A Postcolonial Critique of Religion and Ethnicity in Southern Kaduna with Specific Reference to an Online Forum

By

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Declaration

I, Sokfa Francis John, declare that this thesis is my own original work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been acknowledged. No parts of this work have been submitted to another institution for degree or examination purposes. Unless stated otherwise, this work is entirely mine.

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Sokfa Francis John

Candidate

As the supervisor of the candidate, I hereby approve this dissertation for submission.

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Dr. Federico Settler

Supervisor

Dedication

To my family: John and Elisabeth, Habila, Agnes, Esther, Amako, Achi, Boman, Zychat and Akut.

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Abstract

Against the background of ethnic and religious relations and conflicts in Kaduna, northern Nigeria, this study examined the emerging social and cultural spaces on which religious and ethnic identities are contested, such as the internet; and the religious forms and ideological practices that are (re)produced and invoked on such spaces to create imaginations of identity and for othering. I employ postcolonial theory and research in digital religion to specifically examine a Southern Kaduna Online Forum and the prevailing representation on the forum. I analyze a two-year worth of Online Forum's content (2013-2014), which I complemented with a self-administered online survey. The online survey results indicate that majority of respondents were relatively young (ages 20-40), male and Christians belonging to the several ethnicities of Southern Kaduna. Most respondents have been members of the Online Forum for over 2 years, and identified more universal goals as their motivations for joining, such as, to pursue Southern Kaduna interest, support state creation and to promote peace, although their visions of peace differ. In addition, respondents viewed strategies such as interfaith dialogue and prayer as less likely to bring about peace in Kaduna; while political solutions such as state creation and equal political representation were viewed as more likely to bring about peace. In my analysis of the Forum's 2-year content, I identified key narratives through which Southern Kaduna Christian Self, Hausa-Fulani Muslim Other, and Religion are constructed and depicted by Online Forum users. Generally, Southern Kaduna Christians are imagined as marginalized, loyal, non-violent, and morally superior, while Hausa-Fulani Muslims are imagined as suspicious, inferior, aggressive and rigidly religious. Online Forum members further critically engage in conflicting representation of religion both as a problem to society which causes retrogression, and as an intrinsic part of society which cannot be particularly separated from politics. Among other things, I argue that Online representation emerges out of offline conflicts, and reflect varying degrees and intensity of offline conflicts. I further argue that Online Forum members are knowingly or unknowingly engaged in religious work through their participation in the online forum; producing rhetoric and epistemology through their active participation, and creating a digital archive of religion in Africa.

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General Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In his book, *Media and Society in the Digital Age*, Kevin Kawamoto describes digital media in the 21st Century as involving "a complex web of technologies, practices, policies, controversies, relationships, and economic considerations" (2003:2). He notes further that all aspects of society are affected by the continuously emerging and changing nature of digital media, including news and information, government, politics, religion and civil society (Kawamoto, 2003). At the heart of this dynamic nature of digital media and its effect on society is the several relationships that are formed, modified and unformed on the online digital environment – whether exclusively on the digital environment, as complementary or as a continuation of offline relationships and practices. This makes the digital media environment an important tool and site for contestations of different kinds including the several identity and representation politics that are played out on many localities around the world, and frequently expressed in the conflictual relationships between Christians and Muslims.

The Islam and Christian-Muslim dialogue scholar, Mahmoud Ayoub, rightly observes that the relationship between Christians and Muslims globally has been one of "mistrust, misgivings, and misunderstanding" (2007:43). Several other scholars, like Ayoub, are concerned largely with relations between the "Christian" West and the "Muslim" Arab world – a relationship that has enjoyed even more scrutiny since Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism*, as well as growing "Islamofascism", wars and conflicts since the events of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. Alongside this broader context are several more local contexts, which, on the one hand, reflect and feed into the broader global context and patterns of Christian-Muslim relations; and on the other hand, have been shaped by specific local encounters, histories, forces and life situations, some of which long predate the 9/11 attacks. For example, the social tensions in Nigeria over the past three decades in which religious and ethnic identities are prominent.

Against the background of conflictual ethnic and religious relations in Kaduna, northern Nigeria, this research examines the emerging social and cultural spaces in which religious and ethnic identities are contested, such as the internet; and the religious forms and ideological practices that are (re)produced and invoked in such spaces to create imaginations of identity and othering. The work employs postcolonial theory to examine the narratives and rhetorical practices of an online forum and to investigate how representations of the Self and Other are produced online by users of the forum and their significance for offline ethnic and religious relations. This chapter offers a general introduction to the research and discusses the theoretical and methodological framework as well as other important introductory issues.

1.2 Background to the Study

In the past three to four decades northern Nigeria has experienced several violent social conflicts involving the contestations and invocation of religious and ethnic identities. Kaduna state emerged as a site for some of the most intense of such conflicts. While conflicts existed prior to colonialism, they have escalated and taken different forms during the colonial and postcolonial state-making processes in Nigeria. Tense inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations are often attributed to historical political configurations as well as the conflation of political, cultural and religious identities (Fwatshak, 2007; Oguntola-Laguda, 2008; Adebayo, 2010). In their study of these conflicts and the general mood of interfaith and interethnic relations in Nigeria, scholars tend to construct the role of religion, religious agitations and ethic/religious identities as "politicized" tools in the pursuit of other interests (Ayantayo, 2009:103). Some also refer to emerging forms of religious extremism and nationwide mutual suspicion between Christians and Muslims, with each group claiming to be marginalized and feeling that their religion is under threat due to the religious and political activities of the other (Best, 2011; Salawu, 2010; Jega 2000). This is worsened by the mixture of these factors with the looming, persistent and never fully addressed fears and feelings of marginalization and socio-political exclusion by the hundreds of minorities in the country (Suberu, 1996).

The frequency and intensity of these conflicts in Kaduna state in recent years has earned the state a reputation as one of Nigeria's most volatile states and contributed to the problematizing of religion, ethnicity and their contestations as important political, religious and academic concerns,

producing a wide range of efforts to understand their impact on life in the country. These conflicts often involve several minority ethnic groups with a largely shared Christian identity, and the Hausa-Fulani, which is one of Nigeria's three largest ethnic and politically dominant groups. The Nigerian historian, Toure Kazah-Toure (1999:134) argues that, in fact, the "Christian versus Muslim dichotomy" in Nigeria's conflicts was introduced by the 1987 conflicts in Kaduna state. There have been several other conflicts since 1987 that have significantly shaped inter-group relations along religious and ethnic lines in Kaduna, with telling implications for Christian-Muslim relations across the country. Some of the most significant ones include the Zango-Kataf riots of 1992, the Sharia conflicts of 2000, the Miss World Pageant conflict of 2003, and the Post-election violence of 2011.

1.2.1 Emergence of Online "emancipation" Groups

The post-election violence of 2011 saw a huge loss of lives and property across religious and ethnic identification in Kaduna and beyond. However, this was soon followed by several episodes of attacks and mass killings of villagers in the southern parts of Kaduna state, inhabited mostly by Christian minorities. While these attacks where initially reported as perpetrated by "unknown gunmen"[1], they were later identified and subsequently reported[2] to be carried out by Fulani herdsmen (Human Rights Watch, 2013). This happened over the years alongside the rise of the activities of the extremist group, Boko Haram in Kaduna and Abuja, especially the bombing of public places and churches.[3]

The events that followed the post-2011 conflicts saw a rapid rise of activism-oriented civil society groups in Kaduna claiming to fight for the several minorities of Kaduna, commonly referred to as the "Southern Kaduna" people due to the geographical locations of their places of origin and their dominant presence in the southern part of Kaduna state. The general mood was that minorities were being targeted and the attacks on rural areas were interpreted as systematically planned and executed pogrom, which are linked to several historical and contemporary grievances of predominantly Christian ethnic minorities in a predominantly

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[1] Here are some links to media reports on some of such incidences:
http://allafrica.com/view/group/main/main/id/00021005.html; http://saharareporters.com/2013/05/12/gunmen-attack-southern-kaduna-village;
[2] .g. http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/10/17/herdsmen-attack-military-outpost-kill-20-in-kaduna/;
https://www.naij.com/61887.html
[3] http://edition.cnn.com/2011/12/25/world/africa/nigeria-church-bombing/

Muslim majority Hausa-Fulani northern Nigeria. Some Christians, however, have exploited social media and other online platforms to further mobilize and engage their agenda often phrased in emancipatory terms. Some of these groups exist entirely online, or begin online and mobilize for offline practice, while some establish online forums to circumvent offline restrictions and policing, and to explore relations across boundaries, including diaspora relations. A quick count of such groups revealed over 30 of them on Facebook alone, some of which have over 10, 000 online users. Examples include: Southern Kaduna Youth Liberation Movement, Southern Kaduna Youth and Students Forum, Southern Kaduna Indigenes Progressive Forum, Netzit People's Movement and Gurara Forum. A report by Judith B. Asuni and Jacqueline Farris (2011) of the Media Tracking Center in Nigeria shows that Nigeria witnessed a dramatic upsurge in social and new media use during the 2011 elections and after, and that these media contributed to both the escalation of violence after the election and access to help for [potential] victims. The populating, around this time, of social media by Southern Kaduna groups may have been part of this general sudden rise in social media use. My study examined one of these online Forums on which members invoke religion and ethnicity in their pursuit of emancipation. My focus was on how members of this group engage in the (re)production of representations of the Self and Other, and the rhetorical practices they employed.

The online group I investigated is a closed Facebook group belonging to a Kaduna-based Non-Governmental Organization that describes itself as a socio-political pressure group. Its profile document and online description shows that it was founded in 2011 by a group of Southern Kaduna professionals with the intention to unite the diverse ethnic groups in Kaduna in pursuit of a common agenda. This agenda is framed as the "emancipation" of the Southern Kaduna people from their oppressive socio-political situation and lack of self-worth, and to enlighten and empower them to more easily deal with the challenges of their daily lives. The forum's online membership is one of the largest among groups with a similar agenda, comprising over 11,000 online members (residing in Nigeria or in the Diaspora) from across the over 50 Southern Kaduna ethnic groups. The group has recently enjoyed increased visibility in Kaduna and Nigeria through its press releases and press conference, and has presented itself as a non-religious group. The membership criteria include being indigenous to Southern Kaduna by birth or through one or both of one's parents. In order to maintain the anonymity of the group and its

membership, the online forum investigated will be referred to in this thesis simply as Online Forum, or Forum.

1.3 Research Problem and Objectives

In their pursuit of Southern Kaduna interests and emancipation on the online platform, the Forum members invoke religion and ethnicity to construct ideas about themselves and the Hausa-Fulani 'Other' in light of historical and contemporary events in postcolonial Nigeria. Most of the conversations in the period reviewed (2013-2014) revolve around issues related to conflicts, violence, attacks on villages, politics and elections. Most of the literature on ethnic and religious relations in Nigeria make use of historical and political theory, and sometimes sociological approaches, that focus on understanding the causes of conflicts as well as making suggestions on the ways to address these conflicts. There is very limited work on the role of media in such relations and how the rhetorical construction and representation of identity inform such relations. Furthermore, very little exists that critically investigate the changing dynamics and innovative social spaces on which the intertwining causal factors of conflicts are articulated and contested. Yet, the growing use and relevance of social media for identity politics and pursuit of sectarian agendas increasingly shows this to be a relevant problem, particularly since studies are consistently showing an overlap between social media presence and everyday life (Slater, 2002; Hongladarom, 2011)

1.3.1 Research Questions
The key question for this research project is:

> In what ways are the Self and Other imagined and represented on the Online Forum in light of ethnic and religious tensions in Kaduna?

Sub-questions

- What are the contemporary contestations around religion and ethnicity in Kaduna, Nigeria?
- How has the Online Forum under investigation emerged as a site for such contestations?
- In what ways are religion and ethnicity articulated and contested on the Online Forum?
- How are representations [re]produced on the online platform?

1.3.2. Research Aim and Objectives

The primary aim of this study is to understand the nature and mechanisms of identity and representation in new media spaces against the background of tense inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations, through the examination of the narratives and rhetorical practices of a Nigerian online group. My research objectives include:

- To investigate the contemporary contestations of religion and ethnicity in Kaduna state
- To examine the emergence of the online Forum as a site of ethno-religious tension
- To explore the ways in which religion and ethnicity are contested and articulated on the Online Forum.
- To determine how online representations of the Self and Other are produced.

1.4 Theoretical and Methodological Framework

This study is approached as a postcolonial critique, whereby postcolonial theory is employed as both a way of reading, and a theoretical lens for examining two years of content from the Online Forum, as well as data collected through an online survey administered to Forum members. I found postcolonial theory to be appealing as an overarching theoretical framework and critical approach to my study because its core concerns helped me interrogate identity, colonial and postcolonial African contexts and the experiences of Southern Kaduna. It also assisted in analyzing their cultural and religious practices, and the long history of ethnicity- and religion-implicated conflicts that form the background of my study and appear to inform the emerging online practices that I studied. Although it is a highly criticized theory, postcolonial theory offers one of the most nuanced ways of investigating questions concerning identity, difference and the politics of representation, especially among previously colonized subjectivities. Thus, I engage the theory not as a fixed set of assumptions or practices but as a process, a problem that itself, like identity, is shifting, changing and growing as it is brought to bear on several postcolonial issues.

Postcolonial theory encompasses a broad range of approaches, interests, epistemological and critical practices that make it impossible to provide a singular definition. However, some of the common elements in this diversity allow a certain delineation of the field. Postcolonial theory involves the critical response to the historical colonization of different peoples, and the

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continuous effect of these cultural encounters on the colonized and the empire, as well as contemporary forms of colonialisms. As Graham Huggan argues, postcolonial theory is a "performative mode of critical revisionism, consistently directed at the colonial past and assessing its legacies for the present, but also intermittently focusing on those colonialisms that have surfaced more recently in the context of an increasingly globalized but incompletely decolonized world" (2013: 10).

Thus, at the center of postcolonial theory is the historical experience of colonialism. Jenni Ramone thinks of both postcolonial literature and theory as a "reaction" to colonial encounters; and that critiquing the representations and assumptions that fueled colonialism is a core objective of the theory (2011:1). Gautam Thakur (2016) explains that the common elements visible among postcolonial theorists are a suspicion of ontological questions, as well as a distrust of grand narratives and universalization. It is a "political and philosophical countermanding of the need for a transcendental signifier universally establishing meaning across societies, cultures and history" (Thakur, 2016:18). It is precisely this attention to nuance and complexity that makes postcolonial theory useful in my study.

At the heart of ethnic and religious relations in Nigeria is the experience of colonialism in its different expressions. Particular to northern Nigeria is the experience of indirect rule, and for northern minorities, what is referred to as colonialism within colonialism, or colonialism by proxy (Ochonu, 2013). This involves the annexing of largely non-Muslim northern minorities into northern Muslim political structures – the Sokoto Caliphate and its various emirates, and the complex relationships of dominance and resistance that emerged, which minorities still employ to interpret their current realities (Kazzah-Toure, 1999). Mahmood Mamdani (1996) and Peter Ekeh (1975) interrogate the indirect rule system and its enduring effects on postcolonial state and civic relations – religious, ethnic or racial. They maintain that colonialism created two-tiered states in Africa, which Eke (1975) termed the Two Publics in the Nigerian context, and ethnicity and religion were utilized to organize colonial state and to fragment resistance.

Postcolonial theory offers a way to critically engage this phenomenon and its continuing relevance. As Ramone observes, postcolonial thinking questions the understanding of history that represents places or events from a single perspective and fixes them within specific dates. It encourages multiple perspectives and understands history as having an ongoing impact that

needs to be interrogated (Ramone, 2011:4). In doing so, postcolonial theory helps me move beyond essentialized ideas about identity and generalized narratives about inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations, towards questioning what appears to be known *with certainty*, and to better draw on the specific context and particularities of Kaduna and Nigeria, while still critically engaging grand narratives about Christian-Muslim relations and social conflicts. Thus, the theory serves as an outlook, a specific critical gaze on 'reality'; a methodology for engaging historical and contemporary knowledge forms and issues, as well as a political practice that privileges previously silenced voices and alternative knowledge.

Identity is a central problem within postcolonial theory. And key figures in the postcolonial tradition – Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak – all wrestled significantly with this question, theorising identities as largely discursively constructed. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) raises important questions about the mechanisms of such constructions over time, as well as the relationship between knowledge and power in the process of defining and dominating groups. In Said's work othering and representation appears to be a straightforward binary of an "us" vs "them" relationship. Thus, he seems to draw a clear line between the Orient and the Occident while he is actually concerned with the discursive production of the Arab and Muslim Other as oversexed, primitive, cunning and barbaric, through media and knowledge regimes that imagine the West in opposition to the imagined Other. Bhabha (1991), however, theorizes the Other in a way that avoids any binary conception of identities. He does not entirely free the Self from the Other. In his engagement with marginal identities and the idea of hybridity he creates a space where neither the Self nor the Other is entirely exclusive. In other words, identities do not have clear exclusive borders. Spivak (1988) focuses on the subaltern subject, particularly the subaltern woman subject, and questions the role of intellectuals in the representation of that subject. She argues that there is no satisfactory position from which the subaltern, who is forever voiceless, can be represented. She further holds that even discourses that are politically very radical consolidate the West's position in discourse (Spivak, 1988).

These approaches inform most postcolonial writing and activism and and the various ways other scholars have further developed them, offer a suitable optic for investigating identity problematics in Africa, and specifically in Kaduna, irrespective of the space in which such identities are negotiated. They make visible the workings of representation and the discursive

creation of the Self and Other in daily lives, and in the language and practices of the Online Forum I investigated. Abdullahi An-Na'im (1999) and Mahmood Mamdani (1996) both emphasize the relevance of such investigations in their exploration of the relationship between indigenous identities in the polity and postcolonial state-making. They highlight the unresolved as well as re-emerging tensions in this context. An-Na'im, in "Competing Claims to Religious Freedom and Communal Self-determination" (1999), wrestles with the question of indigenous legal systems such as African customary laws and Muslim personal law, and the meanings and tensions they hold for postcolonial state-making. An-Na'im argues that mediating issues of self-determination and claims to religious freedom in this context must be understood against colonialism and the global forces that determine the nature of, and changes in, postcolonial African states. This is what postcolonial theory equips me to do as the offline or online struggles of minorities in northern Nigeria appear to be for self-determination against state-making and legislative processes that (allegedly) exclude and oppress them.

1.4.1 Theoretical Imperfections

Despite the usefulness of postcolonial theory for my study, certain criticisms have been expressed against it that could have some implications for my study and, thus, require attention.

Obsession with Colonialism: Moore-Gibert cites the captivating expression of one critic about the implication of the fixation on colonialism and colonial discourse in postcolonial theory: "Deconstructing imperialism keeps us within imperialism's orbit" (1997:20). He further highlights the criticism that the focus on imperialism blinds theorists from new "cultural productions of the postcolonial world" in a process that only replicates the imperial discourse rather than engage local ones (1997:20). Said's *Orientalism* (1978), for instance, focuses almost exclusively on the colonizer and their discourse. Said (1978), arguably, almost ends up in a self-contradictory practice: he homogenized the empire, representing it as possessing an essential unity, with very little variation. Yet, his criticism rests on the idea that the West essentialized and constructed the identity of the rest in a homogenous way.

The obsession with colonialism/imperialism in postcolonial theory is potentially misleading in that it could give the impression that identities and differences among previously colonized groups can only be understood in light of historical colonialism. It could also undermine the long existing and varied forms of relationships, interactions and meanings that informed the realities

of groups prior to colonialism, or which may have existed concurrently and yet independent of colonialism. While the experience of minorities under British indirect rule is historically significant in my study, other factors such as precolonial slave raiding narratives, trade, intermarriage, and spatial segregation prior to, and during colonialism, contribute immensely to how identities are represented and negotiated offline and online in contemporary Nigeria. While they also enhance the understanding of colonialism, these factors, without being tied to colonialism, still offer very important insights into relations in the region.

But can there be a postcolonial theory without an explicit focus on historical colonialism? Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2006) would respond in the negative. In their introduction to the second edition of the *Postcolonial Studies Reader*, the authors remind readers that postcolonial studies, whatever form it may take, rests on the "historical fact of European colonialism and the diverse material effects to which this phenomenon gave rise", and they add, that "we need to keep this fact of colonization firmly in mind" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2006:1). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin further argue that the "increasingly unfocused" application of the term "post-colonial" to several subjects and practices threaten the survival of the effective meaning of the term (2006:1-2). Thus, for the authors, Rukundwa's and van Aarde's (2007:1171) optimistic definition of postcolonial theory as "defiance by which any exploitative and discriminative practices, regardless of time and space, can be challenged" would constitute an extreme diffusion of the theory. The fact of colonialism is important for the maintenance of the distinguishing feature of postcolonial theory. Indeed, as long as the impact of colonialism is still very strongly felt and neo-colonialism remains an everyday question, postcolonial theory will continue to be a valuable tool for interrogating important elements of the postcolonial condition, such as identity. However, any rigid fixation on imperialism that blinds the theorist from the other diverse cultural productions and realities, historical or otherwise, must be avoided, as I attempt to do in this study. Postcolonial theory holds value for other kinds of practices that do not necessarily revolve around [neo]colonialism but acknowledge it. The online subject-production I examine, for example, does not necessarily revolve around the experience of [internal] colonialism, although the experience significantly contributes to how identities are engaged on the online platform.

Sneaking in of French High Theory: Moore-Gilbert sees postcolonial theory as "work shaped primarily, or to a significant degree, by methodological affiliates of French 'high' theory –

notably Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault" (1997:1). Moore-Gilbert (1997) argues that this "intrusion" of high theory has bought postcolonial theory its greatest criticism. The influence and presence of French and other Euro-American ideas in the social sciences and humanities today is almost ubiquitous and could lend credit to the views that postcolonial theory makes theory complicit in neocolonialism and universalization of Eurocentric ideas that misrepresent the non-western experience. I do not think that the value and usefulness of postcolonial theory should be simply dismissed because of the origins of the ideas on which some of its key arguments were built. The value and relevance of various European/American contributions cannot be downplayed, but like any uncritical obsession with colonialism, their usage can be modish and could blind scholars from possibly better and more contemporary alternatives. The challenge is to critically apply theory, not to simply adopt them as fully developed explanations. Despite their use of high theory, postcolonial theorists have developed ideas that best enable me to understand my subject of investigation critically. I think the value and usefulness of theory should be prioritized over origins and location, and in the spirit of Homi Bhabha, I do not think there can be exclusively "Western" or "French" theories in the increasingly hybrid realities of our time. Nonetheless, I also believe that Africans need to theorize their own realities and not allow subscription to Euro-American theories stifle this effort.

Mystification of the Colonized's Realities and Praxis: Neil Lazarus, in the *Postcolonial Unconscious* (2011), holds that postcolonial scholarship through strongly held but inadequately formed ideas, rely on a set of concepts, assumptions, theories, and methods that have proven to be inadequate for engagement with the supposed object of study – the postcolonial world. He argues further that these set of assumptions and theories have only enabled postcolonial theorists to further "mystify" the postcolonial world, making it even more unintelligible (2011: 16-17). Benita Parry, and other critics agree that such mystification of, especially, the material realities and the operations of capitalism in the postcolonial world, constitute a major failure of postcolonial theory. Moreover, they argue, there is no interaction between theory and practice in the field despite its claims about bringing forth alternative knowledge systems and giving voice to those on the margin (Bernard, Elmarsafy and Murray, 2016:3). Parry (2004) sees the disciplinary location of postcolonial studies largely within English and cultural studies as part of the problem. She argues that it informs an orientation towards "distanced interpretation of texts,

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images and discourses" which deny the discipline any substantial involvement with the actually lived situations and experiences of imperialism" (Parry, 2004:74).

As a student of postcolonial theory, despite its appeal, accessing its discourse has felt like assuming an entirely new social identity. In order to belong, I needed to learn and develop the specific language of postcolonial theory. A set of highly ambiguous concepts needed to be understood, and still, some of its important content such as Spivak's and Bhahha's works initially only became accessible through the interpretation and simplification of other writers. The intellectual demands of the field do limit its thoughts to well-educated persons, and the "subaltern", whose reality many theorists purport to examine, may barely recognize themselves in the discourse. The conversations and writings of postcolonial theorists, thus, barely become intelligible to a wider audience, academic or otherwise, and its captivity to western theoretical traditions, assumptions and methodological approaches makes it inaccessible, to an extent, to its putative subject - the postcolonial world - beyond the metropolis. The aim of my usage is to lay bare rather than mystify online identity construction. Thus, I use postcolonial theory with this awareness in mind and with the conviction that it can make this possible. However, I do believe that a certain level of bridging is required between theorizing and practice, and I conceptualize my use of the theory as an active engagement with real experiences of people – to the extent to which the online space (in relation to the offline) can be conceived as real.

The Death of Postcolonial Theory: Gautam Basum Thakur (2016), in his work which aimed to reimagine postcolonial theory to better serve the needs of the 21st century, argues that postcolonial theory as it is most commonly used and understood is dead. He argues that the West is no longer interested in erasing or marginalizing the Other on account of difference, but actually upholds the unique worldviews and difference in the face of globalization. It is precisely the "manifest content" of globalization and its underlying longstanding position as the producer of knowledge and universal that Postcolonial theory should engage (Thakur, 2016:5-7). Thakur contends that postcolonial theory needs to be revised to address the cultural production of knowledge globally. Highlighting the often-drawn distinction between postcolonial theorists and critics based on their respective focus on text and material conditions of the colonized worlds, he argues that both need to move beyond exploration and criticism of representations of the Other, and recovery of marginal voices. This is because such use of the theory, in his view, do not

change the West's perception of the Other, and empower the West to further access and exploit non-Western voices, which in Academic institutions have already been domesticated (Thakur, 2016:31).

Thakur's work offers a valuable and current review of postcolonial theory, and his application of the theory to interrogate western film has value for my study. However, I think he overstates the loss of significance of postcolonial theory and the fizzling out of its concerns. He also divides the world into 'the West' and 'the rest' very neatly, and thereby fails to see the several other forms of global relationships and representational politics that make postcolonial theory relevant today. I agree that postcolonial theory requires reimagination to suit today's forms of subject production, but, as Thakur's own work demonstrates, this is not because the problems postcolonial theory initially sought to address have ceased to exist but that they have taken on new forms. Thus, in my study, postcolonial theory remains a useful tool and method to examine new forms of subject production and the new media platforms on which this takes place.

Moore-Gilbert's argument nearly two decades ago is still very relevant. He notes that despite limitations, postcolonial theorist such as Edward Said raise important questions that require serious attention:

> whether it is possible to represent cultural difference without, on the one hand, resorting to essentialist models of identity or, on the other, reducing different cultures to the status of exchangeable terms in a system of more or less arbitrary equivalences. More pressingly still, Said's work asks whether 'true' knowledge – or even non-coercive and non-reductive representation of the Other – is indeed possible. Behind these inquiries lies another, deep preoccupation, which Said expresses as follows: 'Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly? (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 73).

These questions remain in the background as I wrestle with the question of identity and representation. My study of an Online Forum raises further critical questions regarding the significance of the online space and what difference this makes to the nature and mechanisms of representation. For the reasons already discussed, postcolonial theory, in my view, is a sufficient optic for examining representations and identity politics on any space. However, I imagine the online platform not merely as a passive stage or board on which identities are reworked/worked out and re/produced, but as a space actively shaping the forms of representations that eventually emerge. Thus, the platform itself becomes an important problem. This is reflected in Marshal

McLuhan's communication maxim that "the medium is the message" (1964). Postcolonial theory is not sufficient for examining this dimension of my study. Thus, I employ research in new digital media and digital religion to better understand the online platform and the ways it shapes and is being shaped by online rhetorical and religious practices.

1.4.2 Digital Media and Religion
Social science researchers increasingly explore the internet and internet-based phenomena for relevant and valid research and methods (Toepoel, Vis, Das and van Soest, 2008; Schrooten, 2012). Janice Waldron (2011) asserts that there is general agreement among researchers in the social and media sciences that online communities represent offline communities in the traditional sense of the term, although with significant epistemological differences. Reiterating Hines' (2005) observation about the cogency of online phenomena, Waldron notes that in its own right, the internet should be regarded as a cultural context. Therefore, if online communities are considered as genuine, functioning and situated in a legitimate cultural context, then valid entities exist online that can be studied (Waldron, 2011).

Extending Waldron's argument, Vince Marrota (2011) examines literature about online cultural and religious identities to understand the extent to which ethnicities constructed online negotiate or reflect those constructed offline. Morrota (2011) argues that online subjectivities provide alternative representations that utilize dominant discourses within the societies hosting them. This provides an epistemological and methodological foundation for my examination of the Online Forum as a valid entity in a legitimate social context. This perspective, as articulated by Marrota, could assist in making visible how the construction of the Self and Other occur online, as well as the ways in which it reflects, and contributes to prevailing social conflicts in Kaduna, Nigeria.

Heidi Campbell in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practices in New Media Worlds* (2013) proposes and argues for a frame that captures the changes in, and the conception of, religion within digital culture. For Campbell, digital religion refers to religion as articulated and performed online and also denotes how religious practice is being shaped by digital media and spaces. Campbell (2013) argues that the study of religion in digital culture will shed more light on the impact of the internet on society more broadly. Mia Lovheim (2013) argues that an online religious identity is not really different from an offline one. She holds that in contemporary

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society religious identities are mediated, performed, and requires continuous revision and performance in social settings that are known and unknown and some of these settings are physical while others are digital.

From the same perspective, Kerstin Radde-Antweiler (2008) explores the performance of religion and ritual in online environments free of real-life body conditions. She examines *Active Worlds, There* and *Second Life* as virtual worlds that present three-dimensional spaces for individuals, represented as avatars, to live and interact with each other. Radde-Antweiler (2008) focuses on *Second Life* as an enhancement of real life possibilities at the religious level where thousands of users transfer real life religious activities, symbols and performance into the online virtual world. Louise Connelly (2013) notes that for some people, online ritual is not only contained within the *Second Life* but that there is a negotiation between the online practice such as meditation and the offline "realities"[i] which the online serves to initiate and to simultaneously frame. This is in line with Campbell's (2013) assertion that the online community is usually a supplement and extension of the offline experience. These studies and other writings on new media provide me with the conceptual tools to engage the online forum to understand its nature, how it works and how (if) offline experiences and media are transformed when engaged on online platforms.

1.5 Mapping the Context of the Study

Kaduna state, created in 1975, is one of the largest states in Nigeria, with a population of over six million (National Population Commission, 2006). It is situated astride northern Nigeria with one part (Southern Kaduna) in the Middle-Belt region, and the other part in the area with a large Hausa-Fulani and Muslim population. The northern part of the state is predominantly populated by Hausa-Fulani and Muslims. Central Kaduna has a large Hausa-Fulani and Muslim population, but also has several other ethnicities and religions, and a large population of migrants from other parts of Nigeria and beyond. This makes Kaduna one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse cities in Nigeria (Aruwan, 2014). The southern area of the state is populated by over 50 largely Christian minority ethnicities with distinct languages. Some of these include: Adara (Kadara), Anghan (Kamanton), Ayu, Atyab (Kataf), Ham (Jaba), Gwong (Kagoma), Gure, Fantswam, Gbagyi, Takad, Sholio (Marwa), Tsam (Chawai) Bur (Sanga), Bajju (Kaje), Atachaat

(Kachechere), Bhazar (Koro), Ninzo, Oegworok (Kagoro).[4] Collectively, these groups and their locations were known in colonial times and until late 1990s, as Southern Zaria because of their geographical location to the south of Zaria (Zazzau emirate) (Suleiman, 2011; Goifa, 2011). However, "Southern Kaduna"[5] has become the most commonly used designation to refer to these people both in popular usage and academic writings. I have used "Southern Kaduna" throughout this work for this reason, and because that is the designation that is used by the members of the Online Forum I have examined.

The metropolitan city of Kaduna was created by the British around 1912, as the administrative capital of the old Northern protectorate. It became the capital city of the old Northern Region at independence in 1960, and subsequently the capital of the North central state (1967) and old Kaduna states respectively. Kaduna was also the major military center of northern Nigeria and focal point of northern politics and economy. Although the importance of Kaduna in this regard somewhat declined with the emergence of Abuja, near Kaduna, as the new Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria in 1991, Kaduna is still a "nerve centre" and holds symbolic significance in northern Nigeria, making it a highly contested place (MEP, 2010:9).

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[4] The names in parenthesis are the Hausa-Fulani ways of referring to these groups, some of which are also the most known names of these groups in northern Nigeria. Philip Hayab, who at the time of writing is researching Language and Identity at Stellembosch University is revising earlier writings on these ethnicities such as Meek (1925) and Gun (1956), and has suggested that there are over 63 ethnic groups in Kaduna, at least 58 of which are from Southern Kaduna, he provides a list here: https://philiphayab.blogspot.co.za/2015/08/kaduna-state-north-central-nigeria.html
[5] Based on my familiarity with the area and informal conversations I have had with several people about the preference for Southern Kaduna instead of Southern Zaria, the most common reason is a desire to dissociate themselves with Zaria emirate and the history attached to it especially following the establishment of Chiefdoms for Southern Kaduna that were finally independent from the emirate in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Figure 1.1 Senatorial Districts of Kaduna State Nigeria

FEDERAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT MAP OF KADUNA STATE
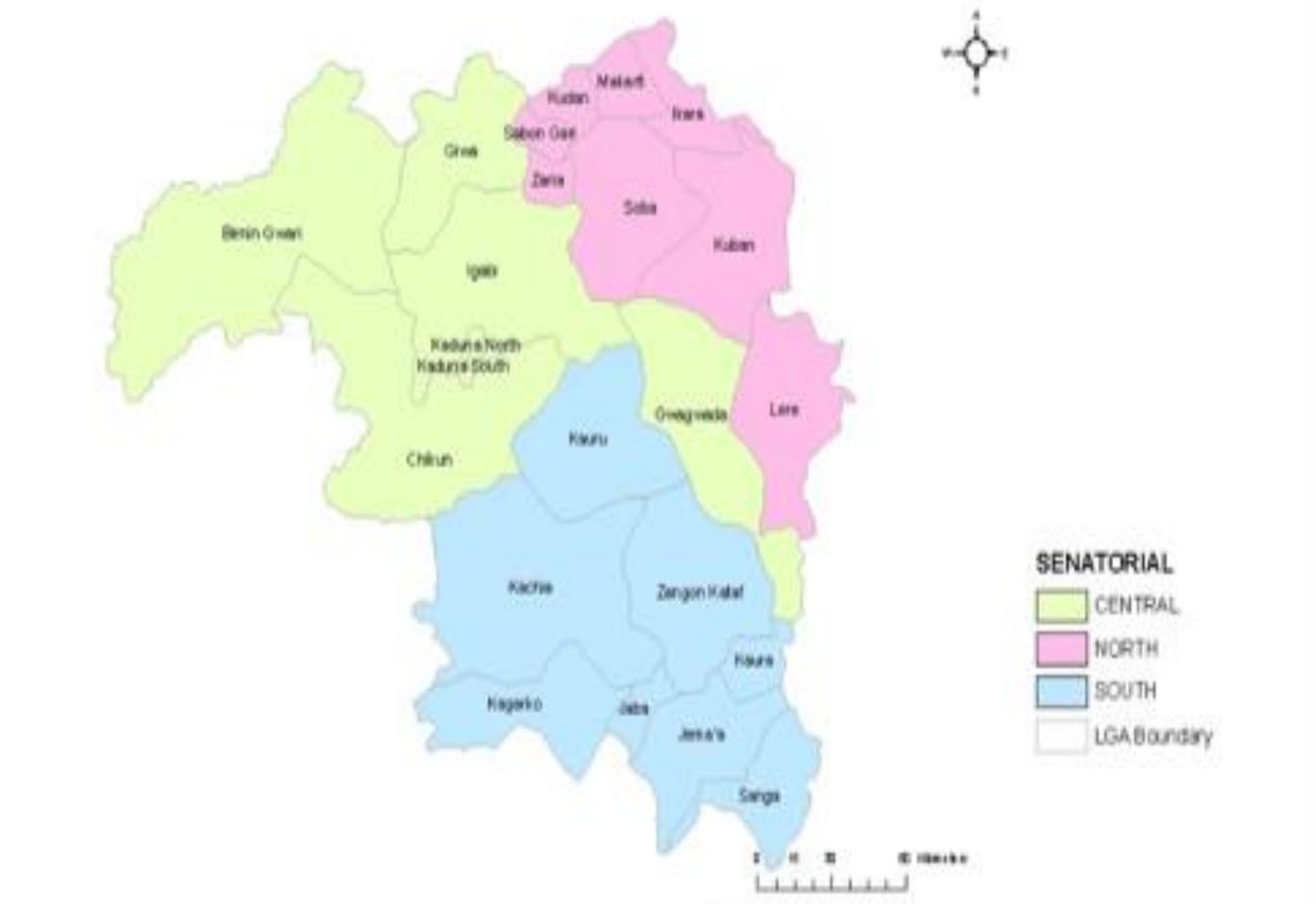
. Source: www.kadunastate.org.ng

Figure 1.2 Map of Kaduna State, Nigeria
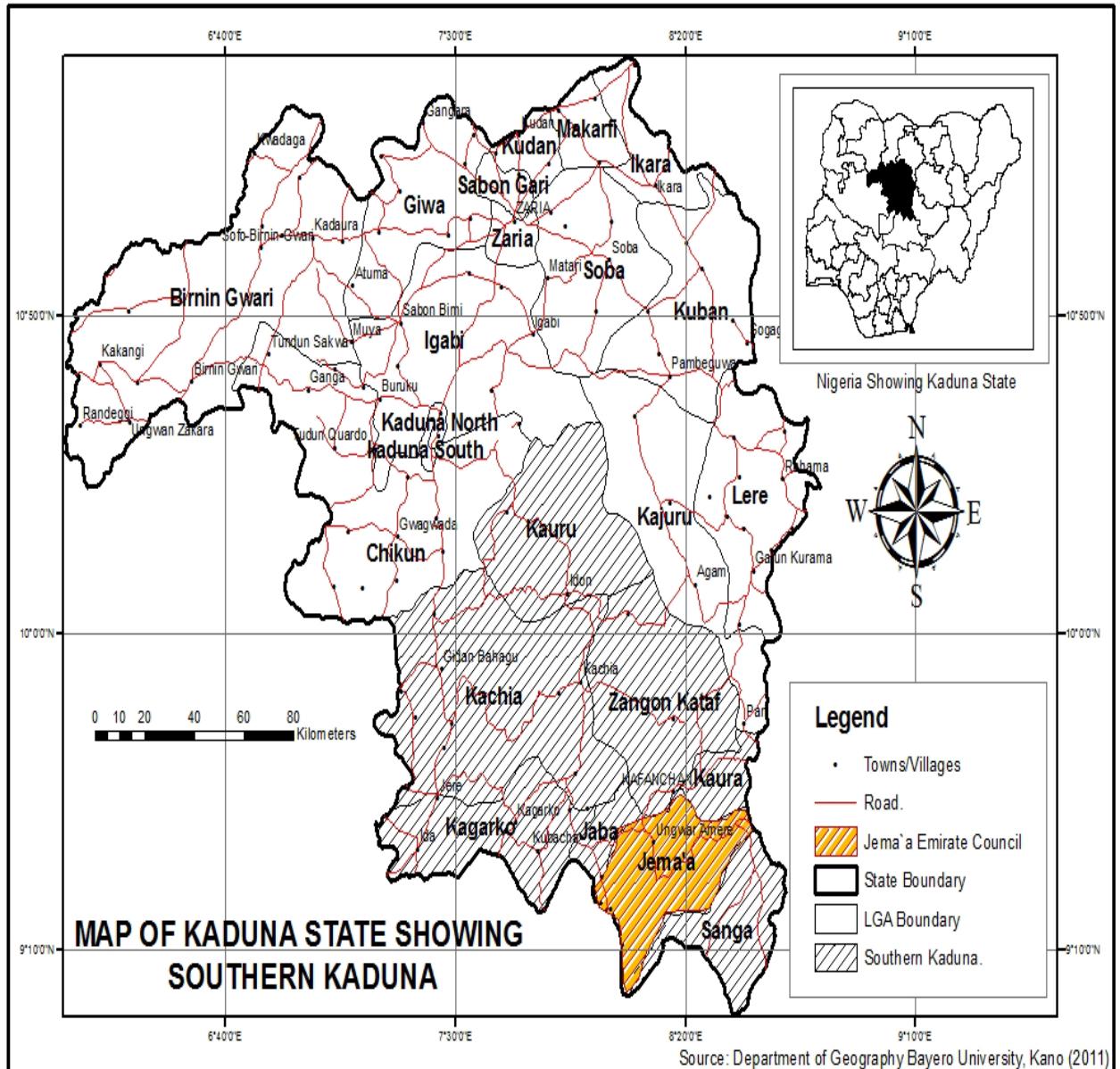
Source Suleiman, 2011:3.

Christianity and Islam are considered the two main religions in Kaduna (as in Nigeria at large), and both Muslims and Christians claim to constitute the majority population. The most recent census in 2006 did not include religion and ethnicity as variables, hence it is impossible to verify these claims. The last census to include religion was conducted in 1963 (Ostien, 2012:2), which, though considered more reliable than subsequent ones (Angerbrandt, 2011:29), is surrounded by controversy (Okafor, Adeleke and Oparac, 2007). Thus, it is difficult to tell the current Christian–Muslim composition of the state. Since the violent conflicts of 2000 and 2002 there has been a huge migration of people towards areas of the state inhabited by members of their own religion and ethnicity– Muslims to the north of Kaduna, and Christians to the south) (Harris, 2011:293). Christians and Muslims still interact in daily life, they work together in offices and do business together during the day, but nevertheless move back to their respective areas at the end of working ours.

Kaduna is also a hub of religious life and activities. It houses the headquarters of the northern branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the national headquarters of one of the prominent Islamic umbrella organizations in Nigeria, the *Jamaatu Nasri Islam* (JNI). . Both organizations have emerged as key role players in the Nigerian public sphere, often positioning themselves as the voices and representatives of members of their respective religions (Odumosu, Olaniyi and Alonge, 2009: 38-68). Numerous other Christian and Muslim religious organizations are also present, and religious activities are among the most visible public activities in the state. It is very common to find religious books and paraphernalia being sold in markets and street corners, and to hear very loud Christian and Muslim music and sermons on the streets coming from preachers or tapes played by vendors. As in other parts of Nigeria, religion permeates every sphere of life. Political power, the concept of nation, authority and control, everyday conversations and interactions are coated with religion, spiritualized and expressed in religious or "God-talk" and performances (Ayantayo, 2009). Thus, Christianity and Islam are the most public religions in Kaduna despite the existence of several other religions, such as African indigenous religions, the Hare Krishna movement, Eckankar, the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (ARMOC). Currently, there is ongoing controversy over a proposed religious bill by the new governor of Kaduna state, part of which intends to restrict public religious activities such as

preaching and playing of religious cassettes and CDs to private homes or inside church buildings as well as other strategies to address the problem of religion-related conflicts in the State.[6]

1.6 Significance of the Study

By applying postcolonial theory this study offers a fresh and critical understanding of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations and social conflicts in Africa, as well as burning questions concerning identity. This is a major shift from the dominant historical and political theory approaches to the subject. The study offers new insights that could greatly inform both theory and practice in terms of revising how issues related to communal self-assertion, minority struggles, identity politics, material and epistemic violence, and other critical issues are understood, and what are the most effective and innovative ways of addressing them.

The study's investigation of online platforms and related practices offer new understandings of the significance of new media to every day lived experiences, and how social actors transcend and negotiate boundaries, deal with grievances and conflicts, and explore dynamic avenues for pursuing their goals. The study also indicates that policy and political practices need to view online environments and social/cultural spaces as equally influential in all aspects of life. Considering Nigeria's social conflicts, the study's focus on representation offers insight about destructive reproductions of identity thereby enabling a better understanding of these conflicts and creating another avenue for exploring potentials for more lasting coexistence.

1.7 Conclusion and Structure of the Thesis

I have offered, in this chapter, a general introduction and background to the central questions of this research. Areas covered include social conflicts in northern Nigeria, the emergence of social media activists and emancipation groups in Kaduna, the research question and problems, postcolonial theory and religion on digital media, and a description of the context of study. This research report is organized into seven chapter as follows:

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[6] http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/04/03/kaduna-el-rufais-controversial-religious-bill/

Chapter one offers a general introduction to the study paying close attention to the background, research problem and objects, as well as a critical review of the theoretical framework and approach to the study. The chapter also offers a background to the geographical context of study.

Chapter two reviews relevant literature, and surveys relations between ethnicities and religions in Kaduna, Nigeria. It focuses on key historical moments, events and conflicts that have shaped ethnoreligious relations.

Chapter three discusses theories and previous studies on identity and representation, paying particular attention to ethnicity, religion, language and media in postcolonial Africa and Nigeria.

Chapter four outlines the research methodology, methods and design of the study.

Chapter five presents, analyses and discusses the online content as well as survey data utilized in this study. This is organized under broad categories of representations of the Self, Other and Religion.

Chapter six applies the empirical material of the study to theorize about the nature and mechanism of online representation and online religion in postcolonial Africa.

Chapter seven concludes the study with a summary, general conclusions and a section in which the implications of the study for peacebuilding in Africa is discussed.

Chapter Two:

Socio-Historical Survey of Ethnic and Religious Relations in Kaduna, Nigeria

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I examine, and review literature on the factors and historical moments that shaped and produced the tense ethno-religious relations in Kaduna within the broader context of northern Nigeria, and inform emergent definitions of the Southern Kaduna Christian Self and Hausa-Fulani Muslim Other. The Sokoto jihad of the 19th century serves as an important historical starting point for my investigation of precolonial relations in northern Nigeria, due to its significance in the constructions of religious and ethnic identities. The chapter also explores the role of media in cultural interactions, dominance and interfaith conflicts in Nigeria, as well as the emergence and impact of new media on these relations. The literature reveals that some of the key factors that cause and sustain interreligious and interethnic tensions are historical grievances that can be traced back to pre-colonial and colonial times, tensions that were never adequately addressed by the Nigerian Federal state. I argue that while this is important, the changing nature and platforms for expressing and engaging these factors need to be critically explored using new approaches to better understand the dynamics of present day relations. The chapter begins with a review of key literature that represent the diversity of academic discourses on Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria more broadly.

