

Religions and Development Research Programme

Religion, Politics and Governance in Nigeria

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with

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Ibadan



Working Paper 39 - 2009



Religions and Development

Research Programme

The Religions and Development Research Programme Consortium is an international research partnership that is exploring the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. The programme is comprised of a series of comparative research projects that are addressing the following questions:

- How do religious values and beliefs drive the actions and interactions of individuals and faith-based organisations?
- How do religious values and beliefs and religious organisations influence the relationships between states and societies?
- In what ways do faith communities interact with development actors and what are the outcomes with respect to the achievement of development goals?

The research aims to provide knowledge and tools to enable dialogue between development partners and contribute to the achievement of development goals. We believe that our role as researchers is not to make judgements about the truth or desirability of particular values or beliefs, nor is it to urge a greater or lesser role for religion in achieving development objectives. Instead, our aim is to produce systematic and reliable knowledge and better understanding of the social world.

The research focuses on four countries (India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania), enabling the research team to study most of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional belief systems. The research projects will compare two or more of the focus countries, regions within the countries, different religious traditions and selected development activities and policies.

The consortium consists of six research partner organisations, each of which is working with other researchers in the four focus countries:

- University of Birmingham, UK: International Development Department, Department of Theology and Religion, Centre for West African Studies, Centre for the Study of Global Ethics.
- University of Bath, UK: Centre for Development Studies.
- Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi.
- Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan.
- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan.

In addition to the research partners, links have been forged with non-academic and non-government bodies, including Islamic Relief.

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ISBN: 0 7044 2777 X
978 0 7044 2777 8

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This document is an output from a project funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID.



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Key words: Nigeria, Kano State, Anambra State, Oyo State, religion, politics

Acknowledgements

This report draws on the support of many individuals, and the author and contributors are grateful to all named and anonymous respondents, without whose support the research could not have been carried out. In Nigeria, this group of people includes *Alhaji* Opeyemi Abuliazeez Abduljeleel, Pastor Peter Adagbada, *Mallam* Ali, Chief Akanbi Atoyebi, *Alhaji* Adulrauf Ayedun, Sir Ngozi Anyakora, Reverend Joshua Bwamche, Mohammed Danyaro, Haruna Garba, Abdul-Lateef Jimoh, Reverend Madi-Dangora, Prince Sulaiman Makanjuola-Totoola, *Alhaji* Abdulfatai Ologbonoke, Pastor Andrew Olubunmi, C. J. Onyenze, Pastor Richard Ejike Orji, Funmilayo Osho, Father Ezekiel Owwoeye, Abduljeleel Abdulyekini Soga, as well as our confidential respondents. We appreciate that they have given us valuable time. We also appreciate the contributions of Uchenna Chester Azubuike, who carried out the interviews in Anambra State, and the work of Justina Dugbazah, who has provided administrative support for this component within the Religion and Development Research Programme since September 2007. The reports on religion, politics and governance in India and Pakistan by Surinder Jodhka and Gurpreet Mahajan and Mohammed Waseem and Mariam Mufti respectively were also very helpful to us. Useful comments and helpful suggestions for the final draft were offered by Aderemi Sulaiman Ajala, Carole Rakodi and Gurharpal Singh, as well as in discussions under the 'Chatham House Rule'¹ at the Ditchley Foundation on 1-3 October 2009. We are also very grateful for the insightful and generous comments by an anonymous reviewer.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

AD	Alliance for Democracy
ADS	Ansar-Ud-Deen Society
ANPP	All Nigerian Peoples' Party
ANPP	All Nigerian Peoples' Party (before 2002 All Peoples' Party)
APGA	All Progressives' Grand Alliance
APP	All Peoples' Party (after 2002 All Nigerian Peoples' Party)
ATR	African Traditional Religion (meaning a plurality of practices and beliefs)
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CofN	Anglican Church (Church of Nigeria)
ECWA	Evangelical Church of West Africa
FBO	faith-based organisation
FOMWAN	Federation of Muslim Women Organizations
HMCO	Hausa Muslim Community Awka
<i>Izala</i>	Izalatul-Bid'a Wa Iqamat
<i>jihad</i>	struggle
JDPC	Justice, Development and Peace Commission
MASSOB	Movement for the Actualization of Biafra
NACOMYO	National Council of Muslim Youth Organisations
NASFAT	Nasrul-Lahi-Il-Fathi Society of Nigeria
NBC	Nigerian Baptist Convention
NEPU	Northern Element Progressive Union
NPC	Northern Peoples' Congress
NPN	Nigerian Peoples' Party
NSCIA	Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
PDP	Peoples' Democratic Party
PDP	Peoples' Democratic Party
PFN	Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria
PRP	Peoples' Redemption Party
RCCG	Redeemed Christian Church of God
YMCO	Yoruba Muslim Community Anambra

Summary

Case studies of Kano, Anambra and Oyo States demonstrate that the relationships between the Nigerian state and religious organizations are often asymmetric and unstable: Christianity and Islam provide groups and individuals with moral frameworks on which to base their demands and critiques of the state; Christian and Muslim organizations both contribute to and challenge state institutions, such as law and education; and religious leaders are not immune from complicity in patronage politics.

Part of international comparative research on the participation of religious groups in politics and governance, this study of Nigeria draws on extensive use of secondary sources and case studies of the States of Kano, Anambra and Oyo, chosen to represent different religious and ethno-regional compositions and historical experiences. Interviews with representatives of a selection of Christian and Muslim organizations and the government in each state explored their views and expectations on state-religion relations, as well as religious views on some key development issues.

Despite Nigeria's secular constitution, religion has become increasingly important in the public sphere because of political liberalization and the degree of autonomy accorded to the State governments in a federal system. The case studies show that relationships between the state and Muslim and Christian organizations are frequently ambiguous: while both world religions provide moral frameworks for people and groups to articulate their demands and critiques of the state, they also challenge institutions provided by the state: the Muslim critique of secular law has led to the introduction of *shari'a* penal law in twelve states, while Christian demands for a re-privatization of former mission schools currently under state control might reinforce Muslim disadvantage in the educational sector.

The ability of religious organizations to participate in politics and governance is strongly related to patterns of inclusion and exclusion based on linguistic, ethnic and regional identity, as well as on intra-Nigerian struggles to limit the political participation of certain groups through the requirement of 'indigeneity' at State level. As a result, and given the close links between ethnicity and religion, religious competition is interwoven with the other rivalries that dominate Nigerian local politics and the relationships between the state and religious organizations are non-equitable: in all the States some organizations are excluded from participation in local politics while others have good access to the state. Conflicts over religious participation are closely tied up with disputes over access to material and ideological resources, from access to land to control of the State budget and local radio and television channels.

The government primarily views religious organizations as political mobilizing agents, thus state institutions often attempt to co-opt specific religious groups and FBOs for political purposes, rather than providing systematic support for their development activities. At the same time, many religious groups seek to influence government, even though they also fear its corrupting influence on themselves and others.

All the State governments work with some religious organizations, so there are spaces for interaction, but uneven relations with the state contribute to mistrust among religious groups, and the resultant fears about religious or other identity-based forms of exclusion may contribute to deepening social divisions. However, the inclusion of religious groups in the state has in some instances contributed to increased mutual understanding, while the creation of some inter-religious forums means that some religious groups have been able to enter into a dialogue with each other as well as the state.

Many concerns about the Nigerian state and visions of development that prioritize infrastructural development and service delivery are shared by representatives of different religious backgrounds. Also, all the respondents commented, almost despairingly, on Nigeria's increasing poverty. However, religious views of women's roles differed, with Christian and Muslim groups from the north emphasizing family and household duties as women's main responsibilities and Muslim and Christian groups from the south envisioning a much wider scope of action for women. This suggests that differences in world views are not necessarily determined by religious orientation, and that other factors play an important role.

The study concludes that:

- Nigerians from different parts of the country share similar views on good governance and development: these emphasize infrastructural development, education and health care and are shaped by recourse to Biblical and Qur'anic ideals of justice, equality and 'the fear of God'.
- Despite their shared critique of the Nigerian state, which often includes government failure to provide educational and health-related infrastructure, religious organizations neither act in concert nor, frequently, in the common interest of all Nigerians.
- Despite attempts by the state at various levels to co-opt religious groups in order to gain grassroots support and legitimacy, State governments do not systematically support independent development efforts by these groups.

- Encounters between the state and religious groups have included and facilitated negotiation, imitation and dialogue, but the unequal integration of religious groups and FBOs into politics often has the effect of giving priority to ‘indigeneity’ and locality; as a result it also creates and intensifies religious rivalry.

Some implications include:

- Religious groups’ critique of the failure of the Nigerian state to deliver welfare to its citizens unites them and suggests that they could be important participants in a national dialogue about the country’s future.
- Attempts to reduce religious conflict must address concerns over equal treatment and the fear of marginalization felt by many religious organizations, often arising from favourable treatment for indigenous groups.
- Some of the new public institutional spaces that provide opportunities for creative engagement between both the state and religious groups and different religious groups may increase Muslim-Christian understanding and have the potential for wider use.

1 Introduction

In recent decades, religion has become an important factor both in public debate and as a means of political mobilization. However, the rise of religion has not happened in and for itself: it is closely linked to wider material and ideological developments that have affected global politics. One of these trends is the decline and collapse of state socialism, which served important ideological and political functions outside the socialist world, including the offer of an ideological and political alternative. This alternative included the provision of an alternative moral and political vision of the world, and, on the whole, a consensus by ruling elites that social inequality needed to be limited. Since the 1980s, global and national politics have increasingly been dominated by ideological and practical responses to the ostensible victory of liberal capitalism. Reflecting a growing scepticism of alternative visions of the world, idealistic thinking has frequently been perceived as outdated and positive visions for the future of humanity have been limited to the functioning of the market and its institutions. Whether as a direct or an indirect result of this, global inequality has increased dramatically since the 1980s, both in the global North and in the South (cf. Cornia and Court, 2001).

In many contexts, increasing reliance on the market and the lack of consensus on limiting social inequality and poverty meant that moral principles and hopes for humankind were demoted to the private realm of personal ethics or faith. While even during this era religion has often informed and influenced politics, both in predominantly secular Europe and beyond, the recent intensification of religious debates has had important political and developmental consequences, because it reflects or intersects with existing and – due to increasing inequality – growing social divisions. Thus, the ideological distance between Islam on the one hand and Christianity and the (Western) secularism derived primarily from Christian traditions on the other has contributed to a growing political distance between Muslim and Christian communities. Because large parts of its population are either Christians or Muslims, often within the same countries, Africa is located at the centre of the contestations associated with this political and ideological struggle.

Today, Muslim and Christian communities and organizations in many African countries are publicly questioning the legitimacy of the secular postcolonial state, while at the same time extending their activities in areas of social provision closely associated with the state, but which the state is no longer able to guarantee, such as education and health (Corten and Marshall-Fratani, 2001; Soares and Otayek, 2007). Religious politics do not affect the state in a coherent or uniform way, instead having a complex and even contradictory impact on state institutions. On the one hand, the political

engagement of religious groups and their provision of services in areas where the state has failed to deliver present an ideological and practical challenge to the state (Love, 2006). On the other hand, such activities support and supplement state activities in important sectors, and can even be understood as supporting the state. Nevertheless, even formal collaboration between state and religious actors can be perceived as undemocratic and threatening by excluded groups, creating further ground for political – and religious – contestation (cf. Philpott, 2007; for a perspective aimed at reducing contestation see Deneulin with Bano, 2009).

This paper examines the participation of religious groups in governance and development in Nigeria, an important African country in terms of both its economic potential and political influence and its population of at least 140 million inhabitants (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006).¹ It argues that the close interaction between the state and religious and faith-based organizations (FBOs)² reflects the widespread perception that Nigeria is not a secular state. Case studies of Anambra, Kano and Oyo States illustrate that the relationship between the Nigerian state and Muslim and Christian organizations and FBOs is frequently ambiguous: while both world religions provide groups and individuals with moral frameworks to articulate their demands and critiques of the state, they also challenge institutions of common interest provided by the state: the Muslim critique of secular law has led to the introduction of *shari'a* penal law in twelve Nigerian states, while Christian demands for a re-privatization of former mission schools currently under state control might further emphasize Muslim disadvantage in the educational sector. Moreover, religious leaders are, like leaders everywhere, not immune from complicity in patronage politics.

In addition, the ability of religious organizations and FBOs to participate in politics and governance is strongly related to patterns of inclusion and exclusion based on linguistic, ethnic and regional identity, as well as on intra-Nigerian struggles to limit the political participation of certain groups through the requirement of 'indigeneity' at the level of the federation's states. As a result of this, the relationships between the state and religious organizations and FBOs are uneven and non-equitable: in all States there are some organizations that are excluded from participation in local politics while others have close access to the state. Conflicts over religious participation are closely tied up with disputes over access to material and ideological resources, from access to land to the control of the State budget and local radio and television channels. As religious difference often reflects difference in markers of group identity, including language, education, historical rivalry, ethnicity, and sometimes even age and

gender, religious competition is closely interwoven with the other forms of rivalry that dominate Nigerian local politics.

The unevenness of relations to the state contributes to mistrust among religious groups, and the resultant fears about religious or other identity-based forms of exclusion are likely to contribute to retaliatory practices at different levels, thus contributing to deepening social divisions. Consequently, attempts to reduce the intensity of religious conflict must engage with concerns over poverty and development and diminish the impact of patrimonial politics and 'indigeneity'. Nevertheless, the fact that all the State governments also work closely with some religious organizations and FBOs means that there are spaces for close interaction, negotiation and imitation. As a result, some religious groups and FBOs have been able to enter into an intensive dialogue with each other as well as the state. Their often creative engagement with each other serves as a laboratory of state-religious interaction.

So far, this introductory section has attempted to sketch out the most important arguments presented in this paper. Building on a review of the relevant literature (Robert, Odumosu and Nabofa, 2009), this report moves directly into a historical overview of Nigeria's religious history and politics which emphasizes the postcolonial period and provides the context for a detailed discussion of religion and politics at the State level. This is followed by some research methodological notes relevant to the discussion in the following sections. Following on are Sections 3 to 5, which focus on case studies of religious politics and participation in Kano, Anambra and Oyo States. The case studies illustrate differences and similarities between the political process in the three states, showing the complex ways in which religious and faith-based organizations (FBOs) engage with politics.

Section 6 compares and contrasts the responses from the three states, with the aim of exploring similarities and differences in religious views on good governance and development, poverty and gender. Interestingly it appears that many concerns about the Nigerian state are shared by representatives of very different religious backgrounds. Also, when it comes to gender, ethno-regional origin is a much stronger indicator of difference than religious affiliation. Section 7 focuses on the relationships between religious and faith-based organizations and the state, exploring the different views and expectations articulated by respondents from the state sector and from religious and faith-based organizations. It argues that relations between the state and religious and faith-based

organizations are asymmetric and unstable, which creates insecurity and a widespread sense of disadvantage. In Section 8, the conclusion argues that the state must address the fears of marginalization felt by many religious organizations. However, the inclusion of religious groups in the state has also contributed to increased mutual understanding and learning among religious and faith-based organizations. Indeed, we suggest that some of Nigeria's religious politics and innovations might be of interest for religious practitioners and politicians beyond Nigeria.

2 Religion and politics in Nigerian history

As a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country, Nigeria's broad religious geography reflects the historical exposure of its northern communities to Islam through the trans-Saharan trade and the success of Christian missionary enterprise in many of its southern parts. However, while historical alliances and shared ethnicity are closely associated with the adoption of these two world religions, religious and ethno-regional identity are cross-cutting, often reinforcing each other. Thus, while Islam had been entrenched in the pre-colonial Hausa cities for centuries, many other northern groups converted to Islam in the wake of the nineteenth century Islamic *jihad* under Uthman dan Fodio (1754-1817), during which the greater part of northern and central Nigeria was incorporated into a new Caliphate, albeit with the exception of the existing, and much older, Islamic kingdom of Borno, which remains the most important rival to Sokoto's claims to represent all of northern Nigeria. Other Muslim groups with a tradition independent of the Uthmanian Caliphate include the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria, where people initially converted to Islam as a result of links to Malian trading communities (cf. Peel, 1996, p. 610), and Nigeria's middle belt, where large-scale conversion to Islam has continued throughout the postcolonial period.

Nigerian Christianity dates back to the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the early nineteenth century, which was followed by the emergence of a literate African elite, consisting of liberated and returned slaves as well as local converts, in coastal cities such as Lagos. Because Christianity is much younger than Islam in the local context, it is not associated with pre-colonial relations of power. And because its growth in Nigeria was accompanied by the spread of mission education, Nigeria's professional elite was, for a long time, dominated by Christians. Like Islam, Nigerian Christianity is heterogeneous. Roman Catholicism has long been the religion of the Igbo-speaking south-east, although Nigerian-founded Pentecostal churches have made strong inroads into this area over the twenty years prior to this study. In other parts of the country's south, Protestant denominations – including Pentecostal groups – are dominant in the Christian community, but the Yoruba-speaking south-west is almost equally divided between Christianity and Islam. Moreover, there are important Christian groups in the north, which include both Hausa converts and smaller local groups determined to assert their difference from the Hausa-speaking majority or from relations of power associated with the Caliphate (cf. Kastfelt, 2003). Moreover, just as there are Muslim migrants from northern Nigeria in many southern cities, there are Christian communities of migrants, or descendants of migrants, from the south in almost all northern Nigerian cities.

Apart from Christianity and Islam, Nigerians also belong to a range of other religious groups. The largest of these is comprised of followers of traditional religious practice, here referred to as African Traditional Religion (ATR), with the proviso that local belief systems and practices differ widely, and that their subsumption under one term mainly reflects the fact that these practices do not (yet) hold the status of world religions.³ However, many ATR groups share the conviction that the worldly and the sacred are closely interwoven, and that all human relations – including those involving the state and its representatives – reflect both secular and spiritual forces. It is believed that insight into these forces can be gained through divination and revelation, and that they can be influenced through sacrifice, prayer and incantation. Because traditional practices have influenced Christians and Muslims and vice versa, debates about their validity form an important and ongoing part of inter- and intra-religious struggles in Nigeria (Amherd and Nolte, 2005). Beyond the engagement with local traditions, Christianity and Islam have expressed a high degree of political competitiveness with each other at least since the 1970s.

Nigeria's colonial and postcolonial rulers have managed the differences associated with different religious constituencies, and especially Islam and Christianity, in various ways. For most of the colonial period, almost all parts of northern Nigeria – the areas belonging to the Uthmanian Caliphate and the kingdom of Borno – were under indirect rule, i.e. administered through the structures of the Caliphate, albeit under British guidance. While secular concerns guided important aspects of the local administration, it was thus officially presided over by traditional authorities sanctioned by tradition and Islam, and Islam also constituted the basis for local government. *Shari'a* courts,⁴ which had existed before colonial rule, were integrated into the colonial state, and most people turned to *shari'a* law for the mediation and resolution of personal conflicts.⁵ Only in the run-up to independence in 1960 were criminal laws codified into secular law. The colonial state's reliance on the structures of the Caliphate in turn affected religious and educational politics in northern Nigeria. In many parts of the north, missionary activity was forbidden, preventing the emergence of an educated elite prepared to challenge either the *Emirs* or local Muslim traditions. As a result, when the colonial presence was dismantled, the established urban (trading) elites and the local aristocracy emerged as the tenants of northern Nigerian politics.

While Islam was deeply entrenched in the traditional sphere of the Nigerian state, Christianity was, especially in the south, mainly associated with modernization. As most missions provided schooling, and later even college training, Christianity was closely associated with the spread of education. The rapid growth of literacy contributed to the emergence of a mostly urban intermediary class of educated men and women who worked as catechists, clerks and teachers. This group soon took up and transformed the local elite's struggles for self-assertion. Directly confronted with racial division in the colonial administration, banking practices and even the mission churches, literate southern Nigerians eventually formed the core of Nigeria's anti-colonial movement. Criticizing both the colonial state and the traditional rulers through which the state had ruled, members of this educated elite considered themselves – rather than the representatives of older elites and especially the aristocracy – the natural heirs and rulers of the colonial state after independence.

2.1 Politics and religion in postcolonial Nigeria

When Nigeria attained independence in 1960, it became an officially secular state. At the same time, both Christianity and Islam were closely, though never exclusively, associated with very different social and geographic groups, and this was reflected to some degree in postcolonial politics. Although the independence movement had split along ethnic lines, southern Nigerians, who, apart from those in the south-west, tended to be Christians, generally envisioned national integration and development in line with Western models of modernization, democratization and meritocracy. Meanwhile, many northern Nigerian leaders, most of them Muslims, were cautious about political independence. One of the reasons was that they were worried that low levels of literacy in the north could mean that, instead of being ruled by British officials, after independence northern Nigeria would be ruled by southern Nigerians. As a result, education became an important concern of the Muslim communities in both the north and the south of the country. The resulting engagement of Nigerian Muslims with wider political, intellectual and religious debates has significantly contributed to the transformation and internal differentiation of the Muslim community since independence, giving rise both to a trend towards secularization⁶ and to more fundamentalist movements critical of the local Sufi traditions, some of which are discussed below. However, while religion and education played an important role in structuring political competition in the early postcolonial years, and even in the clashes eventually leading to the first military coup (1966) and the Civil War (1967-70), the political impact of religion was widely perceived as less problematic for Nigeria than that of ethnicity and regionalism.

In response to the Civil War, Nigeria's military rulers broke up the regions into which the country had been divided and instead created a federation of twelve states (subsequently increased to thirty-six). To reduce administrative differences within the country, the military also centralized and standardized Nigeria's administration and finances so that the majority of the country's export revenues were collected centrally and then (re-)distributed to the State and local governments. While this degree of fiscal centralization means that the central government has a final degree of control over State politics, meaning that secession would be economically disadvantageous to most States outside of the Niger Delta, this form of federalism also provides State governments with a regular income that is independent of local productivity.

The reforms following the Civil War were aimed at nation-building, and in the area of education, they attempted to level differences between Christians and Muslims. Starting after the Civil War in the south-east, and finalized in 1976, the military government headed by General Olusegun Obasanjo encouraged the Nigerian State governments to take over schools and hospitals owned by religious organizations in order to reduce inequalities, especially the educational gap between Muslims and Christians. As most schools and hospitals were owned by the mission churches and based in the southern part of Nigeria, this inequality of access to facilities and education levels was widely perceived at the time as having contributed to the struggles over Nigeria's future that had led to the Civil War (Davis and Kalu-Nwivu, 2001). However, the establishment of state control over – and state funding for – the nation's educational institutions further complicated educational politics. One reason was that decision-making in this matter actually takes place at the State rather than federal level, meaning that State decisions were not consistent at the national level. At the time, and despite some complaints over individual State governments' anti-Christian bias (cf. Hackett, 1999, p. 543), public engagement in the provision of Western education was generally perceived as a contribution to the nation's modernization. However, Nigeria's developmental failure has meant that the education provided by the state is generally of low quality and the educational reforms are sometimes perceived as having diminished the influence of Christian organizations as well as southern groups (Hackett, 1999). As a result, the churches demand that the government should return the ownership and management of mission-established institutions to them.

While the educational sector in northern Nigeria has greatly expanded since the 1970s (Bano, 2009), the provision of education remains a problem, especially in rural areas, and Muslims fear that they would be disadvantaged by a return of formerly Christian-owned institutions to the churches. Moreover, the return of formerly Christian schools might also affect Muslim politics in unexpected ways. In the 1970s, education was generally understood as Western education, meaning that many Qur'anic schools were overlooked. Similarly overlooked were the Muslim itinerant educators and students (often referred to as *almajiri* or *tsangaya*), who have been associated with violent uprisings, from the 1980s Maitatsaine risings (Lubeck, 1985) to the 2009 *Boko Haram* violence (*The Nation*, 8 August 2009). A withdrawal of state control over formerly Christian schools would also undermine the (overdue) attempts in some northern States to exert control over potentially subversive Muslim educational institutions (*Daily Triumph*, 16 November 2008). As a result of Nigeria's complex educational landscape, therefore, education remains a religiously contested topic.⁷

The reforms following the Civil War also affected Nigeria's legal landscape. A *Shari'a* Court of Appeal had existed in the Northern Region since 1960, albeit with a remit limited to civil cases between Muslims. When the region was divided into States, this Court of Appeal ceased to exist, and while some northern States set up their own courts of appeal, the legal landscape of northern Nigeria had been disunited. In response, demands for the establishment of a Federal *Shari'a* Court of Appeal were first voiced during the constitutional engineering that preceded the return to civilian rule in 1979-83, often referred to as Nigeria's Second Republic. While many northern Nigerians felt this would simply ensure the unity of Nigeria's Muslim community, Nigerian Christians in the south, who had hitherto not come into contact with Islamic law, were fearful, because to them the creation of a federal institution concerned with *shari'a* law appeared like a significant expansion of Muslim legal influence over the state.

Although a compromise was worked out at that time,⁸ the bitter rhetoric surrounding the issue has been revived on several subsequent occasions. In the mid-1980s, when Nigeria was again under military rule, Christian-Muslim relations were further polarized when its membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) became public knowledge. Religious competition continued to be intense under successive military governments until 1993, when Nigeria's so-called Third Republic was aborted with the cancellation of the presidential elections by the military head of

state, Ibrahim Babangida. The annulled 1993 election of the southern Muslim presidential candidate Moshood Abiola led to a mobilization of pro-democracy groups opposing yet another military government, especially in the Yoruba-speaking south and south-west. The resentment felt in the south-west also found expression in a revival of ethnic politics. In order to overcome the resistance associated with ethnic *ressentiment* and mobilization, the military leader who eventually succeeded Babangida, Sani Abacha, turned to religion.

Abacha spent much of his time in government manipulating another so-called transition process election. In the course of this, he invited religious leaders of all faiths to the capital Abuja in May 1998 and asked them, and indeed all Nigerians, to pray for three days to move the nation forward. The reason for this was that he wanted to emerge as the only – and divinely chosen – candidate for a supposedly democratic presidential election (Mustapha, 1999, p. 280). Undeterred by the fact that Abacha died about two weeks after he had called upon God to help Nigeria, his civilian successor in 1999, President Obasanjo, also turned to religion to legitimate himself. Appropriating and subverting the reservations over government corruption expressed by many Christians, especially in the growing Pentecostal movement, he had declared himself ‘born again’ during the 1990s and had joined the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), a powerful and expanding church with a strong base in Nigeria’s south-west.

The Obasanjo administration presided over a constitution, which, despite the considerable experience of Nigerians with constitution-writing (the country has had nine constitutions since the first [Clifford] constitution in 1922), was somewhat ambiguous with regard to the role of religion in the state. Thus, Section 10 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) announces that

The Government of the Federation of the state shall not adopt any religion as state religion.

