ARTICULATIONS OF BELONGING: THE POLITICS OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN BAUCHI AND GOMBE STATES, NORTH-EAST NIGERIA

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Nigeria is the most linguistically diverse country in Africa, with more than 500 ethno-linguistic groups (Lewis *et al.* 2013; Blench 2007) and a population that is about half Christian and half Muslim. The management of this great diversity has been a constant theme in Nigerian society and politics, from the colonial period to the present. In recent times, identity-based conflicts have become commonplace, many of them escalating into large-scale collective violence. These inter-group conflicts, when they occur, take different forms, but the mobilization of collective identities based around ethnicity, place of origin or religion is a regular feature. The surge of localized communal conflicts across Nigeria is in large part a result of high levels of deprivation amongst the general population on the one hand, and a deeply corrupt, kleptocratic political elite on the other that is focused on power – not for a wider public good, but for the diversion of state resources for itself.[1] The Nigerian political class is catastrophically failing to govern the country efficiently or justly, lacking even 'enlightened self-interest' (Ibrahim 2014). Ethnic and religious disputes are therefore rarely mediated or settled by the government – except sometimes by traditional rulers (Blench *et al.* 2006) – and they are at the same time reflective of communal struggles for access to the state and its resources (Ekeh 1975; Nnoli 1978; Sha 2005). Such competition often escalates into violence, and at times politicians are themselves rumoured to be involved in sponsoring such violence. The present level of violence and general insecurity across northern Nigeria has become particularly acute, and in places is being accompanied by a recasting of local political authority. Nonetheless, patterns of armed conflict and the forms of insecurity experienced in central and northern Nigeria are by no means uniform. Local political arrangements also vary, particularly in the handling of ethnic and religious diversity and competing social interests. In this paper, we seek to explore the variations in the local politics of inclusion and exclusion.

Many inter-group conflicts in Nigeria are fought on the premise of indigeneity, a concept that is defined on an ethnic basis, with groups categorized variously as 'indigenes' or 'settlers', depending on their place of origin – which can often be

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[1]This is what Joseph (1987) referred to as 'prebendalism'.

FIGURE 1   The Federal Republic of Nigeria, showing its thirty-six states, some
principal towns and cities, and neighbouring countries

contested. The notion of 'indigene' institutionalized by the Nigerian state as a
constitutional category of citizens, against the 'non-indigene' – or, to use
Nigerian popular discourse, 'settler' – is entrenched and given vent through the
practice of local actors. In a Nigerian context, the contestation is not just about
the usage of the categories 'indigene', 'non-indigene' and 'settler'; contestation
is more importantly about the boundaries of who is 'in' and who is 'out'. The
debate sometimes encompasses issues of minority rights, but these issues are not
essential to it, as everyone, including majorities, are supposed to be 'indigenous'
in one state of the federation or another. Ideas of indigeneity in Nigeria generally
bear limited resemblance to the principles adopted in the 2007 United Nations
Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Gausset *et al.* (2011) and
Pelican (2009) unpack the varied meanings of indigeneity, and the distinctions
between indigeneity and autochthony, in a critical analysis that is relevant for
our purposes here.

   In some parts of Nigeria, social differentiation based on notions of indigeneity
overlaps with religious boundaries between Muslims and Christians, at times gen-
erating 'ethno-religious' violence (Higazi 2008). However, religious differences in

northern Nigeria do not always create fixed social boundaries, as there can be much interaction, ranging from friendship to intermarriage, between Muslims and Christians (Last 2007). Religious pluralism can also sometimes weaken indigeneity politics. In some parts of central and northern Nigeria, ethnic groups and even families are religiously mixed. In such cases, Muslim and Christian ethnic kin have social ties that extend to their co-religionists from other ethnic groups, going beyond narrow visions of indigeneity. When religious affiliation cuts across ethnic boundaries, this can strengthen connections between different ethno-linguistic groups and reduce the politics of belonging. It can also mean that religion is not so easily mobilized or incorporated into indigeneity discourses. In northern Nigeria, the politics of belonging is often especially fraught when disputes between 'indigenes' and 'settlers' are overlaid with or reinforced by religious politics. This is clearly the case in southern Bauchi, one of the cases analysed in this study, but it is less so in Gombe, our comparative case.

In some instances, the politics of belonging remains prominent and discrimination against 'settlers' persists, regardless of cross-cutting religious ties with 'indigenes'. But elsewhere in northern Nigeria religion can supersede ethnic identity, either dampening indigeneity discourses or, in some (but not all) religiously plural areas, fragmenting ethnic politics along faith or ecumenical lines. In some cases, therefore, ethnic and/or kinship ties help bring Muslims and Christians closer together, but in others people have become divided along religious lines, even when they share a common ethnic identity. Where the latter applies, one religious bloc within a group defined as 'indigenes' of a place may promote an ethnic agenda based on exclusivity, while another may support a more inclusive politics that incorporates co-religionists.[2] In the most extreme cases in northern Nigeria, religious violence has divided ethnic kin to the extent that militants have even targeted their own family members (as has happened, on some occasions, in parts of Plateau and Borno states). But inter-ethnic conflicts where religion has no prominent role in mobilization are also common in central Nigeria, and, although less common, there are also violent conflicts between religiously mixed groups where ethnicity trumps religion and co-religionists have fought each other on an 'ethnic' basis.[3]

It is these dynamics between religion, ethnicity and indigeneity that are the focus of this paper. There are some discernible differences both across central and northern Nigeria and in Bauchi and Gombe states in the way in which these social categories and ideologies interrelate and are articulated. In exploring the local politics of belonging and its different features across the region, we consider social, political and economic factors that may account for variation, and the historical constitution of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations in particular places.

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[2]This is the case among some ethnic groups on the Jos Plateau that are religiously mixed. 'Indigenous' Christian majorities tend to regard the Hausa population in Jos as 'settlers', whereas 'indigenous' Muslim minorities often (though not universally) adopt a more inclusive position towards their Hausa Muslim co-religionists.

[3]For example, in Namu town, Qua'an Pan Local Government Area, southern Plateau State, violence between the 'Pan' (Kofyar) and Goemai in April 2006 occurred along ethnic lines, despite both groups being to some degree religiously mixed.

We compare Bauchi and Gombe states – contiguous states in north-east Nigeria – because they have certain common features but also important differences in their histories and social characteristics. Bauchi and Gombe are both religiously plural: the majority of the population in each state is Muslim, but they also have substantial Christian minorities. In Gombe State, the population is estimated to be about 65 per cent to 70 per cent Muslim and 30 per cent to 35 per cent Christian, while Bauchi State is about 85 per cent to 90 per cent Muslim and 10 per cent to 15 per cent Christian.[4] Most of the territory of the current Gombe and Bauchi states was administered as part of Bauchi Province during the colonial period (1903–60), within the Northern Region of Nigeria. With the creation of states in 1967, they became part of the North-Eastern State, which was then divided up in 1976 into three different states – Bauchi, Borno and Gongola. In 1996, more states were again created, including Gombe State, which was carved out of Bauchi State. The 1996 state creation exercise increased the total number of states in Nigeria from nineteen to thirty-six, which was significant because, inter alia, at the state and local government levels, it created new majorities and new minorities (Suberu 2001). The administrative histories of the current Gombe and Bauchi states are therefore closely tied, but there are nonetheless marked differences in social structure and politics at the local level, both within and between the two states. We compare these characteristics below and argue that this helps to explain the differential levels of violence in the two cases.

Conflicts in Bauchi and Gombe have rather different origins, and mass violence has occurred several times in Bauchi but not in Gombe on such a large scale. The politics of belonging in Bauchi and Gombe varies. The dispute over the 'ownership' of Tafawa Balewa town in southern Bauchi has degenerated into mass violence and ethno-religious strife, but no such equivalent exists in Gombe. In Gombe State there are disputes over farmland and territorial boundaries between ethnic or intra-ethnic communities, but these conflicts are not generally about struggles for political autonomy or 'emancipation' from dominant groups. While Middle Belt sentiments[5] such as these are still present in Gombe, the demands subsided as local elites were co-opted into the state's patronage structures. The prevalence of religiously mixed families and kin groups also means that indigeneity politics in Gombe is not fuelled by religious discourse to the extent

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[4]These estimates are based on our own judgements from the fieldwork we carried out across both states, and from the responses to the question of demographic composition given by respondents in Gombe and Bauchi.

