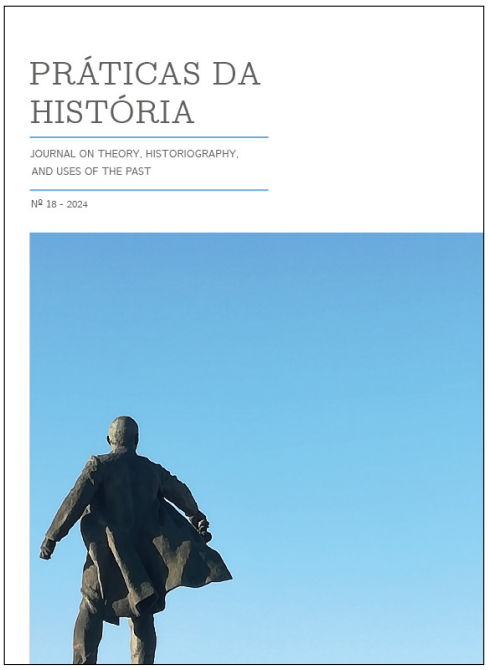

The Dangers of History: Another Culture of Violence in Benue and Plateau States, Central Nigeria

Samaila Suleiman

Práticas da História, n.º 18 (2024): 343-375

www.praticasdahistoria.pt

This journal is funded by National funds through FCT — Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., under the projects UID/HIS/04666/2013, UID/HIS/04666/2019, UIDB/04666/2020, UIDP/04666/2020, UIDB/04209/2020, UIDP/04209/2020 and LA/P/0132/2020.

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How do competing historical narratives authorize or sanction violence? The central argument of this article is that the mobilization of historical narratives, whether popular, amateur or academic history, constitutes another form of violence that is far from the concerns of students of conflict in Central Nigeria. Based on oral interviews and a critical study of reports of government commissions, ethnic memoranda and propaganda leaflets, collected during fieldwork in Benue and Plateau states, Central Nigeria, the article examines the ways in which the extra-textual and meaning-assigning agency of history is weaponized as an instrument of negotiation and political violence. The article examines the various discourses around the Sokoto Jihad and the history wars among competing ethnic groups in Benue and Plateau states. The study is located within critical work that is attuned to the salience of symbolism in understanding the capacity of vengeful historical discourses to inflame violence.
Keywords: History; historiography; identity; violence; Nigeria.

Os riscos da História: uma nova cultura de violência nos estados de Benue e Plateau, Nigéria Central

Como podem narrativas históricas em competição autorizar ou sancionar a violência? O argumento central deste artigo é que a mobilização de narrativas históricas, sejam elas populares, amadoras ou em forma de história académica, constituem outra forma de violência que está longe das preocupações dos estudiosos sobre conflitos na Nigéria Central. Baseando-se em entrevistas e no estudo crítico de relatórios das comissões do governo, memorandos étnicos e panfletos de propaganda recolhidos durante o trabalho de campo realizado nos estados de Benue e Plateau, Nigéria Central, o artigo examina as formas através das quais a agência histórica extratextual e atribuidora de significados é usada como instrumento de negociação e de violência política. O artigo examina os vários discursos sobre a Jihad de Sokoto e as guerras historiográficas entre grupos étnicos dos estados de Benue e Plateau. O estudo situa-se no âmbito de um trabalho crítico que está em sintonia com a importância do simbolismo na compreensão da capacidade dos discursos históricos vingativos para inflamar a violência.
Palavras-chave: história; historiografia; identidade; violência; Nigéria.

The Dangers of History: Another Culture of Violence in Benue and Plateau States, Central Nigeria

Samaila Suleiman*

> History is the most dangerous product that the chemistry of the human intellect ever evolved. Its properties are well known, it makes us dream, it intoxicates people, creates false memories for them, exaggerates their reactions, keeps their old wounds open, torments their rest, leads them to delusions of grandeur or of persecution, and makes nations bitter, arrogant, insufferable and vain
>
> – quoted by Alain Dubuc in Rudyard Griffiths, ed., *The Lafontaine Baldwin Lectures*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2002), 60-61.

Introduction

There is no shortage of literature, particularly in the field of cultural anthropology, linking symbolic violence (in images and texts) and physical violence.[1] Although most of these works deal with theories and

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1 See Pierre Bourdieu, "Symbolic Violence," *Critique of Anthropology* 4 (1979): 13-14, https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X7900401307; Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Power," *Sociological Theory* 7, n.º 1 (1989): 14-25, https://doi.org/10.2307/202060; John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); Sherry Hamby, "The Second Wave of Violence Scholarship: Integrating and Broadening Theories of Violence," *Psychology of Violence* 1, n.º 3 (2011): 163-165, https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0024121; Víctor Sampedro Blanco, "The Media Politics of Protest: Social Movements, Political and Discursive Power," *The International Journal of Theory and Research in Social Movements* 20 (1997): 185-205.

debates on violence, they are not primarily concerned with the practical intertwinement of historical discourse and violence. In the particular case of Africa there is little attention on the linkages between history as a form of discourse and violence. The historiography of conflict in Central Nigeria privileges factors such as intolerance, the politicization of differences in culture, ethnicity, and religion, competition over the ownership or allocation of, or access to land and natural resources, as well as the rights of ownership and citizenship within communities as the dominant interpretations of violence,[2] with little scholarly attention to the underlying narratives used as technologies of exclusion, scapegoating and demonizing ethnic communities.

Between 1980 and 2018, Central Nigeria is reported to have witnessed more than 100 violent communal clashes in which thousands of people including women and children lost their lives. In Plateau, Benue and Kaduna states alone, it is reported that 1,632 people were killed between January 2016 and October 2018.[3] These conflicts are usually occasioned by competing views of history, historical rumours and conspiracy theories. As a manifestation of the political instrumentalization of history, the conflicts, including the Boko Haram crisis, banditry, and

2 Bala Takaya, ed., *The Settler Phenomenon in the Middle Belt and the Problem of National Integration in Nigeria* (Jos: Midland Press, 1998); Nankin Bagudu and C. J. Dakas, eds., *The Right to Be Different: Perspectives on Minority Rights, the Cultural Middle Belt Constitutionalism in Nigeria* (Jos: League for Human Rights, 2001); Okechukwu Okeke, *Hausa-Fulani Hegemony: The Domination of the Muslim North in Contemporary Politics* (Lagos: Acena Publishers, 1992); Moses Ochonu, *Colonialism by Proxy: Hausa Imperial Agents and Middle Belt Consciousness* (Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2014); P. Chunun Logams, *The Middle Belt Movement in Nigerian Political Development: A Study in Political Identity. 1949–1967* (Abuja: Centre for Middle Belt Studies, 2004); Mahmoud Hamman, *The Middle-Benue Region and the Sokoto Jihad. 1812–1869. The Establishment of the Emirate of Muri* (Kaduna: Arewa House, 2007); Bala Usman, "Nigerian Unity and Nigerian History: Beyond Fairy Tales," paper delivered at the First Annual Dialogue organized by the Citizens Magazine, Abuja, 20 August 1992; M. Mangwvat, "Historical Insights on Plateau Indigene-Settler Syndrome, 1902–2011," paper presented at a Workshop on Citizenship and Indigeneity Conflicts in Nigeria, Centre for Democracy and Development and Development, Abuja, 2011; Niels Kastfelt, "The Politics of History in Northern Nigeria," paper presented to the Research Seminar of the African Studies Centre, Leiden, 27 April 2006; Okpeh O. Okpeh, "The Idoma and Minority Group Politics in Northern Nigeria. 1944–1960: A Study in an Aspect of National Question" (M.A. Thesis, University of Jos, 1994).

3 Amnesty International, *Harvest of Death: Three Years of Bloody Clashes between Farmers and Herders in Nigeria* (Abuja: Amnesty International, 2018), 5. Available on: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/9503/2018/en/.

farmer-herder violence, are interpreted as legacies of the 19th century Jihad wars, and attempt by the progenies of the Sokoto Caliphate to annihilate the non-Muslim ethnic minorities in the region. How do competing historical narratives authorize or sanction violence? The central argument of this article is that the mobilization of historical narratives, whether popular, amateur or academic history, as claim-making device and technology of exclusion, scapegoating and demonization, constitutes another form of violence that is far from the concerns of students of conflict in Central Nigeria.