However, Section 38(1) holds that

Every person shall be entitled to the freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his [sic] religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate its religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

Referring to the demands associated with the struggle over *shari'a* law in the past, the constitution also acknowledged the right of Nigerians to *shari'a* justice by stating that

There shall be for any State that requires it a Shari'a Court of Appeal for that State.
(Section 275 (1))

and

There shall be a Shari'a Court of Appeal of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. (Section 260 (1))

After the implementation of *shari'a* penal law in twelve northern Nigerian States in 1999 and 2000, the debates about *shari'a* law led to some religious polarization as well as to intensive debates about the nature of the Nigerian state. Many Muslims interpret the constitutional provisions by focusing on the provision for freedom of religion. If Muslims are free to practise Islam, which includes the practice of *shari'a* law, then the introduction of *shari'a* at State level is, in their view, an expression of their constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom. Many Christians, in contrast, focus on the provision that no state religion be adopted and feel that the introduction of *shari'a* law is unconstitutional because it affects their religious freedom to live without *shari'a*. Thus, the institution of *shari'a* penal law is viewed by many Muslims as an act of religious freedom, while a significant number of Christians and other non-Muslims interpret it as a challenge to the constitution, which is meant to guarantee their own religious freedom.

Despite heated debates about *shari'a* at the time of its introduction, the boundaries in the struggles by religious groups and organizations over public space and recognition are fluid. Some Christian groups have 'translated' the current Muslim debate into the realm of Christianity and demanded the introduction of (Christian) canon law in predominantly Christian states (Imo, 2008, p. 64). Others have argued that *shari'a* constitutes a threat to the secular state model (cf. Ilesanmi, 2001). However, the appeal to secularism may be a primarily rhetorical device to appeal to an international (secular) audience, because Christians actively support the (re-) integration of religion into the country's politics in many other areas. Beyond the grand rhetoric of debates over the secular state model, it is interesting that speakers from both religions appeal to the constitution and other state provisions. This means that religious politics revolve around both the sacred texts and historical practices of the faith communities and the constitution and its provisions. As a result, *shari'a* has been implemented within

the framework of the constitutional system. While this means that religious ideas and practices are included in state provisions, the latter also impact on religious discourse and practice (Suberu, 2009, p. 552-553).

Beyond the struggle over the *shari'a* law, the informal extension of the constitutionally established 'federal character principle' to the Christian and Muslim constituencies has had a noticeable effect on the political debate. The 'federal character principle' was originally devised to guarantee the equitable representation of Nigerians from all States of the federation in political and bureaucratic government offices. This principle has assuaged both northern Nigerian fears of a preponderance of the better educated southerners in government and administration, and southern Nigerian fears of northern domination, based on the fact that most governments since independence have been headed by Muslims from northern Nigeria. Employed by different military and civilian governments since the 1980s and continued systematically under both the Obasanjo (1999-2007) and Yar'Adua (2007-) administrations, the practice of balancing the number of Muslim and Christian office holders, and often of pairing a Muslim chair with a Christian vice-chair (and vice versa), has contributed to a tacit understanding that government will ensure Muslim-Christian parity in federal institutions (Suberu, 2009, p. 558).

This form of religious representation constitutes a way of managing Christian-Muslim tensions at the federal level and can be understood as a de facto acknowledgement of the multi-religious nature of the Nigerian state (Paden, 2005, p. 81). It may have contributed to the growing acceptance of *shari'a* among non-Muslims. A recent survey suggests that between 2001 and 2007, support for *shari'a* law increased from 55 per cent to 60 per cent in *shari'a* states, and from 10 per cent to 28 per cent in non-*shari'a* states (Afrobarometer, 2009, p. 6). Of course, these numbers also illustrate that a significant number of northern Nigerians (including Muslims, Christians and traditionalists) remain indifferent or opposed to *shari'a*, making Islamic law a practice that continues to be central to the political and religious debate in Nigeria, even in the north.

Also, although the guarantee of equitable religious representation alleviates immediate anxieties, it suggests that Christian-Muslim opposition is central to Nigerian politics. Yet by focusing on the divide between Islam and Christianity, federal policy obscures other forms of religious conflict. For example,

while the equal representation of the world religions reflects the notion that Nigeria has roughly equal numbers of Muslims and Christians, it does not address the aspirations of followers of traditional practices and beliefs, despite their ongoing political relevance in many localities. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, as our research illustrates, the assumption that the cleavage between Nigerian Christians and Muslims is the dominant one obscures the differences within these traditions.

By focusing only on the monotheistic religions, and by assuming that relations within the Christian and Muslim communities are unproblematic, the present multi-religious policy does not reflect the reality and fails to address important struggles over meaning and power within Nigeria. Instead, the state's attempt to mediate between what it conceives of as two fairly homogenous groups seems to reflect and reinforce debates about the 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington, 1993), which potentially radicalizes both the perceptions and the responses of Nigerian believers and their international supporters. Moreover, while it may be a workable assumption to treat Islam and Christianity as of equal influence at the national level, this is clearly not the case in the politics at State and local government levels, where struggles over the inclusion of local religious groups are likely to reflect concrete rivalries and historical differences linked to factors beyond religion, such as language, ethnicity or place of origin. In this report we argue that the two-dimensional nature of Nigeria's multi-religious political and governance practices shapes the nature of religious competition in various ways.

2.2 Research design and organization

This paper is based on field research in three of Nigeria's thirty-six States undertaken during 2007 and 2008. These States were chosen in order to represent both uniform and mixed Muslim and Christian communities in different ethno-regional settings. The states studied included the mainly Christian Anambra State in the south-east, the predominantly Muslim Kano State in the north, and the mixed Christian-Muslim Oyo State in the south-west. In Anambra, Kano and Oyo States, interviews were carried out by Uchenna Chester Azubuiké, Nathaniel Danjibo and Abubakar Oladeji respectively⁹, who spoke with leaders and members of religious and faith-based organizations engaged in local politics, as well as with some representatives of the State government and administration (see Table 1). In all three States, respondents from both Christian and Muslim organisations were interviewed, as well as members of 'indigenous' and 'migrant' groups (see Table 1). The researchers also spoke to government representatives in all three States. All respondents were offered confidentiality, though this

offer was not taken up by many. Interviews in Anambra and Oyo States were carried out in English and in Kano State in Hausa and English. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and those in the Hausa language were translated by Nathaniel Danjibo. A complete list of interviews, with anonymous responses identified by position and state, can be found in Appendices 1-3.

Table 1: Interviews with representatives from religious groups and FBOs

	Anambra	Kano	Oyo	Total
Ansar-Ud-Deen Society (ADS)		2	1	3
Anglican Church (Church of Nigeria, CofN)	1			1
Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)		2	1	3
Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA)		1		1
Hausa Muslim Community Awka (HMCO)	1			1
Izalatul-Bid'a Wa Iqamat (<i>Izala</i>)		1		1
[Roman Catholic] Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC)	1		1	2
Nasrul-Lahi-II-Fathi Society (NASFAT)		1	1	2
Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)	1		1	2
Yoruba Muslim Community Anambra (YMCO)	1			1
Total	5	5	4	17

Source: Fieldwork by Azubuike, Danjibo and Oladeji, 2007-2008

One result of the relatively short time available for fieldwork was that that all but one of the respondents was male. While this reflects the male-dominated structure of most of the organizations with which we engaged, most of which encourage women's activities in a separate 'women's wing', it also reflected the fact that we had only male researchers in the field, who all felt that if they had asked to speak to women so soon after contacting an organization, this might have given rise to misunderstanding. Nevertheless, this creates a regrettable bias and we suggest, therefore, that the reflection on attitudes to gender in Section 6.3 should be considered preliminary. Also, all Christian and most – though not all – Muslim respondents were members of the Nigerian (educated) elite. Again, this reflects the dominance of educated leaders in the religious and FBO sector, as well as the fact that during the short time in the field, the interviewers strove to obtain as much material as possible and

therefore did not focus on contacting respondents with fewer educational attainments. While we do not believe that our research points to dramatic differences between the views of Muslim and Christian representatives, and while we think that our respondents attempted, on the whole, to speak for their organizations (please see below), we still suggest that our findings may not be representative of all followers of the organizations with which we interacted.

The aims of the interviews were to assess in what ways religious communities and FBOs engage in the political process in the States, and to analyse the roles of religious communities as obstacles to and levers of change for development more generally. For this purpose, respondents were generally encouraged to reply as representatives of their organizations. Where this was misunderstood and individuals responded for themselves, the interviewers repeated the questions and asked about the organization's view. However, several interview transcripts, as well as field note comments by the interviewers, suggest that many respondents shifted between different points of view, with the result that most responses include comments that reflect personal, organizational and even general philosophical or religious views. In order to take account of this potential source of confusion, we have been careful to attribute quotes to specific respondents, rather than simply attributing the views expressed to organizations. Where confidentiality was agreed, respondents are acknowledged with reference to the relevant State and their organizational affiliation.

This paper sets out to analyse the findings from the field within the wider context of political analysis and debate in Nigeria, especially since 1999. It is therefore based on a review of secondary material on the political communities in general by the author, in order to contextualize the findings from the field, as well as drawing on the draft fieldwork report and interview transcripts. The clear division of labour between the research team members influenced its method of investigation, which could be described as a modified institutional approach. Such an approach is based on the notion that decisions affecting governance and development are made within the institutional contexts of both religious and faith-based organizations and government. However, our institutional focus also reflects the fact that the report is based on short-term fieldwork, in which little time was available for the observations of actual practice by the researchers in the field. Thus, during fieldwork, while it was possible to access and discuss the formal (and informal) rules of institutions with organizational representatives, it was only rarely possible to gain a detailed understanding of local political, religious

and developmental concepts and debates. Moreover, the author and contributors had to overcome significant communication problems, and as a result found it difficult to integrate the case study research and the more general observations drawn from the responses of interview partners. As a result, the report emphasizes two slightly different areas of interest, namely – first – studies of the activities and scope of action of religious and faith-based organizations in the three selected States, and – second – a discussion of views from both FBOs and religious organizations and government on aspects of governance and development in Nigeria.

2.3 Research terminology

The terminology needed to understand organizational forms in multi-religious settings is under-developed and attempts to develop a usable typology are few and preliminary. In this study, the organizations with which the research team interacted can be described as either religious organizations, used to describe the organizational expression of the faith traditions (institutions such as dioceses, churches, mosques or Muslim *tariqas*¹⁰), or faith-based organizations (FBOs), used to denote organizations with some autonomy from their religious organizations, as well as a public engagement profile similar to other non-governmental organizations. However, it is useful to bear in mind that many organizations straddle even these broad definitions. Thus the Nasrul-Lahi-Il-Fathi Society (NASFAT), the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society (ADS) and the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) are religious organizations or communities, but they were also recognized as FBOs by Odumosu, Olaniyi and Alonge (2009) because of their strong commitment to development and missionary causes. We suggest that, with the exceptions of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), neither of which are religious organizations in the sense specified above, and the Hausa and Yoruba Muslim communities interviewed in Anambra State (HMCO, YMCO), both of which have relatively few resources and might best be considered religious (or ethno-religious) associations, all the organizations discussed in this report are both religious organizations and faith-based organizations (FBOs). When we refer to them, the terms ‘religious group’ and ‘FBO’ are used interchangeably, although the analysis emphasizes the organizations’ activities as FBOs.

Despite the difficulty of categorizing the organizations studied in this research, it is clear that they are quite different in terms of their organizational capacities and remits. Using Clarke’s (2006, p. 840)

typology of FBOs as a general guideline, we can, for example, assess the reach of the organizations covered and illustrate some unevennesses. Thus, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) is a typical apex body, which aims to represent all Nigerian Christians. The Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) is usually considered its Muslim counterpart. However, unlike CAN, the NSCIA is not organized at the State level but at the federal level only. As its main officers are the traditional rulers of Sokoto and Borno, as well as a high chief in Abeokuta (Ogun State), none are directly involved in the politics of the States under study. After a consideration of these differences between the organizations, as well as the difficulties of gaining access to the eminent personalities involved, we did not attempt to contact them. However, in order to ensure that we did not favour CAN in our discussion of national politics, we agreed not to digress from State-level concerns in our interviews with CAN representatives.

In order to assess the direct influence of political closeness on an organization, it was decided to interview members of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, reputedly very close to President Obasanjo (1999-2007), rather than representatives of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN). Apart from the Muslim communities in Anambra State, all the organizations with which we interacted operate in more than one Nigerian State, although the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) and *Izalatul-Bid'a Wa Iqamat (Izala)* are mainly confined to northern Nigeria, illustrating the ongoing organizational differences between north and south. Finally, the interviewers found it more difficult in some States than others to access local organizations, and this has resulted in a lack of interview data from important groups, including the northern Nigerian Sufi orders. We have tried to balance this through references to the scholarly literature where possible, but as a result our findings remain tentative.

In their mapping of Nigerian NGOs, Odumosu, Olaniyi and Alonge (2009) classify NASFAT, JDPC and ECWA as primarily development-oriented FBOs and the ADS as a mainly missionary organization, even though the research and interviews show that the differences between the activities of these groups are limited. In addition, Odumosu et al. suggest that the JDPC is primarily a socio-political FBO, which is reflected in its unique and critical engagement with electoral practice in Oyo and especially Anambra States.

2.4 Outline of the paper

The paper first focuses on case studies of religious groups and FBO participation in the selected states, starting in Section 3 with Kano State, because of the high incidence of religiously motivated conflicts in that State. Kano State has long been a centre of rivalry between the Sufi *tariqas* or orders of *Qadiriyya* and *Tijaniyya*, and it has also experienced a range of violent clashes involving groups critical of the *tariqas* since Nigeria's economic decline in the 1980s. Such clashes have included bitter and violent conflict between local groups and the (Muslim) local aristocracy and State government, and they have not ceased since the implementation of *shari'a* law in Kano and other northern Nigerian States since 1999. As a result, the management of intra-Muslim rivalry is of paramount importance for the State government, while the resolution of Christian-Muslim differences is of secondary relevance. As will be seen, *shari'a* law plays an important role in bringing Muslims from different backgrounds together.

From Kano, in Section 4 the narrative moves to Anambra State, which has suffered from intense rivalry between its mainly Christian constituencies. Like in Kano State, these rivalries are partly driven by local criticism of the State government. However, due to the fact that the political elite in Anambra State only holds worldly authority, the nature of the criticism by religious organizations is not directed against a religiously legitimated establishment. In the much more competitive environment of Anambra State, religious rivalry is closely linked to patronage politics, which are determined by the links of politicians and their backers or 'godfathers' to the central government. Unlike in Kano, the State government does not officially include religious groups in the running of its own affairs, although through a proportional distribution of posts among religious groups it ensures that very few groups are fully excluded.

Meanwhile, in the multi-religious Oyo State, discussed in Section 5, religious conflicts have been of much lower importance than other forms of competition. Thus, Muslims in Oyo State and elsewhere have adapted the *shari'a* debate to local circumstances by pioneering the introduction of Independent *Shari'a* Arbitration Panels at state level. These have been widely accepted by Christians because of their voluntary character. However, unlike in Kano, such panels do not include all minorities by origin, and in Oyo State, northern Nigerian Muslims have their own *shari'a* provisions, meaning that religious difference is actually increased by the fact that different Muslim groups have different origins. At the

same time, a system of proportional involvement in politics by different religious groups has led to an intense Muslim-Christian dialogue, with potential relevance for Nigeria as a whole and even beyond.

As Section 6 illustrates, despite the different circumstances under which they participate in politics in the States, the organizational representatives interviewed for this report share very similar views on good governance and development. They emphasize infrastructural development, education and health care, as well as justice, equal treatment and the fear of God. Also, all respondents comment, almost despairingly, on Nigeria's increasing poverty. Despite the shared vocabulary with regard to Nigerian politics, religious views of women's roles differed, with Christian and Muslim groups from the north emphasizing family and household duties as women's main responsibilities and Muslim and Christian groups from the south envisioning a much wider scope of action for women. This suggests that differences in world views are not necessarily determined by religious orientation, and that other factors play an important role. Overall, the comments of our informants include a strong critique of the failure of the Nigerian state to deliver welfare to its citizens, a critique that both unites and legitimates religious groups and FBOs as participants in a national dialogue over the country's future.

Perhaps because of the religious base to many critiques of the Nigerian state, relations between the state and FBOs are complex. Section 7 shows that the government primarily views religious organizations and FBOs not only as service deliverers but also as political mobilizing agents. For this reason, state institutions often attempt to co-opt specific religious groups and FBOs for political purposes, rather than providing systematic support for their development activities. However, because such processes tend to reflect the interests of those individuals and groups in power, religious organizations and FBOs are unevenly linked to government. At the same time, many religious groups seek to influence government, even though they also fear its corrupting influence on themselves and others. As religious leaders and their followers worry about their spiritual integrity, differences in faith and practice seem to become increasingly important. These relationships between religions and the state are likely to further intensify communal tension, because excluded groups, whether they are excluded on the basis of their religion, place of origin or ideology, tend to justify their discrimination against others as being a way to 'even things out'. As a result, both communal and religious rivalry is exacerbated by the unequal inclusion of religious groups in the state. The main points of the conclusion are listed below:

- Nigerians from different parts of the country share similar views on good governance and development: these emphasize infrastructural development, education and health care and are shaped by recourse to Biblical and Qur'anic ideals of justice, equality and 'the fear of God'.
- Despite their shared critique of the Nigerian state, which often also includes government failure to provide educational and health-related infrastructure, religious groups and FBOs neither act in concert nor, frequently, in the common interest of all Nigerians.
- Despite attempts by the state at various levels to co-opt religious groups and FBOs in order to gain grassroots presence and legitimacy, the state does not systematically support independent development efforts by these groups.
- Encounters between the state and religious groups have included and facilitated negotiation, imitation and dialogue, but the unequal integration of religious groups and FBOs into politics often has the effect of privileging 'indigeneity' and locality; it also creates and intensifies religious rivalry below the federal level.
- Some religious developments, for example the creation of public institutional spaces for interaction between religious groups, may have potential for addressing religious (especially Muslim-Christian) difference.

3 Muslim debates and *shari'a* politics in Kano State

Kano, an ancient Hausa-speaking trading town, is Nigeria's most important northern metropolis today. Like most historical centres in the southern Sudan, Kano has a long history of engagement with Islam. Muslims lived in the town long before the fourteenth century, when one of the town's rulers converted and eventually declared Islam the religion of the state. His conversion was linked to the large-scale immigration of traders from Mali, who settled in Kano and contributed to the emergence of a distinct Kano identity. It appears that Islam was widely known in most Hausa cities by the fifteenth century, though its practice was tolerant of local beliefs and mostly limited to the urban elite, who drew on it to attract scholars and traders. Islam was also a valuable resource in Kano's institutional development, and in the sixteenth century, local scholars created a written constitution which enumerated the obligations and responsibilities of its ruler and remained a focal point for Kano politics over subsequent centuries.¹¹

By 1804, a Sokoto-based Islamic reform movement under the leadership of Uthman dan Fodio created a Caliphate centred on the Hausa states but going far beyond them. Dan Fodio's choice of Sokoto as the capital of his empire, and his defeat of Kano, which had asked to be spared on the grounds that it had adopted Islam earlier than Sokoto, remains an important source of rivalry within the former Caliphate. The rivalry between the cities of Kano and Sokoto eventually led to a civil war between the two cities in the 1890s. It was also expressed by the adoption in Kano of the *Tijaniyya* Sufi tradition, then a reformist movement critical of the older *Qadiriyya*, which was predominant in Sokoto and most of Uthman's Caliphate. After the British conquest, most of northern Nigeria was governed by indirect rule, which meant that local *sultans* and *emirs* continued to govern their territories, albeit with the advice of a British Resident. As the local aristocracy had significant control over the local population, social change, including the introduction of Western education, was slow, and society – still organized in accordance with the reforms introduced by the Caliphate – was ossified in many respects.

As colonial rule encouraged the entrenchment of Islam in northern Nigeria, Kano remained a centre of religious study in the *almajiri* education system, which brought rural young men to study under Kano scholars, where they improved their knowledge of Islam as well as learning a trade (Lubeck, 1985). The economic significance of Kano also grew further when it was linked to Lagos by the railway in 1912 and became the most important regional market for groundnuts and cotton. As Kano expanded, its aristocracy and trading elite increasingly aligned with each other in their struggle to maintain control over a city that was increasingly attracting educational and economic in-migrants. Beyond migration

from the rural areas surrounding Kano, the railway also attracted many southern Nigerians to the city. These immigrants were rarely allowed to settle in the old quarters of the town, and most of them resided in a new and separate neighbourhood called Sabon Gari.

In the run-up to independence, Kano's ruler, *Emir* Sir Muhammadu Sanusi, became an influential member of the political party associated with the northern aristocracy and traders, the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), which became the most powerful of Nigeria's ruling parties. The NPC's successor party, though no longer only focused on the North, also held power in Nigeria's Second Republic, and its policy of centralized social and political conservatism and coalition-seeking arguably influenced the political strategies of most of Nigeria's military regimes, which have tended to be dominated by northern Nigerians. However, in what appeared to be a reiteration of pre-colonial rivalries between Kano and Sokoto, Sanusi's relationship with the leader of the NPC, Sir Ahmadu Bello, an heir to the throne of Sokoto, deteriorated after independence, and eventually Sanusi was deposed in 1963. Partly in response to the perceived domination of Sokoto and its 'core' Caliphate allies, Kano became a centre of opposition to the party in power at the federal level. Focused on the interests of commoners and poor people (*talakawa*) rather than the urban elite and aristocracy, Aminu Kano, himself the son of a prominent scribe in the Kano Native Authority, emerged as the leader of the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU), which challenged the activities of the NPC in northern Nigeria until the military coup of 1966 ended the First Republic.

In 1967, when Nigeria's present form of centralized federalism was introduced, Kano became the new capital of Kano state. However, Kano State in its present form only emerged in 1991, when what is now Jigawa State to the northeast of Kano was excised. Despite this division, Kano State remains Nigeria's most populous state, with at least 9.3 million inhabitants (cf. Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006; footnote 2). During the Second Republic (1979-83), NEPU's successor party, the Peoples' Redemption Party (PRP), was able to defeat the governing Nigerian Peoples' Party (NPN) in Kano State.¹² Kano's refusal to vote for the dominant party at the federal level probably still reflected the powerful influence of Sokoto and its loyal allies in the government. While the NPN was successful both in northern and, to some degree, south-eastern Nigeria, its nucleus had been formed on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of Abubakar III as *Sultan* of Sokoto and Leader of Nigeria's Muslims (*Sarkin Musulmi*). Moreover, Shehu Shagari, the NPN's leader and eventual president of Nigeria, was an

office-holder at the *Sultan's* court. Rejecting a similarly strong presence of Sokoto in the party favoured by the Babangida regime during the failed transition to civilian rule in the early 1990s, Kano voted against its presidential candidate Bashir Tofa, despite the fact that he originated from Kano, and instead supported the Yoruba-speaker (and Muslim) Moshood Abiola, whose election was eventually annulled (Vaughan, 2005, p. 125). The wide appeal of Abiola in northern Nigeria, though not in Sokoto, would have made him the first Nigerian president to rule without support from Sokoto.

In the run-up to the Fourth Republic, the son of Abubakar III, Muhammadu Maccido, also had powerful reasons not to support the majority party. After his father's death in 1988, the then military ruler Ibrahim Babangida had supported the installation of one of his relatives, Ibrahim Dasuki, who remained *Sultan* until the Abacha government dethroned him and installed Maccido in 1996. When Babangida re-emerged as one of the main sponsors of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in the transition to the 1999 elections, Maccido, like many former allies of the now deceased Abacha, allied himself with the strongest opposition party, the All Peoples' Party (APP) (cf. Greiter et al, 1998, p. 340). At this time the APP had no coherent political programme or project, but by appealing to many power-brokers outside of the PDP, it established itself as the governing party in Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Jigawa, Yobe, Borno, Gombe, Kogi and Kwara States, thus finding support in diverse constituencies in northern Nigeria and, below the State level, also in the south. While the votes of Kano – as well as many other northern Nigerian states – for the PDP reflected the party's greater ability to build national coalitions, it is possible that the fact that Sokoto did not support the PDP also contributed to its ability to establish itself in Kano.

Soon after the 1999 elections, the APP found a focus for its political ambitions: the implementation of *shari'a* penal law at the State level. Transformed into the All Nigerian Peoples' Party in 2002, the ANPP appealed to the Muslim electorate through the public support for its presidential candidate in 2003 and 2007, the former military ruler General Muhamamdu Buhari, who campaigned for the introduction of *shari'a* penal law throughout northern Nigeria. However, the ANPP's overwhelming association with the introduction of *shari'a* may, after an initial surge of enthusiasm, not have served as a basis for national success in the long term.¹³ Hopes to carry all twelve *shari'a* states in 2003 were disappointed because the party lost control of Kwara, Kogi and Gombe,¹⁴ as well as many of its southern Nigerian supporters. However, the ANPP won Kano, which, because of its economic importance and large

population, and also because of its long history of political rivalry with Sokoto, constituted an important win for the party. Under the leadership of Kano State's current governor, Ibrahim Shekarau (2003-), the state has since become a centre of ANPP activities (Paden, 2005, p. 159). Despite strong electoral support for Buhari and the ANPP in northern Nigeria, the party lost further governorship seats in the 2007 election.¹⁵ Although it achieved an electoral victory in Bauchi State, it lost Sokoto and Kebbi States, whose political elites had come to an arrangement with the PDP. The decline of the ANPP in Sokoto further emphasized the importance of Kano.

After the ANPP governors of Zamfara and Bauchi States decamped to the PDP in early 2009 (after the fieldwork was completed), it was rumoured that Buhari, the ANPP's two-time presidential candidate, and Ali Modu Sheriff, the current governor of Borno State, are also considering leaving the party, which might mean that a shake-up of Nigeria's political alliances is imminent (*This Day*, 7 May 2009). However, as the candid pro-*shari'a* orientation of the ANPP seems to have reduced rather than expanded its influence beyond Kano State, Buhari's exit might be the making of the party. Despite the scepticism about *shari'a* in most of southern Nigeria, the ANPP has been able to maintain or even expand its presence in southern Nigeria through alliances with local opposition parties. If the ANPP widens its currently narrow focus, it is very likely that the party will recover politically, making Kano an important centre of opposition politics in Nigeria, albeit at the cost that such politics may then no longer be dominated by predominantly Muslim concerns.

3.1 Christian-Muslim relations in Kano

While Kano received very little attention from missionaries during the colonial period, it did attract migrants from all over Nigeria (and beyond), many of them Christians. Due to colonial and, later, postcolonial notions of 'indigeneity', these migrants mostly settled separately from the native Kano citizens. Today, Sabon Gari, where most immigrants and Christians live, is the economic heart of the city. Because most Christians are considered to be southern Nigerian 'in-migrants', even if they are third- or fourth-generation Kano residents, religious difference is often linked to ethnic or regional rivalry, and public assertions of in-migrants' ethnic or religious identity has often been viewed with suspicion. Like the ethno-religious violence preceding the Civil War (1967-70), Muslim-Christian violence in Kano has frequently followed perceived challenges to Islam or Muslims. For example, an evangelical mass rally of the German preacher Reinhard Bonnke in 1991 sparked a two-day

disturbance which left several hundred dead. Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, the incidence of Christian-Muslim clashes in Kano has slightly increased, although in a context in which violence has increased throughout Nigeria. Kano was a centre of 'revenge' attacks on Christians after ethnic and ethno-religious clashes in other parts of Nigeria in 1999 and in 2004 (Human Rights Watch, 2005; Nolte, 2004). In 2002, a Nigerian reporter's comments on the suitability of Miss World contestants as wives for the Prophet incited violence, as did the appearance of Danish cartoons depicting him in late 2005.

