

Jonah Jang and the Jasawa:
Ethno-Religious Conflict in Jos, Nigeria

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Abstract

Conflict between “indigenes” of particular localities, and “settlers” there, is widespread in Nigeria. Sometimes religious difference compounds the problem. This essay studies the indigene-settler tensions in Jos, the capital of Plateau State, which twice now, most recently in November 2008, have erupted into violent clashes claiming many hundreds of lives. The story of the 2008 outbreak is told against its background of ethnicity, religion, local history, local politics, the ambivalent state of Nigerian law on the subject of indigene rights, and, perhaps most harmfully and most intractably, corrupt and incompetent government. The conclusion suggests little hope for quick improvement.

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1. Introduction

On Thursday, 27 November 2008, elections were held in all seventeen local government areas (LGAs) of Plateau State, Nigeria, to the LGA governing councils and their chairmanships. Early the next morning, in one of the LGAs, Jos North, which visitors will know as the city of Jos itself, an orgy of killing and destruction broke out that, before it was quelled two days later, left between 400 and 600 people dead (some estimates are higher) and some parts of the city devastated. This was not the first such episode in Jos: in early September 2001 a similar outbreak left up to 1,000 dead, and there have been lesser clashes at other times.

There is already a large literature on the communal violence that is still endemic not only in Jos but in other parts of Nigeria as well. As the lengthy bibliography given in the last section of this paper indicates, the phenomenon is complex: the bibliography

includes the reports of human rights and other concerned organisations as well as studies by scholars from history, political science, sociology, anthropology, religious studies, law, and other academic disciplines, all relevant to a sound understanding of the social and political pathologies still plaguing Nigeria. The causes of the problems are in fact quite well understood. The difficulty is how to overcome them.

This paper originated as a report for Cordaid, an international development organisation based in the Netherlands.¹ For some years Cordaid had been funding efforts at peace building and conflict prevention and management in Jos and elsewhere in Plateau State. The crisis of November 2008 was unexpected and highly unwelcome; Cordaid wanted to understand it better, and what had gone so badly wrong. I was asked to investigate and make a report. My investigation included a month (February 2009) spent in Nigeria, mainly in Jos, interviewing a number of people and gathering relevant literature and other documents. I had lived in Jos, teaching in the Faculty of Law of the University of Jos, during 1991-93 and again from 1996-2007, so I was already quite familiar with the situation. My report was submitted to Cordaid in May 2009. I am grateful to Cordaid for permission to publish it in this revised form.²

Those familiar with the literature will find little that is new in parts 2 through 5; I have only tried to sum up in my own way what is already well known. I have not littered the text with citations, except where other texts are quoted or in some few special circumstances. New material enters in part 6, especially with the discussion of Jonah Jang, and continues through the conclusion. The new material is based on cited sources or on interview material as indicated in the text. All websites cited, including news articles, were last accessed in July 2009.

2. Overview of Nigeria's indigene-settler problem

The conflict situation in Jos arises primarily out of ethnic difference, pitting Hausa³ "settlers" vs. the Plateau "indigene" tribes of Afizere, Anaguta and Berom. Jos is the capital of Plateau State, and the local indigene tribes, backed by other indigene tribes elsewhere in the State, feel they have a right to control it, i.e. its local government, by force if necessary. In other parts of Plateau State the other indigene tribes have been

¹ See http://www.cordaid.nl/English/About_Cordaid/Index.aspx?mId=10182.

² I am grateful also to all those who granted me interviews or otherwise assisted me while I was in Nigeria in February 2009; I hope all may remain discreetly nameless; interviews are cited in the text only by date. Many thanks also to Paul Beckett, Jan Boer, Jasper Dung, Adam Higazi, Franz Kogelmann, Carmen McCain, Margaret Skinner, Muhammad S. Umar, and Gunnar Weimann, who all read early drafts of the paper and made valuable comments and suggestions. None of them of course bears any responsibility for the final result; all errors of fact or interpretation are entirely my own.

³ Or as they themselves sometimes prefer to say, "Hausa/Fulani", but in fact the dominant culture is Hausa and many groups besides the (town) Fulanis have been more or less absorbed into it, often preserving traces of their older ethnic identities well-known among themselves. The cattle Fulani are separate. They too sometimes get into fights with other people, not because they are "settlers" but on the contrary because they are nomadic cattle-herders intruding on other people's farmlands.

fighting back against other Hausa settler incursions as well. In some places they also fight indigene vs. settler battles amongst themselves over control of particular localities. In fact indigene vs. settler fighting is endemic all over Nigeria.

In Plateau State religion enters into the question as well, because the Hausa are mostly Muslims and the Plateau tribes are mostly Christians. So besides the honour of ethnicity, the honour of religion is also there to be defended, also by violence if necessary. Fighting between Christian groups and Muslim groups also occurs elsewhere in Nigeria. But conflict is not always inter-religious: in yet other places, in Plateau and other states, the fighting is sometimes between rival groups of Christians or rival groups of Muslims. The underlying problem is the alleged rights of indigenes, meaning roughly “earliest extant occupiers”, to control particular locations, as opposed to the rights of “settlers” or “strangers” or more generally “non-indigenes”, defined as everybody who came later. Religious difference is secondary, although it adds fuel to the fire when things go wrong.

The particular locations indigenes and settlers fight over are the 774 LGAs into which Nigeria is now subdivided. In the end, the fighting is about access to resources controlled by the federal, state, and local governments, through which 80% of Nigeria’s GDP flows. (This is largely derived from oil and gas production in the Niger Delta.) The resources to which access is gained by control of LGAs include land, a lot of money, a lot of jobs, admissions and scholarships to schools and universities, health care, and more. Large sums of money are misappropriated by those holding office and those with whom they do business, including people in the state and federal governments. What is not misappropriated is spent on projects benefiting only certain groups. The many jobs at stake are modest but at least steady government jobs, in the police, the armed forces, the universities, and other branches of the civil service at all levels (government is Nigeria’s largest employer by far). Administration of all these resources is by a system of “indigene certificates” issued by local governments. Access to indigene certificates and the resources depending on them is directed primarily towards members of the ethnic or subethnic group controlling the LGA. Other groups living there, even groups settled there for scores or hundreds of years, are excluded. They are told to “go back where you came from” if they want the benefits of indigeneship.

In effect Nigeria is tending in some respects towards disaggregation into its constituent ethnic and subethnic groups. Those formerly somewhat vague and fluid clusters are increasingly precisely and immutably defined as indigenes of particular LGAs: those who trace their patrilocal ancestry back to that place, no matter where they were born or have resided. Some powers of sovereignty are moving, not towards the Nigerian nation run democratically by its citizens without regard to ethnicity or place of origin, but towards many little principalities run by their indigenes to suit themselves. Non-indigenes – though Nigerians – resident within those enclaves are denied not only access to resources, but also basic rights purportedly guaranteed under the constitution, beginning with basic civil and political rights. Every Nigerian has the full rights of indigenes in one small locality, one ethnic enclave, and only the more partial rights of citizens in every other place. This is the “pathology” or “crisis” of Nigerian citizenship

discussed in the literature. It once again raises “the national question” – whether Nigeria will continue as one country or will crack up somehow into smaller pieces.

3. Complications

There are many complications: Let me give a few as briefly as possible.

a. Ethnic ties, though weakening, remain powerful in the lives of most Nigerians. Ethnic divisions were preserved and sometimes even further articulated and made stronger under British “indirect rule”, through the continuation in power of existing traditional rulers (obas, emirs, chiefs of various other descriptions and magnitudes, district heads, village heads, etc.), the creation of many new “traditional rulers” where they didn’t exist before, the administration and sometimes fabrication in local courts of the “native law and custom” specific to particular local groups, and the differential treatment of indigenes and strangers everywhere. All this lives on today. Ethnic and subethnic groups are demarcated more or less clearly by their languages or dialects, by their traditional rulerships, and by the “laws and customs” they still more or less observe and which the courts will still more or less enforce. Depending on how you count, there are between 400 and 500 mutually unintelligible languages still spoken in Nigeria, though many of these are tiny.⁴ Often there still has not been much contact or intermarriage with other groups. The almost complete failure of the Nigerian state to provide social safety nets for citizens perpetuates older support networks based on ethnicity. No group however small wants to die out, or its language and traditions to die out, or its traditional privileges to be further reduced. The whole nation is in sympathy with this view. Nevertheless smaller groups are disappearing, as they assimilate to the larger groups among whom they now live. Some smaller groups are conscious of the danger of their own extinction and are trying to combat it in various ways; the claimed rights of indigenes are arrows in their quiver. In the more densely populated parts of the country – large towns, cities, urban agglomerations – there are roiling mixtures of peoples of all ethnic backgrounds in which everyone’s old identities and traditions are being eroded and replaced by new formations, still evolving, but clearly more individualistic than formerly, according less deference to big men and ancestors and the outworn baggage they bring with them. With these modernizing tendencies, the claimed rights of indigenes are in frequent conflict.

b. Beyond continued support for their much-truncated traditional rulerships and administration of their traditional laws and customs in local courts, Nigeria’s ethnic and subethnic groups, conceived as indigenes of particular LGAs, find other support in the constitution and laws of Nigeria. In particular the claims of indigene groups to reserved access to specified resources have legal backing. The word “indigene” entered Nigeria’s constitution in 1979, when the phrase “belongs or belonged to a **community indigenous to Nigeria**” was used in the definition of citizenship (§23(1)(a), emphasis

⁴ Gordon 2005 states: “The number of languages listed for Nigeria is 521. Of those, 510 are living languages, 2 are second languages without mother-tongue speakers, and 9 are extinct.” The list of languages given shows estimated numbers of speakers for most: some have less than one hundred remaining speakers. But these are all estimates based on scant data.

added here and subsequently in this subsection). The phrase “federal character” also entered Nigeria’s constitution in 1979, to denote a principle of minority-group inclusion in federal government and its affairs: the relevant subsection, §14(3), reads as follows:

The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the **federal character** of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few States or from a few **ethnic or other sectional groups** in that Government or in any of its agencies.