[5]The Middle Belt refers both to the geographical area that stretches laterally across the central axis of Nigeria and to the political project that began in the mid-1940s among non-Muslim minority ethnic groups in the former Northern Region. A mainly missionary-educated elite in non-Muslim areas of the North agitated for self-determination from 'Hausa-Fulani' domination through the creation of a Middle Belt Region, to be carved out of Northern Nigeria. In 1958 the British government's 'Willink Commission into the Fears of Minorities and the Means of Allaying Them' rejected Middle Belt demands for their own region. The central zone of Nigeria – that is, the southern part of the former Northern Region – remained within the North. In 1967, on the eve of the civil war (1967–70), the four regions were divided into twelve states. Despite the fact that a Middle Belt Region was never created, the sentiments of the movement, referring to issues concerning minorities and employing a related discourse, are still present and evolving.

that is observable in Tafawa Balewa in Bauchi.[6] This paper therefore compares these different social and political articulations of inclusion and exclusion, and, where they exist, expressions of xenophobia. We also seek to show how religious and ethnic pluralism is managed in Bauchi and Gombe. In doing so we explore why, to date, Bauchi and Gombe have experienced markedly different levels of conflict, despite both being religiously and ethnically diverse.

POLITICAL AUTHORITY, CHIEFTAINCY AND KINSHIP IN GOMBE STATE

The demographic composition of Gombe State varies substantially between the eleven local government areas (LGAs) and, most starkly, between the northern and southern parts of the state. The northern areas, notably Nafada, Dukku and Funakaye LGAs, are predominantly Muslim, with a largely rural population. The relatively few Christians there are mainly civil servants who have been posted from southern or central Gombe for work. Other Christians include a minority of traders in the main towns who are Igbo, and some of the policemen and other security personnel. The Christian community in northern Gombe has churches in the larger towns, served by pastors who are also originally from outside the area. Among the Muslim majority there is a range of different sects, including the *darika* (Sufi orders) and reformist groups such as *Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'ah Wa'Ikamatis Sunnah* (properly abbreviated as JIBWIS, but still also widely referred to as Izala),[7] as well as Muslims who do not identify with any particular sect or religious organization but who pray in the mosques as Sunni Muslims. Gombe State is not a core Hausa area; the Hausa language is now widely spoken there, but in northern Gombe Fulfulde and Bole are also lingua francas among the Muslim population. While the north is visibly Islamic and dominated by majority groups in the region, including Fulani, Bolewa and Hausa, central Gombe is more religiously mixed. Groups such as the Tera, in Yamaltu Deba, have tended to accommodate both Islam and Christianity with relative amity.

The southern part of Gombe State is more politically fragmented, with a varied religious make-up, and while northern Gombe is flat, this area is rugged, its topography defined by the contours of the Muri Mountains and the Tangale-Waja Plateau. This is an area of tremendously high linguistic and ethnic diversity, with a multiplicity of minority languages and groups that historically were decentralized, without any overarching political authority, but with clans that in some

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[6]The religious pluralism of some ethno-linguistic groups in central and southern Gombe, such as the Tera, Tangale and Waja, is comparable in some respects to the much more populous Yoruba of south-west Nigeria. There are crucial differences in the political and social histories and in the current articulations of Islam and Christianity in the two regions, but they have in common religiously mixed families and politics, and the frequent acceptability of intermarriage between Muslims and Christians without the prerequisite of religious conversion by either the man or the woman. For an ethnographically deep and historically intricate analysis of the interplay between Islam and Christianity among the Yoruba, see Peel (forthcoming).

[7]This Arabic name translates into English as 'The Association for the Removal of Innovation and the Reinstatement of the Sunnah'. Izala was established in the late 1970s as an anti-Sufi movement, inspired by Wahhabi doctrine.

FIGURE 2   Bauchi and Gombe States and environs, with local government areas, main towns, and topographical features

cases cross-cut 'ethnic' boundaries (Adelberger and Kleinewillinghöfer 1992; Adelberger 2011). Christians form a majority in southern Gombe, but many areas – especially the major towns, such as Kaltungo, Billiri, Bambam and Talasse – are religiously plural. There were extensive population movements, from different directions, up to the Muri Mountains prior to the twentieth century, as people sought refuge from slave raiding. This was especially the case in the wake of the jihad launched by the Shehu Usman dan Fodio, which spread from Gobir, in north-west Nigeria, in 1804 (see Last 1967). The emirates at Bauchi, Muri, Adamawa and Gombe that were established during the jihad all plundered the region around the Muri Mountains for slaves (Adelberger 2011; Low 1972).

Although there is great ethno-linguistic diversity in southern Gombe, these are important shared historical experiences. Links between groups were shaped through exchange relations, kinship ties and adaptation to the mountainous environment (Adelberger and Kleinewillinghöfer 1992). This produced commonalities in some of the material culture (Adelberger 2011) and certain shared political aspirations, but, despite this, ethnic boundaries are still prominent, even if they have also been malleable. The small-scale societies in the Muri Mountains were not subjugated during the nineteenth century jihad, but the British colonial forces overwhelmed them in the early twentieth century and mounted punitive expeditions where there was resistance (Adelberger 2009). In the colonial period and subsequently, more of the lowlands were brought into agricultural production (Tiffen 1974). There were also several mission stations set up in southern Gombe and these gradually gained Christian converts. This was partly enabled through mission schooling, which, over time, meant that people from southern Gombe gained a lead in Western education. This advantage has been sustained over the rest of the state, although it is arguable whether this has been matched by a proportionate number of top bureaucratic positions.

The Gombe Emirate was established in the early nineteenth century by Buba Yero, who had the Fulani religious title of *modibbo* and whose campaigns extended throughout much of the Gongola Basin and up into Borno to the north and the Middle Benue to the south (Low 1972: 90–1). The fighting between Buba Yero's forces and Habe (non-Fulani) groups of the region, and Buba Yero's subsequent role as a flag-bearer in Shehu dan Fodio's jihad from 1804, had a lasting impact on inter-group relations and political development in the Gombe region. Buba Yero was born in the Shellen area (in what is now northern Adamawa) in about the 1760s; his paternal side were Fulani and his mother was a daughter of the chief of Shellen (Low 1972: 90). He travelled to further his Islamic studies and eventually came under the tutelage of Sheikh Usman dan Fodio at Degel, in Gobir. Buba Yero's campaigns began some years before the Shehu declared jihad in 1804 and are described by Low, who noted (1972: 91) that 'on completion of higher studies Buba resettled at Shellen, having been told [by the Shehu] to remain at peace with surrounding Habe communities of the Gongola Basin area. He disobeyed orders and attacked them on a wide front soon after.' With the outbreak of hostilities in Gobir and the spread of the conflict to other parts of the region (Last 1967), Buba Yero became the flag-bearer for the Gombe jihad and received orders from the Shehu (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1993; Low 1972). In the course of the campaign, a garrison was established at Dukku and an alliance forged between the Fulani and Bolewa populations of the area.[8] An emirate was then founded at Gombe Abba, about 8 miles west of Dukku, in *c*.1824, where it remained until its relocation to Gombe Doma in 1913. The present Gombe city, now an important commercial centre in northeast Nigeria, was established as a colonial settlement and became the Gombe

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[8]Fulfulde is the main lingua franca in Dukku today, although Hausa and Bole are also widely spoken. The Emir of Dukku identifies himself as Bolewa and speaks the Bole language. Interview with Alhaji Abdulkadiri Hamna El-Rashid, Emir of Dukku, and his aides, 24 February 2012. I was told that the Emir of Dukku was born in 1926 and became emir in 1964. He died on 24 December 2012 and was succeeded by his son.

divisional headquarters in 1919 (Abba 1985; Tiffen 1974), the headquarters having been temporarily based at the Fulani–Bolewa town of Nafada.[9] The Gombe Emirate grew in importance during the colonial period, as new territories within Gombe Division were placed under its oversight as part of the system of indirect rule. Since the year 2000 this process has been reversed, with the creation of new emirates and chiefdoms in Gombe State and a corresponding reduction in the size and authority of the Gombe Emirate. This has had some implications for inter-group relations in Gombe and has made most of the traditional rulers in the state clients of the governor, rather than subordinate to the Emir of Gombe.

In 1996, when Gombe State was created, there were six chiefs with staffs of office: the Emir of Gombe was the only first-class chief and his domain covered northern and central Gombe State. The other gazetted chiefdoms were all in Gombe South: the Mai Kaltungo was second class; and the Bala Waja, Mai Tangale, Nidu Grah Cham and Folo Dadiya were all third class.[10] Governor Hashidu (1999–2003), the first civilian governor of Gombe State, upgraded some seven districts and two village areas that were previously part of the Gombe Emirate to emirates in their own right.[11] The districts, now emirates, that were carved out were Yamaltu, Deba, Akko, Pindiga, Dukku, Nafada and Funakaye. The two village areas upgraded by Hashidu became the Gona Emirate (in Akko LGA). Only two districts were not upgraded: Kwami (Mallam Sidi) and Gombe town; these were left for the Emir of Gombe. In Gombe South, Hashidu upgraded the Mai Kaltungo to a first-class chief and all the third-class chiefs to second class, and he also created a new Tula chiefdom, which was also second class. In 2011, Hashidu's successor, Danjuma Goje (governor from 2003 to 2011 and now a senator), upgraded all eight of the new emirates and all six of the second-class chiefdoms in Gombe South to first-class status.[12]

Rather than serving as district heads under the Emir of Gombe, the traditional rulers of the new emirates were independent from Gombe Emirate; essentially, they are now directly answerable to the Gombe State government. The Emir of Gombe retained his position as chairman of the State Council of Emirs and Chiefs, but the hierarchies of the traditional leaders had otherwise been flattened. This generated some friction, as previously lowly chiefs were given the same rank as higher-status neighbours. Similarly, Kaltungo chiefdom, in southern Gombe State, lost influence as districts in Tangale-Waja were upgraded to first-class chiefs.