The introduction of *shari'a* law in 2000 created some anxiety among Christians in Kano State, which was alleviated at least in part when Governor Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso argued that a gradual introduction of *shari'a* was required in order to take account of the State's cosmopolitan nature. However, Kwankwaso's moderate approach created Muslim opposition, and local groups set up an independent *Shari'a* Implementation Committee as well as a *hisbah* group to police compliance with the law.¹⁶ Perhaps in response to repeated clashes between the *hisbah* and the police, the State government established a *Hisbah* Board in 2003. However, this came too late for Kwankwaso to win the 2003 elections, which focused strongly on the implementation of *shari'a*. His successor Ibrahim Shekarau supported a stronger reflection of Muslim ideas in state operations, although he has stressed that neither *shari'a* nor any other pro-Islamic policy will affect Christians, and *shari'a* has not been extended to the Sabon Gari, where many Christian 'in-migrants' live, and which continues to be known locally as 'pleasure island'. At the same time, the deliberate enforcement of 'moral' dress codes, including the wearing of head scarves by Christian school girls, has affected all Kano State citizens (*IRIN*, 1 September 2003). As not all Christians are opposed to the moral values widely associated with the introduction of *shari'a* law, Christian criticism of the local state has primarily focused on the discriminatory treatment of churches, the exclusion of Christians from state-controlled radio and television, and the perceived excesses of the *hisbah* groups (Ludwig, 2008, p. 622-624).

3.2 The experiences of Christian organizations

The two Christian organizations whose representatives were interviewed were the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). ECWA was formed in 1958, when the Sudan Interior Mission in Nigeria handed over missionary activities to 'indigenous' converts. ECWA thus began its work in Kano State as a church still dominated by missionaries, but since the

1960s it has attracted local converts – including both Kano ‘indigenes’ and migrants from other parts of Nigeria – through enthusiastic mission work. ECWA also ran several schools in Kano, which were nationalized in 1978. Today the church runs a primary and secondary school, an eye clinic which attracts patients from all over Nigeria and beyond, and a rural development centre where farmers are educated about modern agricultural developments. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) is an umbrella organization of most Christian churches in Nigeria and was founded in 1976. It meets regularly to discuss and take action on matters of common interest to all Christians, including, since 1999, the introduction of *shari’a* penal law. The Kano branch of CAN was established shortly after its foundation at the national level, and while the organization does not have many material resources it has been quite vocal in the debate about *shari’a* penal law, the activities of the *hisbah* groups and related issues of concern to Christians in Kano State.

The relationships between these two FBOs and the Kano State government suggest that Christian organizations in the state are in very difficult position. This is generally attributed to the fact that Kano is a predominantly Muslim state. The State government is tightly controlled by Muslims, and there are currently no Christians in elected positions at state level and very few in high or mid-level administrative posts. Generally, the Christians in Kano are marginalized and do not take part in decision-making. Christian organizations are not subject to direct government control, but the government may request compliance with State policies and regulations from their schools and other institutions. Kano State government has often prevented Christian groups from acquiring land for the building of churches or other buildings that might be put to religious use, and Christians are not only prevented from airing their programmes on State-controlled television and radio stations, but also on private and federally-owned stations which broadcast in Kano State.

The faith-related development activities of Christian organizations are also often subject to government interference. Reverend Madi-Dangora, the secretary of CAN’s Kano State branch, explained that “two years ago, CAN Tudun Wada local government organized a conference and the local government stopped it without any reason” (interview 5 January 2008). Christian organizations are not generally taxed, although they have to pay taxes on profits made in schools and other institutions, such as hospitals, and they do not receive support for either schools or hospitals from the

State government, both being open to not only Christians but also Muslims. Reverend Joshua Bwamche, the senior pastor of ECWA commented on this practice:

Instead of the state government to be giving grants to those schools because it is not only Christian children that are trained; some Muslims bring their children to those schools. So instead of the government to give grants to support these schools, they are collecting money; they are charging the school something on yearly basis (interview 6 January 2008).

The close regulation of education provided by Christian FBOs that the Kano State government attempts is, however, not entirely successful, and ECWA has also resisted government regulation.

Reverend Bwamche explained that

At a point when we first built the school the State decided we ought to, we must employ an Islamic teacher in [our] Christian school. But our predecessor then said no, we don't intend to teach Islamic studies talkless [sic] of employing an Islamic teacher. And we made it very clear to them that any Muslim child that comes into this place, we will teach them Christian Religion Knowledge as a course, but we will not abide by what they said we should. They had intended us to teach Islamic Studies in our schools but we have rejected that (interview 6 January 2008).

ECWA has also successfully complained to the government about the way it has been treated. In 2007, a delegation went to visit Governor Shekarau and pointed out that Christians were not being treated equitably. They argued that as public funds were used to build mosques, to pay Imams and to send the Muslim faithful to Mecca, at least some public money should also be put towards supporting Christians. While the government did not want to support churches or pastors, it agreed to sponsor a pilgrimage by ten ECWA Christians to Jerusalem (interview 6 January 2008). Reflecting Christian attempts to win a share in government resources for Muslims, as well as a modern incorporation of the idea of pilgrimage into Christianity, Pilgrim Boards have supported Christians at the federal level and in other Nigerian states for some time, and Ludwig has suggested that several northern Nigerian states have begun to sponsor Christian pilgrimages to alleviate protests over *shari'a* (Ludwig, 2008, p. 617, 631). However, this does not necessarily reflect an – even tokenistic – inclusion of Christians in the State administration. Under Governor Shekarau, and in a clear rebuttal of the demands made by CAN, the head of the Kano Christian Pilgrims Board is a Muslim (*Vanguard*, 13/10/2003). Also, while the State government includes three representatives of non-‘indigene’ groups to represent this large constituency, only one is a Christian.

While some of the restrictions and difficulties encountered by Christian organizations in Kano are undoubtedly informed by religious prejudice, it is also likely that they reflect concerns over class and economic forms of rivalry. Due to their close association with education and schooling, many local Christians tend to be relatively well educated. As a result, many work in offices, educational institutions, hospitals and other professions, and for this reason their presence in northern Nigeria has frequently been perceived as a threat to Muslim upward mobility (Antony, 2002). Beyond concerns over the presumed threat of Christian professionals to Muslim society, many northern Nigerian Muslims also associate more general fears with the Christian presence in the educational sector. Appalled by often foreign-sponsored Christian proselytization campaigns or 'crusades', and mistrustful of teachers' motives, many Muslims fear that Christian schools are set up to convert Muslim children, thus turning them into apostates (Ahmad, 2005, especially p. 24).

Moreover, local prejudice against Christians is probably exacerbated by the fact that many of Kano's political struggles revolve around the mobilization of difference between those considered 'indigenes' and the numerous in-migrants to the city. At several points in time, 'indigenes' have come to feel under threat from in-migrant mobilization, and although the vast majority of in-migrants to Kano are Muslims (and not all Christians are in-migrants), for many Kano citizens, Christians constitute a clearly identifiable group of potentially threatening outsiders.

Under these circumstances, it is difficult for Christian groups to operate successfully and make themselves heard, and the fact that ECWA has not only dared to defy government expectations regarding its schools but has also lodged a successful complaint over government spending is remarkable. It is possible that ECWA's success is based on the family or professional links of its local members to Kano's political elite. Such links would explain why the church is confident that its refusal to teach Islamic Studies will be tolerated, and why it could arrange for a delegation to be received by the governor in order to present its grievances. While ECWA's successes are relatively small, they contrast with CAN's lack of success, and suggest that as a church with local converts, ECWA may be in a marginally better position than the cosmopolitan CAN or the mostly 'migrant' churches of which it is constituted.

3.3 Muslim political debates

The popular support for *shari'a* law in Kano reflects longstanding debates about proper Muslim practice, some of which are linked to violent conflicts between Muslim groups. Kano's enthusiastic embrace of the *Tijaniyya* and, from the 1940s, the Reformed *Tijaniyya* under Ibrahim Niass (d. 1975), led to violent clashes with the *Qadiriyya* during the 1950s and 1960s, and it has been argued that by the 1960s, the *Tijaniyya* had become the dominant group. However, by the late 1970s, Kano experienced a divisive debate over the value of the Sufi tradition itself. In 1978, *Sheikh* Ismaila Idris had founded the Society for the removal of innovation and reinstatement of tradition or *Izalatul-Bid'a wa Iqamat*, usually referred to as *Izala*. The organization opposed the inherited traditions of the Sufi orders, which it considered innovations that had tainted the original teachings, and advocated a return to the Qur'an and Sunna.

The *Izala* became even more popular when the outstanding Arabist and legal scholar *Sheikh* Abubakar Gumi, a former protégé of the northern post-independence leader and one-time Grand *Khadi* of the Northern Region Ahmadu Bello, associated himself with the organization and translated the Qur'an into Hausa to enable all local Muslims to practise their faith independently of Arabist scholars. While the *Izala* accepted the Nigerian state and its boundaries, it demanded a stronger Islamic identity for Nigeria. In order to work towards this aim, the *Izala* also supported the systematic education and political mobilization of women (Loimeier, 1997, especially p. 166-172, 207). Its success shocked the local Muslim establishment, and *Tijaniyya* and *Qadiriyya* began to reassess their relationship with each other in order to create a united front against the 'fundamentalists'. Since then, Kano has experienced several violent clashes between *Izala* and the Sufi orders, especially the *Tijaniyya* (Paden, 2005, p. 60-62, 184).

The conflict between the Sufi orders on the one hand and the *Izala* on the other also reflected social differences. While most members of the northern aristocracy tended to favour the *Qadiriyya*, the established families in Kano and the surrounding towns and villages were close to the *Tijaniyya*. Meanwhile, many (though by no means all) followers of the *Izala* in Kano came from poor or poorly represented groups, including students, women and petty traders. Although the *Izala* was able to establish itself in many of the old quarters of Kano, it has been identified with a followership strongly associated with 'newcomers' to the city's politics (Kane, 2003, p. 104-122, 227-239; Loimeier, 1997, p.

252-265). The different social bases of the *Izala* and Sufi groups are reflected in their different approaches to religious and political practices, with the *Izala*'s strongly egalitarian ethos reflected in its consistent campaigning for *shari'a* law in order to address the ills perceived to be present in society.

Apart from the *Izala*, Kano also witnessed the rise of the Maitatsine movement, a radical, anti-status quo movement founded by *Alhaji* Marwa Maitatsine. Maitatsine attracted itinerant traders, scholars and other marginal people, who engaged in a number of extremely violent battles with the State government. One of the first and most violent of the movement's battles took place in Kano in 1980, when several thousand people were killed (Lubeck, 1985). While the Maitatsine movement itself was destroyed in the mid-1980s, other anti-establishment movements have emerged in northern Nigeria. A recent group with a similarly disenchanted followership is the *Ahl-Sunna wal Jamma* or 'Followers of Mohammed's (SAW) teachings', also known as the Nigerian Taliban or, more recently, as *Boko Haram*.¹⁷ The group was founded in the early 2000s under the leadership of Mohamed Yusuf and is opposed to both the Muslim establishment and the Nigerian state (United States Department of State, 2008). Several of its members were accused of supporting local terrorism and it carried out violent attacks on police stations in the cities of Kano, Bauchi, Borno and Yobe States in July 2009, during which several hundred people were killed (*Vanguard*, 28 July 2009; *Daily Independent*, 29 July 2009)

More intellectual than the Maitatsine or *Boko Haram* is the Muslim Brotherhood, also referred to as Islamic Movement, which is often described as Shi'ite because its leader, Yahaya el-Zakzaky, was trained in and receives support from Iran. Having agitated for an Islamic revolution since the 1980s, el-Zakzaky has been arrested and imprisoned several times. However, he continues to appeal to educated northern Nigerians, and the Islamic Movement is centred on university cities including Kano. Like the *Izala*, it has heavily invested in education and owns several hundred so-called Fudiyah Schools, as well as an important Hausa-language newspaper. El-Zakzaky has also publicly protested against the introduction of *shari'a* penal law, arguing that "before *shari'a* can work successfully, there must be Islamic education and improvement in the standard of living of the people" (*Daily Champion*, 21 April 2002). While Zakzaky claims that he and his followers limit their activities to intellectual pursuits, they have also been accused of training militants to fight against the Nigerian state and of supporting attacks on the northern Nigerian aristocracy (*Vanguard*, 19 March 2009; *Leadership*, 8 January 2009).

Ignoring or distancing themselves from these critiques of the postcolonial state, both the *Izala* and the Sufi orders have strongly supported the introduction of *shari'a*, and as set out above, support for *shari'a* has increased since its introduction. This is interesting in light of the fact that many observers originally derided the campaign for *shari'a* by Zamfara State governor Ahmad Sani Yeriman Bakura as an attempt at political self-legitimation directed either against Abacha's critics or against the growing representation of southern Nigerian interests under President Obasanjo's government. Such concerns may have played a role, but it is unlikely that the introduction of Islamic law was a well-planned political move by the aggrieved political elite of northern Nigeria: the *Sultan* of Sokoto did not attend the inauguration ceremony. Only when enthusiastic reactions proved that Bakura had touched on widely held sentiments, and when he was even hailed as *mujaddidi* or renewer, a term usually reserved for Uthman dan Fodio, *shari'a* quickly became part of the political programme in several northern Nigerian states (Last, 2003, p. 141-2).

Irrespective of political strategies aimed at the central government at the time, the adoption and eventual success of *shari'a* constituted an appropriation of the *Izala*'s oppositional discourse by the northern political and traditional elite. Even today, support for *shari'a* is significantly higher among *Izala* members (of whom 84 per cent supported Islamic law in 2007) than among other Muslims (of whom 59 per cent supported *shari'a* in 2007) (Afrobarometer, 2009, p.: 7). However, the eventual support for *shari'a* by both the traditional elite of Kano and the government both acknowledged the legitimacy of the *Izala*'s popular demands and made it impossible for the *Izala* to mobilize its followers in opposition to the State's political and traditional elite.

At present, important scholars from the Sufi orders as well as from the *Izala* and similar organizations are represented on the state's *Shura* Committee, which advises the governor on Islamic policy, and which cooperates with the *Shari'a* Commission, the *Hisbah* Board, and the *Zakat* Commission. Other recent State government projects have included involvement in the collection and distribution of *zakat*,¹⁸ the building of a *Hajj* Training Centre¹⁹ and investment in schools for Muslims that teach both secular and religious subjects. The wide appeal of these policies to Muslims of different backgrounds suggests that the stereotypical interpretation of African Islam as divided between 'tolerant' Sufis' and 'radical' reformers only captures local debates and struggles at a very superficial level (cf. Mamdani, 2004). It appears that Governor Shekarau has not only taken up and responded to general Muslim

concerns, but that the introduction of *shari'a* has also succeeded in the creation of structures for the debate and resolution of differences between Sufis and their most important critics,²⁰ thus creating a powerful alliance of local – albeit only Muslim – religious groups.

3.4 Muslim organizations and government

In reflection of Shekarau's politics of Muslim consolidation, most Muslim organizations have developed extremely close relationships with the Shekarau government, even when, like the *Ansar-Ud-Deen* (ADS) and the *Nasrul-Lahi-il Fathi* Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), they primarily represent 'in-migrant' Muslims. The *Ansar-Ud-Deen* (ADS) is a Muslim order that was founded in Lagos in 1922, at that time closely associated with the *Ahmadiyya*, a Muslim order originally founded in Punjab, India,²¹ and very successful in western Nigeria. Like the *Ahmadiyya*, the ADS emerged in the context of Yoruba Muslim-Christian competition, and it has built up a large network of primary and secondary schools throughout Nigeria. While it has significantly contributed to the educational and political success of Yoruba Muslims, it has not attracted many non-Yoruba followers (Reichmuth, 1989). In Kano in 1936, it set up a primary and a secondary school, which were taken over by the state in 1978, and it also runs a small clinic. The organization is currently providing public lectures on various issues, workshops, training loans and IT training, mostly to young people.

The *Nasrul-Lahi-il Fathi* Society of Nigeria (NASFAT) was founded in Lagos in 1995. Since then it has grown dramatically, and today it has over 1.2 million members. Like other Muslim organizations that originated from the south-west, the group has appropriated techniques and practices more generally associated with Christianity (especially Pentecostalism), holding regular youth events, prayer camps and vigils throughout Nigeria. It has been especially successful in mobilizing Muslim women. At the same time, NASFAT shares many of the characteristics of *Izala*, such as its emphasis on education and the equality of all Muslims, as well as its discouragement of ceremonial expenditure and other practices not endorsed by the Qur'an or Sunna (Meagher, 2005, p. 31; *The News*, 9 February 2009). In Kano, NASFAT was formally inaugurated in 2005, and it has already established two branches and prayer camps, where it holds lectures and seminars aimed at different audiences. One of the areas of direct developmental concern in which organization has been active is the promotion of the poliomyelitis (polio) vaccine. After it came to light that the pharmaceutical company Pfizer had used experimental and often harmful meningitis drugs on children in a Kano hospital in 1996, many northern

Nigerians had avoided the polio vaccine, which they suspected of having similar side effects. When the ANPP government of Ibrahim Shekarau came to power in 2003, the head of the Kano state *Shari'a* Supreme Council, Datti Ahmed, acknowledged these rumours and suggested that the vaccine was part of a US anti-Muslim conspiracy. The vaccination programme was subsequently stopped. Important Muslim organizations, including the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), of which Nigeria is a member, and the International Fiqh Council²² criticized the decision, and after roughly a year, during which local doctors and officials tested the vaccine, it was declared safe and reintroduced (though no samples of US origin are used). However, in the meantime polio had spread dramatically from an epicentre in Kano to other Nigerian states and even beyond Nigeria's borders (*New York Times*, 20 March 2006). In the attempt to control and eradicate the outbreak and to convince those who remain sceptical of the vaccine, several local Muslim organizations – including NASFAT – have participated in more recent polio vaccination drives.

Reflecting the openness of the current government to all Muslim groups, both NASFAT and ADS representatives described their relationship with the Kano State government as harmonious and reported visits to their organizations by Governor Shekarau and other politicians. Neither had experienced any government restrictions, nor did they pay taxes on any of their activities. Mr Abdul-Lateef Jimoh and *Alhaji* Adulrauf Ayedun, the secretary and chairman of the ADS respectively, reported that the Kano State government sends *hisbah* groups to provide security during their prayers on Fridays and for other functions as required. Neither group reported any problems of access to the government and when the ADS raised a complaint about the dilapidation of the ADS school, which had been taken over by the government, Governor Shekarau promised to include their request in the 2008 budget. Overall, the organization believes that it is close to the government:

We [ADS] are a bit close to the Governor here, the present Governor. We don't know what will happen tomorrow if he is no longer there. We hope the relationship will continue. Mostly, Kano is predominantly Muslim and we know there will be no changes (interview 3 January 2008, Abdul-Lateef Jimoh and *Alhaji* Ayedun).

NASFAT reported that it is even more successful, perhaps because due to its dramatic expansion, it is less restricted to Yoruba Muslims, but also because it is seen to play an important role in countering the attraction of Christian Sunday services to Muslim youth by holding prayer meetings on Sunday mornings. One of its members was appointed to the State government cabinet as a Special Adviser to

the Governor and through him the organization reported that it has been able to achieve a lot. Since Shekarau has come to power, it was noted that he had visited the NASFAT offices twice and also that the organization had received donations of two plots of land and a bus from the State government. Moreover, NASFAT also has the opportunity to air Islamic religious programmes on television, especially during the month of Ramadan.²³

These examples illustrate that in Kano state, Muslim organizations operate under much more favourable conditions than Christian ones. This difference is not (only) the result of the structural problems encountered by Christians in Kano State, but also reflects official policy. *Mallam* Mohammed Danyaro, the Director of Internal Affairs at the Kano State Ministry of Information, Youth and Social Development, defended the dissimilar treatment of Muslim and Christian organizations, and specifically their differential treatment in terms of taxation, by suggesting that Christian organizations are inherently different from Muslim groups because of their presumed insertion into the economy. As *Mallam* Danyaro explained,

You have Pentecostal organizations and churches, for example, that generate money. These are expected to pay taxes to the state. Unlike those ones, what we have here in Kano, I mean the Muslim FBOs, do not generate money; they are non-profit making organizations and so do not pay tax. You read the papers and you find people accusing some church-based organizations of trying to make money out of religion. This is not applicable [to Muslim organizations] in Kano. Therefore, they do not have any reason or cause to pay tax (interview 13 May 2008, *Mallam* Danyaro).

It is implicit in *Mallam* Danyaro's views not only that Muslim FBOs have the support of the government, but also that they have its sympathy. Unlike Christian organizations, which are suspected not only of making a profit but of 'making money out of religion', i.e. of acting in non-pious and selfish ways, Muslim FBOs are seen as truly not-for-profit. It is interesting that *Mallam* Danyaro also regards churches and Christian organizations as existing 'outside' of Kano. This suggests that the visibility (and general awareness) of Christian organizations in Kano is very low, but also that, despite the attempts of local churches like ECWA, the association of Christianity with 'in-migrants' from other parts of Nigeria remains high, while Muslims – even if they are, by local reckoning, 'in-migrants', can be accepted. However, this does not mean that all Muslims are valued equally. Perhaps reflecting the ADS' situation, ADS representatives A. Jimoh and A. A. Ayedun argue:

Jimoh: Mostly, the Kano people they don't usually manipulate religion but they rather manipulate ethnicity; you are Moslem, [but] you are Yoruba, you are Ibo, you are Hausa. ... it will be very difficult for someone who is a Christian [meaning an outsider] to win [an] election...

Ayedun: Even if he is a Muslim?

Jimoh: Even if he is a Muslim. That is where ethnicity counts.

(interview 3 January 2008)

Thus, while in general Muslim organizations receive extremely favorable treatment from the Kano State government, the state's religious preferences are cross-cut by concerns over ethnicity and the status of 'in-migrants' vis-à-vis 'indigenes'.

3.5 *Izala* and the politics of power

As set out above, the *Izala* emerged as a powerful reformist movement in northern Nigeria under the influence of Abubakar Gumi during the late 1970s and 1980s. Since the mid-1980s, and especially since Gumi's death in September 1992, the movement has suffered from factionalism. As a result of struggles over the local leadership, attempts by members of Kano's political elite to re-appropriate the *Izala*'s focus on the Sunna, and the fact that the *Izala* has come under some political pressure (see below), some former members have now joined other groups, including the organization *Ahl as-Sunnah* (people of the Sunna; Sfeir, 2007, p. 250), which is close to Governor Shekarau.

Despite this, the *Izala* remains an important organization. It currently runs a male and female primary and secondary school in Kano, reflecting its ideals of female education but also strict gender separation. Like other Muslim organizations, the *Izala* does not pay tax, and the government of Kano supports its schools by paying their heads and deputy heads. The organization can also draw on the protection of the *hisbah* groups. Moreover, the group is represented in the Governor's advisory *Shura* Committee, as well as in the other bodies advising on *shari'a*, *hisbah* and *zakat*. Nevertheless, members of the group feel that the *Izala* is strongly under-represented in these bodies. They perceive this to be a result of their conflict with the *Emir* of Kano, which has also led to a decline in the previously cordial relations between Governor Shekarau and the *Izala*.

According to our interview with *Mallam* Ali, the secretary to *Mallam* Abdullahi Pakistan, who is the leader of an important *Izala* group in Kano, the conflict began when Kano's traditional *Emir*, *Alhaji* Ado

Bayero, attempted to appropriate a piece of land on which the *Izala* had built a mosque. When the group resisted, Bayero, who had supported Shekarau during his electoral campaign, allegedly exerted pressure on the latter's office not to favour or support the *Izala*. The relationship between the group and the government of Kano was further polarized when a Muslim cleric, *Sheikh Ja'afar*, who was a leading member of the *Izala* group as well as an outspoken critic of both the *Emir* and the government, was murdered in a mosque shortly before the 5 a.m. prayer on the morning of the April 2007 general elections (*Daily Trust*, 12 May 2007). To date his assassins have not been officially charged.

Since the conflict with the *Emir* and, by extension, the government of Kano State, the *Izala* representatives feel that the government has ignored them. Unlike other local Muslim groups, the *Izala* reported that it had not received gifts during Muslim festivals, nor had it been able to attract any visits by the governor. The group also believed that while Governor Shekarau had originally been well disposed to making Abdullahi Pakistan a commissioner in the state, this expectation had been disappointed. While *Mallam Ali* admitted that despite the *Izala*'s difficult situation, there were members of the organization in government, he complained that their influence was limited:

Those of our members in government are very ineffective. For example, one of our members is the Deputy Commissioner of *Hisbah* [the *Hisbah* Board], but you know that *Hisbah* has been proscribed by ex-President Obasanjo. And even if *Hisbah* remained, he is not the head and cannot attend the council meetings of the State. So, where is the influence? (interview 13 May 2008, *Mallam Ali*)

Mallam Ali downplays his organization's influence somewhat (*hisbah* continues to provide security in Kano State, though some of their activities have been reined in), but his feelings of disappointment, presumably based on the grassroots success of the *Izala*, were palpable. His views are supported by scholars who have commented on the under-representation of the *Izala* in the policy-making bodies related to the introduction of *shari'a* (cf. Wakili, 2009, p. 9).

The conflict underlying the present – albeit relative – marginalization of the *Izala* relative to other Muslim organizations of similar importance in Kano State throws a light on the close relationships between political and religious power, as well as social difference, in northern Nigeria. On the surface, the *Izala*'s refusal to recognize the authority of the *Emir*, which in turn resulted in the deterioration of the organization's relationship with the government, does not seem to be a religious disagreement but

a struggle over the *Emir's* influence. Nigerian politics continue to be dominated by extensive patronage networks and, within these networks, by the agency of powerful individuals or 'godfathers', who sponsor politicians and in return exert some control over their activities and sometimes even over budgets. In northern Nigeria, the legacy of indirect rule and the widespread belief in the worldly and religious authority of the aristocracy has often meant that local traditional rulers, like *Emir Bayero*, have been able to dominate politics. Bayero's challenge to the *Izala* might be interpreted as an attempt to see whether the group was prepared to engage in local politics according to the rules of patronage. Once the *Izala* refused to do so, they were quietly excluded from the most important government positions.

But at the same time, religion and power are closely interwoven in Kano, and it remains difficult to separate the religious and the political. Thus, the main representatives of the city's elite, Governor Shekarau and *Emir Bayero*, are members of the Sufi orders, while the *Izala* represents many Muslim outsiders and newcomers. Thus the *Izala's* unwillingness to accommodate the *Emir* would be perceived both as imprudent and disrespectful by many other Muslims in Kano and could easily be construed as a slight against the locality. Equally importantly, the *Emir* holds both worldly and religious power as the leader of the local Muslims. Thus, beyond its egalitarian rhetoric, the *Izala's* willingness to challenge the *Emir* – and by extension, Governor Shekarau – is a reflection of its potentially subversive religious message.