The word “indigene” was then linked with the phrase “federal character” in the section of the constitution empowering the president to appoint ministers (§135(3)):

Any [ministerial] appointment...shall be in conformity with...**section 14(3)** [i.e. federal character] Provided that...the President shall appoint at least one Minister from each State, who shall be an **indigene of such State**.

Dissenting voices had cautioned against this sort of constitutional entrenchment of distinctions based on ethnicity and place of origin (Osoba and Usman 1976), but to no avail. Constitutional negotiations in the late 1980s and early 1990s further expanded the federal character principle and further linked it with the notion of indigeneship. Most importantly, in 1995 a new Federal Character Commission (FCC) was included among the federal executive bodies defined and mandated by the constitution.⁵ The FCC was then established and manned, in 1996, under its own statute, still very much operative.⁶ The FCC is empowered to issue regulations which among other things “**define an indigene of a State**” (FCC Act §17(2)(k)). It has issued such regulations, defining an indigene of a State as “**an indigene of a Local Government in that State**”, and continuing:

An indigene of a Local Government means a person:

- i. **either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents was or is an indigene of the Local Government concerned; or**
- ii. **who is accepted as an indigene by the Local Government....**⁷

⁵ This was in the “Abacha constitution” of 1995, drafted by a Constitutional Conference convened by Abacha. This constitution never actually took effect, but its new provisions on the Federal Character Commission were carried forward into the 1999 constitution, of which see §153(c) and 3rd Sched. Pt. I C.

⁶ Federal Character Commission (Establishment, etc.) Act No 34 of 1996, available at http://www.fccnigeria.org/FCC_Act.htm.

⁷ FCC, “Guiding Principles and Formulae for the Distribution of all Cadres of Posts”, available at <http://www.fccnigeria.org/GuidingPrinciples.htm>, §10. The definition of “indigene of a Local Government” makes increasing numbers of people indigenes of many LGAs, so there is a further rule that no one is allowed to actually claim more than one LGA as his or her place of indigeneship. This rule is frequently flouted; many people have certificates of indigeneship from

Many believe that the detailed sharing out of power and resources to defined ethnic and subethnic groups, which the administration of federal character in these terms has brought about, has helped to prevent large-scale polarisation of Nigeria along its major ethnic or regional fault-lines. The smaller ethnic groups, the “minorities”, like it because it ensures they get their “slice of the national pie”, and seems to give them license to control their own local territories, their “heritage”. But this has come at the cost, as has been mentioned, of the country’s disaggregation into hundreds of tiny principalities run on the basis of indigene sovereignty.

c. The other constitutional provision it is necessary to mention dates from much earlier. In the negotiations leading up to independence, it was agreed to include in the new Nigerian constitution (for the first time) a chapter on Fundamental Rights. This included a ban on discrimination by government among citizens based on “[membership of] a particular community, tribe, place of origin, religion or political opinion” (1960 constitution §27(1)). But all the then-regional and subregional governments were in fact discriminating, in various ways, in favour of their own people, and none was prepared to stop. Perhaps most glaringly, in the North, there was a huge programme of “northernisation” on, to replace with northerners the earlier-adopters of Western education from the Eastern and Western Regions who then filled most positions in the Northern civil service. So several exceptions were appended to the 1960 constitutional anti-discrimination provision, as follows:

(2) Nothing in this section [27] shall invalidate any law by reason only that the law:

- (a) prescribes qualifications for service in an office under the state or as a member of the armed forces of the state or a member of a police force or for the service of a body corporate established directly by any law in force in Nigeria;
- (b) imposes restrictions with respect to the appointment of any person to an office under the state or as a member of the armed forces of the state or a member of a police force or to an office in the service of a body corporate established directly by any law in force in Nigeria;
- (c) imposes restrictions with respect to the acquisition or use by any person of land or other property; or
- (d) imposes any disability or restriction or accords any privilege or advantage that, having regard to its nature and to special circumstances pertaining to the persons to whom it applies, is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society.

So much, in 1960, for the principle of non-discrimination. Not surprisingly, there are hardly any court cases seeking to enforce it. People expect discrimination, it is “part of

several different places, which they use as suits particular purposes. In short, the indigene-certificate trade is itself badly corrupted.

life”. It is negotiated as part of politics rather than more formally through the courts. The non-discrimination principle has been carried forward into the 1999 constitution, as §42, which adds “sex” as a category on the basis of which it is forbidden for government to discriminate; and most of the old exceptions have been eliminated. But exception (b) still remains, now as §42(3), apparently still permitting much of the discrimination based on ethnicity and place of origin the FCC has spawned, or rather continued, complicated, and in some ways strengthened. Scholars and other observers concur that discrimination by government on the basis of ethnicity and place of origin is a major contributor to ethnic and ethno-religious violence all over the country.

[M]illions of Nigerians who live outside the socio-political space within which they can affirm their indigeneity suffer exclusion and are exposed to all kinds of humiliation. While some have endured deprivations in passivity, others have contested their exclusion, leading to a spate of communal conflicts. In many instances, this has assumed the dimension of violent conflicts with dire consequences for development, national unity and the resolution of the National Question. (Egwu: 2005)

How to stop the violence is the problem. Getting rid of discrimination by government might help. But then how would federal character be administered? And how can discrimination by government be stopped anyway? – everybody does it and always has.

The dominant Christian [indigene] population in Plateau State is saying that until the problem is given a constitutional solution, “the hospitality of the people of the State should not be abused by settlers who make outrageous and bogus claims for rights and privileges which do not exist anywhere else in the Federation.” (Danfulani 2006, quoting a group called the Plateau Patriots)

d. Local governments determine who their own indigenes are. Acceptance as an indigene by a local government is indicated by issuance of a “certificate of indigeneship” or “indigene certificate”. Whoever controls the local government controls the issuance of indigene certificates. This in the final analysis is what much of the fighting is about. So for instance, the Hausas of Jos, who have long claimed to be indigenes of the place as much as anyone else, by virtue of their long residence there and the alleged “emptiness” of the land they settled when they got there, its then “belonging to no one”, when they have been able to control the local government, have issued indigene certificates and shared out spoils to themselves as well as to the other serious claimants to indigeneship, the Afizeres, Anagutas and Beroms. This cut into the shares of the indigene spoils obtained by the latter alone (and they also fight over it among themselves). To them the Hausas are settlers who can just go back to wherever they came from if they don’t like being denied indigene rights in Jos. When they regained control of the LGA themselves, the Afizeres, Anagutas and Beroms stopped issuing indigene certificates to the Hausas. When the thing is put up to a vote, who will rule, who will get indigene certificates from Jos North, fighting breaks out. The Hausas always think they can win the elections and work hard to do so, including unfortunately by various unlawful rigging practices. The other groups insist that the Hausas must not win and they too work hard, also by rigging in their own various ways. Whoever loses will have been outrigged (cheated! perforce)

and will have lost honour and an important share of the Nigerian spoils. Both sides are prepared to fight to defend their “rights”.

e. History also comes into it. In Plateau State the indigenous tribes have been fighting Hausa incursions since the 19th century. The territory Jos now occupies (to name one such place among many on the Plateau) was successfully defended in the late 19th century against attempted “*jihadist*” penetration from neighbouring Bauchi, the nearest outpost of the so-called Sokoto Caliphate. (Morrison 1982) Beginning in the early 20th century, after the British took over and Christian missionaries began reaching them, the Plateau peoples mostly converted to Christianity. What a shame then (in Plateau eyes): under the *pax Britannica* (roughly 1900 to 1960), Hausas and other northern Muslims finally found it possible to occupy parts of the Plateau. They entered and settled peacefully to work in the tin mines or farm or do leatherwork or cut nails and hair or teach the Qur’an or trade or do business and no doubt for many other reasons as well. As they came they established their own self-perpetuating, always expanding, and largely self-governing communities in Jos and elsewhere on the Plateau. Exploiting networks criss-crossing Nigeria, much of West Africa, and farther abroad, they thrived, acquired property, grew wealthy, relatively at least to the less well-connected indigenes. They felt themselves superior to the indigenes, whom they viewed as “primitive”; they did not integrate with them or adopt local customs; often they were disrespectful. In some parts of Plateau settler Hausas were even given power by the British to rule over the indigenes, thus accomplishing a principal aim of the *jihad* by other means: “between 1902 and 1947 the British appointed twelve successive [persons as] ‘*Sarkin* Jos’ who were of Hausa/Fulani origin” (Egwu 2009). In recent years the Hausa community of Jos have agitated for reinstatement of their traditional rulership there, some even arguing for an “Emir of Jos” to rival the most exalted of the local chiefs. Plateau Christians have been vociferous in their warning of a further Hausa aim: not only to rule, but to Islamise: not only Jos, but Plateau State and the entire nation. This alarmist line has worked well several times in national politics and is still regularly deployed whenever Muslims seem to be making advances. The predilection of the Hausa (in this context “Hausa/Fulani” is more appropriate) ruling castes for conquest and rule is not much in doubt. It was displayed in the northern wars of the 19th century and then gratified for sixty years under the British; and northerners, mostly Muslims though by no means all Hausa/Fulani, have ruled Nigeria for most of its young life. Moreover the Hausa language and Hausa culture have shown strong powers of assimilation threatening to smaller groups. The claim that beyond this there is an agenda to “Islamise the country” or “impose sharia everywhere” is perhaps less convincing. In any case, a well-remembered Plateau record of successful armed resistance to Hausa incursions in the 19th century, subsequently subverted by the British, is now being reasserted and re-enacted in the name of indigene rights. The Plateau indigenes now also march under the banner of Christianity. Islam also animates the Muslims, from whom cries of “*Jihad!*” and “*Allahu Akbar!*” can be heard when the battle rages in the streets of Jos.

