar and renowned educationist), mission schools have failed to produce patriotic Nigerians and therefore ought to be phased out. He writes:

Without laboring the point, the most effective solution would be for all Nigerian schools to become secular and citizen oriented, for they have failed in the last one hundred years to produce Nigerians and the sooner all these schools direct their attention to this issue the better. But they cannot successfully do so until all the children are completely free from religious bias.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ Nathaniel Ndiokwere, *The African Church Today And Tomorrow Vol 1. Prospects and Challenges*, 81.

²⁶⁹ Babs Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, 72.

The government takeover of schools was carried out after the Nigerian civil war despite the fact that Christians and people from southern Nigeria were vehemently against such a measure. The takeover of schools was another form of ethnic and religious struggle between the north and the south. Since the takeover however, Christians, especially Catholics had built other private schools. Politics and ethnic rivalry aside, the Nigerian government herself, do understand the importance of missions in education. They understand the need for private agencies to contribute in education. There is a huge difference between kids who attend public schools and those who attend private schools. Often children in private and/or church schools perform better both in academic, civics or moral behaviors. The progress of the country will continue to suffer unless Nigerian leaders set aside ethnic/religious interests and work for the welfare of the entire nation.

5.2.3 ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN HAUSA ETHNIC GROUP

Some institutions have been identified as having contributed to the strengthening of the Hausa ethnic community, their primacy and unity. Such institutions include the New Nigeria Development Corporation (NNDC), the Bank of the North, Ahmadu Bello University, the Kaduna Polytechnic, the New Nigerian Newspaper and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). Through these means the ruling Emir endeavors to enhance and protect the Hausa people's interests.²⁷⁰ We shall examine the media namely the New Nigerian Newspaper and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). Through such means and approach the Hausa community promotes unity and progress

²⁷⁰ Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Religion Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan –Nigeria: Spectrum Books Limited, 1993) 67.

within their area. But the constant challenge facing each ethnic group in the country is to take steps further and cater for the entire nation.

5.2.3.1 THE NEW NIGERIAN NEWSPAPER

The New Nigerian Newspaper is a major northern Nigeria Newspaper that serves as channel to articulate the Hausa and northern interests. According to Matthew Kukah the first attempt of print journalism in Northern Nigeria was the Hausa paper known in Hausa language as *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* (Truth is worth more than a Penny). The newspaper was a means to articulate and promote the views of the north, to test and improve their literacy level as well as to enhance their educational and reading ability.²⁷¹ The paper was very limited in its coverage. Prior to the emergence of the New Nigerian newspaper, there was another paper known as the Nigerian Citizen. It was published in the Hausa city of Zaria under the Gaskiya Corporation. The Gaskiya Corporation had set up a printing company for Islamic Literature and Islamic publications. The newspaper served as the mouth piece of the northern people especially the major northern political party known as the Northern people's Congress (NPC)²⁷²

The New Nigerian Newspaper came into being through the Instrumentality of Charles Sharp, a British businessman who the northern regional government employed to facilitate the establishment of the Newspaper. The paper became their mouth piece, a means to articulate the views and philosophy of the northern region.²⁷³ That joy was expressed in the statement accredited to the then premier of the region who said in a Nigerian expression:

²⁷¹Ibid. 101.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.68.

It used to be generally considered as being generally improper for one to blow one's own trumpet. But the fact has emerged and has been demonstrated time and time again, that nowadays, if you do not blow your own trumpet, no one will blow it for you – for the simple reason that they are busy blowing theirs.²⁷⁴

The statement suggests that you have to fight for yourself because nobody is ready to fight for you. And for an ethnic group to fight for herself in Nigerian understanding, such group would have to be first of all united. For Matthew Kukah the veracity of the Premier's statement would be well understood to anyone who was following the political and social realities of that time in Nigeria. Kukah opined that the acquisition of education especially western education had given the southern region an advantage over their northern counterpart. And there is struggle by the people of the north/Hausa group to catch up with the south.²⁷⁵

The New Nigerian Newspaper helped the Hausa people during the Nigerian-Biafra civil war which took place between the month of May 1967 and January of 1970. The Newspaper championed their cause and helped them to disseminate information about the war. The propaganda through the newspaper was aimed to isolate the Igbo ethnic group that was trying to secede from Nigeria and become a sovereign state to be known as the Republic of Biafra. The Nigeria/Biafra civil war was a major act of violence in Nigeria. The New Nigerian Newspaper can be said to have achieved the purpose for which it was established. The paper rose to an enviable position in the eyes of many both within and outside the country especially during the time of the civil war. Matthew Kukah observed:

²⁷⁴ "Premier's Speech New Nigerian." January 1, 1966. *Matthew Kukah Religion Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, 68.

²⁷⁵ Matthew Kukah, *Religion Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, 68.

The war years however, were to help shape the paper. They provided an unlimited opportunity for the New Nigerian to rise not only as a defender of the North, but of national unity and interests. Through its editorials, features and reportage, it rose to an enviable position. It became one of the most talked about newspapers from this part of the world. As its integrity grew, the confidence of the paper also grew. By fighting for national unity, it gained the confidence of the government, and in the process, it still maintained its northerness and legitimacy.²⁷⁶

At some point after the civil war, New Nigerian Newspaper found disfavor with the federal government. The newspaper criticized the decision of the federal government to build the Mainland Bridge in Lagos. The city of Lagos is in the southern part of Nigeria. Lagos was the capital of the nation at that time. But some years later, the capital was moved to the city of Abuja in the northern part of Nigeria. This transfer of the nation's capital to the north was yet another source conflict. It was perceived by many Nigerians as a form of marginalization by the dominant ethnic group, namely the Hausa/northern ethnic group. Hausas have been in power over a long time and they were in power during the transfer of the nation's capital. The New Nigerian Newspaper criticized the government and argued that while the bridge was being built in the south, there was no bridge linking up the south with the north or linking the north with itself. The federal military government was not happy with such critique of her policy. The editor of the paper Alhaji Mamman Daura was arrested and detained. Later the editor was set free when the managing director of the paper Alhaji Ciroma was summoned to meet with the then head of state General Yakubu Gowon, who is also from the Hausa ethnic group.²⁷⁷ The federal government listened to the critique by the newspaper. After few months the government awarded the contract for building the bridge across the Benue

²⁷⁶ Ibid. 70.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

river. And by building this bridge the government established a major link between the northern region and the southern region. This is a pointer to the power and influence the newspaper wielded as a defender of the interest of the Hausa region.²⁷⁸

While the north has her own mouth piece as the New Nigerian, the south also has the paper known as the Daily Times as her own medium of information and expression. The Nigerian Federal government is also aware of the importance of these two major newspapers in north-south conflict in the country. The government is aware that it has to be careful while dealing with these national dailies because the nature of information they disseminate is vital for the peace of the entire nation especially as it concerns the struggle between the north and the south. That is why the leaders of country tried to give the two newspaper equal treatment and equal attention. The government understood that it can be accused of taking sides with any of the papers. Since the leadership of the nation was in the hands of the north, there is the perception by the people from the south that the government has the tendency to favor the north and the northern newspaper. The Nigerian politics, religion, ethnic issues and economy have ever been affected by the constant struggle between the northern interests and southern interests.²⁷⁹

In 1975 the federal military government announced that it will take over majority of the shares of the two newspapers namely The Daily Times and the New Nigerian. The government stated that these papers henceforth are expected to make constructive criticisms in their publications. They are to make sure that their publications serve the national interests. The government could not have taken over only one of the newspapers without incurring the wrath and anger of the other. But even when the two newspapers

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

were taken over, still the south is suspicious of the government. This is because there is the idea that the government and the northern newspaper have similar agenda to promote and protect the northern interests and ideology. The south perceived the move to take over the newspapers as a ploy by the government to silence the south alone.²⁸⁰

More so the period in question was a critical time in the history of Nigeria. It was at this period in 1975 that General Yakubu Gowon who has been Nigerian head of state since 1966 was overthrown in a military coup when he went for an Organization of African Unity (OAU) meeting in Kampala, capital of Addis Ababa. The leader who came to power after the coup was General Murtala Muhammed. Both General Gowon and General Murtala Muhammed are from the north. Both are also Hausas. The southerners, majority of whom are Christians were suspicious that this may not just be a coup but a way to exchange power by the same people with the same agenda of dominating the people from the south in both politics and religion.²⁸¹ People from the south were suspicious as to why the government decided to take over the newspapers. Matthew Kukah writes: “We still need to look elsewhere for explanation as to why a northerner would preside over the taking over of the voice of the North.”²⁸²

The northerners were in power and a northern newspaper will most unlikely speak ill of their own people. That is why they taking over of the newspaper became a surprise to many. Some from the south believe that the government wanted to take over the southern newspaper in order to monitor and censor the south. But it cannot take over the paper of the south alone leaving that of the north. If they do this then the imbalance

²⁸⁰ Ibid. 70-71.

²⁸¹ Ibid. 71.

²⁸² Ibid.

will be clear to all. So in order not to stir up controversy and conflict, they decided to take over the two. But there is the suspicion by some that behind the curtain the northern leaders might favor the northern newspaper. The north-south ethnic struggle can be very intriguing. However, the point we are trying to make is that the ethnic groups in Nigeria can live in peace within their various ethnic groups. They achieve this by having some programs that unite them together and serve as their voice like the newspaper. How we wish that such a trend can be translated to rest of the country.

5.2.3.2 FEDERAL RADIO CORPORATION OF NIGERIA (FRCN)

This is another media that was formed to be the voice of the ethnic group of the north/Hausas. The FRCN was first called the Broadcasting Corporation of Northern Nigeria (BCNN).²⁸³ This radio station played important role during the Nigeria-Biafra civil war. It became a good match to Radio Biafra. The civil war was the greatest and most devastating act of conflict that had taken place in the Nigerian soil. The Radio Biafra was the mouth piece of the Igbo ethnic group during the war. The FRCN Kaduna and the Radio Biafra became instruments of propaganda and campaign on both sides of the conflict. Matthew Kukah observes:

The role played by Radio Biafra.....on the propaganda side of the war opened the eyes of the Federal Government to the threat that an unrestrained radio station can pose to the propaganda claims and the national aspirations of any government in a crisis. The role played by Radio Kaduna to counter the Biafran propaganda endeared it to the Federal Government and the rest of Nigeria.²⁸⁴

The Federal Government, which was under the leadership of Hausas, sang the praises of FRCN Kaduna because it was helpful during the civil war. The station

²⁸³ Ibid. 88.

²⁸⁴ Ibid. 89.

promoted the cause for one Nigeria and was opposed to the seceding Igbo ethnic group. As radio Biafra was championing the cause for the Igbo and trying to unite the Igbo people to prosecute the war, the FRCN Kaduna was on the opposing side and championed the cause of the north. The FRCN also tried to win the support of the Yoruba ethnic group and some other minority groups. Although the Federal Government believed that the FRCN Kaduna was on her side, still the government was very watchful of the station because the government thought that the station may turn its power against their leadership. and may begin to attack the government. Kukah notes

In spite of the praises that the Federal Government and many Nigerians showered on the station, the government still had to deal with the fact that this station or any other, had the capacity to turn its power into equally sinister and parochial aims.....Consequently, one of the post-war priorities of the Federal Government became the issue of restructuring the three regional stations with a view to reducing the powers of their transmission and their reach.²⁸⁵

The Federal government issued statement to the regional stations with a view to restructuring them according the government's whims and caprices. The government idea and agenda fell into deaf ears. The regional administrators ignored the instructions. Surprisingly the Federal government refused to take up the matter because of its volatile nature and the issue simmered without further ado.²⁸⁶

The Hausas understood the importance of FRCN Kaduna in their social, religious and political survival in the competitive framework of the ethnically diverse nation. That was why they kept fighting against any regime that decides to restructure or meddle with FRCN in ways that the north finds to be to their disadvantage. Another test

²⁸⁵ Ibid. 89.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

for the place of the FRCN Kaduna in the affairs of the north and the nation came up during the regime of Alhaji Shehu Shagari between 1979-1983. In 1981 this regime introduced a bill in the national house of assembly that will restructure the FRCN Kaduna. People wondered why FRCN Kaduna was singled out and figured out that it must have been on account of its influence and power in challenging the federal government. The bill would want the programs of the radio station to originate in Lagos capital of Nigeria (with government supervision). Then from Lagos the program will be relayed to other FRCN radio stations in English and three other northern Nigeria languages.²⁸⁷

This bill received lots of opposition. It passed in the Federal House of Representatives but the protest got so intense in the senate. The politicians from the north quickly accused the federal government of taking sides with the south in a secret plan to destroy FRCN Kaduna and in this way would silence the north and Hausa ethnic group.²⁸⁸ Kukah writes that the reactions across the North were predictable and severe. In Kano one of the mega cities of the north, people openly tore the pictures of the President as a sign of their objection. President Shehu Shagari who happened to be from the north was being accused of presiding over the dismemberment of the people of the northern region.²⁸⁹ “The bill was withdrawn and FRCN Kaduna thus survived another take-over bid.”²⁹⁰ That was a clash between ethnicity and politics. The Hausa ethnic group won because the government knew how strong ethnic interests can be in the country.

²⁸⁷ Ibid. 93.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid. 93.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

Thus one can see how the Hausa group comes together to fight for their common cause. They understood the importance and the contributions of the radio station to their people's unity. In similar fashion each ethnic group strives to preserve the unity and oneness of their ethnic community. There is a saying that *ewu oha nwe aguu na agugbu ya*. This native expression is saying that a domestic animal/pet owned by many people may suffer from hunger. This is because one person might think that the other person will feed the pet and vice versa. In the end nobody takes the responsibility to feed the pet. This expression can apply to the scenario in Nigeria. The various ethnic groups appear not to have fully understood that Nigeria is their country. They cling more to their various ethnic group and Nigeria as a nation continues to suffer. And when Nigeria is suffering, eventually all the ethnic groups are suffering. When there is continued underdevelopment, massive unemployment, religious and ethnic conflicts, it does no one any good.

5.2.4 FOSTERING UNITY IN HAUSA ETHNIC GROUP.

In the early days of colonial rule, the south had an advantage over the north in terms of acquiring the Western Education. The southern educated elite were quicker to embrace the emerging political process that came with the colonial rule. Initially political development and political process were somehow slow in the north.²⁹¹ “Western politics and political models were seen as innovation and were deprecated.”²⁹² This would change on account of the northern/Hausa peoples' aim to come together and not be left out in the political affair of the country. Hassan Kukah writes: “But the speed and direction which political activities took in the north created the atmosphere for what we

²⁹¹ Ibid. 5.

²⁹² Ibid.

choose to call the politics of conscription as a response and a means of political mobilization.”²⁹³

Alhaji Isa Kaita, a prominent Hausa and politician puts it this way: “When politics came, in view of what was happening in the whole country, we did not have the choice, we were all conscripted into politics to fight for the North and to defend her interests against southern domination.”²⁹⁴ Hausa people at this time were considered to be backward when compared with the south in terms of political awareness and organization. This was why prior to the nation’s independence in 1960, they regions were to achieve internal self –government before the actual independence. But the northern politicians wanted each of the regions to become self-governing at their region is ready. This indicated that the north were not ready like the rest of the country. Eghosa Osaghae writes:

The years 1954-59 were used to prepare the country for independence. In deference to the demand by the Northern political leaders that every region should be allowed to become self-governing at its own pace, the two Southern regions became self-governing in 1957, and the Northern region in 1959.²⁹⁵

Part of the problem in the north was the absence of western education with the opportunity it offers. What was dominant was the Koranic and Arabic form of education. This was as a result of the huge influence of Muslim religion and Muslim culture in the area. Kukah observed that the northern elite and politicians recognized the need for the western education and wanted to do something in order to effect a change. “The northern ruling class decided to alter the scope and rules of the playing field in view of the

²⁹³ Ibid.6.

²⁹⁴ Alhaji Isa Kaita, “Interview” In Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Religion Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, 6.

²⁹⁵ Eghosa E. Osaghae, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independent* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998) 11.

limitations and disadvantages imposed on them by lack of an adequate cadre of western trained personnel.”²⁹⁶ The preoccupation of the ruling class was to hold its people together and to protect them from southern incursion. The Muslim religion served as an important tool in this regard. It has always been difficult to separate religion from politics in Nigeria. Religion has been seen as the foundation of the Hausa caliphate and remains an important factor in political as well as ethnic competitions.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Religion Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, 6.

²⁹⁷ Ibid. 13.

CHAPTER SIX

HISTORICAL EXCURSUS, MEANS AND PERPETRATORS OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

6.1 HISTORICAL EXCURSUS OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

6.1.1 PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA

Nigeria got her independence in 1960. The date or time for the first religious violence ever in Nigeria is still not so certain. Nigerians have various views on this. Some writers would argue that it can be traced back to the time that religious missionaries came to country. Toyin Falola for example observed:

In seeking the reason for today's sharp and volatile religious boundaries in Nigeria, it is crucial to reevaluate the influence of the Christian elite since 1842 and the role of the colonial state in the first half of this century. Religious tension had started to build as early as 1930 as the Muslim elite became increasingly upset by the power and arrogance of the Christian elite.²⁹⁸

Religious violence became more frequent beginning from 1980s and not much is known about religious violence prior to this period. However Toyin Falola cautioned:

It is misleading, however, to think that Nigeria was free of religious troubles before 1980. For centuries, ever since the introduction of Islam and Christianity to the region that became modern Nigeria, there has been tension over interpretations of doctrine, the relationship between religion and state, and the use of religious issues for political gain. In the nineteenth century, Usman dan Fodio, using the idea of jihad, created the huge Sokoto caliphate, the largest state in West Africa until it was conquered by the British in 1903.²⁹⁹

Philip Akpen would argue that conflicts began to emerge all the more with the joining together of the north and south protectorate in 1914. He opined that the

²⁹⁸ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 13.

²⁹⁹ Ibid. 5.

amalgamation involved the merging together of the numerous autonomous political units.

It also involved bringing together the various ethnic groups under one political unit.

Akpen believes that such arrangement brought about conflicts especially conflicts of

ethno-religious nature.³⁰⁰ This is because the various sovereign chiefdoms, states, and

village confederations were loosely fused together into one political entity.³⁰¹ For Toyin

Falola:

Colonial Nigeria was nothing more than an artificially constructed agglomeration of diverse ethnicities and other loosely united groups.....Older loyalties to Kings, gods, and religions continued until the end of colonial rule in 1960. Such royalties slowed down the development of a strong independent nation and quickly turned the modern state itself into an arena of bitter competition for power and wealth.³⁰²

The ethnic groups have their different religious practices. The merging together not only brought about religious conflicts, it also brought about ethnic conflicts. Religious conflict is as old as religious practices in the country. In a multi-religious community such as Nigeria, it is challenging to resolve conflicts. Religious conflict becomes more difficult to resolve because it has to do with faith and the spiritual. Take for example, when someone argues that God has mandated him through a vision or dream to engage in conflict, it can be difficult to convince such a person that conflict may not be the best option.

6.1.2 FROM THE YEAR 1980

This was during the second civilian leadership after independence. The first civilian rule was between 1960 -1966. The military was in power from July 1966 to end of 1979. With the second democratic rule after a protracted military rule came more

³⁰⁰Philip Akpen, "Ethnic And Religious Conflicts: Challenges for Sustainable Democracy" In *Religion in Politics* Julius Adekunle ed. 70-71.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 52.

freedom of religion and expression. Such may have given rise to an abuse of freedom by some individuals who engage in acts of religious violence. Falola notes that the south-east is more peaceful. The south-western region is less peaceful when compared with the south-eastern part. Some cities in the south-west like Ibadan and Lagos are more troublesome and volatile. In the mega cities of the south-west there exists large population of Christians and Muslims living side by side. Disturbances often emerge between Christians and Muslims within these areas.³⁰³

The northern part of the country is where most of the religious violence in Nigeria had occurred. Such indicates that there are more religious extremists in the area. Chronicling the history of religious violence in Nigeria since 1980 Kunirum Osia observed:

In May 1980, in Zaria, religious disturbances occurred between Christians and Muslims during which properties belonging to Christians were destroyed. On October 30, 1982, in Kano, Muslims and Christians clashed with one another. Many Christian churches were burnt. In March 1986, in Ilorin, Muslims and Christians clashed during procession at Easter. In May 1986, at the University of Ibadan, Muslim students demonstrated against the position of the Cross on the premises of the chapel of the Resurrection. The burnt the figure of the Risen Christ in that chapel. In March 1987, in Kafanchan, Christians and Muslims clashed at the college of Education. Lives were lost as a result of the incident. A number of mosques were burnt by the Christians. Waves of rioting spread to Katsina, Funtua, Zaria, Gusau and Kaduna. Muslims burnt down Christian churches in these places and properties belonging to Christians were destroyed. In February 1988, in Kaduna, at the Kaduna Polytechnic, religious riots ensued among students during which Muslim students destroyed the foundation walls of a Christian chapel.³⁰⁴

³⁰³ Ibid. 280.

³⁰⁴ Kunirum Osia, "Resolving Religious Conflict in Nigeria : A Search for Points of Convergence." *Dialogue & Alliance* 7, no. 1 (Spr-Sum 1993): 41-52. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (Accessed September 17, 2009). 42.

Almost every year there is an incidence of religious violence. Falola observed that in the Northern part of the country especially in their big cities like Kano and Kastina, religious violence has taken certain forms and shapes. Some disturbances are been championed by the reformists as in the case of Shiites or the Maitatsine³⁰⁵ engaging in conflict with the state government. At other times violence is directed toward the immigrant Christians who have migrated from the southern part of Nigeria. It is at such point that a mixture of religious violence and ethnic violence take place. Those migrants from the south to the north are from other ethnic groups such as Igbo or Yoruba. The common understanding is that they are being attacked or rejected on two grounds: one is because of religion and another is because of their ethnicity.

Such attacks come with spiral effects. Once the Hausa ethnic group, attack the Christians residing in the northern region, the conflict easily escalates. The Christians would want to retaliate by attacking the Hausas living in the south. Some Christians make fun of the whole situation by jokingly saying that “there is nothing like turning the other cheek.” By this they are making reference to the Bible passage where Jesus said “When someone strikes you on your right cheek turn the other one for him as well. If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well (Matthew 5: 39-40).”³⁰⁶ At some other times acts of violence can begin from the south. Hausas who are mainly Muslims residing in the south are attacked. In return, the Hausas will attack people from the south residing in the Hausa dominated area of the north.

³⁰⁵ Maitatsine is a radical religious sect in Northern Nigeria that began in the late 1970s. It was believed to have been formed by Mohammed Marwa (died 1980).

³⁰⁶ *New American Bible* (New York: American Bible Society, 1991).

6.1.3 KANO STATE

Kano is one of the states in the northern Nigeria and also one of the largest states in the country. Kano city is the capital of Kano State. Toward the end of the year 1980, a number of religious riots broke out in the city of Kano. This riot lasted from 18 to 29 of December and so many people lost their lives and many people were unaccounted for.³⁰⁷ Jan H. Boer opined that the Maitatsine sect unleashed a three-day riot. Both Muslims and Christians were killed and many churches were burned. The purpose of the acts of violence it was alleged was to reform Muslim worship and to cleanse it from non-Muslim tendencies.³⁰⁸ The non-Muslim tendencies include the presence and influence of Christians in the area. Most of those Christians belong to a different ethnic group. The acts of violence were carried out for both ethnic and religious reasons. Boer chronicled the acts of violence and destruction of the Maitatsine saying that Maitatsine riot took place in October 1982. During that period about 400 people in Maiduguri lost their lives including both Christians and Muslims. Uprisings also took place in places like Rigassa and Kano during the same period. In February 1984, the Maitatsine group struck in Jimeta, in 1985 the same sect killed many people in hours of fighting in Gombe. Many Muslims denounced this group. The government banned them but that did not stop them from their violent activities.³⁰⁹

At another time the Muslim Students Society (MSS) were protesting against the location of St. George's Anglican Church in Fagge, Kano city. The reason given by the

³⁰⁷ "Daily Times of Nigeria." March 2, 1984, "West Africa." November 8, 1984, "The Guardian." February 29, 1984. In Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 137.

³⁰⁸ "Tell Magazine" October 28, 1991 p.3, "African Concord" October 28, 1991, p.30 In Jan H. Boer, *Nigeria's Decade of Blood 1980-2002* (Canada: Essence Publishing, 2003) 39.

³⁰⁹ Jan H. Boer *Nigeria's Decade of Blood 1980-2002*, 39.

students was that the Church is close to the Mosque.³¹⁰ People found this reason bizarre and the protest irrational for after all the Church and the Mosque have been there for a long time. The Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury visited the church within the year in order to perform the foundation stone of a new church. During the students riot, the police were able to protect the church building but many other structures within the premises were destroyed. Other areas in the city including some churches were also destroyed and over forty people lost their lives.³¹¹

A committee was set up by the government to do some investigation on the issue. One of those appointed to that committee was Justice Haruna Dandaura, a native of the area. Justice Haruna was also the President of the Christian Council of Nigeria at that time. In his submission he told stories about when the church was first built and later the mosque was built as well:

In 1933, when the mission compound was built up, I was there. The compound then stood within the radius of about 1000 yards on each side from Sabongari and Fagge. There was no building of any kind anywhere near it. A few years ago the Waje offices were moved ----to somewhere near the mission compound. With this building came school buildings----to the east and north sides of the church. Right in front of the church, almost covering the passage, a court and police station are built. This appeared to have choked up the compound and there was hardly any way out. On the day the mosque was to be opened, Muslim worshippers filled the mission compound and worshipped undisturbed.³¹²

The Christian association of Nigeria Kano branch sent a memorandum to the committee doing the investigation. In their submission they highlighted some areas that they argued must not be swept under the carpet. Among the points they stressed include the list of

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² J. H. Dandaura, "Letter to the Secretary of the Committee Appointed to Investigate the Religious Disturbance of 30th October, 1982." In Jan H. Boer *Nigeria' Decade of Blood 1980-2002*, p.40.

nine churches that were destroyed during the riots, the Christian bookstore that was also destroyed as well as other Christian properties.³¹³ This violence started by the Muslim students showed how the younger generations see things differently from the older generations. The church and the mosque have been existing side by side for a long time and there was no violence until students created one.

Another disturbing violence took place in the city of Kano in 1991. This was connected with the visit of Reinhard Bonnke, a Christian evangelist from Germany.

Kano has been particularly vulnerable to riots. The October 29, 1991 issue of *Tell* screams out once again, 'Bloodbath in Kano: Religious Fanatics Strike Again.' Christians had invited evangelist Reinhard Bonnke from Germany for an evangelist campaign scheduled for October, 1991, and had dubbed it a 'crusade,' a word that immediately rankles Muslim ears and reminds them of the crusades of past centuries. Previously, two foreign Muslim evangelists had been denied entry visas and a third had been deported. In addition, Muslims were denied the use of the Race Course for one of their celebrations, while Bonnke's crusade was originally scheduled to be held there. The riot that ensued killed hundreds of people. Over sixty Christian businesses and allegedly more than twenty churches were destroyed.³¹⁴

Dan Babarinsa of the *Tell Magazine* gave an account of hostilities that took place after the arrival of the Evangelist Bonnke for his crusade:

The riot lasted two days, leaving more than 200 people dead and hundreds injured. The governor imposed a 12-hour curfew on the city..... President Babangida, who was attending the Commonwealth summit inZimbabwe, hurried home to take charge of the situation. The targets were mostly southerners and Christian northerners. As the rioters moved from street to street, killing people, setting vehicles and houses on fire, a few dimension was introduced. As had never happened in previous riots, the Christian community showed an unwillingness to turn the other cheek. They mounted barricades and formed vigilante groups to

³¹³ Memorandum of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Kano State Branch, December 22 1982, pp32-33. In Jan H. Boer *Nigeria' Decade of Blood 1980-2002*, p.41.

³¹⁴ Jan H. Boer *Nigeria' Decade of Blood 1980-2002*, p.41.

defend the non-indigene enclave of Sabon Gari. Rings of fire, from burning tires and other materials, were placed on many roads in Sabon Gari.....But before the defenders got their act together, the destruction had been massive and far-reaching.....Building materials worth millions of naira were destroyed and looted. Corpses littered the areas. As Sabon Gari became a well-defended fortress, the fundamentalists moved to pockets of non-indigenous settlements and houses in other parts of the.....city and rounded the people up. The counter-attack threatened to escalate the crisis. A mosque was burned at Emir Road in apparent retaliation for the more than 20 churches burned. The terrible destruction was more visible on Airport Road where a big Mobil filling station was burned and 16 vehicles were burned at a nearby Total filling station. Another Agip station was burned. The famous Queen's Cinema as well as the headquarters of Kabo Holdings, which houses a branch of the Bank of the north, were also gutted.³¹⁵

This riot associated with the visit of Bonnke showed once more that religious violence in Nigeria most often has connection with ethnic violence. When the violence started the northerners began to attack the southerners. Those attacked have migrated to the north to reside and work. Underneath religious violence in Nigeria, there are ethnic components. Karl Maier spoke of the religious violence in Nigeria with particular reference to the city of Kano. He alluded to its ethnic component. He made reference to the killing of the Igbo people at the beginning of the Nigerian civil war:

Religious clashes were no mild affairs, especially in Kano, the second biggest urban center in Nigeria after Lagos. They conjured up the frightening images of the pogroms against the Igbos in the 1960s on the eve of the civil war and the Maitatsine riots of the early 1980s in which hundreds died. The previous April, religious and ethnic riots in another northern state, Bauchi, left upwards of a thousand people dead. There were two million people in Kano.³¹⁶

Karl Maier further talked about the reaction of the Igbo people who were involved in the Kano violence. He narrated the encounter he had in Sabon gari in Kano:

³¹⁵ Dare Babarinsa, "Allahu Akbar" *Tell Magazine*, October 28, 1991 pp.12-16. In Jan H. Boer *Nigeria' Decade of Blood 1980-2002*, p. 42-43.

³¹⁶ Karl Maier, *This House has Fallen: Crisis in Nigeria* (USA: Westview Press, 2000) 160.

At Sabon gari rows of shops had been burned to the ground. The foundations of several buildings had buckled from the heat of the fires. We walked along the streets speaking to Igbo merchants who had lost everything to the rioters or the looters who came in their wake. 'We are refugees in our own country,' screamed a businessman named Pajeane, whose house had been set alight by Hausa rioters. Another bystander, Hyginus Ofoegbu, said he had seen six people stabbed to death. Suddenly, a muscle-bound young man about 6 foot 5 inches tall jumped off the back of a motorbike and strode over to introduce himself. Ndubuisi Ikena was a twenty-year old Igbo youth leader who admitted to participating in the killing and the torching of mosques. His aggressive bearing left little doubt that he had. 'They have been treating us like slaves for years,' he said of the Hausas. 'When they started attacking us, we carried out revenge.'³¹⁷

The violence in Nigeria shows the ethnic tension between the ethnic groups. It shows also the religious divisions involved. One hears words like they attacked us and we had to revenge. Whether the violence begins as an ethnic violence or religious violence, it makes not much difference, both religious violence and ethnic violence often interwoven.

On December 29 1994 another acts of violence broke out in the city of Kano. It was another good example of ethno-religious conflict. The ethnic groups involved are the Igbos and the Hausas. A group of followers of Abubakar Mujahid, a breakaway from El-Zakzaki's Islamic movement were leading the violence.³¹⁸ Karl Maier writes:

By December 1994 Kano was once again on the boil, and militants claiming to support Mujahid's faction were guilty of the provocation. They accused the wife of an Igbo trader named Gideon Akaluka of desecrating the Koran by allegedly using pages from the holy book as toilet paper for her baby. The police detained Akaluka for his own protection. But a gang of militants broke into the jail, killed Akaluka, and led a great procession around Kano with his severed head on a pole. Mujahid said he had had nothing to do with the lynching, but at that time his movement's newspaper, Al-Tajdid, declared that Akaluka was 'properly punished for blaspheming the Koran.' Six months later a

³¹⁷ Ibid. 165.