Does this matter? In a material sense, for the majority of people living in these areas, it probably makes little difference. But symbolically it does matter, as the political status of a community is given increased recognition if it has its own emirate or chiefdom. These are parallel structures to the three tiers of government

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[9]Author visit to the old West African Frontier Force military base and trading outpost at Nafada, and interviews with the Emir of Nafada, Alhaji Muhammed Dadum Hamza, and the Madakin Nafada (eighty-four years old), 27 February 2012. A local text is 'A Condensed History of Nafada', pp. 30–7 (n.d.).

[10]Interview with Alhaji Adamu Abubakar, the Folo Dadiya, Bambam, Balanga LGA, Gombe, 3 September 2012.

[11]Interview with Alhaji Muhammadu Dadun Hamza, the Emir of Nafada, Nafada, Gombe State, 27 February 2012.

[12]Aliyu Hamagam, 'Goje Upgrades 13 Traditional Rulers', *Daily Trust*, 27 January 2011.

FIGURE 3   People's Democratic Party election campaign poster, Nafada
(27 February 2012)

in Nigeria – federal, state and local – and those that are recognized by the state
receive a share of the local government subvention. They do not have any
formal political power, but they are important in regulating access to land and
in dispute resolution – between individuals, within households, and between com-
munities (Blench *et al.* 2006). As traditional leaders are close to the political elite,
they can also help to attract political patronage and development to their commu-
nities. The use of traditional institutions by Hashidu and Goje to build up their
networks of local political clients also gave renewed emphasis to the ethnic or
communal definition of boundaries. Where there are disagreements over access
to land, or where there is local demand for the upgrading of the status of their tra-
ditional institutions, ethnic discourses are often employed. However, the impor-
tant point about Gombe, when compared with Bauchi State, is that inter-ethnic
disputes tend to be about the delineation of community boundaries – as this deter-
mines ownership of farmland – and over the relative authority of different chiefs.
The disputes in Gombe South – unlike in Tafawa Balewa – are not about the
'ownership' of particular towns or chieftaincy stools.

Patron–client politics in Gombe has tended to reinforce local ethnicity, but it
has also been somewhat inclusive. The very explicit co-opting of emirs and
chiefs to establish political bases in the eleven local governments of Gombe
State shows how patronage networks have been built up by post-1999 civilian
administrations in the state. The need for party political structures and support
across the local governments has made it necessary to co-opt both Muslim and
Christian political clients into the system. This, we argue, has so far dampened
the degree of religious discord in Gombe State politics. This type of politics is
at least partly facilitated by the sociological characteristics of southern Gombe,

an important constituency that is also far ahead of the rest of the state education-
ally, and therefore people from the area have been prominent in the civil service as
well as in government. Gombe South is the most ethno-linguistically diverse part
of the state, but many kin groups are religiously mixed; along with the represen-
tation that Christians have in the state administration, this helps to prevent the
surfacing of sharp religious divisions. There are nonetheless some grievances
among the Christian minority, as discussed below.

The whittling down in size and influence of the Gombe Emirate – which now
essentially comprises only metropolitan Gombe – created more first-class chiefs,
especially Muslim ones in Gombe North and Gombe Central, but, as outlined
above, the same process also led to the upgrading of chiefdoms in Gombe
South. Christians are more numerous in southern Gombe, but of the six first-
class chiefs there, four are currently Muslim – the Mai Kaltungo, Folo Dadiya,
Mai Tula and Bala Waja – and two are Christian – the Mai Tangale in Billiri,
and the Nidu Grah Cham in Balanga LGA. This imbalance, with more
Muslim traditional rulers even in areas where Christians form the majority of
the population, is a legacy of the influence of the Gombe Emirate in appointing
chiefs, which saw Muslims being given more favour. It also reflects possible reli-
gious bias by the state governors, who have also affected the selection process.
The recent appointment of the Mai Tula is a case in point – he is a young man
and a Muslim from the 'ruling class'. Christians argue that Danjuma Goje, the
former governor, imposed him against the wishes of the Tula people, especially
the Christian Tula (who are the majority). Because the imposition came from
the top, they could not prevent it, but this now means he lacks popular support.[13]

The chieftaincy system in Gombe South is still dominated by Muslims in many
areas, except in Billiri and Cham LGAs, where the chiefs and most of the village
heads are Christian. The high ethno-linguistic diversity of southern Gombe State
and its mountainous terrain mean that there are also many small groups with their
own titled chiefs. There was a shift of people from the uplands into the lowland
plains of southern Gombe for farming during the course of the twentieth
century, after slave raiding had been ended; this partly accounts for some of the
land disputes between groups today, since many of the farming areas in Gombe
South were settled quite recently, by a heterogeneous population (Adelberger
et al. 1993). Discontent over representation in southern Gombe is largely internal
to the particular chiefdoms and local governments in question, even though the
state authorities can play a decisive role in the selection of chiefs. Chieftaincy dis-
putes in southern Gombe have tended not to lead to inter-religious violence. In the
case of groups in southern Gombe that are religiously mixed, Muslim chiefs are
still drawn from the local population and they can have support among
Christians, depending on their performance as leaders. Such chiefs also tend to
include Christian representatives on their councils, and when chieftaincy positions
become vacant it is likely that Christians would contest them. The creation of first-
class chiefs in southern Gombe has also given ethnic minorities more status and
representation, as well as reducing the size of the Mai Kaltungo's domain – his-
torically the most influential traditional leader in Gombe South, and a Muslim.
The promotion of the Mai Tangale and the Nidu Grah Cham to first-class

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[13]Interview with an informant in Gombe, 14 April 2014.

status puts them on the same level as the Mai Kaltungo. This would seem to indicate that the reasoning of the state government is based on political contingency and ethnic politics as much as on religion. The state government's policies won favour among the traditional rulers whose status was raised, but generated opposition from chiefs whose influence was reduced. The Mai Kaltungo complained that the Mai Tangale in Billiri used to be turbaned in Kaltungo, and that the Cham chiefdom had been carved out of Tangale-Waja.[14] Relations between the late Emir of Gombe[15] and Senator Goje, both Muslims, were reported to be sour.

Also crucial in Gombe is the fact that Christians have quite good representation in the state government and civil service and that they control the local governments where they are in the majority (in southern Gombe). Since 1999, the three state governors – Hashidu, Goje and Dankwambo – have all been Muslims, but the deputy governors in all of these administrations have been Christians. Of the three senators representing Gombe, those for Gombe North and Gombe Central are Muslims, while the senator for Gombe South is a Christian. Three of the four local government chairmen in Gombe South are Christian – in Billiri, Kaltungo and Shongom LGAs. At present, Balanga has a Muslim (Waja) LGA chairman, but this may also suggest that religion is not a major factor in local Balanga politics, because the Waja population is approximately two-thirds Christian and a third Muslim, and he would have needed more than one-third of LGA support to be elected.[16] As the Gombe State chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) put it: 'In Gombe South, being a Muslim or a Christian is a choice. You can choose your religion. For me to vote you into power as a Muslim, I am voting my brother into office.'[17]

In religiously mixed local governments in central and southern Gombe, there is also a tendency to ensure that appointments reflect the religious diversity – and thus there is a mix of Muslim and Christian commissioners and permanent secretaries in Gombe State, with Muslims in the majority due to their higher total population. Christian leaders themselves indicated that they were represented relative to their population, but some complained that there could be discrimination that made it harder for Christians to reach the top levels of government and the civil service.[18] There is also some religious activism in politics. The CAN chairman stated that they had to go to the previous Gombe State government to tell them to give Christians sufficient appointments. This occurred after Senator Wada died in office – he was a Christian, representing Gombe South constituency, and was replaced by a Muslim. Goje's initial choice for the subsequent senator was also a Muslim, against the wishes of many people in Gombe South,

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[14]Interview with Alhaji Saleh Muhammad, Mai Kaltungo, Kaltungo, Gombe State, 3 September 2012.