f. A more recent historical episode is also on the minds of the Plateau peoples. This is the 1991 subdivision of the old Jos Local Government Area into two smaller pieces, Jos North and Jos South. Jos North comprises the city of Jos itself. Jos South has its

headquarters at Bukuru, about 15 km to the south. (A Jos East LGA was carved out later, mostly from Jos South.) This subdivision of the old Jos LGA of course changed the local political equations. Within the new Jos North, in particular, the local peoples were no longer so predominant, most of them living with less admixture of other ethnic groups in Jos South; in elections to city-wide offices in Jos North, therefore, other groups, like the Hausas, might now expect to win. This in fact is believed by the Plateau indigenes to have been the exact purpose for which Jos North was created: to give the Hausa community of Jos an LGA they could control. "The creation of Jos North Local Government was done to favour the Hausa community in Jos.... [S]ince that exercise, Jos North has known no peace.... [T]here was no basis for the creation of Jos North, if not to carve a safe haven for the Hausa settler community."⁸ On this point the Plateau indigenes may well be correct. Jos North was one of hundreds of new LGAs created by decree of General I.B. Babangida, who ruled Nigeria from 1985 to 1993.⁹ In Western theory more local governments would drive democracy down further towards the grassroots, bring it more to life locally. In Nigerian practice it only further localised and multiplied political skulduggery and violence. In their details the new boundaries seem to have been based more on Nigerian practice than Western theory:

Indeed, if there was any single overriding logic to the 1991 local government reorganizations, it is that they were largely the result of the concerted manipulation of the distribution and configuration of the new localities to favour...the [Babangida] administration's key members, advisers, supporters, or lobbyists. (Suberu 2001: 107)

Babangida is a northern Muslim (Nupe by tribe), as were many of his administration's key members, advisers, and supporters. Although they do not directly confirm it, these facts are consistent with the proposition that "The creation of Jos North Local Government was done to favour the Hausa community in Jos." The Hausa community certainly lobbied hard for it. The Plateau indigenes protested vociferously, but to no effect.

g. For their part, the Jos Hausas say they are only seeking a fair share of the benefits that should accrue to them by virtue of their citizenship of Nigeria and the long-standing existence of their community in Jos. They say they have acquired their own cultural identity among other communities of Hausas: wherever their ancestors may have come from, they themselves are now "Jasawa": this is not only claimed locally but ascribed elsewhere in the north. Among other things this means that for some of them (how many is not clear) it is difficult or impossible to get indigene certificates from any LGA

⁸ Submissions by the Chairman of the Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network, Prof. Nenfort Gomwalk, to the Judicial Commission of Inquiry investigating the November 2008 civil disturbances in Jos North Local Government Area, reported in Jude Owuamanam, "Jos crisis: Commission may invite IBB", *Punch*, 18 March 2009, internet edition.

⁹ Between 1987 and 1991 Babangida increased the number of Nigerian states by 11 and the number of LGAs by 289 (Gboyega: 1997, 392-96). "In virtually every state of the federation [the LGA reorganisations] provoked vicious protests, leading to tens of fatalities and the virtual paralysis of a number of local administrations" (Suberu: 2001, 106-08).

except Jos North. No LGA in “Hausaland proper” any longer recognises them: “they are no longer part of them”. So if Jos North too denies them indigene certificates, they must do without this vital document in Nigerian life, and thus suffer many disadvantages and hardships as they attempt to make their ways in the world. Even if they can get indigene certificates from LGAs farther north, this helps them little in practice. In Jos and Plateau State, where they reside, “their certificates are not from there”. In the LGAs farther north from which the certificates come, the people actually resident there will have their own problems to deal with; emigrants living afar will get little consideration from them. In fact the difficulties increasing numbers of people all over Nigeria have in getting equal rights anywhere is one of the major drawbacks of the whole “indigene” idea as it is currently being administered.¹⁰

h. The Jasawa go on. They have lived long in Jos. Their claim to be indigenes there (they say) is at least as good as the claims of the Afizeres, Anagutas and Beroms. However that may be (the Jasawa have argued their indigeneship of Jos often and at length, but it has been decided adversely to them several times), they own a great deal of property there. They have brought manufacture and trade and businesses of many kinds to Jos, and increased its prosperity. They pay their taxes there. They have a fine central mosque and many schools. For many years they ruled there. They have no wish to go anywhere else and in many cases nowhere else to go. Their exclusion from a share of governance and the benefits of indigeneship of Jos is not only unfair to them as a matter of equity. It is also strictly speaking unlawful. It impermissibly burdens their exercise of their constitutional rights to move freely anywhere in Nigeria and to reside and own property anywhere (citing §§41 and 43 of the 1999 constitution). It amounts to unconstitutional discrimination against them on the basis of ethnicity, place of origin, and/or religion (§42). It is only sustained by denial of their constitutional right to vote and be voted for in free and fair elections (citing many sections, among them §7, which among other things provides that “The system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this Constitution guaranteed”). These powerful arguments resonate with those made by other excluded settler groups all over the country. Unfortunately the Jasawa have been all too ready to advance their own claims by resort to violence.

i. This raises one final point. The Jasawa are not the only large settler group of long standing in Jos. There are roughly equally large groups of Igbos and Yorubas, to take only the most prominent examples, who have been settled there just as long as the Hausas, own just as much property, are just as wealthy, and have contributed just as much to the community. They too are excluded from governance and the benefits of indigeneship of Jos and have the same problems getting equal rights anywhere else. The difference is that they are not contesting with the indigenes for political control of Jos or the benefits of indigeneship there; unlike the Jasawa, they have no proprietary feelings toward the city and no ambition to rule. The Jasawa side, when the violence starts, counts them with the indigenes, even the Muslims among them, and their losses in lives

¹⁰ The 2006 Human Rights Watch Report, *“They do not own this place”: government discrimination against “non-indigenes” in Nigeria*, illustrates this problem with examples from several parts of the country.

and property have been horrendous. Although there are many settler groups in Jos, the city's settler problem is a Jasawa problem.

* * *

Enough has perhaps been said to indicate the complexity of Nigeria's indigene-settler problem as manifested in Jos and many other places. Many other pieces of the puzzle could be explored. For instance, the widespread illiteracy, un- or under-employment, and poverty that still plague Nigeria; the large numbers of rootless jobless young men of all ethnic and religious backgrounds present everywhere always ready to loot and destroy and kill; the increasing availability everywhere of arms of every description; the venal, petty-minded and short-sighted politicians who never hesitate to stir up trouble by playing on ethnic and religious sentiments; pervasive and unchecked corruption of public office resulting in pervasive corruption of elections and widespread electoral violence; and the sheer incompetence of many public officials, elected and appointed, compounded by ingrained habits of autocratic, arbitrary, secretive, and unaccountable rule. These problems are all intertwined. Overcoming them will not be easy.

4. Conflict in Plateau State, 1991-2007

Between 1991 and 2007 there were several outbreaks of communal violence in Jos. Two stand out: those of April 1994 and September 2001. These events are briefly summarised in this section.

Elections to the Jos North local government council and chairmanship were held in 1991, soon after the new LGA was created. The winner of the Jos North chairmanship was Sama'ila Mohammed – a Jasawa. This was exactly what the Jasawa had worked toward and the indigenes had feared. The elections passed off peacefully, and there were no incidents of communal violence during Sama'ila Mohammed's term. But the indigenes complained about his appointment of other Jasawa to key positions in the local government, and most especially about the fact that he began issuing indigene certificates from Jos North to Jasawa, as well as to Afizeres, Anagutas, and Beroms. Sama'ila Mohammed's tenure of office ended prematurely in November 1993 when General Sani Abacha, upon seizing control of the federal government, dissolved all democratic structures in Nigeria, including elected state and local governments.

General Abacha, a northern Muslim (Kanuri by tribe though born in Kano), appointed Col. Mohammed Mana, another northern Muslim (from Adamawa State), as military governor of Plateau State. The day-to-day management of local governments was left in the hands of their existing Directors of Personnel Management (DPMs), pending further instructions. These came early in 1994, when the military governors throughout the country appointed five-person "caretaker committees" to run the local governments. The man appointed by Col. Mana to the chairmanship of the Jos North caretaker committee, in early April 1994, was Alhaji Aminu Mato, a Jasawa.

Mato was not acceptable to the Jos indigenes. On 5 April 1994 they staged a protest at Government House in Jos, against his appointment or indeed the appointment of any Jasawa as chairman. Col. Mana nevertheless swore Mato into office on 6 April, and the handing-over ceremony was fixed for 8 April at the local government headquarters.