³¹⁸ Jan H. Boer, *Nigeria's Decades of Blood*, p.46.

fight between a Hausa and an Igbo in Sabon gari sparked a new riot. 'It was a communal ethnic conflict.' Mujahid said. 'It had nothing to do with Islam. But again his movement took advantage of the unrest.....'³¹⁹

The violence of 1994 connected with the beheading of Gideon Akaluka continued even in 1995. Clashes again erupted between the Hausas and the Igbos in the Kano area. Several members of the Mujahid's Kano-based followers went missing. It was reported that allegedly the police picked them up and shot many of them whom they considered to be the architects of the lack of peace in the area. This led to more clashes and violence. The police accused the Ja'amutu Tajidmul Islami (a Muslim Fundamentalist group) of launching campaign to drive the people of Igbo ethnic group out of the area.³²⁰

Two Hausa women had kept their vehicles in front of a store managed by an Igbo trader around the city of Kano. While those women were busy doing their shopping, two Hausa men burgled the vehicle and stole their items. The Igbo trader saw them from inside his shop and identified the culprits for the ladies whose car was robbed. The ladies reported the incident to the police. The police arrested the culprits, charged them but later they were released. Having now been released those two men came to the Igbo man's shop and attacked him for identifying them. A big fight ensued.³²¹ According to Jan Boer "Other Hausa people in the area saw the fight and immediately took the side of their Hausa brothers, totally disregarding the reason for the fight."³²²

The violence soon spread to many parts of the city. Religious fanatics took to the streets and began to kill people. Anybody who could not say in Arabic 'There is no God but Allah' will be killed. A woman was riding on motorcycle used for transportation. She

³¹⁹ Karl Maier, *This House has Fallen, Crisis in Nigeria* p.169.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Jan H. Boer, *Nigeria's Decades of Blood*, p.47.

³²² Ibid.

and her driver ran into the rioters. The driver was set free. But the woman could not speak Arabic. The rioters started hitting her with stones. However she was quickly rescued by a gentleman. But immediately after her rescue another woman was killed on the particular spot.³²³ These gory tales of the mixture of ethnic and religious violence show the complex nature of the situation in Nigeria.

The ring leaders among the rioters then went to St. George Anglican Church. This church was at the center of the 1982 controversy. They were armed with knives, machetes and other dangerous weapons, forced their way into the church premises, chanting ‘*Allahu akbar*,’ God is great! They called for the head of the Church, Canon Gedege, who was lucky enough to escape with his family through a back door.³²⁴ Next the rioter headed to the areas inhabited by people from other ethnic groups. Boer writes:

By now the residents of the Sabon Gari, the non-indigene quarters of the city, recognized the need to defend themselves and set up strategic roadblocks to prevent the mob from further penetrating the area. These became the war fronts where many were killed and much property destroyed.³²⁵

Samuel Uche is one the residents of Sabon Gari in Kano. He is a Christian and from the Igbo ethnic group. He gave an interview to the Magazine known as *Today’s Challenge* (TC). In the interview he expressed his anger with the fate being meted out to known indigenes whenever there is violence in Kano and its environs. Uche, speaking in broken English, stated that residents of Sabon Gari in Kano:

Don’t rely on the police. They don’t rely on the Army. But I must tell you that Sabon Gari is not an easy field to swallow. As small as we are, there is nothing we don’t have, but moreover, we have God. We are ready. This Sabon Gari can face the whole of Kano

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid. 48.

³²⁵ Ibid.

*State and burn Kano State.....But for the fact that we held our youth, eh! They were ready to face Mobile Policemen. They were ready to face soldiers. They were ready to face this people. We only held them; we only told them, No. Otherwise, if we didn't hold them, man. I don't want to go into this area, nobody in Kano will be safe. The Emir, the Governor, the police, nobody will be safe. I don't want to tell you how but it will happen. I must tell you that we're prepared.*³²⁶

6.1.4 KADUNA STATE

Kaduna State is in the northern part of Nigeria. Acts of religious violence erupted in the city of Kafanchan (a big city in the area) among the students of college of education. The issue at that time was the publication of provocative documents. "To put it into a larger immediate context, the Kafanchan riot was preceded by the Muslim publication of such provocative documents as Jesus is not the Son of God and The Holy Bible is not the Word of God."³²⁷ Tension was high in the area as a result of such publications. Atmosphere at the Kafanchan college was charged between Muslims and the Christians.³²⁸ However the main issue that sparked off violence at the college was a lecture delivered to the Christian students by Rev. Abubakar Bako. Jan Boer writes:

The Christian program included a speech about the life and work of Christ. The speaker quoted from two Qur'anic passages. These Qur'anic quotations triggered Muslim students who apparently were in the group just waiting for an offence on the part of the preacher. Theirs was a reasonable expectation. The preacher, one Rev. Abubakar Bako, was a convert from Islam who knows the Qur'an and is known for quoting from it. Converting from Islam demotes one to a status somewhat less than a human and strips one of all human rights and dignity. For such a person to quote from the holy book – something Bako was known for doing on his evangelistic campaigns throughout the north - is a doubly

³²⁶ Samuel Uche, "Is Islam Lawlessness" An interview, *Today's Challenge*, March 1996, p.26 In Jan H. Boer, *Nigeria's Decades of Blood 1980-2002*, 49.

³²⁷ Jan H. Boer, *Nigeria's Decades of Blood 1980-2002*, 50.

³²⁸ Ibid.

unpardonable sin. His very presence was enough to raise Muslim suspicions and hackles.³²⁹

Rev. Bako made inflammatory statements. This shows some religious preachers can contribute to religious violence. Use of religious converts as in the case of Rev. Bako, is one of the tools that some religious groups use in attacking other religions. As Rev. Bako was speaking one female student led an attack against him. She sized the microphone and shouted to the boys to come and fight. The Muslims students argued that Rev. Bako abused the Holy Prophet Muhammad, misinterpreted as well as misquoted the Holy Qur'an.³³⁰ The school administrators tried to calm down the situation but did not succeed. Full blown violence ensued. Two Muslim school administrators were drawn into it and asked Bako to just apologize, while they pleaded with the Muslim students to allow the Christian meeting to continue. However, both the Muslim students, mostly members of the Fundamentalist Izala group, and the organizers refused their approach. Instead, the Christians demanded that the Muslims be removed from the meeting place. The administration's attempt to forestall violence was fruitless in this volatile situation. A fight ensued and soon escalated into full-blown ruckus, with sixteen students seriously injured and a church burned along with the school mosque. Bako escaped through a barbwire fence.....³³¹

The Christian students continued their meeting in the town instead of the school premises. Again their meeting was disrupted. They were attacked with sticks, clubs, knives and other types of weapons. The violence spread in the town. There was reign of terror in the area, road blocks were mounted. Some of the rioters went about the town

³²⁹ Ibid. 51.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid. 52.

destroying buildings and cars. The police could not calm the situation and Special Forces were called in by the government. Before the acts of violence were brought under control, a lot of destructions have already taken place.³³² About the city of Kafanchan, Karl

Maier writes:

Despite its position as a key railway junction, like Minna, Kafanchan has enjoyed none of the economic largesse from the rich and powerful that so quickly transformed Babangida's hometown. The growth industry in Kafanchan, run-down and generally underdeveloped, appeared to be religion. There were churches – Pentecostal, the Ecumenical Church of West Africa (ECWA), Catholic – and of course mosques everywhere. Since the colonial occupation of the area at the turn of the century, Kafanchan and the surrounding area have witnessed a variety of uprisings dating back to tax revolts against the British in 1922 and 1946. Riots between Islamic and Christian Students erupted at the Kagoro Teachers College in 1987, and in 1992, just three months after my visit to Wukari, clashes between the katafs and Hausa traders in the Zango Kataf market sparked full-scale fighting between Christians and Muslims throughout the state of Kaduna, fighting that claimed hundreds of lives.³³³

Rotgak Gofwen commenting on violence in the city of Kafanchan in Kaduna State

also observed:

The Kafanchan riots erupted at the College of Education, Kafanchan in Kaduna State following an allegation that Rev. Abubakar Bako, an itinerant Christian preacher, newly converted from Islam, misquoted the Qur'an and blasphemed the Holy name of the Prophet Muhammed....Muslim students felt offended and went on a rampage (burning houses and destroying property belonging to Christians) on campus and in Kafanchan town.³³⁴

With each acts of violence, more religious and ethnic tension will be created in the process. Those who felt that they suffered more casualties will end up planning for revenge. One set of violence then leads to another. The Christian students at the college

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen*, 208-209.

³³⁴ Rotgak I. Gofwen, *Religious Conflict in Northern Nigeria and Nation Building: The Throes of two Decades 1980-2000* In *Religion in Politics*, Julius O. Adekunle ed. 222.

of education staged a revenge attack. They damaged mosques and properties that belong to Muslims. The city authorities intervened and the Kafanchan situation subsided. But the trouble spread to other parts of the state of Kaduna. A news report over the radio did not help matters. A radio station in the area broadcasted that in the recent disturbances in the city that it was the Christians who were out killing Muslims and destroying their property. The radio news report also indicated that two mosques were burned, copies of Koran desecrated and many Muslims especially the students at the Kafanchan college of education had gone into hiding.³³⁵ Following the radio report, Olayemi Akinwumi and Ibrahim Umaru observed:

By March 10, 1987, Kaduna, the state capital, was already on fire; the homes and property of the Christian group, the *Kaje* people (from southern Kaduna, where Kafanchan is located) were attacked by Muslim youth. Later, the riot degenerated to an outright war on Christians, their property and churches decimated not only Kaduna, but also in other major cities such as Zaria, Katsina, Funtua, and Kankia. Though the riot was brought under control, it would appear the reaction of the state government was slow considering the scale of destruction and death toll.³³⁶

The Kaduna state government set up a commission of inquiry to investigate these disturbances. But not much could be done to stop future occurrence. It is often difficult to detect the perpetrators because of corruption within the government and the law enforcement agencies. Kaduna state has people from various backgrounds and mutual suspicion has existed among the various groups.

Kaduna state is multi-ethnic in composition, with Hausa, Fulani, Gbagyi, Kaje, Katab, Jaba and Gure being the major groups. Hausa and Fulani, who are largely Muslims and found in the northern parts of the state have dominated commerce and monopolized

³³⁵ "Newswatch Magazine." March 30, 1987, 10 In *Religion in Politics*, Julius O. Adekunle ed. 223.

³³⁶ Olayemi Akinwumi and Ibrahim Umaru "Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Politics", In *Religion in Politics*, Julius O. Adekunle ed. 223.

power since its creation. The other ethnic groups, especially Kaje, Katab, Gbagyi and Jaba who are predominantly Christians and mostly found in the southern parts of the state, dominate the technocracy, military personnel, civil servants and the educated elite from the state. The northern parts of the state appear to be more developed and served with industry and modern social amenities than the southern parts. The latter groups therefore have been complaining of political marginalization and neglect in terms of federal and state appointments as well as infrastructure development. The Hausa and Fulani groups who largely controlled political power in the state were suspicious of the other group arguing that should control of power be tilted in favor of the south, the other group would use their advantages mentioned earlier to marginalize the northern groups. It would appear these mutual suspicions have created the perfect setting for the riots that erupted.³³⁷

The Miss World Beauty Contest of 2002 also caused violence in Kaduna State.

The pageant was initially scheduled to take place in the month of November of 2002.

Later it was moved to December because of Ramadan. The organizers shifted the date so as to allow the Muslims time to complete their Ramadan activities.³³⁸ Some conservative Nigerians were against the hosting of the contest mostly on moral grounds. Things changed for worse after a publication by the *ThisDay* Newspaper:

Although much public outrage was made in the print and electronic media on the issue, the protests against the hosting of the 'Miss World' contest passed off without violence. However a newspaper article published in *ThisDay* on Saturday, 16 November 2002 by Miss Isioma Daniel which suggested that the Prophet Mohammed would have approved of the Miss World contest by probably choosing a wife from among the beauty pageant contestants. This comment triggered the violence and mayhem that was to follow. On Wednesday, November 20, demonstrators took to the streets in Kaduna town.³³⁹

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Olayemi Akinwumi and Ibrahim Umaru "Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Politics", In *Religion in Politics*, Julius O. Adekunle ed. 226.

³³⁹ Ibid. 226-227.

During the initial stages of this Miss World protest, rioters were peaceful and orderly. But some miscreant and criminals hijacked the protest.

An initially peaceful public protest against the content of the article was hijacked by a group of people who were primarily intent on causing trouble, and the demonstration quickly turned violent. A group attacked and burned the newspaper's regional office in Kaduna. At no point did the police intervene to stop the violence by the protesters or make any arrest, despite the fact that the office of *ThisDay* was attacked in broad daylight and in full view of many residents and passers-by.³⁴⁰

The issue of Miss World pageant was a secular affair. But the protest turned into both religious and ethnic conflict.

The following day, better-organized groups of Muslim youth in different areas of Kaduna town took up arms and began attacking Christians. They sought out Christians' homes, particularly in Christian-Muslim neighborhoods, and targeted people on the basis of their religion. Several scores of Christians were killed and many injured; others ran for their lives, leaving their homes and property behind which was then looted by the rampaging youth. The attackers also destroyed or burnt houses, commercial buildings, schools, hotels and churches.³⁴¹

6.1.5 CITY OF ZANGON KATAF

In 1992 violence broke out in the area of Kaduna State known as Zangon Kataf.

The conflict started around the month of February. The bone of contention this time was the relocation of market. Olayemi Akinwumi and Ibrahim Umaru noted:

The Zangon Kataf conflict started in February 1992 when a dispute broke out over the relocation of the market. The Muslim-Hausa did not agree with the predominantly Christian Kataf's desire to move to a larger site. A tractor driver was attacked as he worked on the new site. This led to Muslim – Christian violence. After a panel to examine the immediate and root causes of the violence was constituted, a report by the State Government was released. The

³⁴⁰ Ibid. 227.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

Muslims felt it was not favorable to them and hostilities broke out again between the two communities on May 5, 1992.³⁴²

The Zangon – Kataf conflict is unique. The reason is that the conflict was super headed by a mixture of Christians and traditionalists. John H Boer observed:

In the February 1992, a violent riot took place in Zagon Kataf, once again in Kaduna State. This one was different from all previous riots in that it was started by the mostly rural Kataf people, a mixture of traditionalists and Christians, with Christians in the lead. The target was the Hausa-Fulani Muslim community, the townspeople.³⁴³

After some days of violence, lots of properties were destroyed. Churches and Mosques were burned. Many people from all sides of the conflict lost their lives. The estimate could reach around 300 people who died during the mayhem. What complicates these conflicts is that people from neighboring places would come to fight with their religious or ethnic group. Some people come to enrich themselves by looting and stealing. Many people who joined in the Zangon Kataf conflict came from the nearby states like Katsina and Sokoto. It was also suspected that some who participated were retired or dismissed from the army or police.³⁴⁴

6.1.6 PLATEAU STATE

The city of Jos is the capital of Plateau state in northern part of Nigeria. Plateau state is dominated by the Hausa ethnic community. Jos distinguishes itself from other cities in the area. It has been known to be peaceful among other northern cities. Jan Boer writes:

Trying to distinguish itself from other northern cities, Jos has long paraded itself as the capital of the State of Peace. For decades,

³⁴² Ibid. 224-225.

³⁴³ John H. Boer, *Nigeria's Decades of Blood*, 55.

³⁴⁴ Olayemi Akinwumi and Ibrahim Umaru "Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Politics", In *Religion in Politics*, Julius O. Adekunle ed. 225.

indigenes have lived comparatively peacefully with large groups of non-indigenous Muslim northerners. The situation was put in jeopardy in April 1994. A peaceful demonstration of indigenous people, comprising of Christians and traditionalists, was followed a few day later by a violent riot.....³⁴⁵

The Jasawa youths were being urged by some elders to rise up and reclaim their chieftaincy heritage. The Jasawa people were said to be the Hausa-Fulani Muslim settlers from Bauchi state, a neighboring state to Plateau state. These settlers moved to the city of Jos. During the colonial period, Jos was under the rule of the Emir from Bauchi. And the Emir would usually appoint a Hausa man to be the chief of the city of Jos. In 1926 the Jos area was separated from Bauchi and chieftaincy returned to the indigenous people of Jos.³⁴⁶ However in 1987, a Hausa politician Alhaji Saleh Hassan reportedly urged the Jasawa youths to try and take back the traditional leadership and chieftaincy of the city of Jos. He urged the youths that it is their right to do so.³⁴⁷

This is set in motion lots of dynamics that eventually resulted in the appointment of a member of Jasawa group as the chairperson of the Jos Local Government Council. This appointment was made by the military administrator of Plateau State. Non-violent protest erupted as a result of this appointment. After sometime, this appointment was suspended. The suspension then led to bigger uproar and riots led by the Jasawa people. The rioters caused havoc in the area, burning houses and looting. Many lives were also lost. The trouble subsided by the effort of the army and the police but tension and mutual suspicion remained.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ Jan H. Boer, *Nigeria's Decade of Blood*, 92.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid. 92-93.

In the month of September 2001, violence again occurred in the city of Jos. A Muslim was appointed by the government to be the chairperson of the Jos north council. He was also to be the coordinator of the National Poverty Eradication Program. This appointment did not go well with the natives. The natives argued that Mohammed Mukar Usman, who was appointed, is a settler and not a native. He was therefore rejected by the people.³⁴⁹

As this conflict was causing commotion in the city, another incident followed. A Christian woman was said to have passed from the middle of the crowd of worshippers. People had spilled over from the mosque into the street on a Friday prayer session. The security personnel and vigilantes accosted the woman and beat her up for her boldness and audacity. Christians in the area planned for a retaliatory attack.³⁵⁰

The atmosphere was heated up by the Jasawa people who began to circulate pamphlets to claim that Jos city belonged to them. People regarded them as settlers. Their predecessors were believed to have migrated from the neighboring state of Bauchi. There has been ongoing ethnic dispute about who are the rightful owners of the city of Jos. These incidents put together prepared the city of Jos for a heavy violence. It began after one of the Friday prayers, people began looting, attacking people on the road. The entire scenario spread, many lives were lost, mosques and churches were destroyed.³⁵¹ This sort of violence shows the complex nature of the acts of violence in the country. It was a combination of religious, ethnic and political issues.

³⁴⁹ Ibid. 93.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid. 93-94.

6.1.7. SUMMARY OF RIOTS/VIOLENCE (2000 – 2005)

Date	Location	Principal Actors
February 28, 2000	Kaduna (Kaduna State)	Kaduna city exploded in violence as Muslim and Christian extremists and other hoodlums clashed over the proposal to introduce <i>sharia</i>
February 29, 2000	Aba (Abia State)	Riots began in Aba as a reprisal to that of Kaduna, which later spread to other Eastern States.
September 8, 2000	Kaltungo (Gombe State)	Religious violence was sparked off by the presence of the state <i>Sharia</i> implementation committee.
December 2, 2000	Hadejia (Jigawa State)	Sectarian disturbance was caused by a debate between Muslims and Christians. There was wanton destruction of worship places.
September 7, 2001	Jos (Plateau State)	Violent ethnic/religious crises between Muslims/Hausa-Fulani and Christian/indigenes. The subject of discord between the Jasawa Development Association and Plateau Youth Council was originally over a political appointment in Jos North Local Government.
September 15, 2001	Onitsha (Anambra State)	Reprisal violence against Northerners in Onitsha following the Jos crisis in which Igbos were attacked.
October 12, 2001	Kano (Kano State)	Peaceful anti-American protest over the bombing of Afghanistan turned violent, taking ethnic and religious tone. It degenerated into uncontrollable violence which claimed lives and

		damaged properties and places of worship.
June 2002	Yelwa Shendam Mayhem (Plateau State)	An ethno-religious violence between the native people (predominantly Christians) and Hausa settlers (predominantly Muslims).
November 21, 2002	Kaduna (Kaduna State)	Violent protest in Kaduna following a Newspaper editorial on hosting of beauty pageant in Nigeria.
January 2004	Yobe State	Militant Islamic group operating under the name of Muhajirun launched a Taliban-like attack on police.
April 3, 2004	Makarfi (Kaduna State)	Religious protest in Makarfi town over alleged desecration of the <i>Qur'ran</i> by a Christian teenager.
May 1, 2004	Yelwa Shendam (Plateau State)	An ethno-religious mayhem that claimed over 500 lives and many women and children were abducted by suspected Taroh militia. This was a revenge killing.
September 27, 2004	Limankara (Borno State)	A self-styled Taliban group hiding on the Goza hills and Mandara mountains on the north-eastern boarder with Cameroon raided police stations killing officers and stealing ammunition.
January 16, 2005	Ipakodo (Lagos State)	A religious conflict between Odua People's Congress (OPC) and Muslims over the erection of Ogun Shrine in a Muslim praying ground.
August 20, 2005	Isale-Eko area of Lagos Island Local Government; Lagos State.	No fewer than 30 Muslim youths were feared dead when cultists and members of the out-lawed Odua Peoples Congress (OPC) attacked Muslims.

Source: Philip Akpen, "Ethnic and Religious Conflicts: Challenges for Sustainable Democracy" In Julius O. Adekunle ed. *Religious in Politics: Secularism and National Integration in Modern Nigeria*, 75-76.

6.2. MEANS AND PERPETRATORS OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

6.2.1. VERBAL WARFARE

This has to do with war of words or what can be referred to as verbal attack. Some leaders of the various religious groups are the worst culprits in this regard. The Pastors, Imams, religious preachers, religious writers use their sermons, crusades or publications to persecute their religious opponents. They use such forums to galvanize support and convince the masses on the next possible strategy to perpetrate violence. They calumniate their religious opponents with the power of words.

While physical violence is the most public expression of hostility, it does not represent all the manifestations of religious crisis in Nigeria. Through verbal aggression, Nigerian Muslims and Christians continue their fighting and competition, creating a more or less permanent state of warfare of some kind. Even those who regard themselves as law-abiding and peaceful either underplay the power of words to hurt and incite or deny altogether that they have the power to cause harm. Through sermons, public speeches, writings and revivals, each religion has made the other into a primary concern. Nigerian Christianity cannot be fully understood today without analyzing its perception of Islam, and the same is true also of Islam in relation to Christianity. A good Muslim is one who is able to withstand Christian conversion tactics and campaigns. A good Christian is also one who is able to confront Islam and challenge the Qur'an's authority.³⁵²

There is hostility in the country. Some people see their fellow citizens as enemies simply because they practice their religious belief differently. Next door neighbors are enemies just because one is a Christian and the other Muslim. They find the least

³⁵² Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, p. 247.

opportunity to verbally attack and assault each other and tell each other how bad his or her religion is. They forget the fact that they are praying to the same God. Various people's approach to God can be compared to the story of seven blind men and a big elephant. These men being blind do not see or know that they were touching an elephant. One touched the strong big leg and concluded that he had touched a strong piece of wood. Another touched the big flat ear and drew another conclusion altogether. Same was applicable to the rest. They drew different conclusions and kept arguing among themselves not knowing that they were touching the same animal.³⁵³ Similar analogy can apply to religious groups in Nigeria. They worship the same God but through different approaches. But they fight against each other and seem to have forgotten that they have the same object of worship.

6.2.2 USE OF CONVERTS

Muslim converts into Christianity as well as Christian converts into Islam are used as tools to perpetrate violence. According to Toyin Falola "Christians themselves have adopted the strategy of using Muslim converts to Christianity as agents of discredit."³⁵⁴ Christians are not the only culprits in this aspect. Muslims are also guilty of such practice. In Nigeria Muslim converts into Christianity tend to be more in number than Christians who got converted into Islamic religion.³⁵⁵ When someone converts from Islamic religion into Christianity for example it is believed that he had known a lot about the Muslim religion and will be in a better position to castigate the faith. Such Muslim –

³⁵³ Randy Wang, "The Blind Men and the Elephant" Accessed November 11, 2012. www.cs.princeton.edu/~rywang/berkeley/258/parable.html.

³⁵⁴ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, p. 256.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

to- Christian convert it is believed, will be more effective in convincing other Muslims to opt for the Christian faith.

Falola narrated the story of Paul Jinadu as a typical example of Muslim to Christian convert who used his conversion to the disadvantage of Muslims. Jinadu was born around 1942 into a Muslim household. His original name was Mohammed Ali Monsuru. After his conversion to Christianity he changed his name to Paul. He believed that his dramatic conversion was similar to the story of the conversion of the Apostle Paul as recorded in the Bible (Acts of the Apostles chapter 9). Jinadu did everything as true and faithful Muslim until he was sent to England for studies at a young age.

Jinadu was born into a polygamous Muslim family. His mother was a junior wife. The other wives wanted to get rid of him and his mother because their husband loved his mother more than the other wives. In order to protect the young Jinadu he was sent to England so that he can carry on with his education in a safer environment. In England there was no mosque close to the place where he was living with a Christian family. Casually he began to attend the church with the family and from there he began to develop interest in the Christian faith. He attended Christian crusades and on one occasion he gave his life to Jesus and became a born again believer. Jinadu abandoned his former plan of attending a medical school to the dismay of his parents. Instead he attended a theological school and became a Christian Minister. He used such platform to promote the Christian religion and to oppose the Islamic faith.³⁵⁶

With his education, Jinadu like some other Muslims converted into Christianity argue against the Muslim faith:

³⁵⁶ Ibid. 257-258.

No Muslim is able to talk about God in the personal way that we born again Christians can. The way Mohammed points does not lead to a definite saving knowledge of God. It is a case of fulfilling the requirements of the five pillars of Islam and hoping for the best. There is no assurance of salvation. Nor can there be, since salvation is not found in any other. Only Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life³⁵⁷

The problem with Paul Jinadu's approach to religion is that such hostility to other people's faith tradition leads to religious violence. Experience has proved this to be the case. People of various religious traditions believe that their religion is the best. The better approach to religious practice whether you are a convert or not will be to respect and honor another person's religious conviction. In turn those people will honor and respect your own religious tradition and then everybody will endeavor to live in peace and harmony. People have the right to write or say what they think. But some speeches can be categorized as rebellious speeches capable of causing havoc and mayhem. When freedom of speech leads to violence in the society, the state is obliged to censure such statements and if need be punish offenders depending on the manner of the speech or statements. Every citizen may enjoy the liberty of writing or saying what one thinks so long as it does not compromise the public peace and other peoples' freedom.

6.2.3 DEHUMANIZING PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITH

There is a saying in the southern part of Nigeria specifically in Igbo ethnic group which says: "*Iga enye Nkita ajo afa ka I wee gbuo ya*" (You have to blame the dog for wrong doing in order to harm it). This applies in some sense to the religious disturbances in Nigeria. Religious groups go to the extent of demonizing and dehumanizing the opponent before attacking them. Sometimes each side of isle labels

³⁵⁷ Paul Jinadu, *I have Seen the Lord* (Ibadan –Nigeria: Christian Growth Books, 1985) In Toyin Falola *Violence in Nigeria*. P. 258.

each other with derogatory and degrading names. Such labels in some sense give them the impetus or audacity to launch their attack since they now perceive their opponent as being of less worth or value. Falola writes:

Irrespective of specifics, the very first step in any case of violence is to construct the enemy, to differentiate and dehumanize it in order to justify any action visited upon it. Religious violence is justified by constructing a person or a group as different and demonizing it. Muslims call the Christians *kaffir* and the southerners *yanmirin*. Christians call Muslims murderers, *awon elesin imolile* (worshippers of a treacherous cult), and infidels. To cite a few examples from our cases: Marwa used various unpleasant labels even for fellow-Muslims (“slaves” and “firewood in hell”); Yahaya called religious opponents prostitutes, and a CAN official referred to Muslims as satans. Those enemies so demonized must be prevented from offering their religion or beliefs to a rival group.³⁵⁸

The trend in human existence is to punish evil doers and to do no harm to the innocent. It is considered immoral to harm/kill a good person. Falola observed in the Nigerian case that religious differences serve as a ground for attacking and victimizing other groups. Their attackers believe that they are doing the world a noble duty by attacking and probably reducing the number of their opponents because their religious group is considered bad/inferior and in fact deserves to be out to existence. Those considered as enemies do not deserve either sympathy or good wishes. When President Shehu Shagari (Nigerian leader from 1979-1984) lost seven children in a car accident in the 1980s, a Christian singer was alleged to have celebrated it with joy as “revenge from God”. When the Maitatsine rioted in the 1980s, corpses were difficult to identify because the killers had mutilated the corpses. Misfortunes to rival religious communities are

³⁵⁸ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 280.

considered as God's punishment on his enemies.³⁵⁹ According to Falola one religious leader once said that they kill for Allah. And religious activists once argued that they kill as a pre-emptive attack.³⁶⁰ These entail destruction of lives and property. Many examples abound where many innocent lives were lost and property worth lots of money destroyed.

6.2.4. *BOKO HARAM* VIOLENCE

The *Boko Haram* sect has been operating with militancy since around 2002. The group known as *Boko Haram* claims to be an Islamic sect. They seem to be one of the worst perpetrators of religious violence in recent times. They take a violent and war-like approach in the practice and spread of religion. Chris Ajaero writes:

Boko Haram which figuratively means 'Western or non-Islamic education is a sin' is a Nigerian Islamic fundamentalist group that seeks the imposition of Shariah laws in 12 northern states of Nigeria. The group presently has an undefined structure and chain of command. The official name of the group is *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-jihad*, which in Arabic means 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophets's Teachings and Jihad.' The literal translation is 'Association of Sunnis for the Propagation of Islam and for Holy War.' It became known following sectarian violence in Nigeria in 2009. But residents of Maiduguri, where it was formed in 2002, dubbed it *Boko Haram*. Loosely translated from the local Hausa language, this means 'Western education is forbidden.' Residents gave it the name because of its strong opposition to Western education, which it sees as corrupting Muslims. The term *Boko Haram* comes from the Hausa word *boko* meaning 'Animist, western or otherwise non-Islamic education.' And the Arabic word *haram* figuratively meaning 'sin' but literally means 'forbidden.' *Boko Haram* opposes not only western education but also western culture and modern science.³⁶¹

This group was believed to have started in the 1960s in Nigeria. However it started to draw attention in the year 2002 when Mohammed Yusuf became its leader. Yusuf formed

³⁵⁹ Ibid.281.

³⁶⁰ Ibid. 282-283.

³⁶¹ Chris Ajaero, "A Thorn in the Flesh of the Nation" *Newswatch Magazine* November 21, 2011, 19.

the group in the city of Maiduguri. He set up a religious complex. This complex included an Islamic school and a Mosque. The school attracted students from poor families from the north and its environs. In 2004 it expanded to the city of Kanamma in Yobe State. This base which was set up in Kanamma was named ‘Afghanistan.’ Within a short period it was believed that students from this base attacked a police station in the area killing police officers.³⁶²

From its activities, Boko Haram has both political and religious motives. They were operating through the school system by recruiting kids from poor back grounds and neighborhoods. Its schools are alleged to be breeding grounds for jihadists.³⁶³ Initially their activities were taken to be random mob actions by some youths who have no jobs and are engaging protests in order to drive home their point and make their voices heard. But they proved to be much more than random dissatisfied youths. The members of the Boko Haram have proved to be trained, coordinated and well-funded.