[15]The emir referred to here, Alhaji Shehu Abubakar, died in May 2014 after a long battle with cancer. He was succeeded by his second son, Abubakar Shehu Abubakar, in June 2014. Abubakar is reported to be a popular choice.

[16]Communication with Mr Bashiru Yusuf, resident in Gombe but from Balanga, 3 April 2014.

[17]Interview with Reverend Abare Kallah, Gombe State CAN chairman, Gombe city, 23 February 2012.

[18]Interview at the office of the Tangale Community Development Association, Billiri, 28 February 2012.

but this was 'amicably resolved' as a Christian was chosen eventually.[19] There is also a perception that resources are not allocated evenly, because governors have tended to locate investment in their own areas and there has not yet been a Christian governor. It is perhaps indicative of political confidence in Gombe South, but also of a sense of marginalization relative to central and northern Gombe, that people there are campaigning to have a People's Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial candidate – whether a Christian or a Muslim – from their zone in 2015.

The articulation of belonging and the nature of inter-communal disputes vary across the state. Blench *et al.* (2006: 39) mention conflicts in northern Gombe between different groups of nomadic pastoralists – Udawa and Fulani – which in 2003 required a military intervention. As has become common across the region, there are also disputes over access to land and water between pastoralists and farmers. The farmers we spoke with in northern Gombe said that desertification had become an acute problem for them, especially during the planting season, and Fulani pastoralists reported that the situation was pushing more pastoralists southwards on a permanent basis, for example from Sokoto and Yobe towards central Nigeria.[20] Population pressure, the cutting down of trees, and the cultivation of more land, including cattle routes – some of it with tractors – were the reasons given by another village elder for desert encroachment.[21]

The violent Islamist sect *Jama'at ahl al-sunna li'l-da'wa wa'l-jihad,*[22] popularly known by its nickname Boko Haram, has not gained popular support in Gombe. Even northern Gombe, which is close to areas of southern Borno and Yobe that have been affected very adversely by the insurgency, has so far remained relatively unscathed, although there are ominous signs that terrorist attacks are spreading and intensifying. There was an isolated attack on a Deeper Life church on the outskirts of Gombe city on 4 January 2012, suspected (but not confirmed) of having been carried out by Boko Haram, and an attack on a police station and prison on 24 February 2012.[23] There have also been periodic attacks on security personnel and some assassinations in 2012–14 of people accused of cooperating with the security forces or preaching in Gombe against the sect, but not on the large scale seen elsewhere in north-east Nigeria. Because Gombe borders Borno, Yobe and Adamawa but has seen much lower levels of violence, there has been an influx of thousands of internally displaced people into the state. There has been limited support for Boko Haram in Bauchi – the July 2009 insurrection started there and Bauchi has been attacked numerous times since then, but it is

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[19]Interview by the authors with Reverend Abare Kallah, Gombe State CAN chairman, Gombe city, 23 February 2012.

[20]Discussions in Hashidu, Dukku LGA, with Abubakar Adamu, the Hakimi of Hashidu; Mallam Yahaya Adamu Hashidu; Ahmadu Waziri Hashidu (a Fulani elder, about age eighty in 2012); and the Ardo, Muhammadu Hamza. Interviews, 25 February 2012.

[21]Interview with Muhammadu Hamasewu (aged about eighty-four), *Digachi* (village head) of Marewo, a Fulani village a few kilometres from Hashidu, 25 February 2012.

[22]'Association of the People of the Sunna for the Missionary Call and the Armed Struggle' (see Brigaglia 2012).

[23]The best single volume currently available on Boko Haram is Pérouse de Montclos (2014). For analyses of the origins of Boko Haram and the escalation of the insurgency, see Mohammed (2014) and Higazi (2013a). The 24 February 2012 attack on Gombe city is touched on in Higazi (2013b).

not currently a core stronghold of the sect, which has its main presence in Borno, Yobe and the north of Adamawa. In 2012, there was a series of attacks by suicide bombers driving vehicle-borne improvised explosives into churches in Bauchi city, claiming many lives. This increased suspicion between Christians and Muslims in Bauchi, but it did not lead to rioting, and such attacks have not recurred in the two years since then. This may be partly because churches in northern Nigeria have now greatly increased the security around their perimeters, making it far more difficult for vehicles to get near church buildings. But the sect did extend its presence into some parts of northern Bauchi State, with reports of militant bases in different locations of the savannah forests of Darazo, Ningi and Ganjuwa LGAs, and open preaching of the sect's doctrine in some of the nearby villages.[24] Boko Haram appears to have been forced out of its forest redoubts in Bauchi – at least from Balmo forest, in Darazo LGA – in July 2014, and earlier in the year from Azare town (which they subsequently bombed twice, in November 2014, probably in retaliation), by local people and the military.[25]

The situation is far from stable and the risk of more frequent attacks in Gombe and Bauchi has probably increased with Boko Haram's consolidation of its area of control in parts of Borno, Yobe and northern Adamawa. On 31 October 2014, a bomb blast struck Gombe Line Motor Park, in Gombe metropolis, reportedly killing at least twenty-four people.[26] On 4 November 2014, Boko Haram attacked targets in Nafada – the first such attack on the town, despite its proximity to Yobe and Borno. They destroyed the police station, a military checkpoint and the PDP office, and they assassinated a prominent Muslim cleric and four of his students.[27] At least some of the attackers seem to be coming in from outside Gombe State, as the activities of the sect have been more effectively suppressed in both Gombe and Bauchi than in the far north-eastern states.[28]

Instances of violent conflict in southern Gombe have been more along ethnic lines, mainly involving disputes over farmland. One of the main, intermittent conflicts is between the people of Billiri and Kaltungo. This conflict first escalated

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[24]Ahmed Mohammed, 'Boko Haram: fighter jets raid Bauchi forests', *Daily Trust*, 23 May 2014.

[25]Ronald Mutum, 'Police arrest Boko Haram "chief-butcher" after Balmo forest raid', *Daily Trust*, 14 July 2014. The information on Azare comes from two personal contacts who are from there but currently live in Jos and Bauchi respectively.

[26]See also '24 killed in Gombe bomb blast', *Weekend Trust*, 1 November 2014, <http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/weekly/index.php/top-stories/18072-24-killed-in-gombe-bomb-blast>; 'Boko Haram on rampage in Gombe, attacks police station', *Premium Times*, 4 November 2014, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/170570-boko-haram-on-rampage-in-gombe-attacks-police-station.html>.

[27]Phone conversation with the Emir of Nafada, Alhaji Muhammed Dadum Hamza, 27 November 2014. See also 'Boko Haram on rampage in Gombe, attacks police station', *Premium Times*, 4 November 2014.

[28]The government destroyed the mosques associated with Boko Haram in Bauchi and Gombe states – as elsewhere – in the military/police crackdown on the sect in July 2009, during which the original leader of Boko Haram, Muhammad Yusuf, was killed in Maiduguri. In July 2011, after Boko Haram re-emerged and as its terrorist campaign was becoming increasingly violent, Governor Yuguda of Bauchi, Governor Goje of Gombe and former Governor Sheriff of Borno published written letters apologizing for the destruction of Boko Haram's mosques two years earlier. This attempt at appeasement failed, as the sect rejected their apologies and continued its violent struggle.

into violence in November 1990 and has recurred periodically since then. As Tangale representatives in Billiri put it:

> The unfortunate part of the story is that the people in Kaltungo are Tangales like us, just dialectical differences, but we have carried enmity we had with each other since before colonial times to today, into modern times – in terms of sharing of government resources. And there are people who try in instigating this division between us, because they know that if we unite ourselves we would be a very strong political force.[29]

The claim of instigation refers to an allegation that support is given to the Mai Kaltungo, a Muslim chief, by the Gombe Emirate and the state government in order to divide the Tangale, who are approximately 80 per cent Christian and 20 per cent Muslim.[30] The Tangale Community Development Association also claims that the dispute has an important political dimension dating back to 1991, when they were within the same LGA:

> The Kaltungo people claim authority over the Tangale people; they are highly placed in government and whenever the Billiri people disagreed, the government would always rule in their favour. The Tangale people in Billiri LGA were able to align very well with those in Tula. So they were seven wards against three in Kaltungo, in which case they [Kaltungo] would not win the chairmanship. So they used the farmland as an excuse to start shooting our people and create a crisis.[31]

This view is rejected in Kaltungo, where it is claimed that they are the ones who were marginalized due to the links between Goje – when he was governor – and Billiri:

> Billiri people were settled around Kumo, on the western side, but displaced by Fulanis [in the precolonial period]. Now Billiri people are trying to claim Kaltungo land, especially farmland, but they don't even have a presence there. The Area Command was forcefully taken to Billiri from Kaltungo, because Kaltungo did not have good relations with Goje; the Civil Defence was also transferred. Furthermore, Tula, Billiri and Cham got chiefdoms from Kaltungo.[32]

This demonstrates very clearly the differences in perspective between the two sides, but also that disputes in Gombe South cannot easily be boiled down to religious differences between Muslims and Christians. In that regard, the argument of Johannes Harnischfeger (2004) that such struggles are instigated by Muslims in order to take control of territory and establish shari'a looks far-fetched and unrealistic. Even the small-scale conflicts that the shari'a controversy generated in southern Gombe in around 2000 largely subsided after the then governor,

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[29]Interview at the office of the Tangale Community Development Association, Billiri, 28 February 2012.
[30]According to informants in Billiri and Kaltungo.
[31]Interview at the office of the Tangale Community Development Association, Billiri, 28 February 2012.
[32]Interview with Alhaji Saleh Muhammad, Mai Kaltungo, Kaltungo, Gombe State, 3 September 2012.