“[T]he indigenes swore not to allow [Mato] assume office. Tension was thus palpable in the air. On 8th April...people thronged to the venue to prevent [the handing-over] taking place” (Bagudu 2003: 88). They succeeded. Col. Mana backed away from Mato’s appointment, ordering the DPM to continue running Jos North until further notice. This in turn infuriated the Jasawa. In the following days Jasawa butchers slaughtered animals on the highway near the Jos abattoir, saying these and other acts of protest would continue until Mato was installed. On 11 April the Jasawa held a meeting near the central mosque, calling for people to come out en masse for a demonstration the next day.

The following day, Jasawa youths took to the streets.... This later finally degenerated into chaos and violence in the city of Jos, leading to the destruction of property and the death of four persons. Parts of the Jos ultra-modern market, the Gada Biyu market, and an Islamic school and mosque along Rukuba Road were destroyed. (Best 2007: 55)

This was mild in comparison to what happened in later years. But Mato never did take office, and except for one brief interlude, the chairmanship of Jos North has never again been held by a Jasawa person.¹¹

It is not only from the local government chairmanship that the indigenes have sought to exclude Jasawa. One instance of this, discussed below, set off the September 2001 Jos crisis. An earlier example was the attempted appointment, in 1996, of Ado Ibrahim, a Jasawa, to the relatively insignificant post of Secretary of the Jos North Education Authority. Normally this appointment would have been made by the local government chairman, but at the time there was none, so the military governor of Plateau State, still a northern Muslim,¹² nominated Ibrahim. “[T]he indigenes vehemently opposed the appointment. The government dropped him.” (Best 2007: 57)

Then of course there was the issue of indigene certificates for Jasawa. This seems not to have come to a head until 1999. Until then the governorship of the state continued in the hands of military governors, northern Muslims appointed by Sani Abacha; they evidently prevailed on the caretaker chairmen of Jos North, indigenes though they were, to continue issuing indigene certificates to Jasawa. But on 29 May 1999, after a series of elections to all offices, the entire country was handed back to

¹¹ Brief interlude: at some point in 1994-96, local government elections were again held in Jos North. A Jasawa, Mukhtar Mohammed, who had served as Secretary to the Jos North Local Government under Sama’ila Mohammed, again won the election. But his opponent, Christopher Sarki Jang, an Afizere man, challenged in the election tribunal Mukhtar’s qualifications for office, among other things showing that Mukhtar had indigene certificates from local governments in other northern states, all giving different birthdates; Mukhtar was arguably not even old enough to be chairman. C.S. Jang won his case, Mukhtar was removed after serving only a few months, and Jang took over. After that no Jasawa has held the office of chairman.

¹² I have not been able to determine which military governor this was. Col. Mana served from 9 December 1993 – 22 August 1996, and Col. Habibu I. Shuaibu (from Kano) from 22 August 1996 – August 1998 (per http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Nigeria_federal_states.htm), but when in 1996 the attempt was made to appoint Ado Ibrahim as Secretary of the Jos North Education Authority remains unclear to me.

elected civilian rulers. Joshua Dariye, a Plateau Christian, a Mushere from Bokkos local government, was elected governor of Plateau State. Frank Bagudu Tardy (or Taddy), also a Plateau Christian, Anaguta by tribe, was elected chairman of Jos North, in an election unmarred by violence. Under Tardy the issuance of indigene certificates from Jos North to Jasawa was completely stopped.

The Hausa/Fulani petitioned the LG Chairman in a letter of 20 October, 1999, but were not satisfied with his response. Key Hausa/Fulani leaders paid a visit to the LG Chairman to register their concern. They were still not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting. They further, finally petitioned the Plateau State Government. The Hausa/Fulani note that the local government authorities did not revert to the status quo, and the Plateau State Government did nothing about it further. (Best 2007: 59)

With the return to civilian rule under the Christian indigenes of Plateau State, the Jasawa, and other Hausa/Fulani settlers resident elsewhere in the state, were increasingly excluded from participation in state and local government and the benefits flowing therefrom. This formed the background to the September 2001 and subsequent crises.

The proximate cause of the September 2001 Jos crisis was another attempt to exclude a Jasawa from appointive office. This time the appointment was made by an agency of the federal government, the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). The appointment was to the office of NAPEP Coordinator for Jos North Local Government. The appointment was made by the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo: hence a southern (Yoruba) Christian naming a Jasawa to a federal position relating to Jos. The person named, in late July 2001, was Mukhtar Mohammed.¹³ Once again the indigenes set their faces against it. Within Jos, controversy, insults, threats, and tensions escalated throughout August, finally exploding into violence on 7 September.

From September 7 to 13, 2001, Jos...became the scene of mass killing and destruction.... [I]nitial figures compiled by local human rights groups, religious communities and other organizations indicate that more than 1,000 people were killed.... [S]ome villages on the outskirts of Jos had been almost completely destroyed; they lay abandoned and empty. In the centre of town too, extensive damage to mosques, churches, schools, shops, homes, and vehicles was clearly visible. (HRW 2001: 1)

Wanton murder was committed by both sides. Afterward there were claims and counterclaims of pre-planning, the involvement of big men inside and outside Plateau State, foreign funding, the importation of arms and mercenaries, deliberate instigation, deliberate ethnic cleansing of neighbourhoods and wards. The failure of the state government to take the impending crisis seriously and to take steps to defuse it before it erupted was widely condemned. The police were totally incapable of stopping the violence once it started. In the end the military were called in; they restored order, if not

¹³ This was the same Mukhtar Mohammed who had briefly served as chairman of Jos North in the mid-1990s, but had been evicted by the election tribunal, see n. 11 above.

law, in their usual heavy-handed way, themselves killing many in cold blood. Details can be read the 2001 HRW report listed in the bibliography. All of this was repeated in November 2008, even more so.

The Jos crisis of September 2001 was the beginning of a series of outbreaks of communal violence, in Jos and elsewhere in Plateau State, continuing in 2002, 2003, and 2004. “[F]ighting in Plateau State between February and May 2004 alone generated some 250,000 IDPs [internally displaced persons]” (International Crisis Group 2006: 15). Finally, in May 2004, President Obasanjo declared a state of emergency in the state, suspending the civilian government and imposing a “sole administrator”, General Chris Alli. Six months later, some measure of peace having been restored, the civilians resumed office. The governor, Joshua Dariye, had in the meantime been arrested in London on charges of embezzlement, money-laundering, and other financial crimes, had jumped bail, and had snuck back to Nigeria, resurfacing in Jos on the very day he resumed office (thus resuming also his immunity from prosecution). He was subsequently impeached by the Plateau State House of Assembly and indicted by the Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission on charges of looting billions from Plateau State (the case drags on). In Jos, the chairman of Jos North elected in 1999, Frank Bagudu Tardy, went out of office when his term ended in 2002; after that no local government elections were held in Jos North until November 2008, the LGA being run by caretaker committees appointed by the governor. As for Mukhtar Mohammed, whose appointment as NAPEP Coordinator for Jos North set the whole thing off: he continued in that office for some years, working not from the local government headquarters, but from an office in the Federal Secretariat in Jos. His effectiveness under the circumstances may be doubted.

5. Talking about peace, 1991-2007

Already in late 1993 the potential for Jasawa-indigene conflict in Jos had attracted the attention of organisations concerned with conflict prevention and management. On 15-17 December 1993 the Conflict Prevention and Management Centre of the African Leadership Forum, sponsored by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (Germany), held a seminar in Jos on “The Settler Question in Nigeria: The Case of Jos-Plateau” (Gohum 1993). The report of this seminar makes interesting reading especially for its articulation of the fears and grievances of the Jos indigenes – which seem not to have changed or diminished in the subsequent fifteen years – respecting the Jasawa and their powerful allies from farther north. A great many similar conferences and seminars, organised by government, the universities, and NGOs, have been convened subsequently.

In the aftermath of the crisis of 12 April 1994 another familiar pattern was set. A commission of inquiry was appointed by the governor, chaired in this case by Hon. Justice J. Aribiton Fiberesima (rtd). The commission was to determine “the remote and immediate causes” of the crisis, assess the damage, identify those involved and advise as to what further action if any should be taken against them, and, finally, to make recommendations about how to avoid recurrences (Best 2007: 56). The commission convened, viewed the *situs*, received memoranda, took testimony, and made its report to the governor. That was the last that was heard of that report: it was not published, no

white paper based on it was published, no conspirators, instigators, or perpetrators who may have been named therein were publicly identified or prosecuted, and no known measures were taken to avoid recurrences. Between 2001 and mid-2004 ten other official commissions and committees were appointed to investigate and address outbreaks of communal violence in Plateau State. All their reports and recommendations met the same fate.¹⁴

Another form of talking-shop used was the state-wide “peace summit” or “peace conference”. In 2002 four one-day peace summits were convened by the governor: for “elders, religious leaders and government officials”; for “youths, student groups, trade unions and others”; for “traditional rulers, religious leaders and community leaders”; and finally for “chairmen and members of transition committees and leaders of the six political parties” (Plateau State Peace Summit 2002). The communiqué issued afterwards is mostly platitudes: “conflict is counterproductive”; “the panacea for peace is the pursuit of justice”; “architects of violence should be apprehended and be prosecuted”; “the spread of rumours, hearsay, gossip and suspicions should be discouraged”. But sometimes it comes more to the point: “Plateau people must sustain their accommodating nature and create room for other people to co-habit.” “Other Nigerians who have chosen to live in Plateau State should not violate the hospitality of their hosts and not sabotage or demean such hosts.” And these warnings: “The growing appetite for war by the youths should be discouraged and extinguished by the elders, traditional rulers and religious leaders.” “Societies or groups that perpetrate violence or whip up sentiments of war will have violence visited upon them.”