In July 2009, the Nigerian police started investigating the group following reports that it was arming itself. Several of its leaders were arrested in Bauchi, sparking deadly clashes with security forces which led to the death of about 700 people. Yusuf was arrested and killed in Maiduguri on July 30, 2009, by Nigerian security forces after being taken into custody. In January 2010, the group struck in the Borno State capital, killing four people in Dala Alemderi ward while the sect freed more than 700 inmates from a prison in Bauchi State. In December 2010, members of the sect bombed a market and 92 of its members were arrested by police. Their activities peaked on Friday, January 28, 2011, when the governorship candidate of the All Nigeria Peoples Party, ANPP, was assassinated, along with his brother and four police officers. On June 17, the group attacked the Force headquarters at Louis Edet House, Abuja. About 73 vehicles were destroyed by the bombs detonated by a suicide bomber. Officials believed that the attack was the first suicide bombing in Nigeria’s history. Nine days

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Ibid.

later, on June 26, the sect bombed a beer garden in Maiduguri. The militants on motorcycles threw explosives into the drinking spot, killing about 25 people. On June 27, another bombing in Maiduguri, attributed to the group, killed at least two girls and wounded three officers of the Nigeria Customs Service, NCS. On July 3, another bombing of a beer garden in Maiduguri killed at least 20 people.³⁶⁴

Still on August 26, 2011 the Boko Haram sect claimed responsibility for the bombing of UN House in Abuja – the capital of Nigeria. Security operatives probing all these incidents and the activities of this group believe that they are affiliates of the Al-Qaeda. The Boko Haram sect is believed to have received some of their training from Algeria and Afghanistan. Moreover it is suspected that some members of the security agents in Nigeria such as the army and police belong to this group or are in support of their activities. That is why it has been difficult for the Nigerian security forces to put a halt to the menacing activities of the sect.³⁶⁵ The Boko Haram story presents an example of how a religious sect chooses violence instead of peace. Islam preaches peace and tolerance but some extremists continue to perpetrate acts of violence. Boko Haram is such example in Nigeria.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

This chapter examines the various reasons why religious violence occur in Nigeria. Some of the reasons apply to violence between Muslims against fellow Muslims, some apply to the violence between Christians against fellow Christians. Most of the reasons to be discussed here apply to the violence between Christians and Muslims. Religious conflict overflows into ethnic conflict and similarly what began as an ethnic conflict often ends up leading to religious conflict. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the causes of these conflicts because they can be as a result of religious and ethnic reasons at the same time. However it is necessary to point out that ethnic differences play some major roles in such conflicts. Most of the time when what can be perceived as religious conflicts erupts the violence is usually between the ethnic groups mostly between the Hausa community and the Igbo community. Religious riots in Nigeria are as a result of different motives and intentions. Jan H. Boer writes:

These riots have had a number of different motives and shapes. Originally they were initiated by Muslims – though this is decidedly a controversial statement – while Christians sometimes started later riots. At times they are intra-Muslim affairs, with one sect attacking another. Sometimes they are by Muslims aiming at the government and could be considered political in nature, though a more accurate description might be ‘politico-religious’, for religious and political concerns are never far from each other in Islam. At other times they are directed against Christians. In some cases, as in Plateau State, the riots begin as anti-government demonstrations. The resulting atmosphere of violence remains in the air, and later the riots become Muslim versus Christian, sometimes without a clear picture as to who took the initiative. Eventually as people became accustomed to violence and aversion to it wore down, Christians also initiated riots with the cooperation of traditionalist as in Zangon-Kataf. Many riots spill over onto wider areas. Often the initiators can be identified, but in the case of

Kaduna 2000, it is difficult to determine who started the actual attack.³⁶⁶

7.1 DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE SAME RELIGION

Theological or doctrinal differences among the same religious sect often generate violence. Falola observed:

Differences among members of the same religion are often expressed through violence: one faction will seize places of worship in order to prevent others from using them; power struggles over the appointments of leaders are divisive and can end in physical combat; consensus over theological matters is not always easy or possible; changes result in prolonged quarrels; and the state even sometimes sets one faction against another in order to promote general instability when it is politically expedient.³⁶⁷

Again Falola writes:

While Nigerian Muslims like to present a common front and argue that there are no sects in Islam, there are in fact profound differences and divisions among them. When these divisions result in violence or political tension, they become difficult to conceal. The prevalent assumption that Islam is culturally and theologically monolithic, held mainly by Christians, is dead wrong. There are many different kinds of factions, sects, movements and Sufi brotherhoods known as *tariqa*, often characterized by sharp doctrinal differences.³⁶⁸

Nigerian Muslims can easily rally themselves together and speak as well as protest with one voice. In that sense one can see them to be more united than the Christian groups. But that does not mean that the various Muslim groups/sects do not have differences. In the Nigerian context, experience had shown that they do fight among themselves sometimes on account of doctrinal issues. Christians also have a lot of doctrinal differences. They have many denominations and sects. In Nigeria there are

³⁶⁶ Jan H. Boer, *Nigeria's Decades of Blood 1980-2002* (Canada: Essence Publishing, 2003) 37.

³⁶⁷ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 227.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

more sects in Christianity than there are sects among their Muslim counterpart. Often different Christian sects engage in acts of violence against each other.

7.2 THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC)

Since her political independence most of the Nigerian Presidents have come from the Hausa ethnic group. Most of these Presidents have been Muslims. Often non-Muslims accuse these political leaders of trying to Islamize all Nigerians. This has been a constant reason for violence. Toyin Falola observed that Christians usually accuse Nigerian Presidents who are usually Muslims that they have a hidden agenda to make Nigeria an Islamic religious state, that they do not believe that Nigeria should be a secular state. A case in point according to Falola is the conspiracy by Muslim leaders to make Nigeria become a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).³⁶⁹

Some Nigerian Christians consider this as religious favoritism. It is President Ibrahim Babangida who was in power when Nigeria became a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). According to Joseph Kenny “Babangida’s ill-calculated secret of carrying the nation into the O.I.C. pleased most Muslims, but raised a storm among Christians which has lasted for years.”³⁷⁰

The Organization of the Islamic conference was established in 1965 by mostly Arab countries, with the aim of eventually including all Islamic states and any others that wished to join. Its first major meeting, the Summit of Conference of Kings and Heads of State and Government of Islamic Countries, was held in Rabat in 1969.....Between 1969 and 1971, organizational meetings defined the structure and functions of the OIC, and representatives of thirty Islamic states officially approved the OIC charter in Jeddah in February and March 1972.³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 164.

³⁷⁰ Joseph Kenny, “Sharia and Christianity in Nigeria: Islam and a Secular State” *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 26. (Nov. 1996). 342.

³⁷¹ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 94.



Figure 3. “IBB AT 71..His Life And Time (Biography)” *CKN NIGERIA* Friday, 17 August 2012. <http://www.cknnigeria.com/2012/08/ibb-at-71his-life-and-time-biography.html>.

Commenting on the problem of OIC, Kunirum Osia writes: “As if all these problems between Christians and Muslims were not enough, the Babangida administration made Nigeria a full-fledged member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).”³⁷² Christians voiced their displeasure through their organization the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). Christians argued among other things that such a move was a disregard to the tenets of the Nigerian constitution.

Christians saw this act as a subtle way of making Nigeria an Islamic state contrary to the tenets of the constitution. Christians

³⁷² Kunirun Osia, “Resolving Religious Conflict in Nigeria: A Search for points of Convergence” *Dialogue&Alliance*, 7 no.1 Spr-Sum 1993. 42.

protested against the surreptitious way in which it was done. They objected to the aims of the OIC (as reflected in the Charter of the OIC) and drew attention to three issues they found seriously objectionable. Their first objection was the OIC's aim to promote Islamic solidarity among its members. This, they felt, put them at a disadvantage, given Nigeria's religious pluralism. Their second objection was to the OIC's call for the coordination of all efforts for the safeguarding of the struggle of the Palestinian people and to help them to regain their rights and liberate their lands appropriated by Israel. The Christians felt that this exacerbated Nigeria's lack of foreign policy consensus on the Middle East question. Their third grievance was against the sixth objective of the OIC, namely, to strengthen the struggle of all Muslim people with a view to safeguarding their dignity, independence and national rights. This particular objective, they argued, ran counter to some provisions of the Nigerian Constitution.³⁷³

The OIC issue created problems and conflicts in the country. It inflamed all the more an already troublesome religious situation.

In every way, Nigeria's entry into the OIC turned out to be a costly miscalculation. The resulting controversy polarized the country along the religious divide more than had any other issue in Nigeria's history. Unlike the other major religious-political issues, al-Shari'a and secularity, which had been brewing for decades, the OIC crisis erupted overnight, and as it happened, the Nigerian population did not know about the OIC crisis until it was already well underway.³⁷⁴

The reaction from the Muslim community was different.

When news of the OIC alignment reached Christian leaders, they were enraged and immediately called for the government to withdraw. Muslims reacted, thrilled at belonging to the OIC and demanding that Nigeria remain a member. A major crisis ensued. In the first few days, the government thought that Christians would calm down in due course. This did not happen, since Christians were terrified of Nigeria becoming an Islamic country as a consequence; the secular Nigeria media also interpreted the OIC crisis as a religious issue. Others thought of it as a policy issue,

³⁷³ Ibid. 42-43

³⁷⁴ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 95-96.

wondering why the government would fail to consult its people before making such major decision.³⁷⁵

Christian leaders went into action trying to prove to the government that Christians were not in support of the country's membership. They mobilized themselves through their umbrella organization, the Christian Association of Nigeria and made their voices heard.

Christians immediately mobilized against the OIC. Their manifold objections were widely publicized in the newspapers and were the subjects of sermons and church publications throughout 1986. Churches issued statements and called for special prayers, rallies, and fasts aimed at fighting the OIC. Christians thought of the OIC as an Islamic organization, conceived by Muslims to achieve objectives that would promote the cause of Islam; citing its charter and activities, they concluded that the OIC was nothing but an organization of Muslims united in the defense of Islam. The situation provided an opportunity for the Christian leadership to launch a full-scale attack against the government and Nigeria's Islamic elite. A number of Christian writers and organizations were concerned for the country's instability, having experienced a civil war and continuing to witness the north-south divide in addition to the problems of ethnic strife, military rule, and political backstabbing. Membership in the OIC, it was argued, would complicate every one of these problems.³⁷⁶

Muslims on their part launched a counter attack. They voiced their support for the OIC and highlighted many benefits that Nigerian Nation stands to gain as a result of her membership.

Muslims counterattacked in defense of the Babangida administration. They said the Christians were exaggerating the negative implications of the OIC; liberal Muslims said that OIC membership could only be managed if Christians were tolerant. They pointed out that some Christian heads of state (the leaders of Senegal and Rwanda) attended OIC meetings. Moreover, the emphasized, the OIC could be expected to financially assist the country in times of trouble: the OIC would grant monetary and

³⁷⁵ Ibid. 96.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

technical assistance, and the Islamic Development Bank made low-interest loans to OIC members. All of these claims implied that the OIC was not primarily a religious organization, but something akin to the United Nations. They further pointed out that OIC membership was no more in violation of religious freedoms than were Nigeria's diplomatic relation with the Vatican.³⁷⁷

The OIC issue has been a perturbing problem in Nigeria ever since. Christians continued to protest against it, but with little or no success. Subsequent governments were silent on such controversial issue as OIC.

To this day, the government has been walking a tightrope on the OIC issue: in order to satisfy Muslims, it has not officially withdrawn its membership; and to satisfy the Christians, it has refused to play an active role in the OIC or to advertise its participation in the organization. Its Advisory Council on Religious Affairs has met with failure because of deep mistrust among the members and because its Christian members believe that they are being manipulated.....³⁷⁸

The trouble associated with the OIC seems to be lying low. Subsequent administrations seem to have learned some lessons on the divisive nature of such volatile issue. That accounts for why the government has been silent and more cautious on the issue.

7.3 THE SHARIA LAW

The Longman Advance American Dictionary defined Sharia as "a system of religious laws followed by Muslims."³⁷⁹ The Sharia has been in operation in Nigeria since the pre-colonial and pre-independence era. Joseph Kenny observed that "Sharia is as old as Islam in Nigeria."³⁸⁰ Kenny noted that around the 14th century Islam was

³⁷⁷ A. F. Masha and Ram Oyekan, "O.I.C. : A Muslim Viewpoint," *The Guardian*, 11 February 1986, 5. In Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 97.

³⁷⁸ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 102.

³⁷⁹ *Longman Advance American Dictionary*, (England: Pearson Education Limited, 2001)

³⁸⁰ Joseph Kenny, "Sharia and Christianity in Nigeria: Islam and a Secular State", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, p. 338.

already being professed in Kanem-Borno area of northern Nigeria. And that it was during the reign of Mai Idris Aloma (1571-1603) that many of the leading people in the Kanem – Borno Empire became Muslims.³⁸¹ “Kano and Katsina were two Hausa states which were on the trade routes between Kanem and the west, and came under the influence of Muslim traders who passed through or settled there.”³⁸²

Quadri stated that Mai Idris Aloma was the first ruler to introduce as well as enforce Sharia Law around the sixteen century. According to Quadri, Aloma separated the administration of justice from the executive branch there by taking legal decisions out of the hands of local chiefs and then setting up the *Qadi* courts in order to administer justice in accordance with the sharia legal code.³⁸³

The Jihad which took place in one of the mega cities in the northern region namely the city of Sokoto helped to promote the sharia legal system to a considerable degree. Liman writes:

The Sokoto Jihad, which began in 1804 under the leadership of Shehu Usman dan Fodio left a considerable and lasting impact on the politico-religious development of northern Nigeria. One of the immediate consequences was the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, which allowed the institutionalization of a strong and dynamic socio-political system, including the adoption of the Shari’a.³⁸⁴

Liman further argued that the fighting of the Jihad was in part to protest the issue that certain laws were implemented, contrary to the sharia law. Liman argues:

It is noteworthy that the reasons for the Jihad were primarily religious, among which were: oppression of Muslims in the form

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Yasir Anjiola Quadri, “The Survival of Shari’a in Multi-Faith Nigeria”, In *Shari’a in a Multifaith Nigeria*, Muhibbu-din M. A. ed. (Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria: Shobiotimo Publications, 2004) 2.

³⁸⁴ Sa’adatu Hassan Liman, “Shari’a And Politics: Crises, Conflicts, And Resolutions” In *Religion in Politics Secularism And National Integration In Modern Nigeria*, p.160.

of imposed taxes not sanctioned by the Shari'a, and the abduction of Islamic women and the misappropriation of their possessions. Hence, it was justified to institute the Shari'a in order to ensure justice and equity. Shari'a was therefore considered a revolutionary idea, which had come to displace the status quo and replace the socio-political practices with Islamic tenets.³⁸⁵

The Hausas would argue that sharia is part of their culture and belief system. But as far as the rest of Nigerians are concerned, the sharia legal system has generated controversy in the country. The argument is that Nigeria is a multi-religious nation. There are Christians, Muslims, traditional worshippers, and agnostics. All these live side by side with each other. Even in the Hausa area that is predominantly Muslim, still there are people of other religious traditions. There ought to be a level playing field for all religions. But this seems not to be the case since the issue of sharia came up in the country. Ndiokwere writes:

There is no other Islamic imposition of its way of life, culture and creed on non-Muslims that has generated as much controversy everywhere than the sharia issue. In Nigeria, the introduction of sharia laws into the country's legal institution as well as the story of Nigeria's membership of the organization of Islamic conference has been fought against with tremendous ferocity by all and sundry – Christians and non-Christians, atheists and as well as agnostics. Muslim leaders press for the extension of sharia laws into Southern Nigeria.³⁸⁶

Muslims Scholars would respond to people like Ndiokwere that the sharia law does not apply to non-Muslims. But how far non-Muslims have bought this explanation is a different issue. Non-Muslims argue that Nigeria is a secular state and that by accepting the practice of sharia law, Nigeria will be having two judiciary systems, namely the secular system and the religious system. Paul Oranika writes that sharia system has split

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Nathaniel Ndiokwere, *The African Church Today And Tomorrow Vol 1. Prospects and Challenges*, 83.

Nigerians into two camps: those opposed to it, and those in support of the system. The introduction of sharia can lead to constitutional crises as the country now seems to have two types of laws namely the Nigeria legal system which is secular and then the sharia legal code which is religious.³⁸⁷

The Nigerian constitution states that no Nigerian should be made to suffer more or greater punishment for the same offence than other Nigerians would ordinarily suffer in any given offence. The sharia law goes against this. The Nigerian constitution states:

(1) A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions or political opinions are not made subject; or be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizen of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions or political opinions. (2) No citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his birth.³⁸⁸

Kanu Agabi writing to state governors that practice sharia notes:

I appreciate that your motive in conferring criminal jurisdiction on the Sharia Courts is to ensure transparency and achieve a more orderly and disciplined society. I commend this lofty objective but in achieving it we must not violate the constitution. Unless we abide by the constitution we shall have on our hands an arbitrary society based on the discretion of our rulers. That is totally unacceptable. The fact that Sharia law applies to only Muslims or to those who elect to be bound by it makes it imperative that the rights of such persons to equality with other citizens under the constitution be not infringe. A Muslim should not be subjected to a punishment more severe than would be imposed on other

³⁸⁷ Paul Oranika, *Nigeria: One Nation, Two Systems* (Baltimore: Publish America, 2004) 96.

³⁸⁸ *The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, Section 42 (1 and 2).

Nigerians for the same offence. Equality before the law means that Muslims should not be discriminated against.³⁸⁹

Many religious riots and crises have been attributed to sharia as its principal cause. Oranika writes:

The troubles in Kaduna were the result of the introduction of sharia system in that state. Kaduna state is a microcosm of the bigger problems facing the country.....While Muslims in Kaduna favor sharia, Christians and other non-believers of Islam oppose such a system. Although some northern states had introduced sharia before Kaduna state did, the battle against the sharia system has been fiercer in the state than anywhere else in the nation.³⁹⁰

The Nigerian President during the Kaduna sharia riot, President Obasanjo, addressed the nation sometime after the riots:

I speak to you again today with a sad and heavy heart, having recently returned from a visit to Kaduna, where I saw the carnage and devastation resulting from the recent disturbances in that city. I had decided to make a personal visit there, because I was very concerned by the security and other reports I was getting from the officials on the ground. I could not believe that Nigerians were capable of such barbarism against one another. But what I saw there was perhaps even more gruesome in detail.....These acts cannot, and must not, go on. We must bring to a very prompt end the temptation to always resort to violence in any disagreement between groups, whether religious or ethnic or political. We must rid ourselves of the mentality of murderousness that stems from fear and suspicion of the other person. We must rediscover the value to dialogue.³⁹¹

The practice of Sharia law became a bigger issue since democracy was reintroduced in Nigeria in 1999. It was at this time that Sani Ahmed Yerima came to

³⁸⁹ Kanu Agabi, "Memorandum To Governors of All States that are Practicing Sharia Legal System" In Paul Oranika, *Nigeria: One Nation, Two Systems* p.51-52.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Olusegun Obasanjo, "Presidential Address to the Nation on Sharia Riots" In Paul Oranika, *Nigeria: One Nation, Two Systems*, 41-43.

power as the Governor of Zamfara State. Beginning from the year 2000 the Governor launched sharia law in his state.

The Shari'a became an issue when Sani Ahmed Yerima, the governor of Zamfara, reintroduced the Shari'a in his state in January of 2000. Resistance followed, especially from the Christians. Ignoring the protests and the potential danger of ethnic and religious conflicts that his actions could cause, the governor proceeded to implement it. Niger State and ten other northern states followed Zamfara's lead. Many of the Nigerian Muslims who favor the Shari'a are Sunni.³⁹²

The Sharia in Zamfara and in those states where it was introduced deal with issues such as consumption of alcohol, corruption, adultery and stealing.³⁹³ According to Julius

Adekunle the reasons adduced by those who favor sharia include:

First, they believed that because the constitution of Nigeria allows freedom of religion their action was legal. Second.....the Sharia is a fundamental aspect of Islam, it is about divine justice, and it should be adopted to promote Islam. Third, that the Sharia would reduce crime, would create a society free of violence, theft, and corruption, and would evolve an atmosphere of peace and progress. Fourth, that the adoption of the Sharia is a means of connecting with the wider Muslim world. It is argued that Nigeria's Sharia states could receive development grants from Arab and Muslim nations.³⁹⁴

Despite the explanations and the reasons many non-Muslims in Nigeria are not convinced.

Non-Muslims in the twelve Sharia states are uncomfortable with the Shari'a despite the claim that they will not be subjected to its laws. To the Christians in particular, the implementation of the Shari'a is tantamount to religious terrorism within Nigerian borders.³⁹⁵

³⁹² Julius O Adekunle, "Religion, politics, and Violence" In Julius O. Adekunle ed. *Religion in Politics: Secularism and National Integration in Modern Nigeria* (New Jersey: Africa World Press Inc, 2009)182.

³⁹³ Ibid. 183.

³⁹⁴ Ibid. 182.

³⁹⁵ Ibid. 185.

Although the emphasis was that it applies only to Muslims, still non-Muslims were afraid of it and could not be convinced.³⁹⁶ Karl Maier writes:

Living under Shari'a is believed to be an intrinsic right and duty of the Islamic faithful, and any Muslims who oppose it are deemed to be lacking in true belief. The Muslim argument that Shari'a would not affect non-Muslims, however, was clearly false since its ban on alcohol, cinemas, and integration of the sexes in most spheres of life would affect everyone.³⁹⁷

According to Julius Adekunle:

From the Christian perspective, the Shari'a violates the secular constitution and they fear that the Shari'a laws are geared toward the growth of Islam and that there is a conscious attempt to turn Nigeria into a Muslim state. Particularly in the northern states, where many of the religious conflicts have taken place, both Christians and Muslims accused each other of religious intolerance.³⁹⁸

Some Nigerians believe that Sharia law is connected to politics. Those governors who introduced the Sharia law in their state did so in order to score some political points. They introduced the Sharia law in their states “to register their disenchantment with Obasanjo’s government.”³⁹⁹ Obasanjo was the Nigerian president at that time and he is a Christian. It is been argued that the northern Muslim governors were not in favor of Obasanjo’s policies and decisions. They decided to embark on the Sharia law as form of protest and to win more support.

As things are, the general opinion was that zealous Muslims in Nigeria are attempting to reinvent the Shari'a to draw political attention to themselves. In this case, the critics of the Shari'a who claim it is being used for political reasons against the Obasanjo’s administration are justified. However, opinions from the Muslim circle reflected that the Shari'a was simply and purely a matter of religion, not of politics. It became political because people of other

³⁹⁶ Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000) 145.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Julius Adekunle, “Religion, Politics and Violence” In *Religion in Politics*, Julius Adekunle ed. 185-186.

³⁹⁹ Ayodele Akinkuotu, “A Dangerous Agenda” *Tell Magazine* March 2000, 14.

faiths inhabit the states where the Shari'a was adopted. Even though it was difficult to arrive at a definite agreement on its implementation, there were apparent clashes and overlapping of interests among religious and political leaders. The collision of religion and politics resulted in several violent outbreaks.⁴⁰⁰

Punishment for offenders varies under Sharia law. Punishments include death penalty by stoning or by hanging, amputation of right hands and lashing. These Punishments are often swift in execution. There are not delays or prolonged process of appeal if there were any appeal at all.⁴⁰¹ According to Adekunle "One of the death sentences was carried out: Sani Yakubu, a 27 years old man, was hanged for killing a woman and her two children in January of 2002 in Katsina State. Lashes and amputations have also been implemented."⁴⁰²

It was believed that the introduction of Sharia in the Hausa ethnic group areas was to prevent Christians from residing in the area. The introduction of Sharia has therefore both ethnic and religious sides. There is the fear that Christians migrate from the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups to reside in the Hausa ethnic group. When they migrate they also take their Christian faith with them. This has brought increase in the presence of Christian denominations in the north.

Stemming from the argument on intolerance is the point that Muslim politicians support the Shari'a in order to curtail the increasing growth of Christianity in the north. Those who use religion to promote their political ambitions and status are doing so at the expense of the peace and unity of the countryEvolving peaceful co-existence is a political process, considering the fact that religion has not only been used as a political propaganda, it has also become an instrument of hatred. Neither Christianity nor

⁴⁰⁰ Julius Adekunle, "Religion, Politics and Violence" In *Religion in Politics*, Julius Adekunle ed. 184.

⁴⁰¹ Julius O Adekunle, "Religion, politics, and Violence" In Julius O. Adekunle ed. *Religion in Politics*. 184-185.

⁴⁰² Ibid. 185.

Islam encourages violence, but political force sometimes instigates hatred that leads to bloodshed.⁴⁰³

Christians and Muslims do show signs that they can co-exist in the country. There have been cases where Christian and Muslim neighbors protect each other from violence and chaotic situations. This demonstrates the spirit of togetherness.⁴⁰⁴

7.4 DESIRE BY RELIGIOUS GROUPS TO DOMINATE PARTS OF NIGERIA

The struggle by religious sects to dominate one part of the nation or another often leads to violence. This involves conversion and the struggle to win more members.

Which religion should dominate in what part of the country? This point is hardly mentioned in the literature because its essence is not clearly understood. Conversion is an ongoing process to the Islamic and Christian movements alike. Numbers are crucial- if central Nigeria were to be converted to Islam, the balance of national power would shift, the dynamics of confrontation would change, and more pressure could be put on the state to grant concessions to Muslims⁴⁰⁵

The adherents of the Muslim tradition may not bother themselves that the Christians dominated the eastern part of the country. Christians also know that northern Nigeria has been dominated by Muslims. Christians would not want to yield to the Muslims in the east and Muslims would not want to yield to the Christian in the north. The central part of Nigeria has mixed population of Christians and Muslims. Tensions between the two groups abound in the central part. According to Toyin Falola:

In the north however, Muslims did not want to yield an inch.....Central Nigeria, with its large Christian population, has been the most permanent source of tension. To many Muslims leaders, to yield the central part of the country to Christian control would be to allow the hostile destruction of the north. Central

⁴⁰³ Ibid. 186.

⁴⁰⁴ Danlami Nmodu, "Guns Now Silent while Unease Booms" *Tell Magazine* March 2000, 21.

⁴⁰⁵ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*. 167-168.

Nigeria has always been useful, both politically and economically, to the Muslim political elite.⁴⁰⁶

It is believed that there are more Christians from the east residing in the north than there are northern Muslims residing in the east. Geographically, the north has more land than the east. The Yoruba area (western part) has a mixed population of Muslims and Christians.

The Yoruba areas in the southwest have also seen a split. Conflicts here have been minimal so far, but tension has been building gradually. A Yoruba-Muslim identity is getting stronger and stronger, and it is too early to say what the far-reaching implications of this will be on future politics.....there was a conflict in the University of Ibadan in 1985, and other tensions suggest that violence might erupt here in the future. A few examples from the 1980s illustrate this point. The Yoruba Muslim intelligentsia and people who write about the Yoruba religion have presented Yoruba Muslims as tolerant. This is true, except for the fact that relations between them and the Christians have been souring since the mid-1980s, in large part attributable to the OIC crisis and the utilization of religion for power.⁴⁰⁷

The struggle to win converts seems to be even on both sides of the two major religious groups - Muslims and Christians. Both groups are aggressive in challenging their opponents. Christians try to convince Muslims to become Christians and Muslims try to win Christian converts. Religious violence is reduced in the areas where preachers and leaders emphasize the spirit of tolerance and accommodation.⁴⁰⁸ Where people are more educated violence is also less. With education often comes maturity, responsibility and more employment opportunities.

7.5 SCHOOL SYSTEM

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid. 168.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid. 169.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid. 171.

The control of educational system is another area of conflict. Since the introduction of Christianity in the country, it has been accompanied by the Western type of education and school system. Falola observed that Muslim scholars are opposed to the ownership and control of schools by the Christian missionaries. They believe that such schools indoctrinate anti-Islamic tendencies and create problems for the nation. The Western system of education as prevalent in Nigeria has been accused of not offering Arabic and Islamic lessons. That also is a cause for conflict.⁴⁰⁹

In the early 1970s, after the civil war there was government takeover of schools owned by religious groups and voluntary agencies. Many Christians believe that members of other religious traditions were behind the takeover.

When the colonial administration became more interested in education after the 1920s, it deliberately promoted educational cooperation with the church in order to reduce costs. Muslims began to establish their own schools, too, but their numbers were few. With regional autonomy in the 1950s and independence in 1960, the north spent a substantial amount of money to establish public schools, partly to increase enrollment and to reduce the impact of Christian mission schools. In the 1970s, many Muslims and others began to argue against Christian mission schools and urged the government to take them over. Among the arguments against such Christian schools were that they had become irrelevant in modern Nigeria, that the state could afford public education, and that while Nigerians needed common national values, mission schools limited themselves to specifically Christian values. With the influx of oil money, the Nigerian state was able to finance schools, and nationalized many Christian schools in the 1970s, much to the annoyance of many Christian religious organizations.⁴¹⁰

Religious groups in Nigeria believe in education. They believe that religion can be transmitted and spread through the schools and educational system. The youth is the

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.171-172.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

future of the society. That is why both the Muslims and the Christians would want their schools to excel in the education of the younger generation. Schools owned and managed by religious groups are great tool in the spread and propagation of faith. This underscores the reason why religious leaders try to excel in the establishment and running of their own private school. Even after the government takeover of schools in the early 1970s, religious leaders did not give up the school system. They lobbied through the Parents Teachers Associations in various schools so that religious and moral instructions are taught in schools. Through this process they keep track of their members. After some years religious authorities began to build new schools. This is why schools managed by religious group are in many places in the country. The struggle to dominate the educational system is a continuous effort by the religious groups in the country. Violence sometimes arise as a result.

7.6 MIXTURE OF RELIGION AND POLITICS

Christians as well as Muslims struggle to have more say in the affairs of the government in Nigeria. They accuse each other of using the government money and resources to sponsor and promote a particular religion. For the most part, the leadership of the country has been in the hands of Muslims. Most of the leaders also have come from the Hausa ethnic group. Some states have governors who are Christians. In such states governors have been accused of promoting and favoring a particular religion. According to Olayemi Akinwumi and Ibrahim Umaru, there is mutual suspicion between Christians and Muslims. Distancing religion from politics will mean that religious agenda will be removed from public affairs. Many Christians under the umbrella of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) believe that the major approach to counter the overbearing

influence of Islamic domination in Nigerian politics is to increase Christian involvement in public affairs.⁴¹¹

In the post-Independence period, CAN has been the most unified voice and rallying point for the Christian community in Nigeria, CAN is an ecumenical group that emerged in 1976 during the Murtala-Obasanjo military regime. It came into existence as a result of the government request for a single Christian group to deal with in connection to a proposed national pledge of allegiance in schools. Being an ecumenical group, the constituency of CAN is broader and more effective than the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), formed in 1929 to provide a single theological and ethical voice for the mainstream Protestant churches in the country at both the national and international levels. CAN provides also a wider forum than Northern Christian Association (NCA), which fruitlessly fought to resist the overwhelming influence of Ahmadu Bello during Nigeria's First Republic. Members of the CAN include Catholics, Protestants, and the Pentecostal churches.⁴¹²

From the period it was instituted the Christian Association of Nigeria had been active in engaging in political discourse in the country. During the drafting of 1999 Nigerian constitution, CAN was a principal partner in the political debate and in making sure that the issues of Muslim-Christian relation are addressed. According to Olayemi Akinwmi and Ibrahim Umaru, an example of issues raised by CAN during the drafting of the 1999 constitution include:

Would the state, for instance, include aid to pilgrims or donations to religious organizations or the use of state apparatus or functionaries to assist any religion on the observance of holidays, the use of religious symbols, and so on? CAN and its Christian members in the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) also kicked against the dovetailing of Shari'a laws and judiciary system for the English one. They called for the application of neutrality by providing a Canon Law judicature for Christians. CAN even formed a committee to draft the Canon Law, and called for equal

⁴¹¹ Olayemi Akinwumi and Ibrahim Umaru "Christian Association of Nigeria and Politics" *In Religion in Politics: Secularism and National Integration in Modern Nigeria*, Julius O. Adekunle ed. (New Jersey: African World Press Inc, 2009) 220.

⁴¹² Ibid.

recognition and treatment of all religious groups as well as privileges for Christian pilgrims to Rome and Jerusalem.⁴¹³

Religious divisions coupled with ethnicity compound Nigeria's problems. The sharing of the nation's wealth and resources are done along ethnic lines. But religious groups see problems there. Christians, especially those from the south accuse the government of not being fair and of favoring the north even when oil which is the major source of revenue comes from the south. Falola observed:

How the nation's resources should be shared was yet another issue with religious dimensions. In the politics of resource distribution, ethnicity has compounded the religious divide to generate intense struggles over how regions and areas will divide national wealth. No satisfactory arrangement has yet been reached. From the point of view of the southern Christian intelligentsia, the Islamic north takes an incommensurate share, considering its relatively small contribution to the nation's resources.⁴¹⁴

The involvement of politicians or the military leaders in the affairs of religion has been criticized by many. Since her political independence, Nigeria has been ruled mainly by the military. Whether it is military or civilian regimes, appointments of personnel to key managerial positions are often based on religious affiliations. For the years that the country was governed by democratic leaders, election of candidates into various offices were mostly done on religious grounds. People would vote for candidates from their own religious group. The concept of separation of the religion and politics or separation of Church and state has continued to suffer in the country. Jan H. Boer writes:

Political concerns are often based on hidden, deeper and usually unacknowledged religious issues. The 1994 Jos riot centered on a political appointment, the chieftaincy of Jos, that the Muslims wanted to take back. In my estimation, the event was the result of a political attempt to reclaim that chieftaincy, a position of authority

⁴¹³ Ibid. 221.