2.2 Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria

Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria is a widely explored subject, particularly from political and historical perspectives. Scholars of religious studies and theology have also engaged the problem, but mostly adopting the same historical and social/political approaches. The theologian, Akintunde E. Akintunde (2014), in his book on the responses of Christians to Islam in Nigeria, situates Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria within a global context, while at the same time making a strong case for more localized and contextualized approaches to the issue if thorough understanding is to be achieved. He argues that Nigeria offers models for both cooperation and

competition that helps to understand interreligious relations on a more global level. To correct the imbalances in literature on the subject, Akinade (2014) contends that most studies adopt approaches and focus on content that best serve a western context and vision of dialogue. He further argues that much of the global perception of interfaith relations in Nigeria are a misrepresentation facilitated by the media, which spread a singular narrative that imagines Nigeria to be a space for radicalism and intractable ethnic and religious violence. This, for him, undermines the realities of peaceful relations that also exist in the country. Akinade (2014) offers crucial insights on the tense relations in the country. He notes that interfaith relations have been shaped by prevailing theological, cultural, political and historical conditions and circumstances that inform the way Christians and Muslims imagine and perceive each other. Adherents of both religions also apply their own religious standards to interpret and distill each other's religion. In addition, that national politics is marred with religious sensibilities and that the appropriation of religion for securing and distributing political/administrative offices has become a deeply rooted practice and a well-established convention in the country. This has created a combative aspect to worsen interfaith relations.

My study affirms Akinade's (2014) suggestion that any thorough analysis of interreligious relations in Nigeria must take into account the several interrelated factors that are at play in the Nigerian public space. But more important for my work, is Akinade's (2014) presentation of interfaith encounter in Nigeria as an ambivalent one, which evoked both affirmation and condemnation. My study highlights how this ambivalent encounter and its causal factors are also at play in the digital public space, thus showing how crucial it is for studies of interfaith relations to also take seriously the online social sphere, which in contemporary times, is reshaping encounters in terms of meaning and experience, and challenging previous strategies for good interreligious relations.

The political scientist, John Boye Ejobowah, in his work, *Competing Claims to Recognition in the Nigerian Public Sphere* (2001), reviews the political and constitutional strategies that Nigeria has adopted from the colonial period to the present to better accommodate its multiple ethnicities. He argues that while British colonialists tried to unite the northern and southern regions of the country, they created more divisions within each region. This resulted in a problem for the postcolonial Nigerian state which explored several strategies to manage divisions

among ethnic groups competing for resources and recognition (Ejobowah, 2001). One of the key strategies has been state creation through which the society is divided into smaller states, and the construction of units tied mostly to ethnic identities. Yet, contestation remains as there are always groups clamoring for recognition. Ejobowah (2001) argues that sometimes such claims for recognition are only a smokescreen for more deeply rooted political and/or economic problems. For instance, the struggle for constitutional recognition of the Sharia legal system in northern Nigeria is, for some proponents, a strategy for re-establishing the North that was lost through colonialism, or a way of gaining and asserting power. Ejobowah (2001) argues that in differentiation-prone societies like Nigeria, group constitutional recognition can cause instability, and at the same time recognition-denying institutions can cause intense conflicts. Thus, recognition must seek to balance the need for differentiation among groups with the need for social stability. Ejobowah highlights the fact that the question of diversity has been an on-going constitutional debate, with continuous and frequent modification and adjustment to better address the problem. However, through these assertions, Ejobowah (2001) ignores the dynamics of ethnicity, especially its strong ties to religion in northern Nigeria. In so doing and by treating the problem as largely a tension between theoretical approaches to diversity and local realities, Ejobowah (2001) downplays the importance of religion as one of the major problems that the same constitutional changes attempt to deal with.

The religious aspect receives more attention from Rotimi Suberu, a prominent Nigerian political scientist. In his book, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria* (2001), he faults the Nigerian brand of federalism for the conflicts in the country. He argues that while the primary goal of federalism was to accommodate the diverse ethnic and religious communities in the country, it has become an institutionalized conflictive system that exists mainly to process access to the highly centralized power, opportunities and resources (Suberu, 2001). Thus, the federation has undermined diversity rather than adequately addressing problems related to it. Suberu (2001) argues that the competition for power, resources and opportunities at the center has led to the politicization of religious agitations to enhance the chances of access. Thus, Nigeria's federal character, which aims to increase equal representation and access, has become more about the representation of Muslims and Christians at all levels of the Nigerian public sphere. This has in turn increased the mobilization of religion in pursuit of sectarian agendas. Suberu (2001) suggests that unless the Nigerian federal system begins to promote (and limit) political and

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economic self-rule, divisions along ethnic and religious lines will remain a problem. While the politicization of religion theory is the most widely appraised explanation for poor Christian-Muslim conflicts in Nigeria, Suberu (2001) provides deeper insights into a very important question, namely, at what point do religious affiliations begin to matter in political competitions, and why. Although he acknowledges the diverse interconnected factors contributing to poor interreligious relations, Suberu (2001) treats the problem as primarily a political one. My study gives significant attention to religion as an equally important factor in these conflicts to show that while it may be true that religion is politicized, it is important to understand why it is easily susceptible to such politicization. My study suggests that we should perhaps look beyond politicization.

While essentially offering different perspectives to support the politicization of religious theory, contributors to the volume, *Religion in Politics: Secularism and National Integration in Modern Nigeria* (2009), edited by Julius Adekunle, also paid close attention to other factors. In this volume, with most contributions being made by historians, Philip Akpen's (2009) chapter highlights the fear of majority domination among ethnic minorities at the eve of independence in 1960 which was not sufficiently addressed. It also highlights, the subsequent regionalization of the country whereby Nigeria's three major ethnic groups controlled power and dominated public life to the exclusion of minorities, causing tensions between them. Sa'adatu Hassan Liman (2009) makes the argument that British colonial powers in Nigeria, rather than managing the country's diversity, promoted division among groups by minimizing differences. Thus, in its bid to politically engage Nigerians, the British government/administrators promoted the formulation of political parties around religious and ethnic identification thereby sowing seeds of division along those lines in Nigeria's political institutions.

In his widely cited and comprehensive work of 1993, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria,* the Nigerian cleric and intellectual, Matthew Kukah, addresses the question of Hausa-Fulani hegemony. He argues that historically, poor Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria were worsened by the hegemony of the largely Muslim Hausa-Fulani ethnic group over the several minorities in the region. The British colonial indirect rule system aggravated the problem by taking control in 1903, of the Islamic state system that existed in the North and using it to control the region. Kukah (1993) thus illustrates how, through this configuration, the British and Hausa-

Fulani Muslim emirs emerged and are widely perceived as imperial/imperialist and oppressive. Kukah (1993) further observes that the frustration of Nigerian religious extremists, their anger over colonial interference and the failures of the postcolonial state to meet the needs of its citizens has been a major contributing factor to poor interfaith relations. One important contribution of this work to my research is Kukah's calling to attention how the print, radio and television media in Nigeria have been used by dominating powers to promote selfish and divisive ideas and interests.

In a more recent article (2013), Kukah and Kathleen McGarvey explore the social, political and theological dimensions of Christian-Muslim dialogue in Nigeria. In addition to some of the factors outlined above, they argue that five important issues define Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria today. First, the failure by the Nigerian government to address the issues surrounding minorities, especially lasting fears among non-Muslim minorities in the North regarding their treatment as "second-class" citizens. Second, perceived unequal distribution of resources whereby many Christians, for instance, contest government financial support for Islamic pilgrimage and construction of mosques. While government has responded to such agitations, for instance, by supporting Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem to balance their financial support for *hajj*, they have only made the religious factor in the public sphere more problematic without eliminating suspicion of inequality. Third, the successive military rule by mostly Muslim leaders for about thirty years in the country's past has left Nigerians with memories of brutality, tragedies, and civil wars that still have an influence on how Nigerians relate to each other. The fourth factor is the consistent conflicts that often result from false rumors and allegations about blasphemous statements against religions. Fifth, the failure of the state to address questions, fears and agendas surrounding the question of Sharia in the Nigerian constitution and judiciary (Kukah and McGarvey, 2013). In addition to these factors, Kukah and McGravey (2013), observe that the most important cause of tense and conflictual Christian-Muslim relationships in Nigeria is historical stories about relations between Hausa-Fulani Muslims in the North beginning from the period of the Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio, and the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1804.

Kukah and McGarvey (2013) also point out that relations between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria have also been positive in some respects. Even prior to colonial conquest, there were

close interactions including intermarriages and trades which happened alongside the wars and slavery. Akinade (2014), in his article *Sacred Rumbling* (2013), also places emphasis on the positive Christian-Muslim relations that has existed in Nigeria, despite the many conflicts. Akinde (2013) argues that "dialogue of Life" is practiced in Nigeria whereby Christians and Muslims collaborate and interact very closely in their practical everyday life on the streets, shared homes and markets. They exchange felicitations during important religious occasions, and would attend significant occasions to support each other, such as baptisms and weddings.

I agree with Akinade's (2013) observation that this form of dialogue is rarely given much attention or recognition by scholars. Evidence of positive dialogues of life have been widely ignored because studies on interfaith relations tend to focus on northern Nigeria where such relations are problematic and violent, and where scholarship is orientated towards offering solutions to conflicts. The more peaceful relations Akinade (2013) highlights are characteristic of groups such as the Yoruba in Western Nigeria, for whom close familial interactions between Christians and Muslims are a way of life and not necessarily constructed as "dialogue" following crises. Among the Yoruba, unlike many groups in northern Nigeria, the bond of ethnicity appears to be more important than religious differences (Osaghie and Suberu, 2005). Commendable periods of peaceful relations have been experienced in northern Nigeria as well, but the seeming ease with which violent conflicts recurrently surface raises questions about the nature of such peaceful moments.

2.3 Religious Reform and Complex Encounters in Northern Nigeria

Before the Jihad of Dan Fodio, Islam was already widely practiced in the numerous independent Hausa states that existed in the area presently known as northern Nigeria. However, elements of Hausa pre-Islam religions were also imported into the practice of Islam. Uthman Dan Fodio, a Fulani Muslim leader and teacher, saw this as "Mixed-Islam" (Falola and Heaton, 2008:61), Describing the practitioners as an "undifferentiated collective of bad Muslims" (Ochonu, 2008:98), Dan Fodio embarked on a jihad that aimed to purify the practice of Islam in these states (Smith, 1966: 408-409). In the process, Dan Fodio established the Sokoto Caliphate, which was very extensive and united all Hausa states and Borno (Kanuri state) under one Islamic government (Islahi, 2008). Falola and Heaton observed that Dan Fodio and his successors

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worked to build a pious and ideal Islamic state like that which the prophet Muhammad established in ancient Arabia (2008:61). Some historians have argued that although Dan Fodio and his successors did not realize the desired Islamic state, their achievements were remarkable. Their conquest and imposition of a central political and religious authority across formerly independent Hausa states homogenized the people into a single political and linguistic unit. Thus, when the British conquered northern Nigeria in 1903, the region had become primarily identified with Islam, and Islamic piety had become a key marker of Hausa-Fulani identity (Ochonu, 2008:100; Falola and Heaton, 2008:61). Against a popular narrative which refers to the Jihad as the beginning of Muslim efforts to Islamize Nigeria, scholars such as Miles (2003:53) and Loimeier (2003:245) argue that the primary goal of the jihad was not the conversion of non-Muslims but a reformation of adulterated Islam. Yet, the question remains, what was the implication of the reform for non-Muslim minorities in the area and why is this moment ever-present in victimization narratives of Christian groups, as Kukah and McGarvey (2013) argue?

The jihad caused immense changes in the inter-ethnic relations between Hausa-Fulani Muslims and the numerous independent ethnic minorities in northern Nigeria. The historians Galadima and Turaki (2001) observe that these groups had no centralized political systems and adhered to different forms of indigenous religions, but gradually found themselves in constant resistance of efforts by Muslims to proselytize among them, and relations between them and Muslims gradually became dominated by religion (2001:91). The Jihad also engendered slave raids for the Trans-Saharan slave trade and to meet the needs of the expansive caliphates and its major emirates, including Zaria (Zazzau) located in the present-day Kaduna; and because Islam does not allow the enslavement of Muslims, the Middle Belt's pagan groups increasingly became the legitimate target for slave raids (Kazah-Toure, 1999; Galadima and Turaki, 2001; Abdulkadir, 2011).

To the south of Zaria were "pagan" ethnic groups now known as Southern Kaduna groups (Okpanachi, 2010:21). Throughout the Southern Kaduna area there were also Hausa-Fulani Muslim enclaves, mostly of traders and Fulani herdsmen who were gradually organizing themselves into small polities (Smith, 1960). Prior to the 1800s ethnic groups in Southern Kaduna lived in small independent and scattered villages and communities. The only authorities in these communities were elderly members and family heads with no centralized authority even

at the village level. According to Rotimi Suberu, this diffusion of power, coupled with their inferior technology and lack of military strength "rendered them relatively defenseless in the face of Hausa-Fulani expansionism and imperialism" (1996:48). During the Dan Fodio jihad, the Jema'a emirate emerged in the Southern Kaduna area as a vassal state of Zaria emirate. Complex forms of relationships emerged between the non-Muslim groups of the area and the Hausa-Fulani Muslims of Zaria; the Hausa-Fulani enclaves in the area gradually became the economic and political centers of Southern Kaduna (Smith, 1960; Suberu, 1996). These changes resulted in religious and socio-political unrest as Southern Kaduna groups increasingly felt threatened and feared what the implications of such developments might be for them (Goifa, 2011).

The Kaduna historian, Toure Kazah-Toure (1999), argues that during this time, the dominant feature of relations between the Southern Kaduna "pagan" groups and the emirates was slavery. The Jema'a emirate was obligated to provide slaves, farm products, amongst other things, as tribute to Zazzau. Zazzau also had slave labour needs, had access to the trans-Saharan slave market, and was building a flourishing economy attributed to slavery. Thus, both Jema'a and Zazzau found in the Southern Kaduna non-Muslim communities legitimate target for meeting their needs for slaves (Kazah-Toure, 1999), They, therefore, periodically raided these communities, especially those they considered antagonistic, which drastically swelled hostility between non-Muslim groups and the emirates (Blench, Longtau, Hassan and Walsh, 2006; Abdulkadir, 2011). Roger Blench (2010) argues that narratives of this slaving era, which lasted until the 1930s, have recently re-emerged to inform the current political and ethno-religious relations in Southern Kaduna, and in northern Nigeria at large. Perhaps the resilience of the slave narratives, as is suggested in my research data, comes from its being a relatively recent experience that has not been lost in time. My own initial encounters with Kaduna in the 1990s, for example, exposed me to existing historical accounts told by older people about slave raids, some of whom claimed to have had firsthand experiences of these raids and aggression or knew someone who did.

However, in their reference to this moment in history, scholars are not clear whether slavery was a unidirectional experience. Did the minorities also take slaves or were they merely victims? Were non-Muslim Hausa-Fulani, if present, also raided? Kazah-Toure (1995) argues that while non-Muslim and non-Hausa-Fulani communities were the targets of these raids, enslavements

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and aggression, some Hausa-Fulani Muslims also suffered within the emirates. He also points out that Southern Kaduna non-Muslim groups also took slaves, but these were few and constituted captives of inter-ethnic land conflicts and counter-attacks against slave raiders (Kazah-Toure, 1999). Such Hausa-Fulani slaves were integrated into Southern Kaduna households, as the Southern Kaduna groups neither had the need for slave labour, nor an internal slave market (Kazah-Toure, 1999:115). Moreover, he argues that

> In spite of prevailing internal contradictions, the polities of Southern Kaduna did not develop oppressive institutions and there was no taxation and forced labour. Major forms of domination, exploitation, oppression and repression – associated with the feudal emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate hardly existed (Kazah-Toure, 1999:116).

2.4 British Interruption and Aggravation of Already Tense Relations

It was on the socio-political and religious landscape discussed above that the British established the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, after deposing and killing the Sultan of Sokoto in 1903, and made it a laboratory and model for British indirect rule system (Crowther, 1964). The British believed that indirect rule would balance their foreign values and leadership with indigenous values and governance. They also believed that it would protect traditional cultures and customs and at the same time transform practices that impeded political, social and economic development (Falola and Heaton, 2008; Weiss, 2004). Indirect rule was not successful in southern Nigeria because of the massive restructuring of political institutions that it necessitated. However, in the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, it was easily established. The High Commissioner, Lord Frederick Lugard, "simply replaced the administrative superstructure with a British duplicate" (Falola and Heaton, 2008:115). Thus, the role once played by the Sultan of Sokoto was now played by the British High commissioner. The Caliphate and emirate structures were left untouched but all traditional authorities were renamed Native Authorities (Odugowi, 2011:21).

The British also made efforts to extend the political institutions and administrative structures they found in Muslim areas to non-Muslim areas, which they believed were ungovernable due to the absence of centralized authorities and structures. This became a source of conflict. The African history Scholar, Moses Ochonu observes:

It is not clear if the British understood the troubled precolonial status and semiotic resonance of Hausa as a socio-political category in the non-Muslim sector of northern Nigeria, if they did, it did not stop them from crafting a colonial policy that privileged the emirate system of administration and social organization and sought to spread it to the middle belt, where several ethnic groups had either resisted it or were suspicious of it (Ochonu, 2008:100).

In his more recent book, *Colonialism by Proxy (2013)*, Ochonu offers fresh insights into the colonization of these ethnic groups of northern Nigeria. For Ochonu, the strategy was "Subcolonialism" by the Hausa Fulani based on dialogue/agreement between Hausa-Fulani elites and British officials, rather than indirect rule commonly understood to be the colonial system across northern Nigeria. Instead of using elites from among these communities, Hausa-Fulani agents were deployed to "civilize" them because they were perceived to be backward, while Islamic civilization was considered superior by the British. Both colonial British and Hausa-Fulani elites imagined the middle belt as a pagan area highly in need of "monotheistic" governance and colonization/conquest. Thus, in their intervention in northern Nigeria, British officials shoved preexisting struggles in directions that were advantageous to Hausa-Fulani; and availed them with superior resources that enabled them to extend their dominance economically, politically and religiously. In addition, Lugard, in his administration of the Northern region, is believed to have restricted Christian proselytization in the area (Ademolakun, 2013), while Muslims were freely able to proselytize (Bolaji, 2013). A slightly different view is that other colonial officers were hostile to Christian missionaries in the region, and that Lugard himself did not support missionary activity, but did not actively campaign against them (Faught, 1994). Yet, in *The Dual Mandate* (1922), where Lugard articulates in detail his theory of indirect rule and British governance of Africa, there are strong indications that Lugard actively restricted and campaigned against missionary activity in northern Nigeria. For example, alluding to criticism of the colonial government for restricting and being hostile to Christian missionaries, Lugard argues that Christian missionary activities were never successful in Muslim societies, and that in northern Nigeria, Europeans, including tourists, were viewed as part of the colonial government, thus, the establishment of any European Christian mission would be viewed as a colonial government's activity and a "bridge of the pledge of non-interference" with Islam, and lead to a loss of confidence (Lugard, 1922: 592). In any case, this literature agrees that Christian missions met with administrative restriction and hostility that prevented the early spread of Christianity in northern Nigeria due to an understanding between northern elites and colonial administration

aimed to preserve what they considered the culture and religion of the north, namely Hausa and Islam.

At the establishment of indirect rule in northern Nigeria, about three among the dozens of ethnic groups in Southern Kaduna had developed relationships with Zaria emirates that allowed them to be independent and ruled by their own emirate-style Native Authorities. The colonial administration incorporated non-independent groups into the Zaria emirate since these groups did not have centralized authorities. The emirate, therefore, appointed Hausa-Fulani Muslims as district heads for the incorporated communities (Suberu, 1996). Suleiman (2011) notes that the situation in Southern Kaduna was quite ugly since the Hausa-Fulani who had settled among Southern Kaduna people at that time were a minority living in small enclaves in the Southern Kaduna area, and Southern Kaduna relationship with the Hausa-Fulani up to that point had not been a good one (2011:7). Another view is that Southern Kaduna communities had related well with the few Hausa-Fulani that lived and did business among them. Thus, they had considered them to be different than the Hausa slave raiders from Zaria – until they suspected them of colluding with the emirate and colonial authorities (Mustapha, 2000). The most important thing, however, is that relationships were significantly changed and certain ideas about the Self and Other began to take shape and have continued to impact views about identity in contemporary Nigeria.

Since colonial Native Authority officials constituted the emirs, district heads and other officials who were mainly Hausa-Fulani Muslims, it was they who enforced colonial policies on the non-Muslim communities and thus, among the non-Muslim population, Hausa-Fulani became synonymous to colonialists, exploiters and oppressors (Suleiman, 2011). Moreover, because of the kind of leadership Southern Kaduna communities experienced under these Native Authorities, the idea that they were facing a Hausa-Fulani Muslim colonialism became popular (Smith, 1960; Kazah-Toure, 1999; Suleiman, 2011). Non-Hausa, non-Muslim groups were, for the first time, subjected to illegal forced labour for construction of personal houses of Native Authority officials and markets, heavily taxed and extorted; their women were used as carriers of loads and suppliers of firewood, amongst other things (Kazah-Toure, 1999). Although Hausa-Fulani commoners also experienced these practices in other parts of northern Nigeria, they were reserved for the non-Hausa-Fulani in the Southern Kaduna area. Non-Muslim women were also

taxed by the British who incorrectly claimed that these women, unlike Muslim women, could own property (Kazah-Toure, 1999). For a long time, all the Native Authority officials in the administration including security services (police and prisons), labour, judiciary and others, were Hausa-Fulani Muslims, and non-Muslim groups were often regarded as infidels, and regularly and arbitrarily subjected to Muslim legal and judicial systems – an experience that immensely contributed to their high receptivity to Christianity when they had access to it (Suberu, 1996; Kazah-Toure, 1999; Ochonu, 2013).

How did the colonial authorities respond to this situation? Native Authority officials were met with protest and resistance right from their first arrival in the 1900s. However, colonial authorities brutally suppressed these protests (Mustapha, 2000). The initial response of the British officials to the protests by Southern Kaduna ethnic groups can best be understood within the framework of the dominant racist representations of these groups among colonialists, as well as British anthropologists and explorers. The colonialists saw the ruling circles of the Sokoto Caliphate and its emirates "both in theory and practice, as the most ingenious, intelligent, cultured and politically sophisticated" (Kazah-Toure, 1999: 115). Although Lugard and his officials thought Islam inferior to Christianity, they also saw it as the highest form of spirituality that Africans could attain, superior to African traditional religions, and they believed that it provided a level of civilization not found among the 'pagan' cultures of northern Nigeria (Weiss, 2004). The non-Muslim ethnic groups of Southern Kaduna and other parts of the Middle Belt were described as "raw pagans", "savages", "uncivilized", "primitive", and of "inferior stock" (Galadima and Turaki, 2001:88; Kazah-Toure, 1999:116). Thus, apart from the physical separation of settlements and facilities of Hausa-Fulani from the other ethnic groups, the British justified forced labour by arguing that it provided the opportunity for the "pagans" to develop confidence in their affairs with the "more civilized" Hausa people, and also that the people could complain when unjustly treated. Yet, the British always backed the Hausa-Fulani rulers when the people complained or protested, thus, activists faced trials presided over by the same people against whom they had protested and who also managed the prisons where they served their sentences (Kazah-Toure, 1999)

Southern Kaduna peoples, thus, increasingly called for socio-political and judicial changes in form of new independent chiefdoms to be headed by their own people, a non-Muslim judicial

system, and an end to deliberate oppression, amongst other things (Suberu, 1996). They also exploited all avenues available to them including missionary education and the formation and joining of associations such as the Northern Nigerian Non-Muslim League founded in 1949. The persistent resistance of Southern Kaduna people to emirate rule led to the questioning of this rule by one of the colonial governors, Cameron, who also made attempts at reforms. However, other British officers rejected his attempts on the basis that it would undermine the Emir's authority, and the Emir argued that the people were too primitive to be left without Hausa-Fulani supervision. Nonetheless, the Governor asked that Southern Kaduna people be incorporated in positions such as district heads (Okpanachi, 2010:). Commenting on the fact that much of anticolonial revolt in Southern Kaduna was targeted at Hausa-Fulani Muslim and the construction of Hausa-Fulani as the enemy, Suleiman puts forward the following argument:

> It should be pointed out that the Hausa-Fulani aristocracy (emirs, chiefs and district heads) in Northern Nigeria which the British colonial government met, put in place and/ or worked with were as much victims of colonialism as their colonial subjects – both Muslims and non-Muslims across the protectorate. Several emirs and chiefs were deposed and exiled by the British colonial power while scores of district heads were relieved of their positions across the northern region of Nigeria during colonial rule (2011: 7).

While this is true, the subordinate position of and experience of aggression by the non-Hausa groups, coupled with the absence of the British in the colonized space of minorities makes it challenging to accept any narrative of equal victimhood. Relative to the experience of minorities, the Hausa-Fulani was powerful – arbitrarily. This view and the encounters that informed it continued to play out beyond the colonial era as the section that follows illustrate. It is also a dominant narrative among members of the Online Forum analyzed for this study. Thus, the foregoing discussion helps to situate online narratives in the broader northern Nigerian context and story.

2.5 Postcolonial Dramas

From 1954 through to Nigeria's independence in 1960, three autonomous regions were established in the country, with one major ethnic group dominating in each – Yoruba in the Western Region, Igbo in the Eastern Region and Hausa-Fulani in the Northern Region

(Weimann, 2010). During the period commonly known as the First Republic (1960-1966) these three regions were caught up in intense competition and struggle for political control and relevance. The Northern Region under the leadership of the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, who was the leader of the Northern People's Congress (NPC), exploited different strategies to boost northern influence in the country. Though the end of British rule left the North with greater political influence, indirect rule marred the region's competition with under-development and a lack of western education compared to the other two regions (Simon, 2011).

The Sardauna and the NPC also wanted to recover and preserve the religious and cultural heritage and identity of the Northern Region inherited from the Caliphate period which was disrupted by colonization. He further wanted to use this as a unifying strategy that would enhance the influence of the region on the affairs of the new republic (Ochonu, 2008). Apart from the threat posed by the more educated and more developed Southern Nigeria, with its large Christian population, the Northern Region's leadership had an "uncomfortable awareness" of the penetration of Christianity into the minority ethnic groups of the Middle Belt areas, such as Southern Kaduna, where Christianity was getting stronger from the 1950s (Peel, 1996).

The Sardauna, thus, introduced a principle of "One North, One Destiny" and a "Northernization" policy (Falola and Heaton, 2008). On the one hand, the policy favoured Northerners of all ethnicities and religions in employment. For the first time, according to Simon, many non-Hausa and non-Muslims felt a sense of belonging, making the period one of "exceptional unity" in northern Nigeria (2011:16-17). On the other hand, the Sardauna embarked on a massive Islamic proselytization in the Northern Region in order to achieve his goal of religious unity as well as recovery and preservation of his image of the region's religious and cultural identity. Northern elites also began to apply and interpret Islam in ways that helped them achieve different ideological ends (Bienen, 1986; Miles, 2003; International Crisis Group, 2010). The Sardauna also did not reform colonial administrative structures to address the concerns that, more than national independence, had dominated northern minorities such as those of Southern Kaduna. Rather, he and the NPC brutally suppressed opposition such as the Middle Zone League (MZL), to which many of the non-Hausa and non-Muslim minorities belonged and which served as their voice (Ojo, 2012; Simon, 2011; Peel, 1996). Some scholars suggest that the use of religion in the Northern Region for building political alliances during this period marked the beginning of the

politicization of religion and its relevance to conflicts in northern Nigeria (Ibrahim, 1989; Lenshie and Inalegwu, 2014; Ibrahim, 1991).

There have been several changes since the first republic ended in 1966, which have influenced socio-political and religious life in Kaduna. The abolition of the regional system and creation of states in Nigeria began to introduce new changes to inter-ethnic and interreligious relations especially in the area of majority-minority status as ethnic minorities in northern Nigeria became more visible in the public sphere (Weimann, 2010). While many states in the region still have an almost exclusively Hausa-Fulani Muslim population, the majority-minority status has been redefined in others. The present-day Kaduna state was created in 1975 from the former North Central state created in 1967. This, and the carving of Katsina state out of Kaduna in 1987, reduced the state-wide majority status of Hausa-Fulani Muslims[7] and opened up opportunities for more political participation by Southern Kaduna people. Local Government Areas in Southern Kaduna have increased from two in 1987 to eight by 1992. Although the influence of traditional rulers is waning in democratic Nigeria, numerous chiefdoms and districts were created along ethnic lines in Southern Kaduna as well as a few more emirates in other parts of the state (Angerbrandt, 2011; Blench, Longtau, Hassan and Wals, 2006).

At the level of state leadership, Hausa-Fulani Muslims have successively governed Kaduna state since independence. From 1999, Christians of Southern Kaduna origin have occupied the position of Deputy Governor (Suleiman 2011). The appointment of the then state governor, Namadi Sambo, as the vice president of Nigeria in 2010, created the opportunity for his deputy, Patrick Yakowa, a Southern Kaduna Christian to assume governorship, and retain the position in the 2011 elections – making him the first Christian and Southern Kaduna person to hold the position. While this was both highly celebrated and opposed, it was short-lived following his tragic death in 2012 (Omonobi, Mamah and Yenogoa, 2012). Complaints about marginalization, deprivation of rights, and underdevelopment have remained among Southern Kaduna groups. Many Southern Kaduna people also believe that splitting Kaduna would bring their alleged marginalization to an end and promote lasting peace. Thus, there has been pressure for the creation of Gurara State for Southern Kaduna (Angerbrandt, 2011; Suberu, 1996). The foregoing

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[7] Kaduna State of Nigeria, http://www.nigeriagalleria.com/Nigeria/States_Nigeria/Kaduna_State.html

shows that rather than reduce tensions, postcolonial state-making processes aggravated them and gave them new forms.

2.6 The Emergence of "Ethno-Religious" Conflicts in Kaduna State

My discussion so far suggests that interethnic and interreligious relations in Kaduna have historically been very tense. This frequently escalated into violent conflicts in the colonial and early independence periods (Mustapha, 1998). Scholars invariably trace contemporary tense ethno-religious relations and conflicts in Kaduna state to these periods. However, scholars such as Kazah-Toure (1999) and Suleiman (2011) suggest that though oppressive, these events no longer fully explain ongoing conflicts in Kaduna. The Kafanchan conflicts of 1987 ushered in a new phase of conflict in Kaduna and Nigeria at large, in which religion more explicitly emerged as a prominent feature; conflicts previously understood as communal began to be known as religious or ethno-religious. Thus, Kaduna has not only recorded a "superlative number of ethnoreligious disturbances ever in the history of Nigeria" (Gyong and Ogbadoyi, 2013:39); but, by the year 2000, was being described as a "dangerous convergence of religious and ethnic fears and animosities" (International IDEA, 2000:296).

Most of the scholars I have included in this review agree that ethno-religious conflicts in Kaduna state, and in Nigeria at large, are caused and reinforced by a complex mix of interlocking factors. These factors include sensitivity among Nigerians to religious issues, coupled with the militarized psyche of many Nigerians due to many years of military rule; attempts by some Nigerians (Christians and Muslims) to forcefully impose a religious ideology on others (Usman, 2013); contact with, and susceptibility of Nigerian Islam to violent fundamentalist forms of Islam in other parts of the world, as well as growth in violent fundamentalist forms of Islam in the country; radical Christianity fertilized by contact with Pentecostal revivalism from the West (Best, 2011; Salawu, 2010); contests over religious truths, citizenship (indigene-settler problems), distribution of resources, individual and group rights (International Crisis Group, 2010); public criticism and perception of Islam by Christian missionaries passed down to contemporary Nigerian Christians (Ridouani 2011); regionalism and the suppression of numerous minority ethnic groups by the three major ethnic groups (Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-Fulani) (Lergo, 2011); inciting media captions and reports, and inflammatory rhetoric on social

media and circulated text messages (Orji and Uzodi, 2015); and shifting perceptions of ethno-religious identities and "othering" between groups in ways that portray the "other" as an existential threat (Okpanachi, 2010).

Attempts to understand these conflicts are further compounded by the prominence of religious and ethnic differences. Most, if not all, of the conflicts in postcolonial Kaduna and northern Nigeria, notwithstanding their actual causes, invariably also take on a religious dimension. Thus, they are commonly and "rightly or wrongly attributed to religion" (Gotan, 2008:93). By far, the most popular theory on the role of religion in social conflicts in Nigeria, is the "politicization" or "manipulation of religion theory" mentioned earlier (Gotan, 2008). This argument emerged following conflicts in the 1980s and believed to have been popularized by Bala Usman who saw such politicization as a way of exerting control over people's behaviour and actions without their being aware of the purpose, goal or method through which they are being controlled (Ayantayo, 2009). According to Ibrahim;

> The manipulation thesis posits that religious differences are amplified and that confessional conflicts are provoked as part of a wider strategy for acquisition of political influence and/or for enhancing the assets of groups involved in the process of power brokerage….the series of religious conflicts that have been occurring in Nigeria since 1977 are a direct result of the manipulation of religion by 'intermediary bourgeoisie' in an attempt to mystify the way in which they are exploiting the masses (1991:127).

Scholars such as Mwadkwon (2001:57) have, therefore, cautioned against simplistic interpretations of these conflicts in purely religious terms. Fwatshak (2007:59) further points out that religion is often used as a tool for identity fixture and mobilization, although religious tensions may not have been a triggering cause of conflicts.

As my main goal here is to offer a historical survey of the factors that have shaped present ethno-religious contestations and the ways in which the people of (Southern) Kaduna perceive and relate to themselves and others, I briefly highlight a few specific conflicts in postcolonial Kaduna. Besides being major and high-intensity conflicts, more than anything else, these conflicts have shaped present-day life and relations in the state and affected Christian-Muslim relations nationwide. They have also contributed immensely to the emergence of several civil groups, such as the Online Forum that I investigate in this research. The conflicts in question include the Kafanchan Crisis of 1987, the Zango-Kataf Crisis of 1992, the Sharia Conflicts of

2000 (and Miss World, 2002), and the 2011 Post-Election Violence (and ensuing tensions). My focus is on the ways in which each of these conflicts shaped contemporary ethno-religious relations in Kaduna state as seen in both offline and digital spaces.

2.6.1 Kafanchan Crises of 1987
The violent conflicts of 1987 began at the Kafanchan Teachers College in Kaduna. One of the leaders of the Christian student's association in the college, and a former Muslim, allegedly misinterpreted the Quran and called the Muslim prophet an imposter. Violent conflict escalated during a protest by members of the Muslim Student Society against the alleged misrepresentation, and soon spread to other parts of Kaduna and northern Nigeria (Ibrahim, 1987). Investigators of this conflict suggest that enduring intercommunal tensions, frantic mobilization of religion in northern Nigeria, and the controversy at that time over Nigeria's registration into the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), among other things, had already warmed up the stage for the emergence of this conflict (Human Rights Watch, 2010; Suberu, 1996). More importantly, however, is the observation that this was a major departure from the essentially inter-communal nature of conflicts in Kaduna. The conflict presaged and introduced an additional dimension to conflict, namely "a Muslim versus Christian dichotomy" (Kazah-Toure, 1999: 134). It "marked the assimilation of the ethnic minority ferment in Southern Zaria[Kaduna] into federation-wide, inter-regional and inter-religious struggle involving northerners and southerners, and Christians and Muslims…with telling implications for the relationship between Christians and Muslims throughout the federation" (Suberu, 1996:51).

2.6.2 Zango-Kataf 1992
February 1992 saw the eruption of violent conflict involving the predominantly Christian Atyap (Kataf) ethnic group and Muslim Hausa-Fulani in Zango-Kataf town, Kaduna. The Hausa-Fulani community had resisted plans to relocate the Zango weekly market site from the town center, populated by Hausa-Fulani, to a supposedly more neutral site (Suberu, 1996). The Local Government Council under the leadership of an Atyap man gave reasons such as the congestion of the market, poor hygienic conditions, and expansion of opportunities for upcoming Atyap traders to reduce Hausa-Fulani dominance of commerce in the area, and the need for a more suitable site rather than the midst of Hausa settlement (Mustapha, 2000). The Hausa-Fulani in the area resisted the plan on the grounds that the new market site incorporated the site for their

annual Muslim *Eid* prayers, and that the move was a plan intended to hurt them economically. Thus, they obtained an injunction to stop the relocation (Mustapha, 2000; Suberu, 1996).

This conflict aggravated in May 1992 and spread to other parts of Kaduna for several reasons. One such reason was allegations by the Hausa-Fulani of being threatened with a letter from Atyap community leaders expressing plans to reclaim Atyap land from the Hausa-Fulani (viewed as settlers) (Mustapha, 2000). There were also allegations about a letter to the Sultan of Sokoto sent by an extremist Muslim group asking for his help to start a jihad in defense of the Muslim Hausa-Fulani in Zango-Kataf (Suberu, 1996). The market relocation issue became an opportunity for the expression of deeper and longstanding resentment such as the Atyap unhappiness over Hausa-Fulani Muslim domination of political, economic and cultural life in the area; resentment over the continued incorporation of the Atyap into the Zaria emirate post-independence, and their being belittled by the Hausa-Fulani who called them *arna* (pagan or infidel) (Human Rights Watch, 2010). This conflict, following the trend set by the 1987 conflict, increasingly became ethno-religious, expressed in the burning of mosques and churches, and attacks along religious lines as the conflict spread. People also began to relocate and settle in areas dominated by their own ethnicities and religion (Blench, 2010).

2.6.3 Sharia Conflicts of 2000

Weimann (2010) argues that in pre-colonial northern Nigeria, the application of Islamic law was the most obvious demonstration of the extent to which a ruler upheld Islam. Thus, application of Islamic law in modern northern Nigeria become a symbol of the region's political and religious autonomy (Weimann, 2010). When the British conquered the region, they retained the Islamic justice system and treated it as a system of customary/native law, charging native courts to dispense the native laws and customs that existed in the area as long as it was not "repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience", and native law and custom "includes Moslem law" (Ostien, 2007:171). British authorities were also aware of the fears of Christians and non-Hausa-Fulani minorities and the differing opinions over Sharia application in the region. Knowing this threatened the unity of the entire country, they set up, in 1958, the Willinks Commission to "ascertain the facts about the fears of minorities in any part of Nigeria and propose means of allaying those fears whether well or ill founded" (Ojo, 2012:58).

Minorities argued to the commission that Sharia was a tool used to marginalize them (Bolaji, 2013), and Southern Kaduna minorities tabled further complaints including that the "Hausa-Fulani were contemptuous of them and called them *arna* meaning 'pagans' or 'infidels'" (Abdu and Umar, 2002:89). The commission's recommendations referred some of the complaints back to regional authorities to address. This led to the adoption, in 1959, of the Penal Code for the Northern Region based on the Penal Codes of India (1860) and Sudan (1899) (Weimann, 2010). The code was largely English with certain provisions based on Islamic criminal law, and was inherited by all the states that emerged from the Northern Region of from 1966, including Kaduna created in 1975 (Weimann, 2010).

This compromise was, however, dissatisfactory for some Muslims as manifested after independence. At the sittings of Nigeria's new constitution drafting committee from 1978 and National Assembly from 1978, the issue of Sharia constituted "the most contentious and divisive debate" (Bienen, 1986:51). There were also heated debates in the 1989 and 1994 constituent assemblies but, in all cases, debates were ended by military rulers who intervened to maintain the status quo (Weimann, 2010). Northern Nigerian Muslims and activists advocated for a federal Sharia court of appeal for Muslims, which would take a middle position between the Sharia courts of appeal of northern states and the Supreme Court of Nigeria (Bienen, 1986). Practitioners of indigenous religions and Christians strongly fought against this motion on the grounds that it violated the secular status of Nigeria and marked the beginning of an islamisation of the country (Falola and Heaton, 2008). Joseph Kenny (1996) posits that the Sharia advocacy was another manifestation of the manipulation of religion by politicians because there was not much desire among Muslims in the country for life under strict Sharia restrictions. Yet, because of the symbolic meaning of Sharia, politicians who advance the cause get votes (Kenny, 1996).

The re-emergence of the Sharia debate, which resulted in violent altercations and the most lasting division between Nigerian Christians and Muslims, especially in Kaduna, was at the end of military rule in 1998 when general elections to usher in the fourth republic were announced. Ahmed Sani, a governorship candidate for Zamfara state promised "religious reforms" if elected (Weimann, 2010). This gained him popular support, but more importantly, it also gave rise to a Muslim popular movement which put pressure on eleven other northern states to follow suit (Weimann, 2010). This move by Sani and other politicians is widely seen as purely political, and

an exploitation of the already growing rift between Christians and Muslims nationwide. However, many Muslims, especially advocates of the reform, understood it to be an overdue move towards decolonization and expulsion of unacceptable innovations in Nigeria's Islamic life and society. They also believed it would improve security, address corruption and moral decadence, which were the result of western cultural influence and loss of Islamic values (Miles, 2003; Weimann, 2010).

In addition to the many anti-implementation arguments, Kaduna Christians argued that Sharia implementation was a move to force Islam on non-Muslims in the state and to use state resources for promotion of Islam (Paden, 2005). Despite efforts by the government to control the heightening of tension during the rallies and protests by supporters and opponents of Sharia implementation, highly intense violence between Christians and Muslims broke out in February and May 2000 (Ukiwo, 2003). Southern Kaduna members of the State House of Assembly further threatened the House with secession if it went ahead to implement Sharia across the state. Thus, as a compromise, and to accommodate all people in the state, a tripartite court system was adopted: magistrate courts were retained, area courts in areas with high non-Muslim population became customary courts and, in areas with high Muslim populations, Sharia courts (Ukiwo, 2003). In parts of the Kaduna metropole and other major towns with mixed populations, religious laws were forbidden (Weimann, 2010). Furthermore, the state governor, unlike in some Sharia states, accepted that restrictions such as those imposed on the sale and consumption of alcohol would not apply to Christians in the state (Paden, 2005).

The fact that conflict occurred in Kaduna over Sharia law despite its substantial Christian and non-Hausa-Fulani population gave rise to a wave of fear, longstanding suspicion and heightened anxieties of Christians in other Middle Belt states where Sharia had not been proposed. The conflict also gave rise to reprisal attacks in other states (Ukiwo, 2003). One effect of the conflict in Kaduna is the polarity it dramatically heightened in residence patterns within and outside Kaduna metropolis. Christians and Muslims continued to relocate to areas where their respective ethno-religious group is dominant, except for some areas with seemingly even distribution of Christians and Muslims (Gandu, 2011; Harris, 2011). John Paden noted that by "2002, residents were describing particular areas of Kaduna as 100 percent Christian or 100 percent Muslim"

(2005:172).[8] This reduced contact between Christians and Muslims increased mutual suspicion which fueled grave crises afterwards, such as the 2002 Miss World conflict and the 2011 post-election conflicts (ICG, 2010; Paden, 2005).

2.6.4 2011 Post-Election Violence and After

The contest for Nigerian presidency between Goodluck Jonathan, who was a Christian from the Niger-Delta region, and Muhammadu Buhari, a Muslim from northern Nigeria, again divided Nigerians along the lines of religion and ethnicity in 2011. When Jonathan emerged as the president, there were protests in northern Nigeria by supporters of Buhari alleging that the elections were rigged. This soon turned into violence (Human Rights Watch, 2003). The Human Rights Watch's report on the conflict observes that rioters were initially Hausa-Fulani Muslims who attacked properties of prominent members of their own religion and ethnicity that they considered to be loyal to the winning party (PDP), as well as police and electoral commission offices (HRW, 2003: Orji and Uzodi, 2012). In Kaduna state, the violence moved from attacks on Hausa-Fulani Muslims by mobs of the same identity to violence between Christians and Muslims (Bekoe, 2011). Christians in Southern Kaduna were reported to have also attacked and expelled many rural Fulani pastoralists from that part of the state (Human Rights Watch, 2010). The severity of the conflicts in Kaduna have been linked again to past animosities between Southern Kaduna and Hausa-Fulani in the state, and the tension caused by the vehement resistance by some Muslims to the governorship candidacy of Patrick Yakowa, a Christian, leading to the most inflammatory electoral contest in the state since its creation (Bolaji, 2013; Orji and Uzodi, 2012).

Kaduna, since the post-election violence of 2011, has seen several bombings of places of worship and other public places by suspected members of the Boko Haram group.[9] But what has aggravated ethno-religious relations even more are the dozens of attacks on Christian rural settlements, and the evidence suggesting that Fulani herdsmen were responsible for the "apparent revenge attacks" (Human Rights Watch, 2010:110). The persistence of these attacks in Southern Kaduna has prompted involvement of civil society organizations that, together with several

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[8] The Kaduna state governor, Ramalan Yero, in 2013, lamented this division of Kaduna almost into two neat halves separated by the bridge in Kaduna city, and some consequences such as how recently Muslim and Christians children rarely attend the same schools. http://www.informationng.com/2013/02/kaduna-state-gov-laments-muslimschristians-dichotomy-sues-for-peace-unity.html

[9] Example of news reports on the explosions can be found here: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28447204

activists and some politicians, have attempted to end the mass killings. Southern Kaduna groups have explored avenues such as digital media to challenge what they perceive as premeditated attempts to decimate them. But also, the 2011 elections generally saw a nation-wide social media explosion that changed people's participation in the electoral processes as well as the conflicts that ensued. This constitutes another major historical moment for interreligious relations in which the significance of digital media is heightened. This is further discussed in the next section.

2.7 Media, Horizontal Inequality and Interreligious Relations in Nigeria

Print media were first established in Nigeria by European missionaries in the 1840s to help them proselytize. Other print media later emerged, such as the *West African Pilot*, started in 1937 by Nnamdi Azikiwe, nationalist and first president of independent Nigeria, to promote nationalist agendas and facilitate the struggle for independence from British rule (Tafida, 2015). Broadcast media began as an extension of the British Broadcasting Cooperation's (BBC) programs in Nigeria in 1932; and through several states of development, the Nigerian Broadcasting Cooperation emerged in the 1950s. The Broadcasting Company of Northern Nigeria (BCNN) was established in 1962, in Kaduna, and started the Radio Kaduna Television (RKTV) (Akashoro, Okidu and Ajaga, 2013). The earliest northern print media were also established in Kaduna in the 1960s, such as the *New Nigeria Newspaper* (Tafida, 2015).