As a result of the *Izala's* refusal to submit to the *Emir's* worldly and religious authority, it has been largely excluded from the implementation of *shari'a* law, even though the demand for *shari'a* was originally the organization's most popular political message. In fact, the *Izala's* political influence has been further reduced at the grassroots by the emergence of other organisations close to the *Emir*, which copied the *Izala's* emphasis on the Sunna. As a result, several former leaders and sponsors of the *Izala* have now joined other non-Sufi groups, especially the *Ahl as-Sunna*. The *Ahl as-Sunna* is, perhaps not surprisingly, well represented within the Islamic institutions of the Kano State government. Thus the adoption of *shari'a* has shown that Kano's leaders were willing to accede to grassroots demands for *shari'a*, which to a large degree reflected the concerns of social groups who felt excluded. However, they were not prepared to concede real or symbolic power to *Izala* and the social groups it represented.

3.6 Conclusion

Overall, the activities of the religious groups and FBOs interviewed in Kano are similar; they include schooling, health care and other forms of education, ranging from public lectures to workshops, as well as, less frequently, small loan or microcredit programmes or even pro-democracy work. Despite these similarities, the State government ensures that Christian organizations operate under very different conditions than Muslim ones. Apart from government attempts to control their activities, either through *shari'a* legislation or direct intervention, Christian groups receive very little government support or encouragement, and their activities are taxed because it is assumed that they are carried out 'for profit'. Meanwhile, Muslim organizations are exempted from tax and generally receive government support at different levels, including the payment of teachers' salaries, protection by *hisbah* groups and, often, other government donations.

The activities and responses of Muslim organizations suggest that the politics associated with the *shari'a* debate in Kano have not only brought Sufis and their critics together in a range of institutions (see also Harnischfeger, 2008, p. 91), but that they have also made it easier for 'in-migrant' or non-Hausa Muslim organizations to carry out their activities and even to influence or participate in government. The introduction of *shari'a* law and other Islamic policies has also strengthened links between politicians and local (Muslim) constituencies through the inclusion of respected scholars in new institutions of the State, including the advisory *Shura* Committee, the *Shari'a* Commission, the *Hisbah* Board, and the *Zakat* Commission. As a result, Muslim scholars and intellectuals not only have an important say in State politics, but also serve as mediators between their faith communities and organizations and the state's political class. This is perceived as positive and implicitly democratic not only by most (Muslim) religious groups, but also by government representative *Mallam* Danyaro, who argued,

Of course, those who are the custodians of the people are the *Mallams* [teachers]; they are the driving forces of the people. These same *Mallams* influence politics and policies in the State (interview 13 May 2008).

However, while the introduction of *shari'a* has been very successful in capturing popular opinion, and in creating and renewing links between the political elite and Muslim intellectuals, the entrenchment of

Islamic law has clearly not succeeded in reducing patronage politics and 'godfatherism'. In this context, the *Izala*'s refusal to acknowledge the *Emir*'s right over its properties in Kano, though in itself both legal and legitimate, has clearly marginalized the organization. In a society where patronage dominates, no popular local group can participate in politics without, as contemporary Nigerians put it, a 'godfather'. But as the spiritual leader of Kano's Muslims, the *Emir* is of course much more than simply a man of political influence or 'godfather', because he also represents the faith. For this reason, the conflict between the *Emir* and the *Izala* was also a conflict with religious content, in which the *Izala* symbolically refused to acknowledge the *Emir*'s power over its members as Muslims.

Clearly, the combination of worldly and political influence in the northern Nigerian elite shapes the nature of political opposition in that part of Nigeria. In Kano State, neither the Christians nor the *Izala* recognise the spiritual authority of the *Emir*, and both have been excluded from the State government. According to the same logic, discontent with the government also inspires religious dissension. This is confirmed by the recent violent attacks on several northern towns by the Taliban/ *Boko Haram* group, which condemns the Nigerian government as both oppressive and immoral because of its failure to adhere to Islamic virtues and address social ills such as poverty (*Los Angeles Times*, 29 July 2009).

Perhaps one can argue on the basis of the above that if the government of the State represents both worldly and spiritual power, political opposition also tends to be ideological and religious opposition. While Christians are excluded from power because of their religious difference, Muslims experiencing marginalization because of their origin or social class also (frequently) understand their exclusion as religious, and, in the worst case, as un-Islamic.

4 Religion and ‘godfather’ politics in Anambra State

Anambra State is situated in the Igbo-speaking south-east of Nigeria. Until the emergence of the colonial and postcolonial state, Igbo-speakers were a politically, culturally and religiously fragmented group. Most Igbo-speaking communities reflected the egalitarian ethos of segmentary lineages, and in the absence of a widespread culture of kingship and chieftaincy, most larger towns were made up of decentralized communities. Spiritual life in these communities was characterized by diversity, but it seems that the control of particular spiritual forces, often shrines or oracles, played an important role in the organization of social, political and economic life. Anambra State is located in a part of Igboland that has experienced a higher degree of centralization, and by the tenth century, the area was dominated by the ancient kingdom of Nri, whose capital was a ritual centre from which its ruler and priests advised on and managed events that were perceived as taboo or threatening. In turn, Nri provided a safe haven for most individuals who were expelled from their communities for ritual reasons. Nri was also the centre of practices linked to the *Ozo* title, a chieftaincy title of spiritual significance that remains important in south-east Nigeria until today. Thus, Nri exercised power and influence over others primarily through religious means, rather than through military or administrative control (Harneit-Sievers, 2006, p. 53-60).

Possibly in response to the increasing European trade, especially the trade in slaves, Nri declined from the fifteenth century onwards, and by the sixteenth century, the riverine trading town of Onitsha, today Anambra’s most important commercial centre, had taken its place as a local centre. Pointing to strong links between Nri and Onitsha, Onitsha was governed by a centralized ruler or *Obi*, who was advised by *Ozo* chiefs. By the nineteenth century, however, the abolition of the slave trade and the rise of the palm oil economy affected Onitsha’s politics, and the city’s traditional elite was eclipsed by a new group of power-holders, often individual *Ozo* chiefs, who had attained wealth and power through the trade in palm oil (Henderson, 1972). In an attempt to introduce indirect rule along northern Nigerian lines, the British attempted to introduce or re-invigorate centralized government through traditional authorities to eastern Nigeria, although this attempt failed dismally. Reflecting the competitiveness and the participatory aspects of local traditions, eventually most local authorities included a range of (usually male) representatives.

The palm oil trade had brought missionaries to Igboland, and in the second half of the nineteenth century, Anglican and other Protestant missions, as well as a Catholic presence, were established in

the urban centre. By the early decades of the twentieth century, Catholicism had become the dominant monotheist religion in eastern Nigeria, partly, as Ekechi (1971) argues, because the Catholic Church was prepared to offer local converts access to education. This enabled local young men (and less frequently, women) to pursue successful careers within the colonial state. At the same time, traditional beliefs remain important, especially in northern Igbo trading cities like Onitsha and nearby Awka, perhaps because localities here relied less on the state than other groups (Ifeka-Moller, 1974), or because the local business and political practices remained closely linked to traditional beliefs.

Beyond personal conversion, the Christian influence on Nigeria often also encouraged an increasing awareness of ethnic identity, which was based on the written languages that were shared through Bible translations and literacy. While this spread from the predominantly Yoruba-speaking Lagos elite to the south-west in the early decades of colonial rule, by the later colonial decades it had also transformed south-eastern Nigeria. As Igbo-speakers caught up and overtook Yoruba-speakers in terms of education, they tended to dominate the sectors of the colonial state open to Africans, such as the lower ranks of the civil service and the railway. Based on the organizational power of the pan-ethnic Ibo [Igbo] Federal Union, Igbo speakers, especially the politician Nnamdi Azikiwe, also dominated nationalist politics – and the associated entrepreneurial fields of newspaper publishing and local contracting – from 1944 onwards. This caused resentment, especially among Yoruba-speakers, and in the 1950s led to the emergence of Azikiwe's rival Obafemi Awolowo as the leader of a more specifically ethno-national politics in the south-west.

The rift between Azikiwe and Awolowo was bitter and personal, and the break-up of the nationalist movement along ethno-regional lines has influenced Nigerian politics in important ways. It meant that at independence, a coalition of southern nationalists vis-à-vis the North was impossible to achieve, and eventually Azikiwe, despite his egalitarian values, allied his party to the NPC under the leadership of the northern aristocrat Sir Ahmadu Bello. The resulting power struggle between Azikiwe and Bello, whose politics reflected almost diametrically opposed visions for Nigeria, eventually led to the break-up of the First Republic, a series of military coups and the declaration of independence by the Eastern Region as the Republic of Biafra. After the Biafran defeat in 1970, the centralized federalism that had been introduced in the rest of Nigeria in 1967 was implemented in the former Eastern Region as well, and most Igbos became residents of a new East Central State. This state was again divided in 1976,

when the (old) Anambra State was created with its capital in Enugu. Another state-creation exercise in 1991 excised the current Enugu State from north-eastern Anambra State and moved the state capital to Awka, which lies half-way between the cities of Onitsha and Enugu. The present Anambra State has a large and dense population, with at least 4.2 million inhabitants and the second highest population density of the nation after Lagos (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006; see footnote 2).

Igbo politics have been shaped by the fact that even after the Civil War, Azikiwe preferred an alliance with the dominant northern party to one with Awolowo. The ties between Igbo political leaders and different networks of power based in northern Nigeria (which in the south are often wrongly perceived as monolithic) have constituted an important axis for Nigerian coalition-making ever since. The history of this alliance illustrates that Nigeria's patronage networks have a long history of cutting across lines of religious difference. It also suggests that the rivalry between southern ethno-regional groups was so divisive that it superseded concerns over religious (not to speak of ideological) differences, as most southern Nigerians (with the exception of the Muslims of the south-west) are Christians. However, it is possible that the prioritization of ethnic over religious difference was more important to southern politicians than to northern leaders, at least in the 1950s and 1960s, because there are some indications that at that time the northern leadership might have preferred a political alliance with the south-west. Interestingly, however, the political divide between the south-east and the south-west has not prevented the spread of Pentecostal and Anglican churches from south-western to south-eastern Nigeria, which has blurred the boundaries of Christian denominational differences between Igbos and Yorubas.

As a result of historical ties with the federal governments dominated by northern Nigeria, Nigeria's south-east enjoyed closer links to both civil and military administrations than the south-west or the Niger Delta, at least until the late 1990s,²⁴ although it has never regained its pre-war prominence. The tentative alliance between the conservative northern leadership and south-eastern politicians has not only shaped national coalition building, it has also transformed Igbo politics. Where politics in the 1960s drew on grassroots support and mobilization, they were, by the mid-1980s, characterized by the dominance of political entrepreneurs, who drew on personal links to the federal government, for example, through direct or indirect relationships with military rulers Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha, to dominate their own societies politically. Reflecting the Nigerian political economy, where the

central government has the greatest degree of control of the nation's revenue, such local strongmen combined political power with sometimes fantastic wealth, which they accrued through government contracts. In return, they provided their patrons with information and political support, or, where that was impossible, at least the acquiescence of 'their' people (cf. Reno, 2005, p. 139).

As a result, politics in south-west Nigeria – including Anambra State – are dominated by the ambitions of powerful men, who aspire to the kind of rarely challenged political authority enjoyed by their mostly northern mentors. At the cultural level, the rise of these aspirations is also reflected in the revaluation and even invention of local forms of chieftaincy and kingship. However, at the same time, Igbo strongmen live in a society with a very strong egalitarian tradition, which means that their power is frequently contested, even – and perhaps especially – by former clients or subordinates, and that their actions continue to be closely scrutinized by the many people who hold traditional and modern participatory and democratic ideals. It is this constellation which has, since the return to civilian rule, most frequently led to political violence.

4.1 Muslim organizations and ethnic difference

Like northern Nigeria, the south-east is a region of Nigeria with an entrenched majority religion generally associated with the 'indigenous' population and a relatively small minority religion linked to 'in-migrants' (even if these have lived in the area for generations). Unlike in the north, in the south-east Christians are in the majority and Muslims are in the minority. Like most south-western states, Anambra has experienced a few Christian-Muslim conflicts of significance. In 2001, Onitsha experienced violent clashes after struggles over political and economic control between Christian 'indigenes' and a local Muslim majority of in-migrants in the city of Jos turned violent and Igbo refugees from the crisis returned to Onitsha with the bodies of their murdered townspeople. As the clashes coincided with the attacks of 11 September 2001, the violence in Jos was locally imagined as a (Muslim) Hausa conspiracy against (Christian) Igbos. Fuelled by rage and fear, a mob 'avenged' the murders in Jos by attacking resident northern Nigerians, killing at least seven (Human Rights Watch, 2001, especially p. 21). A similar revenge attack took place in 2006 after clashes in northern Nigeria following the publication of the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed in the Danish press, and dozens of people died as a result (Okafor, 2007, p. 40). However, it would be wrong to understand these clashes as primarily religious. As those attacked were mainly Hausa-speaking Muslims, the local violence was

first of all ethnic, clearly distinguishing Hausa-speaking Muslims from their Yoruba co-religionists also residing in Anambra State.

While relations between the local Igbos and ‘in-migrant’ Muslims have been cordial since 2006, the division of the Muslim community along ethnic lines also affects the Muslim experience in Anambra. To reflect this rift, we interviewed representatives both of the Hausa Muslim Community of Awka (HMCO) and the Yoruba Muslim Community of Anambra State (YMCO). The Yoruba Muslim community is small but has existed for over a century, and apart from the mosque, it runs an Arabic school for children. Despite its primarily ethnic base, the YMCO’s Chief Imam Abdulfatai Ologbonoke argues that the organization’s aim is to propagate Islam and to teach others how to worship God. The organization mainly provides a support network for Yoruba Muslims in the state, so beyond the provision of religious education it also occasionally helps individuals to pay rent, especially the rent down-payments required for those looking for new accommodation. According to our respondent, the community has not had any dealings with the state – implying that the organization does not pay tax – apart from government support for several [number not given] pilgrims to Mecca. The organization also consciously distances itself from the political sphere:

... this organization is not a political organization and any of our members with interest in politics is free to do as he pleases. I think you understand me. Our people having interest in politics are not [forbidden] by us to do so (interview January 2008, Imam Ologbonoke).

The Hausa Muslim community (HMCO) is of a similar age to the Yoruba one, but it is somewhat bigger and is organized more elaborately. Our respondent, *Alhaji* Garba Haruna, the head of the community, explained that the community is run by a council that is made up of representatives from each of the northern Nigerian states which have residents in Anambra State, as well as representatives from other countries. As the Hausa Muslim community represents all local Muslims, with the exception of Yoruba-speakers, it brings together Sufis and their critics and has a strong international outlook and a wide network of links. This reflects the fact that several of its members are traders, who are Hausa only in the sense that they speak the language, even if it is their second or business (trading) language, and that the organization provides them with support. It was also through this organization that the Anambra State government assisted the local (Hausa) Muslims during and after the 2001 clashes, by allowing them to relocate to the army barracks until they could return to their places of residence. The HMCO also distributed food donated by the government and wealthy individuals to the refugees.

The HMCO pays tax on some of its activities, but it is not clear from the responses whether it provides any specialized religious education for the children of its members. It is nevertheless well institutionalized at the local level. Reflecting an openness to engage with the issue of human sexuality more openly than is generally acceptable in many northern states, the HMCO is represented in the Anambra State Action Committee on AIDS, which also provides free testing. The organization receives regular support for pilgrims to Mecca from the government, as well as visits and presents from government representatives during the Ramadan fast and on religious holidays such as Eid (al-Fitr, the end of the fast). On some holidays, including Eid and Christmas, the community also exchanges goodwill messages with the Catholic Church. Our respondent himself reported that he is regularly invited to represent the HMCO at State events and even at the national level:

They [the government] always invite us during certain meetings they are having. I have attended some like that and there are [discussions] on how we are going to make the State greater (interview January 2008, *Alhaji Garba Haruna*).

Despite their minority status, none of the Muslim respondents interviewed appeared to feel a sense of exclusion similar to that expressed by Christian respondents in Kano State. An important reason for this seems to be that the local organizations are slightly better integrated into the local state. Both religious groups receive state support for Muslim pilgrimages, and the HMCO is clearly included in a number of institutions and patronage networks at the state level, which give it an opportunity to represent its members' interests. Also, apart from the fact that the HMCO pays local taxes, neither of the organizations reports any attempts by the State government to interfere with their religious and educational projects. But while the local 'minority' groups are clearly viewed with much less suspicion than those in Kano State, they also seem less ambitious and, presumably, are perceived as less threatening to local interests as a result. Thus, none of the Muslim respondents referred to plans to spread the Muslim faith aggressively, for example through radio and television advertisements, and neither organization is in control of institutions of public interest, such as (secular) schools or hospitals.

Moreover, unlike Christians in Kano, Muslims in Anambra State do not tend to be perceived as a threat to local upward mobility. Most Muslims in the state are traders, whose main links are with northern Nigeria, and usually operate in markets – such as the import of cattle – that are both specialized and well protected. Also, in a part of Nigeria which suffers from very high population density, local in-

migrants to Anambra State – whether Muslims or Christians – do not constitute a large percentage of the population. As a result, Anambra ‘indigenes’ do not generally fear that in-migrants might exercise a disproportionate degree of political control or even constitute a threat to local interests.

Finally, the relationship between the two Muslim NGOs in Anambra is not primarily characterized by religious divergence but by ethno-regional difference. Thus the Hausa Muslim community is constituted of Muslims from northern Nigeria and abroad, irrespective of the strong doctrinal disagreements that shape politics in northern Nigeria and some of Nigeria’s neighbouring countries. As a result, members of the Sufi orders and their critics work and worship with each other, united by their common command of Hausa and an identity as northern Muslims in Anambra State. Relying on a much more clearly ethnic base, but overcoming less dramatic doctrinal differences, the separate existence of the Yoruba Muslim community illustrates that the interests of Nigeria’s southern Muslims are quite independent of the wider Nigerian Muslim community, even in predominantly Christian surroundings.

As our research illustrates, the Yoruba Muslim community is much less able to engage with Anambra State and its institutions than the Hausa Muslim community. This is most likely due to the fact that Yoruba Muslims are considered outsiders by both the local Igbos and the wider (northern) Muslim community. From the local point of view, Yoruba Muslims are religious outsiders, as well as representatives of rival (Yoruba) visions of southern Nigerian politics. For northern Nigerian Muslims, Yoruba Muslims are representatives of a group which has strongly criticized the consistent influence of northern Nigerians on the federal government. As the major group left out of the political alliance between the north and south-east in the 1960s, both Christian and Muslim Yoruba-speakers have long harboured resentment against the federal government, which was exacerbated during the years of military rule in the 1980s and 1990s. While Yoruba political resentment has lost importance since the presidency of Yoruba-speaker Obasanjo (1999-2007), the gap between Yoruba and northern Nigerian Muslims has been difficult to bridge. Thus the doubly awkward position for Yoruba Muslims in south-east Nigeria reflects the close and complex relationship between ethnicity, regionalism and religion.

4.2 'Godfathers' and governors since 2000

Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, Anambra has been the site of extremely bitter struggles over political control, and in many ways it has become a prime case of the Nigerian phenomenon of 'godfather' politics. While these struggles have also been played out as (Christian-Christian) religious competition, they have their origin in Nigeria's patronage politics and especially the important figure of Arthur Eze, a client and local representative of former military ruler Sani Abacha (1993-8). After Abacha's death, two of Eze's former aides, Emeka Offor and Chris Uba, were able to carve out important positions for themselves in the PDP, where Offor concentrated on delivering Anambra State while Uba focused on expanding his financial base through government contracts. In the 1999 elections, Offor successfully sponsored Dr Chinwoke Mbadinuju in the state's gubernatorial elections on the PDP ticket. But because of his 'godfather' Offor's demands for a significant profit on his erstwhile investment, a large percentage of the State government's resources were brazenly diverted from their original purpose, and when Mbadinuju was unable to pay the salaries of State employees for several months, he – and by extension Offor – lost both public credibility and support within the PDP (cf. Olarinmoye, 2008).

From the very beginning of his tenure, Governor Mbadinuju held regular Pentecostal-style praise worship meetings on Mondays, which were broadcast, along with the governor's sermons, by State controlled radio and television (Obadare, 2007, p. 139). These might be interpreted as attempts to hold on to public esteem, or even to gain support as an opponent of *shari'a* law – as many Igbos live in northern Nigeria, its introduction was hotly debated in south-east Nigeria – but it is also likely that he wanted to emulate the then President Obasanjo, who at that time strongly emphasized his new-found Pentecostal Christian identity.

Partly in response to this attempt by Mbadinuju to appropriate Christianity, the Roman Catholic church, through its Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), became very vocal about its opposition to 'godfather' politics. The church also underscored its politics with its actions: at a time when Mbadinuju's government had not paid civil servants over eight months of salary arrears, Catholic officials publicly returned a two million Naira (at the time approximately £8,000 or \$13,500) donation by the governor himself and enjoined him to take the money to pay the salary arrears of the State government's workers. The JDPC also protested strongly against the assassination of Barrister

Barnabas Igwe and his wife Abigail in 2002, allegedly by the Bakassi Boys, a vigilante group by then formally under the control of the governor (Smith, 2007, p. 187). By exposing and documenting a number of corrupt and illegal activities of State officials through seminar presentations, press communiqués and even open letters to politicians, the JDPC not only challenged the attempts by Mbadinuju (whose religious affiliation is perhaps best described as Pentecostal Anglican) to present himself as a spokesman for all Christians but also created popular support for the Catholic Church.

In the 2003 elections, the new PDP candidate, Dr Chris Ngige, himself a Catholic, attempted to capitalize on the politicization of faith in the State and campaigned on a topic of great interest to the Catholic Church, namely the return of former mission schools to their owners. However, Ngige was, like Mbadinuju, a political 'godson', who was backed and financed by Chris Uba. Uba had established himself as the PDP's strongman and ubiquitous 'godfather' in Anambra after Offor's loss of influence within the PDP. However, by this time, a realistic challenge to the PDP had emerged in the form of a new party, the All Progressives' Grand Alliance (APGA). The APGA won support in the south-east, especially because it articulated the growing worry of many Igbos over some of the policies implemented by (Yoruba-speaking) President Obasanjo. For example, Obasanjo wanted to discourage the import of cars older than eight years, and as Igbos dominate Nigeria's import-export car trade, this was perceived by many Anambrans as an attack on their livelihoods. Alluding to the short-lived Biafran state of the Civil War (1967-70), the Movement for the Actualization of Biafra (MASSOB) found widespread support and tacit acceptance from more radical members of the Catholic Church and APGA itself (Obianyo, 2008, p. 15-6). Focusing Igbo sentiments of ethno-national solidarity and protest, APGA was headed by the erstwhile Biafran leader Odumegwu Ojukwu, who also stood as its presidential candidate. In the Anambra State elections, Peter Obi, also a Catholic, stood for the office of the governor on the APGA ticket. According to Obianyo (2008, p. 15), the Catholic Church supported him openly.

Despite the popular – and Catholic – support for Obi, the PDP officially won the State elections again in 2003. Yet Chris Uba did not make it a secret that he believed he had 'bought' the election for Ngige, and like his predecessor, presented Ngige with substantial demands. When Ngige refused to fulfil them, the two men fell out and in July 2003, Ngige was abducted and detained by police officers allegedly in Uba's pay. In the dispute between the two men it was revealed that Ngige had not only

provided his 'godfather' with a resignation letter and speech before the election, but that he had also sworn political allegiance to him at a modern 'traditional shrine' in Okija. The embarrassment of Ngige and others over this revelation, and indeed Ngige's claim that he had sworn the oath with the permission of his priest and a bible in his pocket, suggest that politicians are aware that recourse to traditional practices, especially when associated with clandestine politics, easily evokes suspicions of evildoing, which is widely perceived as much worse than corruption (Ellis, 2008, especially p. 457-9). The confrontation between Ngige and Uba escalated in 2004, when thugs allegedly sponsored by Uba stormed through Awka and destroyed state infrastructure as well as private property. While the battle raged on, Obi took his complaint over the lost election to the courts, and in 2006 the Court of Appeal in Enugu asserted that he had won the 2003 elections (Africa Research Bulletin, 2006). However, Obi was impeached after a short time, and only reinstated three months before the 2007 elections, which were officially declared to have been won by Andy Uba, Chris Uba's 'godson' as well as his brother, and – perhaps in a bid to counter Obi's appeal – a man with strong support from the Anglican Church in Anambra State. However, in June 2007 the Supreme Court of Nigeria removed Andy Uba from office and argued that no elections should be held until February 2010, when Obi will have served a full four-year term.

However, while Obi's term of office continues outside the general schedule for elections in Nigeria, he still has to govern the State together with the PDP members in the State House of Assembly who won their seats in 2007. This has created some difficulties, and in late 2007, the PDP members of the House of Assembly refused to pass Obi's budget proposal for 2008 unless he agreed to their demands. In April 2008, the Anglican Archbishop Maxwell Akinwenwa, drawing on his church's close links to the PDP, intervened and the budget was finally passed, but as the start of the rainy season was by then near, no building projects could be commenced. Thus, inter-party horse-trading led to a delay of many infrastructural projects by a year. These ongoing struggles illustrate the persistence and dominance of godfather politics in Anambra State and, beyond that, Nigeria. As a result, the 2010 elections in Anambra State are widely perceived as likely to have an important signal function for Nigeria's future.

4.3 Christian organizations and their insertion in party politics

The three Christian organizations whose representatives were interviewed in Anambra State included the Anglican Community (AC), the [Roman Catholic] Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) and the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), a Pentecostal church. The views and comments emanating from these organizations illustrate that the turbulent political history of Anambra State has affected Christian organizations in dissimilar ways and that, as a result, the churches' engagement with the political process differs strongly.

The Pentecostal Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) was established in 1952 by Reverend J. O. Akindayomi, a first-generation convert to Christianity in south-western Nigeria. After Akindayomi's death in 1980, the church's leadership passed to Dr Enoch Adeboye and the organization has since become one of the most rapidly expanding churches in Nigeria and beyond, claiming to regularly reach more than five million worshippers. Adopted by President Obasanjo (1999-2007) as 'his' church, the organization has, along with other members of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), enjoyed preferential treatment during his presidency (Obadare, 2007, p. 145-6). The RCCG expanded to Anambra State in 1993, where it was sometimes also included in the government's religious ceremonies during Mbadinuju's term in office between 1999 and 2003.

Despite this inclusion in the political process during the first term of the Obasanjo presidency, our respondent, the Assistant Provincial Pastor of Anambra State, Pastor Richard Ejike Orji, stressed emphatically that the RCCG was not concerned with playing a role in politics, and that it only supported politicians with prayers. While the RCCG contributes to development in the State through a variety of institutions, including primary and secondary schools and scholarships, as well as HIV/AIDS counselling, drug provision and a (planned) maternity clinic, it claims to have no formal contact with the Anambra State government. However, as the government includes members of the RCCG, this is not a result of exclusion from the state but a considered policy. When prompted, the organization asserted that its non-participation in local politics is deliberate:

We keep the laws of the land. We have not had any interruption or contact with the Anambra State government. We may have some members who are in government but there is no direct contact or influence from either us or from them (interview 14 May 2008, Pastor Orji).

The current policy of the RCCG in Anambra State could be understood as aimed at rebuilding its credibility at the grassroots and overcoming any negative associations arising from its association with former president Obasanjo and, if only informally, former Governor Mbadinuju. It could also be understood as deriving from underlying ethnic tensions, exacerbated by dislike for Obasanjo. Because the RCCG draws strongly on Yoruba ritual, musical and literary genres, it is possible that it might be perceived locally as a Yoruba church, despite the fact that it has been able to attract large numbers of believers from other backgrounds.