In 2004, during the state of emergency, General Alli undertook a number of peace initiatives, the most important of which was the Plateau Peace Conference, which met in Jos from 18 August to 21 September. All indigenous “ethnic nationalities in the State”, “pegged at fifty-four”, were invited to send two representatives each; forty-eight indigenous groups actually did so. “Other major Nigerian ethnic nationalities resident in the State”, namely the Fulanis, Hausas, Igbos, people from the “South-South” (Urhobos, Ijaws, etc.), and Yorubas, were allowed one representative each, although in the end the Fulanis and Hausas each had two. Some “interest groups” were also represented: women (one from each local government), various civil society groups, and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Jama’atu Nasril Islam (JNI), representing Christian and Muslim interests. For more than a month this large group discussed Plateau State’s problems in exhaustive detail. Its 167-page report, this time published in the Plateau State Gazette, summarises the discussions and the resolutions adopted, point by point. There is much of interest in the report, but for present purposes it is sufficient to quote the following parts of §7.2.1, at pp. 31-33, on “Indigeneship issues: perceived discrimination and denial of rights – politically and socially” (with emphasis as in the original):

¹⁴ In 2004 the steering committee of the Plateau Peace Conference collated all these reports and used them to help identify the numerous issues the Conference then debated (Plateau Peace Conference 2004: 9); but the reports themselves still have not been published..

- i. The Conference discussed the problem of Jos and re-affirmed the conclusion of [the 1994 Fiberesima Commission] which identified the true indigenes of Jos as **Afizere, Anaguta** and **Berom**.
- ii. Delegates also advised that all peoples should learn to be proud of where they come from and to associate themselves with their places of origin.
- iii. The Conference felt that with proper understanding of one another, integration and assimilation will ultimately come without any intimidation and antagonism.
- iv. ... [T]he 1999 Constitution...recognises that every citizen has the right to contest for any elective position...but appointive positions anchored on representation should be done within the ambits of [the federal character principle based on indigeneship].
- v. [discussion of a problem in Kanam LGA]
- vi. Local Governments should only issue **Indigene Certificates** to **indigenes** of the respective Local Governments in Plateau State, as defined by the Conference.
- vii. Other Nigerians who may be non-indigenes in a place of residence should be issued with **Residence Certificates** backed by an enabling law.
- viii. The Federal Government should include [a] definition of an **indigene** in the Constitution.... Such a definition should be mindful of minority rights...as well as consistent with the principles [of federal character].
- ix. Non-indigenes should desist from making frivolous demands on issues that are not their heritage, but the exclusive preserve of the indigenes, notably traditional rulership and traditional rites of **indigenous** communities.
- x. To allow for effective integration, assimilation and development, indigenes are not to discriminate against other Nigerian citizens, but should embrace them.

The Hausa community of Jos made an appeal to the Conference, to consider the need to include the Hausa as indigenes, based on the fact that they have been in Jos for a long time, have made crucial contributions to the development of all facets of the socio-economic and political life of the State, and know no other home. In response to this request, Conference made reference to [other long-term settler communities elsewhere in Nigeria still treated as non-indigenes]. Moreover, there are several other ethnic groups such as Urhobos, Yorubas, Ibos etc. who have settled in Jos at the same time or even earlier than the Hausas and have also contributed to the development of Jos. Therefore the Hausas should not be treated different from these other groups.

So the claims of the Jasawa to the status of indigenes of Jos North, and to indigene certificates from there, were once again decisively rejected. The Jasawa should “associate

themselves with their places of origin". From Jos North they might only have "residence certificates", which in the current state of the law and practice would get them nowhere. As non-indigenes they should stop seeking "appointive positions anchored on representation", i.e. positions meant for indigenes of Jos North or Plateau State. They were welcome to stay, but they should learn to integrate and assimilate themselves "without intimidation and antagonism". The indigenes were "not to discriminate" against them: but in that case what good would indigeneity be?

Not satisfied with this outcome, the Hausa delegates to the Plateau Peace Conference refused to sign the conference report, as did the representatives of JNI. The only concession they seemed to have gotten was the acknowledgement that "every citizen has the right to contest for any elective position". In the next round of nationwide elections, in 2007, which in Jos again passed off peacefully, the Jasawa took the indigenes up on that, managing to elect one of their own (Sama'ila Mohammed again) to the federal House of Representatives from the Jos North/Bassa constituency. After the election they went farther, prevailing on the newly-elected president, Umaru Musa Yar'adua, another northern Muslim (a Fulani from Katsina), to give one of his scarce ministerial appointments, the original "federal character" jobs, to another Jasawa, Ibrahim Dasuki Nakande. Plateau State got another ministerial appointment as well, which went to an indigene (Amb. Bagudu M. Hirse, a Mwaghavul from Mangu), but Nakande's appointment was still an affront to the sense of the Plateau Peace Conference that the Jasawa should stop seeking "appointive positions anchored on representation", and it reinforced the suspicions of the Plateau indigenes of a conspiracy of northern Muslims to claim Jos for themselves. The newly-elected governor of Plateau State, Jonah Jang, a Berom man and a fervent Christian, pursuing his own agenda in Jos and in no mood to be nice, "dealt with" the Jasawa over the next year. Themselves freshly aggrieved, the Jasawa then again vigorously pursued their putative "right to contest for any elective position" in the local government elections held in November 2008. This time the result was another orgy of murder and mayhem in Jos. I will come back to more of the details below.

6. Dariye and Jang

From the point of view of the Jasawa, Joshua Dariye as governor of Plateau State (1999-2007, with some interruptions¹⁵) was bad enough. He presided over vigorous programmes of "indigenisation" of all institutions in the state, from the local governments on up; in the course of a contest for the position of Director-General of the National [federal] Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, which happens to be located in Plateau State, he went so far as to assert "that it is their [Plateau indigenes'] birthright to produce the head of any federal establishment located in the state" (Alubo

¹⁵ Dariye was elected 1999; re-elected 2003; suspended May 2004 when state of emergency declared; arrested in London September 2004 on charges of embezzlement, money laundering, etc., jumped bail, snuck back to Nigeria; reinstated as governor December 2004 when state of emergency ended; impeached and removed by Plateau House of Assembly November 2006; reinstated April 2007 when Supreme Court sustained his challenge to impeachment; went out of office May 2007 when Jonah Jang came in.

2004: 147). He backed Frank Bagudu Tardy's refusal any longer to issue indigene certificates from Jos North to Jasawa. In a March 2004 interview "he suggested that the demands of Jos's Hausa community to be recognised as indigenes might be grounds for evicting them from the state altogether" (HRW 2006: 45):

From the on-set, let me say it again, as I have before that Jos, capital of Plateau State, is owned by the natives. Simple. Every Hausa-man in Jos is a settler whether he likes it or not. In the past, we might not have told them the home truth, but now we have... They are here with us, we are in one state but that does not change the landlord/settler equation, no matter how much we cherish peace... Our problem here today is that...the tenant [is] becoming very unruly. But the natural law here is simple: if your tenant is unruly, you serve him a quit notice!... This unruly group must know that we are no longer willing to tolerate the rubbish they give us. The days of "over tolerance" are gone forever. All of us must accept this home truth.¹⁶

In his 18 May 2004 broadcast declaring a state of emergency in Plateau State, President Obasanjo blamed much of the problem on Dariye:

As at today, there is nothing on ground and no evidence whatsoever to show that the State Governor has the interest, desire, commitment, credibility and capacity to promote reconciliation, rehabilitation, forgiveness, peace, harmony and stability. If anything, some of his utterances, his lackadaisical attitude and seeming uneven-handedness over the salient and contending issues present him as not just part of the problem, but also as an instigator and a threat to peace [...] His personal conduct and unguarded utterances have inflamed passions.¹⁷

After the state of emergency, when he was reinstated as governor, Dariye "enthusiastically embraced" the resolutions of the Plateau Peace Conference which the Jasawa had rejected (HRW 2006: 46).

Jonah Jang, elected governor in 2007 as Dariye's successor, is a much soberer and more credible figure than Dariye. But he has been at least as uncompromising in his dealings with the Jasawa, perhaps more so. I will next try to sum up some of the political context and thinking that seem to account for this. In the next section Jang's dealings with the Jasawa over a number of years are recounted.

Born in 1944, Jang is from Du, a town in Jos South LGA, in the heart of Beromland.¹⁸ He was educated and made his career in the Nigerian Air Force, rising to the rank of Air Commodore. While in the Air Force he served brief stints, under General

¹⁶ *Saturday Champion*, March 20, 2004, p. 9, quoted in HRW 2006: 45. In November 2008, instead of "The tenant is becoming unruly", some indigenes said "The rats are trying to drive the owners out of the house." (Interview 4 Feb. 09)

¹⁷ "Broadcast by His Excellency, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo GCFR, on the imposition of a state of emergency in Plateau State, Tuesday May 18, 2004", quoted in HRW 2005: 47.

¹⁸ Much of the biographical information in this and the next section is from Jang's CV, available at http://www.plateaustategov.org/gov_bus/gov_bio.html.