In their study of media from pre- to postcolonial Nigeria, Akashoro, Okidu and Ajaga (2013), observe that broadcasting, especially in the 1960s to the 1980s, was worked out to exclusively serve and promote the political aspirations of the governments of each region. The self-interest of the owners dominated the media in such a way that all the ideal functions of media were excluded – watch-dog, criticism, diversity of voices and neutral observation (Akashoro, Okidu and Ajaga 2013). There was a total manipulation and ownership by the successive national, regional and state governments and what was communicated to the people in both broadcast and print were only official versions of stories. Several social actors fought against this situation. Thus, following the deregulation of media by the military regime from 1985, private media began to emerge, thereby, softening government monopoly of media (Tafida, 2015). However, government-owned media continued to be influenced by their loyalty to governments. In

addition, they denied deviant groups access and gave such groups and their causes negative press. The authors further note that while the private media helped the situation to an extent, they were also influenced by the specific interests of the organizations it collaborated with (Akashoro, Okidu and Ajaga, 2013).

In his study of media coverage of minorities in Nigeria, Ayobami Ojebode (2007) argues that the there is a persistent and gross lack of attention to minorities. This both reflects and causes horizontal inequalities in the country. Drawing on previous studies, Ojebode (2007) shows that in most cases not everyone is seen by the media in pluralistic societies as the media often focuses on the influential and dominant groups and give smaller groups only negative attention. As a result, the cultural symbols and events surrounding the lives of dominant individuals and groups are privileged and elevated above others. Ojebode (2007) shows that the three "mega" ethnic groups in Nigeria (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo) have enjoyed such privileges and elevation to the detriment of minorities. For decades, for instance, all major news on national television included salutations in the languages of these three ethnic groups. In addition, the national radio station's identification jingle was a blend of sounds from cultural musical instruments of the three mega ethnic groups (Ojebode, 2007). Ojebode (2007) further illustrates the low cultural status of minorities and their issues in Nigerian media, showing that 77% of coverage in print media was of the three major ethnic groups, with 23% for minorities. With broadcast media, news coverage of the activities of minorities was 6.3% and 69% of this low coverage represented minorities as violent and greedy. Ojebode (2007) also highlights that minorities believe that their cultural experiences and struggles in the Nigerian space were not known by the government as well as outsiders because of the lack of attention they receive. For them, such inattention is also a reflection of their economic and political subordination (Ojebode, 2007). Ojebode's findings were also confirmed by media personnel who attempted to exonerate themselves using the lack of tools and funding, poor and unpaid salaries, and market potential, as reasons for their lack of attention to ethnic minorities (Ojebode, 2007).

Akpan, Erin and Olofu-Aeoye (2013) and Auwal (2015) agree with some of Ojebode's findings. They argue that media outputs, goals and methods are largely shaped by the environment in which they operate, and very often work to reinforce dominant narratives and ideologies in the environment – which in turn influences governance quality and peace. Akpan, Erin and Olofu-

Aeoye (2013) and Auwal (2015) suggest that to develop a better understanding of the role the media plays in interreligious conflicts in Nigeria, the Nigerian environment needs to be understood. Akpan, Erin and Olofu-Aeoye (2013) note that government-owned media in Nigeria hardly gives the expected publicity of the people's grievances no matter how genuine they may be, as they have to conform to the wishes of their owners and deal with other factors such as corruption, poor remunerations of personnel and the dangers journalists encounter in their work. While private and social media has reduced these problems, and changed the one-directional nature of media communication in the country, they are not entirely free of the same problems. Thus, the authors conclude that, like religion, the media is susceptible to manipulation and has been used to misrepresent and aggravate conflicts in Nigeria with biased news coverage and reporting Auwal (2015).

These authors suggest that media has played a major role in aggravating the tension that exist between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, a fact that Nigerians are increasingly aware of and that has created a mistrust of mainstream media by Nigerians who have felt ignored and misrepresented by it. A study by the BBC Media Action (2014) shows that while Nigerians expressed appreciation of the media for timely updates and information on the developments of conflicts in the country, they also believe that the media was, to a large extent, responsible for the escalation of conflicts due to inaccuracies in reporting. The study also found that Nigerian citizens engaged freely in conversations about conflicts publicly and in private, as well as on digital/social media platforms (BBC, 2014). However, these platforms, particularly Facebook, twitter and 2go, very rapidly circulated rumours and inciting information about conflicts.

This is further elaborated in a report of the Media Tracking Center in Nigeria, by Judith B. Asuni and Jacqueline Farris (2011). The Media Tracking Center ran a project that explored how social media platforms operated during Nigeria's 2011 elections by tracking social media activities and collating information from Facebook, twitter, SMS and photos shared online. The report shows that there was a sudden internet and telephone explosion with activities both from individuals and traditional media during this period (Asuni and Farris, 2011). This resulted from huge anticipation among citizens following a renewed confidence in the Nigerian Electoral Commission because of the appointment of a respected academic and activist, Professor Attahiru Jega to head the commission. This also changed the nature of consumption and dissemination of

information in Nigeria as many citizens could share their thoughts and observations on the election, ensuing conflicts and other surrounding issues irrespective of their location, status, age, political orientation, religion or ethnicity. In the post-election mayhem, social media helped save many lives as conflict management personnel utilized information shared by Nigerians. However, it also incited and escalated violence. The study gave examples of messages that spread among Christians and Muslims to worsen the violence especially in Kaduna where it was most intense (Asuni and Farris, 2011).

The study shows that because of the role of social media during the 2011 election period, many Nigerians, for the first time, felt that their voices would be heard (Asuni and Farris, 2011). It opened up the wider Nigeria for many citizens as, for instance, people accessed online copies of newspapers and electronic media that they would normally not access or interact with – both from other parts of Nigeria and globally. This upsurge of social media activities in the Nigerian environment was as a result of its affordability, accessibility, the anonymity it granted in some cases, and the way it allowed Nigerians to cross group-boundaries to encounter and interact with other individuals and groups of different locations, orientation, education, beliefs and more (Asuni and Farris, 2011).

2.8 Conclusion

Most analyses of ethnic and religious relations in Nigeria emerge from historical or political/sociological perspectives and positions. These are the approaches that have also been adopted by religious studies scholars. Thus, there are significant similarities in terms of approaches and content across scholarships in the academic discourse on the subject. However, the themes raised in these fields of scholarship, as highlighted in my historical survey above, calls for a diversity of approaches that could further deeper insight into the problem considering the persistence interreligious and interethnic conflicts in Nigeria and globally. Such themes as colonial disruption and aggravation of preexisting tensions, resistance, the persistent role of identity, among other things, yield more insight with a postcolonial analysis, which my study does.

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The historical discussion in this chapter suggests that Southern Kaduna people have been a marginalized group in the Nigerian socio-political space as well as by mainstream media, but more so in northern Nigeria. Although their proximity to Hausa-Fulani center of power shaped and intensified their experience in certain ways (Osaghae, 1998), they share in a general exclusion and marginalization that many minorities across Nigeria experience. In addition, literature on the subject suggests a continuous connection among the different historical moments despite the changing times, structures and conditions. This is seen in the consistent resurfacing of past grievances and moments that have been fixed and distilled, thereby creating a history of violence that is ever present and never fully past.

This constant resurfacing of historical grievances is a significant part of the explanations for recurring conflicts, and potentially blinds scholarly analysis of interreligious relations in Nigeria. Thus, rather than offering new insights into such relations, scholars seem to recycle the same explanations and approaches although the recurrence of conflicts call for deeper reexamination in relation to fresh social developments and changes. To be sure, the prominence of such remote causes of conflicts means that they are important and some of such historical grievances are about issues that are still experienced today. Thus, without dismissing or undermining the significance of these historical factors as well as their consistent reemergence in the way minorities respond to contemporary tensions in Nigeria, my study focuses on how these groups themselves employ these and other newly emergent narratives to produce representations about themselves and the dominant groups in ways that, despite its advantages to their cause, stall the change they seek.

The social media moment and explosion discussed in the preceding section may have provided the suitable environment and opportunity for the emergence of the several Southern Kaduna emancipation groups on social media because of their surfacing around the same period. Also because of the several advantages they could see from social media, as it allowed them to circumvent restrictions, utilize social capital across boundaries within Nigeria and in the diaspora, share their struggles with outsiders, deal with the lack of interest minorities receive from traditional and established media and find a platform for their voices, which the voices of dominant ethnic groups had overshadowed. But what happens to grievances when they are migrated to this new digital platform? What emerges after they have been wrestled with on an

online space? And how does this potentially shape interreligious and interethnic relations? Scholarly literature and research has left much to be desired on these questions. My study moves beyond the focus on institutional failures and historical grievances, to explore these new cultural, social and religious spaces that are emerging as sites for engagement, articulation and contestation of these narratives and conflicts, as well as for reproducing and crafting new identities that reflect interethnic and interreligious tensions and suspicions. The next chapter theoretically maps this terrain by reviewing literature with a focus on the question of identities, religion and representation in the postcolonial offline and online spaces.

Chapter Three:

Identity, Digital Media and Representation in Postcolonial Africa

3.1 Introduction

Sociologist and narrative theorist, Margaret Somers (1994), holds that identities are constructed through locating oneself or being located in social narratives. Narratives connect people to a set of historical, special and other relationships, thereby providing explanation for events and experiences (Somers, 1994). In the previous chapter, I outlined and discussed narratives of and about Southern Kaduna people and religion to highlight some of the culturally constructed stories within which Southern Kaduna construct ideas about who they are and represent themselves and others to the world. In this chapter, I will explore this further, and discuss the ways in which such identities and representation in their different expressions and dimensions have been explained in scholarship, especially in relation to Othering and digital media in postcolonial Africa. Representation, according to Anita Wenden (2005), is the language that is used in conversation or text to give meaning to events, social conditions, groups and social practices. Thus, from this point of view, meanings are not neutral, but are shaped by the position from which representations are constructed, whether socio-cultural, autobiographical and otherwise. This is what identity groups compete for, in identity politics, the meaning and the power to represent or to naturalize their own representation of reality (Wenden, 2005).

This chapter takes for granted that identities and representation are closely connected, and often inseparable, especially when dealing with contestations by identity groups (Puttergill and Leilde, 2006). Thus, both identity and representation are a consistent and central theme throughout the chapter. Given that my study of representations on an Online Forum is framed within postcolonial theory, I privilege postcolonial perspectives on identities, and see identities as constructed, fluid, multiple and hybrid. I examine postcolonial discourses on identity and representation, and the connection between identity and social behaviour and attitudes, especially in the context of intergroup conflicts. I further examine constructions of religious and ethnic identities in Africa and the role of language in the construction of identity, using Nigeria as a case for analysis. The chapter also examines current research on themes such as identity

construction, and self-presentation/performance in digital media. Finally, I examine recent literature on the emerging field of digital religion and how they explain the interaction between religion and digital media.

3.2 Multiple, Crisscrossing and Hybrid: Postcolonial Discourse on Identity

Contemporary identity theory and social identity theory highlight central issues in the study of identity within the social sciences and humanities. The social psychologist Jan E. Stets and the sociologist Peter J. Burke (2000), offer a comprehensive explanation of identity with a focus on the Self, that illuminates the concept and offers a helpful starting point for understanding the basis of identity formation, activation and salience, cognitive and motivational processes that follow upon the activation of identities. They note that in social identity theory, identity is formed though the processes of self-categorization (known as identification in identity theory), and social comparison (Stets and Burke, 2000). Thus, identity means a person's (or group's) knowledge or awareness of their belonging to a particular social group or category. Social comparison, on the other hand, is the group formation process whereby people considered similar to the self are seen as belonging with the self (in-group) and those different to the self are seen as belonging to an out-group category (Stets and Burke, 2000). The process of self-categorization results in the exaggeration of, emphasis on, and attachment of special significance to the similarities of other in-group members to the self, and the differences to the self, perceived in out-group members. In constructing the self as unique, insignificant differences may be amplified and important similarities downplayed, and such differences become imagined as natural or obvious, rather than produced (Lawler, 2008; Ellison, 2013). Social comparison supplies the mechanism that produce positive judgement of in-group and negative judgement of out-group (Stets and Burke, 2000). Identity theory differs from social identity theory in its emphasis on roles as the basis of identity. The Self and Other are identified as "occupants" of a role within the context of social structure. The "meaning" and "expiations" attached to roles and their performance become incorporated into the way an identity is understood, and the yardstick for behavior (Stets and Burke, 2000: 225-226). However, Stets and Burke (2000) suggest that a complete theory of identity would take both doing (social identity theory) and being (identity theory) as the inseparable basis of identity formation.

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Unlike the impression given by Stets and Burke, Richard Jenkins (2008) in *Social Identity* suggests that identity is not only about self-definition or self-concept in relation to one's or a group's position in society (Jenkins, 2008). It also includes who, how, or what, others define or perceive an individual or group to be. As Jenkins succinctly puts it, "who we are, or who we are seen to be, can matter enormously" (2008:4). Jenkins further argues that identities should be viewed as a process of "being" or "becoming" instead of a "settled matter"; as "Not even death freezes the picture: identity or reputation may be reassessed after death" (2008:17). But what triggers such [re]assessment or salience of identity? For the sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman (2004) it is difficult or irritating situations that challenges one's sense of belonging; situations that create awareness of alternative(s) to one's belonging. On such occasions, one realizes the fluid and unstable nature of identity and belonging (2004:12). Other scholars would agree that identities are often activated and imbued with social and political significance as a result of tension and/or when a desire is at stake (Knowles and Gardner, 2008; Forehand, Reed, and Deshpande, 2002). This relates to Bauman's (2004) view of identity as ambivalent because it can be oppressive and liberating. This also loosely reflects Bauman's portrayal of the shift from modern to postmodern conception and preoccupation with the meaning, nature and praxis of identity. In an earlier work Bauman (1996) says identity is highly contingent and too easy to choose in the postmodern era, and cannot be contained, essentialized or streamlined as in the modern.

In postcolonial theory conceptualizations of identity generally follow the postmodern view of identities as being multiple, dynamic, hybrid, unstable, fluid, evolving, sensitive and context specific, with the added critical focus on the effect of colonialism on the nature and production of identities among colonized peoples. In his deconstruction of identity in postcolonial fiction, Cherki Karkaba rightly observes that identity in postcolonial thinking is destabilized and fragmented as a result of the "increasing awareness that it is a question involving the relationship between the self and the other" (2010:93). The formation of the Self is done in opposition to the Other (Basaglia, 2012). Consequently, for Karkaba (2010), the Self is unstable and continuously shifts in relation to the Other, which it sees as the embodiment of difference. It is this that forms the basis for how I view and analyze identity in this project. Karkaba (2010), like most postcolonial scholars, relied on, and reechoes, the seminal contributions of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak whose writings form the basis of postcolonial theory as it is widely

understood, and the conceptions of identity and representation in the various application of the theory.

In *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said interrogates the process of constructing and representing identity. He focuses particularly on how the West (Europe and North America) discursively produced the Arab and Muslim Other as primitive, cunning, oversexed, and barbaric, through the use of media, force (because the Other was regarded as unruly) and different knowledge regimes, which also served to mirror the West as superior to the imagined Other (Said, 1978). Thus, Said maps out the relationship between power and knowledge in representation, and the (legitimization of) domination. Colonial authorities depended on a prior body of flawed and abstract knowledge about the Orient, depicting it as irrational, childlike and different and this had material effects on the colonized (Said, 1978). Thakur notes that *Orientalism,* in addition to exposing hegemony and racial power politics, is a description of a "fantastic spectacle", the "theatricality of constituting the Self via the Other" (2016:42). Said (1978) also shows how representation is also a contemporary process, particularly through film that persistently reinforce certain images of the Arab Other. In *Orientalism*, Said (1978) brings out the connection between politics of representation and identity construction, given social interaction and power. He also problematizes the practice of categorizing, defining and labelling groups. However, Said's world is polarized into two almost entirely separate halves which stand in opposition to each other. But as Ramone (2011) notes, this is only in appearance as Said is specifically concerned with Arabs and Islam as well as French, British and American colonizers. Said's work enables a critical interrogation and excavation of the underlying mechanisms in the representations of the Self and Other in Nigeria, and how this is discursively produced online.

Identity and representations of Africa has been a critical subject among many African thinkers and writers, many of whom have focused on the European construction or "invention" of Africa (cf. Mudimbe, 1988), and Africa's role in reinventing itself. Emevwo Biakolo (2006) explores the representation of Africa as ignorant, idle, lazy, thievish, mistrustful, suspicious, brutish, crafty, bloody and treacherous. Biakolo (2006) also examines the binaries that emerged to entrench the superiority of Europe over Africa such as conceptual versus perceptual, pre-logical versus logical, scientific versus religious. Biakolo (2006) challenges contemporary imagination of Africa as backward based on views that Africans do not have an inherent incapacity for

scientific advancement and cling to magic/religion instead of threading the path of Europe. Mogobe Ramose (2003) argues that Africa, even after colonialism, has had many spokespersons other than Africans that have produced discourses and images about Africa, often outside an underlying inherited definition of human beings as rational animals. In his seminal work, *The Invention of Africa* (1988), V. Y. Mudimbe interrogates the discursive creation of Africa through persistent Eurocentric categories, religious and philosophical practices and epistemologies. These, he argues, resulted in alterity, through the production of Europe–Africa binaries that marginalize and pathologize African societies, bodies and identity (Mudimbe, 1988). Further, in *The Idea of Africa* (1994), Mudimbe illustrates that from Ancient Greek narratives to postmodern discourses, African discourses have been changed or silenced through Western narratives, resulting in a reaction from African intellectuals which has caused both affirmation, reconstruction and denial of African identity and difference. Kwame Appiah (1992) in his analysis, prioritizes the hybridity, diversity and richness of African identities. He deconstructs and challenges the invented fixed and essentialized representations of Africa by both imperialists and African nationalists. (Appiah, 1992) Biakolo (2010) and Mudimbe (1988) reserve a role for the African intellectual, including the diaspora, in subverting Eurocentric images of Africa and reinventing African identities. Paul Zaleza (2006) has particularly pointed to the calls of scholars such as Mamadou Diouf and Bachir Diagne that Africans should pay attention to the epistemological repository of the Islamic library as a way of interrogating the colonial one in which representations of Africa is rooted. Kwasi Wiredu (2006) explores misconceptions and impositions on the meanings and experiences of indigenous religions in Africa, calling for "disentangling" of such frameworks of thinking and a further clarification of religious beliefs in Africa (2006: 34).

While the criticisms in the above paragraph do subvert dominant Eurocentric narratives and facilitate a certain level of caution and suspicion in the production of knowledge about Africa, I find the near obsession with colonialism to be limiting as well. Hence, the importance of Zaleza's (2006) call for attention to Islamic documentation about Africa. There is need for more attention to social formations and interactions that do not necessarily result from colonialism, as these could enhance our understanding of the colonial disruption of identities by offering a comparative point of reference to colonialism. Certain ways of constructing and representing the Self and Other existed among groups that now make up Nigeria before colonialism, which

colonialism merely exploited rather than created (Philips, 2004). Moreover, there is much that such discourse could learn from examining colonial northern Nigeria for instance, where Islam and Hausa society were represented as more civilized, advanced and exemplary, compared to the neighbouring primitive, barbaric pagan tribes and religions for whom subordination to Muslim native authorities was considered civilizing (Ochonu, 2008).

Control over the representation of culture and identity is a major interest of the cultural theorist, Stuart Hall (1980; 1982; 1996). Hall sees culture as constituting systems of representation which, as a tool and condition of signifying practices, actively produce meaning rather than present the previous meaning or intention of the subject in the world. In other words, representation is a reconstruction and not an actual portrayal of what is being represented. It is a fiction. Thus, like Homi Bhabha, Hall (1980) believes identities to be ambivalent and in a flux. For Hall, all representations are ideological, and serve the objectives of the controllers of media. For instance, the distinction between the West and the rest, as Said also shows, served to position the west as superior and oblige the west to upgrade the rest (Said, 1978). Hall notes that this representation and language is something individuals adopt and within which they position themselves whenever they use expressions such as third world, globalization, modernization, even if they do not personally accept the superiority of the West (Hall, 1996). Thus, to be able to avoid an invocation of Western superiority, such language must be changed, and this is a very challenging task.

Homi Bhabha (1990; 1996) stands out in his ability to avoid simplistic "Us" vs "Them" binaries in his discussions of identity. Bhabha recognizes the importance of cultural difference constructed through translation. For Bhabha (1994) the encounters between the colonizer and the colonized always produces an unresolvable excess that is also not translatable (Bhabha, 2016). This is further complicated by migrants, minorities, and postcolonials who disrupt the borderline around identities and produce ambivalent and shifting boundaries which they also embody (Bhabha, 1990). This conception of ambivalent boundary is important to Bhabha's understating of hybridity through which those who are alienated can resist their oppressors. Hybridity, as a "third space" characterized by ambivalence, reflects the unintended consequence of translating the Other's identity, which produces something new instead of what was intended (Bhabha, 1996). The contact between the colonized and colonizer challenged the essentialist, fixed,

invariable and pure conception of identity and culture, and created a third space, an in-between as a site of disruption, negotiation, and emergence of new possibilities. In this space, established categories of identity and culture are questioned, meanings and representation are not fixed or singular, colonial hegemony and narratives are displaced. According to Ramone (2011), Bhabha may not adequately reflect the precise reality of the people on the margins with his concept of hybridity, yet he shows how the Other is always present and part of the Self, thereby challenges any conceptions of nation, culture or identity as pure and unique. This is useful for analysing conflicts and politics involving identity groups. But more importantly, Bhabha (1996) creates an opening for me to analyse the digital space as a possible "third space" that is ambivalent and on which boundaries are traversed, worked out, and negotiation, resistance and subversion enabled.

According to John R. LeBlanc (2002) such ambivalence in identity and the tension it births is at the heart of postcolonial theorizing. For LeBlanc, postcolonial theory highlights the problem of home and its transformation into alien space, as well as the transformation of alien into home space. LeBlanc argues that the home space has, at least, two dimensions. One is physical: one's space or place of origin, or a place with which one identifies. The second is intellectual (also psychological or spiritual) "out of which" one speaks, makes sense of the world and articulates it (LeBlanc, 2002:240). He sees this as best described by Bhabha's idea of "location" because home is dynamic, multidimensional, evolving and problematic, the process of forming identity includes the claiming of such home space (LeBlanc, 2002:240). LeBlanc (2002) argues that colonialists extended the practice of mentally defining familiar spaces as 'ours' and unfamiliar ones as 'theirs' and different, by destroying the space of the Other (colonized) to create for themselves a home space. This, of necessity, dispossesses the Other who inhabited the space and challenges the authenticity of the home space and opens a space for resistance.

A critical issue that LeBlanc (2002) raises is the problem of spatial proximity between the home and alien spaces. Physical, intellectual, spiritual or psychological distance tends to be reduced by technologies, including the internet in contemporary society. This makes it difficult to imagine the usefulness and even possibility of constructing space in exclusive terms as belonging to only one group, ideology, or identity. The collapse of distance and emergence of spatial proximity in contemporary society implies that different groups, identities and ideologies share the same spaces – intellectual, spiritual or physical. Thus, home with its associated meanings and feelings,

must be conceptualized and experienced in the presence of the Other, who was previously a stranger, and vice versa. LeBlanc goes on to suggest that as part of homelessness, therefore, is the "persistent and proximate presence of the other" as it feels difficult to "be" and act safely or comfortably in the presence of the Other. When home is imagined as physical space, it easily becomes a place of "violent exclusivity" and if thought of as intellectual or spiritual, it becomes a space for hatred and prejudice (LeBlanc 2002: 241). Philippe Gervais-Lambony (2006) notes that identity formation is also expressed in the construction of territory, and to create a belief in shared membership politics often attaches identity to space. LeBlanc's (2006) text useful because it addresses the question of proximity, enables me to engage the question of home, proximity of the Other and narratives of secession and expulsion in my data. My data indicates that these real concerns in postcolonial offline and online spaces.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak takes a different turn on the question of representation in her renowned work "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988). She raises critical questions about who the subaltern subject is, whether she has a voice, and whether it is the place of the academic investigator to represent her (Spivak, 1988). Spivak challenges the assumption of scholars like Deleuze and Foucault that the marginalized subject, if offered the opportunity for union or solidarity, possess knowledge of their conditions and can speak. She argues that the condition of needing to be represented and thereby enabled to form such alliance, being given a chance, mediation and/or the interpretation of the subaltern silences them, and indicates that they cannot speak (Spivak, 1988). The subaltern lacks access to the language and dominant discourse, and thus, cannot express themselves to be heard and listened to. This is further complicated by the female subject, who is doubly marginalized (Spivak, 1988). Spivak's work is a caution against political discourses and activism, or any external representation of the oppressed, no matter how radical they appear to be, as they potentially silence the subject they seek to represent and consolidate the imagery of the oppressor. Such representations may also present the subaltern as a singular unit, and therefore, gloss over cultural and experiential differences (Thakur, 2016). Spivak's work calls attention to the several self-declared representatives of Southern Kaduna Christians, particularly, the Online Forum I investigate, and require me to ask a number of questions: How does the social and educational status, and class of forum members, which grants them access to the internet space as a site and medium for activism, as well as the hegemonic discourse impact on the voices and realities of the people they seek to represent?

However, rather than being external representatives, the Forum members see themselves as a part of the marginalized, and this highlights Spivak's sensitivity to the layers and variations within the oppressed, which underlies her understanding of the Subaltern as not just any oppressed or minority groups but as those without access or voice. Other scholars have also explored similar dynamics of representation but paying attention to self-alienation. Rey Chow (2014), for example, argues that Othering is not only external, certain aspects of cultures may other and alienate their own members. Factors such as class, gender, disability and sexuality, when considered as aspects of identity, reveal that there is more to alterity than a simple analysis of colonialism may suggest. (Chow, 2014). In her analysis of postcolonial literature such as Ba Jin's *Jia*, Chow argues that the narrator is a translator since in telling a story, one is presenting it anew; and when modernization informs the translator's motive, certain cultural practices such as mourning in *Jia,* could be represented as "premodern, clannish barbarity" instead of what it really is (2014:63). Thus, in othering their own culture, the translator becomes a traitor.

3.3 Identity Politics, Representation and Conflict

Negative consequences of identity politics raise concerns about identification and organization of groups along religious lines. Yet, scholars such as Amy Gutmann (2003) argue that organizing based on group identity is neither good nor bad. Gutmann (2003) notes that group identification offers disadvantaged groups and individuals, such as women and minorities, security, a sense of belonging, opportunity for justice, mutual support, and an opportunity to build positive self-image and fight stereotypes. Identity politics becomes a problem when the group itself is placed above such objectives. This can obstruct justice, promote inequality and negative stereotypes. For Gutmann (2003), decision to join identity groups is often on the bases of shared identity, identification with, and support for, representatives of the group and their cause rather than a means to other self-interests.

Several studies have examined the relationship between group identification and certain behaviour in specific contexts and situations. For example, Omar McDoom (2012) conducted a social psychological analysis of radio broadcasts and other data from the Rwandan conflict and genocide to explain how security threats lead groups to mobilize against each other. He makes a

distinction between intergroup behaviour and intergroup attitudes in ethnic conflicts (2012). For attitudes, emotions, such as fear, are important as they activate psychological processes that lead to intergroup polarization. For behaviour however, it is material and structural opportunities which either limit or enable the expression of such emotions that are important as they lead to intergroup violence (McDoom, 2012). McDoom (2012) concludes that four types of in-group attitudes indicate group polarization: *boundary activation*, whereby ethnic conflicts are rationalized and background differences exhumed, threat level becomes directly proportional to the salience of group identity. *Out-group negativity* involves the aligning and framing of threat to reflect previously held negative beliefs about the out-group. This rises with threat levels. *Out-group homogenization*, whereby in-group members blur the individuality of out-group members and represent them all as the same, all as threat. *In-group solidarity*, feelings of solidarity within the in-group naturally occurs during threats, but there is a demand and pressure for solidarity, and members' loyalty is measured by the way they respond to the threat, the need to separate "friends from foe" rises (McDoom, 2012: 28-30). Thus, as Rearta Bilali (2014) argues, each conflicting group blames the out-group, presents itself as victim and cast out-group narratives as illegitimate. McDoom's (2012) and Bilali's (2014) works help interrogate the processes and dynamics at work as the Online Forum investigated represent themselves as victims and produce the Hausa-Fulani as oppressor, aggressor and threat.

While McDoom (2012) focuses on ethnic identity, Robert Kunovich and Randy Hodson (1996) investigated whether ethnic intolerance had any causal relationship to religiosity using cases from Croatia. They found that both ethnic intolerance and religiosity are products of polarization between groups which result in competition for scarce resource and conflict (Kunovich and Hodson, 1996). In their view, therefore, religion only serves as a carrier of group identity and does not necessarily cause conflicts (Kunovich and Hodson, 1999:643). This is similar to Matthew Kukah's (1993) conclusion against the popular politicization of religious identity thesis in Nigeria's conflicts. Kukah (1993) argues that religion is a platform or site for political pursuits rather than merely a tool that is manipulated. Jonathan Fox and Yasemin Akbaba (2015) disagree with this position, as their study suggests that Kukah's (1993) position softens a causal relationship between religion and discrimination or conflicts. Fox and Akbaba's (2015) focus was on discrimination of minorities by religious majorities. They found that while forms of discrimination are relative and unique to specific religions, religious identity, nonetheless,

significantly causes religious discrimination (Fox and Akbaba, 2015). They cite the complex theology of Islam as an example, which has a hierarchy of religions, in which different religious groups are likely to receive different treatments in Muslim majority societies depending on the level to which such societies are influenced by the relevant Islamic doctrine (Fox and Akbaba, 2015). Other authors, especially in the context of Nigeria argue that religious and ethnic identities are utilized for mobilization, uniting people and organizing them in conflicts that are caused by other social, economic and political factors (Usman, 2013; Ukiwo, 2003; Peel, 1996). Frances Stewart (2009) holds that conflicts in which such mobilization occur are usually caused by horizontal inequalities. However, she argues that religion should not be treated as only a subset to ethnicity (Stewart, 2009). In contexts where both identities overlap, demographics and the identity that persons in power are seen to use for such things as job allocations, determine which identity is used for mobilization (Stewart, 2009). Amartya Sen, in *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (2006), holds that many (violent) conflicts are caused by the illusion of having an inevitable unique identity. The world is often conceptualized as a "federation of religions or civilizations" (Sen, 2006: xii) based on the assumption that people can be placed under an exact, "singular or overarching" category or "system of partitioning", thereby ignoring and undermining the several other ways people view themselves (Sen, 2006: xii). Sen (2006) cites the use of religion, such as Islam, as an all-encompassing category for all Muslim life and values, for instance, prevents some analysts from understanding Muslims in any other way. This undermines diversity and the extent of difference in societies, which opposes any categorizations along impenetrable identity boundaries. While Sen's critique is insightful and exposes a significant flaw in the conceptualization of identities in contemporary global context, the author takes for granted an understanding of human beings as essentially rational, and all actions as being the result of rational choices.

Studies such as Hancock's (2014) have shown the importance of myths and (historical) narratives in identity construction and representation in conflict situations. Landon E. Hancock (2014), for instance, demonstrates that historical narratives and the lens of old conflicts persist and are consistently used to interpret new conflicts in Northern Ireland. These narratives about the Self and Other are used to produce identities that are informed by fears of extinction – a fear of domination, or perception and anxiety that the survival of one's group is under physical, cultural, or symbolic threat (Hancock, 2014). Such fears operate like "self-fulfilling prophesy"

strengthened and spread through the negative interpretations of events and provocations, leading to further escalations and full-blown conflicts (Hancock, 2014: 433). Such fears, even if they abate after the resolution of conflicts, manifest in other ways. Yechiel Klar and Hadas Baram (2016) agree with Hancock, and add that in-groups often use such narratives to represent the Self as the wronged/victim. While they protect such in-group narratives, they find ways to block and not engage counternarratives. Nida Bikmen (2013) takes Hancock and Klar and Baram a step further. He notes that generally, the attitudes and behaviours of groups towards each other are also dependent on socialization of group members into internal beliefs about out-groups (Bikmen, 2013). Bikmen (2013) observed, for instance, that when Dutch participants were presented with a narrative of national history which emphasized that the Dutch are traditionally open to religions other than their own, participants were more supportive and open to immigration of Muslims to the Netherlands. But when the narrative emphasized the nation's Christian history, participants were more opposed to Muslim immigration (Bikmen, 2013:24). These studies, though European, illustrate what is observed also in intergroup conflicts in Africa and in my study of Online Forum – the fears of extinction, the use of historical narratives to interpret contemporary conflicts and provocations, and ideas about the Self and Other that such narratives reinforce.

3.4 Religion and Ethnicity in Africa

Sociological and historical studies generally agree that ethnic and, in some cases, religious identities were socially constructed or invented in pre- and colonial Africa as a result of the interaction of political and cultural factors (Ekeh 1990; Mamdani, 1996; Ejobowah, 2001; Osaghae, 1998). Ali A. Mazrui in "Shifting African Identities: The Boundaries of Ethnicity and Religion in Africa's Experience" (2001) argues that religious identity in Africa emerged out of Christianization which sharply contrasted it to indigenous religious or Muslim identities. Ethnic identities, on the other hand, emerged out of colonial acts of either fragmenting existing groups or uniting of previously distinct ones, often on linguistic basis (Mazrui, 2001). Mazrui (2001) further argues that because ethnicities in Africa are numerous while religions are basically three (Islam, Christianity and African Indigenous Religions) with Christian and Muslim beliefs having a universal character, ethnicity tends to be represented as divisive and religion as unifying.

However, to show that in Africa, the reverse is also the case, Mazrui (2001) highlights cases such as the transnational nature of post-1994 Tutsi identity, the reinforcement, by Islam, of Hausa identity as distinct from non-Muslim groups in Nigeria, and the reinforcement of Igbo identity by Christianity. He concludes that indigenous African religions, often overlooked and misrepresented, though active and flourishing, are the most ecumenical, tolerant and non-competitive religion in Africa, which promotes a spirit of "live and let live" (Mazrui, 2001: 174).

Mahmood Mamdami, in his book *Citizens and Subjects* (1996), examines how legal distinctions and the language of law turn ethnicities into political identity in colonial and postcolonial Africa. Mamdani (1996) holds that under indirect rule, state law constructed two distinct social categories for the two types of people it had constructed. These include the race category for non-indigene/non-native, and ethnicity for the indigene or native. Race was represented as civilizing while ethnicity was depicted as in desperate need of civilization (Mamdani, 1996). Races lived in civil society, under civil law, spoke the language of rights which delineated and limited power; ethnicities were excluded from civil society and lived under customary law, ascribed the language of tradition which rather than check or limit power, enabled and enforced it, and legitimized the use of force and corporal punishment as deemed necessary (Mamdami, 1996). The indirect rule system, according to Mamdani (1996), silenced several native customs through its sanctioning and recognition of one out of many customary authorities, and declaring it the only genuine authority, thereby representing native customs as singular, unified and static. Against this background, nationalism, the anticolonial struggles of natives, became a struggle for recognition of Africans as a race, for an identity that transcends the ethnic, in order to access civil(ized) society and rights (Mamdani, 2005).

The survival and continuing use of inherited colonial structures in postcolonial Africa contributes to conflicts surrounding entitlement to state resources and services legally based on indigeneity. Mamdani (2005) argues that Nigeria, perhaps, offers the best example of the dilemma this poses. In order to reflect its federal (ethnic) character, access to higher institutions of learning, the army and civil service are based on quotas that are only available to persons indigenous to a state. The consequence is that every ethnic group in the country is compelled to demand its own state, and creation of more states results in an increase in the number of Nigerians that are regarded as non-indigenes. Thus, in resting political identity on cultural identity, the law unavoidably converts

ethnicity into political identity. For Mamdani (2005) political identities are different from cultural or economic ones, and are a product of state formation history. Belonging and identity is what the law says they are, and it is through legally defined categories and groups that people understand and relate to themselves, other groups and the state. Furthermore, the translation of cultural identities into political ones is the law's way of punishing those who attempt to mould a future for themselves that is different from the past, but this determination to build a common future, nonetheless, is what defines political communities. While scholars such as Eifert, Miguel and Posner (2010) seem to assume that ethnic (and religious) identities in Africa exist separately and are then used and strengthened by political exposure, Mamdami (2005) argues that they are political and the result of a political process. Mamdani's (2005) elaborate work is limited by his little attention to religion, despite its close-knit relationship to ethnicity and the role it plays in state formation processes and access to state/federal institutions and services in Africa. Akinadee (2014) for instance, notes that it has become deeply ingrained and conventional in Nigeria for religious identities to be appropriated to obtain political office, and for religious persuasions to be used as the basis of allocation of important political office and administration. I would add to Mamdani's (2011) argument therefore, that once religious identity is conflated with ethnic identity, it also becomes a political one. Mamdani offers a thorough understanding of the modern (and colonial) state making process in Africa, and some of the underlying issues that inform and are contested in the Online Forum I investigated, such as the structural and institutional underpinnings of the experiences that Online Forum members contest as political and civil service employment marginalization.

Akintunde E. Akinade (2014) observes that religion, ethnicity and more recently, political parties, are the primary categories that Nigerians use to identify themselves. However, he argues that many Christians and Muslims continuously negotiate their unstable identity boundaries and location in society. These identities are also employed to "navigate very precarious landscape" (Akinade, 2014), to moderate or worsen certain issues, especially when the state is perceived to be weak. Kukah (1993) in his highly influential study of northern Nigeria, insightfully frames the multiple belongings an "average" Nigerian navigates and how they shape identity-based relations. The life of Kukah's (1993) average Nigerian revolves around not less than ten institutions to which they belong and which compete for their attention – from clan, village, professional, income-based, to religious, gender and age-based groups and associations. These

are also increased by migration to city where identification with certain groups facilitate upward mobility (Kukah, 1993:225). Each of these has its own dynamics, for instance, access to certain religious spaces by members are sometimes based on economic, political, class and other symbols of success. Above these are formal political structures such as region, state, local governments and bureaucracy within which Nigerians compete, mediate, seek patronage and negotiate power, and in the process, trade religious and other identities and belongings (Kukah, 1993, 256). Nonetheless, Akinade (2014) challenges the global simplistic perception and representation of religion and interfaith relations in Nigeria as radical and intractably violent, thereby ignoring the several other peaceful ways that peoples of different faiths understand and relate to themselves. Kukah (1993) highlights the same issue when he suggests that the consistent representation of religion as politicized in conflict undermines the genuine religious life and practice of many ordinary Nigerians. Akinade (2014), examining Christian's response to Islam in Nigeria, observes that both Muslims and Christians have used their own religion and standards to distill and interpret each other. Thus, Christian response to Islam in Nigeria is characterized by a sharp ambiguity that "evokes both affirmation and rejection at the same time" (Akinade, 2014:72). Akinade (2014) challenges the tendency of scholars in the West to uncritically apply the history of relations between Christianity in Europe and Islam as a lens to explain relations in other parts of the world, ignoring contextual histories and peculiarities.

The primary categories traditionally used to describe Nigerian ethnicities are 'majority' and 'minority'. This has also informed several historical and contemporary agitations in the country as these categories are inseparable from regional, religious and other political identities (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). Osaghae and Suberu (2005) highlight the limitations of such categorization as they are based on the understanding of Nigerian ethnicities primary as linguistic, ignoring the importance of self-definition by ethnic group members, as well as definitions given/ascribed by outsiders. Osaghae and Suberu (2005) argue that the minority-majority distinction in Nigeria emerged out of power configurations of colonialism and regionalism. While state-creation produced new majorities and minorities at state levels, the traditional grouping remains politically relevant and active with the Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-Fulani considered as majorities and others as minorities. Religious identities are more critical in northern Nigeria and serve to activate ethnicity, unlike western Nigeria for instance, where ethnicity is more important. While there have been a few cases in which conflicts were associated with indigenous religions, they

are generally politically inactive in Nigeria. Christianity and Islam are the major sources of religious differentiation, and religious identities are more likely to be articulated by Muslims rather than Christians (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). Moreover, while indigene, migrant and settler identities have gained prominence in citizenship contestations, they are based on ethnicity and region, and on the practice of excluding settlers, migrants and non-indigenes from rights and access to resources and services (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). The authors ascribe the prominence of religious over ethnic identities to the Hausa-Fulani of the core north, however, John Campbell (2013) observes that for the Christian minorities in the Middle Belt and other parts of the North too, including Southern Kaduna, shared Christian identity is very important for forging political alliance.

Eghosa E. Osaghae (1998) challenges the frequent treatment of minorities in Nigeria, by scholars, as only historical, ethnic, and victims of systemic marginalization and domination due to their smaller numbers. For Osaghae (1998), this approach blinds scholars to the existence of dominant minorities often not included in the minority category. For example, the Afrikaner in Apartheid South Africa, the post-1994 Tutsi in Rwanda and the Fulani in Nigeria (separate from the Hausa) (Osaghae. 1998). Yet, Osaghae (1998) still defines Nigerian minorities broadly as "culturally, linguistically, territorially, and historically distinct groups, which because of their diffusion, numerical inferiority and historical evolution within the modern Nigerian state, have been subjected to subordinate political, social and economic positions in the federation and its constituent units", thus, in their politics, elites of minorities have focused primarily on addressing this situation (Osaghae, 1998:4). An important point Osaghae (1998) highlights that is often missed by scholars, is that while minorities in the South of Nigeria are mainly ethnolinguistic, those in the north are, additionally, religious minorities, and this is more salient than the former (Osaghae, 1998). Thus, in his categorization of Nigerian minorities, he classed northern minorities as "non-Muslim minority groups" marked by their resistance to Islamization and Fulani domination since the Jihad of 1884, and openness to Christian and western influence (Osaghae, 1998). They are also political minorities. Moreover, Osaghae (1998) highlights another key issue when he broaches the question of the proximity of Southern Zaria (Southern Kaduna) to the center of Muslim Hausa-Fulani politics and dominance, which made internal colonialism easier unlike minority groups that were far from the center and resisted from a more regional standpoint. Osaghae (1998) concludes that minority problems in Nigeria may be

adequately resolved if such groups are viewed as a "category of disadvantaged peoples deserving protection and special treatment in some sort" (Osaghae, 1998:24). For Osaghae (1998), the problems have persisted because typical solutions to minorities' agitations such as state creation, only gave the false notion of resolution followed by a treatment of the marginalized groups as equal to majorities. Moreover, these solutions often swiftly shift from being about resolving minorities issues to majority politics and struggle to serve their own people.

Tunga Lergo (2011) agrees with Osaghae (1998) regarding the power dynamics among Nigerian ethnicities. However, he expresses a preference for "subordinate" and "dominant" groups rather than majority-minority, as classificatory categories, because he sees the boundaries of the latter as fluid, while ethnicity in Nigeria is not as fluid as Osaghae (1998) and others suggest. Moreover, he holds that dominance is often determined by the political system in place; in democracy for instance, the majority is likely to dominate. Lergo (2011) illustrates how regional identities based on majorities/dominant groups alienated, silenced and blurred diversity because to access political and economic resources, minorities had to identify with their respective regional majorities in Nigeria. This was further internalized by Nigerians. For instance, in northern Nigeria, minorities were commonly seen and referred to by non-northerners as Hausa-Fulani and some members of these minority groups saw themselves as such. Lergo (2011) observes that during the 1963 population census for instance, members of minority groups in the north were sometimes either identified and recorded as Hausa-Fulani by non-northern census takers or identified themselves as such (Lergo, 201190). The north had developed a hierarchy of ethnicities with Hausa-Fulani at the top, followed by Muslims of any background, then other regional majorities (Igbo and Yoruba), and northern non-Muslim minorities at the bottom. Thus, according to Lergo (2011), resentment towards Hausa-Fulani extends to all the categories above them in the hierarchy. My knowledge of the region and evidence from my research data partly contradict Lergo's (2011) assertion about resentment. Christian minorities in the north resent the Hausa-Fulani, but appear to want to identify with other groups in the hierarchy whenever possible as a way of distinguishing themselves from the Hausa-Fulani and exploiting already existing tensions between such groups and the Hausa-Fulani. Moreover, northern minorities, even during violent conflicts, seem very tolerant of non-Hausa Muslims, such as Yoruba, Igala and Edo Muslims who also live freely among Christians in areas designated as Christian.

Nonetheless, Lergo (2011), rightly observes that the question: Who is a Northerner? is a vibrant discourse among minorities as they struggle for separate identification from the Hausa-Fulani.

In their critique of identities in Nigeria, many scholars exhibit a fallacious tendency to speak of religious identities in unitary and singular terms that undermine the internal diversity of religions in Africa. This is clear in many discussions about Christian–Muslim relations in Nigeria. Abdu Raufu Mustapha challenges this representation in his introduction to the edited volume, *Sects and Social Disorder: Muslim Identities and Conflict in Northern Nigeria* (2014). Mustapha (2014) argues that in northern Nigeria, religion is an idiom through which warring groups mobilize, and a lens through which broader political and social process that may not relate to the divine are played out. He holds that Nigerian Muslims are constantly confronted with the question of what it means to be a good Muslim in the context of social change. This question splits the Nigerian *umma* into sectarian groups based on different interpretation of sacred texts and ritual practices (Mustapha, 2014). In the same volume, Mustapha and Bunza (2014) argue that at the beginning of the Dan Fodio Jihad in the 1800s all Muslims were Sunni of the Maliki school, and majority of Muslim elites additionally belonged to the Qadiriya tariqa until around 1930 when the rival Tijaniyya tariqa was introduced. In present day northern Nigeria however, fragmentation among Muslims has created numerous competing sects and groups such as the Sufis, Jihadists, Salafists, Shi'ites, Yoruba Muslim groups, Islamic women's groups and many idiosyncratic sects. Each of these has its own internal diversity including those with violent political orientation (Mustapha and Bunza, 2014). Mustapha and Bunza (2014) argue therefore, that speaking of religion as a single unified block is a gross misrepresentation. So is any representation of interreligious contestations in Nigeria as simply Muslims against Christians, and worse, as nationally Muslim north (Hausai-Fulani and others) against Christian south (Igbo). Furthermore, Mustapha and Bunza (2014) argue that there is no single unified Muslim response to contemporary challenges of modern life "traditionalists, modernists, and radicals organized in different sects and groups, compete for fellowship and influence" (92). Mustapha and Bunza (2014) fault the media and "religious entrepreneurs" for misrepresentation and homogenization of religions in Nigeria. What Mustapha and Bunza (2014) illustrate about fragmentation in Nigerian Islam can be said about Christianity in the country as well (Ibenwa, 2014). Based on his mapping of patterns of violent conflicts in Nigeria, Olojo (2014) argues that the continuous representation of such conflicts in Nigeria as always being between Muslims and Christians is

flawed. He notes that between 2006 and 2014, there were more frequent deaths resulting from violence among Islamic groups in Nigeria than between Christians and Muslims, and that this is an underrepresented dimension of conflicts in Nigeria (Olojo, 2014). I agree with John Campbell (2011) that both Islam and Christianity in Nigerian have a militant disposition and that the political and religious status quo of northern Nigeria is being destabilized by Christianity's expansion in the region in recent years (Campbell, 2011: xiv).