However, as our examination of the RCCG in the Yoruba-speaking Oyo State (below) illustrates, the RCCG's official stance on politics in the Yoruba south-west is similar to that in Anambra, despite different local politics and a strong ethnic base. While the above explanations should not be discounted, it is therefore likely that the RCCG's public utterances have a deeper meaning, especially in view of the fact that the RCCG has clear political visions as well as connections to the ruling elite. Ukah has convincingly described the RCCG as espousing an inherently political religious nationalism focused on breaking Nigeria's 'curses' and establishing the nation as sacred space with a unique and special covenant with God. Within that mission, the RCCG has actively contributed to political debates and ceremonies in both Anambra and other states and at the federal level (cf. Ukah, 2003, p. 200-1). Trying to make sense of the RCCG's ambitions and its representation at the State government level on the one hand, and its denial of direct involvement in politics on the other, we suggest that the RCCG wishes to create an image of distance to government, not only in order to disassociate itself from corruption or particular personalities, but also in order to assert that it does not condone the traditional practices – illustrated by Ngige's alleged oath-swearing to his 'godfather' – which many Nigerians see as foundational in contemporary politics.

With a long history of engagement in Nigeria, the presence of the Anglican Church (Church of Nigeria) in Anambra State dates back to the 1850s. The Anglican Church has always been an important provider of local services, and it is associated with the establishment of a large number of primary and secondary schools, including Christ the King College Onitsha, and Government College, Umuohia. Other Anglican institutions include vocational skills acquisition centres and seminaries in the capital Awka and elsewhere in Anambra State. Important Anglican hospitals and health centres in the State include the Schools of Nursing and Midwifery at Iyenu and the Emekuku Hospital at Owerri. Because

both Mbadinuju and the Uba brothers have supported the Anglican Church and drawn on it for legitimacy, it has risen to great prominence in the State, and the current Archbishop of the Province of the Niger and Bishop of Awka, Maxwell Anikwenwa (whose mediation efforts in 2008 are referred to above), has become a powerful elder statesman in Anambra State politics.

All the same, and perhaps with the intention of competing for public legitimacy with the Catholic Church, the Church of Nigeria also set up election monitoring groups to ensure fair outcomes of the 2003 and 2007 elections. However, the comment by our interview partner, Sir Ngozi Anyakora,²⁵ the Registrar of the Seminary College Awka, on the topic is worth quoting, as it could be read as confirming rather reluctantly the fact that the 2007 elections were rigged (see also below):

The church set up monitoring groups just like the international monitoring groups that monitored the elections. ... The Anglican report toed the general line [sic!] that the elections were massively rigged or flawed. The elections [were] wishy-washy in many places (interview May 2008, Sir Ngozi).

Perhaps to illustrate that the Anglican Church was not biased against Governor Obi, Sir Ngozi also asserted, as noted above, that it had contributed to the smooth running of the current government by intervening on behalf of the 2008 State budget. However, beyond this comment, Sir Ngozi was reluctant to answer questions about State politics. In response to a general invitation to comment on politics, and especially 'godfather' politics in the State, which usually elicited passionate responses from respondents, he originally claimed that he did not know anything about 'godfather' politics. When prompted further, he explained that while he was aware of what the term meant, he – and by extension the Anglican church – had no personal experience of such politics:

I know what political godfatherism means but you asked me about their activities, that is why I said I do not know. But I understand political godfathers are people with big money who sponsor candidates and even impose them on the citizenry. ... And so, that means that when the godsons get into government they would also be taking directives from their sponsor who put them there. But beyond this explanation, I don't want to talk more on this (interview May 2008, Sir Ngozi).

Further confirming the sensitive nature of material or infrastructural support for the Anglican Church by the government, Sir Ngozi explained that:

I am not in a position to give a full answer to this question [about contributions from the government to church activities], if what you mean is financial support. But the government do[es] give moral support whenever there are any major activities in the church. The government is usually invited and is welcome to make contributions any way they deem fit (interview May 2008, Sir Ngozi).

The refusal to comment on Anambra State politics by the RCCG and the careful answers by the Anglican representative contrast sharply with the responses from the [Roman Catholic] Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC). Like the Anglican Church, the Catholic Church has been present in Anambra since the nineteenth century and is associated with the foundation of a large number of local educational and medical institutions. The JDPC Nigeria emerged in the 1990s from earlier bodies set up originally in response to the Second Vatican Council, which focused on the church's need to attend to issues related to justice, development, peace and human rights. It has been mandated by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria to promote democratic development in Nigeria. In Anambra State the JDPC exists as three separate organizations in the Dioceses of Awka, Nnewi and Onitsha. The JDPC Awka was founded in 1992, and the organization is engaged in numerous activities, including agricultural extension (through demonstration farms), environmental protection, HIV/AIDS education, study groups, scholarships and microcredit, as well as political observation, the monitoring of contracts and budgets, and civic education.

During the 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections, the JDPC ran mass orientation campaigns through seminars and open air rallies. They also printed and distributed relevant pamphlets²⁶, as well as producing recorded video and audio files of electoral malpractices and abuses.²⁷ It was (also) on the basis of the documentation provided by the JDPC for the 2003 elections that the current governor of Anambra, Peter Obi, was able to challenge the official electoral victory claimed by Chris Ngige. JDPC support and documentation also allowed Obi to quash, or at least postpone by 3 years, Andy Uba's claim to the governorship based on the 2007 elections, in order to enable Obi to hold on to his position for four further years following his courtroom victory in 2006. Waiving aside claims by other groups to have contributed in a similarly critical way to the restoration of electoral justice, our respondent, the JDPC (Awka) Project Manager C. J. Onyenze, pointed out that:

We monitored the election and it is only our own documented evidences that are being tendered or rather, let me say, it is among the major and more concrete pieces of evidences that are being tendered at the Election Petition Tribunals, without which most of those election petitioners wouldn't have anything to present as the defence of what they are claiming (interview 16 May 2008, C. J. Onyenze).

Comments from the JDPC also highlighted the rivalry between the Anglican and the Catholic Churches over political representation and public perceptions. Undermining claims by the Anglican church that it had contributed positively to electoral politics in Anambra State, our respondent suggested that the Anglican Church had been prepared – presumably because of its links to the Uba brothers – to tolerate the 2007 electoral results, leading to conflict between the two denominations:

The last election almost put the Anglican Church and the Catholic Church into a conflict or collision course. This is because the Bishops of the Catholic Dioceses went on air to say there was no free and fair election, the election was not credible. In fact, they said that there was no election unless you are talking about a non-election kind of election. Other important bodies like the 'Elders Council' also condemned the election. The governor himself condemned the election, but the Bishop of the Anglican Communion stood up and said that there was an election. We saw that the people, rather than giving that church a positive grading, really reduced the rating of that very faith-based organization in Anambra State (interview 16 May 2008, C. J. Onyenze).

Interestingly, despite the significant support provided by the JDPC to Obi, the relationship between the organization and the current government does not appear to be unproblematic. It was difficult to elicit the exact reasons for this, but it is very likely that the JDPC's refusal to participate in patronage politics, or at least to participate in such politics to the degree required at the State level, has contributed to this state of affairs, as it appears that some State officials would have liked to work more closely with the group. Our respondent explained:

The last time they [government] wanted to partner with us, we even gave the reassurance we were ready to partner with them, but the condition they gave was such that it was obviously out of what we could bargain for (interview 16 May 2008, C. J. Onyenze).

As a result, the relationship between the JDPC and the government remains complicated, although it is possible that it is especially so with regard to the (PDP-dominated) House of Assembly:

There is always that very unhealthy atmosphere that has been going on between us and these leaders. You see, when they see us, they brand us their enemies. We've come to report them, we've come to checkmate them, we've come to nose about to see the much we now talk about [sic] and report and tell the people this or whatever. You see, sometimes they decide to go [when they notice us], they wind-up and close-up every avenue for us to come in (interview 16 May 2008, C. J. Onyenze).

Given the violence of politics in Anambra State since 1999, it is perhaps not remarkable that the JDPC representative complained about an 'unhealthy' atmosphere of mutual suspicion between his organization and the government. However, the JDPC has not experienced direct violence or intimidation, and it appears as if all religious groups and FBOs in the state are relatively free to engage in the public sphere in the manner they desire.

4.4 Conclusion

As the examples from Anambra State illustrate, the selected religious groups and FBOs engage in quite different activities. Some of the differences reflect a gap between Muslim and Christian groups, which also reflects organizational differences. The Muslim organizations are primarily religious organizations providing community and mutual support, and only the YMCO explicitly focuses on a conventional development issue - education at primary level. In contrast, the Christian NGOs tend to be strong in the classic areas of education and healthcare, which are, in the case of the JDPC, complemented by a range of activities from agricultural extension to civil education, political observation and monitoring.

Despite the difference in focus between Muslim and Christian organizations, the factors determining the participation of religious groups and FBO in local politics seem to be primarily determined by the organization's closeness to power. The religious rivalry of the most important local groups, the Anglican community and the Roman Catholic JDPC, is not primarily based on doctrinal difference but simply on different responses to the practice – and challenge – of 'godfather' politics. While the Anglican church has greatly benefited from its links to local political leaders and their 'godfathers', it still wishes to appear distanced and critical in order to maintain popular respect. Meanwhile, the JDPC

has won much respect for its apparently fierce independence of the government. However, due to the Catholic sympathy for Igbo self-assertion, it would be hard to argue that it is entirely uninterested in the (belated) success of APGA in the State under the current governor, Peter Obi. Thus both Christian organizations are strongly engaged not only in local power politics (and its critique) but also in struggles over popular perceptions.

Among the factors determining closeness to power is ethnicity, especially among the Muslim organizations. Thus, the Hausa Muslim community appears to be very well represented, which probably reflects the awareness that many Igbos live in northern Nigeria, and that good relations between northern and south-eastern Nigeria are extremely important for local livelihoods. At the same time, it also indicates a local understanding that, despite the Obasanjo presidency, northern Nigeria continues to be the nation's natural seat of power. In contrast, the Yoruba Muslims do not participate meaningfully in politics. According to their own claims, this is also true for the Yoruba-based RCCG, but as set out above, the RCCG does have some influence in local politics through its members.

As suggested above, it is likely that the RCCG's case illustrates the difficulty of participation for organizations that perceive politics not only as economically but also as morally and spiritually corrupt. The RCCG perceives its own mission as political, and it encourages its members to be politically active in order to contribute to the making of a new Nigeria. At the same time it fears, like many Pentecostal churches, that the traditional practices which underlie local politics in many parts of Nigeria are morally and spiritually corrupting.

Despite the fact that all these religious groups and FBOs engage in, or withdraw from, politics in a context of great unrest, bitter conflicts and some spiritual anxiety, there does not appear to be any systematic discrimination against any particular organization. Furthermore, none of the religious groups and FBOs' representatives claimed that their religious activities were controlled or curtailed by the State, although the JDPC explained that their monitoring work was sometimes met with suspicion. (Considering that this work was powerful enough to help unseat Governor Chris Ngige in 2006, and in the light of the degree of violence unleashed in other contexts, this does not seem an extreme response.) Also, all the organizations are recognized as not-for-profit organizations and none pays tax on its religious activities. Although the HMCO, the RCCG and the JDPC pay the prescribed taxes,

registration fees and general levies on all other institutions or activities they run, even if non-profit, this does not appear to be the result of State government discrimination, as in Kano. Instead, it appears to reflect insufficient legal transparency or lack of competence in the relevant ministry. Although this is regrettable and leaves open the door for potential manipulation in the future, it appears that at present the situation could be addressed relatively easily.

Part of the reason for this lack of direct victimization of Muslim or local opposition groups may be the fact that the extension of the 'federal character principle' to religion appears to have been generally adopted in Anambra State politics, and there is some agreement that certain quotas of positions of power must be given to members of different denominations. Nevertheless, this arrangement in turn fuels religious competition or creates other problems. As one respondent, a senior government official in the Directorate of the Women Advocacy and Empowerment Agency, explained:

For instance, many times in Anambra State, appointments are pigeon-holed into denominational consideration rather than on qualification, so that even when there might be a better somebody for that particular position, they canvass for the appointment into that position even for a mediocre, because he belongs to a certain denomination (interview May 2008, Women Advocacy and Empowerment Agency).

We were given to understand that most of these appointments are divided between the Catholic and Anglican denominations, but that members of other churches (including the RCCG) are also represented in the government bureaucracy, turning the State administration into a space where the different Christian denominations cooperate, compete and negotiate with each other. While the Hausa Muslim community seems to be represented only in a few instances, its tentative inclusion in the State's religious 'federal character principle' suggests that, as long as Muslims are not perceived as a threat to local interests, the State administration may even provide a forum for inter-religious (and inter-ethnic) debate.

This proportionalist arrangement conveys a considerable degree of religious tolerance, which is presumably possible because the political elite in the State consists of individuals whose power is not religious and political in the same manner as that of the northern Nigerian aristocracy. Also, the high degree of political violence involving 'godfathers' and their clients suggests that there is much a higher degree of fission within the elite. This also implies that the elite might be less successful in subverting

and excluding religious movements like the *Izala*. All the same, the opportunities for religious groups and FBOs to engage with government remain dependent on their political links. On the one hand, this means that the nation's patronage politics are not necessarily religiously based or biased. On the other hand, as the deep rift between the Catholic and Anglican denominations illustrates, the politicization of religion also encourages religious and faith-based organizations to 'religionize' patronage politics.

5 Yoruba opposition politics, ‘godfathers’ and religion in Oyo State

Oyo State is located in the Yoruba-speaking south-west of Nigeria, which has a long urban tradition. Claiming descent from a mythical first city of Ile-Ife, which was in existence by 800 AD or earlier (Olaniyan and Akinjogbin, 1992, p. 48), Yoruba towns and cities were founded throughout south-west Nigeria. During the pre-colonial period, the government of most towns combined authoritarian and participatory structures: towns were usually headed by a ruler, who was advised by chiefs as well as members of representative organizations. By the eighteenth century, the area of today’s Oyo State was, for the most part, populated by relatively small settlements under the control of the powerful Oyo Empire, which dominated many northern, central and western Yoruba towns, as well as neighbouring non-Yoruba groups. Although by this time most Yoruba-speaking communities were united not only by a mutually intelligible language but also by the shared practice of *Ifá* divination and the worship of a pantheon of deities, neither Oyo nor any other local centre ever united all Yoruba communities.

By the early nineteenth century, the advance of the Uthmanian army in the North and the expansion of British interests in the South led to the collapse of the Oyo Empire, and the capital, also called Oyo, was destroyed. Many of the warriors from Oyo and its dominions, who fled northern Yorubaland, subsequently settled in the small town of Ibadan, which is the present capital of Oyo State. Ibadan quickly established itself as a regional centre under the leadership of important and powerful warlords. However, the expansion of colonial rule from Lagos to the hinterland curtailed Ibadan’s attempt to rise to local hegemony before it was successful and the British eventually curbed the power of the warrior companies. Instead, they introduced the principles of indirect rule and re-energized local traditions of urban rulership.

After the abolition of the slave trade, the coastal city and early colony of Lagos became home to a mostly Christian elite of freed or returned slaves, many of whom contributed actively to the Christianization and spread of education in Nigeria. Colonial rule encouraged conversion to both Christianity and Islam. Although local Christians did have a start on access to education, many Muslim groups, especially those based in Lagos, such as the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society (ADS), produced local intellectuals and educated leaders by the 1940s. While the indirect rule system was often bitterly criticized by the growing Yoruba educated elite, the fact that rulership and chieftaincy provided access to the state also proved attractive, and often educated members of aristocratic families contested and won traditional office, thereby creating an enlightened traditional elite that was equipped to engage with

both the rapid changes that occurred under colonial rule and, later, the party politics hailing independence (Nolte, 2003).

As discussed in the previous section, by the 1940s, the long-established Yoruba dominance of Nigeria's political debates was challenged by a rising number of educated Igbos, who had left their densely populated home areas to search for better opportunities in other parts of Nigeria, including Lagos. Eventually, the Nigerian independence movement broke up along (mostly) ethnic lines, and by the 1950s the Yoruba speaker Obafemi Awolowo was able to convert existing Yoruba cultural nationalism into political nationalism. He subsequently established control over the Western Region and even over Lagos, once one of Nnamdi Azikiwe's strongest bases. However, Awolowo struggled to overcome the historical rivalries that characterized relationships between many Yoruba polities and, like Kano in northern Nigeria, Ibadan emerged as an early centre of opposition to 'mainstream' regional politics and continued to vote against Awolowo long into the 1950s. Ironically, in view of Awolowo's difficulties, the attempts by the ruling coalition to extend their control over south-western Nigeria after independence confirmed Awolowo as a Yoruba leader by turning him into a political martyr (Nolte, 2009, especially p. 157-97). Awolowo failed to capture power again in the Second Republic (1979-83), and Yoruba fears of their exclusion from power were confirmed during the military governments of the 1980s and 1990s, especially after 1993, when the presidential election of the Yoruba-speaker Moshood Abiola was annulled by the military government. As a result, both Awolowo and Abiola came to stand for a specifically 'Yoruba politics' which both lamented its exclusion from the federal government and criticized the 'centre', often understood locally to describe a northern Nigerian elite imagined as monolithic, for its corruption (Adebanwi, 2009).

The present Oyo State was created in 1976, when the Western State created in 1967 was divided into three states. Its boundaries were last adjusted in 1990, when Osun State was carved out of its east, although this did not affect Ibadan's status as Oyo's capital. With at least 5.6 million inhabitants, Oyo State is, like Kano and Anambra States, one of Nigeria's most populous states (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006; see footnote 2). Like Kano, much of Ibadan's population is made up by in-migrants from the surrounding region, who speak the local language, and the lines dividing 'indigenes' and in-migrants are often the subject of local political debate. Apart from its majority Yoruba population, Ibadan also has significant Igbo and Hausa communities, as well as immigrants from other parts of

Nigeria and beyond. Like in most states in Nigeria's south-west, the population of Oyo State consists of a minority of traditional practitioners and roughly equal numbers of Muslims and Christians, although it is likely that the Muslim community is somewhat bigger than the Christian one. As in Anambra, the federal government attempted to find political brokers in south-west Nigeria during the 1980s and 1990s. While the entrenchment of a Yoruba opposition politics vis-à-vis the central government meant that this project was on the whole not very successful, Ibadan was one of the few places where local strongmen emerged as political brokers or 'godfathers'. Most of these 'godfathers' were Muslims. While it is possible that this fact reflected a greater preparedness by some Yoruba Muslims to subsume ethno-regional sentiment under religious solidarity, it is impossible to generalize from it, as Muslims also came to dominate Yoruba ethno-national organizations (for the Oodua Peoples' Congress, see Nolte, 2007, p. 222).

5.1 The collapse of the Yoruba opposition and the rise of 'godfather' politics

Due to the negative experience with the presumed transition to democracy in the early 1990s, the 1999 elections in south-west Nigeria were dominated by mistrust of the central government. Most Yoruba-speakers strongly opposed Obasanjo's candidacy because, as a former military ruler of Nigeria in the 1970s, they considered him a stooge of the country's political elite.²⁸ This mistrust found its expression in an election result unusual for many African states (and beyond), which meant that Nigeria's first civilian Yoruba Head of State was elected primarily by votes from outside his area of origin. Instead of Obasanjo's party, the PDP, which had a strong base in northern and south-eastern Nigeria, the party successful in most of south-west Nigeria was the Alliance for Democracy (AD), a party led by many of Awolowo's former political friends and allies. As a result, Obasanjo lost some influence when in 1999 *Alhaji* Lamidi Adesina won the gubernatorial elections in Oyo State on the AD ticket. However, by the end of Adesina's first term in office, the political situation had changed. At the federal level, Obasanjo had enthusiastically courted the Yoruba vote, and within the south-west, Adesina and other AD leaders had failed to show that they were pursuing markedly different or better policies than the PDP. Moreover, disagreements within the AD meant that many younger AD members 'crossed the carpet' to the PDP, thus legitimating the governing party locally.

While majority public opinion was probably still in support of the AD, the change in public opinion made it possible for the PDP to manipulate the 2003 elections at the State level, often with the help of local 'godfathers'. In Oyo State, *Alhaji* Lamidi Adedibu had emerged as a powerful political broker in the early 1990s, when he supported Moshood Abiola's presidential aspirations. A few years after the annulment of the 1993 election, Adedibu supported Abacha's self-succession bid, but soon found himself so ostracized that he had to rely on armed soldiers and policemen for security (Omobowale and Olutayo, 2007, p. 425-42). However, by 2003, Adedibu had re-established himself, and was able not only to deliver Oyo State for the PDP but also to install Rasheed Ladoja as the governor. As in Anambra, the relationship between the two accomplices soon deteriorated, and constant attempts to manipulate the State House of Assembly – though less fomenting public violence – characterized the struggle over dominance. Eventually, Adedibu won enough support to have Ladoja impeached, and in January 2006, Ladoja's successor, Adebayo Alao-Akala, was sworn in. While there were some doubts over the legality of Ladoja's impeachment, Alao-Akala was (re-)elected in 2007, roughly a year before the death of his 'godfather' Adedibu, and continues to govern Oyo State.

Perhaps because of its long history of Muslim, Christian and traditionalist coexistence, Oyo State appears to be the state least affected by religious antagonism since 1999. However, some debates have mobilized religious constituencies in interesting ways. Thus, Lamidi Adesina, himself a Muslim, in 2003 responded to complaints by the National Council of Muslim Youth Organization (NACOMYO) by announcing that female Muslim students could wear a head-scarf to school. NACOMYO, a predominantly south-western federation of Muslim youth organizations, had taken up the demand for *shari'a* law in northern Nigeria and was instrumental in setting up private *shari'a* courts in some mosques in Oyo State and elsewhere, which eventually led to the establishment of the Independent *Shari'a* Arbitration Panel in the year 2002 (cf. Makinde, 2007). However, NACOMYO activists took Adesina's statement as a mandate to admonish and harass female students without head-scarves. When these activities created disruptions to school activities, thousands of Muslim and Christian students took to the streets to protest to the governor (*This Day*, 18 March 2003).

Although Adesina called the NAYOMCO militants to order, important Christian organizations like the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) accused the government of a lack of sensitivity towards Christians, and suggested that the next governor should be

a Christian. Comrade Ola Oni, the National Secretary of the NBC, then stood for the PDP gubernatorial primaries in the State, but his initiative was not successful, and both the next governor, Rasheed Ladoja, and his 'godfather' were Muslims. Nevertheless, CAN and other local Christian leaders also raised concerns related to education. Like in south-eastern Nigeria, many Christian leaders argued that the State government should return nationalized schools to the organizations that had founded them. Unlike in south-eastern Nigeria, in a mixed Muslim-Christian society such a demand does not reflect a general interest in an increase of religious influence vis-à-vis the state. It appears instead as a specifically Christian demand for a relative advantage over Muslims. As most early schools in Nigeria were founded by Christian missions, Christian organizations would benefit disproportionately from a return of their schools. Considering that even in south-western Nigeria, some Muslims fear that Christians abuse their dominance of the educational sector, the demand has some potential for generating local conflict. It is therefore possible that Adedibu's replacement of Ladoja with Adebayo Alao-Akala, a Baptist Christian, was also designed to prevent the further politicization of religion.

5.2 Muslim organizations in Oyo State

The Muslim organizations selected for study in Oyo State were the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society (ADS) and the Nasrul-Lahi-Il-Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), whose representatives were also interviewed in Kano State. As set out above, both organizations originated in south-west Nigeria and, among other matters, focus strongly on the provision of education to both Muslim men and women. NASFAT has been somewhat more successful than ADS in overcoming its Yoruba base and presents a slightly less 'ethnic' form of Islam. Both organizations are currently establishing private Muslim universities, with NASFAT building Fountain University near Osogbo, a Yoruba city less than an hour's drive from Ibadan, and the ADS planning Taqwa University in Offa, a Yoruba town situated on the northern border of Yorubaland. Unlike in Kano, both organizations have several branches in Oyo State, pointing to a very strong local membership.

Our respondent from NASFAT, *Alhaji* Opeyemi Abuliazeez Abduljeleel, is the chairman of NASFAT's organization in Oyo State, which is designated as South-west Zone 4 and consists of 19 branches (NASFAT, List of Branches). In the State, the organization runs nine praying grounds where Sunday prayers are held,²⁹ an education committee, a medical committee, a health committee, a social

welfare committee and a technical committee, and engages in a wide range of projects. These include a large number of educational programmes on Islam, as well as relationship and marriage counselling, a clinic, a co-operative and an interest-free credit programme. NASFAT does not pay tax on any of its activities. The organization is well represented at the government level, and *Alhaji* Abduljeleel pointed out that the former State governor, Rasheed Ladoja, was a member of NASFAT, although he did not come regularly to the organization's *Asalatu* prayer meetings. In addition, a NASFAT member from Oyo town, Asimiyu Alarape, is the present Speaker of the Oyo State House of Assembly.

Good relations with Oyo State's governing elite are reflected in the fact that whenever NASFAT has invited Muslim members of the Executive of Oyo State to its events or programmes, they have made promises of gifts and kept these promises. For example, while Rasheed Ladoja was the governor, he promised to tar the road leading to one of NASFAT's praying grounds at Samonda, Ibadan, and later fulfilled his promise. The former Deputy Governor, *Alhaji* Hazeem Gbolarami, supplied a transformer to NASFAT, which the organization reported that it had used for some time until it acquired a new one. The government also invited NASFAT to participate in the State Action Committee on HIV/AIDS, and provided drugs to be handed out at NASFAT's weekly community services.³⁰

Our respondent felt that NASFAT's closeness to government did not automatically translate into significant political influence. Asked whether NASFAT had 'a lot of input in governance', *Alhaji* Abduljeleel replied:

Yes. But I would not say input per se because they [NASFAT members in government] did not go into politics to represent NASFAT. They went on their own and it just happens that they are NASFAT members and find themselves in positions of authority (interview 6 January 2008, *Alhaji* Abduljeleel).

The Ansar-Ud-Deen Society (ADS) was established in Ibadan in 1932 or 1933, and State-level councils came into existence in 1969. Below the Oyo State Council, there are zones with zonal headquarters, which are divided into branches, and some branches are further divided into divisions. The Oyo State Council Secretary, Prince Sulaiman Makanjuola-Totoola, estimates that there are about thirty branches of the ADS overall in Oyo State. ADS runs a general purpose committee that deals with personal, occasional or seasonal activities, from hospital bills to Ramadan activities. Through this it oversees and operates three local primary and secondary Islamic and Arabic schools in Ibadan alone, as well as

others in other Oyo towns. It also organizes lectures, symposia, and seminar workshops. The organization reported that it pays tax on its schools and vehicles and also encourages its members and the teachers in its schools not to default on income tax.

Like NASFAT, the ADS claims to have representatives in government, interestingly including former Governor Rasheed Ladoja, whom our respondent described as “a passive member of Ansar-Ud-Deen Society”, as well as one of the Permanent Secretaries. The ADS also pointed to the roles played by some of its influential members in the development of the society. According to Oyo state ADS council Secretary, Prince Makanjuola-Totoola,

The ‘children’ of Ansar-Ud-Deen society of Nigeria who are well to do like Musliu Smith, former Inspector General of Nigeria (IGP), have contributed over N100, 000,000 (N100m) to take over some of the secondary schools which belong to Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria. Invariably, members are grateful to these few influential members (interview 27 December 2007, Prince Makanjuola-Totoola).