Babangida, as military governor of Benue (1985-86) and Gongola (1986-87) States. Then, in 1990, Babangida suddenly “kicked him out” of the military: involuntarily retired him, along with twenty or so other high-ranking officers. Jang is said to believe that Babangida kicked him out – discriminated against him – solely by reason that he is a Middle Belt-Berom-Christian rather than a northern Hausa-speaking Muslim of some description. Jang is said to hold his sacking by Babangida as a grudge not only against Babangida but against all the northern Muslims jointly and for the most part severally. There are holes in this story, but then it is speculation from the newspapers.¹⁹

Jang is a serious Christian: he holds a Bachelor of Divinity Degree from the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, Bukuru, earned in 2002. He is evidently a believer in the theory that Nigeria’s northern Muslims, perhaps in coalition with other Muslims from inside and outside Nigeria (Yorubas; elements in Niger, Chad, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Iran, etc.) – various as their several interests might be – nevertheless have the wish, or determination, together to conspire to dominate Nigeria, to claim its territory as much as they can for themselves and for Greater Islam. In short, in this view, the Muslims want to take over, implement sharia law, and plunder the country for themselves. At the moment they are particularly targeting Jos North as a foothold in Plateau State.²⁰ Most of what happens and has happened in Nigeria is understood to support this view. Jang wants to see Christians resist Muslim advances everywhere. Not only resist but fight back: infiltrate, absorb, disrupt, if necessary push them back, push them out. But above all do not let their powers expand in any direction.

Jang is a serious “Middle Belter”. He believes the people occupying a wide band of territory running laterally across the middle of Nigeria, which he calls “the Middle Belt”,²¹ must stand together against any further “Hausaisation” of their languages and

¹⁹ The story comes from a long interview with Jang published in *The Comet* of 12 November 2007. *The Comet* has since gone out of publication, but the interview is again recapped in Mohammed Haruna, “The Media and the Genocide in Jos”, *Daily Trust*, 3 December 2008, internet edition.

²⁰ For a good example of this way of thinking, see the full-page advertorial, “Press Conference Called by the Berom Elders Council Following the Crisis in Jos of November 2008”, *The Nation*, 12 January 2009, p. 36. A small sample: “Jos and Plateau state has stood out as a beacon for Christianity in the North and perhaps even Nigeria. ... To Islamic fundamentalists therefore, Jos is a thorn in the flesh. They bear a compulsion to complete what was started [by] Uthman Dan Fodio and interrupted by the colonial masters, i.e. to conquer this land of Plateau for their North, and perhaps this may be the best time to do it! If there is one point we wish to let the general public know, and we repeat it for emphasis, the fight for the soul of Jos is not political, but the manifestation of a covetous desire to take over Jos to become a Hausa-Fulani city. The attainment of this goal provides a springboard for the ultimate islamisation of the Plateau and the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. The facts stand out only too glaringly.”

²¹ The Middle Belt has a long history in Nigerian politics, which I cannot go into here, but see e.g. Tyoden 1993 and Logams 2004. What exactly “the Middle Belt” is, is not firmly settled. Jang gives it a wide definition: not just what in Nigerian politics is called the North Central geopolitical zone (Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau States plus the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja), but “Southern Kebbi, Southern Kaduna, Southern Borno, Southern Bauchi, Southern Gombe, Adamawa, Taraba, Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa, Kogi, the Federal Capital Territory, Kwara and Niger”. See interview cited in previous note.

cultures and any further Islamisation of their religious beliefs and practices. The Middle Belters must be the bulwark against the advancing tide. “We want to consciensetise our own people to understand that they had their own identity separate from the North.” The northerners, the Hausa-speakers, the Muslims, who have already penetrated the Middle Belt must perhaps be grudgingly tolerated. But they must not be admitted to the privileges of indigeneship and they must not be allowed any further political advances.

In particular, Middle Belt indigenes insist, the settlers from the north must not *rule* them. For the problem is not so much the northerners themselves, even the Hausas, who are widely admitted to have many admirable and even amiable characteristics; it is not the Hausa language, which many Middle Belters speak fluently and are proud to speak as a badge of being “northerners”; it is not even Islam: southern Muslims, like the Yorubas, are well tolerated. No: as many Middle Belters see it, the problem is the feeling believed to exist among the Hausas that *they must rule*. The Hausas see it differently: in their view, when they seek office they are only asking for a part in the state and local governments where they live commensurate with their numbers and their dignity. When they ask and don’t receive, then they contest: it is their insistence on contesting in the political arena for offices that in indigene eyes they have no right to that most offends the indigenes. The Middle Belters – Jonah Jang and many who think like him – put a religious construction on it: they think that in fighting the Hausas they are fighting “political Islam”. A less charged construction is that they are only fighting political Muslims, political Hausas; and political Igbos or Yorubas would be just as bad. The political requests the Jasawa have been making recently are recounted in part 7, below; readers may judge for themselves how radical they are.²²

There are “indigenous Muslims” in Plateau State: individuals, families, perhaps clans among the indigenes who have converted to Islam, rather than continuing in their traditional religious practices or converting to Christianity. Some of them are forging the distinction between being a fluent Hausa-speaker *and* a Muslim, on the one hand, and being culturally Hausa, or being politically aligned with the Hausas, the Jasawa, on the other. For instance, a small minority of Beroms are Muslims. Some of them have distinctly “Hausaised”, adopting not only the Hausa language but Hausa names, dress, and other cultural practices; they tend to side with the Jasawa. But a number of other Berom Muslims are asserting or reasserting their Berom identities and culture, not accepting that to be a Hausa is the only way to be a Muslim. They want to be Berom Muslims, as there are Yoruba Muslims and Kanuri Muslims and a lot of others besides the Hausas. They tend to side with their fellow Beroms in the indigene-settler controversies in Jos. The Jasawa belittle them, calling them *tubabbu* (converts; persons new to Islam), or *munafiki* (hypocrites, perhaps even traitors), and of course this is resented, and doesn’t make the Berom Muslims admire the Jasawa any the more. As one of my Jasawa sources said: “They also feel we are settlers here and that we should leave this place” (interview 13 Feb. 09). These Berom Muslims are saying that the tie of Islam need not override Middle Belt or ethnic ties in the ways the Jasawa are alleging: the tie of

²² For more on the alleged “Islamist” ambitions of Nigeria’s Muslims, see Ostien 2006, particularly the “Final Observations” at 252-55.

Islam needn't mean that Berom Muslims must want a Jasawa as Jos North chairman, or must vote for a Jasawa if he runs, as opposed to a Berom even if Christian. Nigerian Islam is not the political monolith that some have thought it to be, and is perhaps becoming even less so as time goes on.²³

Finally, Jonah Jang is a serious Berom and a serious believer in the right of the Berom nation to control the territory that is its heritage, its birth-right, that is, the territory of which the Beroms are the indigenes. Quite how to define this territory is still being litigated among the Afizeres, Anagutas, and Beroms.²⁴ In any case they all agree that the territory defined as Jos North LGA belongs exclusively to them, or some of them, somehow jointly. No other group, particularly the Jasawa, are co-owners in any part, manner or degree; they are in no way indigenes. The pretensions of the Jasawa to the contrary, and their quest for local privileges and powers, must be combated. As we shall see, Jang has in fact been trying to advance specifically Berom interests in Jos North, and even Du interests, not only at the expense of the Jasawa, but of the Afizeres as well. Jang has even said that the Afizeres are also not indigenes of Jos North (any more than the Jasawa) and should just go back to their own nearby local governments if they don't like it. So the local politics are not being driven solely or even predominantly by religious affiliation even among the Christian indigenes.

So much for an attempted summary of the political context. Let me now come to how this has played out between Jang and the Jasawa in recent years.

²³ I interviewed two Berom Muslims in February 2009. One, distinctly "Hausaised", including his name, told me that when he got out of secondary school and was looking for a scholarship to university (he went to Bayero University Kano), he sought certification as an indigene of Barkin Ladi local government (predominantly Berom), where his family is from: the secretary of the LG refused to certify him on the ground that he was Hausa. He finally got his indigene certificate from Jos North. Today, he says, his children cannot get indigene certificates in Jos North, or in Barkin Ladi, because they are Muslims and bear Muslim names. If they added Berom names to their Muslim names, then they could get from Barkin Ladi; this they evidently on principle refuse to do (interview 22 Feb. 09). The other Berom Muslim, distinctly Berom, including his name, is the source for much of the information about the non-Hausaised indigenous Muslims in this paragraph (interview 12 Feb. 09). An organisation called the Indigene Muslim Community submitted a memorandum to one of the panels of inquiry investigating the Jos crisis. Its chairman, Alhaji Umaru Miango (hence, Irigwe), testified among other things that "We have continued to suffer whenever crises erupt, because the Hausas have always described us as betrayers. We are [also] no longer trusted by our Christian brothers...". "Ex-minister behind Jos crisis, Ajibola panel told", *The Nation*, 25 Feb. 09, pp. 1 and 12. See also "Muslim Forum dissociates self from natives", *Daily Trust*, 4 Feb. 09, internet edition.

²⁴ See "Court recognizes Beroms as Jos indigenes", *Daily Trust*, 19 Feb. 09, p. 10, reporting a High Court decision in a case filed in 2004 by the Afizeres and Anagutas against the Beroms. The Afizeres and Anagutas had asked the court "to recognize them as sole owners of Jos", and to "make a further pronouncement on the propriety of the location of the Gbong Gwom palace in Jos North, while praying that the palace be relocated to any of the known Berom controlled local governments of Riyom, Jos South or Barkin Ladi and not to be left in its present location in Jos North." The Afizeres and Anagutas lost. Whether an appeal has been taken I do not know.