Located within critical work that is attuned to the salience of symbolism in understanding the capacity of vengeful historical discourses to inflame violence, this article examines the ways in which the extra-textual and meaning-assigning agency of history is weaponized as an instrument of negotiation and political violence in Benue and Plateau. The article begins by theorizing what I call "histereotype" to denote the art of misappropriating history in the creation of otherness and toxic narratives that inflame mutual acrimonies. Then it proceeds by interrogating the different contours in which the Sokoto Jihad is used and abused by its opponents and proponents as a discursive tool. In the second section of the article, I examine how settler-indigene contestations impact conflict in Plateau and Benue states and the role of judicial commissions in the conflicts. The last part of the article discusses how ethnic associations sponsored and commissioned historical research and writing as a way negotiating political positions and justifying citizenship claims.

Theorizing Histereotype

The abuse of history, as an instrument of racial, ethnic and religious polarization, has become a significant feature of the place of the past in present politics and conflicts. All forms of mass violence and atrocities such as civil war, genocide, and xenophobia require some cultural legitimation, which comes in form of narratives authorizing killings. History is a dangerous epistemological terrain, prone to all kinds of manipulations. Individuals, governments, nations, and other socio-cultural com-

munities use and abuse it for different reasons. The danger of strategic falsification and distortion of history to scapegoat, exclude, dehumanize, and demonize the Other is particularly true of the Rwandan genocide where historical narratives were weaponized to incite violence.[4] In post-genocide Rwanda, the government suspended the teaching of history, criminalized its manipulation and prosecuted some historians who were found culpable of supporting the genocide through perilous discourses. Similarly, historical narratives were weaponized to incite hatred and violence during the wars in former Yugoslavia. Thus, all nations, particularly those with histories of racial violence, struggle to come to terms with their contested histories.

When deployed, in its crudest political instrumentalization, as a technology for stereotyping and cultural profiling, history can act as a weapon of mass destruction. The ability to organize and mobilize groups against their supposed others, is basically a function of what I call "histereotype" through which historical narratives are deployed to fan the embers of communal discord. In Nigeria, the prolonged absence of history from school curricular has created a dangerous vacuum in historical knowledge, which politicians and ethnic entrepreneurs exploit to further divide communities for their selfish gains.

The Sokoto Jihad as a Metaphor for Violence

The Sokoto Jihad is one of the most studied,[5] albeit distorted, themes

4 Susanne Buckley-Zistel, "Nation, Narration, Unification? The Politics of History Teaching after the Rwandan Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 11, n.º 1 (2009): 31, https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520802703608.

5 See Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate* (London: Longman, 1967); Abdullahi Smith, "A Neglected Theme of West African History: The Islamic Revolutions of the 19th Century," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2, n.º 2 (1961): 169-185; There is a good literature on the impact of the Sokoto Jihad on the Jos-Plateau area, Niger-Benue and the Middle-Benue confluence. See Ahmed Rufa'i Mohammed, *History of the Spread of Islam in the Niger-Benue Confluence Area, Igalaland, Egbirraland and Lokoja c.1900–1960* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 2014); Hamman, *The Middle-Benue Region and the Sokoto Jihad*; John G. Nengel, "Echoes of the Sokoto Jihad and Its Legacies on the Societies of the Jos-Plateau," in *The Sokoto Caliphate: History and Legacies, 1804–2004*, vol. 2, ed. Hamid Bobboyi and A. M. Yakubu (Kaduna: Arewa House, 2006), 181-194; Mohammed S. Abdulkadir, "The Effects of Extension of the Sokoto Caliphate on the Igala Kingdom," in *The Sokoto Caliphate*: *History and Legacies*, vol. 1, 53-64; Mohammed D. Suleiman, "The Sokoto Jihad, Sharia and the Minorities in Northern Nigeria,"

in Nigerian historiography, which is blamed for most of the contemporary conflicts in Central Nigeria. The Jihad, spearheaded by Usman dan Fodio, was the first major Islamic revivalist religious movement in West Africa that led to the founding of the Sokoto Caliphate, the largest single polity in 19th century West Africa. The Jihad brought together hitherto autonomous states in Hausaland under a single polity, but met stiff resistance among the "non-Muslim groups"[6] in what is now Central Nigeria. The Islamic movement extended beyond the frontiers of Hausaland to as far as Borno. Downward towards Bauchi, Plateau, Benue and Gongola rivers a whole chain of emirates emerged. The failure to convert a significant number of traditionalists in the southern parts of the caliphate left a huge vacuum for Christian proselytization in colonial northern Nigeria.

Although the British overthrew the caliphate in 1903, the Sokoto Jihad left enduring discursive legacies around Islamic sharia, which constitutes the cultural capital of the Hausa-Fulani Muslims on one hand, and the nightmare of non-Muslim communities of Central Nigeria on the other hand. While the legacies of the Jihad are cherished and treated as sacrosanct by Muslims in contemporary northern Nigeria, the identity of the non-Muslim communities in the region is deeply rooted in a narrative of resistance against the Jihad and all that it stood for. This binary opposition around the discourse of Sokoto jihad is largely responsible for the protracted mutual fear and antagonism in most parts of Benue and Plateau today.

First Burden

The first burden of the Sokoto Jihad in contemporary Central Nigeria is the narrative of "pastoral jihadism," promoted especially by politicians and the media. The recurring Fulani versus herder conflicts in the region feeds on a specter of continuance of the Sokoto Jihad by

in *The Sokoto Caliphate*, vol. 2, 221-241.

6 The term non-Muslim group was used by the colonial administrators to refer to the peoples of the Middle Belt areas in the southern parts of northern Nigeria.

Fulani herdsmen within non-Muslim communities in Plateau, Benue and Southern Kaduna. The conflicts are depicted as carryovers of the 19th century Jihad wars and attempts at conquering and islamizing the non-Muslim areas, which successfully resisted the Jihadi incursions of the 19th century. This narrative has gained wider currency among the peoples of Central Nigeria, particularly in Plateau and Benue states. Oral histories are told across generations about injuries inflicted on the communities by Jihadists. There is a general feeling that the Hausa-Fulani "settlers" in central Nigeria have a clandestine Jihadi agenda of Islamizing the region, a project their ancestors could not achieve in the 19th century.

The narrative of pastoral jihadism is promoted by highly placed men and leaders of thought,[7] including the former Governor of Benue state, Samuel Ortom, who was widely reported as claiming that the phenomenon of Fulani herdsmen was an invasion of the ancestral land of the Benue people.[8] The governor is quoted thus:

> That the attacks on Benue by Fulani herdsmen are acts of vengeance for losing the 1804 Jihad because Benue people stopped them from penetrating the state through Sokoto... They are convening international conferences, issuing press releases and writing on social media and they have come out to say "look, in 1804 Jihad, it was Benue people who stopped them from penetrating from Sokoto to the sea. And this time around, they are not going to stop." They will make sure that they mobilize all Fulani men across the globe, especially from the West African sub-region to ensure that they acquire arms and come and invade and take over the land because they also said that Nigeria is

7 Rev. Father Solomon Ukeyima, interview by Samaila Suleiman in Makurdi, 17 September 2018; Tivlumun nyitse, interview by Samaila Suleiman in Makurdi, Benue State, 19 September 2018; Elder Nats Apir, interview by Samaila Suleiman in Makurdi, Benue State, 19 September 2018.

8 Reverend Solomon Ukeyima Mfa, interview by Samaila Suleiman in Makurdi, 19 September 2018.

> the only land that God has given them, so no other person will supervene on this land except them. That it is their own land, they got this land by conquest and we have no business staying on this land.[9]

There is a feeling that this Jihadi agenda is still active among some of members of the Muslim elites in Northern Nigeria especially those who cherish the political ideals of the leaders of the Sokoto Caliphate. The disciples of Usman dan Fodio, notable among whom is the Premier of the Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto (1910-1966), were accused of plotting to resume the jihad after independence in 1960. The Sardauna was quoted to have declared Nigeria as an estate of dan Fodio.[10] Usman dan Fodio died in 1817, but his legacies have endured in different forms in present day Nigeria. The notions of "herdsmen terrorism" and "Fulani occupation of Benue state" are evocative of the Sokoto Jihad experience and other parts of Central Nigeria. Although the conflict is interpreted by researchers and policy makers as driven by socio-economic and environmental factors linked to settler-indigene question, the Fulani herdsmen are seen by most ordinary peoples of Central Nigeria as jihadists and historically violent.[11] The Fulani are seen to be using the tactics of terror to conduct Jihad in the wake of scarce resources to displace local communities, occupy their lands, and spread Islam. In order to justify the narrative of Fulani herdsmen terrorism, leaders of terrorist organizations in Africa are said to have nomadic backgrounds, implying they are Fulani herdsmen.[12]

9 *News Express*, "Fulani herdsmen fighting us because Benue frustrated 1804 Jihad," 19 February 2018.