However, the organization does not feel included to the same degree as NASFAT, and Prince Makanjuola-Totoola noted that the ADS had written to the present governor to suggest one of their members for a position, but that this letter had been ignored. He also complained that the organization had not received State government support for pilgrimages to the degree it had expected. Beyond this, Makanjuola-Totoola stressed that the group’s members in government were there on the basis of their own merit. However, he admitted that this meant that the appointments in question constituted informal representation.

The few of our own members who [are] in ... government, we were only lucky because it was [not] given by [sic] being a member of Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria but by merit ... but fortunately, we turn there (interview 27 December 2007, Prince Makanjuola-Totoola).

While it is clear that both Muslim organizations were well represented and free to pursue their aims in Oyo State, it should also be noted that both the ADS and NASFAT are locally based groups that include very few Hausa-speaking Muslims. As in Anambra State, the term Hausa is used locally to refer to all northern Nigerian and non-Nigerian Hausa-speakers, even if Hausa is their second or subsequent language. As in most Nigerian cities, members of non-local ethnic and linguistic groups – including

Hausas – tend to live in separate quarters of the town. This both reflects and reinforces ethno-regional dissociation, and Hausa and Yoruba Muslims in Ibadan rarely worship in the same mosques.

The three areas of Ibadan usually recognized as ‘Hausa’ quarters are Sabo, Ojoo and Shasha, each of which is ruled by a leader or *Sarkin*, who represents the area to the outside and also settles local disputes. During the military period, which was characterized by strong ideological opposition to the federal government, the centre often turned to the Hausa communities in search of local ‘godfathers’. The way in which such strongmen were favoured economically and politically often created resentment. Thus, the fact that the *Sarkin* of Shasha frequently received more respect and security support at official functions than the *Olubadan* or ruler of Ibadan was perceived by locals as humiliating for both the city and its (Yoruba) inhabitants (Agbaje, 2002, p. 19).

When local links to the central government were transformed after the 1999 election, local anger over the past preferential treatment of northern Nigerians found expression in several fights between Hausa groups and the Yoruba ethno-nationalist organisation, the Oodua Peoples’ Congress (OPC). In June 1999, a Hausa cattle dealer stabbed a local in a dispute, and the resulting violence led to many deaths. At the time, the government accepted local perceptions of causation, and threatened the Hausa cattle dealers with relocation. A similar mass response occurred when, in January 2000, a Hausa-driven lorry accidentally crashed into a commuter bus at Ojoo and killed three passengers. After a battle in which more than a dozen people were killed and more than 180 shops destroyed, the driver, who had been hidden from the crowd by fellow Hausas, was given up and killed (*The News*, 19 January 2000).

Since the early years of civilian rule, relations between Hausas and Yorubas have improved, but it appears that the backlash to the former over-representation of Hausa-speakers has not fully ended yet. Thus Dr Aderemi Sulaiman Ajala, a close follower of Ibadan politics and a former confidant of the late *Alhaji* Lamidi Adedibu, asserts that there is virtually no representation of Hausa Muslims in the city’s local governments. According to him, almost all parties send Hausa-speaking ‘indigenes’ to live in the quarters of immigrants before elections, who are then nominated by the parties and subsequently constitute the only choice for those immigrants who care to vote (conversation 23 July 2009). Thus, while Yoruba Muslims usually enjoy unproblematic relations with the Oyo State government, non-‘indigenous’ Muslim groups have almost no representation.

On the other hand, the Ibadan Hausa communities' decision to settle disputes around inheritance and similar matters cases among their members with the help of *shari'a* law has been undisputed. Interestingly, another northern group in Ibadan, the Nupe (Tapa) community, has also set up an independent *Shari'a* Panel, which, while also supposedly compulsory for all local Nupe Muslims, has a less inclusive remit than that of the Hausa community (Makinde, 2007, p. 100-3). While the local acceptance of different *shari'a* practices reflects both religious and ethnic tolerance (or *laissez-faire*), the fact that the *shari'a* panels of the Hausa and Nupe communities are independent of the Independent *Shari'a* Arbitration Panel of Oyo State suggests ongoing divisions among local Muslims. Unlike in Kano State, the differences arising from the differential treatment of 'indigenous' and in-migrant Muslim communities are not bridged by *shari'a* law. Instead, different *shari'a* practices reinforce ethno-regional difference.

5.3 Christian organizations in Oyo State

The Christian organizations interviewed in Oyo State include the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and the [Roman Catholic] Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC). As an umbrella body, CAN Oyo focuses on advocacy work on behalf of its member churches and does not pay tax. It has also organized 'Christian activities', including visits to motherless babies' homes, special needs schools and grieving widows. CAN is not represented in the government, and our respondent admitted that this made it more difficult to participate in decision-making; for example, the organization felt that it had not been adequately considered by the State's Pilgrim Board during the distribution of funds for Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem. However, CAN believed that it easily makes up for its lack of government representation through its good links to the press and media, through which it makes its views known. Possibly referring to the struggles over Muslim students' head-scarves, our respondent, Pastor Andrew Olubunmi, argued:

Any time we believe that there is a wrong step being taken by the government ... we do give advice to the government so that they will know that the decision they are about to take is not good for the entire populace (interview January 2008, Pastor Olubunmi).

As explained above, the RCCG is a Pentecostal Church with a strong base in south-west Nigeria, which has expanded to include members of many different backgrounds. In Oyo, the church has a strong social focus, running a prison and hospital ministry as well as an HIV/AIDS awareness

programme, which includes talks by victims of the disease during Sunday services, thus reaching all regular church-goers. Through the awareness programme, HIV/AIDS patients from within and outside the congregation are also provided with free drugs, counselling and testing, and the church asserted that it works very hard to address the (strongly stigmatized) status of the disease:

... the [church] is going all the way to make sure the society is aware of this, we are preaching it even in our church that everybody should go for a test ... we don't isolate AIDS victims in our [RCCG] society, we sit together, because we know sitting together won't spread AIDS, we advise on health issues (interview 3 January 2008, Area Pastor Peter Adagbada).

Apart from its churches, which it also uses for lectures and other educational events, this organization runs a primary and secondary school in Ibadan, in relation to which it pays tax, and it also holds regular and extremely popular prayer vigils in an area known as Redemption City (formerly Redemption Camp) about an hour south of Ibadan along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. Near Redemption City – which includes houses and apartments for sale to church members – the church is currently establishing its own university, Redemption University. The RCCG has also conducted services at State House, the governor's official residence, and it has several members in the government.

As in Anambra State, the presence of the Roman Catholic Church in Ibadan dates back to the 1880s. It has established a large number of schools and seminaries, including a school for the blind, as well as hospitals and medical centres. Because of its international links and welcoming attitude towards resident in-migrants, the Catholic Church in Ibadan is, even more than the RCCG, a church with an ethnically mixed congregation. It has some members in government, although these are not considered representatives of the church itself but simply successful Catholics. According to our respondent, the Reverend Father Ezekiel Owoeye, who is the Director of the Ibadan Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), the FBO carries out a range of projects which focus on health, education, development and democracy. Specifically, it is active in agricultural extension work and has run several institutional HIV/AIDS awareness workshops, as well as a range of training and rehabilitation programmes for inmates of Agodi prison. Beyond this, it has also organized a range of civil peace, democracy and human rights courses and events in schools and at other public venues (interview 27 October 2007, Father Ezekiel Owoeye). Beyond pro-democracy education and training,

the election monitoring work of the JDPC has been important in documenting electoral malpractice, and supporting appeals against official results. A number of JDPC reports on the conduct of the 2007 elections in the state were submitted to the election petition tribunal which decided on the challenge to the current governor Alao-Akala by his rival from the ANPP, Abiola Ajimobi.

Ajimobi is a gifted orator who is widely believed to have been the popular candidate. Ajimobi campaigned as a devout Muslim, implying that he would not engage in the corruption associated with 'godfather' politics. However, more importantly, he campaigned as an Ibadan 'indigene'. As most of the citizens of Oyo State live in Ibadan, many Ibadan citizens believe – rightly or wrongly – that the governor of the state should be from the city itself. This undermined Alao-Akala, who hails from Ogbomosho in northern Oyo State. With his 'godfather's' help, Alao-Akala was able to convince key players that he hailed from the 'Ibadan side' of Ogbomosho, and the election was won for him. However, once his 'godfather' had died, Alao-Akala confirmed local misgivings over his commitment to Ibadan. Undermining the authority of Ibadan's traditional ruler, the *Olubadan*, by awarding a crown to the ruler of a village traditionally under Ibadan's control, Alao-Akala cut himself off from almost all local ties, and Ibadan-based support for Ajimobi's appeal against the 2007 gubernatorial election increased dramatically. Disappointingly for both Ibadan's elite and the JDPC, however, Ajimobi's appeal was not granted by the court (*Vanguard*, 7 December 2008; *This Day*, 16 July 2009).

5.4 Conclusion

As the political struggles in Oyo State illustrate, there appears to be very little difference overall between the experiences of indigenous Christian and Muslim organizations in terms of access to and representation in government. Of the organizations interviewed, NASFAT and the RCCG seem to have the best links to government, which suggests the possibility that government officials favour 'new' or 'reform' movements within both Islam and Christianity. This might be because such movements are most attractive to members of the local elite, who tend to be opinion-makers and are generally overrepresented in government.

The strong emphasis by all organizations (except for the ADS) that their members are in government as individuals and not as representatives of the organization in question is counterintuitive, because appointments to government posts in Oyo State are usually made in line with an extension of the

'federal character principle' to religion, meaning that Christians and Muslims are represented in about equal numbers and most religious organizations are included. It appears as if the proportionalism in Oyo even exceeds that of Anambra, because posts are not only allocated by local government origin and religion, but also, increasingly, according to gender and age, thus ensuring a (not necessarily equitable) proportion of women and younger politicians in positions of authority. This concern reflects a strong local awareness of the dominant debates among donors and international observers as well as grassroots demands, suggesting that the local political elite is conscious both of its international image and the potential rifts within the society.

Beyond such concerns, however, it is also likely that the claimed distance from the government reflects the fears of many religious organizations that they might be identified with the corruption associated with the political elite. Thus it is likely that the concerns of our respondents do not only reflect concerns over economic malfeasance, but also many people's belief that those who derive 'unjust' or 'satanic' wealth from the political sphere have sacrificed their integrity as Christians or Muslims.³¹ Thus, many people suspect Muslim and Christian leaders who are politically successful of being involved in modern-day traditional practices like oath-taking, an involvement which would undermine their authority as Christian leaders. Therefore, the assertion of religious leaders that they maintain a distance from the political sphere is also an assertion that they are 'real' Muslims and Christians (cf. also Harnischfeger, 2006). This is implicit in the – slightly dissembling – comment by Oyo State NASFAT representative *Alhaji Abduljeleel*:

During my tenure here, I did not entertain politicians, I did not go to them, because I know what they will demand from me, I may not be able to give them. The moment you believe in money and go to them, you will dance to their tune because money dictates a lot of things (interview 6 January 2008, *Alhaji Abduljeleel*).

Interestingly, two of the larger conflicts that have dominated Ibadan politics in the past decade reflect struggles over the locality itself and the status of its traditional ruler. The Yoruba-Hausa clashes of 1999 and 2000, as well as the clash surrounding the governorship of Alao-Akala, crystallized around the perceived humiliation of Ibadan's traditional ruler, the *Olubadan*. The *Olubadan* is a focal point of local identity and like in Kano, non-'indigenes' who are perceived to embarrass him or the town of Ibadan itself find themselves, like outsiders in Kano, under attack by members of the 'indigenous' elite. This notwithstanding, and despite a long royal tradition in south-western Nigeria, the *Olubadan* does

not hold the power or religious influence of the *Emir* of Kano. Therefore, it appears that opposition to him is not perceived as religious but as based on origin.

The debates about head-scarves, the activities of militant NACOYOM members, and the Christian demands for the return of schools appropriated by the state illustrate that some of the religious identities mobilized within Oyo State politics are potentially divisive. However, recent events demonstrate that, although members of different faiths (or different denominations within a faith) fundamentally disagree over certain issues, this does not seem to play an important role in the real struggles over power in the State. In the context of local rivalry, concerns over Ibadan's status and the general unease over the city's 'godfather' politics were crystallized by Ajimobi's appeal to the election tribunal, which brought together Ibadan's traditional elite, a Muslim candidate and a Catholic pro-democracy organization in order to defeat a Christian candidate who had been installed by a Muslim 'godfather'.

This case clearly illustrates that, while religious rivalry constitutes part of everyday politics in Oyo, religious organizations are involved in politics not so much on the basis of their religion but on the basis of their position within local politics. However, the boundaries between ethnicity, indigeneity and religion are sometimes blurred and, as in Anambra, it seems that the politicization of religion by 'godfathers' or their opponents in the State encourages religious groups and FBOs to introduce religion to patronage politics.

6 Religion in the political realm

While the case studies from Kano, Oyo and Anambra States highlight the great variety and local embeddedness of religious politics and the activities of religious groups and FBOs, they also illustrate some wider similarities and differences that affect religious engagement with politics. Some aspects of this engagement will be explored in the section below, which complements the case studies of the organizations' activities by examining organizational – and respondents' – attitudes towards some key issues: good governance and development, poverty and gender. Interestingly, despite the rivalry which characterizes the experience of day-to-day politics for most religious groups and FBOs, the respondents agree on many points. We suggest that this indicates that religious and faith-based organizations share a vocabulary of criticism of the state that appeals to a large section of the population.

The main topic on which interview respondents disagreed is gender. However, here the responses suggest that ethno-regional and cultural differences play a much stronger role in shaping attitudes towards women than religion, with both Muslims and Christians in southern Nigeria, or of southern origin, generally more open to women's active participation in society than Muslims and Christians in the North or those of Hausa-speaking origin. However, as highlighted in Section 2, almost all our respondents were male and, as views on women's abilities and roles might differ by gender, our findings should be treated as preliminary.

6.1 Good governance and development

Despite the high degree of political violence in all three States, none of our respondents, when asked about good governance and development, focused on this topic. Instead, reflecting the social realities experienced daily by the vast majority of Nigerians, they referred to the failure of the Nigerian state to provide its citizens with basic goods. Both religious and government representatives understood the concepts of good governance and development in a very similar fashion. In their descriptions, the provision of social welfare and security loomed particularly large. Our respondent from the civil service in Kano argued that

Good governance entails tackling public affairs through empowering people; through ensuring their welfare; through maintaining their good health; ensuring that a conducive environment is provided for education; good roads are provided; power sector is tackled; water is provided (interview 13 May 2008, *Mallam Danyaro*).

His views on development were congruent with the comments of a female Christian (CAN) respondent from the same state:

When things develop people will be aware. ... There will be electricity, there will be water, and there will be good roads. That is what they call development. ... So by bringing electricity you are bringing development to the people. Even education, there will be awareness among your children, instead of everybody being farmers, they will read and write, they can communicate (interview 14 May 2008, Mrs. Funmilayo Osho).

Equally, a Christian (RCCG) respondent from Anambra State suggested that

Good governance means a government that is popular, that is meeting the needs of the people they rule [sic], like for example, the government that provides motorable roads, not only within the townships but into the hinterlands and communities to enable the people easy access to transport their farm produce. This is one aspect of good governance. Also provision of pipe-borne water, electricity, the government that assists in providing these social amenities is good (interview 14 May 2008, Pastor Orji).

Some respondents added important provisos that reflected their positions within local relations of power in various ways. Highlighting the JDPC's engagement in civic education and its many links to international donors, the views of its respondent from Anambra State on good governance illustrate his familiarity with the international language of governance and development, as well as the JDPC's commitment to pro-democracy work. Highlighting the relationship between government and people as the most important issue in good governance, the JDPC's response does not focus directly on material progress, but, in its reference to the people's wishes, takes such expectations into account:

Good governance is people-oriented. It is being pro-poor and adopting or developing a listenership culture. ... It is centered on participatory governance; brining the people to assist in whatever you are doing, letting them judge their representatives through their score card; it is bringing the people at all times to a point where they would understand the activities of government, be part of it and also ask questions and get answers.

Good governance also plans ahead, taking into consideration the long term nature of development needs of the people, as always pivoted by their needs assessment; good governance should always be purpose driven by sustaining whatever the people are enjoying or want (interview 16 May 2008, C. J. Onyenze).

Several respondents also linked their expectations of good governance and development explicitly to religion, as well as to other abstract values, such as justice and equality. Thus, our respondent from

the *Izala* in Kano explained that he understood as good governance as “governance guided by justice and the fear of Allah”, explaining that *Izala* preaches against the stealing and looting of public funds (interview 13 May 2008, *Mallam Ali*). The comments by Reverend Bwamche from Kano State have a similar emphasis on equality and justice. He also emphasized the importance of religious freedom – a comment that is likely to reflect his frustration over the treatment of his church, and Christians in general, in northern Nigeria:

Good governance is when we respect the rule of law, when we respect the human rights when we equally respect and see human life, value humans; and good governance is when there is security... not only security of life and property, there is equally freedom, freedom of speech, freedom to propagate even your religion. ... Good governance is when development is spread evenly. Not one-sided. (interview 6 January 2008, Reverend Bwamche).

While also listing material and educational progress as the aims of development, the respondent from the RCCG in Oyo used a scriptural reference to illustrate the importance of fairness and justice of government:

[The Biblical King] David said, let them that lead in the midst of man be fair and just. When you are fair and just in managing the resources of the community for the welfare of the community, essentially you have good governance (interview January 2008, Pastor Andrew Olubunmi).

In contrast to the widespread consensus on good governance and development provided by the majority of religious groups and FBOs, our respondent from the Yoruba Muslim community in Anambra was very critical of ideas of development as infrastructural development. Interrogating the interviewer’s question by linking it to the material expectations ascribed by most other religious representatives to the political class, Imam Ologbonoke emphasized that material wealth was nothing without spiritual well-being:

Development for all of us in the state? Do you mean for everybody to become rich? Well, it is only God that can take society and the people to a better kind of living. Development is acting according to the will of God for the bettering of mankind. It is not about all these material things that we see today. People do many evil things to get money, to build big houses etc [sic], but it is vanity if we don’t have the fear of God (interview January 2008, Imam Ologbonoke).

It is unlikely that this dissent reflects the fact that the Yoruba Muslim community is one of only two organizations that are clearly not FBOs, because these views are not shared by the other member of this group, the northern Muslim community. However, it is a useful reminder that both world religions, at least potentially, can also constitute the basis for a non- or even anti-materialistic view of the world (and nation). However, among our respondents, and despite the dissenting view by Imam Ologbonoke, there was a widespread agreement among the religious organizations and FBOs on good governance and development, which is believed to be linked to material progress, including the provision of infrastructure and education, as well as justice, even-handedness and good relations between government and the people it represents. These comments represent views widespread among Nigerians of very different backgrounds. A recent survey suggests that

Nigerians are broadly discouraged by the performance of their political system, and do not generally believe that they have reaped the “dividends” of democracy. Nonetheless, a large majority of Nigerians continue to prefer democratic government over all other options, and many Nigerians remain patient about the anticipated benefits of the democratic system. ... These popular attitudes suggest that Nigeria’s new democracy remains fragile, and suffers a growing deficit of popular confidence (Afrobarometer, 2006, p. 2).

At the same time, our respondents frequently represented abstract ideals, such as justice and equality, as essentially religious ideas, thus framing the enlightenment values generally associated with the debate on development within a religious context. A number of respondents from both Christian and Muslim religious groups and FBOs pointed out that the aims stated by them as desirable could only be achieved by leaders who are God-fearing and who follow scriptural examples, points that were also emphasized by Imam Ologbonoke. The widespread emphasis on the fear of God clearly comments on the prevailing political culture throughout Nigeria, where those in power often commit crimes with impunity. The expression of such – essentially political – criticism through religious discourse suggests that the heated religious debate in Nigeria fulfils important social functions. However, Nigeria’s vibrant press culture suggests that critique of the system is also possible within strictly secular parameters, so the need for a space for debate is not likely to be the main reason for the use of religious discourse for such a critique.

Nevertheless, as the language and main messages of Islam and Christianity are closely related, it is possible that in a country with very divergent cultural and intellectual traditions and influences, the

Abrahamic religions do contribute to a shared moral and political vocabulary that is intelligible across linguistic, cultural and geographical divides. In that sense, the rise of religion in Nigeria might reflect both the failure of secular political alternatives to the country's patrimonial system, and the ongoing struggle by many Nigerians to frame their concerns and hopes for the future in ways that are clear and appealing to their fellow citizens.

6.2 Poverty: "It is here with us"

Asked about poverty, the respondents from the religious organizations and FBOs agreed that the poor should be helped and supported. Most responses focused on individual support for people identified as poor, as well as on programmes designed to provide skills and capital to those without. However, despite similar structural approaches, there seemed to be no general agreement on who the poor are, and several respondents struggled to identify those who are not (quite so) poor rather than poor. A typical comment that illustrates the many facets of poverty recognized by churches, religious communities and FBOs, and the manifold responses offered by these organizations, was made by the respondent from the JDPC in Anambra State, who explained that the JDPC's pro-poor programmes are "directed to alleviating the inconveniencies on the poor, the physically challenged, [and] the marginalized". This organization emphasizes that it is important not to impose one's own ideas on the poor but to support them in order to assist them to help themselves:

Our entire attempt this year is focused on the concerns of the poor, the less privileged, the marginalized, the physically challenged. We will not only try to be their voice but we also try to restore their voice to them, so that they would begin to see their own needs and also to have them met (interview 16 May 2008, C. J. Onyenze).

Despite this professional-sounding statement, however, an element of despair could be discerned in Mr. Onyenze's responses to our interviewer, as he stressed repeatedly that poverty is everywhere:

Oh my God, when we talk about poverty alleviation, it sounds as if it is something that is far-fetched. It is here with us. Go around, you see poor people around at every nook and cranny, you will meet them on the roads, on the streets, you will meet them even in the families. They are there in the schools (interview 16 May 2008, C. J. Onyenze).

It is perhaps this anguish over the ubiquitous presence of poverty which has encouraged a range of different responses by many religious groups and FBOs. For example, NASFAT in Oyo State has helped poor members to set themselves up in business, buying a motorcycle for one former prison

inmate and sewing machines for others wishing to set up as tailors. In a similar manner, their representative considered those in need of food as poor, and reported that such people receive food from the organization during Ramadan. However, in the same breath, the NASFAT representative also expressed fear and anger about poverty, claiming that it results from laziness and lack of parental supervision. Although it is unlikely that secretly well-off people beg for the fun of it, this well-worn trope so exercised him that he spoke with distaste about those who beg although they do not need to:

Every day during the Ramadan we distribute food, raw foods, not cooked ones, for [the poor] to be able to observe the Ramadan fast, [we give them] rice, beans, milk, Bournvita [a malted drink], sugar, etc to observe the fast. And when we see a boy that begs and we know that he is not supposed to beg, we ask the security to go and bring such boy. We will interview him to be able to see his problems. Some [times] during the interview we would see that he or she is not supposed to beg, but [is doing it] because of laziness. Some children will run out of their parents' house, coming here to beg. We have seen a lot like that, and we have taken them to their homes where the parents are apparently surprised to see them begging (interview 6 January 2008, *Alhaji Abduljeleel*).

The dislike for poverty expressed in the comments by *Alhaji Abduljeleel* is presumably fed by an attempt to reduce, if only by implication, the number of poor to a more manageable size: one suspects that people like *Alhaji Abduljeleel* feel that if only those who are really in need of it beg, charity could alleviate poverty. At the same time, the association of begging with laziness or lack of supervision reflects fear and the need to draw a distinction between the real poor and oneself. If a person works and fulfils their obligations as a parent, *Alhaji Abduljeleel's* argument suggests, they and their offspring will not be afflicted by poverty. The need to draw such distinctions between the real poor and others is surely an indication of poverty's omnipresence. The ever-present nature of poverty is also confirmed in comments from Kano State. According to *Mallam Danyaro*, the government spokesperson of Kano,

Pro-poor change is change that is biased towards the welfare of the poor, positive change that is aimed at alleviating the suffering of the poor by giving them shelter [and] food, let the poor have access to health [and] good drinking water, let the poor enjoy the goodies of life. In Nigeria we have got the resources but these resources cannot reach the poor (interview 13 May 2008, *Mallam Danyaro*).

As only a minority of Nigerians has regular access to health, good drinking water and "the goodies of life", it seems clear from his submission that almost every Nigerian can be considered as poor. Considering that he speaks as a government official, it is interesting that he also acknowledges –

albeit indirectly – that the state has failed to channel existing resources into assisting those in need. In the face of such helplessness and failure, the admission of the *Izala* representative is sobering:

Apart from *Zakat* [alms giving, see footnote 18], which we use in distributing [means] to the poor as the Prophet (SAW) has obliged us to do, we do not have any other means of helping the poor (interview 13 May 2008, *Mallam Ali*).

While Mallam Ali also expressed the hope that his organization's planned carpentry programme will help to alleviate poverty, and while several respondents suggested that similar programmes, including those aimed at women and students, will improve the situation, the pervasiveness of poverty, and their own helplessness in the face of it, is tangible from all the responses. These reflect the painful reality of the Nigerian state's failure to address poverty and social inequality, and the growing chasm which has opened between the poor and the not-so-poor since the 1980s. According to Lubeck, Lipschutz and Weeks (2003, p. 20-21) the number of Nigerians in poverty has exploded from a little under 20 million (or roughly a quarter of the overall population) in 1980 to about 70 million (or two-thirds of the population) in 1996, with inequality rising further over the last decade despite overall economic growth. Despite numerous government programmes to alleviate poverty, life expectancy today is a mere 54 years, and infant and maternal mortality are among the highest in the world (Ewruhjakpor, 2008).

Thus the many initiatives through which religious groups and FBOs support and help the poor must seem, at least at times, like a drop in the ocean. To retain hope and optimism in what appears like a hopeless situation, people may turn to faith. It is very likely that concerns over poverty also undergird the support for *shari'a* law in northern Nigeria, which contains both the country's poorest states and those states with the most rigid social order: in the late 1990s, the incidence of poverty was over 70 per cent in Kano State, and it reached more than 83 per cent in many *shari'a* states, such as Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara (Lubeck et al, 2003). While the concern over poverty was certainly not the only reason for the support of *shari'a* law, support for *shari'a* among those self-identified as members of the poor or the middle level of society is between 12 and 14 per cent higher than among members of the upper levels of society (*Afrobarometer*, 2009, p. 7-8).

If, as suggested above, religion provides part of a shared vocabulary for the moral debates Nigerians want and need to hold over the political future of their country, the failure of past efforts to reverse the declining life chances of most Nigerians also encourages groups and individuals to seek out a more

powerful language. In this sense, the historically grounded legal codes guiding the implementation of *shari'a* penal law in Kano and other northern states represent not only part of the discourse of Muslim religious freedom, but also a vocabulary of criticism and hope that is, at least in part, directed at all Nigerians. In part, therefore, *shari'a* is not only perceived as threatening because of its association with sectional interests, but also because of its claim to universality, which excludes other visions of a better future for Nigeria.