7. Jang and the Jasawa

After Jang was retired from the Air Force by Babangida in 1990, he seems to have occupied himself for some years with service on the boards of directors of a number of companies. In 1994-95 he was a delegate, presumably from the Beroms, to Abacha's National Constitutional Conference, at which entrenchment of the Federal Character Commission in the constitution was agreed. In 1998-99, in the politics of the return to democratic rule, he was active in the Peoples Democratic Party, the PDP, the party of Olusegun Obasanjo, among other things serving on its Board of Trustees. But he lost the PDP nomination for governor of Plateau State to Joshua Dariye, a businessman from a minority tribe in Bokkos. "Na money kill am", Nigerians will say: Dariye had more to spread around where it counted; or perhaps, being a "minority" even in Plateau State, he was a compromise candidate among the larger tribes. Dariye proceeded to win the general election against a number of other candidates from other parties. In 2000-02 Jang completed his Bachelor of Divinity degree at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, a respectable academic institution, ecumenically Protestant, just down the road from his place in Du. In 2003 Jang again contested against Dariye for the PDP governorship nomination: Dariye already had a bad reputation and there was sentiment in the PDP to replace him: but Jang did not succeed. So Jang switched parties: he joined the All Nigeria People's Party, the ANPP, the party of Muhammadu Buhari for president, the "northern" party: Jang was the ANPP candidate for governor of Plateau State in 2003. The PDP under Obasanjo won in most parts of the country, including Plateau: Dariye beat Jang again. Then in 2007, at the end of Dariye's chaotic second term, Jang again ran for governor, but this time he got the PDP nomination: he switched parties again, they took him back, he won the nomination, he won the election – but in elections the departing Obasanjo was determined the PDP must win everywhere ("Do or die" were his orders), and did mostly win, elections which were widely condemned as "flawed", "not credible", in fact made a mockery everywhere by goon squads, flagrant buying of votes and assorted other rigging practices. PDP took the presidency, both houses of the National Assembly (90% of the seats), 28 of 36 governorships, and so on down in wide margins in state Houses of Assembly and local governments all over the country. Jang/PDP, or PDP/Jang, won the governorship of Plateau State.

Jang had political conversations with the Jasawa in both 2003 and 2007. In 2003, when he was running on the ANPP ticket against Dariye, he went around meeting with various groups soliciting for their votes. I quote my notes of what I was told about his meeting with the Jasawa (interview 13 Feb. 09):

- Jang met with the Jos Council of Ulama [not only religious but political leaders among the Jasawa: the Hausas pretty much vote as the Council of Ulama direct]. He solicited for the support of the Hausas of Jos. Those that were with Jang: Ezekiel Yusuf, a prominent Tarok man from Langtang, and Alhaji Sale Hassan, a prominent Hausa politician in Jos. They presented Jang to the Council of Ulama, to try to convince them to vote for Jang on the ANPP ticket. The Hausas said: we will vote for you, subject to the following conditions: (1) pick a Muslim deputy governor; (2) agree to create a district for the Hausa community

in Jos, i.e. a territory over which a Hausa chief would be appointed to rule. The Hausa chief would be ready to be under the *Gbong Gwom* Berom [who is the paramount traditional ruler in Plateau State: the Berom call him the *Gbong Gwom* Jos]. All they want is recognition [i.e. their own territory ruled by their own traditional ruler, and of course indigene certificates from there]. The district would be in Jos North Central, made up of about eight wards that are predominantly Muslim: Ali Kazaure, Sarkin Arab, Garba Daho, Ibrahim Katsina, Naraguta “A” (Nasarawa), Naraguta “B” (Angwan Rogo, Angwan Rimi), Gangare, Abba Na Shehu. The Hausa chief would be called *Mai Angwan* Hausa, i.e. District Head of the Hausas. All so that the Hausas can be recognised and integrated.

- Jang said he was happy to meet with them. But we need to understand that from Barkin Ladi up to Mista Ali [the northern tip of Jos North], all the lands belong to the Beroms. As frank as he has always been, he said he couldn't promise to give them any district. The Hausas don't have land to be given a district; all the land they want belongs to the Beroms. And on the issue of picking a Muslim deputy, Jang said that will not be possible, he has already picked his deputy, no going back on that.
- The Hausas said Fine: so tell us how we are going to benefit from your government if we vote for you. He said: he will not make any promises: that their vote for him would determine the benefits, that he has not made any promise to anybody. But if they vote for him he will give them sense of belonging.
- Unpersuaded by that, the Hausas then voted, not for Jang or Dariye, but for the UNPP [United Nigeria Peoples Party] candidate for governor, Alhaji Bello Muhammad Abdullahi, a Muslim from Kanam LGA. They knew UNPP would not win, but most Muslims in Plateau voted that way anyway. PDP/Dariye beat ANPP/Jang.

Then came 2007. Jang switched back to the PDP. In an internecine/interethnic contest he overcame a number of rivals to win the PDP governorship nomination. This time Jang didn't even bother to call on the Jasawa or their Council of Ulama. Instead, in his general campaigning,

he maintained his ground that Hausas don't own any land in Jos, this is Berom land. He will fight for Berom land, get back their land. In central Jos [around the *Gbong Gwom's* palace] he will get land back from the Hausas by sending the Hausas away. But when Yar'adua came to town [campaigning for president on the PDP ticket], Yar'adua came to the central mosque with Jang and Pauline Tallen [Jang's running mate, a Goemai from Shendam]. In the presence of everybody, the Council of Ulama told Yar'adua of their wish not to vote for Jang, even though they want to vote PDP for Yar'adua. So they would not support PDP in the governorship election. They said, if PDP wants Hausa votes they should have a Muslim as deputy governor [a question Jang had already

decided by picking Tallen as his running mate], or give a Muslim the post of SSG [Secretary to the State Government, a powerful post]. Jang said no. The Muslims voted for ANPP for governor. (interview 13 Feb. 09)²⁵

The ANPP candidate for governor, Victor Lar, a Tarok from Langtang, had agreed to pick a Muslim as his running mate. The Jasawa voted for him and also for the ANPP candidate for president, Muhammadu Buhari, not Yar'adua. Lar and Buhari lost to the PDP candidates. Jang was elected governor without the votes of the Muslims. But the Jasawa did manage to elect Sama'ila Mohammed, also running on the ANPP ticket, as their representative to the National Assembly from the combined Jos North/Bassa constituency. As has been noted, they also persuaded Yar'adua, even though they hadn't voted for him, to appoint one of their own, Ibrahim Dasuki Nakande, an ANPP man, to a federal ministerial position: thus the new northern Muslim president gave an initial poke in the eye to the new Plateau Christian governor, though both are PDP. More of the same followed later, after the Jos crisis of November 2008, when Yar'adua seemed distinctly to side with the Jasawa against Jang. There are endless further complications that only real lovers of the Nigerian political soap opera will have the patience to sort through.

Then began Jang's time in office as governor of Plateau State. He did not appoint a Muslim as SSG, though some Muslims, but no Jasawa, were appointed to lesser posts in his government.²⁶ Jang has said that "We went out of our way to accommodate everyone irrespective of religious or tribal inclinations."²⁷ But others saw it differently. Jang appointed a Berom woman as the new caretaker chairperson of JNLG; she of course continued the policy in place since 1999: no indigene certificates for Jasawa. Afizere too felt the heat: according to an Afizere spokesman,

on assumption of office, Governor Jang had an agenda to chase the Afizere out of Jos to Bauchi.... Mr. Sule accused the governor and the Berom of "persistent war of attrition against the Afizere" which they have informed him earlier in a letter they wrote to complain of injustices committed against them since he came to power in 2007.²⁸

As to the Jasawa, I give here a summary of the complaints against Jang made by one of my Jasawa informants (interview 13 Feb. 09); according to other (indigene) informants,

²⁵ An excellent presentation of the positions and the tone the Jasawa brought to Jos/Plateau/Nigerian politics in 2007, more detailed and characteristic than given here, is given in Muhammad L. Ishaq, "The case of a Muslim deputy governor in Plateau state", *Daily Triumph*, 13 April 2007, internet edition.

²⁶ See http://www.plateaustategov.org/gov_bus/exec_council.html for the roster of Jang's initial executive council and special advisers.

²⁷ Quoted in Seriki Adinoyi, "Nigeria: 50 Foreign Nationals Arrested Over Jos Riot", *This Day*, 26 December 2008, internet edition.

²⁸ Buhari B. Bello, "Jang, tribesmen blamed for Jos crisis", *New Nigerian*, 28 June 2009, internet edition, reporting the submission of the Afizere community of Tudun Wada ward in Jos to the Prince Bola Ajibola five-member Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Jos unrest of 28th November, 2008.

these and no doubt many other complaints were aired at vituperative length in a Hausa-language radio program called *Gwarzo* (“brave man”; “hero”) broadcast in Jos on Saturday mornings during much of 2008, castigating Jang, his government, and the PDP. *Gwarzo* went off the air about a month before the local government elections of 27 November 2008 (interviews 12 Feb. 09).