3.5 Language, Representation and Identity

In the previous sections of this chapter, I have implied or occasionally alluded to the interconnection and inseparability between language, representation and identity. A closer examination is now required in light of the significant narratives surrounding the Hausa language in my data. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (2006) explores the birth, spread and use of nationalism globally, the strong attachment of people to their nations, and the loyalty and propensity towards martyrdom this evokes in people. Anderson (2006) argues that the nation is a community that is *imagined* because its members will never know, meet, or hear most of the other members, even in the smallest nations. Nonetheless, each member has a mental image of the community. Further, the nation is imagined as *limited* as no one nation can include all humans, thus, the boundaries are flexible (Anderson, 2006). The nation is imagined as *sovereign* due to its emergence in Enlightenment and increasing awareness of religious pluralism, thus the idea of nations that are free from previous religiously legitimized regimes; and as *community* because the "the nation is always conceived as deep, horizontal comradeship", which ultimately inspires deep loyalty and commitment (Anderson, 2006: 7).

Anderson locates the emergence of the nation in the interaction of capitalism, print technology and what he terms the "fatality of human linguistic diversity" (Anderson, 2006: 42-43). The rise and commodification of print media, especially the exploration of cheap printing in vernacular to widen readership as opposed to previous limitation to the sacred Latin, the 16th Century reformation facilitated by print capitalism, and the emergence and spread of certain vernaculars across Europe as languages of administration and centralization, were factors responsible for nationalism (Anderson, 2006). According to Anderson (2006), to deal with the challenges caused by a diversity of languages, capitalism created print-languages using a few vernaculars that

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gradually became the foundation of national consciousness. This made it possible for speakers of different, and sometimes mutually incomprehensible, language variations to understand each other on print. It also created an awareness of the existence of millions of other fellow readers in their language circles, connected via print, and thus, planting the seed of the imagined national community (Anderson, 2006). Relations of power and status among languages were also created through print as the closer a vernacular or language was to print-languages, the more dominant it became, and the more capable of assimilating others (Anderson, 2006).

John E. Joseph, in *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious* (2004), examines further how group identities interact with the roles of language. He argues that identity, especially when conceptualized in terms of meaning or signifiers and the respective associated meaning, is a linguistic phenomenon (Joseph, 2004). Contact with others is often primarily linguistic – over the internet, phone, letters, as book characters - and such interactions allow people to size up and feel that they know each other better than would be the case if they only had visual contact. Joseph (2004) adds identity to the traditional functions of language – communication and representation – as a major and distinct function, but also as fundamental to them. Thus, one's representation of the world and one's interpretation of text and verbal expressions is organized around and shaped by one's perception of the identity of the persons involved. Joseph (2004) sees language as both culturally loaded and neutral. It is loaded because the manner of usage creates the user's cultural identity. However, a language is culturally neutral in its ability to sustain more than a single culture at once. For instance, the Arabic language has sustained Christian cultures despite its strong bond to Islam. For Joseph (2004), language is not necessarily a vehicle for cultural spread and acquisition in that when a language developed within a specific culture is taken to a different habitus, it moulds itself to the new environment as opposed to the new culture changing its form to fit the original culture of the language. Joseph (2004) seems to imagine language as fluid and culture as static in such an encounter. He is unable to demonstrate that in fact language does not carry any element of culture, or that aspects of culture do not shift to accommodate the categories of meaning in a new language especially when the language is associated with power or dominance, and whether such interaction produces a third space or culture, rather than migrated language simply adjusting to its new culture. His work is insightful on the role of language in the formation and maintenance of identity. And as Gumperz and

Cook-Gumperz (1982) emphasize, language is also crucial in the *communication* of identity, which is a historical process.

Unlike Joseph, Harry Garuba (2001) argues that despite being spurious, ethno-linguistic identities are powerful instruments in the foreclosing of several other identities. Colonialism, and the collusion of missionaries and local politicians, according to Garuba (2001), saw mutually incomprehensible languages in Nigeria being declared "dialects of a common tongue" (Garuba, 2001:7), thereby imposing ethnolinguistic national identities, and suppressing identities based on actually spoken specific languages. Hence, the emergence of the judicial and constitutional demarcation of Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo as major languages, and hundreds of others as minorities. This also directly translates into political and socioeconomic power distribution and status, and, according to Aito (2005) literacy and educational status. Power and socio-political status could be measured by belonging to majority or minority ethnic groups. Thus, national identities in Nigeria emerged out of political power contests, mobilization and contests for resources, as more authentic and self-generated identities and their symbolic values were dispelled. The maintenance of this state of affairs at the national level extinguished local peculiarities of "speech and dialect", discouraged and represented them as "examples of uncultured and uneducated speech habits" (Garuba, 2001:16). Thus, Garuba (2001) notes that in northern Nigeria, because of the power and status of the Hausa language, it is expected that other minorities adopt it and express themselves in it (Garuba, 2001). Garuba (2001) concludes that these arrangements have become internalized and politicized to the extent that they lead to conflicts and frustrate the emergence and thriving of multiple identities and pluralism.

Nonetheless, Lergo (2011) insists that ethno-linguistic identities in Nigeria have rigid boundaries. He views ethnicity in Nigeria as a closed system of classification similar to the Indian caste system; and disagrees with conceptualizations of ethno-linguistic identities as fluid and changing in traditional societies such as Nigeria where the highly exclusive nature of ethnicity is one of its most powerful assets. Lergo (2011) argues that irrespective of the length of time they coexisted and interacted, groups and cultures in Nigeria remain exclusive and closed to outsiders, whether such outsiders speak their language or not. Thus, mother tongue and ancestry are the fundamental basis of ethnicity, such that even when people no longer speak a mother tongue, they hold firmly to their ethnic origins. Lergo (2011) points out that a Nigerian may

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speak the language of a group other than theirs but would see themselves as outsiders even if it is the only language they speak; and they would identify with their own ethnic group even if they do not speak the language.

The tendencies highlighted by both Garuba (2001) and Lergo (2011) are played out and contested in the everyday lives of Nigerians, and they have material impact. Thus, against popular narratives, opinions, myths, and contestations surrounding language policies, especially the Hausa language in northern Nigeria, John Edward Philips (2004) examines the history of the Hausa language in the region in relation to power and administration. Phillips (2004) challenges the popular assumptions that Hausa language fluency and literacy as a civil service requirement in northern Nigeria was imposed by Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto during his time as premier of the region (1954-1966) in his bid to force the language and culture on minorities. Philips also opposed the belief among some Muslims that the colonial romanization of the Hausa language, previously written in Arabic script, was a conspiracy with missionaries to "undermine Islamic civilization and ultimately destroy Islam" (2004:55-56). Philips (2004) also illustrates how Lord Lugard exploited existing tensions/rift between the Sokoto Caliphate and the hundreds of northern ethnic minorities who, he realized, already spoke Hausa language due to a long history of interaction. He united these minorities and recruited soldiers from among them to use in conquering the caliphate. Missionaries also exploited the dislike of Islam among these groups to gain converts (Philips, 2004). But more importantly, colonial authorities and missionaries did not promote or teach English in the north, rather they saw Hausa – the Caliphate's language – as the "language of conquest, of military and administration" (Philips, 2004: 59). Lugard, following the conquest of the north, made Standard Hausa language tests a requirement for working with the state and for promotions. The language was further imposed as the lingua franca even in parts of the north where it was not previously used. The Caliphate had used Arabic as language of law and administration while Hausa was considered the language of poetry. The colonial authorities and missionaries developed roman vocabulary and alphabets to translate everything into Hausa. Many of the thousands of Quranic pupils and scholars were reeducated in the Romanized Hausa language in order to learn *boko* (western education) (Philips, 2004). Although the language policy of northern Nigeria diversified after independence, Hausa remained an official language. The media used Hausa and a few other languages. The emirate courts kept records in Hausa, Arabic and sometimes English (Philips, 2004). While English and the three National languages

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were recognized and used for business in the National assembly, states had the autonomy to determine their language policy. Thus, Phillips (2004) suggests that while colonial policy helped spread Hausa as first language among people who only previously used it as lingua franca, state creation and other post-independence developments could not stop the spread of the language both as lingua franca and first language. Pidgin English, which emerged among minorities, as well as the three major languages continue to be widely learned and used by Nigerians, irrespective of the country's or states' language policy. According to the Church historian Musa Gaiya (1993), missionaries also used the Hausa language to spread the Christian faith, translating scripture and liturgy into Hausa. Thus, the language also emerged as a language of worship. Phillips and Gaiya are important works that provide scholarly basis for critique of popular opinions about the emergence and role of Hausa language in Nigeria's social and religious life. As my data indicates, this is a significant issue for Southern Kaduna as they engage in conversations about norms and naming in Kaduna in relation to cultural recovery, theology and identity.

3.6 New Media, Religion and Identity

Media theory has evolved over time from examinations of face-to-face communication, through mass media to more complex contemporary forms. As presented in Dan Laughy's *Key Themes in Media Theory* (2007) theorists have drawn on dominant ideas and paradigms such as structuralism, feminist theory and postcolonial theory to examine media. A major theme in modern media theory is the effects of media technologies on the way people feel, think and act (Laughy, 2007). This is a recurring question for every emergent media form. Harold Laswell, a key theorist, argues that media is a communication channel for stimulating and receiving response in a straightforward manner (direct effect) (Laughy, 2007). He presumes that there is intentionality and persuasiveness in communication, especially in media propaganda. Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), in disagreement, demonstrate that communication is mediated and interrupted by opinion leaders, and other factors, to influence public opinion. Maxwell McComb and Donald Shaw (1972) argue that public agendas and concerns reflect media agenda set through media representation of the world, and media priorities become public priorities. McLuhan's (1967) medium theory further sees society as shaped primarily by the media technologies available to it.

Such technologies evolve into extensions of human selves and senses, and media content or message cannot be separated from the consequences of the medium.

Other significant themes in media theory include representation, self-presentation, access to information, interconnectedness and transcending of boundaries. Erving Goffman (1956) examines self-presentation as performative expressions in which individuals employ techniques that enable them to present impressions of themselves in favorable and pleasant ways. These are reproduced and amplified by media. Meyrowitz (2001) emphasizes the ability of media technology to make knowledge and information accessible to all; and to connect people in ways that transcend physical boundaries and spaces. Postcolonial theorists, such as Said (1978), see media representation as powerful and able to shape people's view of the world. Thus, media from the West both determine the standards for local media productions in other places and represent non-Western cultures in stereotypical ways that become reified by the western audience. These earlier theorists focus primarily on mass media – television, film, radio, print. However, they are foundational to more recent studies on new media.

Many theorists generally assume that media technologies always work as they are intended, and in the case of mass media, to transmit messages to an audience sometimes imagined as passive. These are some of the assumptions that Brian Larkin challenges in his book *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (2008). Larkin (2008) analyses the role of media technologies in the production of urban Africa, in particular, the Muslim Hausa city of Kano in northern Nigeria. He argues that "media technologies are more than transmitters of content, they represent cultural ambitions, political machineries, modes of leisure, relations between technology and the body, and in certain ways, the economy and spirit of the age…. Media create unique aural and perceptual environment, everyday urban areas through which people move, work and become bored, violent, amorous and contemplative" (Larkin, 2008:2). This indicates that the consequences of media are not always intended. Thus, for Larkin (2008), media are unstable both epistemologically and materially. They are capable of surprises beyond the designer's imagination. In colonial Nigeria, Larkin (2008) observes, authorities installed radio and speakers in public spaces. As a result, radio, a middle-class luxury in Britain, was for everyone in urban Kano, and Kano elites were pleased with the connection of the Hausa-Fulani to modern technology and information (Larkin, 2008). However, Muslim religious leaders were

concerned about the encroachment of radio sounds beyond public spaces. They saw the "disembodied" sounds "on-air" coming from the radio as reproductions and extensions of the sources from which they originate (Larkin, 2008: 55). Therefore, they insisted, for instance, that by virtue of its reaching the private ears of the female, the male radio voice violated Islamic codes of sexual behaviour. Moreover, the visible loudspeakers were symbolic of pollution of Kano's sacred spaces with Christian noises. But the listeners were not passive receivers, they attached their own social meanings to the radio broadcast. The intention of colonial authorities in bringing radio and cinema to Kano was to enhance their own imagination of the city. Larkin (2008) argues that media mainly served here as sublime spectacle, a display of technological advancement, which were expected to reinforce the supremacy of the culture and civilization of the West. But on the ground, the instability and imperfections of media infrastructure sometimes challenged this vision.

Larkin's (2008) theory is unique in that it emerges from a postcolonial developing world context where things do not work as smoothly as they do in contexts where previous theories had emerged. In Nigeria, Larkin (2008) argues, media technologies experience regular breakdown, their purposes are ultimately framed and shaped by those of the empire and by Muslim and Hausa religious and cultural norms. Another critical postulation in Larkin's (2008) theory is on the role of piracy in allowing Nigerians to contemporaneously and immediately participate in the consumer culture of film. Official distribution channels marginalized local Nigerians by availing outdated Indian and American films and CDs. Moreover, the frequent technological glitches, cracks and poor reproduction of pirated films also results in distortions that change/affect images and conversations (Larkin, 2008). Thus, rather than media being imagined as smooth, effective, and progressive developments or revolutions, Larkin's study brings in the reality of breakdowns, cracks and noise. Although he writes in a period marked by advanced digital technology, Larkin's (2008) new media are limited to radio, television, Compact disks, tape recorders and film, paying no attention to the internet. Nonetheless he opens up a space for theorizing about the internet in Africa and the possibility of such challenges as poor broadband speed and connection, cost, reliance on old computers, interruption of epileptic power supplies and other factors in influencing or even changing what content and message makes it to the internet platform and its users in an African context.

Studies such as Hines (2000) and Fung (2002) view new media as operating within already existing social relations and practices, as well as in new spaces with their own practices and relations. Media have been examined as a means of communication, but more importantly, as enabling and sustaining their own cultures and socialities. For example, Hines (2000) describes the internet as a cultural space in its own right. The internet and social media have also been variously studied as a site for overcoming disempowerment, for mobilization and for fighting marginality. Anthony Fung (2002) examined how an online group for Hong Kong persons resident in the United States – Hknet – enabled them to construct their identity, confirm their independent subjectivity and resist domination. Kyle Bowen (2014) shows how non-conformist, religious minorities, LGBTIQ, and other marginalized groups have turned to the internet to organize, pursue their politics and enjoy a free alternative social space for their activities; and legislative authorities are unable to control the boundaries of the debates on such spaces. Indeed, the role of social media in activism and social transformation such as during the Arab spring is documented, and how social media has changed and become part of everyday life (Khondker, 2011; Gerbaudo, 2012; Howard and Hussain, 2013). Adam Acar puts it succinctly, "our lives now start and end with social media" (2014:3). Acar (2014) also observes that like other technologies, media have paradoxes such as empowering people as well as enslaving individuals to technology; creating public as well as private spaces; creating illusions and enhancing disillusion (2014:5). Thus, whether as social and cultural spaces or as tools, media are capable of amplifying, reproducing, extending or challenging and decreasing social, cultural and political dynamics. Larkin and some of the scholars discussed so far, therefore, would agree with Foucault (1980) that engagement in any social practice already implies being in a relationship characterized by [power] struggle. Events and interactions on media platforms, in other words, are not free of the social relations and struggles that, in many cases, inspire them.

Identity and relationships, are important themes in studies of media. Media affords individuals and groups the space, resources, and tools for constructing their identities and presenting them in ways that impact relationships offline and online. As a departure from previous focus on anonymity and experimentation, Kirsty Young (2013) examined how individuals establish and explore their own identities on Facebook. Young (2013) acknowledges that the question of authenticity on networking sites such as Facebook has been largely addressed as they often require users to authentically represent themselves, otherwise they become redundant users due

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to limitations in accumulating new friends online. Self-presentation online requires purposefulness in decisions about how people classify and organize their own and other people's actions. People explore their online profiles to *write* themselves into existence, using language, imagery and other tools to produce desired impressions of themselves. Young (2013) concludes that since impression management is a major function of social media such as Facebook, users present their idealized selves through the manipulation of online profiles and greater self-expression through tools like joining Facebook groups, liking content and profile information. Zhang, Jiang and Carrol (2010) challenge such studies as Young's (2013) for presenting online identities as relatively static because of their reliance on people's online profiles and other personal information. They argue that rather than simply declaring their identities in relatively static profiles, users of social media such as Facebook construct and actively manage their identity through online social interaction of different kinds (Zhang, Jiang and Carrol, 2010). Moreover, different levels of identity exist online, including group and role identity, such as when a participant self-describes as a drummer who belongs to a rock band. Thus, identity online is more dynamic, modulated and adjusted within social contexts.

Alice E. Marwick (2013) agrees with Zhang, Jiang and Carrol (2010) that identity on social media is constructed through interaction and not only through profiles. She argues that because identity cues are fewer online compared to face-to-face interaction, the smallest piece of digital information such as one's typing speed, email address or nickname is useful in forming ideas about them (Marwick, 2013). However, since technology makes variation of self-presentation difficult, large groups of diverse peoples and roles may be identified online under a single category. For instance, on Facebook and Twitter, co-workers, family members, friends, and acquaintances may all be grouped as Friends. The implication, for Marwick (2013), is that one is unable to adjust or modify one's self-presentation to suit the person/s one interacts with. One's information is transmitted to a variety of people simultaneously, sometimes creating tensions with the norms of these groups coming in conflict. Additionally, Marwick (2013) argues that identity construction on social media is explicit, in that it is worked out before interested persons and also reinforce ideas about who is an accomplished modern person – fit and educated.

In terms of the relationship of online identity to the offline, Soraj Hongladarom (2011) suggests that the line between online and offline selves is increasingly fuzzy, and that ultimately, there is

no essence to online or offline selves. Writing a decade earlier, Don Slater (2002) treats online-offline distinctions as transitional in that they will collapse with time. He views the emphasis on the online-offline distinction by earlier users and researchers as emerging from certain ways of experiencing and imagining the internet in relation to identity, disembodiment and virtualness (Slater, 2002). Going online seemed to detach the user from their location and body, giving the impression that their identity online is separate from the offline one (Slater, 2002). Slater (2002) also argues that historically, new media forms are often experienced as virtual at first because they replace or mediate already established "real" forms of mediation. Generally, as implied in much of the discussion so far, more recent scholarship would agree with Slater and Hongladarom on the gap or absence thereof, between the online and offline.

Religions, in their different forms and expressions, are a major and fast expanding presence on the internet (Jukobsh, 2006). Thus, in the last decade, scholarship addressing various aspects of the relationship between religion and the internet and other new media technologies has been on the rise. The media scholar and a key figure on the subject, Heidi Campbell (2013) recently suggested the term "Digital Religion" as a suitable designation for this emerging subfield. Doris Jukobsh (2006) notes that pioneering works on religion and the internet were undertaken by journalists such as Erik Davis who wrote "Technopagans" in 1995 and Joshua C. Ramo who in 1996 wrote "Finding God on the Web". But around the same time (1996), religious scholars such as Stephen O'Leary (2001) and the sociologist Brenda Brasher (2001) also began to produce work on the subject (Jukobsh, 2006:237).

In *Give Me That Online Religion* (2001), Brasher argues that online religion reflects social change as much as it is a product of change itself; these are visible in the droves of spiritualties and religions on the internet. She observes that new technologies make visible previously not foreseen religious needs and create new realms of the unknown at the same time (Brasher, 2001). Thus, contrary to the expectations of modernist thinkers, technological advancement such as the internet did not banish aspects of religion believed to be residue of primitive thinking, but enabled them. Technology, she argues, makes it necessary to develop new theologies, rituals and ways of accessing the divine; and that the cyberspace may be seen as a public space that enhances encounters, interaction and literacy of widely separated religious practices and persons, making it ideal for those who previously had no history. Brasher (2001) also argues that religious

experiences are altered with the migration of offline religious practice to the virtual world. While in the offline experience, the body through the senses and mind are immersed, on the digital space, only the mind is immersed in a religious experience. Brasher (2001) also views cyberspace as sacred time. the cyberspace, she argues, gives certain religious users a taste of forever. Users imaginatively experience an alternative time framework or timelessness whereby a day lived online could feel like a lifetime (Brasher, 2001). This is also seen in the cyber-mystics who experience "uploading" as "eternal life" – leaving their physical bodies to become united with the internet and become one (Brasher, 2001:49). Moreover, Brasher (2001) illustrates that religion on the internet is an extension of offline religion, but also religious innovation, modification and new creation. Brasher (2001) uses the *Cyborg* metaphor to illustrate that technology redefines identity such that today's social and bodily reality is a computer-biology hybrid. She suggests that online religion may be flourishing because of its acceptance of this cyborg aspect of self and identity neglected by traditional religious spaces (Brasher, 2001). Brasher's (2001) work highlights many nuances in the expressions and meanings of religion and spirituality on the internet, however, she seems to assume the internet and the virtual are unreal in her use of the terms "virtual" and "actual" to refer to online and offline realities respectively.

Themes covered by Brasher and other pioneering scholars enjoyed more focused studies from around the mid-2000s. Contributors to the book *Religion Online* (2005) edited by Lorne Dawson and Douglas Cowan, for instance, examined the differences between religion online, that is the spread of religious information online; and online religion, which is the identification and participation in certain religious practices over the internet. I agree with Jukobsh (2006) who in a review of Dawson and Cowan (2005) notes that the distinction between the two is very thin as many religious websites combine both. Heidi Campbell, in *Exploring Religious Community Online: We are One in the Network* (2005), asks what it means to be a religious community, and whether religious practices online are changing this. She holds that relationships online may be viewed as community in the sense of network (Campbell, 2005). She expands the meaning of community on the cyberspace to include its effects beyond the virtual world. This is because the internet rather than being a mere communication tool, is a medium that potentially shapes offline reality (Campbell, 2005). Thus, religion on the internet is not separated from the everyday life of users. Developing this line of thinking in a later work, Campbell (2011) argues that analysis of both online and offline religion reveals a networked religion that is not unique to the online

platform, but embedded also in religious offline practice. She opposes the argument that the internet is changing religion, and argues instead that the shifts and changes observed in religious and other online practices, reflect broader changes in offline western culture and society (Campbell, 2011).

The volume *Religion and Cyberspace* (2005), edited by Morten Hojsgaard and Margit Warburg, explores three key themes; religious authority, construction of religious identity, and online–offline interaction. The editors suggest that research in cyber-religion may be classified into three waves (Hoisgaard and Warburg, 2005). The first include the descriptive publications of the late 1990s, the second the mid-2000s that attempted to be more analytical and research oriented, and finally, the third wave; a bricolage of scholarship, that will apply interdisciplinary methods and analysis to study religion online (Hoisgaard and Warburg, 2005). In the same volume, O'Leary (2005) highlights the potential of internet usage to create sacred spaces online and also fuel religious hatred considering the already existing offline conflicts associated to religion and politics. Introvigne (2005) argues that while the internet space allows the subversion of hierarchy and authority, it also creates its own new hierarchies, and has a vast potential for verbal violence and terrorism. Lovheim and Linderman (2005), argue that religion may be viewed as offering a space or site for the construction of identity and for generating capital.

Two volumes represent some of the most recent strides in research about religion and new media, constituting some new reflections on previously examined themes. These volumes include *Digital Religion, Social Media and Culture: Perspectives, Practices and Futures* (2012), edited by Pauline Hope Cheong, Peter Fischer-Nielsen, Stefan Gelfgen and Charles Ess; and *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (2013), edited by Heidi Campbell. A major running theme in the volume edited by Cheong *et al* (2012) is the relationship between religion offline and digital religion. In his introduction, Stewart M. Hoover (2012) challenges the moral panic associated with the imagined power of the internet to disrupt or undermine already established cultural and social configurations. Like Campbell (2011), he suggests that digital technology offer new, more satisfying and complex methods of doing the same things that had been done prior to their emergence. Hoover, he acknowledges that changes in digital media and culture do in fact affect religion in terms of meaning, spiritualties and practice, hence the entry of religion into digital culture discourse. However, the author argues

that much of the popular changes interpreted as the effect of digitalization on religion are in effect about other things, namely, tradition, authenticity and authority. This is because of the kinds of meaning and symbolic significance religion has assumed following a history of secularization where it has come to represent authority and practices received from the past.

Cheong and Charles Ess (2012) in their chapter on how religion and the affordances of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) interact agree with Hoover and Campbell (2012) that new media technologies offer less in terms of radical revolution and more in terms of transformation or reshaping of already existing infrastructure, practices and beliefs. Thus, the Catholic app, *Confession,* for example, does not seek to replace the ancient religious practice of going to a priest for confession, but to reinforce, complement and amplify it. In her chapter "How Religious Communities Negotiate New Media Religiosity" Campbell (2012) notes that the range of religious strategies for which digital media is utilized by religious communities show that such engagements are informed by beliefs of the communities about media and the core values of such communities. She suggests three categories of beliefs about media found among religious groups in relation to their religious values, boundaries and beliefs about modernity (Campbell, 2012). The first is the perception of media as a conduit, that is, as neutral in itself and can be utilized for evil or good, and some further seeing new media as God's gift and to be employed for God's work, hence encouraging a more accepting attitude (Campbell, 2012). The second is the view of media as a mode of knowing, with its messages as inseparable from the media, and the impact and outcomes of media as determined by the nature of media technologies (2012). Thus, rejection or suspicious use of media is encouraged to prevent unconscious promotion or adoption of embedded values. Campbell (2012) sees a third position in between, which does not accept determinism of both media and its content, but emphasizes that media is socially constructed by its users, as such, religious persons or groups can be more deliberate in directing and shaping media content to reflect their beliefs, and to think critically about the influence of media on their religious community. Campbell builds on the latter to suggest the idea of "religious-social shaping of technology" as a theoretical and methodological approach for studying religion and new media, whereby the internet is viewed as a system that is both social and technological and is shaped by the social environment and community parameters from within which it emerges (2012: 84).

Mark D. Johns (2012) has explored Facebook groups with religious commitments as an arena for understanding how religious communities and identity are formed by young people. He found that majority of members joined such groups in order to vote affirmation for the group itself, its objectives or creator and not to encounter or engage other persons on the group (Johns, 2012). The groups Johns (2012) studied mostly had "praise posts" which are meant to celebrate or affirm the faith, religious affiliation and identity of the user. Johns (2012) suggests that the communications on such groups are likely symbolic in that they are not meant for other users within the group but for outsiders such as friends who see users' profiles and feeds, as a declaration of one's identity. Thus, it is a discursive construction of religious identity that is not visible internally within groups but happens outside it, within the larger circle of Facebook friends. Johns sees such Facebook group's function as serving the purpose of confession or declaration of one's faith rather than dialogue. Contrary to what other scholars suggest, Johns (2012) did not find significant evidence that religious groups online are more than identity cues users want on their profile, or imply online ritual. This raises questions about Johns choice of sample, and require further examination with other groups

An edited volume by Heidi Campbell (2013) explores ritual, identity, community, authority, authenticity and religion in an attempt to broadly respond to the question of what constitutes digital religion. The second section of the book offers specific case studies on the themes theoretically explored in the first, and the third section offers reflections on related issues such as ethics, theology and theoretical framework for researching digital religion. The waves of scholarship on digital religion suggested by Hojsgaard and Warburg (2005) is used by most of the authors in this volume to map out key issues, trajectories and gaps in previous studies and to better situate their own research. Campbell (2013) introduces the volume by tracing the emergence and development of research in digital religion, the search for an appropriate terminology and her own effort to establish digital religion as a subfield. From the establishment of cyberchurches to the creation of religious websites and experiences on virtual worlds such as Second Life to current dominant usage of new media to extend and alter offline religious life and practice, the term digital religion, which Campbell (2013) suggests as a frame for understanding and articulating such evolution of religion on the online space.

Digital religion describes religion and the new ways it is composed through digital culture and media. In addition to religion as performed online, it represents the mutual shaping of religious practice and digital media and platforms. It also marks the space formed through the integration of online and offline spheres. In other words, it serves as a bridge that makes possible the mutual extension and exchange between offline and online religious spaces, practices and contexts (Campbell, 2013). Gregory Price Grieve (2013) dedicates his chapter to investigating what digital religion means in the context of academic inquiry. He begins with an examination of religion as a category that in the European enlightenment era came to mean unscientific meta-narratives that attempt to answer comprehensive existential questions about origins, life, purpose, death and afterlife (Grieve, 2013). Grieve applies this perspective to argue that digital religion is not merely traditional religion repackaged on new media (Grieve, 2013). It is unique in that it is a weaving of non-scientific meta-narratives with technological ideology in order to deal with anxieties consequent on what Bauman (2005) calls liquid modernity. Thus, digital religion has three characteristic features (Grieve, 2013). It is marked by particular forms or aspects of new media; it is a specific technological ideology, one associated with a view of technology as a force that revolutionizes existing social order, communities, institutions, practices and structures; and it is a "workaround" for dealing with modern life conditions. The idea of workaround takes for granted Bauman's argument that in contemporary capitalist society, life is in a constant flux, uncertain, hurried, and highly mediated. Thus, Grieve (2013) views digital religion as a temporary innovative solution to the way religion is experienced in this context and enables individuals to overcome and live through the conditions of liquid modernity.

On the question of online rituals, Christopher Helland (2013) highlights the conflict of insider-outsider perspectives about online rituals. To outsiders, online rituals do not seem to include the social activities or functions that are associated with an offline-based understanding of what is 'real' or 'works' in terms of ritual (Helland, 2013). Helland (2013) argues that what is extraordinary in online religious ritual is not the ritual activity itself but the online environment. Thus, supporting the claim that scientific and technological advancement does not lead to disappearance of religion, rather, in the case of the internet, it calls for an examination of online religious participation, structure and ritual as authentic and real. Loveheim (2013), in her chapter on identity, argues that religious identities today are performed and mediated differently than in previous societies. In contemporary society, they require constant revision and continuous

performance in settings that are both unknown and known, offline and online. An individual's autobiography is the most significant data for the formation of religious identity in online spaces (Loveheim, 2013). Yet, religious identity in contemporary society, is primarily social, strongly tied to social relations and situations that enable individuals to remain in connection, make meaning and act in their daily life.

Authenticity and related question of credibility has been a major concern in discussion about internet content and identity. Kertsin Radde-Antweiler (2013) acknowledges the significance of authenticity in nearly all analyses of online religion. She situates the roots of such concerns in the definitions and distinctions made between what is real and what is virtual – a dichotomy, she observes, that has been widely criticized (Radde-Antweiler, 2013). The large amount of data encountered online and the problem of determining the trustworthiness of such data without any face-to-face interaction further raises the question of credibility (Radde-Antweiler, 2013). Previous scholarly approaches to religion presumed a static, uniform, consistent and definable entity. However, Radde-Antweiler (2013) holds that religion cannot be viewed that way anymore, so also is the 'real'. It is not fixed. Defining religion and the authority to determine the religious 'real' or 'authentic' does not rest with theologians and experts alone anymore. Noting that questions about the 'realness' of online religious experience often come from outside, and from offline religious authorities, Radde-Antweiler (2013) argues that determining what is real should depend on the insider, or practitioner. Therefore, what counts is the religious insider's perspective and criteria for what is real, and what they consider the relationship between the virtual and real to be – distinct, analogous or interdependent (Radde-Antweiler 2013). Radde-Antweiler (2013) further questions whether such analytical categories as authenticity are still useful in analyzing online religious experience considering that they often are outsiders' categories, same as the real versus virtual dichotomy.

Louise Connelly's (2013) study of Buddhist ritual of meditation on Second Life, for example, shows that for many practitioners there is a negotiation between online and offline ritual, rather than an exclusive online containment. Thus, online meditation on Second Life, for instance, serves to initiate or frame a simultaneous offline practice (Connelly, 2013). However, participation of all senses, as Brasher (2001) also points out, is limited in the online space as only the auditory and visual senses are at play. And as Heinz Scheifinger (2013) also demonstrates in

a study of online Hindu *puja*, such senses as smell, taste and touch are not affected, and consequently, religious experience online is limited. Nabil Echchaibi (2013) examines Muslim use of new media technology, the *AltMuslim* website, in the contexts of modernity and the dominant representation of Muslims as traditional, submissive, regressive, anti-modern, introverted and a threatening Other in western spaces – essentialized views that blind people to the complex ways Muslims live and negotiate modernity. The unique contribution of this study is its focus on Muslim agency in the production of media about their own religion and identity, against the background of dominant research focus on public perception and representation of Islam. Echchaili shows that Muslims have embraced new media technologies to originally engage their own religious discourse, what Islam means today, and western modernity, rather than to reinvent religious tradition or awakening of piety. The internet, for Echchaibi (2013), has thus offered Muslims a platform to engage and challenge the dominant representation and perception of Islam, which itself is not static and emerges out of power structures that can be subverted.

3.7 Conclusion

Existing theories and research relevant to identity and representation in Nigeria have paid more attention to ethnicity than religion, despite the significance and salience of religion in northern Nigerian conflicts. This could be a result of the treatment of religion as a subset of ethnicity which Stewart (2009) observed in scholarship about ethnic identity mobilization for violence. Additionally, scholars pay more attention to Christianity and Islam and pay little attention to indigenous and other religions in Nigeria, nor has there been much exploration of the ways in which these religions interact with Christianity and Islam in the Nigerian context. Yet, Mazrui (2001) suggests that in Africa, indigenous religious attitudes and accommodation of other religions offer a good model for interfaith tolerance in Africa.

In terms of digital religions, the literature and theories examined above indicate that further contextual studies and examinations of dynamic and hybrid online sites and practice is required to further enrich this field of study. Jukobsh (2006) and Campbell (2011) have argued that digital religion so far reflects mostly western offline realities. This is not to suggest that there are not studies on non-western contexts, but that these are comparatively limited, especially in Africa.

Moreover, Grieve (2013) and O'Leary (2005) highlight the need to expand the new media sites on which digital religion are explored beyond religious websites or explicitly religious forms. My study of a socio-political pressure group as a sight for understanding some online religious forms and production is a contribution towards this expansion and offer insight into digital religions in Africa. The methodological framework and strategies used to achieve this are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Four:

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In their introduction to the edited volume, *Digital Methodologies in the Sociology of Religion* (2016), Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor and Suha Shakkour highlight the need for research approaches to religion, faith communities and identities online to adapt to the changes, contexts, ethics and other challenges such online realities pose. This chapter details the principles, strategies and tools that I explored in order to collect, analyze and engage my research data and objectives. As the chapter will indicate, data collection on Facebook was particularly challenging given the need to uphold the values of rigour and validity in my research.

I begin the chapter by declaring the philosophical orientation of my research in terms of ontological, epistemological and axiological positions. This is to clarify the underlying assumptions and position that shaped how this study was conceptualized, executed and reported. In providing details about the nature of research data, methods of data collection and analysis, the chapter also highlights some of the challenges encountered in the process and how they were managed. Ethical considerations that were made to ensure the integrity of this research, how validity and rigour was achieved, and my reflexive position as a researcher are also discussed.

4.2 Research Paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (1994) define research paradigm as "a set of *basic beliefs* (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a *worldview* that defines, for its holder, the nature of the world, the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:107). In other words, it is the framework of thinking based on certain basic assumptions about ontology (nature and form of reality) and epistemology (what constitute knowledge, how to generate it, and knowledge—knower relationship). In addition to these are beliefs regarding ethical values in research, the researcher's position in relation to the subject of investigation (axiology) and methodology (Wahyuni, 2012).

This study, being a critique and making use of postcolonial theory, is located within a critical paradigm. Ontologically, this means that in my project reality is perceived as capable of being moulded and shaped by such factors as politics, society, culture, ethnicity, gender, and then reified as 'real' (Wahyuni, 2012). Epistemologically, this paradigm takes a transactional and subjectivist perspective. Hence, it assumes an interactive link between the researcher and the object/subject of investigation; and the investigation as well as findings of the research are believed to be influenced or mediated by the values of the researcher (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Methodologically, the critical approach is dialogic and dialectical because of its transactional nature, thus, dialogue and interaction between the researcher and the researched is valued (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Most critical approaches aim at transformation, bringing about a new and more informed awareness that should lead to change and transformation in society (Gray, 2009: 27). Thus, while I aim to make a theoretical contribution to scholarship through the findings of this study, I have an equally important interest in practical transformation in terms of Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria, as well as dominance of Nigeria's major ethnicities in the life of the country and near invisibility of many of its hundreds of minorities. Furthermore, I hope that my theoretical contributions will contribute to a better understanding of the nuanced and new ways in which representations of identities are formed and used, and ultimately contribute in the fight against Islamophobia and other potentially harmful essentialized representations of cultures.

The issues that are investigated – the social conflicts in Kaduna, social and online identity and their contestation, representation – emerge from socially and historically mediated structures and ideas that have been essentialized and commonly accepted as immutable reality. Thus, a critical approach allows me to thoroughly examine the ways in which such underlying constructions might be challenged and transformed. This also means that my study is informed by the following assumptions: ideas are not innocent but mediated by power relations; in societies, some groups are often more privileged than others resulting in the emergence of oppressive and subordinated groups; what is often presented and/or accepted as reality or facts are inseparable from the interests and ideology of specific, and often dominant/powerful groups (Gray, 2009). Thus, critical studies such as mine, must pay attention to less privileged groups – both in terms of their ability to own voices in the public sphere but to critique their voices as well.

4.3 Research Procedure and Method

The study employs both reactive and non-reactive methods. It is primarily non-reactive in that it uses mainly already available online content from an Online Forum. It was not intrusive and conspicuous in the way it sourced the content for the study. Although gatekeeper's permission was obtained, the study did not require active participation from members of the online forum – except for the online survey used to gather information on demographics and religious preference of the Online Forum users. Christine Hines (2011) argues that non-reactive research projects, which do not require that the people under investigation participate actively in the study, has a prominent and respectable place in the social sciences, and that unobtrusive internet research reduces the burden that is placed on the researched and the researcher. Moreover, in reactive methods such as interviews and surveys, respondents' awareness of the researcher could influence their responses and behavior (Hines, 2011). Since unobtrusive research uses 'found' data, it is capable of exposing bias in data collected through other reactive methods and allow hidden population and practices to be explored (Hines, 2011). This is the kind of opportunity offered by the internet. Internet-based research offers further advantages as seen in Hines' review of studies that compared online data to reactive interviews. Almost any conceivable aspect of daily life is reflected somewhere on the internet, and the internet provides anonymity that leads to frankness, which is rarely shown offline and therefore, offer rich data source especially when researching sensitive areas (Hines, 2011).

My study made use of what people have 'already' said and done online. The data was ready-transcribed, thus, reducing labour demands and interference of bias of both the researcher and the researched in interview and transcription processes. Scholars such as Neuman (2011) differ from Hines, and consider a study to be non-reactive only if the participants are not aware that they are being studied. This study is only considered reactive with respect to the use of online survey. Otherwise, it is a non-reactive study. In addition, I am interested in the online space itself. Thus, in this study, the internet is not merely a tool for data collection or for accessing already available data. The online space on which the data is 'found' and through which further data is obtained, is of importance. I hoped to develop an understanding of the relationships among the online space, the kind of data, the offline space and the subject of inquiry. Thus, the online space itself is imagined to be an important dynamic of the data.

4.3.1 Data Collection

'*Found' Data:* I collected the content of the online forum between 2013 and 2014. A two-year content provides access to data on several issues on the forum as often discussions are aligned to ongoing events in Kaduna state and in Nigeria at large. The online forum was founded in 2011 and membership has continued to grow. 2013-14 therefore, was a good timeframe to collect content as discussions and behavior in the forum would have become more determined and purposeful after over a year of consistent growth and increasing activity. Although difficulty in accessing older posts partly contributed to the focus on data from 2013, such recent data also provide access to more current ideas and development on the forum and society generally.

My initial intention was to mine the found content of the forum using a web cloning software as this would allow the content to be preserved offline in its online format. This was also to prevent loss of content should data become difficult to access or denied. It was further to allow me work with the data more conveniently since I would be able to access it as it appears online without need for internet connection. Cloning, however, was a challenge. I experimented with several software such as Offline Explorer Pro, HTTrack, Web Copy, Site Sucker, Wget, Fresh WebSuction and WebCopier. None of these enabled me to copy the content of the group. One of the major reasons for this difficulty was the fact that the Online Forum, hosted on Facebook, which is a very large and diversified website. Unlike other smaller and simple websites, copying the entire site in order to access a single group was not feasible.

In my exploration of discussion boards,[10] including Facebooks' online help community and interaction with a few software developers, I discovered that several people had similar challenges especially with busy forums that had existed for a few years. Accessing old group contents in such forums was experienced as a challenging and slow process, where it was possible. While Facebook recently added settings that allow users to save all the content of their individual Facebook accounts, the only way to access older content of a Facebook group was through the keyword search feature, or to manually scroll through the contents.

I attempted opening the forum and scrolling down to old posts in order to capture the open content as a single archive file using browser extensions such as Nvivo's N-Capture, Mozilla

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[10] Some such forums include: www.StackExchange.com; www.facebook.com/help/community; and www.CloudBoomers.com

Archive Format and PageArchiver. Scrolling had to be done very slowly due to the large amount of content. I used reputable browsers like Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Maxthon Browser, Safari, Avant, Opera and a few lightweight browsers specifically designed for accessing Facebook. Only Facebook was allowed to run on the computer and browser during this process and sometimes with only the necessary browser extensions turned on so as to reduce the chances of errors and conflicts that could lead to a browser crash. However, all the browsers froze or crashed after a few hours or days of slow scrolling, requiring a restart. The result was unchanged when the same process was attempted on newer and stronger computers in one of the computer science laboratories of my university. Moreover, the web capturing or archiving extensions used could only capture limited content, mostly content that had been made visible via scrolling.

I had to rely on the search feature on the forum's platform to access my research data. Thus, I generated as many search terms as possible. My familiarity with the forum and the kinds of discussion that have been going on since 2011, as well as my research questions and objectives, guided me in generating these search keywords and phrases. I also used many different combinations of the terms, and rewrote some of the terms in the different ways that they are likely to be used on the Forum. Thus, the following were some of the search terms generated: Religion (rel, rln, rgn), Boko Haram (BH, Haramite/s), Christian (Christians, xtn, xty), Muslims (Moslems, Muslems, Moslims), Mosque (Mosques, msq), Church (Churches, ch), Kaduna (KD, Kad, Kada city), Southern Kaduna (SK, Skites, Southern KD), Gurara State, Jihad (Jihadists, jhad), Hausa (Malu, Bahaushe, hausawa), Chibok, Killings, Death, dead, Genocide, Raids, Villages, rural areas, God, Allah, Politics, Politician, Peace, Riots, Conflicts, Crisis, Kidnap, Bombs, explosion, burning, Conference, Government, Sir Patrick Ibrahim Yakowa (PIY), Ramalan Yero, Northern Kaduna, Kaduna North, Federal Government (FG), Faith, Belief, Women, Children, Gunmen, Confess, Repent, Sheikh, Pastor, Bombs, Suicide, Attack, Hausa Fulani, Language, Lingua, kataf, Atyap, Jema'a.

These keywords were very helpful because they returned contents on the exact, or part of the search terms and phrases going as far back as 2012. As the data generated throughout this process were content related to specific search terms and phrases, they were not too heavy and the browser did not freeze or crash when I scrolled down to the beginning of 2013. Each

displayed page was followed carefully to expand hidden and collapsed contents and comments. The entire open and expanded page were then printed to PDF using a Mozilla Firefox add-on called *Print to PDF 0.1.9.3.1* previously installed on the browser. Many posts contained two or several of the search terms, thus, each time any of the terms in the same content is searched, the content is recalled/returned. The fact that several different keywords returned the same content enhanced rigour in the data collection process, as it indicated that the search was thorough.

While this method returned a high volume of content for the two-year period without discrimination, I had no way of determining whether the process gave me access to *all* the content for the period, and this is a limitation of my content-collection method. It is possible that important content were not accessed. However, the several words and combinations searched, the repeated content and the overall volume of content captured (after repetitions have been managed) gave me confidence that most of the targeted content was captured, and that the saved content was representative of the posts and conversations on the Online Forum.

Another implication of my data collection process is that although I was careful and thorough, I, to an extent, could be said to have determined the kind of data that was generated and analyzed. Thus, in order to dilute and manage this level of control over data – though I believe it was minimal – I frequently went through the returned and saved content from each search in order to develop a better sense of the forum; and to find clues for further keywords that could generate content not previously returned by my search terms. This seldom returned new content but I continued the process until I fully established with reasonable certainty that there was no content I had not captured for 2013-2014.

Online Survey: In order to fill the gap left by the collected data in terms of what is known about the users of the forum/study population, I conducted an online survey (see appendix 1). The purpose of the survey was to access relevant demographic information about the Forum users and to directly obtain information about their religious preference, religious literacy and opinions on conflicts involving Christians and Muslims in Kaduna. This ensured that the research did not rely completely on 'found' content. The use of a survey also made triangulation possible, enabling me to further ensure the accuracy of the data generated. The survey, thus, provided a valuable resource for the analysis and deeper understanding of the online contents of the forum.

The survey was self-administered online. An online survey was deemed the easiest and fastest way to access members of the forum. Since the research was focused on the online space and content, it was impossible to access many of the users physically given their diverse locations. It was also a way of experimenting with internet mediated research to better inform my investigation into the digital culture, religion and platforms. I initially intended to administer the survey as a set of three pop-ups of two to three questions each. This would have allowed for easier accessibility and thereby increase the chances of a larger response rate. However, this was not possible, as consulted experts confirmed, because Facebook had no plug-in insertion point that could allow non-Facebook developers to insert features for such a survey. And having Facebook developers consider this feature or administer the survey itself would have been a more challenging and costly task. Thus, since the survey was small with only about ten questions, I considered using online survey administering programs, and experimented with different online platforms.[11] I also studied users' reviews and experiences using these programs.