Danjuma Goje, refused to implement the shari'a criminal code.[33] Moreover, Harnischfeger ignores cross-cutting ties and accommodations between Muslims and Christians in Gombe. This does not mean that religious tensions do not arise periodically, but the general situation in Gombe South and Gombe Central is less tense than is conveyed by his analysis, which implies zero-sum competition between Islam and Christianity.

THE MANUFACTURE OF DIFFERENCE IN BAUCHI STATE

This section of the paper examines the 'manufacturing and management of difference' in Bauchi State, and attempts to understand how it feeds into the politics of exclusion and inclusion, and the repeated outbreaks of violence. The historical experiences and discourses of marginalization have been used and deployed as a justification for violence – as a means of response, which in turn has further entrenched social divides. The case of Tafawa Balewa demonstrates how cultural and traditional practices that hitherto had other roots and purposes are mobilized in new repertoires of identity and belonging, and serve as reference points for the creation and maintenance of boundaries. The Bauchi case also shows how political authorities can exacerbate local feuds, and how the mismanagement of such local feuds can in turn destabilize a wider political field.

Bauchi town was founded in 1809 by Yakubu, one of the flag-bearers of the Sokoto jihad and subsequently Bauchi Emirate's first emir (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1993; Temple 1919). Yakubu and his successors waged war on non-Muslim groups and raided them, as far west as Lafia, and expanded the emirate's area of influence.[34] With the advent of colonial rule, a conquest that effectively occurred in the first decade of the twentieth century, Bauchi became an important urban centre as the administrative capital of Bauchi Province, which was established in 1914. But even prior to the British conquest, and despite being on the periphery of the Sokoto Caliphate, Bauchi was of strategic importance. This was because it was situated on the trade routes across the caliphate, linking emirates to the north and west, such as Kano and Zaria, with Bauchi's eastern neighbours, Gombe, Fombina, Muri and the salt regions of the Benue Valley. As regards its religious geography, Bauchi is predominantly Muslim; however, there is a substantial Christian minority, particularly in Bauchi city and southern areas of the state, as the latter was evangelized by the Sudan United Mission (SUM).

In Bauchi State, religion and ethnicity, to some extent, are the most important identity markers that are deployed by state government officials, groups and individuals. There is considerable discontent, with claims of political and economic exclusion, among Christians – particularly in southern Bauchi State. The Zaar

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[33]The only north-eastern state that implemented part of the shari'a criminal code after 1999 was Bauchi. None of the others – Gombe, Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Taraba – have implemented it.

[34]'History of the Bauchi Emirs', translated from the manuscript of Mallam Mustapha, tutor to the sons of Yakubu, first Emir of Bauchi (1805–45), by A. H. Groom, Assistant Resident. A copy of the translation is in our possession but it has no date. However, the translation is also cited by Hogben and Kirk-Greene (1993: 459), who note that it is quoted in 'A. Schultze, *Das Sultanat von Bornu*, and again in the manuscript notes on Bauchi Emirate compiled by the Hon. Oliver Howard, Resident, *c*.1908'. Groom's translation almost certainly dates from between 1903 and 1908.

FIGURE 4   The Emir of Bauchi's palace in Bauchi city, dated 1891 (4 December 2013)

(also known as Sayawa) are the largest Christian minority in Bauchi State and their population is concentrated in Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro LGAs, bordering Plateau State. Tafawa Balewa means 'black stone' in Fulfulde (Clark 1991), in reference to the imposing rock located on the southern edge of the town. The Zaar refer to the town as Puji, which in Zaar also denotes a black stone.[35] Zaar leaders, through such organizations as the Sayawa Council of Elders and Traditional Rulers, accuse the Bauchi State government of religious discrimination against Christians.[36] Party affiliations and patronage politics constitute another set of dynamics that foster inclusion and exclusion. Since 1999, when Nigeria returned to civilian rule, political party affiliation has re-emerged as a key platform for building patron–client relationships. And so, while religion and ethnicity are key markers of identity, class and patronage politics are also significant. The tendencies that drive the patterns of inclusion and exclusion and how groups and individuals respond are determined by political affiliation and patron–client ties, and these do not always run along religious or ethnic lines; in other words, religious and ethnic group interests are not uniform. While discourses of collective group exclusion are expressed in ethnic and religious terms, the

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[35]Interview with I. Istifanus, Tafawa Balewa LGA CAN chairman, Tafawa Balewa town, 26 August 2012. Also see Dr Bukata Ryaghan Adamu, 22 April 1991, 'Crisis in Tafawa Balewa: remote and immediate causes. A submission to the Bauchi Disturbances Judicial Commission of Inquiry'.

[36]Aliyu Dadi, 'The historical background of the Sayawa (Zaar) in Bauchi State'. Also interview with I. Istifanus, Tafawa Balewa LGA CAN chairman, Tafawa Balewa Town, 26 August 2012.

methods, patterns and strategies for confronting, contesting and responding to what is considered to be 'exclusion' are varied.

Christians in Bauchi State, though a minority in the population, had earlier access to Western education. Most of the earlier generations of educated Sayawa were trained at the mission-owned Gindiri schools in neighbouring Plateau State, with a substantial number proceeding to acquire tertiary education. This made them useful for administrative civil service jobs and positions, but, over time, as the level of education among Muslims increased, it became more difficult for Sayawa to still get the same level of employment. The Sayawa accuse the state government of religious bias and discrimination in appointments and promotions, and of giving preferential treatment to less qualified Muslims. This, they argue, has become especially acute under the present administration of Governor Isa Yuguda. The Christian leaders also accuse Yuguda of bias in the allocation of physical infrastructure and social services, claiming that he has neglected Christian areas in Bauchi city and in Tafawa Balewa.[37]

Since the transition to civilian rule in 1999, there have been two elected governors in Bauchi State: Ahmadu Muazu (1999–2007) and Isa Yuguda (2007–15). Tafawa Balewa has continued to be the main flashpoint for collective violence between Muslims and Christians in Bauchi State, and at times violence has spilled over from there to other parts of the state, including Bauchi city (as in 1991). There was also violence in Tafawa Balewa in 1995, and there was a major outbreak of violence in Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro LGAs in June 2001 – two years into the civilian administration of Governor Ahmadu Muazu. The state government instituted the Justice Bala Umar Commission of Inquiry (2001). As with the 1991 Bauchi disturbances Judicial Commission of Inquiry and with similar commissions in other Nigerian states, it was not a tribunal or court, and had no powers to convict.

The Tafawa Balewa conflict

Bauchi State was widely regarded as peaceful until the first major riot in Bauchi city in 1991. The recurring violence in Bauchi is largely connected to the historical and ongoing contest for control of Tafawa Balewa town, a conflict that on several occasions has spread out of Tafawa Balewa to other parts of the state.[38] There are some exceptions to this pattern, including the rioting that occurred across northern Nigeria in the wake of the 2011 presidential elections, which also affected Bauchi, and periodic attacks since 2009 by Boko Haram, but the Tafawa Balewa conflict predates this more recent instability.

While there are multiple ethnic groups residing in southern Bauchi, the main groups in the conflict are the Hausa and Fulani, who are largely Muslim, against the Sayawa (Zaar) group, who are predominantly Christian but with some adherents of traditional religion. There is no current demographic data to

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[37]Interview with N. Turbe and L. Gizo, CAN officials, Bauchi State, Bauchi city, 30 August 2012.

[38]The focus of this paper is not on the manifestations of violence, rather we are more interested in the historical processes of how group identities have been constructed and employed to include and exclude. It is, however, worth mentioning that the first of these violent outbreaks occurred in 1959; other episodes followed in 1977, 1991, 1995, 2001, 2011 and 2012.

show the relative size of each ethnic group in Tafawa Balewa, but in Tafawa
Balewa LGA as a whole there are twenty electoral wards. Three are controlled
by Zaar Christians in Tafawa Balewa town, while seventeen wards – mainly in
the villages – are controlled by Muslims (Hausa, Jarawa and Fulani).