⁴¹⁴ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 172-173.

to which Muslims, simply by virtue of their being Muslims, the *ummah* of Allah, felt they had a right. It was a position they were once given by the colonialists, but who later took it away from them again to restore it to the indigenes. In spite of their wholesale rejection of things colonial, Muslims did readily accept every power and privilege given to them over non-Muslim peoples and are very loathe to relinquish them even today. It is the same issue that surfaced in Tafawa Balewa and Zangon Kataf. Muslims do not take losing very graciously. Their theology tends towards triumphalism and only allows for victories. It was that hidden theology, or, perhaps a better term, religious world view, that in my estimation constituted the basic motivation of the Jos episode. Political reality had to be brought into line with a deep, often unspoken, largely unconscious, religious world view of power and domination.⁴¹⁵

Government interventions with the view of achieving political ends create problems in places of worship. Political leaders influence religious groups in various ways. Politicians know that their alignment with Churches and Mosques can help them to get elected into offices. Some Pastors and Imams campaign for specific political candidates. Military leaders are also culprits in trying to appease particular religious groups in order to win their support.

There is accusation that the government is not fair to all religious groups.

Neither Muslims nor Christians ever tire of accusing the Federal Government and some state governments of being biased in favor of the other. It is perceived everywhere, no matter what the government does or does not. If Muslims do not make the accusation, Christians will. Sometimes both make the accusation for the same situation.⁴¹⁶

Religious groups have the belief that the government and its apparatus support specific religious groups. Christians seem convinced that government leaders who incidentally have been mostly Muslims favor the Islamic religion. Muslims on their part would

⁴¹⁵ Jan H. Boer, *Muslims Why The Violence* (Canada: Essence Publishing, 2004) 91.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid. 93.

believe that Nigerian leader had always favored Christians. For them this started before Nigeria's independence. They argue that it began with the colonial masters who were mostly Christians. Colonial masters were said to have brought with them a Christian culture in country. Jan Boer observed:

Of course, having basically defined Nigeria governments, their institutions and agencies in terms of the Christo-secular-colonial heritage, Nigerian Muslims would expect partiality towards Christians..... Christians allegedly have the upper hand.⁴¹⁷

Government leaders and politicians get involved in the selection of religious leaders because they would want the religious official to be somebody who would protect their interests. Given the ethnic nature of the Nigerian society, people would want religious leaders to come from their area, their town or village. Mixture of religion and politics continue to be a common feature in the country.

7.7 PILGRIMAGE

Hajj (Pilgrimage) to Mecca in Saudi Arabia is one of the five pillars of Islam. Other pillars include: *Shahadah* (Witness/faith statement), *Salat* (Prayers), *Zakat* (Charity), *Sawn* (Fasting in the month of Ramadan).⁴¹⁸ According to Amir Hussain, it is enjoined on all Muslims who have the resources to perform the hajj to Mecca during the Islamic month of pilgrimage.⁴¹⁹

Historically, this journey would often take several months or more by land travel, and could cost a lifetime of savings. Also, since one could die on the journey, one had to make sure that all of one's debts were paid. Since the 1980s, however, the vast majority of pilgrims have travelled by air, landing at a specially constructed terminal at Jeddah's King Abdulaziz International Airport. The convenience of modern air travel and of this terminal (devoted

⁴¹⁷ Ibid. 94.

⁴¹⁸ Amir Hussain, *Oil & Water* (Canada: CopperHouse, 2006) 91-98.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid. 98.

exclusively to the hajj) has helped boost the number of pilgrims to some two million people every year. While this is a small fraction of the world's one billion Muslims it requires tremendous organization.⁴²⁰

Nigerian Muslims join the rest of the Muslims all over the world to make the hajj yearly.

The travel can be expensive and the Nigerian government subsidizes it. However some

Nigerian do not want the government to keep subsidizing the hajj. Falola observed:

While Christians do not contest this duty, they do not want the government to subsidize the pilgrimage. The government did not begin to take such role until the 1950s, when the western and northern regional governments established the Pilgrims Welfare Boards to minimize the hardship associated with the journey. In the years that followed, government support increased to the point that the hajj was a subsidized activity.⁴²¹

The oil boom during the middle of 1970s brought in a lot of revenue to the Nigerian government. It was during this period that the government organized a FESTAC⁴²². The FESTAC was a celebration of Nigerian culture and the celebration attracted people from all corners of the world. Some Nigerians who witnessed the events would argue that the government simply went crazy with spending because it had a lot of money from the sale of oil. Such money they believed could have been used to develop the country.

It was during this period that the government began to sponsor large number of pilgrims. Falola observed that, as the government puts more money in pilgrimage, it also got involved in the management and dealing with the logistical problems associated with it.

With the oil boom bringing prosperity, the number of pilgrims rose dramatically, reaching a peak of 106,000 in the year 1977. Nigerians made up the second largest delegation of any country

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 173.

⁴²² FESTAC stands for Festival of Arts and Culture held in Lagos – Nigeria in 1977.

that year. The increase in numbers, along the logistical problems associated with the journey, brought two forms of government intervention. In order to ensure that only genuine Muslims undertook the journey, people desiring to make the hajj were required to pass basic tests of Islamic faith, answering questions relating to prayer, *salat*, and the expectations of the hajj. The government sought to curb prostitution by barring single women from making the hajj, and to prevent pilgrimage-related deaths by keeping the weak and sick at home.⁴²³

Many Christians saw nothing wrong with going to pilgrimages but through their association namely the Christian Association of Nigeria, they stressed the point that government does not need to get involved in the sponsoring of pilgrimages. They argued that if the government would commit resources to pilgrimages, then Christians ought to have similar support. The government did offer support to the Christian pilgrims to Rome and Jerusalem through the Christian pilgrim Board. But Christian leaders believed that the support offered to Christians is minimal when compared with the support received by those in the Islamic tradition.⁴²⁴ Thus the conduct of pilgrimages and governments involvement continue to generation conflict and tension among the religious groups on one hand and among religious group and the government on the other.

7.8 NON- ACCEPTANCE OF LIABILITY

One thing is to commit an act of violence, the other thing is to accept and own up one's actions. This plays out in the religious and ethnic violence that occur in Nigeria. No group seems to recognize that they are doing anything wrong by championing acts of violence. There is the tendency to justify one's action or to blame the other group as being the offender. Abdullahi Pindiga observed that the Hausas are victims of ethnic

⁴²³ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 173.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.173-174.

violence and that they are not to be blamed. He cited some examples of violence in certain areas and concluded that they were victims from every side.⁴²⁵

In most riots involving the Hausa, the other tribes are the aggressors. They kill and maim the Hausas before the arrival of the security agents. But in most cases, they (security agents) too take sides. They descend on the offended, shooting and arresting them. A commission of inquiry would then be set up to try the rioters, and while the aggressors would go scot-free, the offended are brought to book. This was seen vividly in the Kafanchan riot, which the Hausas did not start but were killed and jailed. During the Sayawa-Hausa Fulani clash in Tafawa Belawa, Zangon Kataf, it was the same story.⁴²⁶

Against this backdrop and underneath the apparent refusal to accept responsibility is the belief by some that the Christians had an advantage during the colonial era. It is believed that the colonial masters instituted Christian establishment in the country. And that this establishment is secular in nature. By being secular it created a culture that tends to water down the spirituality in the country.⁴²⁷ This accusation is a debatable issue and can be far from the truth.

People who engage in acts of violence will always find reasons to justify their actions. Their popular reason often is that their violent actions are retaliatory in nature. Christian and Muslim extremists have gone out of their way to unleash acts of violence on their neighbors. Even when they use retaliation for excuse it is difficult to draw the line where retaliation stops and outright offence begins. The lack of acceptance of being responsible for violence continues to generate more violence. Each group claims to be the victim instead of the perpetrator and the trend continues.

7.9 DENIAL OF RELIGIOUS MOTIVES FOR THE VIOLENCE

⁴²⁵ Abdullahi Pindiga, "Citizen" 15 June, 1992 5-6, In Jan H. Boer, *Muslims Why The Violence* 78.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Jan H. Boer, *Muslims Why The Violence*. 77.

Often religious groups deny the religious component of violence. They can call it a tribal affair or a political conflict. Sometimes they say that indigenes fight each other. Part of the reason for such denial is to make that matter seem blurred. In this sense no religious group will look bad as war mongers. But it is distortion of facts and trying to make things become complicated so as to make the offenders escape the punishment for their acts of violence. Part of the reason why people succeed in this act of denial is because of the complex nature of the Nigerian situation. Often it is difficult to separate or distinguish religious violence from political or ethnic violence. The conflict might begin as a political conflict and ends up as religious violence as well as ethnic conflict.

Sometimes the country's leaders take advantage of the complex situation and refuse to call a spade, a spade. Some leaders twist the situation to suite their purpose. An example of this was when one of the military leaders by name Babangida was accused of denying the religious component of the riot that took place in the city of Kafanchan. It was believed that the military leader took such a stand because he was being cautious on account of the powerful interests from that part of the country.⁴²⁸ According to Jan Boer similar denial was expressed by the one-time Secretary to the Bauchi State Government, Nadada Umar, in response to a Christian Association of Nigeria's allegation to the effect that the series of riots and disturbances that took place in the Tafawa Balewa area was as a result of the introduction of the Sharia legal system in that state. The Secretary to the state government was of the view that those who are bringing in the issue of Sharia and

⁴²⁸ Ibid. 84.

religion into the conflicts are simply trying to incite the law abiding citizens and that such can lead to more trouble.⁴²⁹

In another related discussion with regard to the Tafawa Balewa riot one spokesperson in the area by name Danazumi Musa failed to recognize any religious component in the crisis. In a response to a question during a Magazine interview by Osa Director, Danazumi Musa stated:

No religious undertone, because there were Muslims among the Sayawas, even before the jihad. Some have been assimilated into the Hausa-Fulani culture. Though Christians are the majority among them, they try to give it religious undertone, since they hope to get the sympathy of the other tribes and neighbors. The crisis is more political and economic.⁴³⁰

During the Jos violence of 1994 the religious leaders distanced religion as being the cause of the hostilities. Sheikh Ismaila Idris condemned the acts of violence as being unfortunate and unwarranted. He stressed that such action cannot be supported by real believers in religion. The religious leader urged all not to be misled. He challenged people not to turn political event into a religious one. For Sheikh Ismaila Idris, the Jos violence of 1994 has something to do with politics but not religion.⁴³¹ People who are familiar with the events of Jos riot in question cannot be convinced that it was as a result of politics. Rather they are convinced that religious extremists were at work again. About the riot Jan Boer writes: “The question then is: What is the political factor at work here? We are given no guidance on this score. It is my educated suspicion that the answer would demonstrate a basic religious factor.”⁴³²

⁴²⁹ Ibid.85.

⁴³⁰ Osa Director, “The Hausa Fulani Own Tafawa Balewa Area” *TELL* January 8, 1996, 9.

⁴³¹ Sheikh Ismaila Idris, Democrat Newspaper April 19, 1994 In Jan H. Boer, *Muslims Why The Violence*. 85.

⁴³² Jan H. Boer, *Muslims Why The Violence*, 85-86.

Sheikh Abdul Aziz who was then the secretary of the Plateau State branch of a religious association, saw the Jos riot as being unfortunate and something to be regretted. He lamented the destruction of lives and property associated with that violence. He condemned the burning of religious houses and places of worship but at the same time felt that the violence has nothing to do with religion. If it is religious violence why burn religious houses he questioned?⁴³³ The fact is that religious houses and places of worship have been destroyed during religious riots. Christian fanatics can destroy churches. Muslim extremists can destroy mosques. Christians have different denominations and Muslims also have different sects. Sometimes these denominations or sects rise against each other. Another activist Sheikh El-Zakzaky attributed the conflicts in Kaduna to social issues. An example of the social issue being referred to here is the massive youth and graduate unemployment. The argument is that many people especially the youth are frustrated and at the least provocation they take to violence.⁴³⁴ But although there are graduate and youth unemployment in the country that may also not be the direct cause of violence. There are cases where youths engage in violence because they were paid to engage in such violence by rich people including rich religious leaders and groups. There is a saying that “an idle mind is a devil’s workshop.” Young people are easy targets who can be co-opted to carry out disturbances.

Government leaders are not exonerated from this denial that a particular act of violence is associated with religion. In the Kaduna violence of the year 2000, the governor of Kaduna State Governor Makarfi was reported to have disassociated the

⁴³³ Sheikh Abdul Yusuf Aziz, “Nigerian Standard Newspaper” April 26, 1994 In Jan H. Boer, *Muslims Why The Violence*, 86.

⁴³⁴ Sheikh El-Zakzaky, *New Nigerian Newspaper*, March 2, 2000, 1-2.

violence from religion. According to Jan Boer, Governor Makarfi contended that people bring in the issue of religion in order to destabilize the government. People believe that the violence was connected with the issue of the introduction of the sharia law. A commission of inquiry was set up to investigate the causes of the riots. The result of the inquiry showed that the disturbances were connected to the sharia. This was in contrast to the position taken by the state government.⁴³⁵

Jan Boer referred to the denial that religion causes violence, as the “religious factor.”⁴³⁶ He wondered whether the denials especially as portrayed in some newspapers are as a result of the slip of pen, something that escaped the editorial eyes or a terminology that was consciously chosen.⁴³⁷ “It is also often difficult to determine whether these references are the authors’ or of the person whose views are being reported. There is an amazing and annoying sloppiness of expression with respect to this very sensitive issue.”⁴³⁸

Boer writes:

The religious factor, combined with a good deal of suspicion, occasionally leads to tense situations. During the last quarter of 2002, I received information from a Nigerian friend that Muslim lecturers in the Religious Studies Department at the University of Jos were accusing the university authorities of planning to eliminate Muslim studies from the curriculum. The ‘unsubstantiated rumor’ led to a ‘passionate discussion’ between Christian and Muslim colleagues, even in this university that, together with its state, was until recently probably the most peaceful one in the north. Indeed, feelings are very touchy and it takes only a rumor to enflame them.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁵ Jan H. Boer, *Muslims Why The Violence*, 86.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid. 88-89.

⁴³⁸ Ibid. 89.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

The denial of the impact of religion on violence by highly placed people in the society can be termed a manipulation of facts. According to Boer: “Open manipulation, even thugs, were used to cause confusion for a mixture of religious and financial motives.”

⁴⁴⁰Such denial constitutes a stumbling block on seeking solutions to the recurring acts of violence in the country.

7.10 LACK OF APPROPRIATE PUNISHMENT FOR OFFENDERS

It is one thing to have laws in a society, it is another thing to enforce those laws. Nigeria has laws but the problem is that often those laws are not enforced. People go against those laws, cause harm to other people and in most cases walk away free. The law enforcement agents like the police and the army often do not do their job in making sure that perpetrators are brought to justice. Those in government do not make sure that the law enforcements agents do their job. It is a vicious circle of neglect of duty by those who are paid to protect Nigerians. According to Jan H. Boer:

The police appear almost without exception in the worst of lights for either showing up too late or for being part of the problem, not infrequently complicating situations. Everywhere in the literature from both Muslims and Christian authors the same complaint is aired, namely that succeeding governments fail to take appropriate action in response to riots. It can be weak action, wrong action, or no action at all. The problem with such failure is that it encourages the next dissatisfied group to similarly resort to violence.⁴⁴¹

Umar Sanda, with respect to the Kaduna riot and violence of the year 2000 questioned the ability of the government and the law enforcement agents to control violence and criminal activities. Sanda opined that the law enforcement agents will feign ignorance of an impending riot and acts of violence in order to avoid doing their job. The

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid. 90.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid. 100.

government who pay them tends to look away without taking to task those security officials who neglect their duties.⁴⁴² On Kaduna violence of 2000 Sanda further stated:

The capability of the law enforcement and security agencies in detecting and nipping in the bud unlawful activities is seriously called to question by their performance last week. Security agencies are supposed to be on the alert at all times and have their feelers everywhere. The security agencies could not have feigned ignorance of the impending demonstration of last Monday as circulars were sent to all churches in Kaduna and Christians were invited in their tens of thousands to congregate at selected places at an appointed time.⁴⁴³

Still challenging the government and complaining of their complacency and inactivity

Sanda continued:

The Kaduna State Police Commissioner is reported to have said that no permission was sought by the demonstrators before they embarked on the march. Granted that it was impossible at that time to seal off the premises they were occupying in order to prevent them from demonstrating. The next most reasonable thing to have been done was to get the organizers of the march to sign an undertaking to be held responsible for any breach of peace that will result from their activities.⁴⁴⁴

Sanda again observed:

The appeal by the Christian leadership in the state to all Christians to congregate at selected churches as early as six in the morning on Monday to go on a peaceful demonstration was one way the leaders thought could remedy their earlier mistake. But barely four hours later, what was planned as a peaceful demonstration had gone violent. Many lives were lost and property worth hundreds of millions of naira destroyed.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴² Umar Sanda, "Avoidable Carnage in Kaduna" *New Nigerian* February 27, 2000, 3.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

The art of governance is a form of contract. The government will do her job and the populace will also their own job.⁴⁴⁶ For Sanda, to not be able to maintain peace in the society is a failure on both the rulers and the people:

The spate of violent communal and religious crises in the country the last few decades is symptomatic of one problem: the failure of the state. It is high time the state performed its reason for being. It is high time governments governed. It is high time the society gave to the state the support it requires to perform its roles. Governance is a contract. And in all contracts, it takes two to enter it and fulfill its obligations.⁴⁴⁷

Nigerian government has been accused of making empty statements when acts of violence occur. Their speeches have been perceived as empty because in most cases such statements are not followed by concrete actions to make sure that the culprits are fished out and brought to justice.

Nigerian governments sometimes try to give the impression of being in control and of intending to take drastic action after riots have occurred. After the Kafanchan episode, President Abacha spoke toughly to the nation. He ordered the establishment of various investigative bodies at federal and state levels. He banned religious organizations from all institutions of higher education. He assured the nation the government would 'not recognize any sacred cow and none will be spared. Enough is enough.'⁴⁴⁸

Nigerians following the tough words from the President had high hopes that probably this time around something serious might be done to find out the offenders and mete out adequate punishment. But according to Hassan Kukah, it was business as usual. Not much was done and with time the tempo died down and as usual the issue was swept

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Jan H. Boer, *Muslims Why The Violence*, 102.

under the carpet. The episode fizzled out once more on account inaction and prolonged delays.⁴⁴⁹

Sheikh Yakubu Hassan, a Scholar and a religious leader in Izala community in Katsina State complained about the problem that perpetrators of violence are not punished. He addressed a news conference in Kastina, a Hausa dominated community. In that conference he blamed the uprising in Kaduna in the year 2000 on the non-punishment of culprits in the past acts of violence especially in neighboring places like Kafanchan and Zangon-Kataf.⁴⁵⁰ According to Hassan, “It is discouraging how the same demands on, and the same promises by the government continue to be made, riot after riot.”⁴⁵¹

The police and the army on their part often do not live up to the expectation in stopping acts of violence. It is like who will watch the watch men. The security operatives have been accused of taking sides with a particular group during such mayhem. Security agents who are Christians have been accused of siding with the Christians. Security agents who are Muslims have been accused of siding Muslims. Jan Boer writes:

On the whole, the army appears much better in the course of various riots than the other security forces. The army often has come in when the other security agencies were clearly unable or unwilling to handle the situation. But sometimes even they seemed involved in negative ways. The Tiv people of Zaki Biam, Benue State, can testify even about an army gone amuck by gunning down hundreds of people early in the new century. Christian women, after the Miss World debacle in Kaduna during 2002, likewise asked about uniformed soldiers attacking innocent

⁴⁴⁹ Matthew H. Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1993) 190.

⁴⁵⁰ “New Nigerian Newspaper”, March 2, 2000 p. 15 In Jan H. Boer, *Muslims Why The Violence*, 103.

⁴⁵¹ Jan H. Boer, *Muslims Why the Violence*, 103.

civilians.....The major Muslim complaint about all security forces, including the army, is that they are pro-Christian.⁴⁵²

Hassan Kukah Observed how a group known as the Council of Ulama continued to level accusation against the army. They accused the army of siding with Christians in order to harm other religious groups.⁴⁵³ The council of Ulama argued that the security agents do this in order:

.....to defend Christianity and persecute the Muslims. The army is the crusader force that is the sworn enemy of Islam..... They are also at war with Islam, at the insistence of a Christian clique with which they have entered into a conspiracy to undermine the Muslim community..... Muslims are in the majority, there is no reason for the imposition of Christian governors over Muslims. Muslims will not accept a situation whereby the nation's armed forces, the police and the SSS are turned into bastions of Christianity, which can be marshaled out against Islam. Muslims all over the country are called upon to take all necessary steps to defend themselves, as they can no longer rely on the state security agencies.⁴⁵⁴

In their statement sent to the Tribunal set up by the government to investigate the Kafanchan riot the Council of Ulama stated that the army let loose a reign of terror on the innocent and defenseless people and made indiscriminate arrests in Katsina, Kaduna, Zaria and other places. As a result of this many people were put in army cells, including women and children.⁴⁵⁵ Such accusations against the security agents suggest that the government will make sure that the security personnel do the right thing.

7.11 USING RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE TO PURSUE HIDDEN MOTIVES

It is a prevalent phenomenon in Nigeria that people engage in a specific type of conflict when they have some other hidden agendas. People use religious and ethnic

⁴⁵² Ibid. 106.

⁴⁵³ Council of Ulama, "Press Conference on the Kafanchan Massacre and its Aftermath" In Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, 195.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid. 195-196.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid. 196.

violence in order to achieve political and economic interests. Often these people are wealthy and powerful. They have followers who perpetrate atrocities on their behalf. Sometimes those hired by the wealthy to be ring leaders of violence do not know fully the real motives of their boss or *Oga* (Master), to use a popular terminology in Nigeria. Jan Boer Called this phenomenon the “Manipulation Factor.”⁴⁵⁶ According to Boer:

Manipulation is often said to be a major factor in Nigerian riots: manipulation of religion, usually on behalf of religious, political, class, and other vested interests. It is really just another name for a certain style of politics. It could be argued that it is Nigeria’s major political style.⁴⁵⁷

Yusufu Bala Usman describes this phenomenon of manipulation as “controlling the action of a person or group without that person or group knowing the goals, purpose and method of that control and without even being aware that a form of control is being exercised on them at all.”⁴⁵⁸ For Jan Boer:

The Potiskum riot is an example of Muslim manipulation of other Muslims in order to get at Christians. The pretext for this riot was the claim by Muslims that a nineteen years old Christian girl wanted to convert to Islam but was prevented by her parents and the police. One official report asserted that this issue was used as a pretext for ‘political machinations by the Bolewa ethnic group in active collaboration with the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group in Potiskum.’ The state’s Police Commissioner claimed that the incident was a case of ‘manipulation of the Islamic religion for political purposes’ in the interest of ‘feudal emirate institution. He blamed the crisis on the Vice-Chairman of the Local Government, Yusufu Umar Kukuri, who ‘mobilised the fanatics to carry out the mayhem’So it appears that here we have a riot that involved manipulation for politico-religious reasons.⁴⁵⁹

Jan Boer further observed:

⁴⁵⁶ Jan H. Boer, *Muslims Why This Violence*, 108.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Yusufu Bala Usman, *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria 1997-1987*, (Kaduna: Vanguard Printers 1987) 11-12.

⁴⁵⁹ Jan H. Boer, *Muslims Why This Violence*, 109.

Politics and manipulation are often used to explain inter-religious crises in Nigeria..... For example, the Oyo State branch of the Progressive Muslims Association of Nigeria accused ‘some self-appointed Muslim leaders’ of creating a crisis between Christians and Muslims in the state. In condemning attacks on Christians, it explained that some Muslims were manipulating religion for political purposes. The group also condemned some Christian organizations for inflammatory statements. Christians and Muslims, the group advised, must co-exist peacefully.⁴⁶⁰

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) is the mouth piece of all Christian denominations in Nigeria. It is their negotiating power in both inter and intra Christians issues. CAN officials have been accused of engaging in manipulation practices and for using religion to achieve political motives. They have also been accused of exploiting the ordinary Christians “by exacting from them great fortunes supposedly to be used for ‘religious purposes’ but actually used for their mansions and expensive cars.”⁴⁶¹

7.12 POVERTY

There is a saying that a hungry person is an angry person. In a situation where many people do not have jobs, they can easily be co-opted to participate in acts of violence with the promise of small amount of money. “There is a general recognition that poverty has made people eager for change at almost any price. It has contributed to the volatile climate, for it has made the people open to anyone promising almost any improvement, anyhow.”⁴⁶² Aisha Isma’il a one time Minister of Women Affairs and Youth Development in Nigeria stated that it is the poor and the oppressed who engage in riots due to the fact that they are clamoring for change. This is because they are tired of exploitation and oppression.⁴⁶³ Speaking about the Kaduna religious violence of 2000,

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.110.

⁴⁶² Ibid.120.

⁴⁶³ *New Nigerian Newspaper*, January 31, 2000 p.1 In Jan H. Boer, *Muslims Why The Violence*, 120.

the Speaker of the federal House of Representatives at that time Ghali U. Na’Aba argued that the level of violence in Nigeria can be traceable “to the prevailing poverty in the country.”⁴⁶⁴

One of the issues that gave boost to violence in Nigeria in the late 1970s and early 1980s was the decline in the Nigerian economy. Prior to this period the economy was doing fairly well. Young people were able to find jobs after high school. If you attend college you are certain of good paying job and not much was heard about religious or ethnic violence. But at certain point in the late 1970s the economy began to go bad. There were high prices of food, building materials and imported goods. This scenario created societal ills and people became vulnerable to rich people, ethnic and religious groups who would want to exploit the situation. Falola writes:

One serious problem was the economic decline of the late 1970s and 1980s that served to fuel the crisis and made it easy for religious leader to mobilize thousands of people. The country was in debt and badly mismanaged, and environmental disasters – drought and desertification among them – were reducing the productive capacity of the rural areas. The masses bore the brunt of the economic decline: prices of food soared, building materials became scarce, and jobs were difficult to find. The police and other officers of state took to corruption to augment their salaries. Politicians at the state and federal levels looted the treasuries and flaunted their wealth in public. The poor sought the means to survive.....many fled from rural areas to the cities, where they compounded the societal problems and made themselves vulnerable followers for exploitative religious leaders.⁴⁶⁵

Religious and ethnic violence go hand in hand. Violence brings about destruction of lives and property. Such destruction retards progress and makes the people and their community poorer.

⁴⁶⁴ *New Nigerian Newspaper*, March 2, 2000 p. 1 In Jan H. Boer *Muslims Why The Violence* , 120.

⁴⁶⁵ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 138-139.

7.13 CLAIM THAT A PERSON'S RELIGION IS SUPERIOR

Another issue that causes ethnic and religious violence in Nigeria is when a particular religious group asserts itself as the true/superior religion. This phenomenon of claiming that a person's religion is superior may not only be applicable to Nigeria. Some people tend to forget that a person's religion often depends on that person place of birth and how such individual was raised. Very few populations in the world choose or select their own religion. Often people practice the religion of those who raised them. A person born and raised in northern Nigeria will likely be a Muslim while somebody born and raised in the eastern part of Nigeria will be a Christian. Again someone born and raised in the Middle East, for example in Iran or Iraq will most likely be a Muslim, someone born and raised in United States will most probably be a Christian and a person raised in Sri Lanka will most likely be a Buddhist. To claim that one's religion is the true and superior does not make much sense. It is common knowledge that people believe that their own religious tradition is the authentic and true one. Such claim in Nigeria makes some people to look down on other people's religious practice. This then leads to demonizing or dehumanizing them. In turn this leads violence.

7.14 TABLE SUMMERIZING NIGERIAN LEADERS

Name	Term	Religion	Ethnic Group	Democracy/ Military
Nnamdi Azikiwe	1960 - 1966	Christian	Igbo	Democracy President
Tafawa Balewa	1960 - 1966	Muslim	Hausa	Democracy

				Prime Minister
J. T. Aguiyi - Ironsi	1966	Christian	Igbo	Military
Yakubu Gowon	1966 - 1975	Christian	Hausa	Military
Mutala Mohammed	1975 - 1976	Muslim	Hausa	Military
Olusegun Obasanjo	1976 - 1979	Christian	Yoruba	Military
Shehu Shagari	1979 - 1983	Muslim	Hausa	Democracy
Muhammadu Buhari	1983 - 1985	Muslim	Hausa	Military
Ibrahim Babangida	1985 - 1993	Muslim	Hausa	Military
Ernest Shonekan	1993	Christian	Yoruba	Civilian (Appointed)
Sani Abacha	1993 - 1998	Muslim	Hausa	Military
Abdulsalami Abubakar	1998 - 1999	Muslim	Hausa	Military
Olusegun Obasanjo	1999 - 2007	Christian	Yoruba	Democracy
Shehu Musa yar'Adua	2007- 2010	Muslim	Hausa	Democracy

GoodLuck Jonathan	2010 -	Christian	Ijaw	Democracy
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The above table shows the religious affiliation as well as the ethnicity of Nigerian leaders. These leaders at one point or another have been accused of encouraging acts of violence either by not doing much to punish perpetrators or by keeping quiet because their ethnic group or religious affiliation is involved. In these conflicts there are often mixture of religious violence and ethnic violence. The problem in Nigeria is that it is difficult to distinguish the two. According to Toyin Falola:

Ethnicity and intergroup relations are complicated in Nigeria.....In many cases, trying to differentiate between a religious identity and an ethnic one can either be difficult, impossible or misleading. The merger between ethnicity and religion does play out in some cases of violence, as when southerners become involved in religious crises in the north. Such a situation cannot be attributed simply to religious differences. Where ethnicity combines with religion, identity becomes stronger and conflicts tend to linger.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁶ Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 13.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ETHNIC VIOLENCE AND ETHNIC GRIEVANCES IN NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

8.1 ETHNIC VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

8.1.1 CRUDE OIL FACTOR

Oil has always been the bone of contention in the country. Stefan Wolff observed that in Nigeria ethnic conflict is allegedly about the struggle to control the nation's vast oil reserves, resources and revenue.⁴⁶⁷ According to Donald Horowitz "Ethnicity is at the center of politics in country after country, a potent source of challenges to the cohesion of states and of international tension."⁴⁶⁸

Crude oil is the major source revenue in Nigeria. This vast oil reserve is located in the southern eastern region of Nigeria, specifically in the area known as the Niger delta. When Nigeria emerged from the experience of the civil war, it was obvious that the ethnic and regional hostilities were still prevalent in most areas. But one of the good results of that era was the growth of the nation's economy. This growth was mainly due to the discovery and expansion of petroleum. "Located mostly in the Niger delta region, petroleum became Nigeria's chief export and single-handedly made Nigeria the wealthiest country in Africa during the 1970s."⁴⁶⁹ Eghosa E. Osaghae observed that the amazing recovery within a short period of time from the civil war was due to the oil boom which the country enjoyed in the year following the war.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁷ Stefan Wolff, *Ethnic Conflict: A Global Perspective*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) 63.

⁴⁶⁸ Donald L. Holowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985) xi.

⁴⁶⁹ Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 181.

⁴⁷⁰ Eghosa E. Osaghae, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998) 69.