10 Usher Ananga, "A Historical Perspective to the Ongoing Benue Situation," *The Nigerian Voice*, 11 February 2018.

11 Abdulbarkindo Adamu and Alupsen Ben, "Nigeria: Benue State under the Shadow of Herdsmen Terrorism," Working Paper 5 (November 2017): 16. Available on: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322759537_Nigeria_Benue_State_under_the_shadow_of_herdsmen_terrorism_2014-2016_Africa_Conflict_and_Security_Analysis_Network_ACSAN_Formerly_NCSAN-Nigeria_Conflict_and_Security_Analysis_Network/link/5a6ef7e1aca2722c947f7bca/download.

12 Adamu and Ben, "Nigeria: Benue State under the Shadow of Herdsmen Terrorism," 18.

On 4 May 2017 the Benue state assembly passed the Anti Open Grazing Prohibition bill, and the state Government signed it into law on 22 May 2017. This enactment was followed by war of words between rival ethnic pressure groups in the state. On the one hand, the Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore, a Fulani socio-cultural association faulted the Anti-Open Grazing Law in Benue State, describing the Bill as obnoxious and a recipe for anarchy. The group vowed to mobilize their people to resist what they described as an "attempt to enslave them through this wicked legislation even contemplated in the history of our nation." On the other hand, the Movement against Fulani Occupation (MAFO) commended the government for passing the bill while condemning the statements of Miyetti Allah and further called on her citizens and lovers of Benue to "come out to defend their mother land from Fulani occupation." These claims and counter-claims fueled the already existing mutual suspicion and acrimony between the Hausa and their host community, the Benue people.

In January 2018, violence broke out in which 73 indigenes of Benue were reportedly murdered by Fulani herdsmen. This event instigated a circle of "Fulaniphobia" and media persecution of the Fulani in Benue state as a reaction to the killings. The massacre was "celebrated" with what was described as "a parade of coffins and jamboree burial" to demonize Fulani herdsmen. A signpost, with the inscription "Burial site for 73 victims of Fulani herdsmen massacre in Benue state," was mounted by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) at the gravesite of those murdered. While the leaders of the Fulani herdsmen berated CAN for politicizing the farmer-herdsmen violence in central Nigeria, CAN insisted that the signpost was strictly for history since that was the least that could be done to memorialize the victims of the attacks.[13]

The attempt by the Government of former President of Nigeria Muhammadu Buhari to create cattle colonies as a solution to the farm-

13 Samuel Ogundipe, "Benue Killings: Signpost Blaming Fulani Herdsmen for 73 Deaths Causes Stir," *Premium Times*, 12 March 2018, https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/north-central/261507-benue-killings-signpost-blaming-fulani-herdsmen-73-deaths-causes-stir.html?tztc=1

er-herder violence in Central Nigeria was interpreted as a form of Fulani colonization of the Central Nigeria in disguise and a call for war, under the auspices of the Fulani-led Federal government of Muhammadu Buhari. The Chairman of the Southern Leaders of Thought (SLT), Professor Benjamin Nwabueze, described the proposed cattle colony of the Federal Government as part of "colonization agenda of the northern oligarchy".[14]

Second Burden

The second burden of the Sokoto Jihad is the Fulani counter-narrative in which the important central Nigerian towns of Makurdi, in Benue state, and Jos, in Plateau state, are claimed to be the possession of the Fulani by right of conquest.[15] This narrative is propagated by some of the apologists of the Sokoto Caliphate who continue to make reference to the Sokoto Jihad even in present day Nigeria. For example, the controversial claim of Prof. Labdo Muhammad that:

> Benue state belongs to the Fulani people by right of conquest. This is because half of the state is part of the Bauchi Emirate and the other half is part of the Adamawa Emirate. Benue is therefore part and parcel of the Sokoto Caliphate. So no one has the right to expel the Fulani from Benue under any guise.[16]

This type of claims accentuates the tension between Fulani and the non-Muslims of Central Nigeria by giving more credence to the Islamization narrative among the opponents of the Fulani hegemony.

Another discursive implication of the Sokoto Jihad is the notion of the Kaduna Mafia. Typical of the thriving culture of conspiracy theories

14 Bertram Nwannekanma, "Cattle Colony, a Colonization Agenda of Northern Oligarchy, Says Nwabueze," *The Guardian*, 20 January 2018, https://guardian.ng/news/cattle-colony-a-colonisation-agenda-of-northern-oligarchy-says-nwabueze/.

15 Abdulfatai Ayobami Ibrahim, "After Facebook Firestorm, Fulani Prof Speaks Again: Why We Are Destined to Lead Nigeria for Long," *Punch*, 3 February 2018, available on: https://punchng.com/why-we-are-destined-to-lead-nigeria-for-long-prof-labdo/.

16 *Daily Post*, "Benue Belongs to the Fulani by Right of Conquest," 18 January 2018.

in northern Nigeria, historical writings particularly on the non-Muslim ethnic minorities feed on a "paranoid historical consciousness," a specter of Hausa-Fulani Jihad, which is a "manifestation of their basic view of the driving forces in northern Nigerian history".[17] Originating from the print media, the Kaduna Mafia narrative is premised on the idea that there is a clandestine group of Muslim power elites –protégés of the 19th century jihadists in Hausaland– who are invested in Islamizing the country. The Mafia narrative has sneaked into the historiographical sphere, creating a dissident community of discourse encompassing not only academic authors but also activists, priests and publishers who together produced a historiography of resistance as a protest against Hausa-Fulani hegemony.[18]

The Muslim population of the North also harbor a strong anathema against the legacies of British colonialism especially the obliteration of Islamic system of education and removal of Arabic Ajami as official language of administration, generally interpreted as the biggest form of cultural violence against the Muslim North. Hence the persistent struggle for the restoration Sharia. Some have even argued that the Boko Haram insurgency is a reflection of this wider cultural resistance by the Muslims of northern Nigeria.

Third Burden

The third burden of the Sokoto Jihad can be linked to the movement for the restoration of Sharia, the Islamic legal system, which was launched in Zamfara state in 1999. While the movement brought hope to the Muslims, the Christians were gripped with fear of the resurgence of jihad, dismissing it as a social conspiracy against the Nigerian state.[19] The Muslims in northern Nigeria equated the movement for the restoration of Sharia to the 19th century jihad of Usman dan Fodio, an-

17 Kastfelt, "The Politics of History in Northern Nigeria," 13.

18 Samaila Suleiman, "The «Middle Belt» Historiography of Resistance," *Afrika Zamani* 27 (2019): 15-44.

19 Dahiru Yahya, "Sharia and the Future of Nigeria," paper presented at the Nigerian Institute for International Affairs, Lagos, 7 September 2000, 1.

ti-colonial resistance within the Sokoto Caliphate and the Islamization drive of the Premier of Northern Nigeria in the mid-1960s.[20] For example, Dahiru Yahya, a highly respected historian in northern Nigeria and expert of the history of the Sokoto Caliphate, in a tacit endorsement of the return of Sharia in Zamfara State, argues that "the Sokoto Jihad and the present day sharia movements were proclaimed in Zamfara by Shaykh Uthman b. Fudi and Ahmad Sani, the Governor of Zamfara state, respectively".[21] There was widespread euphoria following the proclamation of Sharia by the Muslim-dominated northern states of Nigeria, which was accompanied by bitter debates and violent conflicts in parts of Central Nigeria, particularly Plateau state.

Figure 1. Image of signpost of the site of mass burial in Benue.
Photo by Samaila Suleiman, September 2018.

Fourth Burden

The fourth burden of Sokoto Jihad is the interpretation of Boko Haram insurgency as a continuation of the jihad in contemporary Nigeria.