The term 'Sayawa' is a nickname given to the Zaar by the Hausa (Caron 2005);
their self-ascribed ethnonym is Zaar. In everyday use they also refer to themselves
as Sayawa, and introduce themselves as *basayi*.[39] The Sayawa are predominantly
Christian, conversion having begun in the 1920s with evangelization by the
Cambridge University Missionary Society (a branch of the Church Missionary
Society) and subsequently the SUM (Dauda 1999; CAPRO Research Office
1995). They had already established mission stations at Panyam and Kabwir
(on the Jos Plateau, among the Mwaghuval and Ngas respectively) as early as
1907 (Dauda 1999). Proselytization on the plains of south-west Bauchi among
the Zaar and other non-Muslim groups (see CAPRO Research Office 1995) was
initially therefore an extension of the mission on the high plateau. These were
the forebears of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), now the main
Christian denomination in Tafawa Balewa.

In Sayawa consciousness, the conflict and violence are driven by relationships
on three different levels: (1) the historical relationship between Sayawa and the
Bauchi Emirate; (2) the Sayawa relationship with the Bauchi state government;
and (3) the Sayawa relationship with Muslims[40] in Tafawa Balewa.[41]

In recent times, the first serious instance of collective violence in Tafawa Balewa
occurred in April 1991. There were earlier riots in 1959 and 1977, but these were
small in scale. In 1991 and 1995, after fighting broke out in Tafawa Balewa, rioting
spread across Bauchi State – including to the more populated urban and peri-
urban areas of Bauchi metropolis, and to other local government headquarters
across the state. This wider conflagration was triggered by the carrying of the
bodies of Muslims killed in Tafawa Balewa into Bauchi city. In 2001, there was
another riot in Tafawa Balewa, following protests against the state government's
plan to introduce the shari'a criminal code in Bauchi State. After 2001, there was
no large-scale violence until 2011, but the underlying grievances were not resolved.
In 2011, mass violence in Tafawa Balewa recurred and spread out of the town and
into the surrounding rural areas. Prior to 2011, it was mainly urban areas that
were affected by rioting; subsequently, violence has continued to occur both in
the town and in the rural areas of Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro LGAs. In
Tafawa Balewa town, the clashes are principally between the Sayawa and
Hausa, but in the rural areas they are mainly between Sayawa farmers and
Fulani pastoralists. The Sayawa argument for attacking the Fulani is that when

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[39]A Sayawa person in the singular is colloquially referred to as *basayi*.
[40]Muslims in Tafawa Balewa are mixed, comprising Kanuri, Fulani, Jarawa, Hausa and other
ethnicities. However, Hausa ethnicity is the most prominent because of the cultural dominance of
the Hausa population and the assimilation of some of the other groups into Hausa customs and
language. This is not unique to Tafawa Balewa – it is a common trend among Muslims (and many
non-Muslim groups) across northern Nigeria. In parts of north-east and north-central Nigeria,
non-Hausa people are in the majority and this is where local languages and customs other than
Hausa have been sustained to a greater extent (especially, though not exclusively, in rural areas).
[41]Interview with E. Simon, member of Zaar Council of Elders, Tafawa Balewa town, 26 August
2012.

violence breaks out in Tafawa Balewa town, the Fulani from the villages join the Hausa to fight the Sayawa.[42] The Fulani argue that, although there is a tendency to mobilize along religious lines, they have responded only in self-defence and have never initiated an attack against the Sayawa.[43]

There are two major conflicting historical narratives in Tafawa Balewa. The Sayawa narrative makes three main claims. The first is that of first arrival to the area: the Sayawa claim that they were the first to settle in Tafawa Balewa, and their narrative traces Sayawa migration from the Borno area southwards.[44] They assert that, by 1345,[45] they were already settled in the area, but note that they moved down to the present settlements from the hills only after agreeing peace treaties with the Bauchi Emirate on behalf of the Sokoto Caliphate.[46] The second key narrative in the Sayawa account is the subsequent abandonment of the terms of the peace treaty by Yakubu's successors. This established a very hostile relationship between the Sayawa and the Bauchi Emirate: there are accounts of enslavement and oppression of the Sayawa community by the emirate during this period (see also Blench *et al.* 2006).[47] These discourses are still very important in Sayawa consciousness. The third key element of the Sayawa narrative is the long drawn-out claim for a Zaar chiefdom. The Sayawa refer to the earliest protests and demands for an indigenous Sayawa chief as being the Tafawa Balewa riots of February 1959, which culminated in the appointment of Aliyu Dadi, a Zaar Christian, as district head of the then Lere District, bestowed with the title *Dalhatun Bauchi*. In 1976, Dadi was removed and a new *dalhatu* was installed, this time a Zaar Muslim, Mallam Haruna Yakubu.[48] Shortly afterwards, Lere District was split up, creating Bogoro District, which is predominantly Zaar Christian in composition. Mallam Yakubu relocated to Bogoro District and the new district head of Lere, Mallam Ajiya, was a Hausa Muslim. The Sayawa protested and demanded the reversal of the changes creating the new district. Things got out of hand, and Mallam Ajiya was lynched by suspected Sayawa militants; this was followed by riots. The chiefdom the Sayawa are still demanding would cover the same area that the two Sayawa district heads oversaw as the delineated territory of the chiefdom.[49]

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[42]*Ibid.*

[43]Interviews with I. Istifanus, Tafawa Balewa LGA CAN chairman, and with representatives of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, Tafawa Balewa and Bauchi, August 2012.

[44]Aliyu Dadi, 'The historical background of the Sayawa (Zaar) in Bauchi State'. Also interview with I. Istifanus, Tafawa Balewa LGA CAN chairman, Tafawa Balewa town, 26 August 2012.

[45]This is disputed, however, particularly by the Hausa Muslims displaced from Tafawa Balewa. This was made clear to us in the interview with D. Musa, Sarkin Malamai, Tafawa Balewa, Bauchi city, 30 August 2012.

[46]Aliyu Dadi, 'The Historical Background of the Sayawa (Zaar) in Bauchi State'. Also interview with I. Istifanus, Tafawa Balewa LGA CAN chairman, Tafawa Balewa town, 26 August 2012.

[47]Interview with E. Simon, member of Zaar Council of Elders, Tafawa Balewa town, 26 August 2012.

[48]Aliyu Dadi, 'The historical background of the Sayawa (Zaar) in Bauchi State'. Also interview with I. Istifanus, Tafawa Balewa LGA CAN chairman, Tafawa Balewa town, 26 August 2012.

[49]Interview with A. Alkali, former chairman of Tafawa Balewa LGA, Bauchi city, 29 August 2012.

The Fulani/Hausa narrative largely relies on colonial archival sources and counters the Sayawa narrative on the key issues referred to above. Muslims in Bauchi argue that Tafawa Balewa was founded as a Fulani settlement, and that the next inhabitants to arrive there were Hausa, Jarawa, and then Sayawa. As mentioned above, the name 'Tafawa Balewa' is indeed Fulfulde and means 'black rock', but the Zaar have their own name for the town, Puji, which has the same meaning; this makes it difficult to determine who arrived first solely from the name of the town. The Hausa argue that the first colonial district head, Ajiya Attahiru, although a Fulani appointed from Bauchi, was not the founder of the town. When he arrived from Bauchi in 1906, he met Fulani, Kanuri, Hausa, Jarawa and Ngas who were already settled in the area.[50] Furthermore, the nomadic culture of the Fulani pastoralists allowed other groups, such as the Kanuri, to participate in local traditional leadership, providing several village and ward heads. The Hausa leaders of Tafawa Balewa also cite the agitations in the 1950s by northern Nigerian minorities for the creation of a Middle Belt region as a major influence on what they refer to as Sayawa (Zaar) recalcitrance.[51] The United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), a party of non-Muslim minorities in the former Northern Region led by missionary-educated Christian elites, argued that the Hausa/Fulani had dominated, exploited and marginalized minority groups (Logams 2004).[52] The UMBC manifesto was built on a quest to liberate the ethnic minorities of Northern Nigeria from rule by the Muslim emirates. The Zaar have remained more culturally and politically oriented towards non-Muslim ethnic groups in Plateau State and southern Kaduna than towards the Bauchi or Dass emirates. Some of the Zaar political elite are agitating for the creation of a Lowland State, in conjunction with groups from southern Plateau State, which would encompass southern Bauchi and southern Plateau.[53]

The scale of violence in Tafawa Balewa has escalated substantially since the first riot there in 1959, but, when they occur, riots tend to last for just a day, or sometimes a few days. Violent conflict interrupts longer periods of peace, although political tensions and grievances relating to the issues driving the conflict are more constant. Nonetheless, rioting since the 1990s has been highly destructive, resulting in hundreds of deaths and having a profound effect on the social fabric of Tafawa Balewa. All the Muslims were driven out of the town in both 1991 and 2011, and they had still not returned to live in Tafawa Balewa by 2014, although some are now trading there again. The violence since 2011 has also been more protracted, due to its extension into the rural areas. As well as the insecurity in the villages, there have been numerous sporadic shootings and some larger attacks on the town (often on the edge of town, at night) and ambushes on the road to Bauchi.