But the allocation and sharing of the oil revenue often tagged as the “national cake” has not been either smooth sailing or an easy experience. This is because many hostilities had ensued especially in and around the Niger delta region where the great majority of the oil deposits are located. The Niger delta people often accuse the Federal government of not doing enough to help and improve the lives of the people from whose land the vast revenue of the country is being derived. The Federal government is in charge of the oil revenue. This revenue is shared between the Federal government and the states that make up the nation.



Elizabeth Harper, “Nigeria's Oil Industry: A Cursed Blessing”? (July 2003).
<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/africa/nigeria/oil.html>.

In July 2002, some women in the Niger Delta area occupied the premises of the Chevron oil company to demand employment for their families and investment in the local community. The siege lasted for around eight days. It came to an end after the Chevron Nigeria firm agreed to the women's demands to hire more than two dozen villagers and to build schools, water systems and to provide other social amenities and infrastructure within the area.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷¹ Elizabeth Harper, “Nigeria's Oil Industry: A Cursed Blessing”? (July 2003).
<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/africa/nigeria/oil.html>.

Petroleum production grew in the country and so is the revenue accruing into the coffers of the government. But due to corruption few people benefit from benefit from such revenue. Many Nigerians are unhappy about corrupt leaders and some take to violence. In 1971 Nigeria joined the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). As the revenue from petroleum continued to improve, Nigeria began to rely heavily on such revenue. Ever since, Nigerian revenue had continued to rely extremely upon a single source and that is the oil revenue.⁴⁷² After the civil war the military government under the leadership of Yakubu Gowon established the Nigerian National Oil Company (NNOC). This body was charged with the responsibility of managing the extraction and the distribution of oil. Around 1976 the NNOC was merged with the Ministry of Mines and Power to form the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). The NNPC handles complaints from ethnic groups who feel that the oil revenue is not equitably disbursed. Their offices has been attacked or destroyed at one point or another.⁴⁷³

The problem has been how to distribute the oil revenue. The states/areas from where the oil is drilled would argue that the distribution of revenue will be based on what has been termed “derivation formula.”⁴⁷⁴ This is a method where by oil revenue will be allocated to states based on the amount of oil being derived from that area. Tom Mbeke-Ekanem writes:

By 1970 Nigeria had entered an era of oil boom. Oil replaced agriculture as the mainstay of Nigerian economy. In spite of the war, Nigeria was still financially buoyant. Oil-producing states had little to worry about, as far as money was concerned. Before 1970,

⁴⁷² Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 182.

⁴⁷³ Ibid. 185.

⁴⁷⁴ Tom Mbeke-Ekanem, *Beyond The Execution: Understanding The Ethnic And Military Politics in Nigeria* (San Jose: Writer’s Showcase, 2000) 16.

the Federal government statutorily allocated revenues to regions on the basis of origin. This was generally referred to as derivation principle, a formula for distribution of federal government revenue. Essentially, the derivation sharing formula was 50% to the producing region, 15% to the central government, and 35% to other regions. Based on this, northern Nigeria whose revenues were based on groundnut, tin ore, cotton and others, was given the lion's share of revenue from those resources. In the same principle, Western Nigeria, which produced cocoa, got the lion's share of cocoa revenues.⁴⁷⁵

As years go by other products like cocoa, groundnut and cotton yield minimal revenue.

The areas that have no oil reserve continue to agitate. Some would argue that the distribution of revenue will be done on the basis of population instead of the derivation formula.⁴⁷⁶ Currently the oil revenue is allocated monthly from the federal government to the various states. The amount being allocated to the states from which the oil is extracted is higher than that of the rest of the states. There continues to be conflict with regard to the distribution and sharing of the oil revenue. The problem concerns ethnic issues as well. The oil is located in the south east. Those in this area are the minority ethnic groups. This covers the area inhabited by the following states: Bendel, Delta and Rivers states.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 185.



Figure 4. Ben Ikari, “Royal Dutch Shell suspected to have unlawfully resumed oil operation in Ogoni”, *247UReports*, Accessed June 7, 2013. <http://247ureports.com/royal-dutch-shell-suspected-to-have-unlawfully-resumed-oil-operation-in-ogoni%e2%80%8f/>.

8.1.2 OGONI ETHNIC CRISIS

The Ogoni people live in the south eastern part of Nigeria, in the Niger delta area. They are one of the minority ethnic groups. At the same time they are rich in natural resources. The Ogoni land is among the ethnic communities from where the crude oil is extracted. The argument has been that these people do not receive enough compensation from both the government and the big oil companies. Tom Mbeke – Ekanem writes:

Left out in the equation of governance and control in their own country are the minorities, from whose land much of the resources are exploited. The exploiters don't care about these people whose land had been left bare due to years of oil exploitation. In a country where there is no environmental protection, the oil companies continue to operate insensitively, oftentimes leaving the people with a completely devastated environment. It is even more pathetic seeing the people living in pristine conditions such as existed hundred years ago and yet billions of dollars worth of oil are being carted away from beneath their mud houses that have neither pipe-borne water nor electricity, not even cooking gas, even though gas is being flared to the heavens just a hundred yards away. In some of these areas schools are virtually nonexistent. It is not uncommon to see children in an oil community with kwashiorkor as a consequence of severe malnutrition.⁴⁷⁷

Against this backdrop, there are constant agitations within the Ogoni area. The people organized themselves into a powerful group, and issued demands referred to as Bill of Rights which they sent to the Nigerian government.⁴⁷⁸ The Ogoni people formed an association known as "Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People" (MOSOP).

To carry out the aims and objectives of the Ogoni Bill of Rights, an organization was needed. This led to the formation of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). Its first president was Dr. Garrick Barilee Leton, and by the end of the year, Ken Saro-Wiwa was appointed a Spokesman/Public Affairs officer. The movement did not pick up quickly. It took almost two years of patient persuasion before the Ogoni people responded. By November 1992, the organization was fully on the move. The most notable achievements at this time was the passing of a resolution that gave Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria a 30-days quit notice. By the end of first quarter of 1993, the Big March of January 4th and the Vigil of March 13th had been accomplished, to the admiration of friends and foes.⁴⁷⁹

Ken Saro – Wiwa (Figure 5) became the mouth piece of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP).

⁴⁷⁷ Tom Mbeke-Ekanem, *Beyond The Execution: Understanding The Ethnic And Military Politics in Nigeria*, 91.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid. 93.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid. 97.

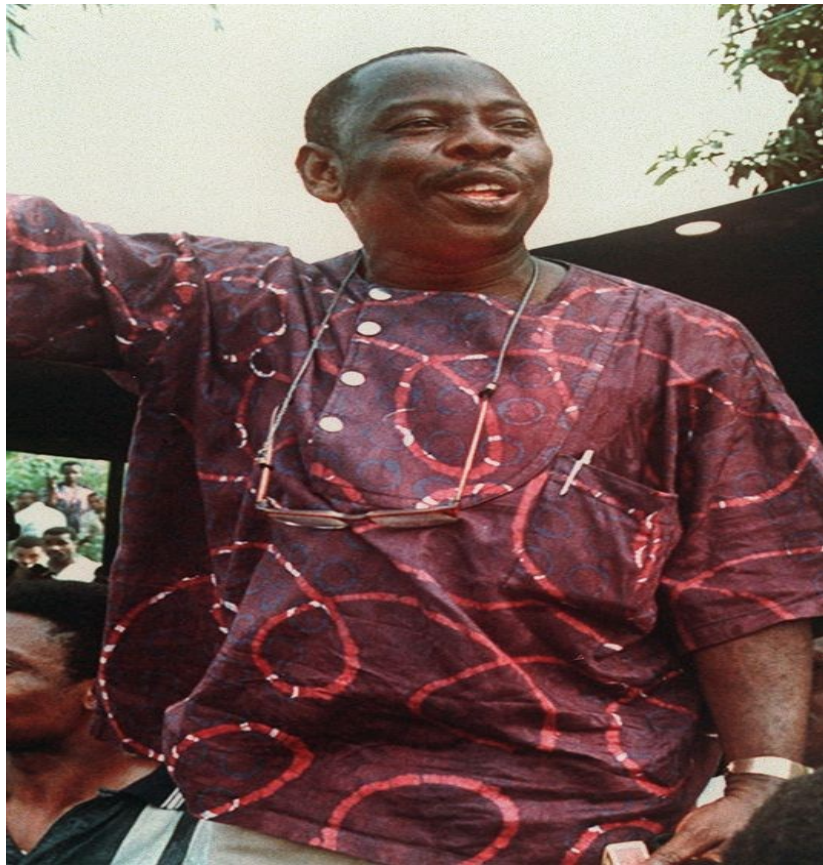


Figure 5. “Ten Years on Nigeria’s Ogoni Minority Mark Saro-Wiwa’s Death.” *Agence France Presse*, November 10, 2005. <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines05/1110-09.htm>.

He and his group continued to make their case known to the Nigerian leadership under the hands of the military. They were agitating for a new nation to be known as the Ogoni nation. Their reason being that the federal government had neglected their community for a long time despite their contribution to the Nigerian economy in terms of natural and mineral resources. “When it became clear that the military junta would not agree to the creation of Ogoni Nation, MOSOP opted for Ogoni State that would consist of 13 local

government areas.”⁴⁸⁰ When their demands were not met they sought international recognition by bringing their case to the United Nation. Tom Mbeke – Ekanem writes:

When their peaceful pleas were ignored, led by their energetic speaker, Saro-Wiwa, MOSOP took their message outside the country to the United Nations in New York, U.S.A. in 1992. Before a U.N. special working group, they received much-needed international attention after presenting their case. Soon after this presentation, they picked up endorsement from international environmental groups, such as Greenpeace and the London Rainforest Action Group. But back in Nigeria, nobody heard or listened to their pleas.⁴⁸¹

The Ogoni people continued to fight for what they thought was their rightful demands. Soon their confrontation with the government and with their neighbors got bloodier. A case in point was what happened during the construction of oil pipeline by Shell oil company.

On April 30, 1993 Ogoni farmers resisted the use of bulldozers to clear their farmland in order to make way for the laying of oil pipeline by Shell and Willbros.....The Nigerian Army from Bori Camp in Port Harcourt was called in by Shell, and a clash ensued. At the end of it, one Agbarato Otu was shot dead by soldiers while more than twenty others were injured. An army public relations officer, Major John Adachie, talking to the press, claimed that the soldiers resorted to shooting in self-defense.⁴⁸²

As usually the case violence begets more violence. The following day hell was let loose as huge crowd took to the streets in protest. People took laws into their hand and began to rob people and destroy property. Innocent people and passerby were attacked. A mixture of religious, ethnic and political violence ensued. Those who have been looking for an opportunity to attack their neighbor found what they wanted.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid. 98.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Ibid. 104.

-----rampaging youths took to the nearby major highway, molesting and robbing travelers, most of whom were non-Ogoni. Some of the Ogoni palamound rulers and elders, angered and shamed by the behavior of the youths, put out a press release condemning the behavior of the youths.⁴⁸³

8.1.3 ARREST OF MOSOP LEADERS

The activities of the activists in the Ogoni area came to the peak when some prominent chiefs in the area were killed by angry youths.⁴⁸⁴ These youth were perceived to be agents of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni people (MOSOP). Those local chief were accused of various offenses as they were tortured to death. An incident is narrated this way:

The first elder met at the palace entrance was Alhaji Kobani. As he tried to talk to the crowd, he was gripped by the neck and thrown to the floor. The next elder caught was Meabe, whom the youths said was the coordinator who betrayed the Ogoni. They showed him a secret photograph of him receiving 10 million naira from the military Government. There was a cry of ‘Kill him, Kill him’ from the crowd. Immediately, the crowd descended on him. The beat, kicked and punched him to unconsciousness. Thinking he was dead, they left him in a pool of blood.Kobani and Kpai tried to escape to a nearby Methodist Church, but they were overtaken by the youths,⁴⁸⁵

As the news of the death of the chiefs spread, there was a strong tension in the area both in various churches and the city. MOSOP leaders were arrested and accused of sponsoring the violence. “With no hesitation, the first person arrested was Ken Saro – Wiwa. The military authority told the world that the attack was ordered by Ken Saro – Wiwa, the leader of MOSOP.”⁴⁸⁶ “Therefore, charged with the murder of the four men

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid. 115.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.114.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.117.

were Saro –Wiwa and fourteen other MOSOP officials.”⁴⁸⁷ More suspects were arrested as the days and nights went by. Around two hundred people mostly men were said to have been locked up.

The government wanted to clamp down the movement and to reclaim the Ogoni land. A contingent of the Nigerian Army, Air force, Navy and Police carried out the raids trying to fish out the culprits.⁴⁸⁸ Many Nigerians were surprised by the amount of efforts made by the government in order to control the situation in Ogoni land. In many of such uprisings it takes time for the government to make serious effort to provide law and order. The reason why the Ogoni issue was handled differently was because a lot is at stake in the area. The government derives much revenue from the area. Many foreign oil companies also live and operate in the area. If the oil production is greatly disrupted by violence, then government stands to lose a lot of revenue. The price of oil in the world market might even be affected.

Ken Saro – Wiwa, the leader of MOSOP and all the others who were arrested were tried in special military tribunal. People were wondering why in a military tribunal since the accused people are civilians. It looked as if a guilty verdict has already been reached even before the trial began.⁴⁸⁹ Given the human right abuses of the Sani Abacha, the Nigerian military leader at that time many Nigerians as well as international observers did not hope that the trial will be fair. Ken Saro –Wiwa and eight other men were found guilty by the tribunal and condemned to death by hanging. The guilty verdict was confirmed by the Nigerian military government and on Friday, November 10, 1995 Ken

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid. 117-118.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid. 118-119.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid. 124.

Saro – Wiwa and the eight others were executed. For many people it is a black day for Nigeria and it will go down in history as a difficult day to remember.⁴⁹⁰ But at the same time it is important to note that four chiefs who were prominent leaders in their community were murdered. These chiefs have families and friends who must have been fighting to see that justice is done and that the culprits are punished. Some people were responsible for that act of murdering the local chiefs. It was in the bid to render justice that nine more important members of the Ogoni ethnic community were hanged by the government. In the final analysis it is the Ogoni community that suffered all the more. That is why those who champion the cause for ethnic, religious or any other type of violence ought to think again.

8.1.4 EKET AND IBENO VIOLENCE

Eket and Ibeno communities are in Akwa Ibom State. Akwa Ibom State is in southern part of Nigeria. Eket and Ibeno are among the minority ethnic communities in the south. They are oil producing communities. Tom Mbeke – Ekanem sees the Eket and Ibeno issue as a situation where by the ethnic communities are left out by both the government and the big oil companies. He sees it as a form of master-servant relationship where by the ethnic communities as servants are left to suffer⁴⁹¹. Mbeke -Ekanem writes:

Caught in this spiderweb of injustice is another oil-producing community in Akwa Ibom State. Like their counterparts in Ogoni and Andoni, Ibeno and Eket communities are also left to survive on the periphery. Like a tamed dog, they patiently and silently wait under the table for the crumbs to fall from the master's table or until the master is full, then whatever was left could be passed on.⁴⁹²

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid. 167.

⁴⁹¹ 193.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

The revenue from oil is in the hands of the oil companies and the government. With reference to the Eket and Ibeno community, Mbeke –Ekanem observed:

Mobil Oil Company had been operating in the area since January 1967, and had complacently carted away millions of barrels of oil estimated at billions of U.S. dollars. Other companies such as Shell, Ashland, and Elf joined in the operation. These companies operated intensively, leaving the people with completely devastated environments.⁴⁹³

There are incessant clashes among the neighboring ethnic communities where the oil is drilled. Each community would want to have a lion share of the land so as to get much resource from both the government and the big oil companies. The oil companies pay royalties on the use of land for the drill of the oil and its processing. Ibeno and Eket communities have been in a land dispute for a long time.⁴⁹⁴ Mbeke-Ekanem observed:

For years, there had been claims and counter-claims as to who owned Okposo community and the Stubbs Creek Forest Reserve on which the Qua Iboe terminal of Mobil Producing Nigeria Limited is located. Apart from the land disputes, the Ibeno people felt they had been marginalized, sidelined, and treated unjustly in other areas, such as the local government governance by their neighbor, the Eket.⁴⁹⁵

The land demarcation between the Eket and the Ibeno people did not generate much dispute until oil was discovered in the area. Such is usually the case, the discovery of oil in an area and money that goes with that bring with it ethnic, religious, political conflicts and struggle.

With the discovery of oil in the area, land ownership became a hot and emotional topic of debate. The Ibeno people were always regarded as settlers by the people of Eket. The sharing of the royalty paid by the oil companies became a highly contested subject. Prominent people in Ibeno had always wanted their status

⁴⁹³ Tom Mbeke-Ekanem, *Beyond The Execution: Understanding The Ethnic And Military Politics in Nigeria*, 193.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid. 194.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

acknowledge by the oil companies operating in the area, especially Mobil. They claimed that the Eket people had always successfully muscled their way through with the oil companies, thereby sidelining them.⁴⁹⁶

The ethnic conflict between the Eket and the Ibeno communities made the Ibeno people begin to canvass to have their own local government. They are not abandoning the rich oil land, rather they figured out that they do not want to be under the domination of the Eket people. This was the period when the federal government was announcing that new local government areas will be created. The Ibeno people, like other communities who felt threatened or marginalized in their present local government fought or lobbied to have their own local government.⁴⁹⁷ But things did not work out for the Ibeno people as they had hoped:

When a new local government was finally created, rather than give Ibeno its separate local government, they were separated from the Eket local government and merged with the people of Esit Eket, a stock of the Eket people, in a new local government called Uquo-Ibeno. The local government headquarters was situated in Uquo Eket, and the chairman of the local government Udo Udokere was from Uquo Eket. The people of Ibeno did not think of the situation as fair, their removal from the Eket west and being added to Eket east instead of granting them political autonomy. They saw the same domination by the same group, but with different players.⁴⁹⁸

If their request for a new local government had been granted, that will mean that they will have a total control of the Okposo land which is the major cause of dispute. The Okposo land contains the Atlantic Ocean where the oil is located. Fishing also takes place in it. One man from Eket was quoted as saying that if they allow the Ibeno people to gain complete autonomy then that will mean giving up the right to their land. Such a mistake

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid. 195.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

according to him will be difficult to be explained to their children and grandchildren.⁴⁹⁹

In January 1993 the two that make up the new local government came together. They are the Ibeno and Uquo –Eket. The new local government is known as Uquo-Ibeno. They came face to face to discuss the manner and method of fishing in Okposo. The discussion did not go well and there were violence over the ownership of the fishing area.⁵⁰⁰

A couple of months later, another riot broke out over the same community, which lies off the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Okposo was set ablaze. Homes that were not touched earlier were later blown apart with explosives. Millions of naira worth of fishing equipment and fifteen lives, including a beheaded police officer, were lost. Following the fight, a 27 – man ad hoc committee, made up of ten persons from each community and seven ex-office members who were elected political officeholders, was set up to study and analyze the grievances of the two communities against each other. The committee called for the immediate withdrawal of all fighters, thugs and hired killers from their hideouts and the return of their arms to security agents that were brought to maintain peace.⁵⁰¹

The peace committee met for a brief period. Its work was suspended temporarily as a mark of respect for the death of the first military governor of the state, Brigadier Udoakaha Jacob Esuene, who died on April 6, 1993. Before the peace commission could resume its hearing, the worst carnage occurred on June 28, 1993.⁵⁰²

On that day Esit Urua, an Eket village sharing a boundary with Ibeno, was reportedly invaded by people suspected to have come from Ibeno. Buildings in Esit Urua were leveled, and properties valued in millions of naira were destroyed. Scores of lives were lost. Following the initial surprise attack, Esit Urua and its Eket kindred recouped and launched a series of counterattacks on Ibeno.....The fighting only came to a halt with the deployment of the Nigerian Army, who were ordered to shoot at the slightest resistance. The Eket, too, had their supply direct from the very military that were sent to quell the crisis.....However, the effect

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid. 195-196.

⁵⁰² Ibid. 196.

of the clash reached down into the Federal Government coffers as oil production was brought to a halt.⁵⁰³

The federal government felt the impact of the violence because oil production was halted. Government was worried about the revenue that was been lost in the process. Worried by the adverse effects on oil production in the area, the federal government set up the Akpata Judicial commission of inquiry to investigate the violence. The chairman of the commission Honorable Akpata, a retired judge, informed the feuding parties at its inaugural session that the tribunal was set up to do everything to get to the root of the crisis in the area and find a panacea.⁵⁰⁴

The communities who were claiming ownership of the land being disputed were asked to present their case as to why the land belongs to them. The chiefs of Uquo and Eket in their memorandum argued that the creek forest reserve was their heritage. They stressed that the forest reserve document of 1930 and the amended order of 1955 bear adequate testimony to their claims. They further tendered other legal documents to support their claim that they are the rightful owners of the land. Such documents included the Eastern Region Local Government Law of 1955, the South Eastern State Traditional Rulers Edict Number 17 of 1973, the Cross River State Local Government law Number 9 of 1983, the Akwa Ibom Traditional Rulers Edict Number 15 of 1990 and also the local government notice of 1990.⁵⁰⁵

Their opponent, the Ibeno ethnic community also claimed that they are the rightful owners of the land. To buttress their claim, they cited the privy council of 1916,

⁵⁰³ Ibid.197-198.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid. 198-199.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.199.

the documents of 1966, the Cross river state traditional rulers edict of 1978.⁵⁰⁶ “Both Eket and Ibeno people made references to historical documents published by acknowledged Nigerian historians and renowned British administrators who worked in that part of Nigeria to buttress their claims of land ownership.”⁵⁰⁷ There we have it. The argument of the ownership of the land was not resolved by the commission of inquiry. There continued to be an on-going inquiry and discussion on the issue.

Another violent incident occurred between the Eket people and the Akwa Ibom State military administrator Navy Captain Joseph Adeusi. This was in March of 1998. The administrator was assaulted by the mob at Eket. The military administrator came from another ethnic group, namely the Yoruba ethnic group. He was posted to govern the state by the Nigerian military government under the leadership of Sanni Abacha. The indigenes of Eket believe that the administrator had allegiance to the military government who appointed him and not to the people he was sent to govern.⁵⁰⁸ Owing to ethnic allegiance prevalent in the country, a military governor from another ethnic group would be suspected to place the interests of his own ethnic group and kinsmen first before any other thing else. There has also been tension between the Eket people and the Yoruba people living in their area. Mobil oil started operation in Akwa Ibom state around 1967. Since that time top managerial positions had been dominated by the Yoruba people. It is important to note that Yoruba ethnic group is in Western Nigeria while the Eket people of Akwa Ibom are in the Eastern Nigeria. Mobil oil group began operation in Eket and Ibeno during the time of the Nigeria civil war. The federal government was at war with

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid. 199-200.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid. 201.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid. 208.

the eastern region. So the Federal Government had to engage the services of the Yoruba people from the west to manage the Mobil oil. That accounts for why many Yoruba people are at the managerial positions at the Mobil oil in Akwa Ibom State. The indigenes of the area had been fighting to change this but with little success. The appointment of the military administrator from the Yoruba ethnic group was like pouring gasoline into fire. The indigenes of Akwa Ibom state saw the appointment as an injustice. After some time following the arrival of the military administrator in the state, the indigenous state workers embarked on a strike in order to attract the attention of the new administrator.⁵⁰⁹

On the third day of the strike, which was certain to affect Mobil production, Captain Adeusi..... decided to go and meet with the striking workers at Eket. At the stadium where the meeting took place he was asked to address the issue. Adeusi responded, saying that there were no qualified individuals from Akwa Ibom State who merited high positions in Mobil. The people felt insulted by such a response and retorted, 'This is a state with a federal university, a polytechnic, and College of Education, and a state with perhaps the highest unemployment in the country in any field.' This was deemed the last straw. Captain Adeusi, the Administrator of the state, was manhandled even in the midst of his armed security. The windshield of his vehicle was broken, as were the eyeglass he was wearing.⁵¹⁰

The indigenes could read from the administrators answer that he saw nothing wrong with his Yoruba kinsmen occupying most of the key positions in Mobil oil being drilled in Akwa Ibom State, in Eket and Ibeno land. About five months after the assault and attack on Captain Adeusi, the state administrator, he was recalled from the Akwa Ibom state, by the Federal military government.⁵¹¹ The ethnic struggle continues. Both communities, Eket and Ibeno receive revenue from the oil proceeds in their land. But that would not

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

stop violence in the area. The question continues to be, how much revenue will be enough to calm down the communities so as to let peace reign. The search for peace continues.

8.1.5 WARRI ETHNIC VIOLENCE

The city of Warri is located in the southern western part of Nigeria. Warri is located in Delta State. The Delta State has been known for the ethnic tension and crisis in the area. In April of 1997, the state was engulfed in a major ethnic violence. The cause of the violence was the relocation of the local government headquarters. For the Ijaw ethnic community (a neighboring community to Warri), it is not just about the relocation of the headquarter, it is much more than that. For them it about the oil revenue and the prospects of development of the area. This area is another major oil producing place in the country. Sharing of the oil revenue has been a source of dispute.⁵¹² This city of Warri is inhabited by three different ethnic groups. Mbeke – Ekanem writes:

Unlike any city in Nigeria, Warri, which is a major oil-producing city is inhabited by three ethnic groups: Itsekiri, Ijaw, and Urhobo. With this mixture, inter-ethnic hostility has never been in short supply whenever any one group tries to exert supremacy over the other. Long before the discovery of oil, there had always been hostility between Itsekiri and Urhobo. This hatred was passed down from generation to generation. No one seems to know when it all started. A young Itsekiri or Urhobo may not know the reason they hate each other, but they simply have to, because it is almost anomaly to do otherwise. There has even been a saying that the two groups go to school to study law simply to be able to sue each other.⁵¹³

Apart from the struggle for the share of the oil revenue the source of hatred within these ethnic communities has also been traced to the chieftaincy tussle in the area. The King of

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

Itsekiri is referred to as Olu of Itsekiri by the people of Ijaw and Urhobo. But the Itsekiri people would want their chief to be known as Olu of Warri. This would imply that the Olu (King) has authority and influence over the entire city, over the three ethnic communities, Itsekiri, Ijaw and Urhobo. The Ijaw and Urhobo people have their own chiefs. But their influence is believed not to have much influence as that of the Olu of Itsekiri. These misunderstanding as a result of chieftaincy issues coupled with the oil issue continue to generate dispute and violence.

In the October of 1996 the Nigerian federal government created a new local government council for the Warri south. This was after a long agitation by the people. The council headquarters was located at Ogbe-ijoh one of the clans in Ijaw ethnic community. But to the surprise of Ijaw people, the local government council functioned for a brief period and was dissolved in March 1997. Local government administration in Nigeria enjoys an autonomy from the state government. This is because the local governments receive their funding directly from the federal government, just like the state governments who receive their funding from the federal government.⁵¹⁴

Within few months after the announcement of the dissolution of the local government, the Ijaw people were informed that local government council has been reopened again. They were informed that this time, its headquarter is re-located to Ogidegben an Itsekiri town. The Ijaw people perceived this as an act of betrayal by the federal government. The possible reason for this re-location they believed, was that the Itsekiri people had more influence in the federal government than the Ijaw people. For after all the Itsekiri people produced the first finance minister of Nigeria, Festus Okotie –

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.204.

Eboh in the 1960s. The Ijaw people saw this as the effect of *Ima mmadu* (knowing somebody or knowing somebody who knows somebody). They perceived that they were robbed of their fair share of vital position because of nepotism.⁵¹⁵ The Itsekiri people asserted that the local government headquarters was supposed to be located in their land in the first place only that the administrator of the state made a mistake when he was announcing the headquarter. In essence the Itsekiri people stated that the headquarter was supposed to be in Itsekiri land not in Ijaw land.⁵¹⁶ Be that as it may, the Ijaw people did not buy the argument tendered by Itsekiri people.

The relocation of the local government headquarters was perceived by the Ijaws as another evidence of their marginalization. The leader of Ijaws in Warri, Dr. E.K.Clark, a former Federal Minister of Information protested to the State and the Federal Governments. The Ijaw Youths organized demonstrations at oil stations belonging to Shell Petroleum Development Company.⁵¹⁷ Tension continued to build up in the area until the early mornings of March 25, 1997 when a serious fighting broke out in the area.

At about 3 a.m. on March 25, 1997, Dr. Clark's residence at No.6 Baptist Mission Road, Warri and his office were reportedly burnt down by people believed to be Itsekiris. His night security officer, Mr. Emeka Ndukwe, an Ibo man, was killed. This incident triggered off a wave of violence that engulfed the entire Niger Delta. The Ijaws strongly believed their leader was attacked by the Itsekiris. This apparently became the beginning of the Warri crisis that led to the killing of innocent citizens, wanton destruction of properties and perpetuation of violence. As expected, serious fighting broke out between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris. It was very bloody, and hundreds of people were killed. What made the fighting so bloody was that the Ijaws had quietly amassed weapons in preparation for a confrontation, probably against the Federal Government.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid. 204-205.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid. 205.

Ethnic tension and violence was rife in the area. Each group became suspicious of the other. The government continued to carry out their investigation when about five months later, another violence erupted.

On Saturday, October 24, 1998 the fight was taken to new heights when Ode Itsekiri, a town said to be the ancestral home of the Itsekiris, was torched by the Ijaws. Properties and many homes of prominent people in the area were reduced to rubble. In what the Itsekiris termed abominable, Olu's palace, a sacred site and seat of Itsekiri government, was not spared. Priceless artifacts, centuries old, were all destroyed. Many more lives were lost.⁵¹⁹

As the hostilities progressed, it involved hostage taking. Hostage taking has become a common feature in the oil producing areas. Often foreign oil workers are taken hostage. During this Ijaw and Itsekili crisis, the Shell and Chevron Oil Companies became big targets. Its staff many of them foreigners were abducted. Huge sums of money were demanded by the fighters before they can stop the violence and set free those who were taken hostage.

Shell Oil Company, which produces oil in the area was dragged into the fight. Its premises were sealed off and its staff taken hostage. Oil-producing workers were also held hostage by the Ijaws.....Nearly half the Nigerian oil comes from this area. As the hostage taking continued, Shell decided to shut down its flow stations and cut production by nearly 20% .⁵²⁰

These rioters and hostage takers believe that by their actions and by disrupting the oil production, Shell and Chevron companies would put pressure on the federal government to meet their demands or look into their grievances. The violence continued. Government dispatched war ships into the area. There was presence of huge military personnel. But in spite of that the Ijaw youths were not deterred. Oil production was being disrupted in the

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

area. To make up for this, the government increased production in the Akwa Ibom area.⁵²¹

The disruption of oil production continued in the Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urhobo areas. The Ijaw leaders under the umbrella of The Nigeria Delta Oil Producing Communities Development Organization (NIDOPCODO) and Environmental Rights Action in Warri filed lawsuit against the Shell Oil Company. In the suit the communities asked the court to order the Shell Company to pay large sums of money in compensation. The court did rule that the Shell oil company will pay some money to the communities being impacted by the oil drilling.⁵²²

Government officials are not immune from the anger and violence of the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta area and its environs. Groups and movements were formed in the Niger Delta areas to keep fighting for what the communities considered to be their rights. Around July of 1998, a group known as the Movement for the Survival of the Izon Nationality in Bayelsa State petitioned the Nigerian Federal government. In their letter they voiced their anger and disappointment. They argued that acts of injustice have been meted out to them concerning the oil revenue sharing in their area. The military administrator of their state was summoned to Abuja, the Nigerian capital to come and discuss issues raised by the people from the state under his jurisdiction.⁵²³

When the military administrator came back from Abuja, he ordered that the leader of the group who wrote the petition to be arrested. The leader was detained by the

⁵²¹ Ibid.206.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid.

government. This brought with it more violence in the area. The community sent a notice to the administrator to set free their leader.⁵²⁴

When he ignored their demand.....the group invaded and rampaged through Government House at Yenagoa, the State Capital, and released their leader. The administrator, fearing for his life in spite of his heavily armed security, escaped to Port Harcourt, the neighboring State Capital where he remained till he was replaced by another military administrator.⁵²⁵

It is important to note that often in these ethnic conflict militias are armed and strong enough even to overpower the security apparatus of the government. Many of them have able-bodied young men capable and eager to fight. Some of the ethnic militia groups are former members of the army or police. Another side of it is that in some cases the security forces of the government are sympathetic to the cause and demands of the ethnic groups. In that sense they give them tacit approval. The incident in Yenagoa where the state administrator had to escape is a case in point where the state security forces did not want to engage the ethnic militia.⁵²⁶

For some time these conflicts in Warri area have been carried out by the Itsekiri and Ijaw ethnic groups. At some point the Urhobo ethnic group got involved. Probably they found out that the other ethnic groups are obtaining their demands from both the oil companies and the government.