I settled for the online survey tool that comes with Google Documents, known as Google Forms as Google is reputable for its applications and online tools. Google forms is very easy to use and does not require any special training to create or distribute surveys. It is free to use and can take unlimited number of responses. Google forms are also mobile friendly and participants did not have to use a computer to respond surveys. The responses from the survey were automatically collected in a Google Docs spreadsheet document, and saved on my google drive account online. This ensured that the data was safe and made the process of analysis much easier. Google forms further supported a variety of question-types that many survey programs did not offer (Agarwal, 2014). Thus, the objectives of my survey were best served and more easily achieved using Google forms.

After the survey was created, the link was shared on the wall of the online forum under investigation, with the permission of the forum administrators and leaders. I wrote a few introductory lines about myself, my study, the purpose of the survey and directed users to the survey link. This introduction was largely a repetition of the content on my information sheet and

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[11] SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com); Zoomerang (www.zoomerang.com); SurveyGizmo (www.surveygizmo.com) and LimeSurvey (www.limesurvey.org). I also read users' reviews and experiences using these programs.

informed consent, which are contained in the survey. The survey was reposted several times afterwards to encourage members to participate.

Given the nature of my study, I think it is important to note here that although the survey was administered online with no direct interaction with the participants, it was nonetheless an interactive process. In my introduction, I thanked the leadership of the Forum for allowing me to conduct the survey. This was a deliberate process that aimed at providing me with some level of credibility among the forum participants, especially among those members who did not know me in person. The post received many 'likes' and responses, mostly good-luck wishes. However, the site administrators were also called upon by a user to confirm my claims of being a Nigerian, of having obtained permission from group leadership, and to assure the group that I was reliable and not an intruder or someone with a hidden agenda. A few key members and administrators attested to my credibility, and explained that they had met me in person and that they were familiar with my research. Afterwards, most of the members who took the survey commented on the same conversation thread to say they had taken the survey, and to encourage others to do the same. A few also tagged or shared the survey to their friends, and one participant suggested that the findings of the survey be shared with the group.

4.3.2 Method of Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was applied on the printed content of the Online Forum. This is a method used to search for, identify, analyze, interpret and report patterns in data, known as themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a very flexible method of analysis and is not tied to any specific research paradigm or theory. It is, therefore, independent and adoptable to different epistemologies and theoretical frameworks (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) provide very clear and helpful guidelines on thematic analysis and its different phases. Their work guided me through the data analysis process.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 83), a number of choices need to be explicitly made when doing thematic analysis. Below, I discuss two of these important choices in relation to my data analysis.

Nature of analysis: Inductive or theoretical

Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that in thematic analysis themes are identified using either an inductive ('bottom-up') or a theoretical (deductive, 'top-down') analysis. In the former, the themes are strongly linked to data, are not informed or determined by the theoretical interest(s), nor the analytic preconceptions of the researcher. In the latter, however, the analysis of data is driven by the analytic and theoretical interest and preconceptions of the researcher in the area of study. This method of analysis focuses more on providing detailed analysis rather than richly describing the overall data. Ideas from one's theoretical framework or concepts from previous studies may be employed to identify themes and analyze them.

My method of analysis fell more, but not entirely, within the second category. It was driven by a postcolonial lens, which framed my study and research questions and objectives, as well as ideas from research in media and digital religion, which I draw upon to understand the invocation of, and practices related to, religion online. Postcolonial theory is concerned with deconstructing colonial history and its effects on present-day social relations and identities of both colonized and colonizer. Postcolonial theory takes seriously contexts of alienation and domination, and seeks to excavate acts of agency and resistance within them by privileging alternative (subaltern) voices and knowledges (Young, 2003; Rattansi, 1997). Thus, postcolonial theory provides a specific way, a point of view, and an interest in reading data. Using this lens, I read my data to identify, code, interpret and analyze representations of identity as they emerged in online rhetoric, practices and narratives about religion and ethnicity in Kaduna on the Online Forum.

The concept of digital religion which I used to understand online articulations and practices of religion as well as the mutual shaping of religion and digital media and spaces (Campbell, 2013), also informed my reading and coding of data. This made visible 'religion' and 'the religious' and how these interact with the online platform and its features to manufacture/reproduce the representations identified using a postcolonial analytical lens.

'Level' of themes: semantic or latent

Another important decision, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is about the 'level' of identification of themes. At the semantic (explicit) level, the researcher identifies themes at the surface, where the meanings of data are considered explicit. In this process, the analysis does not go deeper than what is explicitly expressed by participants or the text being analyzed. At the latent level, however, the researcher goes beyond the surface meanings of data (Braun and

Clarke, 2006). Here, the assumptions, underlying ideas, ideologies, and stories that inform and shape the semantics are excavated and analyzed. I considered the latent approach appropriate for my study given the location of my research within the critical paradigm and postcolonial theory, as well as the 'heavy' history and stories that literature show to underlie the issues that my study population engage online. The examination of my data at a latent level helped me get deeper and more rigorously into my data.

Phases of Thematic Analysis

Recognizing that there is no fixed, wrong or right way to carry out a thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest stages that a researcher may use to conduct a thematic analysis. These are the phases I adopted for my analysis of data because of their simplicity, clarity and flexibility.

Phase 1: Familiarization with data: In this phase I immersed myself in the collected data to get thoroughly familiar with the content. I did this through repeated and active reading of the data to be aware of patterns, search for meanings, and note ideas that were potentially relevant for coding and developing themes.

Phase 2: Generation of initial codes: In this phase I approached the data with specific questions in my mind. The questions were guided by my theoretical framework and my research questions, such as how are Hausa, Muslim, Christian or Southern Kaduna persons/groups defined? What words, phrases, ideas, suggest a certain picture, characteristic of the members of any of these ethnicities and/or religions, and/or serve as identity markers? While I did not read the data for specific answers to these and similar questions, having them at the back of my mind allowed relevant words, phrases, ideas to surface and to be coded. These were coded using colour-highlighting and notes on the PDF documents containing the raw data, as well as a marking system, includingsingle/double lines, zigzags, and other symbols, I developed to help me code print-outs of data.

Phase 3: Searching for themes: Here, the different codes generated were sorted into tentative themes and all appropriate data extracts for each theme were collated. During this phase, I began to analyze the codes and their relationships to each other in order to abstract and identify

overarching themes. This phase of analysis produced a list of candidate themes and sub-themes, as well as their related data extracts and context of their production.

Phase 4: Review of themes: The candidate themes and coded data were reviewed thoroughly, to ensure coherence, validity and accuracy. I carefully read the candidate themes and related coded data. I also revisited previous phases of analysis to ensure that they were adequately followed and that I did not leave out any important steps.

Phase 5: Definition and naming of themes: At this phase, the themes were further named and grouped under three broad themes, namely; Representation of the Self, Representation of the Other, and Representation of Religion. The sub-themes were grouped into specific narratives under which they could be better examined. This also involved establishing the aspect of the data that was represented by each theme, and "identifying the 'story' that each theme tells" as well as "how it fits into the broader overall 'story'" of the data in relation to the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 96).

Phase 6: Producing the report: I have attempted, in this phase, to produce a current research report in a logical and convincing manner.

Online Survey data: 108 responses were received from the online survey. The information collected was automatically tabulated in a spreadsheet using Google Docs, which made it easy to analyze using the Microsoft Excel 2013 Pivot table tool. The frequency and percentage relative to the total responses were calculated and presented in a tabular form for each question. During the analysis of data, both survey and collected online content were brought into conversation, which enhanced the meaning-making process by complementing and challenging each other.

4.4 Validity, Reliability and Rigour

Several steps were taken to ensure the validity, reliability and rigour of this research.

Firstly, triangulation. Triangulation is a strategy used by researchers to ensure validity and reliability (Long and Johnson, 2000). It involves the use of multiple sources, methods, techniques and sometimes, researchers, to minimize the disadvantages of using only one method, source or researcher; and to confirm the point of convergence/divergence or the extent to which

one method or source confirms or disagrees with the other (Long and Johnson, 2000). In addition to the collected online content of the forum, an online survey was also conducted for this study. One of the reasons for using both methods was to find points of convergence between the online content and the data from the survey. Some of the gaps in one data source were complemented by the other, and some findings from one method were either confirmed or countered by the other as the next chapter shows.

Secondly, peer debriefing is considered a very good way of ensuring validity, reliability and rigour in research (Long and Johnson, 2000). It entails the presentation and sharing of the research process and findings at different stages with peers and scholars who may offer important perspectives and critiques. The different stages, processes, and partial findings of this project were presented and shared in several cohorts/group supervision sessions, workshops, conferences, as well as other less formal interactions. This happened at my local university as well as during my interactions with other scholars, colleagues and postgraduate seminars at Emory University, Atlanta, Columbia University in New York, and the Mentorship workshops and retreats organized by the National Institute for the Social Sciences and Humanities, South Africa. The feedback received on these occasions were critically considered and applied where relevant to enhance the quality of this study.

Thirdly, reflexivity. Throughout the research process, I was aware of myself and reflected on my position, personal thoughts and feelings in relation to this research. This has helped me to manage personal bias and tendencies that could have influenced the interpretation or analysis of my data negatively. I have also included a section on my positionality and reflexivity below.

Fourthly, I feel a need to note that there seems to be a general lack of civility in many online sites and forums, especially those that do not have control measures meant to manage participants and what they post. This may raise questions about the trustworthiness of the content from such forums. The Online Forum I investigated is an extension of an offline group, and both the online and the offline interact and shape each other. Based on my knowledge of the forum, many of the members physically meet at least occasionally and are familiar with each other. The level of familiarity and offline interaction puts a check on users as they try to maintain their offline integrity and person on the online platform, or to paint themselves in favorable ways. The activities on this forum also suggest that some individuals have created personalities and

reputations online, which they would want to guard offline. The online-offline connection and interaction of the members, therefore, increases the chances that the content of the forum more accurately represent the minds of members and, thus, reliable to a a large extent. Moreover, members also check on each other and call on administrators and leaders of the forum to deal with posts that are considered inappropriate and the persons who share such posts. There is also a regular reminder and call for 'decorum' and civility on the forum. The forum is also a site for heated debates on issues. Posts and opinions are usually challenged or supported and different views freely expressed.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

A number of steps were taken to ensure that this research was conducted with integrity and ethically.

First, the research was planned according to the requirements of the research ethics committee of the College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and having reviewed the research proposal, an ethical approval/clearance letter was issued by the committee to confirm that the planned study met the required standards (please see appendix 2).

Second, appropriate consent was received. The leadership of the group that runs the Online Forum and the online Forum's administrators were contacted and informed about my intention to use the content of the forum for my research. I also informed them of my intention to conduct a survey on users of the forum. I received from the leader of the group, a signed gate-keeper's permission letter granting me "express permission" to conduct the survey and to use any relevant content of the forum for my study. The online survey questionnaire also contained information about my study and my reasons for seeking respondents from the Forum. The same information was posted on the Forum when members were advised to take the survey. One member that was particularly suspicious of the survey asked the forum administrators to confirm my credibility, which they did. Respondents were made aware of the fact that participation in the survey was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study as they pleased. They were also required to indicate their consent by clicking on the relevant option before proceeding with the survey.

The survey was also designed in such a way that participants did not have to answer all questions to be able to submit. This was to avoid using the system to pressure participants into answering questions they would prefer not to answer, and to prevent cases where participants refuse to submit because they were not comfortable with some questions.

Third, I have, as much as possible, protected the online group and its members from potential harm, respected their dignity and aimed to ensure complete anonymity. Determining what, and when, online spaces and contents are private or public in the context of an internet-based and/or mediated study is difficult as much online activity happen simultaneously in both private and public spaces. Hewson and Buchanan (2013) states that "while much internet communication is often effectively public through greater visibility, traceability and permanence, it is not always apparent whether this makes it ethically acceptable to use such data freely for research purposes" (Hewson and Buchanan, 2013:7). This issue was addressed in this study through the consent given by the leadership of the online forum as well as survey participants. In addition, the name of the forum has been anonymised, and the survey questionnaire did not require members to provide their names or any other sensitive information that could put them in danger. The forum is simply referred to in this work as 'Online forum' and pseudonyms have been used for members when citing coded data.

Since the online forum is a closed one, the risk of exposing its content to third-party sites through my research activity was minimized during the collection of such content by printing to PDF. This process saves open content offline as PDF files without involving any programs that could be intercepted. The survey data was saved in PDF and Microsoft Excel formats soon after the survey was completed, and the online version was removed. The online content and survey data were not made accessible to anyone else, and are kept under protection until they are due to be discarded as required by my institution.

4.6 Reflexivity and Positionality

My identity as a member of a small ethnic group (Atyap) in Kaduna, northern Nigeria was a source of crisis for me, especially when its existence and experience is denied, misrepresented or dismissed as I often experience. I often find myself in situations outside Nigeria, but even more

so within Nigeria, where I must explain the existence of my ethnic group to people who would nonetheless insist on homogenizing northern Nigeria. Because I was born and brought up in Maiduguri, Zamfara and later Kaduna (all in northern Nigeria), most of my life was not spent with people of my own ethnic grouping, nor in the Southern Kaduna area where my parents come from. Much of my upbringing was in places where Islam was the dominant religion, and Hausa the dominant language. Thus, outside my immediate family, most of my daily interactions were with Hausa-Fulani Muslims. My first arrival at Kaduna was in the midst of a violent conflict. In the years that followed, I witnessed several of such violent conflicts in Kaduna, where I lived, and in Jos, where I had my first University education. Following the change in settlement patterns that followed the conflicts in the 2000s my family, like hundreds of others, moved to areas populated mostly by members of their own religion and ethnic groups. Nevertheless, I have lived mostly in multi-ethnic and multi-religious parts of the states, where much of my daily interaction was with members of religion or ethnicity other than mine.

From hiding my religious identity or claiming another's in order to survive during conflicts, to continuously explaining my ethnic identity and the ethnic and religious configuration of northern Nigeria to non-northerners who persist in imposing a Hausa-Fulani (Muslim) identity on everyone from northern Nigeria, my identity either constituted potential danger or a source of disagreement. This was worsened by my awareness of how the Nigerian media misrepresented issues related to minorities in the country. For example, as a young cadet, I joined my colleagues to take accounts of violent conflicts in Nigeria, and would be surprised that death tolls reported by the media were far lower than what we counted, and only selected places appeared in media reporting. Also, the way narratives about such conflicts sometimes shifted and were presented as a part of longstanding political struggle between Nigeria's major ethnicities, especially the largely Christian Igbo versus largely Hausa-Fulani Muslims, brought a lot of questions to my mind.

Thus, for much of my time in Nigeria, I understood religious 'belonging' and ethnicity to be no more than sources and/or catalysts for social and personal conflict. This was very confusing. There seemed to be a contradiction between, on the one hand, the values I learned from Christianity, the popular use of the slogan 'religion of peace' for Islam; and on the other hand, the violent conflicts between members of the two religions. My Kaduna and Jos environments

were very volatile, relations among people were tense, and no matter how freely and happily people seemed to relate, there was always a consciousness, suspicion, and fear of each other. Thus, even the most trivial incidences between individuals of different religions easily sparked conflicts.

My internal conflict and confusion about my ethnic and religious identities were heightened by 1.) the fact that I had friends, relations, mentors and people I greatly admired who were Muslims and/or Hausa-Fulani, 2.) my growing realization that many people from outside northern Nigeria stereotypically consider everyone from northern Nigeria to be Hausa-Fulani (Muslim), thus, the stereotypes and attitudes they directed to Hausas and Muslims were sometimes also directed at me even though I had acquired an understanding of my religious and ethnic group as one that had been in conflict with Hausa Muslims for a long time. At the same time, I was also a recipient of Hausa-Fulani Muslim prejudices against Nigerian Christians generally and against non-Hausa, non-Muslim groups of the north. This was also coupled with my own acquired prejudices against these groups. 3.) I was often uncomfortable among some of my Nigerian peers and groups because conversations and jokes too frequently were competitive and revolved around ethnicities, perpetuating stereotypes and misrepresentations that I believed were responsible for lack of tolerance among groups in Nigeria. 4.) My initial encounters and interactions with a few older people in Kaduna made me aware of narratives that surprised me, given my understanding of colonialism. I met people who praised and felt grateful to "white people", especially white missionaries for supposedly helping Southern Kaduna groups free themselves from Hausa-Fulani enslavement and Islamization. I heard stories of slave raids, unfair tax regimes, and of Hausa native authorities burning down entire harvests of Southern Kaduna people after taking their tributes to Zaria emirate. I was also surprised to learn that the violent conflicts in 1992, 32 years after independence, were partly because of Southern Kaduna groups' struggle for independence from Zaria emirates to which they were annexed during colonialism and for establishment of independent chiefdoms for them. It was shocking that decades after independence such a structure still existed in northern Nigeria and minorities did not seem to have really experienced the independence the rest of the country enjoyed.

Shaped by these experiences, I developed a very strong desire to understand religion in the public realm, the prejudices people use against each other, and how these relate to conflicts, as

well as how I can contribute to peacebuilding in Nigeria. This motivated my pursuit of religious studies and choices of academic institutions. I have also participated in, and initiated, a number of peacebuilding and dialogue initiatives in some communities in Nigeria.

I believe that religion in Nigeria is a phenomenon that requires constant and thorough investigation. However, I do not believe that Nigerians antagonize and/or are violent towards each other simply on the basis of religious difference. I believe that the histories, social and personal narratives, as well as painful experiences of individuals and groups contribute immensely to how they view each other and to their readiness for conflict. Some of these factors may be religious or involve religion, and could be 'real' or imagined, but do not necessarily justify conflict. I am also aware that in Kaduna generally, good and mutually enriching interactions also exist among Christians and Muslims. I am sometimes surprised by how soon both Christians and Muslims return to their activities and interactions in public places such as markets and offices, and the return of life in Kaduna after violent conflicts. But I am often more surprised by how easily and swiftly seemingly good interactions and peace become conflictual.

I also believe that minority-majority issues in Nigeria require very close examination. Despite the changes in Nigeria, minorities are often only visible in the public sphere under the sponsorship, or as part of a majority. While media representation of minorities, from my observation, often silence minorities and absorb their concerns into those of the majorities, or imagine them as strange, odd, unknown groups, minorities seem to receive more attention only when violence is involved, such as the violent rebellion of minorities in the oil-producing Niger-Delta area or the Tiv-Jukun and Zango-Kataf conflicts in northern Nigeria. I am aware that individuals from minority groups hold important positions and may be vocal in Nigeria, but these appear to be often treated only as individuals or as a part of the broader regional imagery. Thus, part of my personal and academic interest and commitment is to support the visibility of such groups, their agencies and agitations. To contribute to enabling their voices find expression in relevant public platforms. My goal is not to make value judgements on these voices and concerns, but to enable them to surface and share the same space with dominant voices so as to be equally examined, critiqued, appreciated and to offer variation and critique of dominant discourses and social patterns.

For this reason, I experienced a little personal conflict at the beginning of my study between my activism against Islamophobia, my familiarity with global popular and academic discourses around Christian-Muslim relations as well as 'West' vs Arab/the 'rest' representations and interactions; and on the other hand, local Nigerian ethno-religious contestation, and how both global and more local realms draw on and interact with each other. Thus, while I was aware of the strong anti-Muslim sentiments in my data, I could not simply 'dismiss' them as merely another expression of Islamophobia, nor explain them away as merely being the historical rumblings of an aggrieved minority. Doing so would have been a display of the very attitude I sought to critique. I believe this context enables a better understanding of the phenomenon. I also believe that close examination and criticism rather than dismissal is a better way to address issues. To be sure, my goal in this study was to theorize about online representation and religion, and abstract theories that are not necessarily tied to any specific group. Yet, I needed to resolve my conflicts through conversations with scholars conversant with both the Nigerian and global environment, as well as personal reflection and journaling to re-examine my own prejudices and ways they could mar my scholarship. I did not have any intention of pursuing any Southern Kaduna agenda in this research. I also did not seek to knowingly promote anyone's interest, and in line with the intent of my research paradigm and theoretical framework, I hope that my study become useful for social transformation.

4.7 Conclusion

In my discussions of the research processes and methods, I have attempted to demonstrate that there is a connection between these processes and my philosophical and theoretical foundations and objectives. These theories informed the way data was approached, collected and engaged. This is important to ensure that there is no conflict between my theoretical approach to the study and my methodology, and to prevent misrepresentation of data and findings. I present and analyze these findings in chapter five below.

Chapter Five:

Online [Re]Production and Mediation of Religion and Identity

5.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this research project was to investigate the rhetorical and ideological practices of a Kaduna online Forum, to excavate users' prevailing representation of identity as they invoke religion and ethnicity to speak about themselves and Hausa-Fulani Muslims in relation to grievances, events, and social conflicts in postcolonial Nigeria. As discussed in the previous chapter, I have analyzed the content of the online Forum posted in the period 2013-2014, and an online survey administered to forum users. Literature on identity, self-presentation and representation on new media suggest that online identities are constructed and performed through static profiles, several identity cues, interaction with others, and through tools such as 'like' or 'join' that allow individuals to identify with certain groups, causes and trends that become displayed on their profiles or notifications as additional cues to who they imagine and perform themselves to be (Young, 2013; Marwick, 2013; Slater, 2002; Hongladarom, 2011). My study investigated an online group that has a clearly stated objective, namely, emancipation and empowerment of Southern Kaduna people. Members collectively engage in the pursuit of these objectives and in presenting particular ideas about Southern Kaduna Self and Hausa-Fulani Other, such as the Self as oppressed and the Other as aggressive. Forum members appear to be engaging in an internal in-group online practice as the group is a closed one, for people of Southern Kaduna origins, and not open to the group that is being othered.

This chapter presents and discusses my findings on how members of this online Forum collectively, rather than individually, produce, mediate, and represent the Southern Kaduna Self and the Hausa-Fulani Muslim Other. The Self in the most simplistic manner is imagined in this chapter to be the Southern Kaduna Christian, and the Other to be the Hausa-Fulani Muslim. This is based on the othering practices observed in the Online Forum. This is not to suggest that these binaries are always true in Kaduna. There are Hausa-Fulani Christians who are also a minority in northern Nigeria. There are Yoruba, Edo, Igala and other Muslims from outside of northern Nigeria, many of whom are migrants in Kaduna, and there are also Muslims who belong to Southern Kaduna ethnic groups. Moreover, there is a significant overlap between representations

of the Self and Other, as the content discussed below shows. The categories used – Christian, Southern Kaduna, Hausa-Fulani, Muslims - are self-determined by members; they use these categories in their rhetorical practices.

The first section of this chapter presents and discusses the results of the online survey administered, while the second section focuses on the analysis of online content. However, in both sections, relevant references are made to convergences between the two sets of data. It should be noted that while members depict the Self and Other in certain ways, their imagination of identity is also marked by ambivalence whereby the Self is not imagined in entirely positive terms nor is the Other depicted in entirely negative terms. Moreover, there is unanimity among members regarding who they believe themselves to be, about who the Other is, or about the place of religion in society. Thus, in addition to representations of the Self and Other, a significant theme regarding the representation of religion emerged, and is also discussed in the chapter.

5.2 Survey Data: Membership, Religious Literacy and Social Conflicts

To complement and enhance the understanding of the content of the Online Forum, members were asked to complete a self-administered online survey. The online survey included 12 questions through which I sought to gather information on four broad areas relevant to my study. The first was demographics, in which I asked participants to state their age, gender, religious affiliation and place of origin. Through these I hoped to gather information that would help me better understand members of the Online Forum - who they are, where they locate themselves religiously and ethnically, and the generational and gender dynamics of the forum - as this would help me better interpret and analyze my data. Secondly, I asked questions about membership of the Online Forum, particularly length of, and reasons for, membership. This was to help me gauge the extent to which respondents identify with the Online Forum and 'own' its contents, as longer membership, for instance, could mean loyalty, affinity and commitment. I also hoped to find in these data the extent to which members' motivations are in accord or discord with the claims and articulations on the forum. It should be noted that the membership criteria of this Online forum, as stated by Forum's administrators and the constitution of the offline organization that owns the Online Forum, is being an indigene of Southern Kaduna. This means, according to the Forum, that one's parents or grandparents are indigenous to Southern Kaduna.

Also, persons resident for ten years or more in Southern Kaduna who believe in the cause of the Forum could join. However, recruitment is mostly by invitation as it is a closed Facebook group and only existing members could invite others to join. Facebook also allows users to request to join such groups, but as with invited members, they require approval of administrators or other members.

The third set of questions in the survey were about religious literacy whereby members were asked to indicate their knowledge about religions other than their own, how much contact they had had with people who do not belong to the participant's own religion, and the extent to which they consider themselves different or similar to members of religions other than their own. Apart from providing general information about religious literacy, this was to enable a critical understanding of participants' context and self-understanding that, perhaps, formed part of the grounds on which they legitimize claims and representation about other religions. Questions that sought participants' views on social conflicts in Kaduna state constitute the last set of questions. Here participants responded to questions that asked about their views on the causes, factors and possible strategies for peace. These were hoped to elicit information that reveal, beyond participants' views on conflicts, their understanding of peace and the factors at play in sustaining peace, what vision(s) of peace they had and how these correspond to and/or illuminate the narratives on the Forum.

The following are the results of the survey. 108 users responded to the online survey. The frequency and percentages of the responses were calculated against the total number (108 = 100%). However, because of the nature of some questions, the frequency of responses were also calculated. Thus, for such questions, the tables will include columns for both responses and respondents. Each question is presented the way it was asked, followed by a tabular analysis, interpretation and a discussion of the data. Hence, the survey questions are presented as sub-headings in the remainder of this section.

1. *Age*

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-30	38	35.19
31-40	51	47.22
41-50	16	14.81
50+	1	0.93
Not stated	2	1.85
Total	**108**	**100.00**

Table 5.1 Age of Participants

Table 5.1 above shows the age ranges of respondents. Two of the 108 respondents did not indicate their age. 35% of respondents were between the ages of 20-30 and approximately 47% between 31-40. Thus, the majority of respondents were relatively young and in the combined age-bracket of 20-40 (82%). This probably reflects the age range of persons with the relevant level of education, political awareness and/or involvement, who are familiar with, have access to, can afford and are equipped to spend time on social media. This could also be an indication that there is greater interest and representation from young people in the online Forum and politics of the Forum. It also indicates an appetite to transfer political struggle to online social media platforms, and to pursue new platforms outside traditional political formations for social action and resistance. The Online Forum could be seen as representing a space that does not rely on traditional channels and patriarchies. The figures largely agree with a recent survey results reported by Jacob Poushter (Pew Research Center, 2016), which shows that a median of 54% of the population of developing and emerging countries have access and use the internet, and 37% own smartphones that can access the internet, a majority of these percentages access the internet more than once a day. The survey also shows that 76% of internet users in Africa make use of social media such as Facebook or Twitter, and in fact, internet users in African and other developing countries are more likely to use social media. Furthermore, the report shows that globally, millennials, between the ages of 18 to 34 are much more likely to use the internet and smartphones and participate in social media, than older people, and that people with higher income and education are more likely to access and use the internet globally.

2. *Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	28	26
Male	80	74
Total	**108**	**100.00**

Table 5.2 Gender of Participants

With 26% female and 74% male responses to the online survey, as table 5.2 shows, the Online Forum is a male dominated social space. The online content analyzed later in the chapter also indicates that men dominate the online narratives and conversations. While 26% may be relatively high depending on one's point of reference, the 48% disparity in gender participation could be because of gatekeeping relating to recruitment criteria or that the agenda set on the Online Forum attracts mostly men. It could also be a residue or extension of offline traditional patriarchy. Studies show that participation of women in the political life of Nigeria is very low and that it, in fact, declined between 2007 and 2015 due to several cultural, social and financial factors that continue to frustrate women's interest and participation in Nigerian political life (Quadri 2016; Arowolo and Aluko, 2010). Pew research statistics also suggest that there is a stark difference between men and women's internet usage in Africa as men are more likely to use the internet and to own smartphones. I would also like to note that while a survey in 2015 indicated more than 12% increase in women's internet usage in places like Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya, women's participation is still very low compared to men (Poushter, 2016). Thus, in addition to patriarchy, this difference in internet usage possibly accounts for the wide gender gap in my survey respondents.

3. *Religion*

Religion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Islam	0	0
Christianity	107	99.07
ATR	0	0
Other	0	0
Not stated	1	0.93
Total	**108**	**100.00**

Table 5.3. Religion of Respondents

As Table 5.3 shows, despite survey participants being given a range of options one of which was a blank field in which they could write their religion should it not have been listed in the options, 99% of participants singularly opted for Christianity. The options were based on what is commonly reported as the three dominant religions in Nigeria (Kitause and Achunike, 2013), and the blank option was based on the recognition that several other religions are also practiced in the country. As the table indicates, there is no religious diversity on the Online Forum and religion is a shared identity among users. This is interesting given that religious affiliation is not a criterion for membership of the Online Forum, but as with gender, recruitment practices and Online Forum's agenda could have influenced the religious identity of the Online Forum. The figures could also be an indication of the extent of normativity among the Southern Kaduna, or a reflection of the Southern Kaduna religious landscape, which is predominantly Christian (Okpanachi, 2010; HRW, 2013). For members, the Online Forum is a Christian social and political space, perhaps, a reflection of an ideal Southern Kaduna environment. Despite recent shifts in settlement patterns along religious lines in Kaduna (Paden, 2005), there is hardly a 'purely' Christian Southern Kaduna social space devoid of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim. The Online Forum seems to offer members this form of social space.

4. *Place of Origin*

Place of Origin	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Southern Kaduna	99	91.67
Northern Kaduna	7	6.48
Other	1	0.93
Not stated	1	0.93
Total	**108**	**100.00**

Table 5.4. Participants' Place of Origin

99% of participants are from Southern Kaduna. The term 'Southern Kaduna' (formerly, Southern Zaria) is commonly used to identify the non-Hausa-Fulani groups who dominate the area south of Zaria in Kaduna state. It is also the name of a senatorial zone in Kaduna, which does not necessarily include all the people that identify as Southern Kaduna. Thus, when participants were asked to choose their place of origin, they may have thought in terms of any of the above

understandings of the term. Being an 'indigene' of Southern Kaduna is the main membership criterion of the Online Forum, and an indigene is someone whose parent(s) or grandparents are from Southern Kaduna. People join primarily by invitation from existing users to ensure that only eligible persons join the group. This also indicates that discussions on the Online Forum could be arrested within certain ways of speaking, in certain registers, and on particular issues. The online platform is also a transnational space for all indigenes irrespective of their geographical location, as membership criteria and recruitment practices does not have any restrictions in this regard but rather exploits diaspora relations. This calls to mind Benedict Anderson's (2006) conception of the nation as an 'imagined community' because even in its smallest expression, members may never meet, hear or know most of the other members, yet they hold a mental image of the community and it inspires nationalism and sacrifice. The Online Forum is an example of an imagined Southern Kaduna transnational community.

5. *For how long have you been a member of this Online Forum?*

Length of Membership	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 6 months	5	4.6
6 months to 1 year	7	6.5
Over 1 year	32	29.6
More than 2 years	64	59.3
Total	**108**	**100.00**

Table 5.5. Length of Membership

A combined 11% of participants have been members of the Online Forum for a year or less, approximately 30% for over a year, and more than half, 59.3%, for over two years. The Online Forum was created in 2011 with a low number of member. By late 2013 to early 2014, when this research was being conceptualized, membership was about 8, 000 and the membership as at the time of writing this report (mid-2016) is over 11, 000. The sustained and growing membership base of the Forum indicates a certain level of loyalty and confidence towards the Forum among members. It could also mean that these respondents represent people who have a vested interest in the Online Forum and its future. It could further indicate that Forum members who felt confident to avail themselves and their views for research are those with an established history

and stronger affinity to the Online Forum. Thus, the data they provided may be regarded as 'typical' and reliable.

While the study did not seek to draw a direct correlation between length of membership and frequency of participation in the Online Forum, what does appear from a close reading of frequency of participation is that over the two-year period investigated (2013-2014), some members appear on a regular but infrequent basis but make substantial and meaningful contributions to conversations. Although the anonymity of the online survey limits my ability to link such members to the combined 89.3% of respondents who had been members for over one year (30%) and over two years (59.3%), some level of correlation is a high possibility.

6. *Why did you join the online Forum?*

To reveal their motivation for joining the Online Forum, respondents were asked to select up to three suggested options, one of which could be a blank field in which they could write a motivation not reflected by any of the listed possible options. I did not want participants to have to choose only one option because from a cursory reading of Forum members' posts, they did not join for singular reasons. Moreover, care was taken not to imply any order of priority or importance in the list of possible options, and participants were not asked to prioritize their choices. Since members could have more than one response to this question, percentages were worked out both by responses and by respondents (see table 5.6 below). This was to ascertain rates based on choice of individual motivations as well as number of respondents. The number of responses amounted to 243, which indicates that about 20 of the 108 respondents selected up to three of the options provided.

Reasons for Joining Online Forum	Frequency	Percentage by responses (%)	Respondents by % (108)
To promote the interest of Southern Kaduna	91	37.45	84.3
To promote peace in Kaduna	52	21.40	48.1
To support the creation of a state for Southern Kaduna	57	23.46	52.8
To make my voice heard on political issues	23	9.47	21.2
To make my voice heard on religious issues	9	3.70	8.3

To make my voice heard on ethnicity issues	11	4.53	10.2
Other	0	0	0
Total	**243**	**100.00**	

Table 5.6. Motivations for Joining the Forum

The most frequently selected option by the majority of respondents (84.3%) was to promote the interest of Southern Kaduna. The second most selected option (52.8%) was to support the creation of a separate state for Southern Kaduna, and the third (48%) was to promote peace in Kaduna. While religion and ethnicity are widely invoked in the Online Forum, making their voice heard on distinctly political, ethnic and religious issues did not constitute motivating factors for joining the Online Forum. Moreover, while the group defines itself as a socio-political pressure group, and appears to engage in political activities and conversations, making their voice heard on political issues was selected by 21% of members. Thus, while these factors had low visibility as motivation for joining, they had high visibility as issues for discussion. This could be an indication that the Online Forum serves as an educational platform such that members join with different motivations, but become more informed about the agenda, language, rhetoric and analysis of the Online Forum, hence the higher visibility of politics, religion and ethnicity as issues for discussion rather than motivation.

Additionally, promoting the interest of Southern Kaduna (84.3%), to support state creation (52.8%) and promotion of peace in Kaduna (48%) could have scored high in the online survey because they are more universal rather than specific interests, and when the options became more specific there was a decline in the response rate. This could be because there is no single voice or trajectory for achieving these universal interests. Thus, making their voice heard on political (21.3%), religious (8.3%) and ethnic (10.2%) issues could represent different possible visions of, and strategies for peace, state-creation, or promotion of Southern Kaduna interest. The high visibility of these issues as topics of discussion would support this suggestion.

7. *How much do you know about religions other than your own?*

Religious literacy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very little	5	4.6
Little	20	18.5
Fair amount	40	37.04
Much	34	31.5
Very much	9	8.3
Total	**108**	**100.00**

Table 5.7. Knowledge about other Religions

As table 5.7 shows, 23% had little (18.5%) or very little (4.6) knowledge of religions other than their own. However, most respondents (77%) said they had somewhere between a fair amount and very much knowledge (fair amount 37%, much 31.5% and very much 8.3%). The nature of such knowledge and its measures, in terms of what constitute 'little' or 'much' for instance, was determined by respondents. The goal was to gauge perceptions about their own religious literacy, rather than using specific measures to test their knowledge as is common with religious literacy surveys. In addition, what constitutes 'religions other than their own' was not specified in the survey and members could have responded with any religion(s) in mind. However, it is likely that respondents meant Islam, especially those indicating knowledge about other religions. This suggestion is based on the following reasons: Muslims and Islam are the most visible subjects of religious conversations on the Online Forum which is dominated by Christians; the issues they discuss come from local historical and contemporary contestations involving Christians and Muslims; a major goal of the Online Forum is to pursue liberation from Hausa-Fulani Muslim hegemony, and finally, there are explicit claims to knowing Islam and Muslims in the content of the Online Forum examined. Thus, Islam is likely the other religion participants claim to (or not) know. 23% had little and very little knowledge of other religions and this is also significant as it could be an indication of self-awareness and possibly, refrain from assertions about other religions based merely on prejudice.

8. *How much contact have you had with members of religions other than your own?*

Contact with people of other faiths	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very little	6	5.6
Little	6	5.6
Fair amount	14	12.9
Much	48	44.4
Very much	34	31.4
Total	**108**	**100.00**

Table 5.8. Contact with Members of other Religions

About 12% of respondents claimed to have had little (5.56%) to very little (5.56%) contact with members of religions other than their own (table 5.8). 12. 9% had had faire amount, 44.4% had much and 31. 4% very much contact. Thus, a combined 88% of respondent claimed to have had a fair amount to very much contact with members of other religions. Scholars assert that Christianity and Islam are the two major and most publicly visible religions in Nigeria, with Islam being dominant in the north (Oshewolo and Maren, 2015). When these figures are interpreted within this context, together with the claimed level of religious literacy (table 5.7), which is almost consistent with the present figures, it could mean that there is a high chance that Christians and Muslims live in a certain social and public proximity to one another. Literature also suggests that Christians and Muslims in Nigeria do live together in close proximity and interaction (Sodiq, 2009; Zandt, 2011). The level of contact with people of other religions and the public-ness of Islam in northern Nigeria may have informed what respondents presume to be their knowledge of Islam.

9. *How different or similar are people of faiths other than your own?*

Difference/similarity of people of other faiths	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not different	7	6
A bit different	44	41
Very different	57	53
Total	**108**	**100.00**

Table 5.9. Difference/similarity to Persons of other Faiths

The three categories in table 5.9 used 'difference' despite seeking to also measure similarity. This was based on a cursory reading of the content of the Online Forum which seemed to emphasize difference between Southern Kaduna people and Hausa-Fulani rather than similarity. Thus, the questions sought to determine how strongly this difference was felt and how widespread this feeling was. It was also premised on historical antagonism between the two groups and the idea of social comparison as a crucial part of identity formation process, which revolves around difference and its amplification, and the minimization of similarities (Lawler, 2008; Stets and Burke, 2000). 53% of participants felt they were very different, 41% a bit different and 6% not different. While what constitute 'difference' or 'similarity' was left entirely to participants, the results reflect the general nature of the content analyzed from the Online Forum wherein boundaries are drawn around a Christian Southern Kaduna identity in opposition to a Muslim Hausa-Fulani identity. This is more so if the figures are interpreted in light of historical conflict. Thus, a combination of 'very different' and 'a bit different' would suggest that difference scored very high in the survey at 94% which is almost all respondents. However, 'a bit different' could also be interpreted as indicating greater similarity than difference. Thus, a combination of 'a bit different' and 'not different' shows a high perception of similarity at 47% which is close to 'very different' at 53%. The possibility of interpreting these figures to serve both perceptions of similarity and difference could be an indication of ambivalence in the group identity, a possible 'third space' where self-definition is not based on comparative binaries.

10. *In your opinion, the social and ethno-religious tensions in Kaduna are the result of…?* Since participants could choose up to three of six provided possible options (table 5.10), the percentage of the results were calculated based on frequency of responses (total of 239) and respondents (108).

Causes of Tensions	Frequency	Percentage by responses (%)	Percentage by respondents (108)
Religion	90	37.66	83.3
Politics	78	32.64	72.2
Ethnicity	48	20.08	44.4
Islam	20	8.37	18.5

Christianity	1	0.42	0.9
Other (injustice and jihad)	2	0.84	1.8
Total	**239**	**100.00**	

Table 5.10. Causes of Conflicts

Unlike motivation for membership (see table 5.5), religion, politics and ethnicity scored high as causes of tensions in Kaduna at 83.3%, 72.2% and 44.4% respectively (table 5.10). This could mean that respondents see factors such as religion generally, rather than specific religions, as the main causes of tension in Kaduna. But where specific religion was cited, 18.5% of members see Islam and 0.9% Christianity as causing conflicts. Other factors scored 1.8% including injustice (0.9%) and jihad (0.9%). Literature often cite religion and ethnicity as two of the major causes of tensions in Nigeria (Abdu and Umar, 2002; Gotan, 2008). However, such literature argues that religion only causes conflict when politicized in the pursuit of other agendas (Best, 2001). While survey respondents were not asked to indicate whether a relationship exists between religion and politics as causal factors of conflicts, conversation on the Online Forum suggest that a significant number of Online Forum members agree with the idea that religion is politicized. Literature also suggest that the different causal factors of conflicts should be understood as intertwining rather than independently causing conflicts, and religion, politics and ethnicity are often cited among the prominent interconnected factors (Ibrahim, 2014; Ibrahim, 1991). This is consistent with the high scores these factors have in the survey.

11. *In your opinion, social and religious tensions are worsened by…?*

Factors that worsen social and religious tensions	Frequency	Percentage by responses (%)	Percentage by respondents (108)
Muslims	30	12.45	27.8
Christians	4	1.66	3.7
Politicians	68	28.22	63
Christian extremists	7	2.90	6.5
Muslim extremists	66	27.39	61.1
Poor administration by Government	54	22.41	50

Foreign interests	10	4.15	9.3
Colonial legacy	1	0.41	0.9
Ignorance about religion	1	0.41	0.9
Total	**241**	**100.00**	

Table 5.11. Factors that Worsen Conflicts

Muslims scored 27.8% and Christians 3.7% as factors that worsen conflicts (table 5.11). This is nearly consistent with the 18.5% score of Islam and 0.9% of Christianity as causes of conflicts in the previous question (table 5.10). However, politicians, Muslim extremists, and poor administration by government were selected as the most pertinent factors by 63%, 61% and 50% of respondents respectively. Christian extremists scored 6.5%. There is also a high consistency between the high score of politics as a cause and politicians as a worsening factor. It is interesting that foreign interests (9.3%) and, especially, colonial legacy (0.9%) scored low as factors that worsen conflicts despite the latter being cited by scholars as a major factor in the tense ethno-religious relations in northern Nigeria (Suberu, 1996; Suleiman, 2012). This suggests that the views of academics could be at odds with popular opinion. It could also mean that the colonial legacy does not have a high score because it was not listed as a possible option, but added by respondents. Scholars argue that colonialism was experienced indirectly by ethnic minorities in northern Nigeria, through the structures of Native Authorities that were mostly Hausa-Fulani Muslims and their already established socio-political structures. Thus, non-Hausa-Fulani northern groups especially groups like the Southern Kaduna who were nearer Hausa-Fulani centers of power, think in terms of Hausa-Fulani Muslim 'oppression' rather than British colonialism as they had little or no direct contact with the British during indirect rule (Osaghae, 1998). Moreover, literature shows that indirect rule structures, which also shape conflicts, were carried over into the post-independence era and continue to inform the image of the Hausa-Fulani as oppressors (Ochonu, 2013; Kazzah-Toure, 1999). This could also explain why factors such as religion, Muslims, politics score higher than foreign interest or colonialism.

12. *What strategies will most likely facilitate lasting peace in the region?*

Strategies for lasting peace	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Creating a new state	42	39
Dialogue (inter-religious)	15	14
Prayer	8	7.4
Equal Political representation	40	37
Other (culture of tolerance, Discipline & leadership, good governance)	3	2.7
Total	**108**	**100.00**

Table 5.12. Strategies for Lasting Peace.

There was no clear agreement on strategies for achieving lasting peace in Kaduna as shown in table 5.12. Although, as seen earlier (table 5.6), over half of respondents (53%) joined the Online Forum in order to promote state creation, fewer respondents (39%) see state creation as a way to promote peace. Equal political representation was the second most preferred strategy with a 37% score. However, the two top selected strategies indicate that majority of respondents (76%) believe that peace is most likely to be facilitated through political strategies (cessation and representation). Despite scholarly and policy preference for interreligious dialogue as a strategy for peace (Toki, Gambari and Hadi, 2015; Schumann, 2003), it was selected by 14% of respondents. However, this could also be a significant indication of willingness for interreligious collaboration. It is also striking, considering the high religious adherence of Online Forum members, that those issues that privilege religion in peacebuilding score less than 10%, such as prayer (7.4%).

In summary, the online survey results indicate that a majority of respondents were relatively young (ages 20-40), male, Christians belonging to ethnicities of Southern Kaduna origins. Most respondents have been members of the Online Forum for over 2 years, and identified general goals as their motivations for joining, such as to pursue Southern Kaduna interest, support state creation and to promote peace. However, they are divided in their specific visions of peace and southern Kaduna interest. A majority of respondents also viewed themselves as literate about religions other than their own, and that they have had fair to high amounts of contact with people of religions other than their own, which I argue is more likely Islam than any other religion. Very

few respondents explicitly expressed a view of people of other religions as similar, and 53% saw people of faith other than their own as different. 41% said people of other faith were a little different, which could indicate a perception of either difference or similarity. In terms of social conflicts in Kaduna, survey respondents scored religion, politics and ethnicity high as causes of conflicts and other factors low. Yet, Islam was scored higher than Christianity at 18% and 0.9% respectively. The same factors, including Muslim extremists, emerge as aggravating conflicts in Kaduna. Moreover, members view strategies such as interfaith dialogue and prayer as less likely to bring about peace in Kaduna, and political solutions such as state creation and political representation as more likely to bring about peace. While these results came from about 108 samples from a site with over 10,000 members as at the time of data collection, it offers some insights into the character, interests and thoughts of members of the Online Forum whose conversations are analyzed in the next section, and thereby, enhance the interpretation of the online content.

5.3 Online Representations of the Self, Other, and Religion

When reading and analyzing the 2-year content from the Forum, I used a deliberately postcolonial optic - an optic concerned with deconstructing the history of colonialism and its continuing effect on social relations. It holds that the identities of both the coloniser and the colonised are affected and through privileging subaltern voices it seeks to excavate acts of resistance and subject agency framed within contexts of domination or alienation (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2006; Hugan, 2013). More specifically, postcolonial theory's engagement with representation and othering enabled me to read the data specifically to identify representations of Southern Kaduna Self and Hausa-Fulani Muslim Other. Being cognisant of the fact that I am dealing with an Online Forum that offers certain restrictions, but also grants certain liberties, and given my interest in religion on this platform, I also applied ideas from research in new media and digital religion as a complementary lens. As a framework for understanding religion and digital media, digital religion is concerned with religion in digital culture and media, and the new ways that such religion is constituted. It is also concerned with the ways in which religious communities adapt, engage and respond to new media, as well as the implication for both offline and online spaces. Digital religion is further imagined as bridging the online and the

offline, and the online as extending and complementing the offline, and vice versa (Campbell, 2013; Campbell and Altenhofen, 2016).