20 Yahya, "Sharia and the Future of Nigeria," 2.

21 Yahya, "Sharia and the Future of Nigeria," 2.

There have been attempts to historicize Boko Haram within the context of the Sokoto Jihad often with dangerous discursive implications. Although some historical analogies may yield productive discourse towards unravelling a tumultuous contemporary problem, the narrative which associates Boko Haram insurgency with the 19th century Sokoto Jihad is a dangerous judgement of history that gives Boko Haram insurgents some discursive legitimacy. It is true that the leaders of Boko Haram seek to draw historical and ideological legitimacy from the Sokoto Jihad, as they also engage in the same practice of misusing the past as a tool of propaganda.

When Boko Haram insurgency and the Sokoto Jihad are conflated against the peculiarities of their socio-economic and political settings, a kind of historical distortion occurs which confers misplaced legitimacy on the former. This is the more so when authorities on the historiography of the Jihad, such as Murray Last, re-interpret the jihad in the light of the Boko Haram insurgency. Murray Last is one of the leading Africanist historians who championed the decolonization of the history of the Sokoto Jihad by exposing the racist theory within colonial anthropology and historiography. However, in his most recent writings, Last has increasingly sought to juxtapose the Sokoto Jihad and Boko Haram insurgency in ways that suggest betrayal of his earlier frsmework and position on the subject matter. The Boko Haram, for Last, is neither new phenomenon nor will it be the last of its kind[22] – it followed the pattern and logic of the Sokoto Jihad.[23] Similarly, Abdulbasit Kassim has invoked the notion that the "trans-generational discourses" established by Usman dan Fodio "have played greater role in Boko Haram's legitimization of jihād than has hitherto been acknowledged".[24]

22 Murray Last, "From Dissent to Dissidence: The Genesis and Development of Reformists Islamic Groups in Northern Nigeria," in *Sects and Social Disorder: Muslim Identities and Conflict in Northern Nigeria*, ed. Abdul Raufu Mustapha (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2014), 19.

23 Murray Last, "The Pattern of Dissent: Boko Haram in Nigeria 2009," *Annual Review of Islam in Africa* 10 (2008-2009): 11.

24 Abdulbasit Kassim, "Defining and Understanding the Religious Philosophy of Jihādī-Salafism and the Ideology of Boko Haram," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 16, n.º 2-3 (2015): 173-200, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2015.1074896.

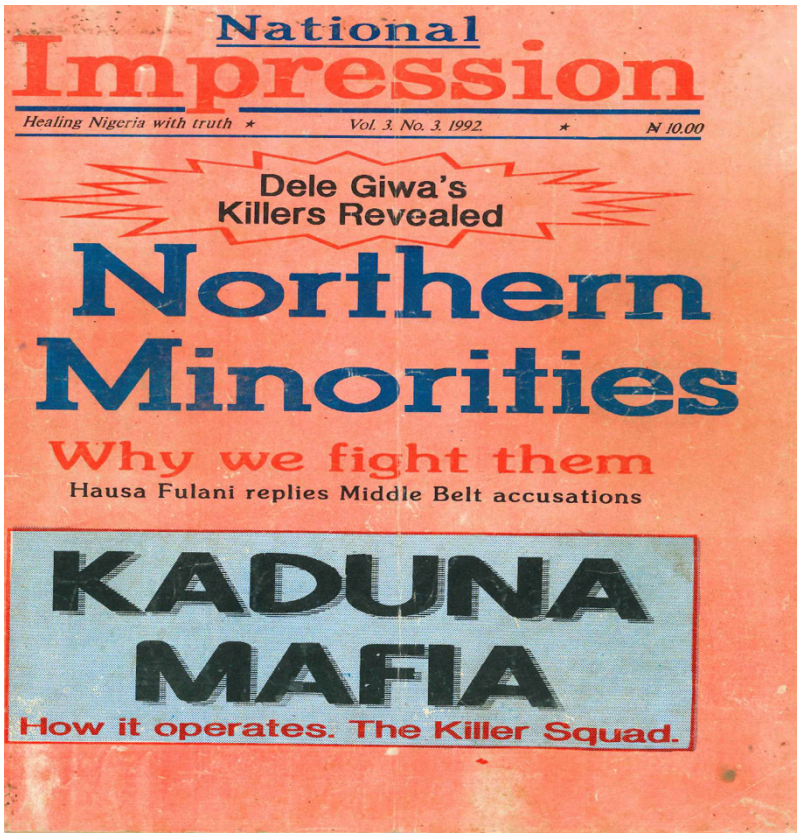

Figure 2. Front cover of *National Impression* magazine. Source: *National Impression* 3, n.º 3 (1992).

This linear progressive narrative conflates two spatially and temporally dissimilar as well as ideologically distinct movements. It is strange that Borno, which was opposed to the Sokoto Jihad, became the home base of a movement for the restoration of the Sokoto Caliphate.[25] More so, the location of jihadi literature in Sokoto negates this revisionist historical interpretation as espoused by Last and others. Apart from the failed attempt to restore Sharia in Sokoto state, there is no evidence suggesting that Sokoto, even as the home base of dan Fodio Jihad, ever contemplated the restoration of the Sokoto Caliphate through violence. Indeed, while Borno opposed the Sokoto Jihad of 19th

25 Johannes Harnischfeger, "Boko Haram and Its Muslim Critics: Observations from Yobe State," in *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*, ed. Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2014), 55.

century, Sokoto, like other Muslim states of northern Nigeria, has been consistently opposed to Boko Haram violence. It is, therefore, intellectually malevolent to present Boko Haram as reincarnation of the 19th century dan Fodio Jihad. In terms of both ideology and strategy, the biggest influence on Boko Haram comes from Taliban and Al-Qaeeda[26]. As rightly pointed by Andrea Brigaglia, Boko Haram "captures all the stereotypes that have daily currency in islamophobic discourses: at the same time obscurantist, primitive and ferocious..." The Boko Haram insurgency "embodies all the prejudices associated with the supposed essence of Islam".[27]

From the foregoing, it could be seen that the Sokoto Jihad is deployed as a convenient discursive tool for political violence and political negotiation in the hands of both its proponents and opponents. It is deployed as a major discursive baseline in the legitimation of their religious, social, cultural, political and economic grievances in the present. For the non Hausa-Fulani, largely Christian communities in Central Nigeria, the Sokoto Jihad is the most dreaded historical idiom in their cultural and political vocabulary. The trauma of the jihad is so profound on the cultural psyche of these communities that a mere mention of the word jihad would provoke memories of slave raiding and pillage by the jihadists. Seen as a symbol of terror and exploitation by non-Muslims, and celebrated by Muslim Hausa-Fulani as their most important cultural patrimony, the jihad represents one of the best examples of political instrumentalization of history in contemporary Nigeria as well as the most abused historical theme in the context of violent conflicts in Central Nigeria. The danger of these politically motivated historical discourses is the way they easily feed into violent communal clashes in Central Nigeria.

26 Daniel Atzori, "Boko Haram's Glocal Jihadism," *Abo News Letter*, 3 March 2016.

27 Andrea Brigaglia, "Ja'far Mahmoud Adam, Mohammed Yusuf and Al-Muntada Islamic Trust: Reflections on the Genesis of the Boko Haram Phenomenon in Nigeria," *Annual Review of Islam in Africa* 11 (2012): 35.

Settler-Indigene Contestations and Commissions of Inquiry

The incessant communal conflicts in parts of Central Nigeria, especially Jos, are typical of the growing native-settler divide and conflicts in the region. The question of which ethnicity owns a particular settlement is important because it forms the basis for determining citizenship and the political and socio-economic advantages attached to it such as political appointments, slots in the federal civil service, university, and scholarship.[28]

Jos, the capital of Plateau state, has over the past two decades come under global media spotlight as one of the most conflict-prone cities in Central Nigeria. The city is home to a number of ethnic groups broadly regarded as indigenes and settlers. The "indigenous" groups comprising Berom, Anaguta, Afizere among others regard their Hausa-Fulani counterparts as migrants, settlers or non-indigenes. These claims and counter-claims around indigeneity have prompted the use of history as a tool of exclusion and violence by competing ethnic groups.

The historical contestation over the patrimony of Jos originally began as a peaceful intellectual debate on the pages of newspapers.[29] *The Nigerian Standard*, which was published by the Plateau Printing Press, offered a discursive forum and alternative voice around which "indigenous" intellectuals of Jos championed the idea of the autochthony of Berom, Anaguta and Afizere communities. On the other hand, the spokespersons of the Hausa-Fulani communities used the *New Nigerian Newspaper* as their mouthpiece. In his famous article "The Hausa-Fulani and their Lots in Jos," Umaru Sani alleged that the Hausa-Fulani

28 Samaila Suleiman, "The Nigerian History Machine and the Production of Middle Belt Historiography" (PhD dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2015), 128.