By the end of May 1999, the war of Warri had become multi-ethnic with the involvement of the Urhobos who, hitherto, were sitting on the fence. By the end of the first week of June 1999, the city of Warri had seen the worst fighting with nearly 500 dead including over 50 government soldiers, in one week of fighting. No fewer than 700 houses were razed down with over 300,000 people displaced. The State Government declared a state of emergency.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Ibid. 207.

Movement in Warri was restricted to between 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. A shoot at sight order was issued to the security personnel. About 30 Shell workers and a dozen expatriates were kidnapped. Some only regained their freedom after ransom was paid.⁵²⁷

The reasons for these acts of violence are varied. The various ethnic groups involved are vying for supremacy. They are also struggling to get more money from the oil revenue. They struggle for land ownership. Each ethnic group would want their own people to be employed in the lucrative oil industry. The struggle and the violence are on-going and no one knows whether there will be an end in sight.

8.2 ETHNIC GRIEVANCES

It is a common occurrence in Nigeria that the various ethnic groups suspect and/or accuse the government in power of favoring a particular ethnic group. In this segment we will use as our example the events that followed after President Obasanjo was sworn in on May 29, 1999. That was when democracy returned to the country after a long period of military rule. Our examples here will help to throw more light on the nature and extent of the inter-ethnic struggle in the country. Each ethnic group has her own grievances against the government. They are pressure groups making demands for the welfare of their ethnic groups.

8.2.1 HAUSA ETHNIC GROUP GRIEVANCES

In Nigeria ethnic, religious and political struggle are geared toward the acquisition of leadership position in the country. At the beginning of the transition to civil rule in 1999, the Hausa group had already started to voice their opinion that they are being marginalized. The complaint of the Hausa people was that the ruling political party –

⁵²⁷ Ibid. 209.

People's Democratic Party- neglected their group in the sharing and allocation of political powers and offices.⁵²⁸

Raufu Mustapha observed that as reported in the many Nigerian Newspapers there were struggle for power among the senators and members of the House of Representatives.⁵²⁹ After the 1999 democratic elections, the people's Democratic Party came to power. The Nigerian President came from the Yoruba ethnic group in the southern Nigeria, the vice –president come from the Hausa group (north). The debate now is which ethnic group will produce the president of the house of senate. That was the position that generated a lot of ethnic and political tussle. We have to bear in mind that religion is also involved in this process. The President is a Christian, the vice President is a Muslim. For the senate president the problem is not only from which place the person should come from, but also from which religion. Religion, ethnicity and politics in Nigeria are always interconnected. Raufu Mustapha observed:

The stake were raised when the northern politicians from the northwest zone-----insisted on having the Presidency of the Senate conceded to their zone, the Vice-President being from the northeast zone. They argued that since the executive is under Obasanjo, a southerner, the north ought to have the leadership of the legislative arm of government.⁵³⁰

The Igbo group in the Federal Assembly and the ruling party were against this move by the politician from the north. Raufu Mustapha further noted:

The political bloc constructed around the Igbo elite within the party resisted the demand. In their view, the Yoruba had the Presidency while a northerner was effectively the number-two man as his vice-president. The Igbo bloc demanded the number-three slot, the Senate President, as a right, given the extant tripodal

⁵²⁸ A. Raufu Mustapha, "Ethnicity and the Politics of Democratization in Nigeria" In Bruce Berman et. al. ed. *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004) 261.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

framework of hegemonic contestation. In the end, the Senate President was allocated to the Igbo south-east zone, to the chagrin of northern politicians.⁵³¹

This scenario in a nutshell shows the nature of the power struggle among the ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Further a number of politicians from the Hausa ethnic group were dissatisfied with the reforms being undertaken by the Obasanjo administration. The administration was accused of being in alignment with Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and championing the causes CAN. The government was accused of gradually handing over the administration of Nigeria into the hand of CAN.⁵³² CAN is the umbrella organization embracing all the Christians. The administration of Nigeria at this point is headed by a Christian. Politicians from the north have brought up this accusation. People from the north are mostly Muslims. This boils down to the Muslim –Christian conflict which has been a constant cause of violence in the country. Religion and politics in Nigeria are difficult to separate. In this scenario Christians blame Muslims that their complaint is because the President of the nation is a Christian. How to manage religion, ethnicity and politics remains a challenging problem in the country.

During the same period the northern/ Hausa politicians accused the President of taking sides with people from his own ethnic group, the Yoruba ethnic group. The people from the Yoruba ethnic group were accused of being in control of federal bureaucratic positions. They were also accused of having more than their fair share of the national economy.⁵³³ “The two zones of the core north, the northwest and northeast, were said to

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Ibid.

be deliberately disadvantaged by appointments favoring Yorubas and Christians.....⁵³⁴

Hausa/northern region alleged that Obasanjo won the presidency on the strength of the votes from people from the north. Then afterwards he failed to show appreciation for the support he got from the north. They alleged that his own people, the Yorubas denounced him and did not vote for him as much as the Hausas did. There was allegation that the north was affected by the retirements in various key positions carried out by the Obsanjo administration immediately he took office. It was alleged that nine out of eleven permanent secretaries who were retired were from the north. Concerning the armed forces, there was allegation that the north was targeted in the retirements carried out. There is the belief that only five northerners were retained out of the forty five Brigadier-generals in the army. The removing of the military officers from the army, it was alleged, was aimed at crippling the political prospects of the north. The reason being that in the event of a military takeover of the government, it will be difficult for a military leader to emerge from the north since most of them have been retired. There is accusation also that many heads of parastatals from the north were removed from the office.⁵³⁵

Another accusation is the notion that the south has the agenda of moving the nations capital back to the southern region since the president is from the south. The city of Lagos which is in the southern region used to be the capital of Nigeria. But the capital was moved to the city of Abuja which is in the north in 1985. And there is suspicion that the capital was moved to Abuja because northerners have been mostly in power since the nation's independence. Further the President who is from the Yoruba was accused by

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Ibid. 262.

northerners that he has not been able to crack down and stop the Yoruba militia who were rioting against northerners residing in the southern city of Lagos. These militia it was alleged was a branch of Odua People's congress which is a cultural association of Yoruba people.⁵³⁶

Each ethnic group has their own grievances. The idea behind these grievances is to present their ethnic group as being neglected or marginalized so as to see if they can attract the sympathy or favors from the government.

8.2.2 IGBO ETHNIC GROUP GRIEVANCES

Concerning the Igbo ethnic groups claim for marginalization Daniel Jordan Smith writes:

Since the Igbo Southeast lost its bid for independence in Nigeria's civil war from 1967 to 1970, the prevailing popular political discourse in southeastern Nigeria has been that of marginalization. In columns written by Igbo writers in newspapers and magazines, letters to editors, comments made through call-in programs on local radio and television stations, and most of all, everyday conversations, the Igbo preoccupation with their marginalization in postwar Nigeria is profound. Igbo complaints about their marginal status in Nigeria take many forms, including claims that federal government resources are channeled disproportionately to other regions, that rules for appointment to civil service positions and entrance into government secondary and tertiary educational institutions are deliberately weighted against Igbos, and that official information and state data collection exercises such as census taking are purposely designed to undercount Igbos and thwart their rightful share of political representation as well as government revenues.⁵³⁷

Many Igbos believe that they have been marginalized as far as the having important positions in the Nigerian government are concerned. They alleged that although they have held key positions in the Ministry of Finance, and the country's central bank, yet

⁵³⁶ Ibid. 261-262.

⁵³⁷ Daniel Jordan Smith, *A Culture of Corruption* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008) 192.

these are not important positions in the country. Daniel Jordan Smith observed: “While Igbo complaints about marginalization are manifold, Igbo discontent is most powerfully expressed in their perceived exclusion from three institutions: the presidency, the military, and the NNPC (Nigerian National Petroleum Cooperation)”.⁵³⁸

Many Igbos interpret the reason for their perceived marginalization to be as a result of the fact that Igbo people fought the civil war. They are of the view that since the time they lost the civil war, they have been excluded from key positions that are the mainstay of the nation’s wealth and power.⁵³⁹ On Igbo alleged marginalization especially in the military, Raufu Mustapha writes:

The main complaint of this bloc is that the Igbo have been ‘marginalized’ from power since the end of the civil war in 1970. Because Igbo officers were either killed in the July 1966 counter coup, or joined the secessionist Biafran army in 1967, the number of Igbo officers in the federal armed forces fell drastically. Since the end of the war, only a few Igbos have risen to senior command positions and they are often retired before this. Within the military institutional dynamic, the Igbo have been largely underrepresented.⁵⁴⁰

The Hausas are those who have been constantly in power. The Igbo group alleges that they have not had their fair share in key leadership positions. When the 1999 civilian rule came on board it was a welcome development within the Igbo bloc. They saw it as an opportunity to gain political powers. But their prominent candidate for the post of the President lost the nomination in the major party, the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). The nomination went to Obasanjo who is from the Yoruba group.⁵⁴¹ Mustapha writes:

“Though Igbo politicians were disappointed by the PDP’s failure to endorse Ekwueme’s

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Ibid. 193.

⁵⁴⁰ A. Raufu Mustapha, “Ethnicity and the Politics of Democratization in Nigeria” In Bruce Berman et. al. ed. *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*, 262.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

candidacy, they still threw their support behind his rival, Obasanjo, garnering massive votes for him in the south-east in the 1999 election.”⁵⁴²

When Obsanjo won the election and his government was formed, Igbos alleged that they were not treated fairly. They claimed that viable and important ministerial positions were allocated to the Yorubas and the Hausas and the Igbos were left out.

When Obsanjo began establishing his government, the Igbo bloc became despondent because they felt that their marginalization had continued, despite their overwhelming support. It is argued that inconsequential ministerial posts were given to the Igbo, while the ‘juicy ones’ went to the Yoruba and the north.⁵⁴³

They Igbo bloc opined that the ministerial positions given to them shuffle around the Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of Justice and Minister of Science and Technology. According to them these portfolios are with little power or influence. They complained that they were marginalized even in the ambassadorial appointments. The Igbos alleged that their people were assigned to war-ravaged countries of the world. They Igbo people asked why no Igbo person has been appointed to be in command of any branch of the armed forces or to be on the Nigerian National Defense Council. To deal with and address these perceived anomalies the Igbos tried to develop their Pan-Igbo institution known as the *Ohaneze Ndi Igbo*. This is an organization that serves as an umbrella embracing the Igbo people. Their aim is to help the Igbos speak with one voice as they continue their struggle to achieve what they see as their own fair share of the national power and resources.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.262-263.

8.2.3 YORUBA ETHNIC GROUP GRIEVANCES

This group believed that they suffered during the regime of the immediate past military government before the return of democratic rule in 1999. The military government at that time conducted a democratic election to hand over power to the civilians. The election in the eyes of most Nigerians went smoothly and was judged to be free and fair. The presidency was believed to have been won by a Yoruba politician known as M.K.O Abiola. But the military government annulled the entire election and the army continued to hold on to power. At that time the Yoruba ethnic group members were at loggerheads with the military. The election that was nullified took place on June 12 1993.⁵⁴⁵ After the annulment of the election, crises and tension continued to mount. Strong opposition to military rule ensued as well. Many Nigerians believed that the reason for the annulment was because the military government headed by Babangida, a northerner would not want somebody from the south to win the Presidency. The problem is believed to be connected with the north-south politics. Victor E. Dike writes:

After all the turns and tumbles the Presidential election that finally unraveled on June 12, 1993 was annulled by General Babangida. This was because Bashir Tofa who was General Babangida's favored candidate did not win. An Interim National Government (ING) headed by Ernest Shonekan was formed in August 1993 in a mix of public outcry.⁵⁴⁶

Ernest Shonekan came from the Yoruba ethnic group. It was believed that his appointment was to satisfy the people from that ethnic group after the annulment of the election. The appointment became the more reason why people believed that the election

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid. 263.

⁵⁴⁶ Victor E. Dike, *Democracy And Political Life In Nigeria* 2nd Edition (USA: iUniverse Inc. 2006) 21

was won by Abiola who is from the Yoruba group. The Interim National Government did not last.

General Sani Abacha in 1993 terminated the Interim National Government and ruled Nigeria with an iron fist until his death in office on June 8, 1998. General Abdulsalami Abubakar took over the leadership of the nation after the demise of General Sani Abacha and handed over to the civilian administration of Chief Obasanjo on May 29, 1999. Nevertheless, because of several aborted democracies in the nation, many Nigerians have not had the opportunity, until 1999, to participate in any political process and the frustration of having been disappointed many times made the people skeptical about the exercise.⁵⁴⁷

The coming of Obasanjo to power in 1999 was seen to be compensation to the Yoruba people. Some people in the north hold the view that “Obasanjo obtained the Presidency on the strength of northern votes.....”⁵⁴⁸ Such view has merits because the north has the largest voting population in the country. And for someone to win the Presidency, such candidate must have won majority of the votes from the north.

When Obasanjo became the President, some people from his own ethnic group were skeptical of him and his policies. Many Nigerians also were doubtful about him. One thing is that he was an ex- military man who had ruled Nigeria from 1975-1979. He was considered even by his own ethnic group as being pro-north and therefore being used by the northerners to achieve their ambitions.⁵⁴⁹ This can account for why the Yorubas continued to voice their grievances even when their own man was in power. Raufu Mustapha writes about the Yoruba bloc:

Though Yoruba support for Obasanjo has increased since 1999, there are still many powerful elements within this bloc who continued to regard him with deep suspicion. Many disagree with

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid. 21-22.

⁵⁴⁸ A. Raufu Mustapha, “Ethnicity and the Politics of Democratization in Nigeria” In Bruce Berman et. al. ed. *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*, 262.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

some of his policies, particularly his refusal to call a Sovereign National Conference, while others regard him as being a hostage of the northern forces that promoted his candidature. This bloc often points out that the dark days of military authoritarianism may be gone, but Nigeria has yet 'to reach Jerusalem.' Central to the view of this bloc, therefore, is the perception that the inner workings of the Nigerian state continue to be structurally rigged in favor of the north and against them. Regional autonomy in a re-worked federation is a fundamental demand.⁵⁵⁰

Another complaint of the Yoruba ethnic bloc is centered on one of their prominent statesman Obafemi Awolowo. There is the perception that Awolowo wanted to rule Nigeria but never actualized his ambition. His people kept agitating about the issue. Raufu Mustapha observed that this is a historical grievance felt by the Yoruba people. Obafemi Awolowo was a dominant political leader of this group from the 1940s up to the 1980s.⁵⁵¹ "That Awolowo never fulfilled his burning ambition to lead Nigeria was seen by this bloc as a travesty of reason and decency – a clear manifestation of the disregard and contempt with which the enterprise and 'enlightenment' of the Yoruba are held by others."⁵⁵²

The Yoruba bloc demanded that the government under the leadership of Obasanjo ought to call for a Sovereign National Conference. Raufu Mustapha writes: "The demand of this bloc is for a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) at which the ethnic nationalities in the country can negotiate the basis of their continued partnership."⁵⁵³ Although the Yoruba group was vocal in this matter, they were not alone. Many other Nigerians after watching the struggle among the ethnic groups also think the Sovereign

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid. 263.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid. 264.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

National Conference is a good approach. If Nigerians agree to be one nation then they have to think on how to work for peace in the country. J.O. Irukwu writes:

In a desire to ensure the emergence and survival of the Nigerian nation of our dreams, many Nigerians have, over the years, been pressing on our governments and the political leadership to convene a national conference of all the Nigerian ethnic nationalities and the various vested interests to provide an opportunity to enable us determine how we are to live together in peace as members or citizens of one modern nation in the context of today's world environment.⁵⁵⁴

There are also those who oppose the idea of the Sovereign Conference. There were disagreements with regards to the form that such conference would take. There were divided opinions as to the scope and detailed agenda of the conference. Some fear that such a conference might be manipulated and that it can lead to greater disunity and disintegration in the nation.⁵⁵⁵

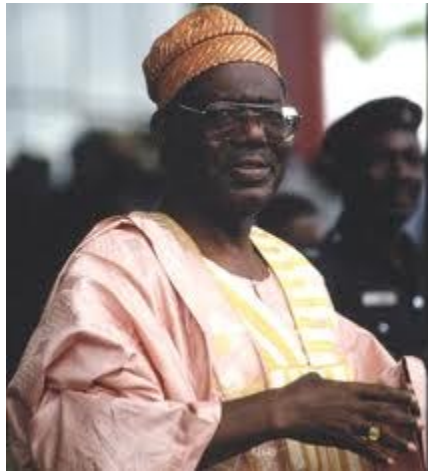


Figure 6. Ernest Shonekan. Source: Ademola Oni, "Politicians must end desperate quest for power." *General NBF Topics*, May 31, 2010. <http://www.nigerianbestforum.com/generaltopics/politicians-must-end-desperate-quest-for-power-%E2%80%93shonekan/>.

⁵⁵⁴ J.O. Irukwu, *Nigeria: The Last Chance* (Ibadan-Nigeria: Spectrum Books Limited, 2005) 203.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.



Figure 7. Olusegun Obasanjo (Military President 1975-1979, Civilian President 1999-2007). Source: “Olusegun Obasanjo” *Wikipedia free Encylclopedia*, May 10, 2001. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Olusegun_Obasanjo_DD-SC-07-14396-cropped.jpg.

8.2.4 MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS GRIEVANCES

The minor ethnic groups reside in the Geo-political zone referred to as the Niger Delta in the south of Nigeria and Middle Belt in the north. “Their complaints are that, despite democratization, they remain powerless in the wider structural workings of the Nigeria state. They remain victims of a long-running neglect in the distribution of facilities, appointments and resources”⁵⁵⁶ The people of Niger Delta have most of all the oil in Nigeria. They allege that they have nothing to show for it in terms of development and amenities. They complain that their oil continues to be controlled and managed by the federal government and the big oil companies. In their opinion they most the get is environmental degradation and pollution that are fallouts of the huge oil extraction.⁵⁵⁷ The Niger Delta people clamor for autonomy and independence from the rest of the country. They argue that the oil found in their area is the major export earnings and

⁵⁵⁶ A. Raufu Mustapha, “Ethnicity and the Politics of Democratization in Nigeria” In Bruce Berman et. al. ed. *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*. 264.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

source of income for the entire nation. This means that if they separate from the rest of the country, then the rest of the country will suffer and the Niger Delta area will be a rich and prosperous nation. Daniel Jordan Smith writes:

Multiple groups in the oil-producing Niger Delta articulate desires for autonomy or independence, expressing popular discontent over the extreme corruption, exploitation, and inequality created in the management of Nigeria's oil industry.⁵⁵⁸

These acts of violence that take place in the Niger Delta area and other places is as a result of mixture of ethnic, religious and political grievances. The same groups of people can engage in the acts of violence in the north, south, east and west. There are people who go about looking for “where things are happening” as the saying goes in Nigeria. People refer to them as tugs. Within few hours someone can drive from northern Nigeria to the South and vice versa. People who were born and raised in the ethnic groups in the south like Igbo, Niger Delta, Eket, Ibeno, Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urhobo live in the north and those born and raised in the Hausa ethnic group of the north also live and work in the south. Experience has shown that an Eket man living in the Hausa ethnic group of the north can spend his weekend in Eket most of the time. He drives home to Eket on Friday and goes back to the north the following Monday morning. Many people from the south who do trading in the north come to the south to purchase their merchandise. They come for shopping at famous *Otu Onitsha* market located in Igbo land close to a big river known as the River Niger. Violence in Nigeria remains a complex issue. Each ethnic group wants to be in power. When an ethnic group is not in power it constitutes an opposition and continues to voice out grievances against the government.

⁵⁵⁸ Daniel Jordan Smith, *The Culture of Corruption*, 193.

CHAPTER NINE

THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR: A SIGN OF ETHNIC DISUNITY

9.1 EVENTS LEADING TO THE CIVIL WAR

The Nigerian civil war started in May 1967 and ended in January 1970. The events leading to the civil war were misunderstanding, issues and problems between the Igbo ethnic group in the south eastern part of Nigeria and the Hausa ethnic group in the northern part of Nigeria. The Yoruba ethnic group was like an observer at the initial stage of the hostilities. The big effort by both the Igbo leaders and the Hausa leaders at the beginning of the civil war was the struggle to win the support of the Yoruba ethnic group. The support of the Yoruba ethnic group was a very important factor to both groups in the civil war. This is because the Igbo people and the Hausas knew that whoever wins the support of the Yoruba people would gain more supporters and probably gain more legitimacy in the eyes of the world.

The civil war showed the effects of ethnicity in the country. The war was a result of ethnic misunderstanding, conflict and disunity. The ethnic groups engaged in the struggle for political power. Just as ethnic struggle caused the civil war, ethnic struggle applies in other facets of Nigerian life. Ethnicity is a big factor in promoting violence be it religious violence or violence as a result of the struggle for crude oil and sharing of the national cake as is often said in the country. Such struggles and violence fill the pages of Newspapers. It is often the object of news in the media. The civil war has been the highest acts of violence that had taken place in the nation.

After political independence the prospects were high. Other nations of the world especially, the African nations, were looking to Nigeria as a place with great potentials. People thought that the zeal and enthusiasm of self-rule will help the nation to move forward toward advancement in various facets of human endeavor. There was a feeling that with independence, Nigerians would put aside their differences and forge ahead in building of their nation. This was not the case. On the contrary, pre-existing ethnic, cultural and religious differences continued to be a major factor in the country. Instead of unity and peace, inter and intra ethnic disturbances coupled with regional divide became the order of the day.⁵⁵⁹ Oil was discovered in commercial quantity in the 1950s. The country has the advantage of having been blessed with both human and natural resources. Many people believed that the nation, especially with its size and population would be a power and leading figure in Africa if not in the entire world. Even at that time it had been declared the “Giant of Africa.”⁵⁶⁰

But beyond what the eyes can see and the seemingly external advantages of Nigerian nation, there lies the immense cultural divide and ethnic differences that often create the spirit of discord and disunity among the various ethnic divisions in the country. These differences seemed to have been better managed when outsiders were in charge of the affairs of the country, during the colonial era when the government of Britain was in charge of governance. Some people have the opinion that colonization with its attendant amalgamation of the country might be part of the problem. A short time after the attainment of self-rule, it seemed that the different entities and ethnic groups that make

⁵⁵⁹Philip Akpen, “Ethnic and Religious Conflicts: Challenges for Sustainable Democracy” In *Religion in Politics: Secularism and National Integration in Modern Nigeria* Julius O. Adekunle ed. (New Jersey: Africa World Press Inc. 2009) 73.

⁵⁶⁰ Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 158.

up the country might destroy each other in a major conflict. The struggle for power, who should rule and who should not, which ethnic group should govern, how oil revenue should be shared and struggle and hatred within the armed forces, were among the factors that eventually led to the civil war.

The nation at independence saw herself as a leading power and source of inspiration to other African countries as it began its journey to become a nation through indigenous manpower. But this hope of being an icon for other African nations was short lived. Instead educated and talented Nigerians who were escaping from the civil unrest brewing within the country became refugees in neighboring African countries. Power struggles between the political elite and the general atmosphere in the country were good indicators that if care was not taken the civilian administration would not be able to hold Nigeria together. This is because the ruling party, which was supposed to be a national party, did not embrace the entire country or have members all through the nation. Even the name itself Northern People's Congress (NPC) suggests that it belongs to the northern (Hausa) region.⁵⁶¹ The three parties that led Nigeria to independence were all regional and ethnic political parties. None could be considered a national party. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) belonged to the northern region, the National council of Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC) belonged to the South-Eastern (Igbo) region, and the Action Group (AG) belonged to the South-Western (Yoruba) region. When the pre – independence election was held in 1959, the NPC emerged as the winner and produced the prime minister in the person of Tafawa Belewa. The NCNC produced the Governor General in the person of Nnamdi Azikiwe. So the Prime Minister was from the North and

⁵⁶¹ Ibid. 165.

the Governor General was from the South -East. The Action Group political party from the South-West was compensated with major ministerial positions.⁵⁶²

Often questions are raised in the country as to why the southern part of the country was divided into two, namely the south –east and the south-west. This question often comes up because the northern part was not divided. The argument is that this gave the north (Hausa ethnic group) undue advantage over the other ethnic groups in the southern part of the country. These divisions were made during colonial rule and have remained the same up to the present era. The reason often adduced for such arrangement was that the northern (Hausa) region is a more homogeneous group with similar culture. More importantly, they have one language, namely the Hausa Language. But a different scenario exists in the south. The south has two major ethnic groups (Igbo and Yoruba) and each has a totally different language. They also have different cultures.

However many Nigerians believe that this sort of division has benefitted and continues to favor the Hausa ethnic group politically. There is also an argument that the colonial administration split the south in order to make it less powerful for their administrative convenience. This is because most of the Nigerian wealth at that time came from the oil and cocoa which are located only in the south. Oil is located in the south-east while cocoa is located in the south –west. At any rate, the division of south into two indicates a political imbalance in the nation and gives an undue advantage to a specific ethnic group. This sort of arrangement may have contributed to the problems that emerged after independence.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶² Eghosa E. Osaghae, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence*, p. 33.

⁵⁶³ Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, (Great Britain: Faber and Faber Limited, 1978) 196.

Given the conflict that existed following the independence election, the center could not hold because none of Nigerian political parties had a national outlook. The central administration had a regional outlook. Not much regard was given to the overall interest of Nigeria. The political leaders seem to have forgotten the aphorism that says “united we stand but divided we fall.” The Western region felt that they were left out in the central administration though some federal ministers came from that region.

9.2 FIRST DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT: ETHNIC IN NATURE

The set-up of the first democratic administration in Nigeria cannot be said to have been national in character. The administration was sectarian and ethnic. Yet the politicians were expected to perform miracles and be able to carry all Nigerians along in order to bring peace. They were expected to hold Nigeria together as a single, united and presumably prosperous nation. But very soon it became apparent that that idea was an illusion. The end result was destruction by war of the much of the gains made during pre-independence days.

Some Nigerian writers have tried to look into why the first democratic attempt by Nigerians failed. Eghosa Osaghae noted that such reasons for the colossal failure would include the corruption rampant within the political elite of the nation, failure to respect the basic rule of political contest and irreconcilable ethnic and regional differences articulated by the sectional political parties.⁵⁶⁴ One can add to his argument that there was no political party that could claim to represent the entire country. What existed was simply three different ethnic parties that were more interested in ethnic/sectarian issues.

⁵⁶⁴ Eghosa E. Osaghae, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence*, 31.

Prior to the amalgamation in 1914, Nigeria had the northern and southern protectorates. With the amalgamation these protectorates became integral parts of Nigeria. But the north and the south remained different. In 1946 the southern region was split into two, namely the south east and south west. They were known as the eastern region and the western region. This was the state of the nation during the 1959 elections.

During the 1959 elections, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) was already believed to have an advantage. As Eghosa puts it: "All the party needed to do to control the federal government alone was to win enough seats in its Northern region to give it the necessary majority in parliament."⁵⁶⁵ To try to counteract this possible advantage the two parties from the south, namely the Action group (AG) and the National council of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC), formed a coalition with other minor political parties. This strategy seemed to have worked for them. This is because although the NPC won more seats than the other parties, it was not able to garner the majority seats it needed to form a government on its own. As a result a coalition government was formed. Eghosa believes that although the NCNC and AG were smaller parties when compared with the NPC, they had more national outlook and orientation. NPC was more regional and ethnic in nature. Its concentration was mainly in the northern region. However the NPC produced the first prime minister and controlled the Nigerian federal government.⁵⁶⁶

Put in another way, the problem with the Nigerian nation is one of identity. Is Nigeria three nations or just a single nation? Although it seems to be a single nation, many factors seem to prove otherwise. The people within the geographical boundaries of Nigeria are known to the outside world as Nigerians. But it seems that Nigerians see

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.32.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

themselves differently. The entity known as Nigeria was created in 1914 by the British colonial administration. It was not the idea of the indigenous Nigerians. The concept of “one Nigeria” might only be in words. But in action it might sound strange to the people whose lives and activities are centered in their various ethnic communities that have existed for a very long time.⁵⁶⁷

Prior to the time of independence in 1960 little effort was made by those in power to emphasize the unity and oneness of all Nigerians. Rather, greater emphasis was placed on the regional administrations of the Northern, Eastern and Western regions and on their relationship with the federal administration. There could have been greater emphasis on the central/federal government and less emphasis on the regions. The pre-independence constitution’s method of administration contributed to undermining the unified national consciousness by granting much power to the regional administrations. This concentration of power on the regions is akin to divide and rule policy and it weakened the federal character of the nation.

Another problem was the issue of the minority ethnic groups. Apart from the three major ethnic groups (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) there still exist various minority groups. And these minority groups also exert a lot of influence both on the major ethnic groups as well as on the nation as a whole.

Within each region, ethnic minorities often opposed the political domination of the large ethnic groups and as a result, they felt increasingly alienated from the political process, creating even further subdivisions of identity that detracted from the development of a single, encompassing Nigerian national identity.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 159.

Michael Crowder, commenting on the influence of the minority groups asserted that the result of the pre-independence 1959 elections and the campaign that preceded the elections did indicate how powerful and dominant the minority groups could be.⁵⁶⁹ This is because the major political parties sought to gain the support and confidence of the minority groups. For such will enable their party to have enough majority in order to form the government. In the event that no party gains the required majority, then a coalition government will be formed.⁵⁷⁰

Within a short period into the first democratic administration it became evident that there were bitter rivalry and discord among the major political parties. Each ethnic and regional party wanted to be in control of the federal government. This competition and struggle for political supremacy resulted in the collapse of the first indigenous democratic rule. The NPC, which was in control of the federal government, was accused of nepotism. It was perceived that Northerners received the majority of the federal appointments to top military, political and bureaucratic positions. This was because the NPC wanted to place northerners in places of importance so as to solidify its grasp of power and receive the necessary support it needed to hold on to power.⁵⁷¹ It was also suspected that the Hausas ethnic group was placing their people in charge of key military position in case of any major conflict or war.

This accusation of nepotism is related to the religious component of Nigerian politics. Politics and religion are often intertwined in the country. One often cannot discuss Nigerian politics adequately without at the same time looking into the role of

⁵⁶⁹ Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978) 244

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid. 245.

⁵⁷¹ Eghosa E. Osaghae, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence*, 39.

religion. In Nigeria there is an aphorism that in people's lives religion and politics are the same. Some make the joke that in Nigeria there is no separation of Church and state or religion and politics during democratic or the military administrations. When the northerners were in charge of the federal government they were accused of favoritism and nepotism. It necessarily follows that they were also being accused of favoring the Muslim religion to the detriment of Christians and other religious groups. This is because most northerners were Muslims. Tafawa Belewa who was the first prime minister was a Muslim as were most of those in his administration. If a Christian were to be in power, he or she will most likely be accused of favoring the Christians. That seems to be the trend in the nation's politics.

9.3 POLITICAL AND ETHNIC TENSION IN THE COUNTRY

The events that led to the civil war were a gradual process. After some periods within the post- independence era, political and ethnic tension continued to build up within the country. It became evident that there existed political power struggles between the regions and the various ethnic groups. The Igbos and the Yorubas were in a kind of 'tug of war' with the federal administration. The reasons were both ethnic and religious. The Igbos and the Yorubas felt that their ethnic groups were being left out and marginalized by the Hausa ethnic group which was in control of the federal government. Religiously also the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups were predominantly Christians.