6.3 Ethno-regional difference in gender perceptions

In principle, most of our respondents from both the religious and faith-based sector and the government agreed on the meaning of women's empowerment, which they saw as advancing the cause of women in society. At the same time, the fact that all the organizations contacted had a predominantly male leadership was not questioned by any of our respondents, although we would like to re-emphasize here that we only spoke to one female respondent and that our findings may not be representative of women's views. Separate from the main (and usually male) leadership, all the organizations have women's wings or sections run by female members, which gives women space to organize and mobilise other women, with varying degrees of independence from the male leadership. This was even the case for the organizations which place a strong emphasis on female submission, such as *Izala* in Kano State and the Yoruba Muslim community in Anambra State, where women are active as teachers and helpers within the female schools. They are also encouraged to participate in the activities of FOMWAN, the Nigeria-wide Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria. Overall, therefore, women appear to play important roles in most religious groups and FBOs, confirming the suggestion that religious groups are one of the most popular and legitimized ways for women to organize for development and self-improvement (Para-Mallam, 2006).

One of the reasons for the strong presence of women in the religious sector is undoubtedly the fact that religion is seen as an appropriate concern for women by large sections of both the Muslim and Christian populations. Moreover, because many women's activities take place in all-female environments, they can be active even in religious organizations that insist on a strong division of gender roles. While this suggests that the participation of women in the religious sphere is generally better than in other areas of public life, it also illustrates the drawbacks of channelling female agency through structures added on to the main organizations. Through this arrangement, women's interests

are both included in larger organizational remits and kept under close control, especially as the overall leadership of most religious groups and FBOs continues to be dominated by men. However, even in very strongly male-dominated organizations, such as the Hausa Muslim community in Anambra, it was reported that women may be asked to mediate or act as intercessors. As *Alhaji* Garba Haruna acknowledged, Muslim women can also rely on a very strong organization at the national level:

They [the women in FOMWAN] are organizing themselves well. Sometimes we may need something from the government, [and] we would go through them. These women have their way more than us [the men in the main organization] because anytime they go to the government for something, the government have always have their demand met [sic] (interview January 2008, *Alhaji* Garba Haruna).

As our fieldworkers were mostly offered appointments with male respondents, we suspect that our information about the activities of women in the religious groups and FBOs examined here may be incomplete. However, even from the information we hold, it is clear that most of the religious groups and FBOs run programmes or offer opportunities specifically aimed at serving women. These include prayer groups (NASFAT, ADS, ECWA, CAN, RCCG, Church of Nigeria), educational opportunities (NASFAT, ADS, CAN, RCCG, JDPC), micro-credit and small-scale business training opportunities (NASFAT, ADS, CAN, JDPC, Church of Nigeria) and centres dedicated to maternal or reproductive health or hypertension (NASFAT, RCCG, Church of Nigeria).³² Beyond these initiatives, which clearly fit into mainstream development policies, many respondents also mentioned the support of widows and orphans as both a religious obligation and a development need. It partly reflects the widespread Nigerian practice of demanding elaborate rituals of submission and grieving from widows, who are often asked to remain in seclusion for up to a year. Moreover, in many parts of Nigeria, widows cannot inherit from their husbands, reducing them to dependence on family and relatives for survival. In this context, the relevant injunctions both in the Bible and the Qur'an are perceived as placing powerful obligations on believers.

However, despite the widely shared acknowledgement that women play an important role in most religious groups and FBOs, the views of our respondents on the meaning and purpose of women's empowerment differed dramatically. Our respondents directly or indirectly associated with the Hausa-speaking communities of northern Nigeria seemed to agree that women's empowerment should

centre on helping them to fulfil their roles as wives and mothers. As the respondent from the *Izala* pointed out, this requires some concessions from men:

The Qur'an says it is a man's responsibility to take care of the needs of his wife and it is the responsibility of the father to take care of the needs of the daughters. ... Among the Sunna people [such as the members of the *Izala*], if a man does not have male children, or if he has small children who cannot engage in labour, it is the man's responsibility to fetch water and firewood for the woman to cook with. That is what real Islam teaches (interview 13 May 2008, *Mallam Ali*).

Similar suggestions were made by the respondent from the Hausa Muslim community in Anambra State:

Women, you know, women are housewives. They belong there and it is completely that way. Everybody knows his rights and the rights of a woman. So, if you know this, it would be wrong to abuse their rights as housewives (interview January 2008, *Alhaji Garba Haruna*).

The respondent from the ECWA church in Kano State which, unlike many other churches, has local roots, highlighted analogous values, although he suggested that women should be able to contribute in a small way to the family finances:

Women empowerment is a situation where women are enlightened [and] given the appropriate knowledge of their roles as mothers, their roles as wives, and their roles as custodians of lives, tender lives. And then giving them not only the knowledge but financing some projects, giving them money to start little, little projects where they themselves can meet up with the financial needs in the family (interview 6 January 2008, Reverend Bwamche).

In contrast, the comments from the Yoruba-dominated ADS in Kano State, despite its Muslim base and historical and close links with the locality, reflect a much more emancipatory view of women's empowerment. While the respondents emphasized typically female roles, they clearly also perceive women as having responsibility for the moral integrity of their husbands, as playing important roles within society, and as holding responsibilities beyond the confines of the household (and petty trading):

What the women really need, what the Qur'an says, is that they are supposed to take care of the home, their children, develop their husbands, make sure [the husbands] do not go astray. ... And you know if you do not develop women you have not developed society. You need to develop women to make sure that they are good housewives, good

mothers. A good housewife and mother will behave decently if she gets to her office, she will not tamper with government money (interview 3 January 2008, Abdul-Lateef Jimoh and *Alhaji Ayedun*).

Mrs Funmilayo Osho, also a Yoruba-speaker and the secretary of CAN's Women's Wing in Kano, had even stronger views on the capabilities of women, arguing that women's empowerment meant to give women the opportunity "to do things themselves, without consulting the men, to be given free hands". However, despite her forceful interpretation of female empowerment in theory, her practical examples of what the organization does to help women suggests a general focus on the family, although she also emphasized the importance of education for women's advancement. She explained that,

We do seminars, we do try our best [to] encourag[e] them. The little you have to take care of your family, your children, find something doing. [We support women] not [by] giving them the money [to do things] but [by] giving them the knowledge on what to do (interview 4 January 2008, Funmilayo Osho).

The wider remit envisaged for women's scope of action expressed by these non-Hausa FBOs in Kano State are shared, albeit with varying degrees of enthusiasm, by both Muslim and Christian organizations in southern Nigeria. Thus, the respondent from the RCCG in Anambra pointed out that in his church, women can aspire to high leadership positions, and that some Provinces are even headed by female pastors. He linked women's success strongly to their religious status and argued that:

If a woman is born again [a member of a Pentecostal church] and conversant with scriptural instructions and is carrying them out, that person would have been empowered. And I also believe that women should be encouraged to express themselves in getting equal opportunity and education like the men. ... I read in the newspaper that we have more women in school than men in Anambra State. So I believe that in [the] Anambra context the women are empowered spiritually, physically and otherwise, even [economically]. Thank God, we have a Deputy Governor of the state who is a woman³³ (interview 14 May 2008, Pastor Orji).

His views were shared by the head of the Yoruba Muslim community in the State, who despite his general skepticism about development (see above), simply stated:

We have very influential and powerful women among us who have contributed so many, many things to the progress of this religion, in particular in Awka and other parts of the state (interview January 2008, Imam Ologbonoke).

In Oyo State, responses from Muslim and Christian organizations reflected a similar pattern. Perhaps in response to disagreements between Hausa and Yoruba-dominated interpretations of Islam, as well as to attempts by the local Muslim organization NACOMYO to enforce the wearing of head-scarves by schoolgirls, the respondent from the ADS also explained in some detail why the limitations imposed on women in northern Nigeria do not reflect the Qur'an's teachings:

The Almighty Allah gave tem a very long Sura in the Qur'an, ... they do not lead prayer [among men], they only head prayer among themselves. But in the socio-economic sector the Qur'an does not forbid them [to be active] and we should not try to mix [the] culture of other people with religion. Culture is separate...

... when you get to Saudi Arabia for instance, it is their culture that their women do not work because they believe that they are the weaker sex. ... But if you now tell us that everybody in Oyo State should wrap their bodies, [you] are now mixing culture with religion. So religion permits them to play their own role (interview 27 December 2007, Prince Makanjuola-Totoola).

Also in reflection of wider debates in Oyo State about the exact meaning of the scriptures (possibly related to the ongoing attempts to 'fix' the meaning of religious identities), even Christian respondents went into some detail about Biblical injunctions. The RCCG's Area Pastor Peter Adagbada explained:

There is a scripture in the Book of Timothy where Paul said women should not speak in the fellowship of the brethren, but if they want to ask any question they should go and ask their husbands at home. Maybe that is what [some churches] are holding on to, [but] ... the Holy Spirit that God gives has no gender characters. Because the Holy Spirit is a gift and its fruits are given to male and female ... what a man can do a woman can do (interview 3 January 2008)

Thus it seems that with regard to gender, the differences between the world religions are less pronounced than the differences associated with ethno-regional origin. Clearly, both Christians and Muslims in or from northern Nigeria emphasize stronger gender separation than their counterparts in or from the South, and northern women's roles are perceived as primarily determined by their obligations towards their fathers, husbands and children. In turn, certainly among Muslims, women's male relations are obligated to support them. In Muslim and Christian communities in the south, however, women are believed to be as capable and powerful as men. However, the expectations of

female leadership in most Muslim groups seem to be limited to worldly success, while some Christian churches accord to woman the same ability to provide spiritual leadership as men.

These positive views of female capabilities are particularly interesting in the light of Muslim support for *shari'a* law in Oyo State, as *shari'a* law has been criticized for its harsh treatment of women in northern Nigeria. In response, scholars concerned about women's rights, as well as organisations like the Federation of Muslim Women Organisations (FOMWAN), have engaged constructively with *shari'a* in northern Nigeria and commented on the improvement which *shari'a* law might bring to women's political, inheritance, ownership, marriage and custody rights, among others (Sada, Adamu and Ahmad, 2005). While we did not interview members of a religious group or FBO involved in the practical framing and implementation of *shari'a* law in Oyo State, it seems that the wider perceptions of female abilities pervasive in south-western Nigeria are reflected in the fact that female scholars and scholars supportive of women's rights are invited to be contributors to the south-western Independent *Shari'a* Arbitration Panels. As a result, although they do not inherit from their deceased husbands and fathers under local law, these panels have improved the position of widows and orphans under their jurisdiction (Makinde, 2007, p. 158-165).

The importance of ethno-regional origin and culture for religious views on women's roles illustrates that orientations primarily linked to ethno-regional origin cross-cut the religious divide. As views on gender relations are an important reflection of wider social norms and values, the importance of religion for Nigerian politics is easily overvalued in studies which examine Islam as a northern religion and Christianity as a southern religion, because differences that are more closely associated with area of origin might be attributed to religion. Our findings support the belief that the higher incidence of religious conflicts in northern Nigeria is not primarily due to the fact that Islam and Christianity are associated with dramatically different world views, although in the absence of more extensive interview material, including from groups that challenge the state, it cannot examine the possibility that there are significant differences within the Muslim and Christian communities. At the same time, the continuing importance of ethno-regional origin resonates with the finding that the dominant basis for exclusion of religious organizations and FBOs from governance in the southern states was origin rather than religion.

6.4 Conclusion

The comments by the religious representatives on development and good governance, poverty and women's empowerment suggest that in this area, religion plays a less important role than generally assumed in structuring popular views on the state of the nation. While it is possible that the fact that our respondents were mostly (male) members of the educated elite may overemphasize similarities between the religious and faith-based groups we interviewed, we believe that our findings point to greater similarities than expected.

Most respondents agreed that the most important indicators of good governance and development are the provision of education, healthcare and physical infrastructure, as well as government inspired by the fear of God. Both Christians and Muslims also argued that justice and equality are important indicators of good government, and they sometimes presented these abstract ideals as essentially religious values. Likewise, questions about poverty revealed similar perceptions and responses. Most religious and faith-based organizations have responded to the overwhelming presence of poverty within Nigeria by providing direct assistance to those in immediate need, as well as through (planned) programmes offering skills or capital to the poor. Despite the optimism inherent in the existence of such pro-poor efforts, both Christians and Muslims also expressed anguish over the pervasiveness of poverty.

This agreement on Nigeria's fundamental problems suggests that Christians and Muslims share, possibly based on their common descent from the Abrahamic tradition, a vocabulary of protest and critique, through which they can express their criticisms and hopes in a way that is intelligible in a wide variety of contexts. The fact that religion has taken on this important social and political function attests to the ideological emptiness of the Nigerian political space, but it also suggests that Nigerians themselves are determined to provide credible alternatives to widespread poverty and governance failure. It is possible to understand the introduction of *shari'a* law as one such alternative, albeit one which is sectionally based and which can therefore be understood as an attempt to silence other aspirations for reform.

In contrast to the largely shared views on the state of the nation, Christian and Muslim views on the private sphere, and specifically on women's roles within society, are more varied. This variation is linked to ethno-regional origin rather than to religion, with northern Muslims and Christians, as well as Hausa-speakers in the south, generally agreeing that women's roles should be confined to the family and household, whereas southern Muslims and Christians often argued that women can take on similar or even the same roles as men, especially in terms of professional achievement or political influence. While the responses were obtained primarily from men, and while they are not comprehensive enough to fully determine the degree to which political and social points of view differed among respondents, they suggest that Christian and Muslim perspectives on governance, development and poverty in Nigeria do not clash significantly, while differences in the views of religious groups and FBOs on gender are primarily linked to different geographical and cultural backgrounds.

While our interviews only cover some of the many important topics on which different world views might find expression, the shared political vocabulary and the regionally rather than religiously divided views on the private realm suggest that religious conflict is not primarily determined by dramatically different world views. Instead, our findings suggest that the authoritarianism of the political sphere in general and the unequal relationships between different religious groups and FBOs and the state in particular contribute to religious rivalry.

7 A fraught relationship: religious groups and FBOs and the Nigerian state

As set out above, the vast majority of religious organizations and FBOs interviewed share both political and practical concerns, and run educational or health-related institutions and programmes which, according to their own definitions, contribute to good governance, development and poverty alleviation. At the same time, many religious groups and FBOs are offered support by government in recognition of their services. However, as our case studies suggest, relationships between the Nigerian state and the country's religious and faith-based organizations are not simply an exchange in which the state empowers religious groups and FBOs, whose services in turn supplement those provided by the state, but are based on a more complex set of mutual expectations and concerns.

In this section, some of the structural features that characterize the relationships between religious groups and FBOs and the state are explored. It notes that all State governments attempt to work with religious groups and FBOs to some degree, and all have adopted methods or institutions through which they exert a degree of control over some groups. However, the responses we obtained from government representatives suggest that government interest does not focus on the developmental efforts of religious groups and FBOs, but on their power and influence at the grassroots. Meanwhile, comments from religious and faith-based organizations indicate that they both resent their exclusion from government's close relationships with other groups and fear the appropriation of their own organizations by a morally corrupt government. With concerns on both sides over the reliability and even-handedness of the other, relationships between governments and religious and faith-based groups is fraught with difficulties and fears.

7.1 State governments' attempts to co-opt some religious groups and FBOs to gain access to the grassroots

In all three case studies, it emerged that State governments had established formal ways of managing their relationships with religious and faith-based organizations and of co-opting especially important groups. Despite this shared agenda, the ways in which individual governments followed these aims differed. In Kano State, the co-optation of religious groups and FBOs into government has advanced furthest, finding expression in the Islamic institutions of the State, in which religious leaders discuss with each other, within the existing constitutional framework (as they understand it), the implementation of *shari'a* law, as well as other Muslim concerns. In the two southern Nigerian states of Oyo and Anambra, there is no formal religious participation in government, but the extension of the

federal character principle to religious proportionalism ensures the inclusion of both Muslims and Christians in government through personal appointments. It is through the links created by personal appointments, as well as public visits, presents and donations, that State governments interact with religious groups.

However, while these institutions provide a space for the mutual exchange and assimilation of important Muslim organizations, they also explicitly exclude others. In Kano State, with the possible exception of the *Izala*³⁴ no organization unsympathetic to the State government or the *Emir* has been invited to participate in the new Islamic institutions. In Oyo and Anambra States, the notion of indigeneity, which also underlies the federal character principle, gives rise to exclusion, and especially in Oyo State, some (though not all) organizations which are closely identified with in-migrant groups fail to be represented or included. Even so, all the States in our case studies engaged with less significant religious groups and FBOs through the allocation of funds to Muslims and Christians through the State Pilgrim Boards, and in several cases also through the inclusion of religious groups and FBOs in public health (especially HIV/AIDS) campaigns.

The often frank statements we received from the government representatives with respect to their views of religious groups and FBOs confirmed our case studies of the organizations themselves. They suggest that the inclusion or exclusion of religious groups and FBOs primarily reflect government concerns over power and influence at the grassroots, rather than government appreciation of their developmental efforts. The most positive acknowledgement of religious groups and FBOs' developmental contributions from the government's side came from an official in Anambra State, where our respondent commented:

Apart from a few, maybe one or two, universities, hospitals and the rest of them, built by the churches, they [religious groups and FBOs] do not really come into governance (interview May 2008, Women Advocacy and Empowerment Agency).

Our contact from the Anambra State government revealed what is really important from the government's point of view, namely the importance of religious groups and FBOs for reaching the population, in order to garner support for political candidates or institute specific programmes.

You know when someone is at the pulpit you do not question the person or whatever the person says. They subtly tell their congregations what to do or who to vote for... But it is done underground and they do not come out openly to fight for it (interview May 2008, Women Advocacy and Empowerment Agency).

Even in the particular environment of Kano State, where the most important (Muslim) religious groups and FBOs are represented in the institutions associated with the introduction of *shari'a*, the ability of religious groups and FBOs to mobilize the population was considered to be their main contribution to governance and development by *Mallam* Danyaro from the Kano State Ministry of Information:

They [religious groups and FBOs] do have [a positive impact on governance and development] because if government is talking about transparency and accountability, social re-orientation, the FBOs and other religious movements are involved because they have influence over the people too. You know they have followers and therefore, whatever message you want to carry to the people you have to go through them (interview 13 May 2008, *Mallam* Danyaro).

However, not every government official felt as generous towards religious groups and FBOs as the respondents quoted above. Thus, Chief Akanbi Atoyebi, a Director in the Ministry of Women Affairs, Social Development and Children's Welfare, Oyo State, explained that religious organizations' greed for donations and contributions means that religious groups and FBOs do not really make a contribution to good governance and development:

I am sorry to say this, I hate to be guilty of heresy but let me be honest with you, the churches and the mosques are paying lip service to moral sanctity in our society. They preach well, they say don't do this or that, but when it comes to issue of donations, people with questionable integrity would go to the Church and the Mosque and make huge donations, yet the clerics will collect it and they [the donors] would be eulogized, and they will be more recognized than those who are living credibly and who rely only on their definite income, legitimate income. ...

So these are the issues, they [the religious organizations] are culpable in the issue of corruption rampaging the Nigerian Society [sic] (interview 25 May 2008, Chief Atoyebi).

These comments suggest that the activities highlighted by many religious groups and FBOs as important development contributions, such as their almost universal engagement in education and health provision, are not perceived by government as playing an important role. Instead, religious groups and FBOs are perceived mainly as organizations through which government can connect with

specific groups, and which can give spiritual gravitas to political careers. While this alone suggests a strong gap between the self-perceptions of the religious and faith-based organizations and governments' perceptions of them, it also suggests that the more idealistic concerns highlighted by several respondents from the religious sector, including the fear of God, justice and equality, are not acknowledged in any meaningful way by state bureaucrats.

7.2 FBO perceptions of government and politicians

While several religious groups and FBOs reported that they have close and successful relationships with the respective State governments, many others see themselves as playing a role as moral critics and advisers. The role of moral critic is exemplarily played by the JDPC through its engagement in civic education, election monitoring etc, which has played an important role in supporting legal challenges to political results determined by violence and patrimonial ties. However, a similar monitoring role is played by several other groups, which argue that they control those in power through the creation of other forms of public commentary, including sermons. As the comments by the respondent from the *Izala* in Kano State illustrate, preaching in particular can be perceived in this context as both dangerous and highly charged politically:

We preach against stealing and looting of public funds, we preach against bad government and its consequences. You know that one of our *Mallams*, [*Sheikh*] Ja'afar, was murdered ... He was a vocal preacher who was against moral and social vices and defended the cause of the commoners. Those in government did not like him and he was murdered.... That is how we contribute to society, even with our lives (interview 13 May 2008, *Mallam Ali*).

While none of the other religious groups and FBOs interviewed shared the extreme experience of the *Izala*, other (though not all) groups also pointed to the power of religious sermons in criticizing and reprimanding those in power. Thus the representative of the Anglican community in Anambra State explained that the church uses its influence within the community to influence its members. As a result, according to him, the Anglican Church contributes to good governance by

... trying to admonish the church members in government when they come to church so that when they go they carry [out] their duties with the fear of God (interview May 2008, Sir Ngozi).

Thus, the power of sermons is perceived very differently by many religious groups and FBOs and government officials. While those in political office perceive sermons as a practical way to communicate their interests to the people, religious leaders see them as a way to evaluate and, if necessary, reprove government on the basis of their spiritual authority. As the NASFAT representative in Kano State, Mr Abduljeleel Abdulyekini Soga, pointed out, the activities of many religious groups and FBOs also include prayer, which is perceived as a developmentally relevant activity:

We contribute to the development of Kano State from the spiritual perspective by praying for the development of the state and by educating people on moral principles in governance (interview 2 January 2008, Mr. Soga).

In our interviews, prayer often also signalled a real or public distancing by a religious group or FBO from the political sphere. Thus, the ECWA respondent, Reverend Bwamche, whose organization's ability to influence local decision-making has been greatly affected by local prejudice against Christians, suggested that among ECWA's most important contributions to Kano State were its prayers:

I strongly believe whether they like it or not that part of the peace we enjoy in this state is an answered prayer of the believers who are currently asking God to control [events in the state] (interview 6 January 2008, Reverend Bwamche).

Several respondents asserted that their organizations do not contribute to good governance by participating in the political process, or even by engaging in public debate, but through prayer alone. For example, the Yoruba and Hausa Muslim communities in Anambra State asserted that they primarily pray for those in power and do not participate in government. In the same vein, the responses from the RCCG in both Oyo and Anambra States reflected a general policy that ostensibly precludes the church from taking any direct action in the realm of politics, not even in the form of public comment. As its representative in Anambra State explained:

If you are a spiritual leader, before you venture out to make any contribution [in the political affairs of the state], you have to be under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and up till now the Holy Spirit has not instructed us ... to intervene or seek redress [other] than what the Scripture told us to pray for our leaders. Any policy that is not too good to the populace, we go to God in prayer for a reversal of such a policy, we pray for our leaders, for God to guide them in their policy formulation and implantation. These are the areas we will only intervene (interview 14 May 2008, Pastor Orji).

Such declarations are particularly interesting because these groups, with the exception of the Muslim Community in Anambra, are de facto represented in government and have played roles of local political importance. As suggested above, it is therefore likely that their claims reflect an attempt to distance themselves publicly from the modernized traditional practices – often referred to as ‘occult’ – which are perceived to dominate politics behind the scenes.

Incidentally, there has recently been increased evidence for the endurance of modern traditional practices, especially in southern Nigerian politics. Apart from the participation of former governor Chris Ngige and other prominent Igbo-speaking leaders in practices at the Okija Shrine in Anambra State and other documented cases in the south-east (Harnischfeger, 2006; Ellis, 2008), the revelation that Sam Edem, the chairman of the Niger Delta Development Commission, had allegedly employed a traditional practitioner to further his own political aims (*Newswatch*, 11 August 2008) and the publication by Ogun State governor Gbenga Daniel of a picture of his opponents during an alleged oath-taking (cf. *Newswatch*, 5 July 2009) illustrate that non-monotheistic techniques of ensuring political unity and success continue to play an important role in Nigerian politics. Beyond the widespread and historical use of oaths to establish trust in southern Nigeria, important politicians of northern Nigerian origin are also rumoured to have used such techniques.

Although it appears that traditional practices are more widespread than visible at first glance, very few politicians have, to date, dared to describe themselves as traditionalists, and traditional practice is often perceived as indicating low social status. One of the reasons for this is political rather than spiritual: many Nigerians feel embarrassment about a public discussion of traditional practices – which are most likely to come to light in connection with political scandals – because they perceive such practices as undermining their own position. Reasons for this reaction include the fact that Nigeria’s political economy at the central level is based on the presumed equal value of Christianity and Islam, with no room for traditional practice. Therefore the public questioning of a regional power-broker’s monotheistic identity can easily undermine her or his suitability for public posts. Moreover, many Nigerians are also strongly aware of perceptions of Nigeria outside the country, including audiences of primarily secular or Christian orientation in the West and the wider Muslim community (*ummah*) in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In view of existing prejudices about Africa in both groups, many Nigerians are concerned that they, or their country, might be associated with practices frowned upon by many outside observers.

At the same time, the perception of (some) traditional practices as embarrassing or even 'evil' may also reflect a conflation of developments in Nigerian discourse, in which Christian and Muslim master narratives and fears of the 'occult' are believed to be confirmed by widespread corruption within the political sector. However, the popularity of the Okija shrine among Igbo speakers from different social backgrounds, as well as the esteem in which traditional practice is held among other Nigerians, whether they are in politics or not, suggests that traditional practices have relevance far beyond issues of political corruption. Far from indicating the collapse of the moral order or the state (cf. Harnischfeger, 2006), many traditional practices are historically rooted in local beliefs and therefore part of many everyday interactions. In such contexts they are described, even by Christians and Muslims, as cultural traditions. Because these traditions include concerns over the creation and restoration of morality and community, some traditional practitioners have even argued that the dominance of the monotheistic religions in Nigeria has contributed to its corrupt political culture. It is therefore also in response to the endurance of traditional practice, its appeal as a moral alternative, and its unstable existence as both 'traditional religion' and 'culture' that many Christian and Muslim leaders (though not all their followers) adopt a form of self-assertion that centres on the projection or creation of a fixed monotheistic identity.

Deriving from the struggle to create unambiguous religious identities is the belief by more fundamentalist monotheists that Christians or Muslims can be contaminated by closeness to those of suspected involvement in traditional (or cultural) practice. Such closeness to tradition is interpreted as undermining the principles of monotheist faiths, and accusations and fears about contamination often dominate debates among Christians or Muslims. Because of their presumed participation in traditional practice (as well as corrupt acts), some people perceive Christians and Muslims active in politics as 'fake'. As the respondent from the marginalized Yoruba Muslim community in Anambra State summarized:

Some people are not where they are supposed to be because they were never God-fearing in the first instance, before they entered politics. They do not fear before they enter there, that is why they perpetrate all those kinds of things in the name of religion (interview January 2008, Imam Ologbonoke).