29 Umaru Sani, "The Hausa-Fulani and their Lot in Jos (1)," *Sunday New Nigerian*, 20 September 1981, 7; C. K. Gonyok and M. Y. Mangvwat, "The Hausa-Fulani and their Lot in Jos ---A Rejoinder," *The Nigeria Standard*, 12 October 1981, 6; Umaru Sani, "The Hausa-Fulani and their Lot in Jos (2)," *Sunday New Nigerian*, 18 October 1981; C. K. Gonyok and M. Y. Mangvwat, "The Hausa-Fulani and their Lot in Jos (2)---Rejoinder," *The Nigeria Standard*, 29 October 1981, 6-11.

settlers in Jos had always been subjected to one form of punitive axe or the other by successive governments of Plateau state because of the popular assumption that their grandparents maltreated the ancestors of Berom.[30] In their rejoinder, Charles Gonyok and Monday Mangvwat, two renown Plateau historians, argue that the "indigenous" population (Berom, Anaguta and Afizere) were never subjected to the authority of the Bauchi Emirate, the nearest political appendage of the Sokoto Caliphate. In another rejoinder entitled "Berom Intellectual Revived Organizational Movement Club," Umaru Sani was accused of plotting to distort the history of Jos on the basis of fabricated evidence.[31] The "indigenous" ethnic groups in Plateau and Benue states take pride in the warrior tradition of their unconquerable ancestors and the narratives of valor, resistance, and retribution against the Sokoto Jihad.

By 1994 the debate had morphed into violence between the Hausa and the indigenous communities in Jos, triggered by the appointment of Aminu Mato, a migrant Muslim Hausa, as the sole administrator of Jos North Local Government. The Anaguta, Afizere and Berom took to the streets of Jos to show their resentment against the appointment. In search for the genesis of the crisis, the government of Plateau state established the Fiberesima Commission of Inquiry to look into the origins of the violence and History was put on top of the agenda of the Commission.

The first thing the Commission did was to call for submission of memoranda from the warring communities. During the public sittings of the Commission, memoranda and oral witnesses were submitted before the Commission. The Berom, Anaguta and Afizere communities presented ample colonial records from the National Archives to legitimize their claim of autochthony as the only bona fide indigenes of Jos. They argue that the name Jos came from a Berom word for spring water 'Gwosh' or 'Jot'. In their testimony before the commission, they recounted the story of how their ancestors, the true owners in occupa-

30 Sani, "The Hausa-Fulani and their Lots in Jos."

31 "Berom Intellectual Revived Organizational Movement Club," *Nigeria Standard*, 5 October 1981.

tion of Jos, fought off the 19th century Jihadists from the area. On the other hand, the Hausa-Fulani insisted that they founded Jos Town as far back as 1836. The oral witnesses, who represented the Hausa-Fulani community, like Malam Maidoki and Alhaji Sale Hasssan, were even sent to London in search of records to validate their claim to owning Jos. However, unlike the indigenous communities, the Hausa-Fulani failed to provide written evidence apart from oral traditions as proof of their right to citizenship in Jos.[32] Such over-reliance on oral history gave Berom, Anaguta and Afizere an upperhand over the Hausa-Fulani community because of the comaparative discursive advantage of archival over oral evidence.

In its findings, the Fiberesima Commission fingered competing claims over the ownership of Jos between the Berom, Anaguta and Afizere tribes on the one hand and the Hausa-Fulani tribes on the other hand, as the root cause of the violence.[33] The Commission, however, reechoed the conspiracy theory of Hausa-Fulani hegemony and the perilous vocabulary of indigine versus settler, reffering to the Hausa-Fulani as "settlers" and the Berom, Anaguta and Afizere as indigenes:

> Although the riot took place on that fateful day, it was merely a product of accumulated tension which had been mounting sequel to an attempt by a group of Hausa-Fulani Jasawa community in Jos to excercise political dominion over the Berom, Anaguta and Afrizere tribes.[34]

Outraged by the findings of the Commission, the Hausa-Fulani community accused it of focusing on defining who is an indigene or

32 The oldest written history of the Hausa-Fulani in Jos was *The Making of Jos* by Sani Salihu, an Unpublished Thesis (NCE) Advance Teachers College, Akwanga, 1983. The author advanced the claim that the Hausa-Fulani founded Jos in the pre-colonial period. He was the first author to use the term *Jasawa* to refer to the Hausa-Fulani in Jos as a distinct ethnic category.

33 "The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Riots of 12th April 1994 in Jos Metropolis," *Details*, 21 October 1995.

34 "The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Riots of 12th April, 1994 in Jos Metropolis," *Details*, 21 October 1995.

settler, thereby ignoring its most crucial mandate of establishing the roots of the violence. On 8 July 1996, the Hausa-Fulani community issued a declaration in which they lay 24 claims including the assertion that they are a distinct ethnic nationality known as Jasawa within the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Jasawa ethnic nationality has been defined as the "Hausa-Fulani people who are [sic] by accident of history born and bred in Jos Division, whose parents and great grandparents founded Jos town in its present location...".[35] The Jasawa declaration was immediately dismissed by Berom, Anaguta and Afizere as another propaganda which could incite the indigenes and other peace-loving residents of Jos.[36]

In the same vein, the Berom community issued another press release accusing the Hausa-Fulani "settlers" of infesting Jos with destitutes, lepers, cripples, and blinds. According to the press release, unlike other peace-loving settlers such as Igbo, Yoruba who have established schools, hospitals, and tourist centers in Jos, the Hausa specialized only in forming trouble.[37] The Berom community bowed to go to war with anybody who interfere with their territorial integrity.[38] Such exchange of dangerous words between the so-called Hausa-Fulani settlers and indigenous ethnic groups only served to aggravate inter-communal tension and mutual animosity and fear in Jos.

The vicious instrumentalization of history was heightened by another tragic violence that erupted in Jos in 2001. Like the 1994 crisis, this violence broke out around competing claims over citizenship rights and political appointments. The violence was sparked by the appointment of a Hausa-Fulani as the coordinator of the defunct Poverty Alleviation Program in Jos North. The indigenous ethnic groups interpreted this appointment as an attempt by the Hausa-Fulani to take over what belonged to them. Leaflets threatening the life of the appointed

35 Umaru Sani, "Jasawa and New Agenda in Foucs," 10 March 2006.

36 "A Rejoinder to the Jasawa Declaration Presented to the Government and People of Nigeria."

37 "Press Release on Our Reaction to the Provocative Utterances by a Clique of Hausa Settlers in Jos," by Berom Community, 1.

38 "Press Release on Our Reaction...," 2.

person were pasted on the walls of his office. Some of these leaflets distributed by the locals had inscriptions like "please go and tell them you are not interested anymore because your life is at stake"; "the devil has no parking space in Jos North"; "trace your roots before its late"; "if you can't read, at least you know what the sign above means. Dangerrr." In reaction to these perilous leaflets, the Hausa-Fulani, under the aegis of Hausa-Fulani Under 25, issued counter leaflets reading threats like: "the seat is dearer to us than our lives. In that case, do you have monopoly of violence?"; "we have traced our roots to Jos North. We can resist the rest, not only you"; "Death is the best friend of Hamas. Be rest assured that we will do it even better"; "Blood for blood. We are ready. Let's see who has more deposit of ready strikers..."

Other anonymous leaflets were circulated propagating the extension of Sharia law in Plateau state. A man distributing these leaflets was arrested, who reportedly confessed to being a Christian, thereby complicating the truth about the situation. Some Hausa-Fulani alleged that a Christian group was responsible for these leaflets, in an attempt to incriminate the Hausa-Fulani Muslims.[39]

In the wake of the 2001 crisis, the Plateau State Government established the Justice Niki Tobi Commission of Inquiry to look into the 2001 crisis. The Commission invited oral testimonies and memoranda from the warring parties. The Hausa-Fulani maintained their position as founders of Jos and delegated Sale Hassan and Inuwan Ali Iliya as their representatives. Inuwan Ali was a wealty merchant since colonial days and a onetime member of the Federal House of Representives, represeting Jos during the Second Republic (1979-1983). When Inuwan Ali was asked to tell the story of how his proteges came to Jos, he stated that his grandparents were originally from Borno.[40] Thus, the Head of the Commission, Niki-Toby, dismissed the narrative of the Husa-Fulani as lacking in evidence. On the other hand, the Berom, Anaguta and

39 Carina Tertsakian, "Jos: A City Torn Apart," Humans Rights Watch, 18 December 2001, https://www.hrw.org/report/2001/12/18/jos/city-torn-apart#:~:text=Acknowledgements-,I.,in%20less%20than%20one%20week.