By 1962 there was serious tension and political turmoil in the western region. The Action Group which was the party that controlled that region was having a leadership problem. At its 1962 convention in the city of Jos the AG split into two, and with this the

party degenerated rapidly.⁵⁷² These crises in the West led to the creation of another region in 1963 known as the mid-western region.⁵⁷³ This was seen by some as an attempt by the federal government to control both the AG and her leadership as well as to weaken the powers and influence of the Western region in the overall political theatre of the nation. This split of the western (Yoruba) region by the federal government under the leadership of the Hausa ethnic group created more fear and tension. There was some fear that the Hausas were using the tactics of divide and conquer in order to weaken the other ethnic groups. Some people saw the split of the region as a good omen, but some saw it as both political and ethnic tactics to have more control over the western region (Yorubas) by the federal powers.

The national census of the 1962 was another factor that contributed in building up political, ethnic as well as religious tension that bedeviled the first democratic government of Nigeria. Population matters a lot in politics. Distribution of national resources is usually done according to the population of an area. Also because seats in the House of parliaments are apportioned on the basis of population, census has important political implications. The Northern Region's political strength, it was believed, had arisen in large measure from the results of the 1952-1953 census, which had identified 54 percent of the country's population in that area.⁵⁷⁴ During the 1962 census, each ethnic group or region tried as much as possible to inflate their population figure for both political and economic advantages. Even the selection and appointment of the census officials by the federal administration was highly criticized. The other ethnic groups

⁵⁷² Eghosa E. Osaghae, *Crippled Gaint: Nigeria Since Independence*, 40.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Helen Chapin Metz, ed. "Nigeria: A Country Study." *Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress*, 1991. Accessed October 15, 2010. <http://countrystudies.us/nigeria/22.htm>.

suspected that the Hausas, who were in charge of the federal government, appointed their own people and agents who would manipulate the census figure to the advantage of the Hausa ethnic group. Eghosa observed that the use of population figures was important for the allocation of revenues among the various regions and for allocation of quotas in recruitment into the armed forces. For Eghosa census in Nigeria was as important as conducting elections into various offices.⁵⁷⁵

It was also perceived that the reason why the northern region seemed to be powerful was because of its population, and that the population figures presented by the north at the previous census were not real. Census figures were believed to have been manipulated so that they can continue to gain political as well as economic advantages to the detriment and expense of other ethnic groups. Eghosa writes: "Since its preponderant population (based on the census) was the reason for its domination, the calculation was that, if it were possible to change the population balance in favor of the South, then the basis of Northern domination would be permanently removed....."⁵⁷⁶ This was the political calculation by the southern region. But their dreams and hopes to control the powers and influence of the north through the census figure never materialized. After the 1962 census there was much tension in the country and many people, especially from the south, thought that the figures were again inflated by the northerners to their own advantage. After much rancor a fresh census was ordered by the federal administration in 1963. The monetary cost was enormous. The result of this particular census, however, did not differ much from that of the previous year. The southerners again opposed it. But this time their opposition was divided. The south east was vehement and strong in their

⁵⁷⁵Eghosa E. Osaghae, *Crippled Gaint: Nigeria Since Independence*, 41.

⁵⁷⁶Ibid.

opposition. But the south westerners did not bother themselves much. Many in the south east suspected that the northern region had bought over the south west to their side. The south eastern government went to court to protest the census result. They argued for the nullification of the result of the census, but they did not succeed. The court argued that the south east did not represent a sizable population of the southerners. This is because the rest of the southerner did not join in the law suit.⁵⁷⁷ The political tensions however continued to build up in the entire nation.

As is often the case, whenever any political party is in power, the opposition parties seek to unseat it. The same applied to the Nigerian situation during the first democratic government. The NPC was in power for four years, from 1960 to 1964. That was the constitutional stipulation. At the end of four years a new election had to be conducted. Therefore in 1964 a general election was held. The NPC was optimistic that it would consolidate its power. It would have no problems winning its base in the northern religion. But it also hoped to make inroads in the western and eastern regions. The major opposition parties, the NCNC and the AG, were also hoping to check and control what they perceived to be the domineering influence and power of the ruling party. There was the fear that the ruling party was becoming more powerful and that if the trend continued it would not augur well for the nation. According to Eghosa, the 1964 general election was seen by the opposition parties as their final opportunity to try and unseat NPC. They hoped to stop domination and control by the Hausa ethnic bloc.⁵⁷⁸ The opposition parties did not achieve their objective of clinching victory during the election. During the election, the NPC formed a coalition with few minor parties. This new alliance was

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid. 42.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

known as the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). The southern political parties on their part also came together and formed the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA).⁵⁷⁹

The 1964 election was the first election that was conducted and organized solely by Nigerian indigenous politicians. It was the first general election after the nation's attainment of independence in 1960. The election of 1959, which ushered in independence, was conducted under the supervision and management of the British colonial masters. The election of 1964 was said to have been filled with a lot of malpractices. According to Toyin Falola, politicians with an eye on the national treasury were determined to capture the federal posts. They were not ready to lose elections, not ready to allow voters to decide. They therefore resorted to all sorts of dirty tricks and all sorts of electoral malpractices in order to succeed. This was common to all sides.⁵⁸⁰ "Parties recruited thugs to defend their members and harass opponents. Electoral officers were either bribed or threatened. The nomination papers of some candidates were rejected to ensure the victory of others."⁵⁸¹

However, despite the electoral problems and irregularities, the Federal Electoral Commission, which was the body responsible for the conduct of the election, declared the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) victorious, stating that the party had won an overwhelming victory.⁵⁸² Therefore, power continued to stay with the Hausa ethnic group of the north. This should not come as a surprise because according to the census, the north has a greater majority of the Nigerian population. To gain more power the western and the eastern regions needed to merge together in order to outweigh the population of

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, 105.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

the North, but this proved impossible because of huge ethnic and cultural differences between them.

There was also a disparity in the educational system within the country. The southerners had made more progress in education. In other words the Yoruba and the Igbo ethnic groups had advanced more in education than the people from the Hausa ethnic group. The post-independence leaders were dealing with these issues. John Sherman observed: “During the first six years of independence, religious differences, political factions, a disparity in educational opportunities, and economic difficulties in many areas of the country led to great dissatisfaction with the civilian government.”⁵⁸³ The hostilities and acrimonies among the various regions kept mounting. This eventually led to the civil war.

9.4 MILITARY INTERVENTION: ETHNIC BASED

The political tussle among the various ethnic groups and political parties continued until the early hours of January 15 1966, when the first military coup took place in Nigeria. This first military coup ushered in the shedding of the blood of many Nigerians in the years between 1966 and 1970. Five army Majors were said to be the ring leaders of the military takeover. Their names were: Majors Kaduna Nzeogwu, E. Ifeajuna, D. Okafor, C.I. Anuforo and A. Ademoyega. All these Majors are from the southern part of Nigeria. Major Nzeogwu who was considered the leader of the group was an Igbo but had lived his life mostly in the Hausa area and speaks Hausa fluently.⁵⁸⁴ They carried out their onslaught and killing spree from the three main regions of Nigeria – Northern, Eastern and Western regions, plus Lagos, which at that time was the federal capital of the

⁵⁸³ John Sherman, *War Stories: A Memoir of Nigeria and Biafra* (Indianapolis: Mesa Verde Press, 2002) i

⁵⁸⁴ Raph Uwechue, *Reflections on The Nigerian Civil War* (Paris: Trafford, 2004) 25.

nation.⁵⁸⁵ Key political and ethnic leaders lost their lives during the coup. They included: Prime Minister of Nigeria Tafawa Balewa, Premier S.L. Akintola of the Western region, Premier Ahmadu Bello of the Northern region. Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa and Ahmadu Bello came from the Hausa ethnic group. S.L Akintola came from the Yoruba ethnic group. Many military officers from the Northern (Hausa) region were also killed. The January 1966 coup plotters believed that their intervention would put an end to the corruption, tribalism and religious problems that had characterized the Nigerian political experience since her independence six years earlier.⁵⁸⁶



Figure 8. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. Source: “Independence Day Speech 1960 – Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa.” *Nigerian Info*, October 1, 2012. <http://www.nigerianinfo.com/2012/10/independence-day-speech-1960-sir-abubakar-tafawa-balewa.html>.

⁵⁸⁵ Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, p.172.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.



Figure 9. Ahmadu Bello. Source: “Brief on our Founding Fathers” *Sir Alhaji Ahmadu Bello (The Sarduna of Sokoto)*, November 5, 2012. <http://www.blog.parliamentintlmagazine.com/?p=373>.

But tribalism, nepotism, corruption, ethnic and religious conflicts did not stop after the coup. In fact, this first coup ignited more fire in an already volatile situation and environment. The Northern (Hausa) ethnic region believed that they were targeted during the coup. They believed that most of those who lost their lives during the coup were from the Hausa ethnic group. The most prominent politician from the Igbo ethnic group at that time was Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. When the first coup occurred he was the Governor General of the country. This was one of the key political positions in the country. But his life was spared by the coup plotters. This helped the Hausa ethnic group to believe all the more that the coup plotters targeted mostly politicians from the Hausa group. Things began to deteriorate quickly. Key politicians who survived the coup were scared on account of not knowing what would happen next now that the army had taken over the government. Many went into hiding or left the country.



Figure 10. Nnamdi Azikiwe. Source: Ben Agande, “FG to immortalise Azikiwe, approves N1.5bn for mausoleum.” *Frank Talk Nigeria*, October 3 2012. <http://franktalknigeria.blogspot.com/2012/10/fg-to-immortalise-azikiwe-approves.html>.

The young Majors who carried out the coup also seemed not to have had future plans on how to rule the nation. Nigerian leadership fell into the hands of the then General officer commanding the Nigerian army, Major General Aguiyi- Ironsi who incidentally was from the Igbo ethnic group. Aguiyi- Ironsi came from the same ethnic group to which most of the coup plotters belonged. Four of the coup plotters came from the Igbo area while one came from the Yoruba area. This raised more suspicion that some ethnic groups were targeted. Some authors argue that Aguiyi-Ironsi was not one of the major plotters of the coup but that he came to power because he was co-opted after the coup has taken place. He was also the most senior in the army.⁵⁸⁷ However, some people believe that Aguiyi-Ironsi was one of the chief architects of the coup from the beginning. John Sherman, for instance, argued that the first coup was led by Aguiyi-Ironsi, and that the coup illustrated the big division and acrimony between the northern and southern parts of Nigeria.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid. 173.

⁵⁸⁸ John Sherman, *War Stories: A Memoir of Nigeria and Biafra* (Indianapolis: Mesa Verde Press, 2002) i



Figure 11. Aguiyi Ironsi. Source: Igboeli Arinze, “Thoughts on Aguiyi Ironsi and the State of the Nation.” *247UReports*, June 8, 2013. <http://247ureports.com/thoughts-on-aguiyi-ironsi-and-the-state-of-the-nation/>.

Each ethnic group suspected the other. Each seemed to be ready for any eventual attack or conflict. When the first coup came, it seemed to confirm the fears of the northern region that the southern region might engage the services of the army in order to attack or imprison the elites from the north. Falola and Heaton observed:

Ironsi’s subsequent policies as head of state alarmed many northerners, however, who came to view the coup and Ironsi as part of a plan by southern – specifically Igbo- officers to use the military as a means of imposing a new era of Igbo domination. In many ways, circumstantial evidence corroborated such a view. In the first place, four of the five majors who led the January coup were Igbo. Of all the officers and politicians killed in the coup, only one had been Igbo, while the majority had been northerners. While the two most prominent figures in northern politics –Balewa and Bello- had been murdered along with their ally Akintola, the Igbo premiers of the Mid-Western and the Eastern Regions had been arrested but later released. To many, this pattern indicated that the coup was primarily an Igbo strike against the north.⁵⁸⁹

Political events were seen and analyzed along ethnic lines. The events of the first military takeover, the ethnicity of those who were killed during the takeover, and the

⁵⁸⁹ Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* 173.

ethnicity of the officers who carried out the military coup, all helped to further destabilize the political, socio-cultural and religious environment of the nation. People suspected that the northern region especially those in the military were planning on how to retaliate.

When the military took power from the politicians during the first coup, their policies and actions were not much different from those of the politicians. Some political pundits believe that the manner in which General Ironsi handled the affairs of the nation was tribalistic. They believed that some ethnic groups were favored more than the others. “Making matters worse, Ironsi made several moves in the first half of 1966 that led many northerners to believe that he was part of an Igbo conspiracy.”⁵⁹⁰ The major activities of Ironsi upon his ascendancy to power were to disband and outlaw all the political parties. He appointed military governors to be in charge of the various regions. One military governor is worth highlighting: the military governor for the South- Eastern Region, Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu. This governor was one of the chief architects of the civil war. The war broke out due to the fact that the South-Eastern Region under his command decided to secede from Nigeria in order to become an independent and sovereign nation. Since the leadership at the federal level could not tolerate this, the civil war followed.

General Ironsi’s stay in power was for a short period of time (January 1966-July 1966). During that period, he was accused of surrounding himself mainly with people from the Igbo ethnic group. He was also accused of not bringing the young army majors who plotted the bloody coup to justice. They were only kept in detention without trial. This angered many Nigerians, especially people from the northern region who felt that

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

the coup plotters should be given a military trial and possibly be executed by the Federal government. Again, on May 24, 1966, Ironsi's government abolished the federal system of administration which was operative in Nigeria. He introduced a unitary system of administration.⁵⁹¹ The regional structures in Nigeria ceased to exist. The civil service as well as the military which used to be administered on regional level began to be controlled by the federal government. The northerners saw this move as Igbo domination. They felt that the central government under an Igbo man's administration would use Igbo personnel and officers to fill key posts in the northern region. Prior to the abolition of the regional structure, each regional government and administration was occupied by mostly those from that particular region. Now that the federal government had introduced a unitary system, the federal government appointed those who would be in charge of the various regions.⁵⁹² The Northerners were uncomfortable with General Ironsi's administration. His introduction of the unitary system became the straw that broke the camel's back. Great tension continued to mount in Nigeria which would eventually lead to the second military coup.

Eventually what was dubbed a counter coup, believed to have been planned and executed by the northern region's army officers, came on 29th July 1966.⁵⁹³ General Ironsi, who was on a visit to the Western region, went missing. He was later discovered to have been assassinated by the coup plotters. For three days the country operated without a leader until the leading northern officers selected Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon to be the new head of state and the commander of the Nigerian armed forces.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Ibid.174.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

Gowon quickly abolished the unitary system introduced by the now deceased leader Ironsi. He reverted back to the federal structure and went on to work for the reconciliation of all the ethnic groups. But reconciliation would prove to be difficult.

When the first coup took place, the northern region felt that the coup was planned and executed by the Igbo ethnic group. Now that the second coup had taken place and the planners were mostly from the northern region, many Easterners began saying that the northern region had now usurped the leadership of the nation. Consequently they refused to co-operate with Gowon and the new administration. Chief among the Easterners who refused to recognize Gowon was the military governor of the Eastern region Colonel Ojukwu. Ojukwu refused to believe that Gowon had the authority to become the commander of the armed forces. Ojukwu's argument was that many living military officers had a greater claim to the title than Gowon. Moreover Ojukwu felt that the Igbo tribe would not be protected under the Gowon's administration.⁵⁹⁵ So the tussle between the ethnic groups continued. Politics and ethnic struggle continued to be the key factor in the manner as well as modus in which the Nigerian nation was governed.

Essentially peace or war in Nigeria at this point in time hinged on two military/political actors: The head of Nigerian military government, Yakubu Gowon and the military administrator of the Eastern Region, Odumegwu Ojukwu. There was a power tussle between the two. They were young military officers who had known each other for some time and who have attended military training together.⁵⁹⁶ They seemed to be old rivals who found themselves at the corridors of power and authority at a crucial moment in Nigerian history. Eghosa Osaghae observed that during this period Gowon had serious

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶ Uche Jim Ojiaku, *Surviving The Iron Curtain* (Baltimore: Publish America, LLLP, 2007) 22.

problems with Ojukwu's Eastern regional government. He noted also that personal conflicts between the two leaders was something well known to many people.⁵⁹⁷

Events went very fast, and within a short period of time the country was already in a deadly civil war occasioned by the act of secession of the eastern region under the command of Ojukwu. There were massive killing of the easterners residing in the northern region. This sparked off revenge killings of northerners residing in the east.⁵⁹⁸ At some point Ojukwu ordered all easterners residing in the northern region to come back to the east because it was judged that they were no longer safe in the north. Gowon on the other hand, was more concerned to keep the east within the federation. He was more concerned to maintain one Nigeria and was prepared to use the resources of the federal government to fight to preserve one Nigeria.⁵⁹⁹ As these events continued to unfold, meetings were held to see if war could be avoided:

A series of meetings between Gowon and Ojukwu took place in Aburi, Ghana on January 4-5 1967. These negotiations produced only a vague and loosely worded resolution. Gowon believed that the federation had been preserved at Aburi, while Ojukwu claimed the Aburi agreement gave him wide-ranging powers to control the government of the Eastern Region and even to secede from the federation if he so chose. In March Ojukwu announced that as of April 1 the government of the Eastern Region would take over all federal departments, taxes, and other revenues, essentially making the region independently administered. Gowon responded by blockading the coast and instituting economic sanctions against the east. Last-ditch efforts at a peaceful settlement broke down, and on May 30, Ojukwu declared the independence of the Eastern Region, which he renamed the Independent Republic of Biafra.⁶⁰⁰

Gowon's administration believed in the unity of the entire nation and was willing to go to war in order to preserve that unity. Gowon also knew that the seceding

⁵⁹⁷ Eghosa E. Osagbae, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria since Independence*, 63.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁹ Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 174.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid. 174-175.

Igbo ethnic group could not win a military confrontation. The former colonial master, Britain, was also in favor of Nigerian unity and supported Gowon and the federal military government.⁶⁰¹

An important reason why the federal government could not allow the Igbo ethnic group to secede was the crude oil which was the main source of income for the Nigerian nation. Almost the entire known petroleum reserve of Nigeria was located in the delta region of the eastern region. If the seceding ethnic group were allowed to have their way, they would take with them the entire oil resource of the nation. In fact if the Igbos were allowed to become an independent nation, the rest of the Nigerian nation would be poor.⁶⁰² The federal government would not allow the Igbos to secede because further fragmentation of Nigeria could take place. This is because Nigeria has multi-ethnic groups. If one ethnic group secedes and becomes independent, then other ethnic groups may also find a way to secede.

9.5 THE NIGERIAN/BIAFRAN CIVIL WAR

On May 30 1967 the civil war broke out. The war was between the Igbo ethnic group under the leadership of Ojukwu and the Nigerian federal military government under the leadership of Yakubu Gowon. Some people believe that personal issues between Gowon and Ojukwu may have also contributed to the civil war. Ojiaku writes:

These two guys had earlier attended the same military school in Europe and knew each other personally. Ojukwu did not take it kindly that a junior officer is now his new boss. Ojukwu constantly threatened that Eastern Nigeria would secede from Nigeria and form its own nation. Yakubu Gowon and the rest of Nigeria realized that most of the Nigerian oil wells were in Eastern Nigeria

⁶⁰¹ Ibid. 175.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

and Nigeria could not afford to relinquish a pivotal revenue generation source like the East.⁶⁰³



Figure 12. Odumegwu Ojukwu. Souce: “Nigeria’s Ex-Biafran leader Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu dies” *DMV Africans*, Accessed June 8, 2013. <http://www.dmvafricans.com/2011/11/nigerias-ex-biafra-leader-chukwuemeka.html>.



Figure 13. “Yakubu Gowon” *Online Nigeria*, Accessed June 8 2013. <http://www.onlinenigeria.com/gowon.asp>.

This war is also known as the Biafran war. When the south-eastern region seceded from the Nigerian, Ojukwu renamed it the Republic of Biafra. All through the period of the war, which lasted for almost three years, the south-eastern region was known as the Republic of Biafra. But when Biafra was defeated and the war ended in January of 1970, the name Biafra officially ceased to exist. The south-eastern region was once more incorporated into the federal republic of Nigeria. At the end of the war Ojukwu went into self-exile in Ivory Coast.

⁶⁰³ Uche Jim Ojiaku, *Surviving The Iron Curtain* (Baltimore: PublishAmerica, LLLP, 2007) 22.

We will continue to refer to the civil war as the Nigerian civil war or the Biafran war. The two terms are understood to mean the same thing. From my perspective I would state that this was not just the Nigerian war or Biafran war. It was more of an ethnic war. It was mostly a war between the Igbo ethnic group and the Hausa ethnic group. The civil war showed in great detail the role which ethnicity plays in the various conflicts in Nigeria. Speaking on the role of ethnicity in Nigerian conflicts, Abu Bakarr Bah opined that: “In Nigeria, ethnic violence led to the virtual collapse of the federation during the Nigerian civil war, and in recent times the Ogoni uprising and the activities of ethnic militias have raised concerns about the survival of the federation.”⁶⁰⁴

If one looks at the events which led to the war, one will notice that there has been a tussle between the ethnic groups. Each ethnic group wants to be in power so as to be able to dictate to other ethnic groups and to control them. The main ethnic group in the south-west, known as the Yoruba, joined the Hausas in order to fight the Igbos. The Igbo ethnic group was isolated during the hostilities. They bore the full effect of the civil war. The civil war can be referred to as the mother of all Nigerian conflicts. The cost of the war was enormous. Many innocent people lost their lives. Many soldiers died both on the Hausa side and the Igbo side. Hunger and disease were the order of the day. Since the war was fought mainly on Igbo land, a lot of the infrastructures in Igbo territories were bombed and reduced to ashes.

The civil war is pivotal in all the conflicts that the Nigeria has witnessed. It is germane to highlight the interplay of ethno-politics as far as the war is concerned. From the onset of the war, it was obvious that the Igbo people were a minority and that it would

⁶⁰⁴ Abu Bakarr Bah, *Breakdown and Reconstruction: Democracy, the Nation-State and Ethnicity in Nigeria* (New York: Lexington Books, 2005) 9.

be difficult for them to prevail and emerge as winners. Some believe that the architects of the war from the side of the Igbo ethnic group had hoped to be supported by the Yoruba ethnic group.⁶⁰⁵ That was the only way they could have made much impact during the war. But things did not work out as they had hoped. Raph Uwechue argued that it was the Hausa ethnic group that better understood the need to find support from another ethnic group:

Up until the eve of the civil war, Nigerian politics were dominated by the three big tribes: the Hausa-Fulani of the North, the Ibos of the East and the Yorubas of the West. In this triangular fight the key to victory was the combination of any two sides. It did not matter which two. Only the then Northern Region led by the N.P.C. (Northern People's Congress) appeared to have fully appreciated and exploited this golden rule⁶⁰⁶

Then how did the Igbo people miss the opportunity of aligning with the Yorubas of the West during the war? The struggle to win the support of the Yoruba ethnic group was crucial immediately after the civil war broke out. The Hausa ethnic group and the Igbo ethnic group knew that their success or failure in the war depended largely on whether the Yoruba ethnic group supported them or not. The civil war was a classic example of the inter-play of ethnic politics. It has a religious component as well. The Hausa ethnic group is mainly Muslims and the Igbo ethnic group is mainly Christians. The Yoruba ethnic group has large number of Christians and Muslims. The civil war can be regarded as a combination of an ethnic and religious war. It can be seen that Muslims in the Hausa ethnic group fought against Christians in the Igbo ethnic group.

⁶⁰⁵ Raph Uwechue, *Reflections on The Nigerian Civil War: Facing the Future* (Canada: Trafford Publishers 2004) 137.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid. 135.

The struggle to win the support of the Yoruba ethnic group was not an easy one. It is pertinent to note that at this point in time, the main leader of the Yoruba ethnic group was in jail. His name is chief Awolowo. He was convicted of treason by the Nigerian Federal Government and was serving a ten years sentence. According to Uwechue, it was hoped that the Yoruba would ally with the Igbos of the East during the war. This is because both the Yorubas and the Igbos had been victims of the powers of the Hausas of the North.⁶⁰⁷ When it became apparent that the civil war was approaching, the leadership of the federal government (which was in the hands of the Hausa tribe of the north) released Awolowo from prison. Uwechue observed that not only did the federal government set Awolowo free; they also “wooed him with the unprecedented flattery of welcoming him with a guard of honor at Ikeja airport.”⁶⁰⁸ Ikeja airport is the international airport at the city of Lagos (Yoruba Territory), the then capital of Nigeria.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid. 136.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.



Figure 14. Obafemi Awolowo .Source: “Brief on our Founding Fathers.” *Parliamentintlmagazine*, November 5, 2010. <http://www.blog.parliamentintlmagazine.com/?p=373>.

Uwechue argued: “Eastern Nigeria’s leadership failed to appreciate what Gowon saw so clearly – the vital necessity of securing the alliance of Chief Awolowo and the Western Region.”⁶⁰⁹ Awolowo, now free from jail and still the leader of the Yoruba ethnic group, made statements that showed his sympathy for the Igbo ethnic group rather than the Hausas, despite the efforts of Hausas to have him on their side. In a letter to the federal military government Awolowo demanded that the northern army stationed in the Western region be removed.⁶¹⁰ In the view of Awolowo, the presence of the northern soldiers in Yoruba land could be considered an occupation of the Yoruba territory. This made Gowon uncomfortable. He rallied his men into action in order to rectify the situation and find means to appease the West.⁶¹¹

As Gowon and those on the Hausa side of the conflict were doing everything possible to have Awolowo and the Yoruba people on their side, the leaders of the Igbo,

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid. 137.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

according to Uwechue, seemed not to have read the handwriting on the wall well. They seemed not to have put in much effort in winning the support of the Yorubas. In May of 1967 when Awolowo came for a peace and reconciliation meeting at Enugu in Igbo land, the Igbo group, according to Uwechue, did not play their cards very well.⁶¹² Enugu was the place where Ojukwu was based. It was the seat of administration of the Eastern region. During that important visit by Awolowo one important personality from the Igbo tribe was not invited by Ojukwu who at that time was the military governor of the Eastern region. That person was Dr. Michael Okpala, who was a good friend of Awolowo. This was a great omission and did not help Ojukwu in his bid to win support of the Yorubas.⁶¹³

The bigger picture of not inviting Michael Okpala to this crucial meeting was that the Yoruba ethnic group might read it to mean that the Igbos were not united. It must have shown the Yorubas that in the event of war the Igbo people might not come together since their important personalities seem to be at odds with each other. The Igbos were in the minority when compared with the Hausas of the north. In terms of soldiers and weapons, they were also in the disadvantaged position. In a tense situation like war and under normal circumstances no one wants to be associated with the losing side. This is why within a short period of time it became clear that the Igbo ethnic group would fight the war by themselves.

To seal the deal and to make sure that the Yorubas were on the side of the Hausas, General Gowon made an unprecedented political appointment. He appointed Chief Awolowo to one of the highest civilian assignments in the Nigerian government. Awolowo was given the post of the vice presidency of the Federal Executive Council,

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

with the unspoken understanding that Nigerian leadership might be his as soon as the war was over and the army withdrew and handed over power to politicians.⁶¹⁴ With this appointment and its acceptance by Awolowo, it became evident that any possibility for Igbo-Yoruba alliance had failed. At the same time it became obvious that the Hausas and the Yorubas had secured their alliance and were ready for whatever happens with regards to the war which at that time was at its preliminary stages.⁶¹⁵

In the events leading to the war, some folks were sensing that the war might be considered to be a war between Muslims and Christians. In other words it was thought the war might be a religious war. Once it became obvious that the leadership of the Yorubas and their people had joined the Hausas of the northern region, it became clear that this war could no longer be considered a war between the Muslims and Christians.

Uwechue writes:

.....a new North-West axis was born. From this moment on, Ojukwu's Eastern Nigeria was isolated and when war broke out she had to fight it alone. Eastern Nigeria's political choice of secession completed the region's isolation. The struggle was no longer between the so-called Christian East and Moslem North.⁶¹⁶

Most of the conflicts in Nigeria have been associated with ethnic rivalry and struggles for supremacy among the various ethnic groups. It can be stated that whether it is the civil war, religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians, religious conflicts between Muslims themselves or Christians themselves, it often begins from the perspective of ethnic struggle. When the Yoruba people were won over by the federal government it seemed evident who the winner of the war could be. The Igbos were isolated. Only five

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.138.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid. 137-138.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

African nations were on the side of the Igbos (Biafra) and their quest for secession. Those nations include: Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Zambia, Gabon and Ivory Coast.⁶¹⁷ It is possible that these African countries sided with Biafra as a result of the ethnic struggles which they had in own country. It is also possible that they supported Igbo-Biafra out of sympathy.

As the civil war dragged on it became clear that the Biafran side was losing. Alfred Obiora Uzokwe writes: “From 1969 onwards, things never really got better in Biafra; they continued to wax from bad to worse. Conscription was on the rise and young men seemed to always do what was necessary to avoid going to the war”.⁶¹⁸ The Biafrans had some songs that often were played over the radio and rendered in the village squares where people gathered. One of the songs went this way:

Igbo Language:

Imela, Ojukwu imela

Imela Ojukwu imela

Agam esoro umaaka ibem lay ambush

Were ezigbo Madison gba ndi awusa.

Imela Ojukwu imela.

English Language:

You have done well Ojukwu, you have done well.

You have done well Ojukwu, you have done well

I will join my fellow youngsters and lay ambush

⁶¹⁷ Ibid. 145.

⁶¹⁸ Alfred Obiora Uzokwe, *Surviving in Biafra: The Story of The Nigerian Civil War* (New York: Writers Advantage, 2003)144.

Use a good Madison and shoot Hausas.

You have done well Ojukwu, you have done well.⁶¹⁹

This particular war song does a couple of things: first it sings the praises of Ojukwu who was the leader of the Igbo ethnic group. Next it indicated that it is war between the Igbo ethnic group and the Hausa ethnic group. Again the song encourages the Igbo youths to come out without fear and fight. But the fact is that most of these youngsters and teenagers who were fighting this war may not have questioned themselves on the reason why they were in the war. As happens in many wars especially in African soil, young people are recruited and often forced to fight.

The war dragged on until January of 1970 when the Biafran leader Ojukwu handed power over to Philip Effiong and left for exile in Ivory Coast. Apparently Ojukwu had left the shores of Biafra on January 10 1970. Then the following day, January 11 1970, Ojukwu's prepared message was broadcast on Biafran radio. In the message Ojukwu told Biafrans that he was no longer around, but had gone to continue to search for peace. He indicated also that he had handed over the leadership of Biafra to Philip Effiong.⁶²⁰

It was clear to many people that there was no way the Biafran's could sustain the fighting for a long period. The Biafrans were incurring many casualties. When Ojukwu handed over and left, the new leader did not have much option than to surrender and seek peace and reconciliation with General Gowon and the Nigerian military government. Uzokwe writes: "After General Ojukwu's departure, Biafra's new leader embarked on an intense negotiation with the Nigerian government. When negotiations were completed on

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.124.

⁶²⁰ Ibid.147.

the 12th of January, he made a broadcast to the nation on the true situation of things.”⁶²¹

In that broadcast General Effiong’s statements alluded to the fact that the civil war could have been avoided. For among many consoling words to the Igbo ethnic group and the entire Nigerian nation Effiong said: “We have always believed that our differences with Nigeria should be settled by peaceful negotiations.”⁶²² This statement indicates that some top military officers within the Biafran army might have been against the war but were either not ready to speak out or were afraid to voice out their opposition to war.

Gowon also delivered a broadcast to the entire nation on the night of the same day that Effiong had given his broadcast. Gowon reiterated what he said he had stood for all along the period of the war, namely the unity of all Nigerians. He began his speech with these words: “We have arrived at one of the greatest moments of the history in our nation. A great moment of victory for national unity and reconciliation. We have arrived at the end of a tragic and painful conflict.”⁶²³ Gowon stressed his desire to work for reintegration of the Igbo people into the rest of the nation. He declared no victor, no vanquished. The civil war was the war between brothers he said, and that the great task that lay ahead for Nigeria was for all to work together in healing the wounds of the war.⁶²⁴ It seemed that the entire nation did come together again. With the help of the oil boom and the oil revenue the after effect of the civil war was not felt as much as people had thought. The nation embarked on rebuilding, re-construction and rehabilitation.⁶²⁵ Ethnic rivalry and struggle between the ethnic groups were the prominent factors that

⁶²¹ Ibid.147.