As the comments from the RCCG suggest, such views are not restricted to those who are for the most part excluded from the political sphere. Even a representative of NASFAT in Oyo State, an

organisation that is ostensibly very successful and proud of its achievements, expressed a similar worry about the blurring of boundaries between 'real' and 'fake' Muslims. He mistrusted even those members of his own organisation who had entered politics:

But we can now say that our members in government are also the same with them [meaning that they are politicians rather than good Muslims]. Some came because they know that NASFAT has a large following/membership and want to use us to win elections. That is why many belong to NASFAT (interview 6 January 2008, *Alhaji Abduljeleel*).

Apart from their concerns over individual and collective moral integrity, the mistrust of the political sphere felt by many religious groups and FBOs reflects a significant difference in outlook and aspirations between the religious sector and the state. As the material contributions to development provided by the religious groups and FBOs are belittled and their spiritual and moral ambitions for Nigeria – the fear of God, justice and equality – are ignored, it becomes clear that, despite the positive relations between some NGOs and their governments, the structural relationship between religious groups and FBOs and the state is problematic. The reluctance of the state to acknowledge the contributions and visions of religious groups and FBOs beyond the material – or, in Kano State, the administrative – level has both influenced and repelled religious engagement in politics. In response, some groups, like the Anglican Church in Anambra or the Sufi *tariqas* in Kano, seek political patronage, and others, like the JDPC, refuse it completely and consistently.

However, most religious groups and FBOs are torn between the desire to benefit from active participation in politics and their own mistrust of the political system, suggesting that the state has only partly managed to appropriate the religious sector. It is likely that political competition between individual religious groups and FBOs expands as a result, because the incomplete appropriation of religious organizations creates jealousies and fears amongst those that are excluded. Beyond existing variations in religious faith and practice, religious organizations also assess each other's moral and spiritual integrity. Thus, when religious groups and FBOs close to power make use of the possibility to shape the public sphere, their opponents perceive them not only as rivals, but also as acting in a morally objectionable way. Such perceptions are likely to intensify the tension between different religious groups, and also contribute to the ongoing emergence of new religious groups.

7.3 Unstable and non-equitable: relations between the state and religious groups and FBOs

The state's inability to establish equitable and non-instrumental relationships with religious groups and FBOs also means that it is not able to mediate successfully between such organizations in those areas where their visions of development and their perception of their own and others' agency differ. This is particularly relevant in the relationships between Muslims and Christians, and especially in their politically crucial attitudes towards education. Thus for example, many Christian groups and FBOs understand their ability to offer education and charity as a way to benefit the larger community. By offering scholarships to students from backgrounds outside their own community – whether they are from other Christian denominations or Muslims – these organizations believe that they are demonstrating selfless charity based on an acknowledgement of the shared humanity of all those able to appreciate education. This is illustrated by the comments from the RCCG in Oyo:

We observe really that anything that is worth its value must be paid for... but what I know at least by the grace of God, apart from pastoring [sic] this church, I administer the school, what we try to give... because we have people who are not even redeemed members who have children here, we try to make sure that we empathize and sympathize with them when they have difficulties making up the fees ... when parents have difficulties in paying and you will be surprised, we have a lot of people coming in here, even Muslims, they have their children here (interview January 2008, Pastor Andrew Olubunmi).

A more explicit commitment to Christian charity and development for 'the people', irrespective of faith, was made by the JDPC representative, who explained:

I know the next thing you will ask me is how we have been able to develop the people. We have been developing them through paying school fees and awarding scholarships to individuals, we have also been showing them on demonstration forms how to get better yields. You teach them what they don't know, they know it and then begin to do them [what they have learnt] on their own (interview 16 May 2008, C. J. Onyenze).

However, the offers of Christian organizations to bring Western knowledge and education to Muslim children, and even to support those Muslim children through scholarships, alarms and offends many Muslim groups. As a Muslim scholar comments:

I wish I could make the point more forcefully that the factors driving social discrimination of non-Muslims [in northern Nigeria] are due mainly to attempts at resisting unrestrained

proselytization and its covert methods as well as the need to maintain an Islamic cultural identity. ... The covert methods used by these missionaries, including enticement of vulnerable and poor people (especially women and children) with certain material benefits, such as scholarship or health benefits, are also considered by many as objectionable, if not immoral (Ahmad, 2005, p. 24).

Thus, it appears that many Muslims perceive the offer of education to their children in Christian institutions as a form of covert aggression and even, if it leads to conversion, as immoral and threatening. Ahmad's comment also suggests that the Christian outreach to women, children and the poor, which reflects, at least in part, (Western) development concerns about the exclusion of vulnerable groups, is perceived as particularly perfidious, thus interpreting both Christian and Western concerns for the wellbeing of 'all people' as attempts to lure Muslims into apostasy and to undermine Islam as a whole.

Ahmad's comment suggests that many northern Muslims do not want to discriminate against Christians in general, but feel forced to do so in order to defend their own identity and Islam in general. For this reason, the attempts by the governments of some Muslim-dominated states to restrain Christian activity are both popular and populist measures, which respond to a pervasive sense of Muslim vulnerability to ostensibly powerful and wealthy Christians. As State governments themselves remain under threat from radical Muslim groups who remain very critical of the state, and who perceive even negotiation with Christians as subversive, governments simply respond to local fears by reducing Christian influence, instead of creating an atmosphere in which local concerns, strategies and practices can be debated and negotiated.

While this strategy may work to maintain the status quo in northern Nigeria in the short term, it is likely to contribute to the radicalization of those feeling under threat at both ends of the spectrum. As illustrated by the aggressive techniques of Christian evangelization in private northern media channels as well as the recent violent clashes involving *Boko Haram*, marginalized groups from both sides feel threatened, and often defend their perceived interests by insisting on them ever more forcefully.

In southern Nigeria, exclusion appears to be more strongly linked to non-indigeneity, or at least to origin from outside the area demarcated by shared ethnicity and language. Local fears of domination by outsiders are partly influenced by opposition to the political influence emanating from northern Nigeria,

the internal political complexities of which are rarely acknowledged. In the contexts of the southern states, therefore, violent conflicts involving religion tend to be linked to power struggles over local influence, which are frequently 'retaliation' attacks following violent conflicts in the north or violent responses to events which are perceived as threatening to local forms of authority. As resentment is primarily directed against (particular groups of) outsiders, the State governments continue to exclude non-'indigenous' organizations. As most of these are also set apart by religion and outlook, the possibility that ethnic conflict will be 'religionized' remains open.

Migrants' experience of exclusion and the uneven assimilation of even 'indigenous' religious groups and FBOs into State politics create an acute sense of under-recognition among many religious groups. As this sense of discrimination in turn encourages maltreatment elsewhere to 'even things out', it fails to put a check on group rivalry. Moreover, the rivalry between religious groups and FBOs in southern Nigeria fuels spiritual insecurity. The negative judgements made by excluded organizations about the integrity of their rivals who are closer to power mean that despairing Christians and Muslims turn to organizations which promise to be untainted by tainted practices, and which are likely to espouse ever more radical theologies in order to convince their followers of their authenticity. Thus, even though religious clashes are not a structural feature of southern Nigerian politics at present, it is possible that religious violence will increase if local fears about exclusion and 'false' religion are not allayed.

7.4 Nigeria's current politics as a laboratory of inter-religious communication

At the same time, however, Nigeria's current politics illustrate fascinating social, political and theological processes that may help the state to develop a more satisfying form of multi-religious practice. For example, while the proportionalist representation and incorporation of religious groups and FBOs into southern State-level politics is often non-equitable and short term, it also creates a promising laboratory for religious interaction. This is particularly true for the south-west, where both Muslim and Christian organizations closely engage and compete with each other. While the state's ability to create spaces in which local fears and tactics can be discussed freely is limited, both because of its uneven treatment of religious groups and FBOs and because of religious organizations' own fears of being tainted by the state, the practices of local religious groups and FBOs reflect a close engagement between Islam and Christianity.

This engagement is in part historical, as reflected, for example, by the adoption of secular education by most Yoruba Muslim organizations, and by the ban on pork and alcohol in many Nigerian churches. The ban on pork is especially interesting, because it reflects a shift of both sensibilities and local practice: while archival documents from the pre-colonial and early colonial era often refer to widespread pig farming, this is rare today and, unlike goats and chickens, pigs are rarely seen along public roads. More recently, the success of NASFAT derives from its decision to address some of the issues which concern Muslims throughout Nigeria. During the 1990s, Christian Sunday services were increasingly perceived as a problem by many Nigerian Muslims, because the use of modern media (including DVDs, projectors, digital screens etc) introduced by Pentecostal churches, and quickly imitated by the older mission churches, attracted many young people. Among them were, allegedly, many young Muslims who had nothing else to do on a Sunday morning and who followed their friends to church for entertainment. Similarly attractive were the night vigils introduced to Nigeria by international Christian missionaries like Reinhard Bonnke, where thousands of people travelled to large prayer camps to spend the weekend praying for and experiencing miracles under the guidance of a charismatic pastor. In many cases, it is believed that Muslim visitors to such events converted to Christianity.

While some Muslim groups explicitly forbade their members to participate in such Christian events, NASFAT was founded in 1995 with the aim of adopting a different strategy: the organization simply offered Muslim religious events instead. Thus NASFAT members meet every Sunday for an *Asalatu* or 'prayer' service from 8:30 to 12:30 at a praying ground, where, under the charismatic guidance of a *Mallam* or teacher, members can also listen to sermons and pray for themselves and each other. Apart from extensive educational support, NASFAT also offers a *Lai-latul Quadri* or 'night of majesty', which includes an all-night Muslim prayer session of great spiritual intensity. Most importantly, however, NASFAT has developed a strong emphasis on mission, and employs a 'chief missionary' who encourages groups of youth, women and people in different professions to reach out to lapsed Muslims and Christians in their environment. The success of the organization, and its recognition even in northern Nigeria (or at least in cosmopolitan Kano³⁵), means that NASFAT not only adapted successfully to a threat emanating from the (mainly) Pentecostal movement, but also successfully changed the face of Yoruba, and by extension Nigerian, Islam.

The formal incorporation of different Muslim groups into the State governments of northern Nigeria through Islamic institutions has also transformed local Muslim (and Christian) practice, although it has not led to a systematic Islamization policy across northern Nigeria because the *shari'a* codex in different states varies considerably. While Kano State has, along with other states with strong ANPP presence such as Zamfara, Borno and Jigawa, spearheaded the introduction of *shari'a*, other *shari'a* states, such as Kaduna and Gombe, have taken a much slower and more consultative route (Ludwig, 2008). The fact that several of the latter states have strong Christian minorities may have influenced the emerging Muslim legal culture in the *shari'a* states, and it has been suggested that some principles of contemporary *shari'a* judgements reflect the local circumstances of its coexistence with other Abrahamic religions. Thus, for example, Nigerian *shari'a* courts condemn all murderers to death, even if they are Muslims who have killed non-Muslims, and in most States, they give equal probatory weight to the statements of Muslims and non-Muslims, neither of which are traditional features of *shari'a* jurisprudence (Ahmad, 2005, p. 33). Suberu (2009, p. 553) suggests that the contemporary implementation of *shari'a* reflects an ongoing engagement with the Nigerian constitution. In particular, he sees the *shari'a* States' refusal to criminalize apostasy (conversion from Islam), which is greatly abhorred by many individual Muslims and which is a crime in classical *shari'a* law, as an indicator that Muslim legal scholars respect Nigeria's constitutional commitment to individual religious freedom.

In addition, the introduction of *shari'a* law appears to have encouraged the popularity in northern Nigeria of Christian pilgrimages, originally a Christian appropriation of Islam which emerged in south-western Nigeria during the 1980s. After the establishment of a National Pilgrims Board for Muslims in 1975, Christians complained about the state's support for Muslims at the expense of other believers, and after an intermediate arrangement, the federal government established a Christian Pilgrims Board in 1985. Sponsored by this board, Nigerian Christians of different denominations go on pilgrimages to Jerusalem and return from their journeys with an elevated status similar to *Alhajis* or *Alhajas*, which they mark with the abbreviation JP – Jerusalem Pilgrim – after their name.³⁶ Since the mid-1980s and beginning in religiously diverse south-western Nigeria, many State governments have also established support for Christian pilgrims at the State level.

While the adoption of the pilgrimage model by Christian groups appears to demonstrate marginality, in which their only access to state funds is through an imitation of Muslim practices, our example from Kano State (and the history of Christian pilgrimages in south-western Nigeria) does not suggest that Christian pilgrimages are perceived as an indicator of marginality by Nigerian Christians. Not only did the ECWA representatives in Kano State ask for such support, but Nigerian Christians generally tend to perceive the ability to embark on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem as an expansion of their Christian experience. Perhaps equally importantly, the existence of state support for Christian pilgrimages also illustrates that northern Nigerian governments are not in principle averse to supporting Christian groups, as long as their activities are not perceived as threatening. Thus it is likely that the debates which have emerged in northern Nigeria in response to the introduction of *shari'a* law will transform the face of Nigerian Christianity more generally, and that the Christian pilgrimage will become a more widely accepted feature in coming years. This development illustrates both the constant competition between the world religions for symbolic, political and economic resources in Nigeria and the innovative potential of Christian-Muslim encounters.

8 Conclusion

An assessment of the relationships between religion, governance and development needs to take into account a variety of factors at the local, state and federal levels. Overall, our findings suggest that the interactions between religion and the state are complex and ambiguous. On the one hand, religious organizations contribute to good governance and development, both through the provision of infrastructure and development programmes, and through their public and private criticism of corruption and iniquity. Through these activities, religious groups offer practical and ideological critiques of government in the common interest. In fact, the high degree of agreement between the respondents in this research even suggests that important concerns over the state of the nation – especially its development and anti-poverty efforts – are shared across religions and States. Muslims and Christians communicate with each other across religious and denominational boundaries in and help to shape a shared language of criticism and improvement.

However, with the exception of the JDPC, most religious and faith-based organizations participate in politics without actively speaking for all believers, or even all citizens - thus only the apex bodies, such as CAN and the NSCIA, attempt to speak for all Christians or Muslims. By not systematically challenging the state's exclusion of other religious groups, religious and faith-based organizations constitute a political group *in* themselves, but not *for* themselves, and often become complicit in a politics of exclusion. By not standing up for the common interest wherever possible, they subvert their own ambitions to serve the common interest. While we have no concrete evidence to support this suggestion, we think that it is possible that the moral panic over 'real' and 'fake' believers demonstrates that many organizations are aware of their own complicity in this process, but that they displace their concern by focusing on spiritual rather than moral integrity. However, if religious organizations are to transform Nigeria's political landscape in a positive way, this will be achieved only if they act in concert and in the common interest.

Despite attempts by all the States to co-opt and appropriate religious groups and FBOs in order to gain grassroots presence and legitimacy, none of the State governments actively supports the development efforts of these groups. Moreover, relations between the state and religious and faith-based organizations are often unequal and depend on an individual group becoming involved in politics. There is at present no template for formal and structured interactions between the state and religious organizations. The existence of differential relationships between the State governments and religious groups and FBOs means that many religious organizations perceive themselves as victims

of policies influenced or executed by others. To address these interlinked problems and concerns, the state must take greater account of religious contributions to addressing social inequality and poverty. In addition, it must stop privileging locality and 'indigeneity' in its interaction with religious groups and FBOs.

The close encounters between different religious groups also have a potentially positive side, which involves dialogue, imitation and negotiation. The shared views of most religious groups and FBOs on the state of the Nigerian nation suggest that the country's religious debates do or could contribute to a widely intelligible discourse of critique and improvement based on the Abrahamic tradition. In northern Nigeria, the close engagement of important Muslim groups in the establishment and maintenance of *shari'a* law has led to the dynamic development of Islamic jurisprudence. In south-western Nigeria, where religion has not been actively incorporated into governance processes, but where Islam and Christianity have a long history of interaction, the mutual appropriation of religious practices has contributed to a transformation of such practices, and in some cases such 'new' practices have been emulated in the wider Christian and Muslim communities. Some of the religious developments in Nigeria – for example the preparedness of the government to provide funds for minority groups, or the creation of spaces for the interaction for religious leaders and scholars of different backgrounds – have the potential to serve as a template for other political encounters involving religion and Muslim-Christian difference.

Moreover, the consideration of state texts and concerns in religious debates by religious leaders and intellectuals has confirmed, albeit in an indirect way, the importance of the state for current religious debate. This is particularly illustrated by the centrality of the 1999 Constitution to both Muslims and Christians in the ongoing debates about *shari'a* law. Thus, while we contend that the decennary of *shari'a* law suggests that the constitution has been widely accepted as having a non-secular nature, we also believe that the importance of the text (of the constitution) for religious debate in Nigeria remains undisputed.

The current engagement of religions with the state has not only transformed religious rivalry and practice, it has also transformed the state. The introduction of *shari'a* penal law in twelve northern

Nigerian states has led to an appreciation of the de facto decentralization brought about by the return to civilian rule. Beyond the inclusion of local – and locally grounded – intellectuals and scholars through the States' Islamic institutions, the ongoing development of these institutions has made Nigeria a more pluralistic society in the sense that a greater variety of legal options are open to its citizens. As the only African country without a strong Muslim majority that has introduced *shari'a* law, the Nigerian experiment gives a unique insight into the possibilities of combining the Western legal option with a seriously debated alternative (cf. Ludwig, 2008, p. 605).

Finally, the Nigerian state has been transformed by the expansion of the federal character principle to include the dominant Abrahamic religions, and the adoption of religious proportionalism below the central level in southern Nigeria. While proportionalism explicitly includes religion in the realm of politics, it also re-establishes the state as the ultimate arbiter in conflict between religious organizations. And although proportionalism, as lamented by some respondents, limits choice and may undermine meritocracy, it also supports mutual exchange and negotiation and alleviates fears of discrimination. If the state is able to encourage more equitable relations between religious organizations, and if it is able to overcome or reduce the prevailing rhetoric of marginalization, it may also be able to encourage not only an assessment of the appropriateness of fears nurtured within the group, but also an ability to take the fears of others seriously.

Notes

- ¹ According to the Chatham House website at <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/about/chathamhouserule/>, the rule states: “When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed”.
- ² The Nigerian data seems conservative and many other sources suggest a population larger by 5-10 million inhabitants (for example UN data, accessed 22 June 2008 at <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Nigeria>, estimates that Nigeria has a population of 148 million).
- ³ For a short discussion of the terminology, see Section 2.3.
- ⁴ Not all local forms of belief are entirely confined to the locality, however. For example, Yoruba *òrìs?à* practice is observed in parts of the Caribbean and Brazil, and it is a fast growing religion among African-Americans.
- ⁵ As in most of West Africa, these courts generally reflected the Maliki tradition.
- ⁶ However, from 1933 onwards, under British rule, a number of bodily punishments, such as amputations or beheadings, were abolished.
- ⁷ An example would be the emergence since the 1950s of local schools teaching not only Islamic but also secular subjects, such as the *Islamiyya* schools (cf. Bano, 2009).
- ⁸ To a lesser degree, this also applies to health care, as many missions founded hospitals and health centres.
- ⁹ Appeals from the State *shari’a* courts could be heard by a panel of judges who were versed in Islamic law and chosen from the Federal Court of Appeal (Laitin, 1986, p. 9).
- ¹⁰ This paper is shaped by the particular experiences of the research team. Our original research plan in 2005 was that a Nigerian team of mostly junior researchers led by a senior researcher from the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research would carry out the relevant research, and that they would later produce a report. These activities would be coordinated for the Religions and Development Research Consortium in Birmingham by Insa Nolte. The senior researcher’s resignation from the team in 2007 left the team without local leadership. As it was difficult to find another local project coordinator at short notice, the component was completed by the junior researchers in the team with advice and guidance from Insa Nolte. It was, at this stage, too late to budget for frequent travel between the UK and Nigeria, and communication between the two locations was mostly by email and telephone, which was often difficult. Under the circumstances, we believe that the completion of this report reflects the strong commitment of both Nigerian and UK team members to the research, and we have therefore agreed that all those who have contributed to the success of the report beyond their assigned duties are named as contributors. On the basis of their interview responses and field notes, Nathaniel Danjibo and Abubakar Oladeji produced a short draft report. While the present paper has been written entirely by Insa Nolte, this draft was an important starting point because it included observations from the field which could be followed up in order to provide additional information on religion and governance in Kano and Oyo States. It is in acknowledgement of their general commitment to the component that they are named as contributors of this report. The main author has also confirmed details in exchanges with Nigerian and Nigerianist colleagues, as acknowledged at the beginning of the report. She is solely responsible for the intellectual argument put forward in the paper, which was subsequently accepted by Danjibo and Oladeji as representing their views.
- ¹¹ The Arabic plural of *tariqa*, which refers to a Muslim order, is *turuq*. To ensure greater readability for English-speaking readers, we have decided to use the Anglicized *tariqas* rather than the Arabic plural.
- ¹² The document is called *Taj al-Din fima yajib ala al-Muluk* (The Crown of Religion Concerning the Obligation of the Princes) and was authored by the scholar Al-Maghili.
- ¹³ It also won the elections in neighbouring Kaduna State.

- ¹⁴ The ANPP's gradual loss of influence in northern Nigeria is not necessarily due to lack of popular support. The PDP has interfered strongly in many elections, and it may have used the powers at its disposal to prevent the emergence of a religiously dominated party.
- ¹⁵ Gombe State introduced *shari'a* penal law after the return to civilian rule, but Kogi and Kwara States, despite a predominantly Muslim population and a historical association with the Caliphate, did not introduce *shari'a* law.
- ¹⁶ Even more than the 2003 election, the 2007 election was widely criticized for electoral malpractice and violence, which was generally believed to have served the interests of the ruling party, the PDP.
- ¹⁷ For an informative reflection on the political and social imaginary associated with *hisbah* groups under *shari'a*, see Last (2008).
- ¹⁸ Apart from its one-time name 'Taliban', this group has no confirmed link to Afghanistan. Its other name, under which it became widely known after the 2009 uprisings, refers to Western education or literacy (*boko* is derived from 'book'). *Haram* is an Arabic term to denote forbidden or unclean according to religious injunction, so that *Boko Haram* means 'Western education is forbidden'.
- ¹⁹ *Zakat* is one of the five pillars of Islam and consists of the contribution of a small percentage one's income to welfare.
- ²⁰ This is a centre where prospective pilgrims are taught the correct *hajj* exercises.
- ²¹ Nevertheless, conflicts between different groups have continued to dominate local politics. Not all of these conflicts reflect the dividing line between Sufism and *Izala*. According to Paden (2005, p. 188), Kano experienced some protests in 2003 and 2004 by representatives of the *Qadiriyya*, who felt that Shekarau had discriminated against them in the appointment of the *Shari'a* Commission.
- ²² The *Ahmadiyya* was proscribed in Nigeria in 1974, at least in part due to the influence of *Sheikh* Abubakar Gumi, a prominent leader of the *Izala* group. Most of its members joined the *Anwar-ul Islam* Movement of Nigeria.
- ²³ This organization aims to provide a common forum for the contemporary interpretation of and reflection on Islam by bringing together Muslim legal scholars and intellectuals from different backgrounds.
- ²⁴ *Ramadan* is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and Muslims are obligated to fast during daytime hours during this month.
- ²⁵ There are important Igbo communities in the Niger Delta, and struggles over their political identity have played an important part in local disputes.
- ²⁶ Sir Ngozi is a Knight of the Church of Nigeria.
- ²⁷ Two such pamphlets, entitled *Democracy: What You Need to Know* and *Democracy and Human Rights: What You Should Know* were given to the research team by the Anambra JDPC.
- ²⁸ This is a 44-page documented *Report of the 2007 Elections of April 14th and 21st* by the JDPC of the Catholic Diocese of Awka, Anambra State.
- ²⁹ The fact that both candidates for the presidency were Yoruba-speakers does indeed suggest that the election of a Yoruba was a pacted outcome of the transition programme, which was designed to overcome Yoruba opposition.
- ³⁰ They are located in Iwo Road, Sango, Moniya, Challenge, Apata, Tollgate and Beere, in the heart of old Ibadan, where Adedibu occasionally attended services.
- ³¹ The nature of these drugs was not clear from the interview transcript, and could not be ascertained retrospectively.
- ³² For a discussion of this trope in Christian Ghana, see Meyer (1995).
- ³³ Hypertension is widely perceived as a typically female complaint in Nigeria.
- ³⁴ Pastor Orji was referring to Virgy Etiaba (APGA), currently the Anambra State Deputy Governor.
- ³⁵ *Izala* remains critical of the *Emir*, and as pointed out in Section 3, its representation in the Islamic organs of the State is believed by academic observers not to reflect its local relevance.

- ³⁶ While Kano is northern Nigeria's largest urban agglomeration, some social and political trends within the city cannot be considered typical of the north.
- ³⁷ This practice has now been taken up by demands by traditionalists in the south-west that their State governments should pay for pilgrimages for them as well. At the time of writing, however, no such pilgrimages had yet been instituted.

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Appendices

1 List of respondents from Kano State

No.	Name and date	Date(s)	Designation
1	Abduljeleel Abdulyekini Soga	2 and 3 January 2008	Mission Board Member, NASFAT Kano State
2	Adbul-Lateef Jimoh	2 and 3 January 2008	Secretary, ADS Kano State
3	<i>Alhaji</i> Adulrauf Ayedun	2 and 3 January 2008	Chairman, ADS Kano State
4	Funmilayo Osho	4 January 2008	Secretary Women's Wing CAN Kano State
5	Reverend Madi-Dangora	5 January 2008	Secretary CAN Kano State
6	Reverend Joshua Bwamche	6 January 2008	Senior Pastor, ECWA Kano State
7	Mohammed Danyaro	13 May 2008	Director, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Youths and Social Development, Kano State
8	<i>Mallam</i> Ali	13 May 2008	Secretary to Mallam Abdullahi Pakistan, Leader of the <i>Izala</i> movement in Kano State

2 List of respondents from Anambra State

No.	Name and date	Date(s)	Designation
9	Pastor Richard Ejike Orji	January 2008	Assistant Provincial Pastor RCCG, Anambra State
10	C. J. Onyenze	January 2008	JDPC Project Manager Awka, Anambra State
11	Abdulfatai Ologbonoke	January 2008	Chief Imam of the Muslim Yoruba Community in Anambra State
12	<i>Alhaji</i> Haruna Garba	January 2008	Head of Northern Muslim Community in Awka, Anambra State
13	Sir Ngozi Anyakora	May 2008	Registrar of Seminary College, St Paul's Anglican Cathedral, Awka, Anambra State
14	Confidential	May 2008	Senior government official in the Directorate of the Women Advocacy and Empowerment Agency

3 List of respondents from Oyo State

No.	Name and date	Date(s)	Designation
15	Father Ezekiel Owoeye	27 October 2007	Director of JDPC Oyo State
16	Prince Sulaiman Mankanjuola-Totoola	27 December 2007	State Council Secretary of ADS, Oyo State
17	Pastor Peter Adagbada	3 January 2008	Area Pastor RCCG New Bodija, Ibadan (Oyo State)
18	<i>Alhaji</i> Opeyemi Abuliazeez Abduljeleel	6 January 2008	Chairman South-west Zone 4 NASFAT Oyo State
19	Pastor Andrew Olubunmi	January 2008	Zonal Secretary CAN Oyo State
20	Chief Akanbi Atoyebi	25 May 2008	Director in the Ministry of Women Affairs, Social Development and Children's Welfare, Oyo State

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