40 Ahmad Garba Shekaru, interview by Samaila Suleiman in Jos, 21 October 2018.

Afizere presented colonial records in form of excerps from Gazettes of Northern Provinces of Nigeria and other history books, which strongly suggested that the Hausa-Fulani community migrated into Jos during the colonial period. Consequently, the Commission recognized the Anaguta, Afizere and Berom as the indigenous people of Jos. The humiliating defeat of the Hausa-Fulani before the Niki Toby Commission alerted them to the weakness of oral traditions and the thsignificance archival history in their contest and quest for citizenship rights in Jos.

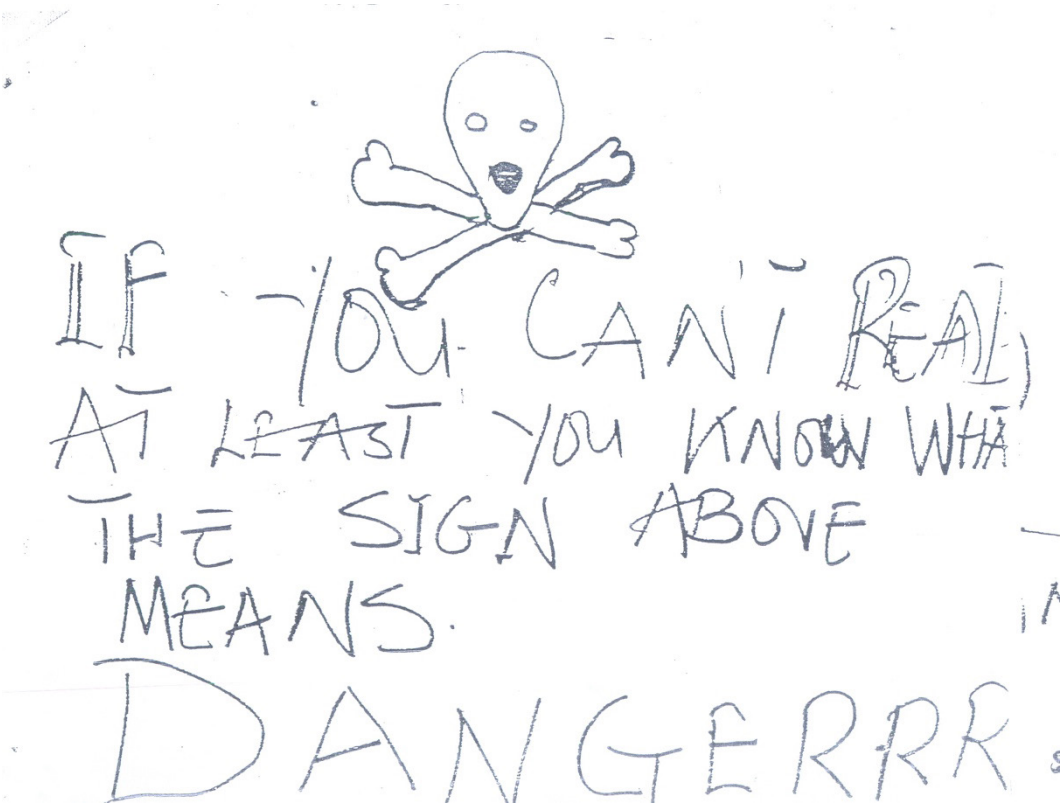

Figure 3. A leaflet circulated during the crisis by members of the indigenous community in Jos. Source: I retrieved this leaflet from an informant during fieldwork in Jos in 2018.

41 Shekaru, interview by Samaila Suleiman in Jos, 21 October 2018.

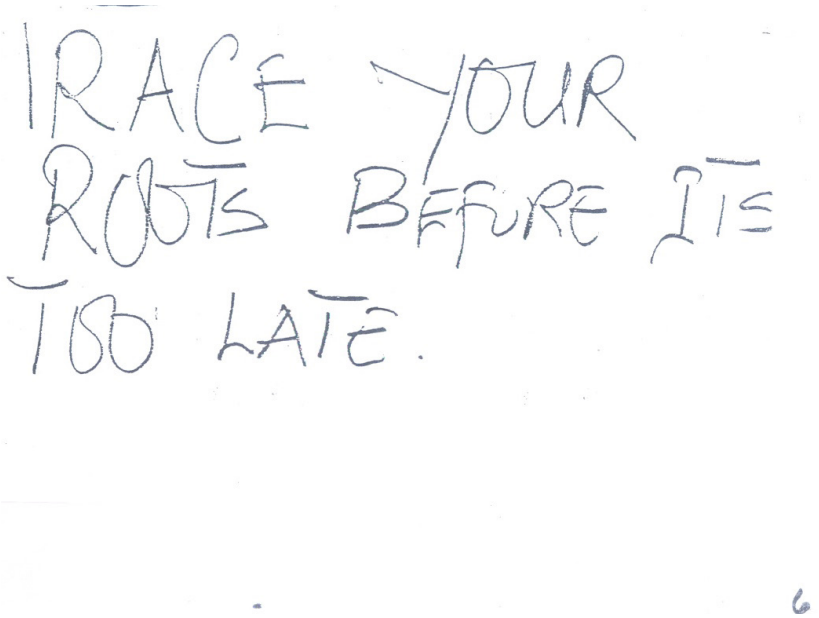

Figure 4. A leaflet circulated during the crisis by members of the indigenous community in Jos. Source: Retrieved during fieldwork in Jos in 2018.

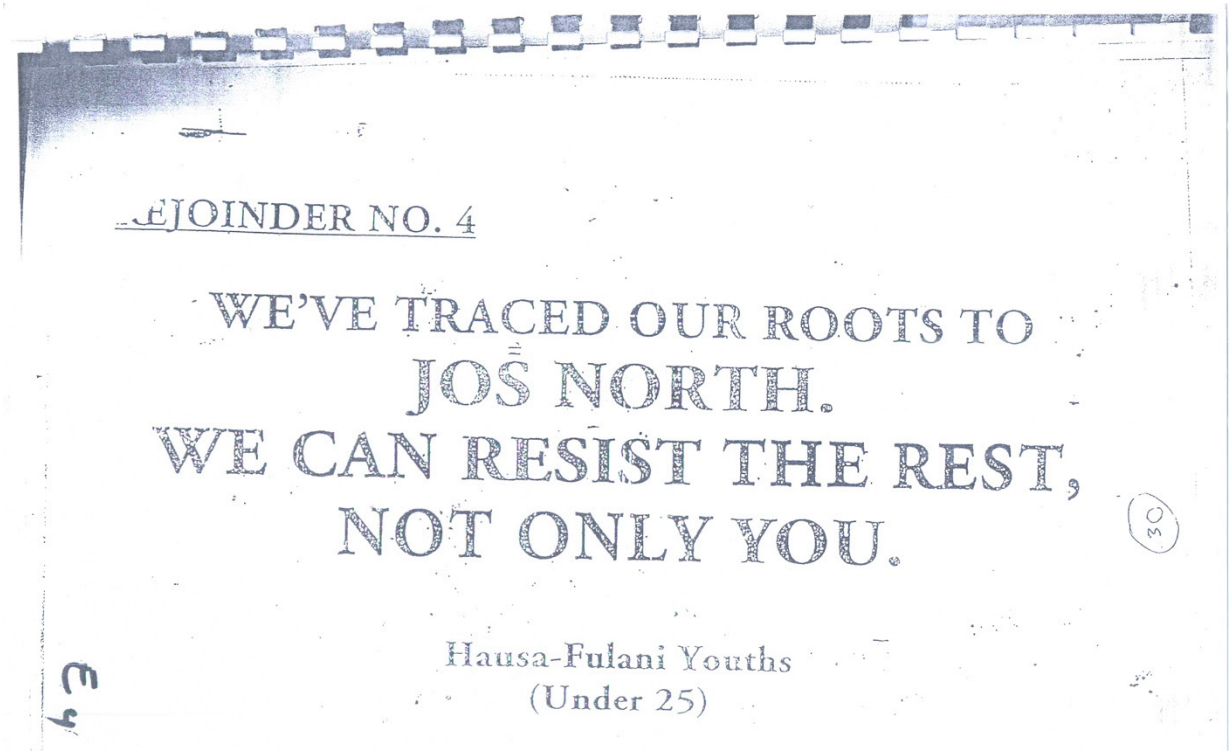

Figure 5. A leaflet circulated during the crisis by members of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim community in Jos. Source: Retrieved during fieldwork in Jos in 2018.