⁶²² Ibid. 148.

⁶²³ Ibid.150.

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Eghosa E. Osaghae, *Crippled Gaint: Nigeria Since Independence* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998) 69.

brought about the civil war. Most of the conflicts in Nigeria have had an ethnic bent. Abu Bakarr Bah argued that in Nigeria, “Ethnicity has been demonstrated and identified as one of those evil forces that stand in the way of progress.”⁶²⁶

It would seem that the military coup of 1966 set in motion the civil war and hostilities. The first coup of 1966 fanned into flames an unprecedented ethnic division. The ethnic rivalry was there already but the first coup seemed to have escalated the situation. When the first coup came many people rejoiced thinking that the army would be the messiah that would solve the Nigerian political problems. Those people forgot that the army was not trained to govern/rule. The army deals with command/force but politics and leadership deal more with dialogue, negotiation and discussion. The “lop sided killing of northern political leaders during the 1966 coup”⁶²⁷ seems to have set in motion this concept/notion of killing your opponent in order to resolve differences. That first onset of the military into Nigerian politics and the killing of important politicians might be seen as a great disservice to the nation. This is because if you kill people from one ethnic group, the tendency is for them to plan to retaliate.

Much has been written on the Nigerian civil war. Each author writes from his or her own perspective. The account of the war depends on who is writing, whether the person is from the Igbo, Yoruba or Hausa ethnic group or any other minor groups in Nigeria. Uche Jim Ojiaku puts it this way:

Books written by Northern Ethnic Hausa authors tend to see the war as Igbo attempt to claim the oil fields of Southern Nigeria. They tend to play down the mass killings of Igbo citizens living in Northern Nigeria as the primary reason for the formation of Biafra.

⁶²⁶ Abu Bakarr bah, *Breakdown and Reconstruction: Democracy, the Nation-State and Ethnicity in Nigeria*, 9.

⁶²⁷ Uche Jim Ojiaku, *Surviving The Iron Curtain*, 11.

Igbo authors also hammer on the brutal and genocidal killings and deportation of Igbo sons and daughters residing in the North as the only reason for the war. Some independent authors see it as ethnic cleansing based on religious bigotry and intolerance of Muslim Hausas against the Christian Igbos; yet other independent authors see it as a result of political instability.....⁶²⁸

Looking at the picture of events in Nigeria it seems that the source and reason for conflicts revolve around ethnic differences, religious intolerance and political problems. The events leading to the civil war and the war itself bore testimony to the impact of these factors.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The cardinal aim of this dissertation is to show that ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria are connected. Nigeria is a divided nation. Solution will come when people learn to have a national outlook instead of an ethnic outlook. Nigerians ought to free themselves from what I will call clutches of ethnicity. They should think less of what will be good for their own individual ethnic community and think more of what will be good for the entire nation. This is because if in the race for ethnic supremacy they tear apart and destroy each other as they did during the civil war, all Nigerians no matter their ethnicity will not be better off. The way forward in Nigeria should be that the citizens will work to blend the different aspects of their national life and endeavor to co-exist in peace and harmony.

10.1 CONCLUSION

10.1.1. A NATION BLESSED WITH OIL RESOURCES

Understanding the issues connected with oil in Nigeria is important because a lot of conflicts is in one way or another connected with the struggle for oil money by the various groups in the country. Peter Cunliffe-Jones writes:

Since the civil war ended, Nigeria has earned more than \$400 billion from oil, and yet both the number and the percentage of people living in poverty have gone up in that time: up from 35 percent to 70 percent of a growing population. In the boom years of 1970s, when the world price of oil soared, the government spent money like water, but, while some was well spent, most was mismanaged. Projects were started but not completed or, if completed, were not maintained. Money was misappropriated and

stolen. The nonoil economy was starved of the attention it needed.
A few became richer, Most became poorer.⁶²⁹

Oil is part of the problem in Nigeria. However it is evident that the problem is not oil itself, rather it is the way that oil is managed and the manner in which the oil revenue is used. After all other nations have oil and have achieved a lot of progress through the management of their oil resources. But it looks like Nigerians have allowed oil which is a blessing to their land to turn into a curse.⁶³⁰

A lot of lives have been lost because of fire caused by oil explosion. Whenever such explosion happens and people lose their lives the next course of actions will be violence in the area. People will take to the streets demonstrating, blaming the government and/or the oil companies. Where oil pipe lines pass through their area, villagers often go there to harvest the oil and sell. They believe that the oil belongs to them and that they deserve a fair share of the products from their area. But because of their inexperience someone might bring in fire and the entire area will explode into flames. Part of the problem is that some of the oil pipelines in Nigeria are not buried in the ground. Having the pipelines under the ground can help to minimize the disruption by the local communities. In the Niger Delta areas homes, farmlands and sources of water are affected by pollution from oil drilling. This makes fishing and farming difficult for the rural dwellers. When people are unable to earn a living from farming or fishing that is the more reason why they have to depend on the government and the oil companies for job.⁶³¹ When such jobs are not forthcoming they take to violence.

⁶²⁹ Peter Cunliffe-Jones, *My Nigeria: Five Decades of Independence* (USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 129.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

⁶³¹ Ibid. 130.

The other important point is that oil drilling does not need many hands therefore the oil sector does not create many jobs.

It takes just a few men and machines to run an oil rig or pumping station – hundreds, not thousands. The pipes suck oil up out of the ground, and the firms put money in the hands of the owners and the government. But unless you are either of those, this is of little help to you. With oil and gas, there are few jobs created for the skilled farmer or fisherman.⁶³²

Although the villagers may not be directly employed in the oil drilling because of its skilled nature, the revenue accruing from the oil can be used to develop the area and create other employment opportunities. The problem is that the oil money in Nigeria draws wrong people into power and corruption becomes the order of the day. With rampant corruption and misuse of the oil money, not much attention is being paid to education, health care, roads and bridges. The oil money circulates in the hands of few leaders and unless those who find themselves in the positions of leadership behave in a reasonable and responsible way things cannot improve.⁶³³

10.1.2. ADDRESSING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Ethnicity does not only contribute to religious violence in Nigeria, it also contributes to corruption and lack of patriotism. Ethnicity contributes to corruption because of what some Nigerian would call the concept of *Ima Mmadu* (knowing somebody who can help you get what you want no matter what it takes). This concept is related to nepotism. Often you hear people say jokingly that *Onye nwanne ya no na – eligwe anaghi eje na –oku mmuo*. (Someone who knows those in power or if someone from your area is in power, then you will be fine). When someone is in a leadership

⁶³² Ibid.

⁶³³ Ibid. 130-131.

position, people from his or her ethnic group expect him to put them first in terms of locating sites for projects or to put them first in any of the benefits from the government. Even when such ethnic group has already received many benefits from the government. This in a way alludes to the point that ethnic and cultural values promote corruption in the country. Victor Dike observed:

Historically, corruption in Nigeria.....could be related to the traditional culture..... Any government that refuses to favor their kinsmen.....is often rejected and accused of marginalization. There are clusters of reasons for corruption: the symbols of office, ceremonies of the office and material resources.⁶³⁴

This accounts for why some areas of the nation are highly developed while some other areas are lavishing in poverty. This can account for why elections into political offices are seen as do or die affair, to use Nigerian parlance. It is so because holding a political office is an easy way to wealth, influence and power in the country.

Speaking of the state of corruption or corrupt practices in Nigeria, Chinua Achebe one of the foremost Nigerian novelists and author disagreed with Nigerian's former President Shehu Shagari. Shagari was President from 1979-1984. Achebe writes:

Quite recently an astonishing statement credited to President Shagari was given some publicity in Nigeria and abroad. According to the media our President said words to the effect that there was corruption in Nigeria but that it had not yet reached alarming proportions. My frank and honest opinion is that anybody who can say that corruption in Nigeria has not yet become alarming is either a fool, a crook or else does not live in this country. Shagari is neither a fool nor a crook. So I must assume that he lives abroad. Which is not as strange or fanciful as some might think. Many Presidents, especially Third World Presidents, do not live in their country.⁶³⁵

⁶³⁴ Victor E. Dike, *Democracy and Political Life in Nigeria* (New York: iUniverse, Inc, 2006) 136.

⁶³⁵ Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, (Ibadan-Nigeria: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1983) 37.

What Achebe is trying to point out is that even when there is massive corruption in Nigeria, President Shagari may not have noticed it much because though he lived in the country he might be completely out of touch with the regular folks and with what is really happening in the country. When a president wants to step out of the presidential mansion in the nation's capital to visit a rural area where most Nigerians live, the leaders in those rural communities will begin to engage in white elephant projects, decorations, emergency road constructions and rehabilitations. These things are done just because the august visitor - the president, is about to visit the area. The bad side of the area is usually hidden from the president; a lot of things are camouflaged. The president is given a guided tour of the area so that in the end he might go back with the impression that at least things are not really bad. On this issue Achebe continued:

When a President of Nigeria sets out to see things for himself, what does he actually see? Highways temporarily cleared of lunatic drivers by even more lunatic presidential escorts; hitherto impassable tracks freshly graded and even watered to keep down the dust; buildings dripping fresh paint; well-fed obsequious welcoming parties; garlands of colorful toilet paper hung round the neck by women leaders; troupes of "cultural dancers" in the sun, and many other such scenes of contented citizenry. But history tells us of wise rulers at different times and places who achieved rare leadership by their blunt and simple refusal to be fooled by guided tours of their own country.⁶³⁶

Violence in the country helps to create the culture of corruption and poverty.

During conflicts, buildings, infrastructures that took several years to be built are demolished. Many churches, schools, hospitals, mosques have been destroyed in the name violence. Take for example if a church or mosque is destroyed the tendency is that the worshippers who make use of such facility will begin to tax themselves and raise

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

funds in order to rebuild the place. By this they are spending more, their savings gone and they are getting poorer. That is why such acts of destruction of property slows economic growth and brings retardation of the Nigerian nation. The nation has often been called the giant of Africa. It is a nation endowed with vast human and natural resources. But since her political independence the country has not seen much progress. Violence and demolition of property continues to slow down the progress of the nation.

Most Nigerians lack basic amenities. In terms of electricity, there are constant power failures, bad roads are all over the place. There have been cases where motorists sleep on the road on a journey that is not supposed to take more than five hours. I had personal and bitter experience in November of 2007 on a journey from the city of Lagos in the west to the city of Awka in the east. Our vehicle left Lagos around eight o'clock in morning. But we managed to arrive in Awka around half past seven in the evening. Under normal circumstances this distance should not take more than five hours. The road was so bad and this is a major highway connecting the south-west and the south-east. Not only that the road was bad, the presence of the so many police men and several check points on the road made matters worse. These police men do nothing except to force drivers to give them money. It was a nightmare and sad experience to see the level of corruption being practiced by those who were supposed to enforce the law, protect lives and property. That shows the level of abysmal lawlessness that Nigeria has plunged into. It is like what Nigerians will call "a no man's land" (a situation where nobody is concerned about any progress). The infrastructures that has already been built are left to deteriorate and rot away owing to lack of maintenance. Many of these property and infrastructure were destroyed during acts of violence. They are left that way because the

owners do have the resources to repair them. One can summarize the scenario by stating that some Nigerians do not love their country.

What is operational in some Nigerian cities is a situation where those who happen to find themselves in leadership positions are simply concerned about their pockets, their own families, and their ethnic group without much concern for the masses and the nation at large. They do whatever they wish because nobody is being held accountable for his or her actions while in office. Take for instance a law enforcement person might be unwilling to enforce the law because somebody from his town, tribe or clan happens to be involved. Often people engage in big criminal activities like armed robbery and murder because they believe that they can bribe their way out of any unpleasant consequences that might result from their actions. But if perpetrators of acts of violence are punished accordingly, then it can deter intending trouble makers from engaging in such acts.

1. Immunity clause in 1999 Nigerian constitution

Democratic rule has been off and on in Nigeria. After a protracted military rule the nation once again began a democratic administration in 1999. It was at the time that the 1999 Nigerian constitution was drafted. The constitution contains the immunity clause. Such clause exonerates major political office holders from being prosecuted while they are still in office. The 1999 constitution states:

(1) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary, in this constitution, but subject to section (2) of this section – (a) no civil or criminal proceedings shall be instituted or continued against a person to whom this section applies during his period of office. (b) A person to whom this section applies shall not be arrested or imprisoned during that period either on pursuance of the process of any court requiring or compelling the appearance of a person to whom this section applies, shall be applied for or issued. Provided that in ascertaining whether any period of limitation has expired for the purposes of any proceedings against a person to whom this section

applies, no account shall be taken of his period in office. (2) The provisions of subsection (1) of this section shall not apply to civil proceedings against a person to whom this section applies in his official capacity or to civil or criminal proceedings in which such a person is only a nominal party. (3) This applies to a person holding the office of President or Vice-President, Governor or Deputy-Governor. And the reference in this section to 'period of office' is a reference to the period during which the person holding such office is required to perform the functions of the office.⁶³⁷

Many Nigerians are troubled by the existence of such an immunity clause. There is the fear that such a clause hinders the checking of corrupt practices in the country especially among political leaders. Victor Dike writes:

The Immunity Clause in the 1999 Constitution..... has made Nigeria a haven for corruption, because it prevents the prosecution of the protected corrupt politicians. In addition, the leaders lack political will to tackle the epidemic. To protect the nation from being mortally wounded, the National Assembly should hasten to expunge the Immunity Clause from the 1999 Constitution and prosecute the politicians that are corrupt. Selective prosecution will not transform Nigeria into a corruption-free society.⁶³⁸

Since the inception of the 1999 Constitution the immunity clause has been attracting lots of attention. The reason being that political leaders are believed to be hiding under the clause in order to defraud the nation. Many Nigerians are frustrated by the magnitude of the corrupt practices engaged into by those protected by the immunity clause. There are commissions set up by the Nigeria Federal Government to fight corruption but the problem is that important office holders are immune from being investigated. The fact that the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) cannot prosecute State Governors some of whom are believed to be stealing public funds is what many Nigerians cannot

⁶³⁷ "The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 308" In Victor E. Dike, *Democracy and Political Life in Nigeria*, 141.

⁶³⁸ Victor E. Dike, *Democracy and Political Life in Nigeria*, 150.

understand. There is the belief that the provision has been grossly abused and has outlived its usefulness. This is because some of those protected by it have taken it as a license to loot the coffers of the nation.⁶³⁹ Articulating the reason for the Immunity Clause in the Constitution, Victor Dike writes:

The Constitutional Immunity is conceived as a provision of the law to insulate certain classes of elected officials from undue distraction while performing his official duties. It is logical that some public officers should be protected from incessant interruption, interference and harassment.⁶⁴⁰

However many Nigerians believe that this immunity clause has made matters worse. If a state governor for example commits a criminal offence he or she will have to be first of all impeached by the legislators before he or she can stand trial. But what happens is that most often the governor and the state legislators come from the same political party and they protect one another. It becomes then difficult to impeach any governor. Money will exchange hands and the matter will fizzle away. If at all any impeachment is done, it takes a long process.

At any rate there have been incidents where seating governors were prosecuted for their corrupt practices. One is what happened with the Governor of Bayelsa State in the south-eastern part of Nigeria. The Governor's name is Diepreye Alamieyeseigha. This incident happened between September of 2005 and July of 2006. Many Nigerian Newspapers featured the story at that time. This Governor was caught in London by the London Police for alleged money laundering. The Governor jumped bail and fled from Britain by dressing up as a woman.⁶⁴¹ He was still a seating Governor in his state. But the

⁶³⁹ Ibid. 140.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid. 142.

members of the Bayelsa State House of Assembly unanimously impeached him. His immunity was removed and he was arrested and handed over to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). He was charged for embezzling public funds, corruptly enriching himself, his family and relatives.⁶⁴²

Again This Day Newspaper in Nigeria carried the story that the Governor of Plateau State, by name Joshua Dariye was on September 2 2004 arrested in London. Over 90,000 pounds was said to have been recovered from him. He was said to have admitted that he owned other accounts. Eventually it was reported that about 300,000 pounds was confiscated from him. Later an inquiry conducted in Nigeria indicated that this governor has extensive real estate buildings at mega cities like Jos and in the capital city of Nigeria, Abuja. The governor was eventually held responsible for his actions.⁶⁴³ These corrupt practices show the level of corruption by prominent leaders in the country and addressing such will be a step in the right direction.

10.1.3. ADDRESSING DISCRIMINATION IN NIGERIA

1. Ethnic discrimination

Another part of the problems that bring about violence and conflict in Nigeria is discrimination. The type of discrimination that concerns us is the ethnic or tribal discrimination. The word tribe here is the same as ethnic. In Nigeria an ethnic group is also referred to as a tribal group. Elechi Amadi argued that ethnic discriminations have been with Nigerian for a long time. Amadi writes:

Without a doubt, this has been the greatest threat to Nigerian unity. In pre-colonial Nigeria the various tribes considered themselves to

⁶⁴² Ibid.

⁶⁴³ This Day Newspaper (February 28, 2005) 'Dariye's Unending Travails' In Victor Dike *Democracy and Political Life in Nigeria*, 142.

be separate and distinct nations and dealt with other tribes from that standpoint. It was quite natural to treat members of other tribes with suspicion and to attribute imaginary characteristics to them. They could be captured and sold off as slaves or killed with scarcely any compunction. War with other tribes was always total.⁶⁴⁴

Amadi further opined that it was the amalgamation of the country in 1914 by the British colonial government that joined the protectorates together as one country. But prior to that, the people saw themselves as different entities. Amadi states:

Constituting all the various tribes into the Nigerian nation was a mere political act, which did not immediately affect tribal loyalties and attitudes. (Even now government contracts, scholarships, jobs, loans and the like are sometimes awarded on a tribal basis.) Adjustment to the new realities has been a long and sometimes very painful process. Nigerians, recognizing this threat to their corporate existence, preached against it tirelessly. Glaring instances of tribalism were decried passionately, even by politicians who practiced them.⁶⁴⁵

The problem in Nigeria is a situation where someone often finds it difficult to attend college in another state in the country. Finding a job becomes even more difficult. A lot of people are business men and women. They move from their own ethnic group and travel to another ethnic group to establish their business. But they are usually afraid because those businesses can easily be vandalized based on ethnic bias. It is difficult for one to live in another ethnic group because of the fear of being attacked. It is like people being foreigners in their own nation. Chinua Achebe observed:

Everyone agrees that there are manifestations of tribal culture which we cannot condemn, for example, peculiar habits of dress, food, language, music etc. In fact many of these manifestations are positive and desirable and confer richness on our national culture. But to prevent a citizen from living or working anywhere in his country, or from participating in the social, political, economic life

⁶⁴⁴ Elechi Amadi, *Ethics in Nigerian Culture* (Ibadan-Nigeria: Heinemann Educational Books, 2005) 66.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

of the community in which he chooses to live is another matter altogether.⁶⁴⁶

Elechi Amadi observes that Nigerians through their constitution have tried to make sure that no one wins a presidential election only by ethnic influence. By that he means that the constitution was worded in such a way that for a presidential candidate to win, such a candidate must win the highest number of votes cast in many ethnic groups. Again such a candidate will have to show a commanding lead in the states by at least winning one-quarter of the votes cast in two-thirds of the states in the nation.⁶⁴⁷ In other words such a presidential candidate will have to prove that he can win not only in his own ethnic group but also in other ethnic groups and regions. This is done in the effort to check the ethnic differences at least to a certain degree. That will help to bridge the gap amongst the people. Such a policy is a step in the right direction toward helping Nigerians to see themselves as citizens from one nation.

2. Religious discrimination

Religious discrimination thrives in Nigeria. Elechi Amadi believes that the Missionaries, whether Christians or Muslims who came for mission work in Nigeria were partly responsible for introducing religious discrimination in the country. He writes:

Religious discrimination was practically unknown among the tribes until foreign religions were introduced. Most tribes respected one another's gods and made no attempt whatsoever at conversion. On the contrary, the mysteries surrounding any particular religion were jealously guarded against intruders.... Both Muslims and Christians made it their business to convert people of other religions. Despite the talk about saving souls, conversion implies a certain amount of intolerance. It means that the converter cannot put up with a neighbor who holds to another creed and so does his best to bring him to accept his faith. In the southern part of Nigeria

⁶⁴⁶ Chinua Achebe, *The trouble with Nigeria*, 7

⁶⁴⁷ Elechi Amadi, *Ethics in Nigerian Culture*, 67.

the early Christians destroyed the shrines of indigenous gods by sheer force and sometimes blackmailed the worshippers of other gods into accepting baptism. The situation was worsened by the fact that the early Christians confused religion with culture, and in their crusade against what they called 'heathenism' they destroyed works of art and banned cultural dances and time-honored rituals which provided peep-holes into the remote past.⁶⁴⁸

Amadi's claim that discrimination and rivalry were introduced in Nigeria by those who introduced foreign religion may not be totally correct. Nigerians were already divided even before the arrival of both the Christian and Muslim missionaries. Nigeria is a country with many languages, different cultural and religious practices. It is a nation of many ethnic groups and communities. And these ethnic groups have been fighting inter-tribal wars even before the coming of the Missionaries. The country is more divided from the perspective of ethnicity and culture than from religious affiliation. When Nigerians say that they are fighting each other as a result of religion, most of the time they are actually fighting on ethnic grounds and differences. This is because if you closely observe the victims of such conflicts it is either Hausas attacking the Igbo people or vice versa. It can also be the Yorubas attacking the Hausas or the other way round. Rivalry, discriminations and/or conflicts in Nigeria are rampant based on ethnic differences.

However the zeal for one religious group or another to convert the traditional worshippers during the onset of the Missionary activities in Nigeria did bring its own brand of conflict and discrimination. There seemed to be a scramble and partition in trying to win the traditional worshippers by the Missionaries. This brought about rancor and misunderstanding among the Missionaries and the traditional worshippers. These

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid. 67-68.

days the zeal for trying to convert people seems to have been much reduced. Elechi

Amadi writes:

Happily, these days the zeal of conversion has cooled somewhat. There are still Jehovah's Witness who go from door to door compelling otherwise indifferent citizens to listen to their sermons; there are revival groups who pitch their tents in public parks and preach all night over powerful loudspeakers; and there are Muslims who promise would-be converts free trips to Mecca.⁶⁴⁹

Religious discrimination will be resolved through religious dialogue and discussion. The more religious groups in the country come together at a discussion table, the more they can understand one another. This will lead to the spirit of collaboration and team work.

10.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.2.1. ANNUAL RELIGIOUS CONFERENCE

By this I mean a religious conference that embraces all religions in the country. In such a conference much emphasis should be focused on Christian/Muslim dialogue. Judging from my research, the religious violence in Nigeria emanates mainly from Christian and Muslim relationships. Traditional worshippers and those without religious affiliation have not constituted much problems. Issues to be discussed in such a conference will include among other things, Muslim accusations against Christians as well as Christian accusations against Muslims in Nigeria. Below are some of such accusations.

1. MUSLIM ACCUSATIONS AGAINST CHRISTIANS.

❖ Accusation against Christian colonial masters

Some Nigerian Muslims complain that colonialism favored Christianity. They argue that Nigeria inherited a government establishment from the colonialist that was more advantageous to the Christian religion.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid. 68.

❖ Alleged destruction of Hajj

Christians have been accused of hatching the plot to do away with hajj. This plot it was believed began as far back as the time of the Colonialist, in the pre-independence era.

The hajj, which is the Muslim annual pilgrimage to Mecca, is a major event in the Islamic religion. The pilgrimage serves among other things as a unifying factor in Islam.

❖ Accusation about anti-Muslim establishments

Some Nigerian Muslims accuse the Nigerian media of being biased and discriminatory against the Muslims. Some believe that Muslims are being discriminated in the televisions, radio stations and the print media.

❖ Muslim Friday versus Christian Sunday

There is also this accusation that Christians receive special treatment by having a work free day for Sunday (Christian day of worship) while the Muslims do not enjoy such privilege on Fridays which is their day of worship/prayers. The argument by some Muslims is that if Christians should enjoy a day of rest on Sundays then Muslims ought to be accorded the same privilege on Fridays. The issue of work-free days keeps coming up in the Muslim/Christian relationship in Nigeria. The observance of Sunday as a day of rest in Nigeria began in the colonial days. This is the tradition in most nations in the world.

2. CHRISTIAN ACCUSATIONS AGAINST MUSLIMS

❖ Accusation of domination

Many Nigerian Christians are of the opinion that Nigerian Muslims especially the Fundamentalist brand have the tendency to dominate over people from other religious backgrounds. Some Christians believe that Muslims feel uncomfortable when they seem

not to have achieved such desire. They have the desire to dominate over not only Nigerians but the entire world. Some Nigerian Christians believe that Nigerian Muslims are intolerant of other religions. But there is also a debate that such acts of intolerance are perpetrated by fundamentalists.

❖ Religion and Politics

Many Nigerian Christians believe that Nigerian Muslims mix religion and politics more than Christians would do. They think that in Islam, religion and their political structure are intertwined and hard to separate. Simply put their religion is the same as their politics.

❖ Christian accusation on government leaders

Some Christians in Nigeria accuse the federal government and many state government of showing favoritism to Muslim religion. They argue that government should show neutrality in matters of religion given its sensitive and volatile nature but that this has not been the case in Nigeria. Some Christians believe that such favoritism or special treatment manifest itself in government appointments, promotions, awarding of contracts, issuance of licenses, allocation of lands and other matters.

❖ Improper response to crisis by the leaders

Christians have also accused the government of not responding properly in times of crises. Because most of Nigerian leaders have been Muslims some Christians allege that they often give preferential treatment to Islam. Some Christians accuse the leaders that they treat Nigerians as if the country is solely an Islamic nation.

- ❖ In a dialogue between Christians and Muslims like the Annual National Religious Conference (ANRC), these sorts of allegations and accusations should be put on the table for discussion.



Figure 15. National Church of Nigeria Abuja (Christians). Source: “Religion in Nigeria” *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, Accessed June 8, 2013. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Nigeria.



Figure 16. National Mosque Abuja (Muslims). Source: “Religion in Nigeria” *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, Accessed June 8, 2013. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Nigeria.



Figure 17. Temple of Osun in Osogbo Nigeria (Traditional Worshippers). Source: “Religion in Nigeria” *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, Accessed June 8, 2013. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Nigeria.

10.2.2. NATIONAL SOVEREIGN CONFERENCE

I would advocate for a National Sovereign Conference to take place in Nigeria. It is a conference that will bring representatives from various ethnic/interest groups together. It will serve as a forum for Nigerians to come together and iron out their issues, their differences and their similarities. Nigerians might decide to retain the status of one indivisible nation or they might decide to divide their nation. A good example can be what took place in Sudan in 2011. On July 9, 2011 southern Sudan got its independence from the rest of the country and became a sovereign nation.⁶⁵⁰ However Nigerians should understand that there are advantages in being a large and unified nation. But the benefits of such large population might be defeated if incessant violence continues to mar the

⁶⁵⁰Yousif Michael and Thomas Kenneth, “President Kiir: The New Year brings new hope of building a peaceful nation.” Accessed November 30, 2012. <http://www.goss.org/>.

progress of the nation and innocent lives continue to be lost on account of ethnic and sectarian violence.

1. Issues to be discussed in the national sovereign conference

- ❖ Dealing with the Incessant Religious Violence/Crises.
- ❖ Addressing the Ethnic rivalry and violence in the country.
- ❖ The challenge of Poverty eradication.
- ❖ The challenge of fighting of corruption in the country.
- ❖ The issue of creating a good structure for Nigerian unity.

2. Members for the sovereign conference: Members for the conference shall include but not limited to the following:

- ❖ Serving and past presidents of Nigeria.
- ❖ Serving and past member of the national house of assembly, state governors, key federal ministers.
- ❖ Serving and former Nigerian supreme court Justices and justices of other superior courts in Nigeria, eminent Nigerian Lawyers.
- ❖ Serving top military officers as well as retired top military officers.
- ❖ Representatives from various professional and religious groups in Nigeria - men, women and youth groups, political parties, manufacturers association of Nigeria, Nigerian Bar Association.
- ❖ Formidable group of eminent Nigerians from all walks of life as well as from all parts of the country shall be selected. All ethnic groups will be represented. The ethnic groups should be represented through their leading associations or groups such as Arewa Consultative Forum (Hausa ethnic group), Afenifere and the

Yoruba Council of Elders (Yoruba ethnic group), Ohaneze Ndigbo (Igbo ethnic group), Ijaw National Congress and the Middle Belt Forum (Minority ethnic groups).⁶⁵¹

10.2.3. ROTATIONAL PRESIDENCY

The practice of rotational presidency started to be in place in Nigeria since 1999. Such practice should be sustained and encouraged. With it all ethnic groups will have their turns in the leadership of the country. Ethnic groups will no longer feel marginalized. This practice will make it possible that no one ethnic group should have the monopoly of leadership in Nigeria.

10.2.4. EMPHASIS ON ONE NIGERIA

There should be more emphasis on one Nigeria. Nigerians should feel at home in any part of the nation where they choose to reside. Each ethnic group should be allowed to practice their culture and tradition provided such culture and tradition did not hamper the common good. The emphasis should be on unity in diversity. In his book entitled “The language of God” Francis Collins argued that science and faith can co-exist. According to him, a scientist can still be a person of faith.⁶⁵² Borrowing such analogy, Nigerians though, a tribal and ethnic people, can still practice their religion in a peaceful and non-violent way. Religion can function peacefully in an ethnic and diverse society.

10.2.5. EMPHASIS ON THE SPIRIT OF LIVE AND LET LIVE

The spirit of live and let live should continue to be emphasized in Nigeria. The live and let live ideology and philosophy in African culture should be harnessed. It is a philosophy that calls for mutual and peaceful co-existence in communities. Nigerians practice this

⁶⁵¹ J.O. Irukwa, *Nigeria: The Last Chance* (Ibadan-Nigeria: Spectrum Books Limited, 2005) 233.

⁶⁵² Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God* (New York: Free Press, 2006) 3.

better in an intra –ethnic and intra-religious setting. But it is a different story when it comes to inter-ethnic and inter-religious relationship. In Igbo ethnic community this philosophy is articulated in various expressions. The Igbo people say *Onye aghana nwa nne ya* (Do not ignore your brother or sister), *biri kam biri* (live your life and allow me to live me or simply live and let live), *mmadu ka eji aka* (Someone who has good people around him has good asset). Uche Ugwueze referred to this philosophy as let-no-one-leave-the-other-behind philosophy.⁶⁵³

10.2.6. ENCOURAGING THE SPIRIT OF PATRIOTISM

Nigerians should beware because the enemies of the nation might be hiding under the umbrella of religion and/or ethnic violence to continue to wreak havoc on the nation. Religious people generally believe or at least have the feeling that their religious practice is the right approach to religion. Each religious tradition should strive to make positive contributions to the world. Humanity is in constant search for meaning and purpose of existence. Religious violence is not the solution. Ethnic violence is not the solution.

There should be continuous encouragement and emphasis on the spirit of patriotism in Nigeria. Those causing religious/ethnic violence should be known for whom they are. They are enemies of peace and progress. Christians and Muslims in Nigeria should know that they have no other native land. They should not allow extremists to continue to create chaos in their country. Anyone who claims to be a Christian or Muslim but engages in acts of violence, destruction of human lives and property, and still thinks that he or she is a true believer in Christianity or Islam should think again. This is because such actions are contrary to the teachings of the religion he or she claims to

⁶⁵³ Uche Lynn-Teresa Ugwueze, *African Culture, Identity and Aesthetics: The Igbo Example* (Bloomington-Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2011) 11.

profess. It can be said that human nature abhors violence, destruction of lives and property and those who commit such acts should be condemned by all people of good will.



Figure 18. Nigerian Coat of arms: Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress. Source: "Nigeria: a Nation at 51." *Nigerians Talk*, October 2, 2011. <http://nigerianstalk.org/2011/10/02/nigeria-a-nation-at-51/>.

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