Guided by these frameworks, I identified the prevailing narratives in the content examined through which ideas about the Self and Other are expressed by Forum Members. As Ammerman (2003) observes, narratives are helpful as metaphors for understanding identities. They help frame conversation and language as important sites for analysis of identity. Somers (1994) notes that people acquire identity by locating themselves, or being located, in social narratives. By linking them to historical and special practices and relationships, people come to understand their experiences, and events become part of a plot through narratives. Thus, as Ammerman puts it, "we may understand identities as emerging, then at the everyday intersection of autobiographical and public narratives" (2003:231). The narratives identified and analyzed from the Online Forum's content were grouped into broad categories, namely, representations of the Self, representations of the Other and representations of religion, based on the extent to which each narrative reveals depictions and ideas about the Self, the Other and Religion.

The reviewed literature suggests that both Christians and Muslims view each other with suspicion, and complain of marginalization. Nigerian Christians complained about Muslims treating them as second-class citizens, and as being on a mission to 'Islamize' Nigeria. Some of the historical events that are often cited to support his claim include the 1804 Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio, the registration of Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1986, state sponsorship of Muslim pilgrimage, building of madrasas and placing Muslim religious leaders on government payrolls, and the attempts to make room for Sharia in the Nigerian constitution as well as the implementation of Sharia in about 12 states in northern Nigeria (Ebhomienlen and Ukpebor, 2013; Nwauche, 2008; Ogoloma, 2012; Okeke, 2013). Jibrin Ibrahim (2000) cites the general perception among Nigerians that while the Hausa-Fulani persistently control political power, the Yoruba control finance and bureaucracy, and the Igbo run commerce and the Nigerian informal sector. He notes that because Nigerians view political power to be more important as it grants influence on other sectors, Hausa-Fulani Muslims are represented as *"ruling* and *ruining"* Nigeria (Ibrahim, 2000:52). Ibrahim also highlights some of the ways Hausa-Fulani Muslims have responded to these representations by citing Dahiru Yahaya, who argued that;

> The Hausa Muslims of the Far-North appear to be the target of the frustration of all other Nigerians. They are hated for the reasons of the political leadership imposed on them by the mutual suspicions of other Nigerians. They are subjected to humiliation by the South-Western Yoruba powerful media by which their culture, religion and leadership are daily treated to insults. They are also excluded from full economic participation by the Yoruba control of the financial institutions. In the private sector they are open to the exploitation of the Ibo control of the modern sector of private business activities. Ibos fix prices unilaterally by which Hausa money is siphoned daily. The Hausa are reduced to utter poverty and a large percentage of them rendered street beggars. The Hausa also feel that they are put at serious disadvantages in the public and social services in the country (2000: 52).

Based on my familiarity with media conversations and content around these issues, especially in social media, these are persistent representations of members of Nigeria's major ethnicities and religions in addition to representations of Muslims as violent, particularly in light of conflicts in Nigeria and the activities of groups such as Boko Haram. Furthermore, ethnic minorities do not appear in Ibrahim's (2000) portrayal of the situation, insofar as they are not associated to a religion. This is possibly because of the regionalism mindset that has persistently merged minorities, especially northern minorities, with their respective regional majorities (Lergo, 2011). These representations and narratives also surface in several ways in the representations of the Self and Other discussed in the rest of this chapter, whereby the Southern Kaduna Christian in the discourse of the Online Forum is portrayed and crafted as oppressed, victimized, puritan, religiously loyal, and marginalized; and the Hausa-Fulani Muslim as suspicious, violent, and morally inferior.

5.3.1 Representations of the Self

Two prevailing narratives in the Online Forum serve to largely reinforce notions of Southern Kaduna Self. The first is identified as narratives of oppression and genocide because they are centered around the several ways in which Forum members construct the perceived marginality and threats of extinction faced by Southern Kaduna. I also hope to show through these narratives, how misfortunes and other events are woven into preexisting stories and beliefs about the Self and Other. Secondly, in the section on narratives of agency and resistance I analyze how Forum members express concerns about their agency, and wrestle with perceived needs and appropriate methods for resisting oppression and genocide – through which further ideas about the Self emerge.

Narratives of Oppression and Genocide

This is the overarching narrative on the Online Forum, it is the lens and story that underlies how many Forum members interpret history and current events in Kaduna state and nationally. Members use very strong language to convey the idea of the Southern Kaduna as oppressed and experiencing an ongoing genocide and annihilation. For example, in a short general reflection about Southern Kaduna, Faith, a frequent user, said, *"The pogrom has started. The annihilation of my beloved southern kaduna people has started" (June 25, 2014),* and encouraged forum members to be courageous. Terms such as "pogrom", "annihilation" and "genocide" often appear in discussions of the mass killings of Southern Kaduna villagers that became commonplace in the post-election violence in Nigeria in 2011 (Lere, 2015). Forum members interpret these attacks as part of an intentional effort by Hausa-Fulani Muslims to "wipe out" the people of Southern Kaduna. For instance, in their response to one such incident, and to images posted of women mourning at a mass grave, Ceiphas wrote, *"O God we need u d mst nw. our enemy want 2 wipe us out" (March 18, 2014)*, and Dan wrote *"We are killed like animals" (March 18, 2014)*, and yet another member, on a similar occasion wrote, *"Islam has a plan against d church (Danju, December 15, 2013)*. These members in their comments, depict Southern Kaduna as a people facing a serious threat to their existence. The threat is also presented as one-directional in that the Southern Kaduna people are seen as primarily victims rather than as losing their lives in a war. This is demonstrated in a post by Bako, an infrequent but fairly regular driver of conversations on the Online Forum and whose opinions seem to be highly respected by many members. Bako wanted to express his disapproval of a meeting he said was held at the Kaduna government's house on April 2, 2014, where traditional rulers and interest groups from Southern Kaduna were invited for a peace agreement with the Fulani association, Miyetti Allah, as a response to the killings in the state. He asked, "*are the people of southern kaduna at war or hostilities with the fulanis? because my understanding of the issues are that this incessant attacks can only be best describe as a pogrom, genocide and clear cut brigandage*" (April 9, 2014). As members expressed their approval of Bako's clarification, they also highlight other related issues. For instance, in the screenshot below which shows three responses to Bako, the second comment suggest that Southern Kaduna people were being tricked and cannot trust such a treaty.

The first[12] and third comments in the screenshot, agree with Bako that the treaty was unwarranted and illogical as it was not a war situation. However, they also criticize supporters and Southern Kaduna signatories as letting themselves be used against their own people. Particularly they criticize one elder, Goje, for showing approval of the treaty on the Hausa language channel of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

Screenshot 5.1 Opposition to Signing of Treaty

The clarity that the Forum members attempt to bring to the situation and the distinction between being at "war" and being victims of a pogrom, suggest a perception of the Southern Kaduna Self as aware, knowledgeable, informed, and capable of seeing through deceit; hence the rejection of the treaty signing on the ground that they are experiencing genocide and not in a war. The above quotes also imply that members believe they know the genocide to be intentional and planned. The second commentator suggests that there are actually designed strategies for the attack: *"this people are only buying time to redesign their attack strategy..."*. Another Forum user, Paul, about a year earlier (March 30, 2013) had called on members to wake up and do something about *"the carefully orchestrated and sustained pogrom of the Southern Kaduna people..., the Extinction agenda of Southern Kaduna by Feudalistic and Religious zealots"*. Thus, further highlighting a view among Forum members that the killings were intentionally planned and deliberately executed, and therefore, reinforcing the idea that they are specifically targeted and

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[12] *Muna Kallon ko"* in the first comment on the screenshot means "we are watching you" in Hausa language.

victimized. This raises a question about why, in the view of Forum members, Southern Kaduna groups are the targets of such aggression. The perceived reason for this is succinctly stated by a regular contributor, Fom; *"The hand writing is clear to any average intelligent mind dat we are being persecuted for our (1) FAITH n (2)TRIBE" (May 18, 2013).* For Fom, it is obvious that religion and ethnicity makes them targets for persecution by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim. This is also in line with beliefs that Muslims are intent on Islamizing Nigeria as Danju asserted when he said that *"Islam has a plan against d church (December 15, 2014);* or Bonet, who claimed not to have believed in the existence of any inslamization agenda until *"afta comin face to face wit a 300 page [top secret agenda of O.I.C. in Abuja]. 157 pages of it centred on 9ja" (December 15, 2014).* The existence of this document, in Bonet's opinion, confirmed that there is a plan to Islamize the country.

These ideas about the Southern Kaduna Self also inform the way members interpret past and current events, including non-violent events. Members tend to link events and weave them into already existing narratives of victimhood, in which they are being targeted. Another contributor, Iliya, for instance, on January 18, 2014, claimed he encountered several Hausa-Fulani Muslim families who had just resettled in a Southern Kaduna town, from other parts of northern Nigeria. Iliya's post generated several responses that made links between the reported resettlement and past cases of conflicts and the notion being under threat. This can be seen in the screenshot of responses below.

Right on time kachia has been garin malo... I can remember that our house got burnt down in 2000 by them. It is just of recent that our people came to occupy a part of the town... We have been dia but we knew they were much

January 18, 2014 at 8:17am · Like

Those who have the knowledge of Islam like   and co knows that jihadistically, these people are not refugees but an Islamic IMMIGRANTS who are embarking on JIHAD. INFILTRATION and CALIPHATE-tion will soon follow if we fold our hands and watch them.

January 18, 2014 at 9:26am · Like

Believe me iam in kachia presently,and there is massive arrival of diz hausa fulani herdsmen with their cattles frm God knows where,I was able to gather that d were aportion a land in kachia for grazing and settlement purposes by d government,they were also agitating for road linking the grazing settlement to d town and also social amenities.I view dis moves as a calculated attempt to make kachia infilterated by diz jihadist,and prone to attack,so guys watch ur back....

January 18, 2014 at 11:05am · Like · 2 Likes

Makama I understand u vividly well, but what am saying is, let the indigene reject the do something before its too late, is their place though part of sk, remember what happen in Zangon Kataf 1992 when Atyap realized that this same people (invaders) wants to claim their land, the rised up to the occassion and entire sk supported, Kachia people should not allow it gets to that extend, we re solidly behind them.

Screenshot 5.2 Muslims arriving at Kachia

The first comment above says that Kachia has been a Hausa town (*"garin malo"*) for a while now, but links it to the burning of his house in 2000. The second comment appeals to Forum members considered knowledgeable on Islam to suggest that the resettlement was part of a jihad. This member also urges people not to fold their hands and watch. This is taken further by the third comment which, despite acknowledging that the Hausa-Fulani herdsmen were apportioned grazing land, and were requesting social amenities, suggests it was a plan to attack the people of Southern Kaduna. Thus, Iliya introduced a particular kind of rhetoric using language such as "invaders", which was replicated in the way other members commented in order to weave what is being discussed into already existing narratives about the Self being systematically targeted for attacks, and the Hausa-Fulani Other as careful schemers. What is unclear, from the comments, especially in the third comment, is whether this was independently planned by the Hausa-Fulani Muslims who resettled or that the government of the day was a co-conspirator in their acts of demarcating land in Southern Kaduna as grazing reserves. The cited Forum members are also inconsistent in their commentary because they also comment that Hausa-Fulani have been in the

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town for a long time – the first comment actually says it has been "garin malo" (a Hausa town) – and that non-Hausa only moved to some part of the town recently. It is also interesting that these members interpret what the third comment terms "agitations for social amenities" as part of a plot. These responses suggest that in weaving events into already existing narratives about identity, these Forum members care less about facts or validity but the appeal of the events in affirming preexisting narratives.

Some Online Forum users also portrayed misfortunes such as road accidents using an in-group lens of victimization and genocide, although this is challenged by other Forum members. For example, when news reached the Forum of a near fatal accident of two Southern Kaduna politicians, comments such as the following were posted; "*It is not ordinary. It is an attack against southern kaduna people. the enemy wants us to perpetually be their slaves. They don't want any Southern Kaduna native to raise to Political/economic freedom. (James, December 23, 2013).* Other members such as Bitrus, whose posts show him to be critical of such views, asked "*Can't smfin like these happen naturally n coincidentally without it being planned ne? (Dec 23, 2013).* But another contributor, Shehu, suggested that Bitrus was naïve, particularly regarding the individuals involved in the accident, so the possibility of it being part of the grand scheme of the Hausa-Fulani should not be eliminated. Shehu argues, "*why rule it out? We don't want such coincidences on our already targeted sons and daughters. You must understand the politics behind the people mentioned to understand what we are saying. (Dec 24, 2013).* Thus, Shehu suggests that members must be open to the possibility that the attacks on Southern Kaduna people could also be carried out outside usual spaces and without usual methods. This expands the image of the Self as targeted and unsafe as attacks may not only take place in villages or during violent conflicts, but also as orchestrated road accidents. Studies, mostly in Europe have shown similar tendencies among group members in conflict situations. Hancock (2014) and Klar and Baram (2016) illustrate that historical narratives and the lens of old conflicts persist and are often applied to interpret new conflicts and events. They are also used to produce identities that draw on "fears of extinction", that is, fears of domination and anxieties based on a perception that the survival of one's group is under symbolic, cultural and physical threat. Hancock notes that sometimes such fears work like self-fulfilling prophecies that are spread and reinforced by a negative interpretation of events (Klar and Baram, 2016: 433).

One other major area, in addition to genocide, that members lament is being excluded and marginalized politically and otherwise. Henry, highly respected by Forum members for his knowledge of Kaduna History and politics, offers a detailed articulation of this. Between February 15 to 22, 2013, Henry posts a series of six lengthy articles titled "The 2015 Southern Kaduna Power Struggle: Between Faith and Reality", in which he reviews historical and partisan political developments, structures, and contestations in northern Nigeria and Kaduna from colonial times to 2013. His declared aim in this was to educate Online Forum members and challenge "empty political faith" in Southern Kaduna shown in Forum members' appeal to God rather than careful assessment and strategizing to better their political situation by the 2015 elections. The following excerpts reflect the nature and content of Henry's posts.

> *"Out of 34 constituencies of Kaduna State House of Assembly, Southern Kaduna has nine, and four from Kajuru, Chikun, Lere and Makera making 13 slots, while Muslims dominate Kaduna North and Central districts had 21 slots. Meaning they have advantage of 8 extra lawmakers."*

> *"Out of 255 Electoral Wards in Kaduna State, Southern Kaduna has 87 Wards, added with 22 Wards of Chikun and Kajuru and four Wards in Lere making 112, while both Kaduna Central and North had 164. Here it is a difference of 52 Wards in favour of Northern and Central Kaduna.*

> *"If you do more in-depth analyses of 500 voters per polling units, Southern Kaduna will have a total of 921, 5000 votes and Northern Kaduna with 3,202 will have a total of 1, 601,000. Added to the fact that all the three arms of government (Executive, Legislature and Judiciary) are all controlled by Northern and Central Kaduna, including the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who is number two in Nigeria, and number one in Northern Nigeria…."*

Using these figures and numbers, Henry hoped to drive home the argument that the political structures and formation of Kaduna disadvantaged the state in such a way that efforts such as voting will hardly result in success. This is premised on the idea that *"two solid blocs indeed exists in two forms, Christian and Muslim bloc, better still, the Hausa-Fulani and the over 50 ethnic groups in Southern Kaduna and others in Chikun and Kajuru…." (February, 23, 2013),* and that this informs voting and political behaviour in the state. However, Henry also

acknowledges that enclaves of Hausa-Fulani exist within Southern Kaduna areas and sympathetic votes for Southern Kaduna exist among Hausa-Fulani and vice versa. Thus, while Henry represents Southern Kaduna as disadvantaged politically, he also highlights that they are not without sympathy from the Hausa-Fulani. His posts received a high number of positive responses, most of which assumed that his facts and calculations were accurate. Forum members appeared to have found in the posts ways to talk about the Self as politically disadvantaged and to create in them a desire for redress as illustrated in the following responses:

> *Clement: "thank you for your relentlessness in always digging out historical facts and presenting them to us in graphic terms to depict the gloomy picture of the huge challenges and threats that keep staring at us in the face" (Feb 21, 2013).*

> *Abba: "A beautiful write up, from history to reality, gaskiya[13] we deserve more than the present" (Feb 15, 2013).*

> *Bomai: "A man from Zaria ever told me SK will never produced the Governor, because of this political structure and he told me they deliberately done it that way to block our chances ..." (Feb 16, 2013).*

These responses agree with Henry that the people of Southern Kaduna have less than they deserve, are under threat politically, and are deliberately prevented from political advancement through carefully designed political structures. While Henry also represents Southern Kaduna people as historically *"intolerant of injustice" (February, 16, 2013)* his post did not give much attention to changes that may have resulted from such historical resistance to political injustice, such as the emergence of a Southern Kaduna person as Governor in 2011, despite the several contestation and violence surrounding his election and demise. Marginalization of Southern Kaduna is also perceived by Forum members to exist in processes of recruitments to civil service. Abba, a contributor, reacts to a recent job screening, *"...This injustice in the recent shorted listed applications for interview/examination in Nigerian Custom Service (NSC) no single Christian applicant from Kaduna and Plateau State. This people are at it again, makes me remember what happened after Zango-kataf crisis, how our people were badly marginalized on jobs and other social benefits" (January 19, 2013).* Another contributer, Didam, adds, *"Even the*

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[13] Hausa language word for "truly".

list of Nigerian Police Academy, the Christians that were given admission are very few" *(January 19, 2013).* These members attempt to present Christians as marginalized in different sectors, and, in doing so, Abba links his reported absence of Christians in shortlisted applicants in 2013 to incidences around violent Zango-Kataf conflicts in 1992. He probably does this to reinforce the idea that the marginalization of Christians of Kaduna has been long standing, and that it goes beyond Kaduna state institutions and structures to federal ones, such as the Nigerian custom service and the Nigeria Police.

The Online space appears to function as a safe space for members to freely present and reinforce these ideas due to the freedom, access, space and resources it offers to pursue their objective without being hindered by traditional patriarchies and confrontations (Fung, 2002; Young, 2013). However, in early 2013 some members posted comments about criticisms of their Online Forum by outsiders, who attacked their politics. These 'outside' commentators requested more clarity about the purpose of the Forum, and whether the Forum has, as one user puts it, a *"road-map for the emancipation of the SK" (January 3, 2016)* which is pursued in the Forum. To this, a regular contributor, Dama, whose engagement in the Forum portrays him as passionate about its goals, responded, "*It's unfortunate that for some this forum's a game of chess. For most on the other hand it is a passion, passion for the emancipation of a people from the shackles of mental, political, historical and economic slavery (January 6, 2013).* Dama claims, in the statement, that Southern Kaduna are under "slavery" and it is not only socio-political and contemporary, but psychological and longstanding, and must be taken seriously. For Dama, this is a real rife situation, "not a game of chess". He reads it as not merely an intellectual or unscrupulous manipulation of a situation, nor as an amusement or competition among members, but a strategic, collaborative effort, and "passion" to free a people from a deeply entrenched experience that is so inhumane that it can only be equated to slavery. Such narratives and rhetoric is invoked by several Forum members on different occasions to reinforce the idea of being oppressed, and to highlight the need for an emancipatory politics. For instance, Kanyip commented, *"Only Southern Kaduna can fight for their emancipation" (October 5, 2014),* A Southern Kaduna politician was once described as having a *"zeal for the emancipation of Sk from the shackles of the oppressor" (Habu, April 3, 2013),* another Forum user, Didam, once wrote that *"SK has not emancipated herself from mental slavery and low self-esteem" (June 7, 2014).* These examples illustrate the appropriation and purposeful use of language to emphasize

a certain perception of Southern Kaduna as oppressed and under slavery. Hence, Dama's frustration with people who do not seem to take the Online platform seriously. Dama, when interpreted in the context of his post, could be suggesting that not only was the Southern Kaduna condition under siege, but the Online Forum as a safe space for engaging the Southern Kaduna experience was also under siege.

Several news reports[14] and reports such as that of the Human Rights Watch (2013) say that after the 2011 post-election violence, Southern Kaduna has experienced recurring attacks by Fulani herdsmen, during which hundreds of people lost their lives. These reports, however, do not generalize the perpetrators to include the usual conflation of Hausa-Fulani as one group, rather, they mention specifically that they were perpetrated by nomadic Fulani herdsmen. But they have also been reported as revenge attacks by the Fulanis for their people who died during the 2011 conflicts. Yet, as the analysis above shows, for Southern Kaduna, these attacks all merge into an agenda of the Hausa-Fulani to wipe them out. In terms of socio-political exclusion and marginalization, scholars largely agree that Southern Kaduna groups have historically been marginalized, and currently hold limited access to power compared to Hausa-Fulani Muslims, and are currently engaged in a struggle for more access and self-determination (Osaghae, 1998; Lergo, 2011; Ochonu, 2013). Some of these scholars also highlight how the image of Hausa-Fulani as the oppressor emerged out of indirect rule system and has persisted after colonialism (Kazzah-Toure, 1999; Suleiman, 2011). Few scholars have argued that the extent of marginalization is no longer the same and that some of the historical grievances of Southern Kaduna are no longer relevant to their contemporary contestations (Suleiman, 2011; Kazzah-Toure, 1999). But as Blench (2008) observes, even narratives of slavery that ended around the 1930s have resurfaced to fan conflicts in northern Nigeria. Bikmen (2013) observes that socialization of group members plays a significant role in the attitude and behaviours of groups towards each other, and that these attitudes change when the narratives change.

Narratives of Agency and Resistance

In addition to the narratives of oppression and genocide, Forum discussions also contain a construction of the Southern Kaduna Self as passive and not sufficiently pushing back against

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[14] [14] E.g. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26602018; and http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/168721-over-4000-killed-in-kaduna-attacks.html

oppression. For example, Emly, a regular contributor of short religious reflections, wrote, *"their machination is encouraged by our 'Do-nothingism' (May 12, 2013)* when responding to conversations about persistence of oppression. Another contributor, Habiba, suggested that Southern Kaduna had become accustomed to their position, hence their passivity. She wrote, *"after decades of playing second fiddle to settlers, we have become comfortable (May 12, 2013).* Members of the Online Forum, thus, grapple with the question of resistance. Forum members repeatedly emphasize the urgency of the need to *"rise", "act", "fight"*, *"wake up"* to address and finally bring their situation to an end. This is evidenced, for example, in responses to a post by Irimiya, a regular contributor, which listed 53 cases violent conflicts and attacks between 1981 and 2014. Bitrus commented in Hausa that, *"muna da hankuri da yawa" (April 8, 2014),* which means, "we are too patient/resigned/non-resistant"; while another contributor wrote, *"please Christians let's not wait for anything, let's rise" (Jibo, April 8, 2014).* In response to pictures posted on the Forum about killings in Southern Kaduna, Bala wrote, *"for how long shall we fold our hands n watch this barbaric act?" (March 16, 2014),* and in an earlier comment in a similar situation, Pious, another Forum user, commented that, *"he who passively accepts evil is asmuch involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it"* (January 17, 2014). Ishaya asked, in response to lamentations of oppression by other Forum members, *"Are we going to spend all our life time as a people complaining and regretting?... the earlier we wake up to reality and restrategise the better" (Ishaya, June 3, 2013).* These examples reveal an appetite for resistance. The cited Forum members represent Southern Kaduna Christians as overly patient and complaining rather than urgently exerting their agency to resist the oppression and violence they experience. Thus, the Forum is also concerned with the agent's ability to shape their own reality. The internet has been studied as a site that enables agency in that it allows niche and marginalized groups to mobilize, engage their concerns, and sometimes facilitate resistance and social movements (Fung, 2002; Khondker, 2011; Gerbaudo, 2012; Howard and Hussain, 2013)

Forum members also encourage each other to own the resistance. This is articulated in Kanyip's comment "*Only Southern Kaduna people can fight for their emancipation…. Together we can achieve this" (October 5, 2014).* Kanyip highlights two important views that are common in the Online Forum. First, that previous approaches to the liberation of Southern Kaduna have not been sufficient and effective. Considering that interfaith dialogue scored 14% in the online

survey administered to Forum members, this could also indicate skepticism about previous political and interfaith efforts. Secondly, that the only trustworthy agents of transformation in this context are Southern Kaduna Christians. This appears to be very important to members – that they be self-reliant and own the resistance, given how frequently it comes up. This is expressed in concerns that the government has been unable, and is not sufficient, to protect Southern Kaduna people and have failed to serve justice. For example, in comments such as, "*d government are silent all this while" (Bello, April 8, 2014,* responding to the post about 53 cases of violent conflicts mentioned above) or *"the government guns are not sufficient to keep the enemy at bay!" (Joy, September 1, 2013)* and *"how sorrowful and painful we'v been treated without justice" (May 30, 2014) and "this impunity in Sk attacks and slavery must end"* (Bala, November 17, 2013). These comments suggest a lack of confidence in government and the need for Southern Kaduna to act by themselves.

Additionally, the emphasis on their own agency by Online Forum members is also informed by the view of Hausa-Fulani Muslims as cunning, untrustworthy, and willing to pursue their goals even under the pretext of peace. For example, Major Hamza Al-Mustapha, a former Chief Security Officer to one of Nigeria's Military dictators, and a Muslim "vowed" to put an end to the incessant killings and conflicts in Southern Kaduna and Plateau[15] during a visit to Southern Kaduna, bringing relief materials to victims of an attack, and inviting Southern Kaduna people to Abuja for a conversation. His efforts were mostly received by Online Forum members with suspicion as indicated in the following screenshot.

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[15] http://naijalog.com/al-mustapha-moves-to-stop-killings-in-southern-kaduna/; also http://viewpointnigeria.com/hamza-al-mustapha-continuous-disputes-in-plateau-and-southern-kaduna-must-be-stopped/

Screenshot 5.3 Reactions over Al-Mustapha's Visit

These responses interpreted his move as ultimately being for the benefit of Hausa-Fulani Muslims, as well as a deliberate political scheme to take advantage of their situation for future political goals. His perceived 'misrepresentation' of the issue also informs the doubt expressed about him. The responses also suggest that only Southern Kaduna people are reliable for 'truthful' intentions and resistance. The attitude displayed in the above responses could foreclose possibilities for peacebuilding or other goals of the resistance of Forum members. The responses seem to be more about presenting an image of Forum members as aware and not easily lured.

A rhetoric of distrust and suspicion is endemic in the Forum, and extends to taint members' view of not only Hausa-Fulani but of Southern Kaduna too, particularly those who are seen as undermining the resistance through a misdirection of their agency. Such Southern Kaduna Christians are identified as traitors for seemingly forming alliances with Hausa-Fulani or helping to advance their interest at the expense of Southern Kaduna. For example, when a newspaper reported that a Southern Kaduna Senator, Nenadi Esther Usman, who is married to a Muslim emir, advocated for the return of Fulanis who had fled a town in Southern Kaduna, Emi commented *"when a land and people have a judas within, the result cannot be less than what she is saying…. Whoever forsake his/her faith for worldly gains would not surprise me if she abandoned and betrayed her people and land" (July 23, 2013).* Another member responded that,

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"*Of course she wants them to come n finish what they started according to their assumed master plan to annihilate the good people of Southern Kaduna" (Joy, July 24, 2013).* Also, there were occasions when members suspected that some participants were spies, or that they trade the Forum's online conversations for profit. For example, a former Forum member left because he was arrested by the police who showed him printed pages of posts and pictures he had shared on the Online Forum about of an attack in Southern Kaduna villages early 2014, charging him for attempting to incite violence. He wrote, *"...when Sk people turn on their own. To think that came from our own is disgusting" (March 23, 2014).* One among the many similar reactions to this incidence read, *"SK Kenan... trading our people for a pot of porridge" (March 23, 2014).* So, while the Online Forum seeks to be a platform for agency and resistance, some members are perceived to be applying their own agency to undermine this effort. The older generation, especially traditional rulers and politicians are also considered with suspicion. Peter, for instance, posts: *"...The earlier we stopped banking hopes on some supposed Elders that are still kowtowing for their individual avaricious appetites, the best for us. this emancipation we fervently crave for can only be engaged by a generation of sincere and ardent Sk indigene!" (August 12, 2013).* Peter represents the older generation as selfish greedy, and inclined to frustrate the agency and resistance of the younger generation.

Among Forum members, four positions exist with respect to methods of resistance to oppression and genocide, which also reflect different forms of activism. The first is publicity. There seems to be a feeling that it is time to "*let the world know our plight" (Gwafan, January 15, 2014, following attacks of villages).* Halima*,* one of the few regular female voices on the Forum, responding to frustrations about the loss of lives in Southern Kaduna, comments, *"now is the time for us to COME TOGETHER and make the loudest noise we can ever make for our ONE VOICE to be heard" (29 January 2013).* She emphasizes the need to speak as a united voice but primarily, a need to be heard. Baman, highlights the urgency of voicing out, "*We need to Shout and I mean Shout now not tomorrow"* (January 19, 2013). It is suggested in these comments that the Southern Kaduna plight is not widely known. However, it is not generally clear what exactly is expected to be the outcome of creating awareness of the situation, and in light of rhetoric of suspicion and self-reliance discussed above, it seems self-defeating, to an extent, to advocate publicity but be too suspicious of people who have attempted to help. Yet, on some occasions there are indications of the desired goal of resistance through publicity. For example, a former

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Forum user, Bako, once accused by the police of inciting violence with the pictures he posted on the Forum, defended himself by saying, *"those pictures were not meant to incite, but to draw the attention of all concerned to see the urgent need for a genuine dialogue targeted at finding a lasting solution to the ongoing killings" (March 23, 2014).* Nonetheless, conversations about reaching other organizations including The Hague(ICC) have taken place on the Forum. For example, when a member shared on March 17, 2014 about the victims and destruction of a Southern Kaduna village, there was a widely welcomed proposition that the Forum's executive should assemble its team of lawyers and *"sue the Federal Govt at the International Court of Justice at the Hague for criminal negligence to protect our people from invading marauders who attack and kill our people. this is a clear case of genocide perpetrated n executed by the Fulani herdsmen against our people" (March 17, 2014).* This was seen as a way of exposing the situation and possibly obtaining justice. In collaboration with other organizations, members have pursued avenues such as an international press conferences and press releases. Images of one such conference was shared on the Forum by Bako on April 8, 2014, who added, *"World Press Conference: Telling the World the True Picture of the SK Pogrom…. To tell the world the true picture of the serial killings in SK since the 2011-post election violence".* On October 3, 2013, a member posted the text of a press release by the Online Forum in collaboration with other organizations which aimed to register their displeasure about *"the continuous and unwarranted attack on the personality of Professor William Qurix Barnabas, the Vice Chancellor of Kaduna State University, as well as Alhaji Abubakar Ladan, the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing council of the Institution, by Zazzau Emirate Development Association (ZEMDA)".* While the release also included a Hausa Muslim, Alhaji Ladan, it focused more on Qurix whom they described as *"our illustrious son",* and served to make clear their intention to resist any threats and efforts by organizations like ZEMDA whose action is also described in the release as *"an effrontery on the entire people of Southern Kaduna…we advise ZEMDA to desist from further fanning of embers of division between the Northern and Southern parts of Kaduna State".* In addition to publicity, such releases serve to reinforce an image of Southern Kaduna as resisting injustice and protective of their own, but also, as fighting against disunity fanned by a Muslim organization.

Publicity is to be done forcefully and in a way that strongly communicates their experience, as a post by Shehu, a Forum administrator, indicates. Referring to photos taken at the scene of an

attack, he wrote, *"the pictures are gruesome and so others need to see them to have an idea of the barbarity. Push to all online platforms you think of and belong to. Silence in this case will not help us" (February 14, 2014).* This comment takes advantage of the nature of the pictures, as they were more likely to appeal to viewers' emotion and evoke a response. The comment also suggests that Forum members seemed to understand that the online platform has potential for wider reach and lesser restrictions. But also, their exploitation of online/social media comes from the view that local traditional media is controlled by Hausa-Fulani Muslims who often twist their reporting to give inaccurate representation of facts and to advance their own interests. A member, for instance, once posted on the forum that he was contacted by a European reporter who wondered why a certain violent incidence against Southern Kaduna was underreported by the international media, not even by their stations in Nigeria such as the Hausa station of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). His response was that "*[BBC Hausa] is a jihadist zone (Abel, July 6, 2014)".* It is not clear what exactly Abel meant, but given that the context of conversation was about lack of publicity concerning the Southern Kaduna experience, and the use of "jihadist" sometimes to refer to Muslims, Abel is likely saying that BBC Hausa is controlled by Hausa-Fulani Muslims who control what and how contents are reported. Other members also expressed this view. Bato, for example wrote, *"d VOA and BBC hausa has now turn to jihadist station" (April 3, 2014)* while contesting alleged inaccurate reports by these stations and their choice of approaching only Muslims when they interviewed members of a Southern Kaduna community following an episode of violent conflict in which a Southern Kaduna man lost his life. Another forum member who claimed to have been an eyewitness wrote, *"I've learnt to distrust anything 'Hausa service'. Be it VOA, BBC, Radio France, Dutchville, etc. they're all propaganda and distortion machines" (April 3, 2014).* Ojobode (2007) argues that the media in Nigeria is mostly concerned with issues relating to the majority population, and that it shows a lack of interest in minority groups and their lives. This indicated that the cultural status and experiences of minorities in Nigeria is very low. He illustrates the low cultural status of minorities and their issues in Nigerian media, showing that 77% of coverage in print media was of the three major ethnic groups, with 23% for minorities. With broadcast media, news coverage of the activities of minorities was 6.3% and 69% of this low coverage represented minorities as violent and greedy (Ojobode, 2007). Thus, for Ojobode (2007) media coverage in Nigeria reflects horizontal inequality. Other studies also show that conflicts in

Nigeria tend to escalate due to inaccurate reporting and representation by media, and that many Nigerians do not trust local media, and that social media has emerged to play a significant role in both escalating and helping to address conflicts (Asuni and Farris, 2011; BBC, 2014).

The second possible method of resistance that emerges among Forum members is violence. There is contestation over violence as a possible response to oppression and genocide, and a small but vocal faction of Forum members propose aggression. For example, in response to a reported attack (24 June 2014),[16] Malachi wrote, *"is high time for us to take arms ad hit the street. Violence bring violence" (June 27, 2014).* Following a similar earlier incidence, another Forum member wrote, *"dis will happen again except we stop it ourself. sometymz u use evil 2 deal wit evil" (Phillip, March 18, 2014).* Malachi and Philip pose a call to arms and advocate that violence can only be ended with equal violence. On another occasion, a member draws on a sermon by a religious leader to suggest that non-violence is no longer a viable or effective option. He cited the Bishop as saying "*Communities that still believe that the only Christian response to Satanic acts of genocide and insurgency is prayers and fasting do not exist anymore upon the surface of the earth (Cletus, October 5, 2014, claimed to be part of a Bishop's sermon during a mass burial ceremony of victims).* The post reinforces the narratives of genocide. Cletus does not explicitly advocate violence but highlights an appetite to reinterpret Christian response to genocide and to evil. He does not discount prayer and fasting, but presents them as insufficient. The results of the online survey I administered suggest that most respondents are likely to agree with Cletus, as prayer scored 7.4% as a strategy for peace. For him, the reported killing of Southern Kaduna people is the act of satanic or devilish people. Several other members disagree with suggestions of violence, unless it is in self-defense, and the general agreement seems to be that Christians must "*never be the first to strike*" but should be ready to protect and defend themselves when the need arises (Peter, December 30, 2014). While striking first is seen as contrary to members' religion and morality, striking in self-defense is not; as Baman suggests in response to a newspaper report about the leader of a Southern Kaduna organization saying that over 4000 people had died in Southern Kaduna attacks since the 2011 post-election conflict,[17]

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[16] http://naijalog.com/al-mustapha-moves-to-stop-killings-in-southern-kaduna/; also http://viewpointnigeria.com/hamza-al-mustapha-continuous-disputes-in-plateau-and-southern-kaduna-must-be-stopped/
[17] *http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/168721-over-4000-killed-in-kaduna-attacks.html*

"*Do we wait for them to kill us like chickens. Christianity did not say you should not defend yourself*" (September 28, 2014).

Yet, the primary reason behind reservations about violence appears to be about preserving a certain image of the Southern Kaduna Christian Self. This is demonstrated in the following responses. Tokan wrote, "*I agree wit d gospel an eye 4 am eye. But we are not known 2 be this barbaric. If we should go down this low we sinc into there level which we are far above*" (March 30, 2014). Another member, Kala, wrote, "*wake up we are nt blood suckers we are nt out 2 shed blood*" (March 30, 2014). Through this representation violence and the ability to enact violence, is contested and rejected as uncharacteristic of Southern Kaduna, but also because it reduces the Self to something lesser than its Self-Image. In these narratives, (non)violence, for Forum members, could be interpreted as a demonstration of humanness, and a marker of religious and moral identity, regarding which Southern Kaduna Christians are depicted as superior.

Advocacy for cessation is the third way that agency and resistance appears to be asserted in the Online Forum. Members envision a separate state for Southern Kaduna, which they refer to as "Gurara State". Gwafan, for example, in an effort to encourage members complaining about being marginalized in Kaduna, posted that "*Gurara State is our dream and we have faith that it will materialized soonest*" (October 4, 2013). Another Forum user, responding to a similar conversation, had posted earlier, "*I for one no longer look at colonialism or terrorism. I am focused on the destination which is of course Gurara state (the SK Nation), not the obstacles. Because I believe in it*" (June 28, 2013). These assertions suggest high hopes and focus on cessation as a way of dealing with oppression and genocide, and for contesting the present political structure. Data from the online survey conducted for this study supports this as 52.8% of respondents said they joined the Online Forum to support the creation of a separate state for Southern Kaduna, and 39% saw state creation as a strategy for peace. Moreover, a separate state for Southern Kaduna has been pursued since the 1950s. Following similar agitations in other parts of Nigeria, the National Conference held in 2014 recommended the creation of about 18 new states, one of which is Gurara state for Southern Kaduna.[18] But there are concerns about secession. Forum members are also aware of some of these concerns, especially, whether the ethnic diversity within Southern Kaduna poses a threat to the survival of a new state if created.

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[18] Nigeria to now have 54 states, http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/08/confab-recommends-54-states-nigeria/

Yet, Forum members are generally positive, and view their diversity not to be a threat, at least not in the long term. For example, in response to a question whether a Gurara state will survive when created (January 17, 2014), Haruna wrote, *"we deserve a state, our contradictions will fizzle out. Its normal, those common things that binds us are more than our differences. So we shall overcome after short period of adjustment".* Elmy, a frequent writer on the Forum, posted a few months later, *"Give us Gurara State and even if your prediction that we would kill ourselves when we have our state is true, it is better and more honourable to be killed by a greedy and foolish SK brother than to go down under the shots of a Jihadist" (July 6, 2014).* While Haruna is optimistic about the survival of a new state, Elmy is willing to tolerate some of the conditions that inspire their quest for cessation provided a fellow Southern Kaduna is responsible for such conditions. This reinforces the idea of superiority associated to Southern Kaduna by some members, such that death by the hands of their own is considered by Emly to be more "honourable". The advocacy for secession suggests a certain level of undesired proximity between Southern Kaduna and Hausa-Fulani, which the combined figure of 88% of my online survey respondents who claim to have had contacts with people of religions other than their own also suggests. Several scholars view state creation in Nigeria as a failed strategy that has aggravated ethnic dichotomies, created new majority-minority binaries that create further problems, and supported ethnic divisions that distort ideas about Nigerian federalism (Adetoye, 2016; Onimisi, 2014). Mamdani (2005) uses Nigeria to illustrate the problem with the persistence and use colonial structures such as the indigene vs settler dichotomy created to suit the colonial two-tier state systems. He argues that this is seen in Nigeria's quota system that seeks to reflect the federal (ethnic) character of the country in access to resources and the state. This has resulted in continuous demand for their own state by ethnic groups as with the creation of each new state new categories of non-indigenes emerge, and the system turns cultural into political identities.

Although Mamdami did not pay specific attention to religion, I argue that the conflation of religious and ethnic identities in the country explains why religious identities also become political ones. LeBlanc's (2006) construction of postcolonial theory as centrally concerned with home space is a useful theoretical explanation for the struggle for cessation as a form of resistance. LeBlanc (2006) observes that technology, including the internet, creates spatial proximity between home and alien spaces, whereby physical, intellectual, spiritual or

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psychological distance is collapsed. This makes the construction of exclusive spaces difficult, and home must then be imagined and experienced in the presence of the Other, this causes a feeling of homelessness and concerns about safety that can result in physical violence or hatred and prejudice, depending on whether home is imagined as physical or intellectual/spiritual. Forum members seem to suggest in this narrative, a discomfort and a feeling of homelessness due to the proximity of Hausa-Fulani Muslims.

Finally, the fourth mode of resistance, appears to be a certain trust and submission to God among Forum members which on the one hand seems to conflict with earlier calls to more active resistance, but on the other hand, does not exclude other forms of resistance. Many members believe that ultimately God alone can bring an end to the suffering of Southern Kaduna. Auta writes that, "*We are praying and waiting for God and not any man to intervene in Southern Kaduna" (October 4, 2014).* Another contributor, Hassan, wrote, "*God is the only & most reliable chief security officer & would continue to watch over us now and always… HIM alone will fight for us (December 23, 2013)".* The online survey results however, show that a significant number of the respondents did not view prayer as a strategy for dealing with conflicts in Kaduna, only 7.4% did. Nonetheless, the sense of reliance and submission to God in Auta's and Hassan's comments is prevalent in conversations in the Online Forum and appears to be part of the Forum's rhetoric in most conversations. For example, having suggested that the Southern Kaduna have been treated unjustly and neglected by the government, Tabitha adds, *"God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob grant SK ppl true justice in Jesus name, amen"* (May 30, 2013). In response to shared images of violence in Southern Kaduna, several comments followed such as, *"this is horrible, God were re thou?"; "God speak to us", "God of vengeance you are watching", "my christian brethren continue your struggle. Lord of the masses will surely fight for you" (January 16-17, 2014)*, and on another occasion, *"Exodus 14:14 Lord wl fight 4u and u av only to be still, God wl never sleep" (Gab, August 13, 2014).* These comments indicate a belief in God and a certain representation of God as one who fights, grants vengeance and watches over his people. The comments also depict Southern Kaduna as God's people and as pious, prayerful, faithful and godly. This way of being, and associated attitudes are applied by Forum members as a mode of resistance, a way of appealing to God or applying their godly resources to fight their oppression and genocide. Prayer and other religious strategies have been used as strategies for resistance and for exertion of agency (Long, 2008; Hinson-Hasty, 2008).

Resistance is a key theme in postcolonial theory and scholars such as Saba Mahmood in *Politics of Piety* (2005), discusses non-conventional modes of resistance particularly, veiling and other forms of religious piety and expressions that are applied as acts of resistance rather than subservience, as well as investment in agency rather than a lack of it.

The narratives in this section represent Southern Kaduna as oppressed, under threat of genocide, loyal, politically excluded, yet morally superior to Hausa-Fulani Muslims. However, the narratives of agency and resistance also suggest that resistance and assertion of agency can take different forms, and Forum members explore publicity, violence, cessation and piety. These forms of resistance also suggest that specific situations and practices call for constant revision of conceptualization of agency. Silma Bilge (2010), for instance, challenges the conception of veiling among Muslim women as either a symbol of subordination or resistance to western domination and culture. Brown (1991) also argues that actions and in-group practices that appear as resistance from outsiders, could sometimes only be a reflection of internal politics or issues. The narratives in this section also reflect militant separationist tendencies that leave little room for dialogue and peacebuilding.

5.3.2. Representations of the Other

Through their online rhetorical practices, Forum members seek to posit their own Southern Kaduna Christian identity in opposition to Hausa-Fulani Muslims. In this section I focus on how the Hausa-Fulani Muslim Other is imagined through narratives of attraction and revulsion which depict some aspects of the Other as reviled and others as desired; and narratives of expulsion through which Forum members imagine the language, culture and symbols of Hausa-Fulani Muslims as an adulteration and foreign and therefore, to be rid of. I also hope to illustrate that despite my analytical and simplistic reference to Southern Kaduna Christians as the Self and Hausa-Fulani Muslims as the Other, this binary is not always clear-cut in the Online Forum. Thus, ambivalence is a major running theme in the representations of the Other.

Narratives of Revulsion and Attraction

The ambivalence displayed by Forum members towards Muslims and Islam is illustrated in the following comment by a member, Paul Haruna, reacting to news report on an impenitent Aminu

Ogwuche, the suspected mastermind of a bomb blast in Abuja, Nigeria on April 14, 2014[19]. He said, "*I condemn his heretical dispositiin to non-muslims and what they stand for. I also wish most of us, with feeble minds, copy his unwavering and stone-hard mind in dealing with our enemy" (July 22, 2014).* Paul's comment expresses disapproval, and views Aminu's position on non-Muslims as unacceptable. Yet, the qualities Aminu appears to display – commitment and unflinching support for Islam – is valued and praised as an ideal to be emulated by Christians in their engagement with the 'enemy' Muslims. Other Forum members further point to this simultaneous attraction and revulsion other contexts. Jacob, for example, was concerned that Southern Kaduna people do not sufficiently look out for each other, and refers to Muslims (derogatorily as jihadists) to make his point. He notes, *""go for a job interview, when a jihadist sees his fellow jihadist, he makes sure the jihadist fellow gets the job…" (December. 12, 2014).* Thus, for this member, Muslims look out for each other, something that he believes Christians should emulate. In another instance, one of the responses to a Forum member who suggested that Islam and Christianity are both violent religions reads, *"If u don't take ur faith serious, for ur information, a muslim does not joke with his" (Charity, November 21, 2014).* Charity here suggests that Muslims take their religions seriously and portrays this as a desirable quality. This is an underlying theme in the representations of the Other. It should be noted that while Paul's comment above is specifically about terrorism, the distinction is not often made by members between terrorists and other Muslims, and some members deny any such distinction exists. For example, in his response to the same post about Ogwuche, Mali wrote, *"Islamic faithfuls and other clerics that have gone to BBC (hausa) to warn the world never to associate BH atrocities with Islam, I truly concore that Ogwuche is a committed Muslim!" (July 22, 2014)* and another Forum member said, *"Open ur eyes n see vry wel, they ar fighting a religious fight(jihad)" (Tani, July 23, 2014).* This uncritical equation of the activities of Boko Haram with Islam informs the representation of Hausa-Fulani Muslims my Forum members.