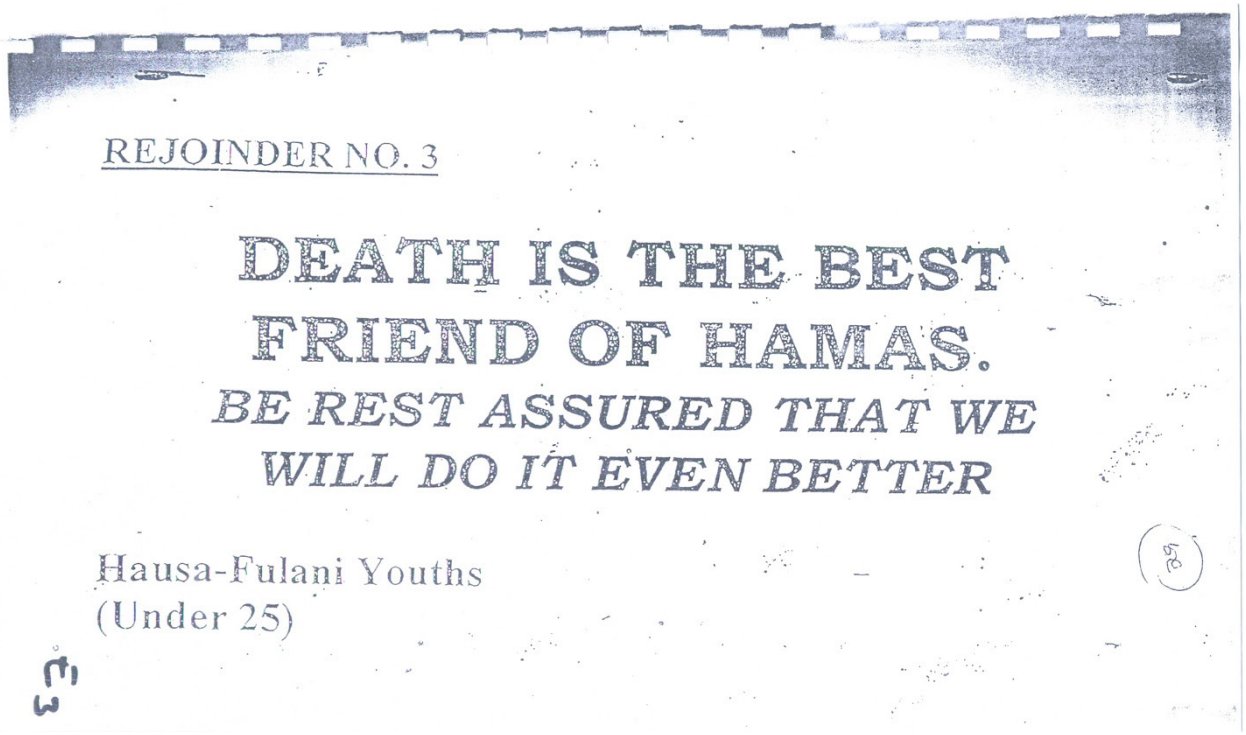

Figure 6. A leaflet circulated during the crisis by members of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim community in Jos. Source: Retrieved during fieldwork in Jos in 2018

In a memorandum submitted to the Judicial Commission of Inquiry set up by the Federal Government to look into inter-communal conflicts in Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba states, the Plateau state government traced the causes of violence in the region to disputes over the ownership of farmlands, ethnic rivalries and settler questions.[42] The Hausa, according to the report, "have been alluding to a time past when they claimed to have ruled Jos and this has remained a source of friction between them and the indigenes of Jos".[43] In their own submission to the Federal Government Judicial Commission of Inquiry, the Jasawa Development Association reiterated the position that the Hausa-Fulani founded Jos as part of Bauchi Emirate. They blamed the historical grudges of the Anaguta, Berom and Afizere against the

42 "Memorandum Submitted by the Plateau State Government to the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Inter-Communal Conflicts in Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba states," May 2002, 1.

43 "Memorandum Submitted by the Plateau...," 3.

Hausa-Fulani as the remote cause of the 2001 violence. Another memorandum submitted to Hon. Justice Prince Bola Ajibola Commission of Inquiry by D.A. G.G. Botto described the Hausa-Fulani as "hooligans" whose criminal ancestors were released from prisons and brought to the minefields of Plateau by the colonial government.[44]

Rather than reconciling competing groups, the various commissions of inquiry established to investigate violent conflicts complicated the situation through acts of commission or omission. Panels in the perception of some are established to punish real and imagined opponents rather than addressing the concrete causes of the conflicts.[45] Moreover, the reports of the commissions were plagued by problems of implementation. There was fear on the part of the governments that releasing the reports and findings of the panels would escalate violence.

Ethnic Associations and the Commissioning of History

The failure of judicial commissions and panels of inquiry to break the circle of violent confrontations and competing grievances over citizenship rights sparked another round of vicious instrumentalization of history. Ethnic associations resorted to commissioning the writing of history books as a claim-making device. History books were seen as the source of more authoritative claims over the ownership of Jos. The war over different versions of history intensified as rival communities commissioned history projects, manipulating archival documents to make case for the ownership of Jos.[46] The Plateau Indigenous Development Associations Network (PIDAN)

44 Chief Da G. G. Bot, "Memorandum Submitted to Hon. Justice Prince Bola Ajibola Commission of Inquiry into the Civil Disturbances in Parts of Jos," 28 November 2008, 5.

45 Report of the National Workshop on Strategies for Enhancing Peaceful Coexistence in Nigeria, organized by the Centre for Peace Research and Conflict Resolution of the National War College, held in Abuja, 9–10 March 1999, International Conference Centre Abuja, 175.

46 The best examples of this vicious instrumentalization of History are the community history projects sponsored by rival ethnic associations in Jos. See Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, *The History, Ownership, Establishment of Jos and Misconceptions about the Recurrent Jos Conflicts* (Jos: Dan-Sil, 2010); and Coalition of Jasawa Community Development Associations, *The Truth about the Hausa of Jos: Documentary Evidence to Clear Misconception about the Origin and Contribution of the Hausa to the Establishment and Nurturing of Jos* (Jos: Ibzar, 2013). Rabiu Isa Hassan Interview by Samaila Suleiman at Arewa House Kaduna, 10 August 2018.

sponsored the publication of *The History, Ownership, Establishment of Jos and Misconception about the Recurrent Jos Conflicts* in 2010.[47] The book was addressed to several national and international institutions including archives, universities and libraries. Relying heavily on archival sources, judicial pronouncements and facts of contemporary history, the book advances the claims of the indigenous ethnic groups of plateau state with a view to correcting "elemental myths and half-truths" about the history and ownership of Jos.[48] Monday Mangvwat describes the book as "the most authoritative on the subject matter," which validates "the consistent claim by PIDAN that the history of Jos is advertently the history of the indigenous ethnic groups of Plateau state who have been autochthonous to the area".[49] For Mangvwat, "the authors have laid bare the thick pall of ignorance that has over the years enveloped the questions of origins, claims of ownership and the colonial process of the establishment of Jos city".[50] The publication looks like an annotated index of colonial archival reports on Jos Plateau.

In response to this publication, the Jasawa Development Association (JDA) commissioned a counter book project in 2013 in a bid to document the contributions of the Hausa community to the development of Jos. A young historian was commissioned to lead the research and writing of the book. Following a thorough interrogation of colonial archives and oral interviews, the researcher arrived at a disappointing conclusion that caused some epistemic disillusionment among members of the JDA. The research discovered that the Hausa arrived in Jos area during the colonial times, contrary to the claims of JDA. Consequently, the manuscript was appropriated and edited on the instance of JDA to promote the narrative or historical claim of Jasawa as the founders Jos.[51] The manuscript was eventually

47 Similarly, the Mwaghavul Development Association has for the first time sponsored the publication of a book titled *Towards a Mwaghavul History: An Exploration* (Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris Corporation, 2011), vii.