The Sayawa also accuse the Bauchi state government of relocating social amenities away from Tafawa Balewa town.[54] Tafawa Balewa was stripped of its status

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[50]Interview with D. Musa, Sarkin Malamai, Tafawa Balewa, Bauchi city, 30 August 2012.
[51]*Ibid.*
[52]See footnote 5 above.
[53]William Audu Wohyit and Chief Nanyah A. Daman, 'Memoranda on the Creation of Lowland State out of Plateau and Bauchi States', Newsgate Communications Ltd, Jos, 17 June 2012.
[54]Interview with E. Simon, member of Zaar Council of Elders, Tafawa Balewa town, 26 August 2012.

as local government headquarters; this was relocated to Bula, the main centre of the Hausa Muslim district of Bununu. Tafawa Balewa District headquarters was also transferred to the village of Zwall. In 2011, passing the bill that authorized the relocation, the Bauchi State House of Assembly (state legislature) referred to constant security breaches.[55] The police divisional headquarters has also been relocated from Tafawa Balewa to Bununu. Sayawa leaders showed us secondary schools that had been closed since the return to violence in 2011; the state government attributes the closures to the breakdown in security in Tafawa Balewa, but the Sayawa are adamant that they are part of a state plan to deprive them of social services. The impact of the crisis on everyday livelihoods, businesses, economic activities, education and healthcare services has been very profound.

In sum, the Tafawa Balewa conflict is largely defined by two key factors: the first is the historical evolution of the relationship between the Sayawa and the Bauchi Emirate, a relationship the Sayawa believe has subjected them to second-class citizenship status. There are narratives that recount subordination during the colonial period when non-Muslim groups such as the Sayawa were administered from Bauchi Emirate as part of the system of indirect rule. Combined with slave raiding in the precolonial period, this is an important historical source of grievance. The second issue revolves around a contest over indigeneity, autochthony and the founding of Tafawa Balewa. This dispute manifests itself in different ways, but fundamentally it is about which group controls the town and its rural hinterland. The Sayawa are agitating for a chiefdom with a territorial delineation that would include Tafawa Balewa town as its headquarters, which would carve Tafawa Balewa out from Bauchi Emirate. This is perhaps the most toxic and intractable issue, as the Fulani side claim that they founded the town. Both sides – Sayawa and Hausa/Fulani – seem unwilling to shift their position on the matter. There were also sharp disagreements over the timing of the weekly market day. Succumbing to pressure from the Sayawa Christian community, the local authorities changed the market day from Sunday to Friday. When the Muslims protested, the market day was then changed from Friday to Thursday. There were also feuds relating to practices in the main abattoir in Tafawa Balewa town, as the Sayawa Christians were no longer keen to allow Hausa butchers the exclusive right to slaughter animals.[56] The Muslims in Tafawa Balewa wanted to continue with the Islamic traditions governing the abattoir. This became a source of continuing tension until a separate abattoir was built for the Christians after the 1991 riot.[57]

Several commissions of inquiry were set up in the wake of rioting in Tafawa Balewa. After the April 1991 violence, the then military administration constituted the Babalakin Commission of Inquiry.[58] The commission recommended

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[55]Nigerian newspapers carried the story of Yahaya Miya, speaker in the Bauchi State House of Assembly, making this point at the foundation-laying ceremony of the new local government secretariat in Bununu on 28 June 2013. See Angabus Pwanagba, 'Relocation of Tafawa Balewa headquarters was done out of Yuguda's ill-will – ZAAR chiefdom', *Daily Post*, 28 June 2013, <http://dailypost.ng/2013/06/28/relocation-of-tafawa-balewa-headquarters-was-done-out-of-yugudas-ill-will-zaar-chiefdom>.

[56]This was and still is the practice in most urban centres in northern Nigeria.

[57]Interview with A. Alkali, former chairman of Tafawa Balewa LGA, Bauchi city, 29 August 2012.

[58]Justice Babalakin Commission of Inquiry (1991).

the dissolution of the local government council executive, payment of compensation to victims, prosecution of suspects, the building of separate abattoirs for Christians and Muslims, the rebuilding of the destroyed town market, and the creation of a Tafawa Balewa chiefdom.[59] All the recommendations were implemented, with two exceptions: a Sayawa chiefdom was not created, and, more importantly, and as in most other cases of communal violence in Nigeria, the perpetrators were not prosecuted.

The refusal of the government to implement the main recommendations of the commissions of inquiry meant that the issues fuelling violence in Tafawa Balewa, and by extension Bauchi State, still lingered. After the riots of February 2011, Governor Isa Yuguda set up a committee to review the reports of the panels and commissions of inquiry that had been established following previous episodes of violence in the state, harmonize their findings and recommendations, and advise government appropriately.

The manner and patterns by which governors and state officials exercise power are undoubtedly very critical in shaping inter-group relations. The administrations of Governors Muazu and Yuguda appear to have adopted different policies and styles of administration in their handling of the Tafawa Balewa conflict. On the Sayawa side, it appears that they believe that they got a better deal during the Muazu administration,[60] despite the fact that it was Yuguda who finally granted their wish for a chiefdom, although he did not grant the Sayawa wish to have Tafawa Balewa town as their headquarters. In contrast, it seems that Muazu's tactic was to implement development projects on both sides but not necessarily to address the lingering and more intractable political disputes. While this ushered in a period of relative peace – there were no major outbreaks of violence during his tenure – the conflict remained unresolved. Yuguda, on the other hand, having been elected on an opposition ticket in May 2007 with a promise to do better than Muazu, and with a commitment to resolve the conflict, has ended up presiding over some of the worst episodes of collective violence in Tafawa Balewa. The Sayawa regard Yuguda as an agent of the Bauchi Emirate and accuse him of repression.[61] Dialogue between the Sayawa and the Bauchi State government increased in 2014, indicating some improvement in relations, even though they have still not resolved the key points of disagreement over Tafawa Balewa.[62]

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[59]*Ibid.*

[60]In interviews we conducted with several Zaar leaders, the point was repeatedly made that, because he was from Tafawa Balewa LGA, Muazu was keen not to annoy either side.

[61]It must be pointed out that Muslim leaders we interviewed also made the point that Ahmad Muazu was a better governor than Isa Yuguda, even managing the Tafawa Balewa situation better than Yuguda. As state governor, Yuguda was influential in the choice of the current emir. He is hardly an agent of the emirate, even though they may have many common interests.

[62]In March 2014, the Council of Elders, led by the Gun Zaar (Chief of Zaar) paid a visit to the state governor, Isa Yuguda. This was at the request of the governor, with the ostensible aim of initiating a process of reconciliation between the government and the Zaar community. The Zaar accepted the chiefdom the governor had created in June 2011, which at the time had been rejected because its headquarters was gazetted as being at Zwall, not at Tafawa Balewa as the Zaar had wished. The Zaar are still insisting that the headquarters must be at Tafawa Balewa and the state government does not seem willing to concede this, but from what we gather, the dialogue is continuing.

FIGURE 5   Zaar cultural festival, Tafawa Balewa, where a Gung Zaar (paramount chief) was 'installed', but without being gazetted and without agreement from the Bauchi Emirate (2 November 2013)

The Sayawa are convinced that their struggle represents a historic fight against exclusion based on local forms of religious and ethnic belonging. Clearly, there are different ways in which actors within ethnic and religious groups contest, dispute and fight actual and perceived notions of exclusion. Moderate actors may be keen to engage, talk and negotiate, but when circumstances do not change and the initiative is taken over by individuals we may regard as hardliners, it becomes harder to find common ground, and the means of contesting and fighting exclusion change, precipitating violence. In past decades, the historical agitations of the Sayawa have not received the necessary attention from the Bauchi Emirate or from successive state administrations. The current Sayawa leadership, under the auspices of the Sayawa Council of Elders and Traditional Rulers, shows little willingness to shift ground and they readily use the historical narrative of discontent, perceived and actual, to rally support.

Religious and ethnic identities are used to create difference, to exclude and to oppress. This difference was created, constructed and sustained by a historical relationship between the Bauchi Emirate, the Fulani and Hausa Muslims of Tafawa Balewa, and the Sayawa. In interviews with Hausa Muslim leaders of Tafawa Balewa there were repeated references to the Sayawa as mountain peoples who were convinced to come down to the plains through the luxury of salt. A Hausa Muslim leader quipped that the 'Sayawa were not used to civilized life – we clothed them, we brought them down from the mountains. They were savages and their quest for land ownership takes us back to the dark ages.'[63]

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[63]Interview with D. Musa, Sarkin Malamai, Tafawa Balewa, Bauchi city, 30 August 2012.