Some Forum members consider Islam to be a bad religion. For instance, Habu once argued that *"Islam is a religion of the devil" (March 16, 2014, responding to a post about violence in Kaduna),* suggesting that Islam is in opposition to the good, to God, since it belongs to the devil. Another Forum member, Joe generalizes anti-Christian sentiments reported, on the Forum, to have come from a Boko Haram member claimed to be fighting a holy war and citing the Qur'an.

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[19] BBC photo report on the Nyanya bombing, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27025825

Joe wrote, *"Ds has shown dat dere is mor hatred, insanity, devaluation of human life, confusion, terrorism, deceit & wanton destructn in d quran dan meet d eye" (September 22, 2013).* Joe uncritically interprets the shared content as "evidence" that evil, understood as violence and inhumanity, is not only something Muslims perpetrate, but it is sanctioned by and ingrained in the foundations of Muslim faith. On another occasion, Batuk reacted to a shared video[20] of Imam Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram's leader, in which Shekau took responsibility for the abduction of over 200 girls in Chibok on April 14-15, 2014, and threatened Nigerian Christians, as well as Muslims who relate to Christians; claiming that Boko Haram was following Allah's Instructions and defending Allah. Batuk wrote, *"I now know it. Any moslem you see as a friend is an enemy tomorrow, forget they pretend, but their koran told them to killed anybody that don't follow their ideology"* (May 5, 2014). For Bakut, Shekau represented Islam not just extremism, and Shekau's claims were easily taken to be the 'truth' about Islam. Yet, the online survey administered indicates that respondents are able to make a distinction between Muslims generally and extreme groups. When asked their opinion on the causes of social tensions in Kaduna, Islam scored 18.5% and jihad scored 0.9% but religion generally scored 83.3% and other factors such as politics and ethnicity also scored higher than Islam at 72.2% and 44.4% respectively. Also, regarding factors that worsen social conflicts in Kaduna, Muslims scored 27.8%, but Muslim extremists scored 61.1%. While these figures are very high in comparison to Christians (3.7%) and Christian extremists (6.5%), and affirm association of Muslims with aggression, they indicate an awareness of distinction between Muslims in general and Muslim extremists. This awareness could also be accounted for by the fact that the survey listed both as options and therefore, I cannot tell with certainty whether the results would have been different if members were asked to list the factors on their own.

This attitude of essentializing all Muslims highlights a representation strategy whereby any claims or information that are in service of one's purpose are simply accepted and reified. This is especially convenient for people who already seek to vilify Muslims. Such reification informs the way everything else is received. It, for instance, allowed a member to respond to a question about what contributions Islam has brought to the world by saying, *terrorism,violence,wars.only God can help us from dis confusion mohammed brought (Ahmadu, June 7, 2014).* I could not find out why this member specifically raised this question, but he suggests that Islam has only

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[20] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrfWS_vL0D4

brought evil to the world. Since, for this member, the evil or motivation for it is rooted in the very source of the religion, from the perspective of this Forum member, when Muslims are violent, they are only being true to their religion. Mali displays this attitude in his response to a Forum member who shared what he learned from a radio program in which an Imam explained *jihad* as 'striving' rather than the violence it is associated with. Mali comments, "*Dnt fall 4 dat crap. We av lived wit dem enof to knw dia schemes. Dnt b dcivd. D true practice of islam is die-hard extremism" (July 18, 2014).* For Mali, the Imam cannot be believed because northern Nigerian Muslims cannot be trusted, as they are schemers. Moreover, for this Forum member, extremism is at the heart of Islam. It is striking that Mali's certainty of the 'truthfulness' of his view on Islam is supported by his claim to have lived with Muslims well enough to know their schemes. For members like Mali, proximity is used to give authority and validity to one's claim. However, it also raises questions about the selective and careful use and direction of such knowledge to serve a specific sectarian purpose; the accuracy of such knowledge; and whether knowledge and interaction necessarily increases tolerance. The results of the Online survey for this study indicate that 12.9% of respondents claim to have had fair amount of contact with members of religions other than their own, while 44.4% have had much and 31.4% very much contact. 5.6% said they had little contact and another 5.6% very little contact. 37.04% further claim that they have fair amount of Knowledge about other religions, 31.8% much knowledge and 8.3% very much knowledge. 4.6% and 18.5% say they have little and very little knowledge respectively. It is a concern, therefore, that these figures and the online content show an inconsistency between, on the one hand, claims of knowledge and interaction between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, and on the other hand, intolerance, prejudice and essentializing rhetoric. It shows that knowledge and interaction does not necessarily bring about peaceful co-existence or tolerance. Akinade (2014) was perhaps responding to this when he proposed that the problem is not religion or proximity, but the possibility of living together for long periods without "encountering" each other. Encounter, for Akinade (2014), is interaction that provides the space and allowance for everyone's story and experience to he told and heard. It is a space that allows multiple stories, because stories that have not been heard are excluded and the owners of the stories likely to be constructed as the enemy (Akinade, 2014). While I agree with Akinade, the narratives in this study would suggest that painful events activate the fears of extinction and oppression, which render as less significant previous encounters.

Other Forum members, however, believe that negative interpretation of, and generalizations about, Islam are unacceptable because they lead to intolerance. Iliya, an advocate of religious pluralism and tolerance on the Online Forum, challenges negative comments about Islam, "*we should have respect for other religion. religious tolerance is expected of us!" (June 7, 2014).* For Iliya, tolerance and respect go both ways, members must be able to give it if they hope to receive it. Moreover, it is a noble thing and required of Christians. Iliya adds that, "*my bible does not encourage me to insult other religion rather it teaches me to Love even my enemies" (June 7, 2014).* Iliya does not dispute claims of Hausa-Fulani aggression but does not think that it is about religion or that it warrants any demeaning commentary on Islam. His understanding of Christianity is that even the Muslim Other must be loved and respected. Other members, like Alhamdu, suggest there is a relationship between suffering and intolerance. He wrote, "*That is why we are suffering because we do not have respect for each others religion" (August 9, 2014).* It is not clear whether Alhamdu meant suffering in general is caused by intolerance or Southern Kaduna suffering specifically. But he suggests that there is a certain 'retribution' for intolerance and that things would be much better with tolerance.

Drawing on their own personal experience with Muslims, some members go on to argue that Muslims are good people. Solo, for instance, wrote, *'d muslims I kwn re swt n loveable pipo n so also d Islam dai preach 2 me' (july 18, 2014).* That is, the Muslims he knew were sweet and lovable people, so too was the image of Islam they preached to him. Although such positive counter-representations of Islam and Muslims exist in the forum, there is a more dominant sense of aversion towards Islam and Muslims especially in times of conflicts or loss. Yet, survey results show that 18.5% of the 108 respondents view Islam as the cause of conflicts, and 61% view Muslim extremists, rather than all Muslims, as responsible for the worsening of conflicts in the state. Literature abound on the general and more global representation of Muslims in media as violent (Saeed, 2007; Said, 1978; Kabir, 2006; Alsultany, 2012). Echchaibi's (2013) research on a Muslim website, *AltMuslim* also shows how Muslims are also using new media to engage modernity and counter dominant representation of Islam.

Despite the repulsion towards Islam and Muslim piety, the latter is nevertheless envied and desired insofar as Muslims are considered to take their religion seriously, to be unwavering in their pursuit of their interests, united, and the Islamic religion accorded a special status above the

state, immune to state laws and beyond the reach of law enforcement in the Nigerian public sphere. This is often expressed in comments such the following by Kefas, *"dos malos can go 2 any length cos of dia relgion (December 28, 2013) (Malo* is slang for Hausa-Fulani Muslims). While the effect of such doggedness is not accepted, members see it more as a religious 'virtue' rather than vice. For instance, it is a common practice for Muslim public transport drivers in northern Nigeria to stop at a mosque during a call for prayer for them and their Muslim passengers to pray before continuing their journeys.[21] This has caused much complaint from non-Muslim passengers. When this issue came up in the Online Forum, many members who contributed thought it was not acceptable, but at the same time most agreed that it was a mark of religious commitment to be emulated, as Katung asked: "*this shows how seriously they take their religion, how serious do we take ours*" *(October 27, 2013).* Such comments are sometimes coupled with outright call on members to 'be' or 'act' like Muslims as Paul Haruna, and in the following comment by Grace, "*they (Muslims) r dedicated @ all times, infact we shouldn't complain but take dat as a challenge, they can do anything 4 their religion and politics*" *(January 28, 2014).* This indicates an explicit affirmation of Muslims as committed and worthy of emulation, but could also be interpreted as containing an implicit critique of Muslims as single- minded in this commitment at the expense of other things.

In addition, Islam/Muslim religiosity is desired because it is seen as enjoying a certain 'elevated status' in Nigeria, which, for Online Forum members, is the explanation for impunity in violent conflict situations and unfair treatments that non-Muslims are believed to receive. For example, following a disruption of a Sunday service by armed policemen to arrest suspects of a reported attack on a Muslim emir of a community in Southern Kaduna,[22] Forum members felt indignant. Francis, the author of the post about the incident asked, "*Can the police carry this out in a mosque?*" *(January 12, 2014).* Several responses to this question suggested further that this was a violation of Southern Kaduna people and their religion/religious space and that the same kind

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[21] Based on my knowledge and experience in northern Nigeria, this is a common practice whereby drivers stop to pray on journeys. I am not aware of any official conversations around this but I am aware of popular contestations over this and the practice of sealing some roads during Jumat [Friday] prayers by Muslims in order to extend the prayer space in some mosques that do not contain all the worshippers. The comments on the report in the following links show some of the conversations around these practices on digital media, where people react to the practices in different ways. https://www.bellanaija.com/2016/08/tanker-driver-reportedly-halts-traffic-after-stopping-to-pray-in-the-middle-of-the-road/; and http://allure.vanguardngr.com/2016/08/truck-driver-stops-traffic-to-pray-in-the-middle-of-the-road/
[22] http://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/nwest/152646-arrests-made-attack-jere-emir-kaduna.html

of violation would not be attempted in Muslim spaces. This is evident in the selected comments in the following screenshot:
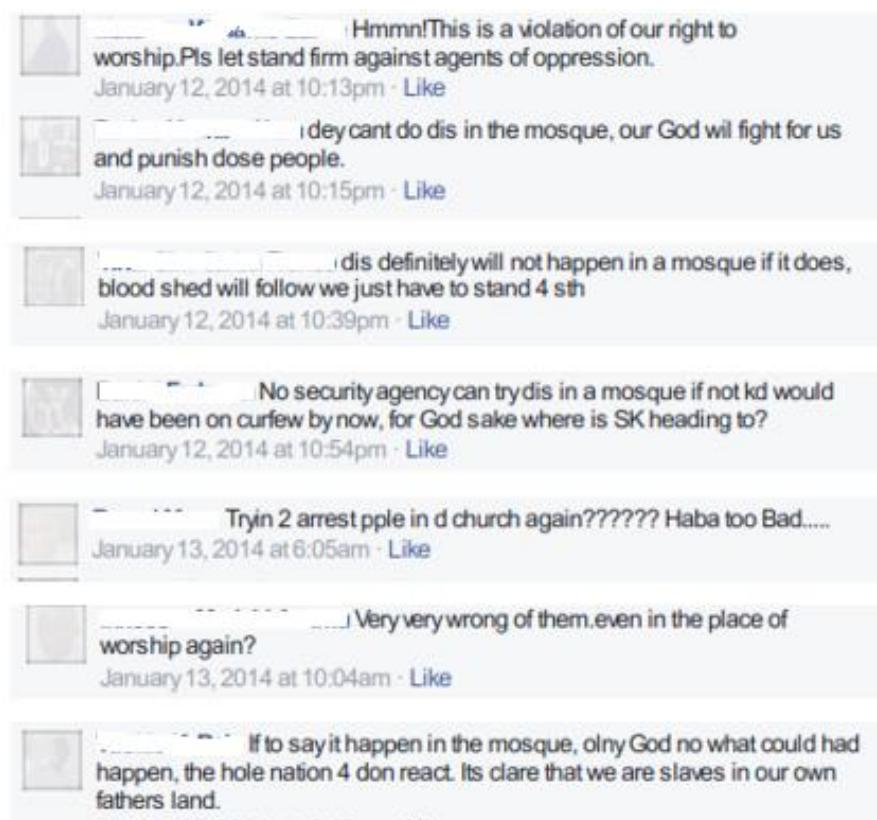
Screenshot 5.4 Reactions to Disruption of a Sunday Service

In the above comments, members suggest that the perceived violation of their religious space and worship is an indication of their being oppressed as seen in the first and last comments, *"lets fight against these agents of oppression"* and *"…it is clear that we are slaves in our own land"*. The comments also suggest that it was wrong to attempt to arrest people in a place of worship. Yet, this is happening to them because they are Christians as the comments suggest that such will not happen in a mosque without consequences that could have included bloodshed, imposition of a curfew and a nation-wide reaction if a mosque were violated. These views represent Muslims as violent in their response to violation. It could also mean that the state and nation takes more seriously things that happen to Muslims or are simply afraid to violate Muslims either because of the consequences or they view Muslims in a certain way, which Southern Kaduna Christians do no enjoy. Similar concerns are raised in different contexts, to depict the different responses of Muslims to similar situations and the response of the state or politicians. For instance, during an

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incidence involving Fulanis in a Southern Kaduna town, during which the military brutalized and killed a Southern Kaduna Christian, Forum members reacted with comments such as, *"if it were 2b in d camp of d Hausa's dis soldier wld nt ve shoot dat guy" (April 3, 2014).* In another example, a Forum member shared that a Muslim Kaduna governorship candidate, in a comment to his opposition, retweeted a tweet that included a line about Jesus having sex with Mary Magdalene. This caused angry responses that divided Forum members. While Forum members who supported the candidate for Governorship condemned the person who shared the post, questioned his source, and when he shared the actual tweet, accused him of taking it *"out of context" (Gabriel, October 11, 2014);* those who did not support the candidate focused on Islam. Hannah, for instance, responded that *"hmmm! Islam is a religion of peace, but when anything is said about their religion, even using the name of mohammed as a reference, they will use their last blood to defend it" (October 11, 2014),* and Timan wrote, *"had it been a Christian that tweeted Muhammad slept with Khadija. do you not think the country would had gone on flames???!!!(Despite the fact that he must had slept with her as per husband and wife)" (October 9, 2014).* These comments suggest that Muslims are easily offended by reference to Muhammad even when the point raised is logical, and that Muslims tend to respond aggressively. The narratives of attraction and revulsion illustrated in the foregoing analysis indicate a perception by Forum members that security agents give different treatments to Christians and Muslims in the public domain. The narratives also suggest that many Forum members make a distinction between Muslim piety which they adore, and Muslim politics which they revile. And while such a distinction between religion and piety appears in the discussion on this section so far, it also appears that there is attraction and revulsion for both piety and politics associated with Nigerian Muslims, and that the religion itself possesses an ambivalent quality that is also admired. For example, in a conversation about whether religion and politics should be mixed, Elmy responded, *"did not religion birth politics?... what makes ISLAM politically palatable and fascinating is that it has never attempted… to divorce religion from politics…" (February 20, 2014).* Thus, the idea that Muslims do not separate religion from politics is advanced by this member as admirable. Scholars of religion and politics in Nigeria, however, suggest that Muslims do not make a distinction between religion and politics, or the religious and the secular, and that religion plays a significant role in political agenda and strategy among Muslims in northern Nigeria (Onapajo, 2012; Laguda, 2013).

Forum members' reactions to perceived violations also refer to rights to worship and freedom in ways that suggest that a certain notion of religious freedom is perceived to be enjoyed by Muslims and not by Christians. In the same context of the previously cited police disruption of a church service, Gani, a Forum user, wrote, *"That was violation of their right to worship which is enshrined in the Nigerian constitution" (January 13, 2014).* Following a similar incidence, another member wrote, *"This is uncalled for and a violation of our Human rights and freedom of worship" (Joel, June 1, 2014).* For these members, this was an indication of their lack of freedom to practice their religion.[23] These members also imply that freedom of religion demands that sacred spaces and people in a religious gathering be respected irrespective of the situation or stake. For some members, this is disturbing because Nigeria is a democracy that is supposed to uphold the constitutional rights of its citizens. As another member pointed out: *"…But I put it to you that even in the reign of ABACHA, soldiers never ever disrupted a live church" (January 14, 2014).* Sani Abacha was a Nigerian military ruler and a Muslim, yet, according to this member, never violated religious rights and freedom to the point of letting soldiers disrupt an ongoing church service. In another instance, when a member complained about a Muslim public transport driver pulling over at a Mosque to pray while the passengers waited, some members argued that the driver was expressing his freedom of worship, and that: *"Freedom of worship is a fundamental human rite" (December 28, 2013).* For this user, it does not matter how others are affected, one's religious practice should not be questioned. For these forum members, therefore, religious freedom means having the space and freedom to practice one's religion without any interference by the state, or anyone else, for whatever reason. This perception appears to also be

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[23] Section 38 of the Nigerian 1999 constitution provides that, '(1) Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance. (2) No person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or to take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance if such instruction ceremony or observance relates to a religion other than his own, or religion not approved by his parent or guardian. (3) No religious community or denomination shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for pupils of that community or denomination in any place of education maintained wholly by that community or denomination. (4) Nothing in this section shall entitle any person to form, take part in the activity or be a member of a secret society.' Section 42(1) of the 1999 Constitution: '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:- (a) 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 (b) 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 citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions or political opinions.

extended, by a significant number of members, to other forms of association in religious environment. For example, when it was shared on the Online Forum that the Nigerian army disrupted a meeting of Southern Kaduna persons in a church hall to discuss elections, members raised similar questions about whether that would happen to Muslims and called it a violation of their rights. Even when several Forum members argued that the meeting included Southern Kaduna Muslims, and was not a religious function but a political meeting, others still insisted that it was a violation. Mato, for example, wrote, *"Freedom of speech and peaceful gathering is a fundamental right as enshrined in our constitution"* (October 14, 2014); Agnes extended and weaved this into the broader narrative of oppression and genocide when she said, *"we freely gave them our votes but they take away our welfare and security. We remain underdeveloped, under threat and refugee in our land, and now our constitutional guaranteed freedom of association is being trampled on" (October 15, 2014).* In light of the discussed Forum members' admiration of Muslims, and the perception that Islam is treated differently by the Nigerian authorities, the digital public space could be viewed as offering this sense of freedom, a sense of being beyond the state and its restrictions, on a plane where one can be as religious as they wish without much fear of confrontation and interference. If the online rhetorical practices of forum members are to be understood as not merely an invocation of religion but as religious practices and productions in themselves, then the online space may be said to represent an ideal space for religious freedom. Thus, it is a space for contesting this status of Islam, but also as an opportunity to also enjoy something similar to the perceived, envied and desired 'elevated' status, though in a different form. The online platform allows them a certain degree of immunity too, and lets them operate at a much 'higher' level, and at the same time pursue the 'elevated status' or contest its existence for Islam in the Nigerian offline public space. Public contestations between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria have sometimes reinforced this image that Muslims enjoy privileges in Nigeria that others do not enjoy, partly because of their hold over political power in the country. At the same time, they are constructed as holding the country back from development and progress. Thus, some have imagined that Nigeria would be better if the north were not incorporated (Falola, 2009; Taiye, 2013).

The attraction and revulsion exposed by Online Forum members is a curios response to the Other, which the French theorist of human nature, Rene Girard (1996) might have highlighted in his mimetic theory. For Girard (1996), people do not only imitate other people's behaviour, they

also mimic their desires in ways that can lead to rivalry and conflicts because the result of desiring other people's desires is a mutual desire for the same thing, hence competition and rivalry. Girard, (1996) uses the term mimesis to highlight the downside of rivalry, as opposed to imitation, which is the positive reproduction of other people's behaviour. Desires, for Girard (1996), are mediated and the mediator or model is the person who shapes another person's desires or preferences. Mimesis can become metaphysical, whereby a person desires not just the same object as their mediator, but desires to be their mediator. This can result in violence. In communities, when mimetic desire is on the brink of escalating into violence, an individual is identified killed as a scapegoat, which restores peace and happiness to members of the community (Palaver, 2000). Mimesis does reflect the dynamics in the narratives of revulsion and attraction to a certain extent. Hausa-Fulani Muslims, in this context, mediate and shape the preferences and desires of Southern Kaduna Christians on the Online Forum, and there is both resentment and admiration directed towards the Other. However, there is no indication that Southern Kaduna Christians desire *the same thing* that Hausa-Fulani desire. We also do not know what the Hausa-Fulani desire. What the data indicate is more of imitation, in terms of a desire to *be like* (rather than *to be*) the Other, and to imitate certain qualities the Other is imagined to possess such as piety, commitment and conflation of religion and politics. To be sure, I suggested that Southern Kaduna imagine Muslims to enjoy a certain elevated and privileged status, and that they desire the same, and perhaps, seek to find that in the free, disembodied, and exclusive space offered by the Online Forum. However, this can only be a mimetic desire if we can tell that Hausa-Fulani Muslims desire the same thing. Thus, mimesis is applicable only when it can be confirmed that both the imitator and the mediator share the same desire.

A more helpful way to understand the ambivalence of revulsion and attraction in the Online Forum would be Stallybrass' and White's suggestion that "disgust always bears the imprint of desire" (1986:191). In their study of the bourgeois subject, they argue that the bourgeois constructs their identity through the act of exclusion of what they considered to be repulsive, dirty, contaminating and low (Stallybrass and White, 1986). The low which is othered and expelled, evokes "nostalgia, longing and fascination" (Stallybrass and White, 1986:191). Desire also carries the mark of disgust, as the Other returns as an object of longing. It is at the same time a site for self-disgust which is at the heart of bourgeois, and other types of desires. Thus, "the

difference of the other becomes a displaced and intensified facet of the same, the object of desire and disgust" (Dollimore, 1991:247). Postcolonial theorists also recognize this ambivalence in race and other relations of domination which suggest a necessary connection and dependence between the savage and the civilized (Aschroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2013; Young, 1995). This is disguised through distinction, as both categories and the meaning attached to them depend on each other for existence (Aschroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2013; Young, 1995). Thus, despite the negative representation of Hausa-Fulani Muslim Other on the Online Forum, they return as objects of longing and fascination, and also evoke self-disgust for not being more like them, or for being laid back and needing to 'wake up', as the narratives of resistance indicate. Thus, the identity of Southern Kaduna is predicated on the difference of the Hausa-Fulani, but also masking a certain sameness or inseparableness that informs both disgust and desire. While revulsion and attraction may appear to be opposing attitudes, they always bear 'imprints' of each other.

Narratives of Expulsion

Narratives of expulsion are primarily concerned with conversations among Forum members about expelling norms and names that Southern Kaduna Christians have adopted from Hausa-Fulani Muslims. The narratives could also be interpreted as a form of resistance, but they are presented in this section to illustrate a certain representation of Hausa-Fulani Muslims and religion, and to some extent, show that some amount of ambivalence also exist in that what members seek to expel are a part of how they have known and identified themselves and how they are identified and known by others. Two threads of conversation about names and norms and the need for expulsion were initiated in two different posts by two different Forum members on April 8, 2014 and lasted until April 16, 2014. It is not clear whether any specific event inspired these posts or that they had anything to do with the specific period of posting, but they reflect the general mode of such conversations about the subject on the Forum. The first was by Maiangwa, a regular contributor who wrote, "*it is high time we rise and bury the name JABA[24] for life and embrace our rightful name, known as HAM" (April 8, 2014).* Maiangwa went on to explain that it was time to do away with the 'slave-masters' names (Hausa names) given to Ham individuals by their ancestors and adopt Ham or biblical names instead. The second post was by

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[24] *Jaba* is the Hausa name for "Ham", one of the ethnolinguistic groups of Southern Kaduna

Desmond, a Forum member whose contributions often focus on these issues. He wrote, *"time to CHANGE our 'Nomenclature' fa! We have stupidly denied ourselves the right to be free. It is henceforth Oetiyabland, Shalioeland, Akululand, Aghanland, Gbagyiland, Takadland, Adaraland".*[25] Desmond goes on to argue that God and the United Charter for indigenous people have given every right to *"their identity. To teah in our tongue, to have our history, our religion, our culture back".* These comments evoked several responses, most of which were in support, expressing a need for cultural recovery. One member wrote, *"...pls let's go back 2 our roots"* (April 9, 2014). Asserting a desire to reclaim an identity by expelling those of Hausa-Fulani, mostly depicted by Forum members as "foreign" and undesirable. This, for Desmond, would be a mark of freedom. As Habu comented, *"names are not innocent, to every name there is history and meaning" (April 12, 2014).* Habu,'s response was part of his effort to demonstrate that expulsion would also symbolize a refusal to accept how the Southern Kaduna people have been defined. As with the critique of violence discussed earlier, there also appears to be a desire not to look like or be identified as the Hausa-Fulani Muslim Other. Kevin in his response notes, *"with our chiefs looking like Emirs...I saw... Oegwam Oegwoeroek looking like the Emir of Dutse*[26]*"* (April, 10, 2014). And another member adds, "*our people made a mistake by allowing the hausas to have their way. If u look at it, we speak their language, we dress like them, even our traditional rulers dress just [like] theirs" (April, 10, 2014);* and Fred's comments is further informative, "*... in short our culture is "Hausa" why can't we change everything now? we even adopt the useless "hausa language" as a general language of communication when our brothers from the South, East and West use pigin English. it has already eaten deep inside us but we can still effect some change" (April 8, 2014).* It seems that a major problem these Forum members see with the state of affairs is that the Southern Kaduna Self is identical to the loathed Hausa-Fulani Other, or rather the Other is believed to have imprinted itself on the appearance, communication, and culture of the Self to the extent that the Self has become invisible, and is at the same time a carrier of the identity of the Other. Tani, for example, writes, *"take myself for example, I have both biblical and hausa names, nothing suggest I am SK" (April 15, 2014).* Fred's reference to the use of pidgin English in other parts of Nigeria rather than the adopted

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[25] These are names of towns associated to specific Southern Kaduna ethnic groups and languages. They the contributor writes them as they are known among the ethnicities rather than the more commonly known Hausa names for such places: Kataf, Marwa, Gwari, Atakar and Kadara

[26] Afhan is a yearly festival in Oegwoeroek (Kagoro), Southern Kaduna. Dutse is the capital city of Jigawa state in northern Nigeria. Oegwam Oegroeroek – Chief of Kagoro

language of one group may not be true about every group in these regions, however, they suggest a preference for a language other than Hausa. Contrary to the expressed admiration for some Muslim qualities, the preceding comments by Forum members could be interpreted as depicting norms, names and cultures associated with Hausa-Fulani as mystifying the Southern Kaduna, blurring their visibility, self-expression, and therefore to be expelled to allow for self-assertion and visibility. It could also be viewed as illustrating the Forum's concern with agency and resistance. However, the narratives of expulsion also indicate a firm presence and internalization of that which is sought to be expelled. This is a reflection of the ambivalence of disgust and desire discussed above.

Another dimension of concerns about names and norms in the narratives of expulsion is about the use of 'Allah' as the name for God by Christians in northern Nigeria. This is not a frequent conversation on the online Forum, but the two times it came up in the period reviewed (2013-2014) it generated much contestation and discussion, which unlike names of people and towns, caused more disagreement among Forum members. On January 3, 2014, Musa, a frequent participant in Forum's conversations who rarely initiates conversations, posted that he did not think northern Christians should continue using "Allah" when referring to God. It is not clear why he chose to post on this topic, but he wrote that, *"if you must use a Hausa word to refer to 'GOD', Rather make use of 'UBANGIJI*[27]*'. That's what is found in the Hausa Bible."* Musa's reasons for making this point were that Christians and Muslims have different higher powers. Several Forum members disagreed and responded in different ways. Musa's suggestion that *Ubangiji*, not *Allah* is what is found in the Hausa Bible is inaccurate, and one member, Simon, points this out when he wrote, *"the hausa bible uses Allah for God (Farawa 1:1 a chikin farko Allah ya halitta sama da kasa) so pls it is proper to use Allah for God" (January 3, 2014).* The text in parenthesis is Genesis 1:1 in Hausa language, which Simon cited to show the use of *Allah* in the bible. Another Forum member observed, *"...as long as hausa remains the main means of communication Allah will be difficult to eradicate, because Allah is God in our hausa Bible and majority of northern Christians worship in hausa" (Jamima, January 3, 2014),* yet another member wrote, *"It doesn't matter, Allah or God. Will ma calling of God Allah make him angry wt me?" (Katuk, January 3, 2014).* These and several other comments sought to show that as far

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[27] *Ubangiji* is a Hausa word for 'Lord' used almost exclusively for God, and often together with *Allah*, as in *Ubangiji Allah.*

as language is concerned, and as long as Christians continue to worship using Hausa language, it would be wrong to suggest that Allah is different to God. Some of them, such as Katuk went on to suggest that naming on this issue is inconsequential. However, those who insist on depicting *Allah* as different to the Christian God seem already intent on representing the Higher power in Islam as inferior to that of Christians. Hence, comments such as, *"Allah cannot be God, there is everything wrong in calling the Christian God allah" (Jude, January 4, 2014).* Jude attempts to justify his position with anti-Muslim rhetoric and comparison. He said, *"Can you equate a loving God dat all he dos is 2 always 4giv & a blood sucking Allah that tells his followers to kill 4 him?" (January 3, 2014).* For this member, using the same name for God implies equality between Christian and Muslim Gods. He depicts Muslims as following a God who is evil and morally inferior to that of the Christians. Other supporters of this claim argued on the basis of the Christian doctrine of Trinity, Jibo, for example, wrote, *"if u believe in the TRINITY, then u'll understand that in the name Allah that mystery is obviously missing" (January 4, 2015).* These forum members, by debating the nature of God, have turned the desire among some of them to expel Hausa-Fulani Muslim Other into a theological conversation. However, their aim appears to be to situate their representation of Islam in the Muslim higher power.

Gaiya (1993) documents the adoption of Hausa by missionaries for translation and proselytization among northern ethnic groups, and its emergence as a language of worship for Christians. According to Garuba (2001), Nigerian ethnicities and languages have been through experiences that reshuffled what is recognized as a language and shaped language policies and practices due to activities of colonialists, white missionaries and local politicians. These include imposition of ethnolinguistic national identities (Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa), suppression of several identities that rested on actually spoken languages through the grouping of mutually incomprehensible languages as "dialects of a common tongue" (Garuba, 2001:7). This also directly translates into political and socioeconomic power distribution, status, literacy and educational status (Aito, 2005). The constitutional recognition and actual maintenance of these languages of the major ethnic groups at the national level extinguished local peculiarities that were discouraged and represented as "examples of uncultured and uneducated speech habits" (Garuba, 2001:16). Thus, Garuba notes that in northern Nigeria, because of the power and status of the Hausa language, it is expected that other minorities adopt it and express themselves in it (2001:12). Garuba (2001) concludes that these arrangements have become internalized and

politicized to the extent that they lead to conflicts and frustrate the emergence and thriving of multiple identities and pluralism.

The representation of the Other as aggressive, foreign, suspicious, inferior, contaminating, and desirable discussed in the narratives of attraction and revulsion, as well as narratives of expulsion, offer critical example of identity struggles in the postcolony. It indicates hybridity and Bhabha's (1994) third space on which distinction is not possible, and difference collapses. It also reflects the predication of identities on difference (Karkaba, 2010) and representation and othering as a reflexive process of mirroring the Self (Said, 1978; Thakur, 2016). This raises questions regarding the physical, cultural, linguistic and symbolic separation that Online Forum members propose in their narratives of expulsion and activism for state creation. In a sense, Forum members feel dispossessed and imagine home in physical terms, hence their violent exclusivism as it seems difficult to feel at home with the persistent presence of the Other. Yet, ambivalence implies that the intellectual or spiritual home space will hardly be free. considering the construction of Hausa-Fulani culture and language as persistently present in Southern Kaduna socio-cultural and religious practices.

5.3.3 Representations of Religion

Apart from the representations of specifically Christianity and Islam in the preceding sections, members also engaged in two representations of religion; as a problem in society, and as an intrinsic part of society. The context of conversations from which these depictions emerge was the 2015 Nigerian general elections and the political debates about the place of Southern Kaduna in Kaduna State and Federal politics. Often these debates, more frequent in the last quarter of 2014, were arrested in the division among members about which candidates should be voted, and often, whether their religion should matter in such decisions.

For some Forum members religion stalls thinking and evokes unwarranted emotional response and therefore, is a problem to society. Hilans, commenting on reactions about shared story that a political meeting in a church was terminated by the Nigerian army, wrote, *"Just the mare mention of a religious affiliation then all sense of reasoning goes ablaze. Religion truly is the opium of the masses" (October 14, 2014).* For Hilans, online attitudes of members are a confirmation of Marx's popular maxim on religion as the "opiate of the masses". It affects members' ability to think clearly on issues and take the right actions. Forum members, in his

view, become emotional when religion enters the conversation. Part of Hilans' reaction comes from his observation that the presentation of the incidence was inaccurate as it was a political meeting involving both Christians and Muslims of Southern Kaduna origin, and it was held in a church hall that is often rented out for different kinds of events, yet these details were ignored by Forum members who were intent on weaving the incidence into an already existing narrative of Christianity as being under siege in Southern Kaduna. Another contributor, Tanimo, also challenges Forum members when he said, *"it's high time we started condemning wrong for its own merit, and not because it is done against christians or muslims, we must learn not to use religion as justification for every dirty thing (October 14, 2014).* While the second half of Tanimo's comment suggests a desire to protect the 'purity' of religion, he also challenges Forum members to move beyond religious affiliations in their perception of wrongdoing, and suggests that a fixation on religion can be problematic. Another Forum user made a similar argument following a suggestion that Christians should vote for members of their own religion only. He said, *"It only shows how narrow minded you are. It is people like you that are drawing this country back (Bala, December 14, 2014).* Another contributor notes, *"I will rather vote even for an imam or Sheik than to vote the wrong candidate simply becos of religion" (Isaiah, December 14, 2014).* These members suggest that basing decisions regarding votes on religion is regressive and a sign of backwardness. Another user, Adam, suggested that Nigerians are actually becoming *"wiser…any attempt to psychologically bamboozle them with religious stings is indeed a quest in futility"* (December 12, 2014). Thus, for this user, there is progress towards secularity, indicating that religion no longer has a strong grip on Nigerians. It is becoming ineffective as a political strategy.

Thus, for members, other values should be placed above religion in the context of leadership and political decision-making, because religion and religious affiliation, they believe, detract from real issues. As Yahaya's comment shows, *"Keep Religious aside, let's face the music" (December 28, 2014),* and Garus observes, *"leadership has nothing to do with religion…no culture, no race, no religion that is stronger than being human" (December 15, 1015)* and Musa asks, *"how has religion helped us? If you're looking for good leadership, religion is the last criteria of a good leader. Those that hide under religion are those with little or nothing to offer" (November 21, 2014).* Religion, for these Forum members, does not contribute to progress and good decision-making. They suggest that holding onto religion is a sign of stagnation, unhelpful

and, one could argue, pre-modern, and people who appeal to religion cannot be trusted. Abba makes this argument when he posted that *"D world today hv outgrown the politics of religion, it was baby politics… He who still live in d past shuld continue to preach d politics of religion" (December 30, 2014).* In other words, to show their maturity and growth as a people, the Southern Kaduna people must outgrow religion. These views on religion and its application in political and social life suggest that these members not only see them as problematic, but a sign of backwardness. This agrees with critiques of religion such as that posed by Dawkins' (2006) which sees religion and religiously-determined behaviour as premodern, and reliance on religion as regressive, considering that modern science offers explanations for the things that religion sought to explain. Yet people stick to belief despite scientific advancement. These criticisms of religion on the Online Forum are striking given the general religious tempo of the Forum and the heavy narratives of identity based on religion. Yet, it agrees with the findings of the survey I carried out among Forum members, which despite showing that 99% of respondents were Christian, making their voice heard on religious issues was the least selected motivation for joining the online Forum (3.7%) and religious strategies such as prayer (7.4%) were not considered a significant strategy for peacebuilding in Kaduna. Thus, while the forum members critique religion as problematic and regressive, and show an inclination towards secularism, it could be argued that their understanding of secularism is more about the decline of religious authority and influence on public life, rather than a decline of religion itself (Chaves, 1994).

Forum members who generally disagree with the secularization positions tend to represent religion as an intrinsic part of society, even though this is expressed often more specifically in relation to politics. For example, Emly, contesting separation of religion from politics, asked, Emly, *"Did religion not birth politics? How can the two then be apart?"* (February 20, 2014). This Forum member did not explain his claim that religion came from politics, but he sought to show that there is a deep and inseparable connection between the two and therefore, efforts to separate them are futile. What is more interesting is the way Forum members make reference to Islam in order to make their arguments on the subject, which further reveals the ambivalent response to Islam, particularly, the attraction to a perceived lack of separation between religion and politics in Islam. As Emly further notes, *"What makes Islam politically palatable and fascinating is that it has never attempted… to divorce religion from politics" (February 20, 2014).* Sam, further notes, in a similar context, *"for a muslim politics and religion are*

inseparable. Let's not peddle these fake liberal ideas that are not real" (November 21, 2014). Other members further suggest that this situation is specific, though not limited, to Nigeria generally, and northern Nigeria in particular. Mary, for example, wrote *"whn u said 'lets 4get religion...i cnt but wonder if u r stil living in ds country let alone d north"* (November 21, 2014); and Hilary wrote, *"We can always peddle separation of politics from religion, but in the politics of the north, religion is its bedrock, fully enshrined. We're victims of religion in politics, maybe that's why we have a great phobia for it, but under the guise of so-called liberal ideas"* (November 21, 2014). These members depict religion as intricately connected to politics and criticize counter-suggestions as fake liberal ideals. Hilary further suggests that such ideas are a mere cover up for something deeper, which is seen in his use of the victimhood narrative and suggesting that the presence of religion in politics was a causal factor and that the experience has caused a "phobia" that makes some Forum members seek separation. The view that religion is intrinsic in society and politics also shapes political decisions as some members explicitly declare their intention to vote political candidates of their own religion only, and partly because this is what Muslims are perceived to be doing. Bala, for example, declared, *"I and my family will not give any muslim our vote, I'll beta vote a bad Christian instead of a Muslim"* (December 5, 2014); and Janet wrote, *"No true Muslim will comment or campaign for GEJ. My SK brothers are channelling their good talents and energy for GMB. Abin mamak!i"* (December 21, 2014). In other words, while Southern Kaduna Christians are campaigning for Buhari, a Muslim, no true Muslim will do the same for Goodluck, a Christian. This Forum user further depicts prioritization of religious affiliation in political decisions as a mark of "true" religiosity, and again, using Muslims as the example. The idea that religion and politics, or secular life, are not separated by Muslims is prevalent in Nigeria (Onapajo, 2012). Kukah (1998) and Laguda (2013) argue that while Christians have historically made a distinction between the sacred and the profane, and applied that to religion and politics respectively, Muslims have seen their religion as applicable to all spheres of life. Kukah (1998) and Laguda (2013) further demonstrate how Muslims have historically applied religion to both pursue and counter political interests, including several conflicting interpretations within Islam. Thus, given northern Nigeria's history of Islam, early political parties and attitudes were tied to Islam and religious concerns form important political agenda (Onapajo, 2012). Falola (2009) suggests that Islamic symbols still remain effective for political ideology and for legitimization. Uthman and Abbas (2013) suggest

that rather than merely mixing religion and politics, Islam upholds a different vision of modernity, and poses a critique of western ideas of modernity and progress. According to Uthman and Abbas, while differing and even conflicting views exist within Islam about modernity, there is a common vision of modernity that diffuses "Islamic principles and values in both the intellectual and political projects of modernity" (2013:171). Nonetheless, scholars such as Laguda (2013) argue that separation of religion and politics is not a feasible goal, as religion has always been an intrinsic part of society and politics.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the results of the online survey I administered on Forum members which provided insights on Forum members' religious literacy, opinions on social conflicts in Kaduna and relevant demographic information. Through an analysis of the survey data, I was able to confirm that respondents were Southern Kaduna Christians, mostly male, and find the online platform to possibly be an ideal imagined space for their practices that affords them certain freedoms and restrictions. The representations of the Self and Other that members construct in this space were also discussed, as well as the representations of religion on the Forum. The chapter shows that Online Forum members are engaged in epistemologically violent depictions of Southern Kaduna Self and Hausa-Fulani Other, and ambivalent and contradictory representations of identity and religion. Thus, the chapter suggests that the Self and the Other are not always distinct or distinguishable as there are ambivalent third spaces. While the Self is constructed as morally superior, it is not free of epistemic violence and inclination to material violence, and while the Other is depicted as aggressive and suspicious, it also bears desirable qualities such as devotion and commitment.

In my analysis of the Online Forum, I am conscious of the fact that I am representing Forum members as if they were not aware of the fact that they were on an online forum. However, there are a few Forum members who were critically aware and who asked whether people follow through offline with the claims they make online. This will be discussed in the next chapter. The chapter will also attempt to curl out lessons from the data about the nature of online representation and digital religion in Africa.

Chapter Six:

Online Representation and Digital Religion in Africa

6.1 Introduction

Three of the key ideas and concepts on which this study rests are *identity and representation*, the *digital media platform*, and *religion*. This study has so far discussed the contextual and historical scholarship on interreligious and interethnic relations in Kaduna, Nigeria. I have also explored theories on identity, new media, representation, and religion that enabled me to frame the study and to engage the research data with the view to draw meaningful conclusions about the Self, the Other, and online religion. Thus, two important questions emerge from this research process, which I discuss in this chapter: (1) What do the findings of this study teach us about the mechanisms of online representation, in the context of religious and social identities? and, (2) what does the study teach us about digital religion in Africa?

In the previous chapter I raised several issues about the ways in which Online Forum members represent themselves, the Hausa-Fulani Muslim Other, and religion. In this chapter, I offer a more focused discussion. I hope to show that although the erratic nature of online conversations makes it difficult to show precisely how online representations come into being, we can nevertheless, draw conclusions about the patterns through which representations emerge and are sustained. Based on a critique of current digital religion scholarship, I also attempt to show that online sites and discussion forums that are not necessarily religious in organization or proselytizing in intent, such as the one I investigated, can nonetheless be significant sites for understanding digital religion in postcolonial Africa. Moreover, such sites can also be meaningful in addressing the absence of non-western realities in the field of digital religion, as well as critiquing the reliance on traditional taxonomies and conceptions of offline religion to explore the online. Moreover, I suggest that certain ideas about religion that emerge from the online forum can be viewed as the product of engaging embodied religious practices in a disembodied online platform. Finally, I reflect on the qualities of the online space on which such ideas about religion are conceptualized.

6.2 Mechanism of Online Representation

Scholars such as Hall (1980; 1982; 1996), Said (1978) and Mudimbe (1988) have argued and demonstrated that representations are discursively constructed imaginations based on already existing knowledge, and that such knowledge often serves the agenda of the producer(s) of representations. Thus, as Minh-ha (1990) argues, even the so-called objective documentary film-maker, for instance, who aims to capture reality *as it is*, alters the environment and the self-presentation of the film's subjects in ways that ultimately shape the film to serve the ideologies of the film-maker. Thus, she observes that "on the one hand, truth is produced, induced, and extended according to the regime in power" (Min-ha, 1990:76). Studies in media and representation have focused on traditional media and the ways in which essentialized groups, such as Arabs or Muslims, are represented by the West (Saeed, 2007; Kabir, 2005). Based on the findings of my study, I suggest that online representations do not only reflect offline social tensions, but that they emerge out of conflicts; that the nature and intensity of the conflict determines the nature of representation and the extent of generalizations that underscore particular representations of the Other. I use the term 'conflict' here to broadly include intra- or intergroup discontent, disagreement and tensions, real or imagined. Most scholars of social and new media focus on self-presentation and self-performance on sites such as Facebook, as well as on the language and tools used in in such identity processes. Young (2013) suggests that individuals 'write' their idealized identities and existence online by manipulating profiles, personal information and other tools. Zhang, Jiang and Carrol (2010) and Marwick (2013) further suggest that beyond static profiles and personal information, identities are actively constructed and managed through different kinds of interaction on social media to produce identities based on belonging and performance. While these scholars enhance our understanding of the online practices that enable individuals to re/present and manage certain impressions of themselves, less research has been conducted about how online group identities are formed, managed and sustained. In this context, a key question is how do online representations of collective identity emerge? Is there an identifiable process through which representations emerge when media, lived experiences, and ideology are brought into alignment and worked out online?

The Online Forum itself is used by members as a mechanism for online representation of Self and Other in the sense that it is a system that has been set up for the pursuit of specific goals and interests among members. This involves processes that rest on ideas about the Southern Kaduna

Christian Self as oppressed and the Hausa-Fulani Muslims as aggressive. Thus, viewed as a system, the online forum becomes a tool for representations. Introvigne (2005) highlights this potential of online technologies for verbal violence and terrorism. Beyond this view of the Online Forum, the place of conflicts as the source and environment for the emergence of online representation is significant. The themes discussed in Chapter five illustrate that most of the ideas about Southern Kaduna Christians and Hausa-Fulani Muslims surfaced in the context of violent conflicts, attacks on communities, political disagreements and elections, and other events with similar and varying degrees of tension. For example, the following comments emerged in response to violent attacks: *"O God we need u d mst nw. our enemy want 2 wipe us out"* *(Ceiphas, March 18, 2014),* and "*because my understanding of the issues are that this incessant attacks can only be best describe as a pogrom, genocide and clear cut brigandage" (Bako, April 9, 2014)* In the narratives of oppression and genocide, Southern Kaduna are represented as victims and Hausa-Fulani as aggressive and barbaric. Similarly, the comments, *"how sorrowful and painful we'v been treated without justice" (May 30, 2014)* and *"this impunity in Sk attacks and slavery must end" (Bala, November 17, 2013),* were made in response to an online post of a list of 53 cases of conflicts and violence in Kaduna from 1981 to 2014. Most of what constitute narratives of resistance and agency in Chapter five also predominantly seek to respond to oppression and genocide. In the narratives of attraction and revulsion, the reported activities of the extremist group Boko Haram, for instance, informed some of the ideas of Muslims and Islam as violent, barbaric, suspicious and a false religion. As is evident in the following comment made by Joe *"Ds has shown dat dere is mor hatred, insanity, devaluation of human life, confusion, terrorism, deceit & wanton destructn in d quran dan meet d eye" (September 22, 2013).* The same context also informs the portrayal of certain features associated with Muslims by Forum members as desirable and worthy of emulation. Although the content examined in the narratives of expulsion could not be linked to any immediate violent or conflict situation, they nonetheless seem to be products of internal conflict and displeasure with Southern Kaduna use of Hausa language for communication, naming, and worship as an indication of seeming lack of freedom and the extent of Hausa-Fulani Muslim hegemony. Furthermore, in the representation of religion, the criticism of religion and religion for development emerged from political contestations over the place of religion in social life and political life. Thus, varying degrees and types of conflicts and displeasure inform the production of online representations of both the Self and the Other.