48 PIDAN, *The History, Ownership, Establishment of Jos.*

49 PIDAN, *The History, Ownership, Establishment of Jos*, xxiii.

50 Monday Mangwvat, Foreword to *The History, Ownership, Establishment of Jos and Misconception about the Recurrent Jos Conflicts* (Jos: Dan-SiL Press, 2010), xxiii.

51 Rabiu Isa Hassan, interview by Samaila Suleiman in Kaduna 10 August 2018; Sani ibn Salihu, interview by Samaila Suleiman in Jos, 20 October 2018; Ahmad Garba, interview by Samaila Suleiman in Jos 21 October 2018; Samaila Muhammad, interview by Samaila Suleiman in Jos, 23 October 2018; Shehu Masallah, interview by Samaila Suleiman in Jos, 25 October 2018.

published with the title *The Truth about the Hausa in Jos*: *Documentary Evidence to Clear Misconception about the Origin and Contribution of the Hausa to the Establishment and Nurturing of Jos*. Like the book commissioned by PIDAN, the authors of this book relied primarily on colonial archives to offer a rebuttal of the position of PIDAN and legitimize their claims of the Hausa-Fulani as indigenes of Jos.

On 1st January 2014, Chris Olakpe, the Commissioner of Police, Plateau State Command, dispatched a crew of four Divisional Police Officers to halt the launching of the book. Several policemen were sighted manning the venue of the event. In an interview with *Daily Trust*, Alhaji Ibrahim Sani Abubakar, a member of the book launch committee, accused the police of supporting their adversary (the indigenous populace). He asserted that the stoppage of the event was meant to undermine the success of the public presentation of the book.

In the Benue axis of the Central Nigeria, the Tiv-Jukun conflict represents another case of the settler-indigene problem. Although the Tiv and Jukun had lived in relative mutual coexistence since the 19th century, their relations degenerated into mutual suspicion and conflicts in the 1990s. The crisis has always been about the settler-indigene question between Tiv and the Jukun,[52] and occasionally involving the Hausa-Fulani community in parts of the present Benue state. While the Jukun regarded the Tiv as "settlers" in Benue and Taraba states, the Tiv claim that they have lived there for centuries. And the Hausa-Fulani people in Benue and Taraba states are considered by both Tiv and Jukun as "settlers." The exclusion of the Hausa-Fulani from the citizenship of Benue state, using the instrument of the settler-indigene divide, reflects the Tiv and Idoma social imaginaries of an awe-inspiring Hausa-Fulani community.[53] The Tiv, on the other hand, are perceived by smaller ethnicities such as Igede (who consider themselves as the rightful inhabitants of the state) as constituting a hegemonic block. For ex-

52 Interview with Professor Silas Okita, Benue, 2013.

53 Moses Ochonu, "Colonialism within Colonialism: The Hausa-Caliphate Imaginary and the British Colonial Administration of the Nigerian Middle Belt," *African Studies Quarterly* 10, n.º 2 (2008): 95-127.

ample, the "settler" status of the Hausa community has been questioned by an Igede historian, Silas Okita, who sees the Hausa-Fulani as the first inhabitants of Makurdi, the capital of Benue state. This controversial position is, however, unacceptable to both Tiv and Idoma historians.[54]

Like the work of panles and commissions of inquiry, the writing of ethnic histories and counter-histories rather than address the problem fans the embers of mutual hatred and suspicion among the affected ethnicities. The categories of "settler" and "indigene" are to say the least perilous discursive strategies that must be eschewed in the interest of peace and stability.[55] As Ibrahim James puts it, "it is not possible to call people settlers where they have lived for more than a century and their children do not know any other place except where they were born. There must be a process of integration to assimilate them".[56]

Even professional historians are not immune from the wars of history in Central Nigeria. The narratives of "indigenous" communities are more widely propagated by professional and amateur historians of Berom, Anaguta and Afizere extraction. Many have demonstrated overt allegiance to ethnic and religious identities particularly in settler-indigene contestations. The research themes and ideological commitments of the historians are conditioned by competing allegiances to the Nigerian state, ethnicity, and religion. For instance, most historians of minority ethnicities in Plateau and Benue espouse the notion of Hausa-Fulani domination, the narrative of oppression and marginalization of ethnic

54 Interview with Professor Silas Okita, Benue, 2013. Okita asserts that Charles Jacobs, the expatriate historian who pioneered the historiography of the Benue Valley, was himself involved in this local politics of historical production as he assembled a lot of materials and groomed young historians that will help the Tiv cause in the settler-indigene contestations. When the claim about the Hausa being the first inhabitants of Makurdi was made and the Tiv historians were disputing it, Okita challenged them to refute it historiographically if they had contrary evidence.

55 Suleiman, "The Nigerian History Machine," 135.

56 Professor Ibrahim James, interview by Samaila Suleiman in Kaduna, 2014. In 1998, Ibrahim James along with other two scholars wrote a book on the settler-indigene problem in the Middle Belt. He pointed out: "We wanted to demonstrate especially to the Government of Plateau State under Jonah Jang, the amount of settlement and intermingling that had taken place in his domain. Unfortunately, the government was not interested until when the crisis later developed in Jos and other parts of the Middle Belt; then they realised that what we were saying was correct."

minorities, and advocate the settler-indigene dichotomy. The Hausa-Fulani historians, on the other hand, promote a caliphate-centered historiography committed to defending the ideals and legacies of the 19th century Sokoto Jihad. The danger of these politically motivated historical claims and counter-claims is that they do not merely illustrate but actually coincide with violent inter-communal clashes in Central Nigeria.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to illustrate the cultures of strategic use of history as instrument of political violence. Central to the recurring inter-communal conflicts in Central Nigeria is the production and politicization of memories of victimhood and genocide, which incites violent inter-communal clashes linked to a wider politics of identity, citizenship, territorial control and competition over scarce resources. It has been demonstrated how the people of Plateau and Benue are entrapped in a web of inherited acrimonies and narratives/discourses: Sokoto Jihad, settler-indigene contestation, warrior tradition, narratives of resistance and vengeance that serve as the epistemic scaffolding for violent conflicts. We have seen how the establishment and operations of commissions of inquiry, rather than address the problem, has exacerbated mutual tensions and the contestations over citizenship.

The explosion of identity around the ownership of Jos has created incentives for the abuse of public records by desperate ethnic associations. Owing to the evidentiary and legal value of archival records, researchers and lawyers for these associations have connived with archivists in forging or destroying records in order to gain undue advantage over their opponents before commissions of inquiry. This has created a dramatic shift in the use and abuse of colonial archives from conventional sources of colonial history to viable instruments of political claims and communal litigations. The war over different versions of history and manipulation of archives is evident in Jos crisis where hostile communities manipulated archival documents to make case for the ownership of the city.

Despite the various measures of conflict management, the tempo of violence has increased, raising concerns as to whether the findings and recommendations of the commissions of inquiry are adequate, whether the intended policy measures have been implemented by successive governments, or the solutions proffered have really addressed the fundamental causes of these conflicts. Membership of the commissions of inquiry has always been based on ethno-religious identities. Thus, different communities use them as podiums to reinforce their respective historical claims and grievances rather than for mediation and reconciliation. Similarly, the attendant memos, communiqués, letters and position papers by ethnic associations are replete with historical stereotypes and irreconcilable claims, which show the underlying role of history in violence in the region. Understanding and responding to the dynamics of violence in Central Nigeria must go beyond the *ad hoc* security responses, policy prescriptions of reports of commissions of inquiry, state-sponsored conferences, and white papers. Attention must be paid to not only the root and immediate drivers of conflict, but also how popular and academic interpretations of local and regional histories are reproduced, packaged, circulated, and instrumentalized as discursive weapons during conflict.

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Referência para citação:
Suleiman, Samaila. "The Dangers of History: Another Culture of Violence in Benue and Plateau States, Central Nigeria." *Práticas da História, Journal on Theory, Historiography and Uses of the Past*, n.º 18 (2024): 343-375. https://doi.org/10.48487/pdh.2024.n18.32231.