These discourses are successfully used by Sayawa hardliners to rally support, and it is these hardliners who drive Sayawa opinion, who entrench difference, and who promote the idea of an exclusive Sayawa chiefdom to be headquartered in Tafawa Balewa. Moreover, by engaging in violent conflict and expelling the Hausa from Tafawa Balewa, the Sayawa hardliners have earned the most important right to legitimacy; the right that comes from defending the community in times of collective violence and danger. But the Hausa population that was driven out of Tafawa Balewa tends to view its displacement as an act of aggression by the Sayawa, not self-defence.[64]

The assertions of traditional and cultural suzerainty over Tafawa Balewa are weaved into competing discourses of autochthony. Geschiere (2009) reminds us that autochthony as 'belonging' can have varied meanings among different groups, even when these groups reside within the same territory. For some groups, the claim to autochthony is based on early settlement, for others they are autochthonous because of conquest, and yet other groups make claim to being autochthonous on the basis of having lived in an area for a given period of time and over several generations. In any case, it is clear within the communities we have studied that autochthony is a relational term, and is used in a if possible break as socio-political context to include but also to exclude. Appadurai (1981) shows how historical narratives of the past can be mobilized for political and cultural projects in the present. The past, he argues, is a 'scarce resource', because cultural understandings of history may differ, records may be thin on the ground, and one particular interpretation of the past or of oral history – such as by one clan or ethnic group – may be challenged by another.

CONCLUSION

One of the recurring contextual features of the Nigerian landscape is, in addition to gender, class or generational identity, the centrality of religion and ethnicity for drawing boundaries of belonging and creating social difference. Also important is the fact that across the thirty-six states of the federation, local arrangements deployed by successive administrations for managing competing group interests have varied, as have the outcomes of such diverse governance practices. In this paper, we have explored the variations at the top but equally from below in the local politics of inclusion and exclusion. To do this, we focused our attention on the conterminous north-east Nigerian states of Bauchi and Gombe.

Why, despite Bauchi and Gombe states having certain common features, such as ethnic and religious pluralism – although Gombe is far more ethno-linguistically diverse than Bauchi – have they experienced different levels of conflict? Relying on empirical data generated from several periods of fieldwork in the two states, we have shown how religious difference does not always create fixed social boundaries. As we observed in Gombe, it can also weaken certain forms of identity politics. Here, positive interaction is deepened through bonds of friendship and intermarriage, and kinship ties among multi-religious families also contribute to

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[64]*Ibid.*

de-emphasizing the manipulative capacity of religion as a tool of mobilization. The social ties between ethno-linguistic groups consequently also reduce the potential for inter-religious violence, even where a local politics of belonging produces conflicts along farm boundaries and sometimes between villages. In contrast, the politics of identity and belonging in Bauchi created the conditions that have led to a violent escalation of a dispute over the 'ownership' of Tafawa Balewa town in southern Bauchi, and mass violence between Muslims and Christians. In neighbouring Gombe, there are disputes over farmland and territorial boundaries, but one can say that this is a common feature of many mixed communities in Nigeria. Moreover, the creation of new emirates and chiefdoms in Gombe State appears to have co-opted most of the major ethnic groupings into patron–client relations with the state government. This has not occurred in Tafawa Balewa in Bauchi because the Fulani and Sayawa cannot agree on the location of the headquarters of a potential chiefdom, nor on 'ownership' or control of the town.

Another key difference observable on the ground is in the perceptions and actual narratives of political exclusion. Here, the practice of governing, or the lack of it, has an impact on social cohesion. In Bauchi State, minority group narratives of not being given a fair share of the proceeds of the prebendal process provided a sufficient incentive to challenge the status quo. However, in Gombe, the co-opting of minority elites into the state's patronage circles seems to have helped maintain a degree of stability, even though there are still complaints about the lack of political accountability and fair elections. In Gombe, minority groups have benefited from the state government's patronage through the granting of chiefdoms; this is seen as being bestowed with independence of sorts, and there are references to being 'emancipated'. An important component of the Tafawa Balewa conflict is the minority group's demand for an independent chiefdom or a traditional ruler of their own. As the changing traditional rulership landscape in Gombe indicates, the political standing of a community is given increased recognition if it has its own emirate or chiefdom.

While traditional and customary rulers have no constitutional role in Nigerian governance, their importance and influence are clear to see. Traditional rulers, by virtue of occupying an important bridge between state and society, emerge as critical and symbolic figures for the groups and territories they represent. As one of our informants in Tafawa Balewa noted: 'Royal fathers give us a sense of belonging; what kind of people are we without a chief?' 'Belonging' is the crux of the matter: the extent to which a social group feels and experiences a sense of existence, recognition, respect and importance. It is not enough for a community to receive amenities or political patronage; this is a social context where recognition and respect are closely tied to this symbolic form of community solidarity. The emancipatory fervour that accompanied the Zaar cultural festival held on 2 November 2013, in which they 'installed' their own chief, finds meaning when situated within a broader northern Nigerian discourse of minority politics, as is also experienced in southern Kaduna State, Plateau State and elsewhere. As we have argued throughout this paper, state practices at the top have tangible local political and socio-economic ramifications. In Nigerian parlance, this refers to the allocation and appropriation of the 'dividends of democracy'. The political and social intersect, and it is the consequence both of social structure and of how ethnic and religious pluralism is politically managed at local and state levels that has given Bauchi and Gombe states such contrasting outcomes.

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ABSTRACT

North-east Nigeria is an area of great ethno-linguistic diversity and religious plural-
ism, with Islam and Christianity both having a strong presence. The majority of
the population is Muslim but there is also a substantial indigenous Christian min-
ority, who form a majority in some local government areas. This paper draws on
fieldwork by the authors in two north-eastern states, Bauchi and Gombe, to
explore why, despite comparable religious demographics, there are marked differ-
ences in the levels of collective violence experienced in the two states. Although
ethno-religious violence has increased across northern Nigeria since the 1980s,
some areas have been more affected than others. To understand why this is, it is
necessary to place ethnic and religious differences in their local historical and pol-
itical contexts. This paper compares Gombe and Bauchi and argues that, although
there are complaints of marginalization among different groups in both cases,
Gombe State has developed a more inclusive system of government and local
conflict management than Bauchi State. We explore what accounts for this differ-
ence in the articulation and management of belonging and whether the contrast is
significant enough to explain differential levels of violence. In doing so, we con-
sider how inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations have been shaped historically
in the two cases and compare current forms of collective mobilization, considering
different social and political spaces within each state. The paper also briefly out-
lines the impacts of the radical insurgent group *Jama'at ahl al-sunna li'l-da'wa
wa'l-jihad*, nicknamed Boko Haram, in Bauchi and Gombe states.

RÉSUMÉ

Le nord-est du Nigeria est une région de grande diversité ethnolinguistique et de
pluralisme religieux, marquée par une forte présence de l'islam et du christian-
isme. En majorité musulmane, la population compte également une minorité
chrétienne *indigene* qui forme une majorité dans certaines régions administratives.
Cet article s'appuie sur des travaux menés par ses auteurs dans deux États du
nord-est, Bauchi et Gombe, pour examiner pourquoi, en dépit d'une
démographie religieuse comparable, les niveaux de violence collective observés
dans ces deux États affichent des différences marquées. Bien que la violence ethno-
religieuse ait augmenté dans tout le nord du Nigeria depuis les années 1980, cer-
taines régions ont été plus affectées que d'autres. Pour en comprendre la raison, il
faut placer les différences ethniques et religieuses dans leur contexte historique et
politique local. Cet article compare Gombe et Bauchi et affirme que si différents
groupes se plaignent certes d'être marginalisés dans les deux cas, l'État de Gombe
a élaboré un système de gouvernement et de gestion des conflits plus inclusif que
l'État de Bauchi. Il cherche à expliquer cette différence dans l'articulation et la
gestion de l'appartenance, et à déterminer si le contraste est suffisamment impor-
tant pour expliquer l'écart de niveau de violence. Ce faisant, il étudie la manière
dont les relations interethniques et interreligieuses se sont façonnées dans ces deux
États d'un point de vue historique et compare les formes actuelles de mobilisation
collective, en considérant différents espaces sociaux et politiques dans chacun des
États. L'article décrit aussi brièvement l'impact du groupe radical d'insurgés
Jama'at ahl al-sunna li'l-da'wa wa'l-jihad, surnommé *Boko Haram*, dans les
États de Bauchi et de Gombe.