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Scholars such as Said (1978), Karkaba (2010), Hall (1980), and Biakolo (2006) explore representation in relation to power, knowledge regimes, language, and encounters between cultures and peoples; how individuals or groups that have access to certain knowledge and power over media, also control the representation. And, as mentioned above, scholarship on online representations focus on the individual and their efforts to present themselves in certain favorable ways to their friends (Saeed, 2007; Kabir, 2005). My study suggests that the tensions that emerge through particular kinds of offline encounters also largely shape how identities are constructed, and that, as Forehand, Reed, and Deshpande, (2002) suggest, conflicts can make certain identities salient. I do not suggest that such ethnic and religious tensions justify the representations produced, but that they offer the context for understanding them and the triggers for the emergence of such representations on the Online Forum.

The rhetorical practices through which online representations of Southern Kaduna Christians and Hausa-Fulani Muslims are produced in the Online Forum are particularly violent, at an epistemological level. Depictions of ethnic and religious identities appear to be stronger, more violent, and more unanimous when responding to posted media reports about violence or when there are strong feelings of marginalization. For example, one forum member stated that *"Islam is a religion of the devil" (March 16, 2014, responding to a post about violence in Kaduna),* while in another instance, responding to a report about a Boko Haram member who claimed to be in a holy war based on Qur'anic teaching, another Forum member wrote, *"Ds has shown dat dere is mor hatred, insanity, devaluation of human life, confusion, terrorism, deceit & wanton destructn in d quran dan meet d eye" (September 22, 2013).* Different events, however, were less likely to evoke these kinds of heavy responses. Conversations about politics, as opposed to religion, seem to produce more critical debates and disagreements among members. The attraction-revulsion dichotomy discussed in the previous chapter is a good example of where members offer criticism of religion as well as an explicit condemnation of the use of religion to divide voters when, for example, some forum members declare their preference for Muslim political candidates. When a forum member suggested that Christians should vote for members of their own religion only, it provoked responses such as, *"It only shows how narrow minded you are. It is people like you that are drawing this country back (Bala, December 14, 2014); and, "I will rather vote even for an imam or Sheik than to vote the wrong candidate simply becos of religion" (Isaiah, December 14, 2014).* Surely, there are positive representations and

contestations even in conflict situations, however, the more general representations of the Other on the Online Forum are negative; if my suggestion is true, this could be because much of the conversations on the Online Forum in the period reviewed are about conflicts in different forms. Thus, online representations of ethnic and religious identities are not fixed but situational and dependent on the intensity of the conflicts that evoke them.

Of course, these conflicts are themselves interpreted through a pre-existing lens distilled from previous conflicts or myths. Klar and Baram (2016), Bikmen (2013) and Hancock (2014) show this to be the case in their studies of how narratives of previous experiences and in-group socialization shape how new conflicts are interpreted. They show that such narratives always present the in-group as the wronged or victim, and seek ways to falsify alternative narratives. What is significant about their suggestion is that one's attitude or response to conflict can be changed with a change of narratives (Klar and Baram, 2016; Bikmen 2013, Hancock, 2014). This is made evident, for instance, in Bikmen's (2013) observation that when the narrative about the Netherlands' historical relationship to immigration changed, so too did the Dutch participants' attitude towards the contemporary migration of Muslims into the country. Thus, when representations shift, the shift is influenced by situations and the lenses through which the situation is interpreted. This supports the findings of my study which indicate that despite participants claiming to have high levels of contact (fair amount, 12.9%, much 44.4% and very much 31.4%) and knowledge (fair amount 37%, much 31.5% and very much 8.3%) of religions other than their own, they were susceptible to inaccurate and not carefully thought out rhetoric about Islam. As I have highlighted above, forum members are more likely to be critical of themselves and more accepting of Muslims during political debates than during violent conflicts. Akinade (2014) suggests that Christians and Muslims have lived together for long in Nigeria, but have not *encountered* each other, and that this accounts for intolerance. While encounter, in Akinde's (2014) usage, would allow an inclusive space for everyone to tell their stories, whether the story is able to prevent negative representations and potential conflicts depends on the degree of conflict. Violent conflicts would likely lead to a rejection or dismissal of what is known about the Other, and non-violent or less violent conflicts may leave some room for the invocation of such stories to even counter negative representations of the Other. What can be deduced from this study as a whole is that in terms of media and self-representations Forum users are more flexible about changing and expanding articulations of themselves in less violent situations. They

use media to contest, but more likely to further entrench ideas about the Muslim Other, and finally, forum members fail to use the transgressive potential of the online media to disrupt offline ideas about the Southern Kaduna Christian victim and the Hausa-Fulani Muslim villain. Instead, the media platform functions as a site for further expanding and entrenching of these ideas.

Due to the erratic nature of the online conversations, and the intermittent contributions to online conversations analyzed in this study – with no definite, fixed or certain course or pattern – a clear and consistent mechanism of representation in terms of the processes involved is difficult to identify. However, apart from the identifiable narratives and language discussed in the previous chapter, a certain wrestling with the Self in terms of agency, subversion, desire for self-actualization, and action is a generally consistent character of responses by members of the Online Forum. This is visible in almost all narratives discussed in Chapter five, particularly in narratives of agency and resistance (as discussed in section 5.3.1). Forum members appear to construct Southern Kaduna Christians as passive, extremely patient, and not taking sufficient action to end their suffering. An attitude one member refers to as their *"Do-nothingness"* (Emly, May 12, 2013). Thus, the consistent call for members to 'rise', 'wake up' or 'fight' suggest a desire to change the discourse around Self as passive. An example is Jibo's response to images about killings in a Southern Kaduna attack, *"please Christians let's not wait for anything, let's rise" (Jibo, April 8, 2014),* and concerning a similar situation, Bala wrote, *"for how long shall we fold our hands n watch this barbaric act?" (March 16, 2014),* and in an earlier comment on yet another occasion, Pius, another Forum user, commented that, *"he who passively accepts evil is asmuch involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it" (January 17, 2014)*. In the previous chapter I showed that members demonstrate an appetite for resistance in several other ways. They displayed a desire to own resistance and invest in the Self rather than rely on government or elders whom they represented as untrustworthy. Moreover, as demonstrated in the narratives of agency and resistance presented in the previous chapters, the Forum members explored different possible modes of resistance including publicity and alternative media, violence especially in self-defense, secession, submission to God to fight for them, and expulsion of names and norms informed by Hausa-Fulani language and culture, as demonstrated in narratives of expulsion. Agency and self-actualization in postcolonial theory is a

continuing question and exposure to different contexts and problems reveal very dynamic ways in which resistance is explored and understood among scholars (Mahmood, 2005; Parry, 1997).

While the criticism of the Self and exploration of agency rests on the perception among Forum members that the Southern Kaduna are not acting, I suggest that members are already engaged in action, investing in their agency and resisting by *being* and practicing online. In other words, agency and self-actualization is effected by Forum members through participation in the Online Forum, even if they do not view it that way themselves. Through this, Forum members can be seen as engaging in the production of a history of ideas and an online archive of content about Southern Kaduna, Hausa-Fulani, religion, and the social tensions in Kaduna. This can be viewed as action, an investment in the Self, effected because of the powerlessness and frustration they feel in light of narratives of oppression and genocide. It is also an investment in the actualization of an ideal Southern Kaduna space considering that my survey shows that 99% of members are Christians and 91.67% are of Southern Kaduna origins. Given the narratives of expulsion, the pursuit of a separate state for Southern Kaduna as part of their vision of peace, and the general representation of Hausa-Fulani as the enemy and aggressor, Forum members can also be said to be actively engaging in creating a Southern Kaduna consciousness, an imagined community that they hope to see actualized in the offline socio-political sphere.

More recent scholarship about the relationship between online and offline realities, especially in relation to religion, understand the distinction between the two spaces to be increasingly thinning, and that online practices are a microcosm, extension or serve to initiate offline ones (Campbell, 2012). In this study the majority of the online conversations are based on offline experiences and, as argued above, emerge from reports of offline conflict. Yet to what extent does what is manufactured or processed online translated back into offline social life? There is no evidence that certain discussions or appeals for action - such as those calls for violent resistance to oppression and genocide - were implemented offline.

However, Forum members are acutely aware of being online and of the affordances of the online space to more freely express oneself. Thus, a few Forum members raised questions about consistency between their online practices and the actual offline transformation that motivates their online presence and practice. James, for instance, responding to a charged political debate online, wrote "*I kno some of u will nt stand eyeball-eyeball to talk wat u re sayin on forum, we*

need men wt proven integrity dat fight da rasce (December 31, 2013). James suggests that some Forum members are able to speak online but are not courageous enough to follow through offline, and this for him is an indication of lack of integrity. The online space, indeed, creates a safe space for self-expression with limited fear of immediate harm or material retaliation (Bowen, 2014). The niche of the closed group also makes it easier to speak in certain registers and express certain opinions more freely than others. However, James questions the inconsistency in portraying a certain image of oneself online and yet not being able to maintain the same image and pursue the same position offline.

To be sure, Forum members are involved in offline politics, and the Online Forum belongs to an offline non-profit organization that has been vocal in Kaduna, calling out government and engaging in protest actions against events and issues considered to undermine or violate Southern Kaduna. Their press on the ZEMDA conflict discussed in the previous chapter is an example. Yet, while Forum members commune within a closed group, they are aware that it is not entirely beyond penetration and surveillance by state authorities. This was demonstrated in the discussion on agency and resistance in chapter five, where the rhetoric of distrust was also applied by Forum members to talk about suspected traitors among them who were viewed as misdirecting their agency against their own people. For example, leaders of the Online Forum reported being arrested and questioned by the Police who possessed, to the surprise of the arrested Forum members, printed content from the online forum. While this was disturbing for members, it was also viewed as part of the ultimate goal – to influence public opinion and political decision in the state. One of the arrested leaders posted, "*but we are not scared if they know what we are talking about, for that is the essence ultimately or are we going to keep talking to ourselves only? The comments and posts herein have made govt sit up on many issues advertently or inadvertently" (March 23, 2014).* This quote shows an appetite to extend the concerns of Forum members beyond the online in-group conversation. It also suggests that the Forum's content has had some actual impact on the state and politics. Scholars such as Khondker (2011) and Gerbaudo (2012) have shown how new media have been a significant tool for social activism, especially with regards to mobilization and advocacy. Moreover, such occurrence as police surveillance of the Online Forum indicates that the continuity between online and offline is not simply effected by the Forum members. This begs further investigation and discussion of the legal ramification of such forum discussions. Being a closed or private Forum with privileged

access for a select people, the question is whether and to what extent such internal forms of speech ought (not) to be subject to the rule of the state. This is further complicated by the difficulty of determining what is private and what is public in the online realm. Although writing in the context of research ethics, the British Psychological Society (2013) observed that it is not always clear when and what internet contents are private or public. Internet communication, it argues, is often public by virtue of being online due to greater traceability, visibility and permanence, whether or not special permissions such as passwords are required for access.

However, there are also indications on the Online Forum that members sometimes do not follow through offline with what was decided online. For instance, after much advocacy and argument on the Online Forum about seizing the opportunity offered by a forth coming primary elections to advance the governorship nomination of a Southern Kaduna Christian, the same enthusiasm was not shown and acted upon during the actual election. Thus, Abel posted, "*u no wat? I lov d way we talk politics on fazbuk, bt I hate mst of our political actions in d real politics. Haba! even jaba local gvt culdnt giv Aziz a vote" (December 10, 2014).* Abel observes that the candidate did not receive even a single vote from his own ethnic group and local government area (Jaba), and while Abel says he is happy with the way Forum members talk about politics on Facebook, he does not approve of their offline actions and politics. This is an indication that there is not always consistency between what is said online and what is actually done offline. Thus, it could be that the online space allows for ideas, solidarity and will, that is either not feasible offline or deceptive because it does not require the same level of commitment, accountability and courage that an offline interaction of the same purpose may require. Moreover, this could also mean that there is a certain level of coercion in the online space where members feel pressured by the need to 'belong' and not be excluded, and therefore express support for the dominant or popular narrative. Thus, the 'disembodied' form of 'being' online as well as the ease with which one can act online, contributes to inconsistencies between the online and offline spaces. Nonetheless, my data suggests, in line with previous scholarship, that online-offline relations are characterized by mutual shaping and a back and forth transmission/migration of content and experience (Slater, 2002; Campbell, 2013; Acar, 2014). Thus, offline experiences and stories are taken online as a continuation, extension or expansion of the offline (Hoover, 2012; Campbell, 2013). I suggest that the online and the offline should not be imagined as two distinct and distant spaces but rather, as overlapping spaces with grey areas that do not allow for experiences or contents to be

distinguished as offline or online. Additionally, my data suggests that online discussions reshape, or at the very least reframe, perceptions of offline realities and, thus, could be seen as having an effect in the offline world.

In sum, in terms of mechanism of online representation discussed in this section, my study suggests that while there are few fixed course and trajectory of regular and consistent contributions from forum members, what is clear is that online contributions take a more violent tone when violence happens in the offline. Moreover, I have pointed out that agency and self-actualization is effected through participation in the forum, even if the members themselves imagine agency in other forms. Online discussions reshape or at least reframe perception of the offline realities and as such have an effect on the offline world. This can be a powerful force for mobilizing people through sectarian rhetoric, it can be transgressive and internally disruptive to the ideologies that called it into being. It is dynamic and as such its life is only sustained for as long as it serves the interest of its members/subscribers. The Online Forum makes possible a critical discussion of issues and expression of opinions that might be explosive/ or illegal in offline contexts – but which are nonetheless necessary for the productiom of an inclusive public (especially in the contexts of historical and contemporary violence).

6.2 Understanding Digital Religion in Africa

In the edited volume, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (2013), Campbell (2013), suggests and apply the term 'digital religion' to frame religious use, practices, presence, and engagement with the internet. This introduction of the term 'digital religion' was necessitated by limitations in previously employed concepts such as "cyber-religion" which were tied to the concepts of virtuality and cyberspace, as a result of which cyber-religion was imagined as incomplete and fake (Campbell, 2013:3). Digital religion also seeks to recognize the blurring of the distinction between 'religion online' and 'online religion' suggested by Helland (2000). Helland (2000) describes as 'religion online' those religious practices and information online that are based on offline religious rituals and sources; and online religion as those new religious forms and practices that were enabled by the flexibility and fluidity of the internet, indicating new ways of imagining religion and spirituality. Digital religion, then, is defined by Campbell as "religion that is constituted in new ways through digital media and

cultures" (2013:3). Campbell also highlights that this definition has implications for both offline and online religious forms and practices. In addition, digital religion "explores… how religious communities have adapted, responded to, and engaged with the digital culture" (Campbell and Altenhofen, 2016: 1). Very important to this framing of digital religion, therefore, is the connection between the online and the offline, and particularly the points at which these spaces meet. Hence, Campbell describes digital religion as a "bridge that connects and extends online religious practice and spaces into offline religious contexts, and vice versa" (2013:4). Thus, it evokes a space that is characterized by features of traditional religions and digital culture. The broad range of themes, religious forms and practices examined by researchers in new media technologies, the internet and religion, confirm Campbell's construction of 'digital religion' as a useful framework for describing and understanding the subfield.

However, the state and content of digital religion scholarship so far raise critical concerns about the understanding of religion that scholars employ. I argue that current understandings seem to rely on old taxonomies of religion that privilege normative theistic religious traditions. Despite the criticism such views of religion have received in the academic study of religion (Masuzawa, 2005), they nevertheless surface in the underlying assumptions about religion that digital religion scholarship seems to use. Consequently, indigenous religious traditions in Africa for instance, are not represented in such scholarship, nor are non-normative forms of religions such as Christianity and Islam. Thus, digital religion in the African context offers very little by way of understanding religion beyond aspects that fit into such traditional taxonomies as belief in a God, religious text and identifiable rituals. Yet, digital religion is vibrant in Africa and requires thorough investigation because not only do religions such as Christianity and Islam have different online presence and expressions, indigenous forms also make use of the internet and have a strong presence.

Thus, digital religion still needs to grapple with the concept of 'religion', in terms of the kinds of practices, modes of being, information, sites and contents that may be regarded as 'religious' or 'religion' in digital spaces, as well as the offline geographical and other contexts from which such contents are generated, or from which such sites take their meaning. How do we tell if a particular online practice is religious? How useful are definitions of religions that emerged out of scholarly examination of offline religious traditions for determining religion and the religious

online? For example, in his attempt to define digital religion in terms of how we should understand religion when it 'goes' online, Grieve (2013) employs the European Enlightenment understanding of religion as unscientific metanarratives, or stories, that seek to answer existential questions. This shaped everything he wrote about digital religion. The question is, however, whether such an approach does not blind researchers to religious forms and practices that may exist online but bear no resemblance to known offline forms, which are based on normative definitions of such forms? These questions are important because thus far most researches in digital religion have focused on specific religions and practices that are either online forms of established faith traditions and communities, such as Buddhism (Connelly, 2013), Catholicism and the practice of confession – *confession app* (Cheong and Ess, 2012), religious websites such as *AltMslam* (Echchaibi, 2013), or virtual recreation of known and established religious spaces such as the Anglican cathedral or Hindu Temple in Second Life (Radde-Antweiler, 2008; Scheifinger, 2013). These are either known forms of offline religious practice extended or recreated online, or online practices that have a certain resemblance to those offline, hence they were deemed religious. Surely, the idea of religion in theory and practice predates the internet and digital technologies. This means that conceptualizing online religion in forms that may not necessarily emerge from or resemble the offline could be a difficult task. However, it also means that the online has the potential to expand what we understand religion to be in ways that definitions of religion based on offline traditions do not.

Some scholars have suggested that to understand digital religion we must look beyond traditional forms and categories. O'Leary (2005), for example, suggests that it may be more insightful for future studies in digital religion to examine computer games than websites belonging to religions. Indeed, volumes such as that edited by Campbell and Grieve (2014) focus specifically on digital games and their potential to deepen our understanding of religion in contemporary popular culture and religion. My study suggests that even more avenues for understanding digital religion need to be explored beyond the explicitly or self-declared religious spaces and practices. Moreover, as Jukobsh (2006) and Campbell (2012) observe, digital religion so far has mostly been situated in the developed word around religious traditions that Western scholars see as important, hence the social realities that online religion so far reflect is largely Western. Therefore, scholarship in digital religion could be critiqued as largely a digital empire of religion, constituting mostly western norms and therefore, in need of interrogation and 'disruption' by

findings from non-western locations. As Jukobsh observes "Larger theoretical and practical questions addressing cyber-religion's contested spaces, postcolonial underpinnings, and undeveloped cultural, religious, and symbolic capital are essential to our understanding of the wide gaps between what is being ignored and what is not" (2006:242).

This limited visibility of religious forms from the global south, and particularly Africa, raises concerns about digital religion as a subfield, especially considering that religious forms and practices in Africa are very vibrant on the digital platform. Currently, this is manifested in at least six (6) very visible ways. 1) Numerous Africans use digital platforms for advocacy and rebranding of their particular religious ideas. For example, the Synagogue Church of All Nations in Nigeria (SCOAN), headed by Prophet T.B. Joshua, does not only use its website, www.scoan.org to post religious contents, it is also used for impression management and to present a certain image of the church as one that seeks to change lives and to change the world. Moreover, SCOAN's ideas and paraphernalia are promoted on the site such as the "morning water anointed by Christ" which is said to regenerate believers, which is available only at the SCOAN church. Other religious sites such as Christ Embassy, also headquartered in Nigeria, have replicated websites for different countries with the country's extension such as christembassy.org.au (Australia) which facilitates branding and spread of its ideas. 2) The internet is also used by African religions for proselytization, such as the Lord's Chosen Charismatic Church on whose website, http://www.thelordschosenworld.org/, tools such as captivating images of broken chains and streaming testimonies appear to serve the purpose of proselytization. 3) digital platforms are used to provide devotional materials for users, such as the Mountain of Fire and Miracles daily devotionals, that are widely shared on social media such as whatssap, facebook, and even on sites that are not established for religious purposes, such as www.nairaland.com. 4) pastoral care and ethical adjudication is another important manifestation of digital religion in Africa. Several religious sites also offer online counselling services and prayer services (for example, http://www.crconline.co.za) and *fatwas*, such as on the ask an imam section of the www.imamsonline.com website. 5) such websites also appear to serve as avenues for reaching out to diasporas in order to expand or discuss dogma, or to simply remain connected to one's community, and 6) several non-conformist and indigenous forms of religion also make use of different online platforms, often to market their services and solutions to specific problems. For example, on the classifieds website in South Africa, www.gumtree.co.za,

there are many adverts by religious specialists on a wide range of services and products, ranging from personal relationship and sexuality problems, to immediate solutions for financial, witchcraft and dreams problems. These examples show that there is much material for understanding digital religion and the humanities broadly in Africa beyond the limited focus of current scholarship.

In light of the above, what can the self-declared socio-political pressure group that I investigated teach us about digital religion in postcolonial Africa? The Online group does not view or present itself as religious, and although it is 99% Christian, religion is not a membership criteria. The results of the online survey administered to Forum members show that religious issues scored 8.3% as motivation for joining the Online Forum, which is significantly low compared to other motivations such as promoting Southern Kaduna interest (84.3%) and to promote state creation (52.8%). Thus, the group is primarily an advocacy group and offers support to its members in times of tension and conflict. Yet, religion is widely invoked on this Online Forum, and forms a central theme in Forum members' understanding and depiction of Southern Kaduna and Hausa-Fulani. This suggests that digital religion is able to emerge and take form on 'non-religious' sites, at least by the standards of the actors on the site. Radde-Antweiler (2013) makes a crucial argument in this regard in her focus on the question of authenticity of online contents of religion. She holds that previous scholarship on religion imagined religion as a definable entity that is static, uniform and consistent, however, religion cannot be viewed that way anymore (Radde-Antweiler, 2013). Radde-Antweiler (2013) argues that what constitutes religion and the authority to determine what is real and authentic in terms of religion is no longer the exclusive domain of theologians and religious specialists, but also the domain of ordinary people and public discourse. In a similar vein, my site of investigation suggests that religion and the religious is produced by people from different walks of life, whose intentions may have nothing to do with religion per se. On the Online forum, for instance, the lawyer, banker, the mechanic, the unemployed person and the politician are all involved in the production and invocation of religious forms, even if they were not deliberately intent on doing so. What the above suggest is that the digital space in Africa is primary used as a resource. What is critical in the understanding of the forum is that while it does that through advocacy and support – it also disrupts ideas about the religious self and other, but members are engaged in doing religious work – and revisioning

the role of religion in their context of Kaduna. This has implications for how we understand interreligious relations in Nigeria, as well as religion in the context of conflict.

Campbell's conception of digital religion includes a merger of "traits of online culture (such as interactivity, convergence, and audience-generated content) and traditional religion (such as patterns of belief and ritual tied to historically grounded communities)" (2013:4). Thus, to highlight what ideas about digital religion in Africa emerged from this study, I also discuss ideas that emerged from this study about the online space as this offers insights into the character of digital religion in Africa. Moreover, if it is true that the online is a microcosm of the offline or primarily offers new, more dynamic and satisfying ways of engaging old religious practices and traditions (Hoover, 2012; Campbell, 2011), then ideas and practices of digital religion is Africa can be viewed as reflections of African epistemologies and social realities.

It is, perhaps, clear at this stage that the Online Forum I investigated is a public site for Southern Kaduna people to wrestle with their experiences, history, identity and agency, and to pursue agendas that affect public opinions and response through their online practices, even though the group is a closed one. On this site Forum members construct religion in several ways. Religion is viewed and engaged as piety and practice, as seen in the ways members refer particularly to Islam, such as when Muslims are constructed as committed and taking their religion seriously in relation to practices such as stopping for *salat* during transit, or the perception that they did not show support for a non-Muslim political candidate, or even when an extremist justifies his actions with religion. In doing so, the practices of piety displayed in these situations are imagined as religious. Further, when members explicitly discussed religion, religion was constructed, on the one hand as premodern, opiate and problematic for society and development; it was viewed as dulling the minds of Forum members. Moreover, the representations of Muslims as inferior, irrational and blindly following their religion, suggests that religion is viewed as dulling the minds of Muslims as well. On the other hand, religion was viewed as intrinsic to society and, in fact, necessary for development, and here again, the political successes of Muslims in Nigeria were associated to the view that in Islam, religion and politics are not separated. These ideas about religion reflect a traditional sociological engagement with religion as constituting myth, rituals and symbols (Grieve, 2013). However, while myths can be replicated online (Grieve, 2013), and symbols can be expanded, rituals often have to be reformed

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once they are taken to the digital space, as they become mediated, for instance, through the keyboard and other programs. Scholars such as Brasher (2001) and Scheifinger (2013) have also demonstrated this reformation and alteration of ritual online, and illustrated how it limits the religious experience associated with rituals, such as the lack of utility of the sense of smell in an online Hindu temple.

In addition, the analysis of the Online Forum's content shows that not only is the group a site for contestation and religious formation, religion on the online space is also itself a site for contestation. Religion, in this sense, is also a platform for engaging the several other issues that members engage online, such as oppression and genocide, violence, cessation, politics and visions of peace. Thus, while Forum members depicted Islam and Christianity in various ways, they are mainly concerned with fears of extinction, access to state resources, and social insecurity. While this study has shown that these issues are intertwined with religious identities, religion nonetheless seems to be a site for also engaging them. Scholars recognize that conflicts in northern Nigeria are informed by several factors, many of which are not religious, but they persistently construct religion as a *tool* that is used or manipulated by politicians to cause conflicts (Lenshie and Inalegwu, 2014; Ibrahim, 1991; Ibrahim, 1989). Kukah (1993) questions the politicization of religion argument and suggests that religion should be viewed as a platform for political pursuits rather than merely a tool in the hands of politicians. The engagement with religion on the Online Forum as a site for advocacy and collective action indicate that Kukah's view is a more useful way to think about the role of religion in Nigeria's social conflicts – as a site for political (and other) pursuits. This view opens up opportunities for deeper understanding of the place of religion in tensions in the Nigerian society.

Some of the above views about religion on the Online Forum, such as religion as practice, are embodied notions of religion and ritual, while others, such as piety, are less embodied. The invocation and discussion of embodied forms of religion and religious ritual on the Online Forum – a disembodied space – has implication for digital religion. If, as I suggested above, Forum members are viewed as engaging in religious practices and productions, even if unintended, they could be viewed as engaging in religious practices without embodied rituals. This does not exclude the possibility of such disembodied religious practice to inform embodied ones.

But there is often a disembodiment to traditional religions such as Christianity and Islam, a certain 'virtualness'. For example, the Muslim *ummah* (global community of believers) can be viewed as a virtual community in the sense of interconnectedness beyond the physical and across time and space. While the *ummah* is embodied in individuals who identify with it and embody its rituals, it is disembodied and virtual in the realm of community of faith. This is perhaps another way of expressing Anderson's idea of the nation as an imagined community (2006). This is not to suggest that the virtual community is not 'real', it is real to the extent that its members experience it as real. Thus, while virtualness is often associated with the internet, the internet can also be seen as a translation of a virtualness that predated it – the virtualness found in disembodied faith or religious communities.

Ambivalence is a prevailing character and theme in the data analyzed for this study. The narratives of attraction and revulsion, and the narratives of expulsion discussed in Chapter five show this explicitly. Forum members expressed both disgust and desire or attraction towards piety and practices they associated to Hausa-Fulani Muslims and Islam. These are indications that the platform is also an ambivalent one, and that this quality reflects on religion in the Online Forum when the forum is viewed an African digital archive of religion, and the religious forms and practices on it. Acar (2014) observes something of this quality in media technologies. He notes that technologies generally, and media in particular, contain paradoxes such as in creating illusions and promoting disillusions, or empowering and enslaving people, or amplifying and compressing social dynamics (Acar, 2014). While the Online Forum I investigated dissolves certain boundaries and allowed Southern Kaduna Christian actors to utilize diaspora relations, circumvent hierarchies and traditional patriarchies in the pursuit of their interests, it simultaneously created new, mostly ideological borders and registers, and fanned sectarianism through the violent representation of Hausa-Fulani Muslim Other. This is in line with Introvigne's (2005) argument that while the online space promotes subversion of authority and hierarchy, it also creates new forms, which has a huge potential for violence and terrorism.

The character of ambivalence on the Online Forum is manifested in several other ways. For example, while it can be imagined as a disembodied space, the language, images, and practices of the Forum is replete with bodies – attacked bodies, maimed bodies, oppressed bodies, aggressive bodies, suspicious bodies and corrupted bodies. These bodies are also predominantly

male bodies, both with regards to online participation in the Forum and the survey respondents. Moreover, the language on the Forum is gendered and privileges males, for example, when a Forum member quoted in the narratives of expulsion criticizes the use of Hausa language, he spoke of their *"brothers from the South" (Fred, April 8, 2014),* or Janet's (a woman) use of "*SK brothers" (December 21, 2014)* to refer to the people of Southern Kaduna generally. This is a fairly common way of using language in the Online Forum, indicating that male bodies have a dominant presence on the Forum. Traditional religious relations to the body also show a certain ambivalence. Several religions traditionally construct the body as a problem – to be tamed, managed, as an obstacle for the soul, unholy, temporal and as something to be transcended in pursuit of more immaterial religious aspirations, yet this obsession with the body suggest an inability to do without the body (McGuire, 1990).

Other expressions of ambivalence in the Online Forum include the idea that while only the Southern Kaduna Christian Self can be trusted in the pursuit of emancipation, among Southern Kaduna and forum members there were suspected traitors and stakeholders who were not trustworthy. The narratives of attraction and revulsion show that while Muslims and Islam are represented as aggressive and as the oppressor, they also possess desirable qualities, and although Southern Kaduna Christians are represented as morally superior, they also have a potential for aggression, even if only verbally. Moreover, the Self in the narratives of expulsion is imagined as invisible, yet it is visible as a carrier of the Other, in the way Southern Kaduna Christians bear Hausa-Fulani Muslim names and have appropriated other Hausa cultural forms. Furthermore, the online space enables sectarianism and violence as observed above, yet it could also be seen as facilitating non-violent response to experiences, especially in terms of material violence. With smart phones and other new media technologies, access to the internet is easy and sometimes immediate. It is possible to imagine the Online Forum as one of the first sites Forum members visit to express their frustration and thoughts on events. While their online practices and representation are violent, there is room to imagine that the processes such content go through – the debates, the challenges to one another – also reduce the chances of impulsive dangerous offline response to violent incidences. The debates among Forum members about violence are examples of this. Forum members challenged suggestions of violence and majority of users felt that violence is only permissible in self-defense. Yet, more generally, there is a

possibility that conversations about events influence the potential response to such events in both positive and negative ways.

This ambivalent character likely also informs the perceptions of religion on the online Forum. As with other postmodern conceptions of reality, digital religion in this African context then appears to defy expectations of a singular and consistent way of being and being religious in postcolonial Africa. Being religious can include contradictions and factors that are typically non-religious and in opposition to dominant views on what constitute religion. This raises a question about what happens at the ambivalent moment when contradictions meet. The moment when both attraction and revulsion, disgust and desire is expressed by Forum members towards Islam and Muslims, or when the Hausa language and culture associated with Islam is at the same time the language of worship and religious practice for Southern Kaduna Christians. The concept of hybridity and the third space in postcolonial theory to an extent captures this moment. Bhabha (1990) sees the encounter of different identities (colonized and colonizer) as producing an excess that cannot be resolved, translated, or accounted for. For Bhabha (1990), the third space is an unintended consequence of translating the identity of the Other, and it emerges in the contact between the Self and Other as an in-between site for negotiation, disruption, and new possibilities that challenge fixed and invariable notions of identity. Thus, at the third space/ambivalent moment, othering is lost and a kind of unity, whereby Islam and Christianity as embodied markers of distinctiveness disappear and linear hegemonic narratives of Muslims as evil are challenged because they are also a subject of desire, and their name for God, *Allah*, is also the Christian name for God.

6.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed what the findings of my study offer for understanding online representation and digital religion in Africa. I have argued that at the heart of online representation are offline conflicts, that the intensity of representation in terms of whether they are negative or positive reflect the intensity of offline conflicts, and that the generally violent tone and rhetoric of the online Forum, thus, seems to be the result of dominant discourse about violence. This has implications for how religion generally, and digital religion in particular, is

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understood in Africa, as well as for interfaith relations, because, like ethnicity, religion seems to be more salient and articulated in problematic ways during conflict.

In this Chapter I have also problematized scholarship on digital religion, and the trend towards excluding several religious forms, practices and presences on the online, especially in non-western context, due to a reliance on understandings of religion that privilege western normativity and priorities. Thus, I raised questions about the usefulness of scholarly conceptions of religion that are based on studies of offline religion. Such studies, I argue, are likely to miss religious forms that do not resemble known offline forms, or are non-conformist to the taxonomies and understandings of religion employed by scholars in digital humanities. The question of a comprehensive and all-encompassing definition of religion has been a longstanding and intractable debate in religious studies, and is not an end that digital religion scholars should necessarily pursue. However, the internet and its practices offer opportunities to revisit the foundations of our assumptions and definitions of religion, rather than simply apply already existing notions of religion, irrespective of the argument that the online is a microcosm of the offline (Campbell, 2013). I have suggested that digital religion in Africa emerges from a broad range of sources and sites, some of which bear no resemblance to religion if the concept of religion used to analyze them are based solely on offline forms of religion and the religious.

Finally, I have discussed ideas about religion that emerged from the online Forum, such as religion as piety and practice, and the representation of religion both as detrimental and relevant to development. Moreover, I have illustrated that religion online is a site of contestation. I have argued that the character of digital religion that emerged from this Forum, reflect the character of the online platforms itself, which, among other things, is characterized by ambivalence and paradoxes. These ideas about religion online and the nature of the site from which they emerge (socio-political rather than religious), reflect the epistemologies and realities of African offline contexts, and thus, further attempts to understand religion in Africa can benefit from exploring several kinds of sites, particularly those that are not explicitly religious.

Chapter Seven:

Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Study

Against the background of social conflicts in Nigeria, in which religious and ethnic identities are prominent, and the increasing emergence of "emancipation" groups on social media to pursue Southern Kaduna interest, this study set out to examine the prevailing representations of the Southern Kaduna Christian Self and the Hausa-Fulani Other by members of an online Forum. This study was motivated by the discovery that members of the online forum widely invoke religion and ethnicity in their online practice. In this project, I applied postcolonial theory and research in digital religion to analyze contents from the online Forum between 2013 and 2014, which I also complemented with an online survey administered to Online Forum users.

The literature examined in Chapters two and three shows that scholars have engaged substantially with issues of conflicts and Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria. They show that while Christians and Muslims have co-existed for a long time, their relationship has been marred by several political and religious contestations that are sometimes manifested in violence, especially in northern Nigeria. In terms of relationships between Christians and Muslims in Kaduna, the literature shows that pre-colonial and colonial religious, political, and social formations and state-making processes contributed; so do the re-emergence of old grievances in pursuit of contemporary interests. Due to the proximity of Southern Kaduna minority ethnic groups to centers of Hausa-Fulani Muslim power, their experience in this matrix has been shaped in ways that have been marked by domination and resistance through colonial to postcolonial periods. While colonialism produced a complex situation for such groups especially by annexing them to the already established Hausa states during the indirect rule system, it was exploiting already existing tensions to achieve its own objectives. Retaining colonial institutions and structures by the postcolonial government also proved to further complicate relationships between Southern Kaduna minorities and the Hausa-Fulani whom they had already come to construct as the oppressor. In the literature review I also discussed specific conflicts in Kaduna in the postcolonial era that were defining moments for the ways Christians and Muslims relate in the state. These conflicts, it was shown, introduced the Christian-Muslim dichotomy in social

conflicts in Nigeria, divided residents and their settlement patterns along religious lines, served as avenues for recalling old grievances, and seem to have motivated contemporary Kaduna movements that utilize the internet to pursue Southern Kaduna interests and to construct and reinforce ideas about themselves and Hausa-Fulani Muslims. Finally, I also discussed scholarly work on media in Nigeria, and the argument that media primarily focuses on the powerful and the three major ethnicities in Nigeria which have dominated politics, and silences minorities as well as representing them as violent.

I observed in my engagement with previous scholarship that much of the literature has paid more attention to ethnicity in Nigeria than to religion, despite the significance of religion in the social life of the country and its conflicts. When religion is examined, there is very limited attention to religions other than Islam and Christianity, even in the search for models of peaceful co-existence despite suggestions by scholars like Mazrui (2001) that religions such as African indigenous religions offer such a model. I also suggested that there is a certain complicity in the silencing of minorities in Nigeria, whether religious, ethnic, or both, among scholars and in representing them as violent, because while their grievances have been present for long, scholars mostly pay attention in events of violence.

The findings from the online survey administered to Forum users shows that the majority of respondents were between 20-40 years of age, male (74%) Christians (99%), of Southern Kaduna origins, that had over 2 years' membership period on the Online Forum. Few respondents claimed to have little literacy and contact with people of faiths other than their own, and regarding their similarities to such people, 53% of respondents saw them as different and 41% saw people of other faith as a little different. Respondents also expressed their views on the factors that cause and aggravate social tensions in Kaduna and what strategies are likely to bring about lasting peace. It was noted that political strategies such as representation and state creation were scored higher by respondents than faith strategies such as prayer and interfaith dialogue. With these insights about members and their opinions, I analyzed the content collected from the Online Forum which including conversations and posts of 2013 and 2014.

Some of the key findings from analysis of data include the following:

- Despite their proximity to members of religions other than their own, and their relatively high levels of interaction and knowledge about such religions and cultures, Online Forum

members still engage in violent representations of Hausa-Fulani Muslims, and sometimes use their proximity to signal a belief that they had bases for their notions about the Self and Other. Thus, more than proximity is required for adequate religious literacy about other religions.

- Regarding the Self and Other, Forum members view the Southern Kaduna as oppressed, under the threat of genocide, politically excluded, religiously and morally superior, and also needed to urgently apply their agency to resist and change their social, political and cultural situation. The Other is viewed as suspicious, aggressive, untrustworthy, and inferior, but also religiously committed and loyal.

- Representations of the Self and Other in the online Forum, are characterized by several layers of ambivalence, which include both desire and disgust towards the Hausa-Fulani Muslim Other.

- Interfaith dialogue is not considered a very effective means of peacebuilding by Forum members. They expressed preference for more political solutions, such as state creation and political representation.

- The relationship between politics, religion, and ethnicity was contested through the Online Forum, and religion appeared also to be a site for contestation over several other issues, rather than a mere tool manipulated by politicians to cause conflicts.

- Forum members are knowingly or unknowingly engaged in religious work through their participation in the online forum; producing rhetoric and epistemology through their active participation, thus leaving a digital archive of religion in Africa.

In addition to the several inferences and arguments I made in my discussion of these themes, I sought to understand the mechanism of Online representation, and argued that offline conflicts play a major role as source and in determining the character of representation in the Online Forum investigated. Moreover, I explored the ways members understand religion as portrayed in the online forum and the implication of my study for understanding digital religion in Africa. However, a question that still requires some attention is the implication of this study to interfaith tolerance and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria, considering that this, as an interest, formed part of my primary motivation for doing this research project.

7.2 Implications of the Study for Peacebuilding in Nigeria

This study highlights several issues that I consider important for any meaningful efforts towards peacebuilding. Firstly, there is a problem of collapsing everything about the Self and Other in the Online Forum into singular identities and narratives, often ethno-religious and violent. Thus, almost everything associated to Hausa-Fulani and Muslims is interpreted as stemming from exactly those identities – their being Hausa-Fulani and Muslim. . Amatya Sen (2006) observes this tendency globally, and notes that the world, and people's experiences of it, are increasingly being partitioned into a federation of religions or of civilizations as opposed to previous utilization of class and nationalism. For Sen (2006) this creates a situation whereby people are defined as belonging to exactly one group – a religion or civilization. This exact identity then becomes the only way the people are understood and their actions interpreted. As a result, people from the Arab world, for instance, are not defined beyond a Muslim identity, and everything they do is connected to their being Muslim (Sen, 2006). Sen (2006) argues that this blurs the actual diversity of the world and challenges the ability of people to co-exist peacefully on the basis of being human which is a shared feature of all human beings. Another implication of this classification of human beings is that the work of peacebuilding is then largely viewed as a task for religious leaders – primarily because they are religious leaders. This way of viewing people and their actions, which is evident in the Online Forum I studied, require deconstruction if peace is to be achieved. Religion is, indeed, a key factor in conflicts in Nigeria, but that is, perhaps, also because people fail to see each other in any other way, and not merely because ethnic and religious identities are conflated. Thus, strategies for peace need to be able to challenge such singular views of people in society. A bad leader or terrorist must be seen as that, and not simply as Muslim or Christian, simply because they practice or identify with these religions or make reference to them.

Secondly, this study highlighted the importance of narratives and the way they are articulated in reinforcing tense situations through prevailing ideas about identity and the motivation for people's action. Approaches to peace also need to pay attention to what narratives and in-group stories prevail about the situation, and what historical narratives are distilled continue to reemerge to freeze events and to weave them into preexisting sentiments. Peacebuilding campaigns and work need to pay attention to these and help people revise these narratives and find ways to understand every situation in its own right. I am not suggesting that such narratives,

especially historical ones, should simply be dismissed because they constitute a misrepresentation of people and situations. They need careful consideration and analysis because they have material impact on people, and representations that they are used to construct may be fantasies, but they are fantasies about real people and are not received by their audiences as fantasies but often as true stories, as the narratives about Hausa-Fulani Muslims in this study have shown. The challenge for practice is how social actors can be enabled to carry out such analysis on their own, and how to utilize the online platform for such objectives. Nonetheless, this study reveals the promise and potential of the online platform to help people cope with, navigate, and transcend the problematics of interreligious tensions and conflicts.

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Appendix 1:

Online Survey Questionnaire with Informed Consent

Survey Questionnaire

Invitation to Participate in Survey

I am Sokfa F. John, currently pursuing a PhD (Human Sciences) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. My research is on the articulation and contestation of ethnic and religious identities in Southern Kaduna as expressions of social (ethno-religious) tenstions - with specific reference to the ___ online Forum.

As part of my study, I am conducting a small survey on users of the ___ online Forum for basic demographic information as well as information about religious preferences of members.

I invite you to kindly participate in this survey. Your participation will immensely contribute to new insights on ethno-religious tension and relations in Kaduna, peacebuilding efforts, and theory in my field(s) of study. It will also make possible the completion of my doctoral studies.

The survey is anonymous and confidential. You will not be required to provide your names or any information that may put you in any kind of danger.

Your participation in the survey is voluntary. You may also feel free to dissallow the information you provide to be used in my study.

Thank you for your willingness to participate

Sincerely,

Sokfa F. John   Dr. Federico Settler   Ms Phumelele Ximba
+27748441033   (Supervisor)   (Research Office)
Sokfa.john@gmail.com   033-2606078   031-2603587
                        settler@ukzn.ac.za   XIMBAP@ukzn.ac.za

Consent: I hereby acknowledge that I have been informed of the purpose of this survey. I am aware that participation is voluntary. I confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of the research project.

○ I accept to participate in this survey

Gender

○ Female
○ Male

Religion

○ Islam
○ Christianity
○ African Traditional Religion
○ Other: [   ]

Age

○ 20-30
○ 31-40
○ 40-50
○ 50+

Place of Origin

○ Southern Kaduna
○ Northern Kaduna
○ Other: [   ]

For how long have you been a member of the   online Forum?

○ Less than 6 months
○ 6 months to 1 year
○ Over 1 year
○ More than 2 years

Why did you join the _____ online Forum?
(tick up to 3 options)

☐ To promote the interest of Southern Kaduna

☐ To promote peace in Kaduna

☐ To support the creation of a state for Southern Kaduna

☐ To make my voice heard on political issues

☐ To make my voice heard on religious issues

☐ To make my voice heard on ethnicity issues

☐ Other: [   ]

How much do you know about religions other than your own?

○ Very little

○ Little

○ Fair amount

○ Much

○ Very much

How much contact have you had with members of religions other than your own?

○ Very little

○ Little

○ Fair amount

○ Much

○ Very much

How different or similar are people of faiths other than your own?

○ Not different

○ A bit different

○ Very different

In your opinion, the social and ethno-religious tensions in Kaduna are the result of
(tick up to 3 options)

☐ Religion

☐ Politics

☐ Ethnicity

☐ Islam

☐ Christianity

☐ Other: _____

In your opinion, social and religious tensions are worsened by
(tick up to 3 options)

☐ Muslims

☐ Christians

☐ Politicians

☐ Christian extremists

☐ Muslim extremists

☐ Poor administration by Government

☐ Foreign interests

☐ Other: _____

What strategies will most likely facilitate lasting peace in the region?

○ Creating a new state

○ Dialogue (inter-religious)

○ Prayer

○ Equal Political representation

○ Other: _____

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

100%: You made it.

Appendix 2: Ethical Clearance Letter

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL ™
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

21 Novemver 2014

Mr Sokfa Francis John 213568791
School of Religion, Philosophy & Classics
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr John

Protocol reference number: HSS/1080/014D
Project title: A Postcolonial critique of religion and Ethnicity in Southern Kaduna with specific reference to the Online Forum

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 3 September 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Dr FG Settler
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Denis
Cc School Administrator: Ms Catherine Murugan