- The Jos North LG headquarters has always been located in the central area of Jos, in a predominantly Hausa quarter close to the central mosque, and, not coincidentally, adjacent to the paramount chief’s palace, now occupied by the Berom *Gbong Gwom* but of course in earlier years occupied by the Hausa *Sarkin* Jos. Neither the palace nor the LG headquarters had been moved in a long time. Jang now says he wants to expand the *Gbong Gwom*’s palace, including building a big church there to rival the central mosque just down the street. [This is in part Berom/Christian magnification, but the *Gbong Gwom* is the paramount chief of all the other traditional rulers in Plateau State, so he should have a first-class palace.] To make space for this Berom/Christian expansion, Jang has removed the JNLG headquarters from where it has been for a long time, to a different place, still in downtown Jos, but no longer in a predominantly Hausa neighbourhood, and no longer blocking expansion of the *Gbong Gwom*’s palace and the building of a church. Another move of the LG headquarters farther out of town will be made when the brand new Jos North Secretariat now under construction way on the southern side of the city is completed. For the Hausas and for many others, relocation of the LG headquarters is already both practical and symbolic. The Hausa presence, and Hausa access, are much reduced; the headquarters no longer so much belongs to them.
- For additional space downtown Jang also wants to buy houses surrounding the *Gbong Gwom*’s palace, which all belong to Hausas. The Hausas are not willing to sell. Current status: the whole thing is up in the air. No negotiations are going on. There will be big problems if they try to move the Hausas out.
- Where the central mosque is, the Beroms are asserting their ownership of the land. The Hausas say the land never belonged to the Beroms: the Hausas occupied it when it belonged to nobody. Beroms say the land was sold by them to the Hausas, but according to the Hausas there is no evidence of this.
- Jang has dusted off a “Jos Master Plan” created as far back as the governorship of J.D. Gomwalk, a Plateau hero, Ngas by tribe, who was justly or unjustly associated with the 1976 coup attempt against the government of General Murtala Mohammed and executed for treason. Jang is now proposing to implement some or all of Gomwalk’s master plan for Jos. Part of this involves widening a number of roads in the city [much needed, but much harder to do now than it would have been in 1976; but almost any principled city planning would be progressive]. Big parts of the roadwork would go through Hausa neighbourhoods and would mean the destruction of many of their buildings. Jang’s government have said they would pay compensation – but only to people

who have statutory documents of title to prove ownership. But most of the Hausa buildings were built and occupied long before statutory documents of title came into existence, and most Hausas don't have them. If Jang's government insists on statutory documents of title, the Hausas would not be compensated for expropriation of their places. They have said no, they don't want any part of it, they do not agree. But the work is going on anyway.

- Jang has said publicly that indigenes should sell no more land to any Hausa; so has the *Gbong Gwom*. The government itself refuses to sell or allocate land to them. The execution of all documents of title related to pending land transfers has been suspended till further notice. This also, the Hausas believe, is intended to affect them adversely.
- Jang has decided that the Jos main market, rendered useless by fire in 2002, will not be rebuilt but will be turned into a shopping mall where all shops will be allocated to indigenes. In other markets, Hausas have been put on notice that they are to be relocated: this is still under discussion. Nothing similar is being done against non-indigenes who are not Hausa, like the Igbos and Yorubas doing business in the markets.

As they say, all politics is local. If all of this is true (and most of it probably is, with many complications, qualifications, and justifications), then one can understand how the Jasawa – who can be as proud and prickly as anyone, even more so – feel themselves increasingly despised, insulted, and unjustly dealt with, and sometimes feel their religion dishonoured as well. On the other side, it must be said that Jang's Jasawa policy is firmly supported by most Christians resident in Jos, whether Plateau indigenes or settlers from elsewhere, and by a growing body of indigenous Muslims as well. Their sympathies for the Jasawa, if any they had, evaporated after September 2001. Said a Jasawa spokesman in 2007: "Christians think they can push us out, yet they continue to underrate our threat. They need to remember what happened to them last time this town went up in flames."²⁹ It was in this atmosphere of hostility and threat, the Jasawa against almost everyone else, that local government elections were finally conducted in Plateau State in November 2008.

8. The crisis of November 2008

One of the innovations brought in by Nigeria's 1999 constitution was State Independent Electoral Commissions: SIECs. Formerly elections to all offices, federal, state and local, had been conducted by national bodies, most lately, in the 1999 elections, by the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC. After 1999 the job of staging local government elections was constitutionally devolved to SIECs appointed by the governors and funded by the state governments; in 2001 and 2002 all states including

²⁹ Ado Ibrahim, the man who didn't quite get the post of Secretary to the Jos North Education Authority in 1996, in 2007 the Secretary of the Jasawa Development Association, quoted in "Jos voters angry and divided", IRIN, 9 April 2007, internet edition.

Plateau enacted local government electoral laws spelling out the details.³⁰ Local government elections were to have been held all over the country in 2002, but no one was ready. Finally in 2004 most states held them, but not Plateau, which was then in crisis.³¹ In Plateau local government elections were only again actually accomplished in November 2008.

Between 2002 and 2008 the LGAs in Plateau State were administered by caretaker chairmen appointed by the governors. In Jos North, Dariye appointed Dr. Danladi Atu, an Afizere man, who served from 2002-06. In 2006 Dariye was impeached by the Plateau State House of Assembly and replaced by Chief Michael Botmang, his Berom Deputy Governor. Powerful Beroms had imposed Botmang on Dariye in 2003 in exchange for their support against Jang. When Botmang took over the governorship he removed Dariye's appointment as caretaker chairman of Jos North, Atu the Afizere, and replaced him with a Berom man, Professor B.T. Bingel, a history professor at the University of Jos. Bingel was not only the first Berom chairman in Jos North history; no Berom had ever before even been a member of the Jos North local government council from any ward, although, for instance, Igbos and Yorubas had been. Then in 2007 Botmang went out and Jang, another Berom, came in as governor. Jang replaced Professor Bingel as JNLG caretaker chairman with a different Berom, a woman named Ngo Lydia Lodam. It began to seem that there would be a reign of Beroms in Jos North, at least for the time being: – until the next local government election at least, when the question of who should rule could be tested at the polls. This is what the local government elections finally held in November 2008 were to decide.

The PDP being the party in control in Plateau State, and therefore the presumptive winner of any election held there, one very important question was: who should be the PDP nominee for chairman of Jos North? The Hausa/Fulani are quite strong in the PDP nationally (one of them is now president and they have most of the governorships in the far north), and there are influential Hausa/Fulanis in the PDP clubs of Jos North and Plateau State. The Jasawa went to Jang again:

As to the JNLG election: the Hausas said let a Muslim be the PDP chairmanship candidate. They are the majority in Jos North. The Berom never even had a councillor in Jos North before; they don't have any ward in Jos North. [Even now, when a Berom is chairman, there is no Berom councillor.] Jang said no. So what about deputy chairman? No. The Muslims went for a third time: at least give us the post of secretary of the LG. Jang said no: that he can do without the Muslims. (interview 13 Feb. 09)

³⁰ The relevant constitutional provisions are §197 (every state to have a SIEC) and 3^d Sched. Part II(b) (composition and functions of SIECs). For an example of the state SIEC laws see Plateau State Local Government Electoral Law 2002, published in Plateau State of Nigeria Gazette No. 1 Vol. 9, 18 March 2004.

³¹ For Human Rights Watch's observations on the 2004 local government elections elsewhere in Nigeria, see "Nigeria's 2003 Elections: The Unacknowledged Violence", June 2004, www.hrw.org/reports/2004/nigeria0604.

One does not know all the details of how the PDP nomination was decided. But perhaps all one needs to know is that Jang was governor, Jang was predominant in the Plateau PDP, Jang was Berom, Jang claimed Jos North for the Beroms, and Jang was from Du. Is it any surprise then that the PDP nominee for chairman of Jos North ended up being a Berom from Du? His name is Timothy Gyang Buba. He is the younger brother of Jacob Gyang Buba, immediate past comptroller-general of the Nigeria Customs Service (a very lucrative position) and a long-time supporter of Jang; in April 2009 Buba the Elder became the new *Gbong Gwom* when the old one died. But Du is in Jos South LG, not Jos North. With his indigene certificate from there, Buba the Younger had even held office in Jos South. But now here he was running for chairman of Jos North – in arguable violation of the very indigeneship rules Jang has been so insistent on enforcing. Buba is widely understood to have been imposed on the Jos North PDP by Jang in an undemocratic nomination process objected to not only by the party's Jasawa but by its Anagutas and Afizeres as well. The Anagutas were pacified by the choice of an Anaguta, a Christian, as Buba's running mate. Rebuffed by Jang and the PDP, the Jasawa turned again to the ANPP, which nominated Aminu Yusuf Baba, one of their own, as its Jos North chairmanship candidate. Baba's running-mate was an Afizere Christian. In this race the Afizeres sided with the Jasawa against the Beroms and the Anagutas, together with whatever other supporters either side could recruit. Thus the stage was set for the Jos North election, to be enacted as a showdown between Jang and the Jasawa.

The election was supposed to be held in January 2008, but the Plateau State Independent Electoral Commission (PLASIEC) appointed by Jang after he took office was not ready:

Even though the former governor, Chief Joshua Dariye built a magnificent edifice as the new office complex of the electoral body it has neither been furnished nor equipped with materials and other logistics to enable it function as an office let alone conduct an election. One of the officials who preferred anonymity told *Sun* that "as I am talking to you, there is no single vehicle on ground except the ones that are grounded that could be said to belong to PLASIEC and there is no single computer in any of the 52 rooms that make up the complex. All the ones that were in place before this regime have been carted away. The present administration has to start from the scratch." The office of the Commissioner for Information and Logistics, Mr. Martins Dinak does not have a single computer or writing material to dish out information. His secretary did not even have a chair to sit on let alone type out information regarding the election. The situation is the same in other offices in the complex.³²

Finally the election was set for 15 March 2008. But by mid-afternoon of that day it had to be called off with no outcome anywhere in the state:

The chairman of the Plateau State Independent Electoral Commission, PLASIEC, Mr. Jefferson Majei who announced the cancellation of the polls

³² "Disarray! uncertainty surrounds conduct of council polls across states" *The Daily Sun*, 9 December 2007, internet edition.

cited thuggery and hijack of electoral materials as reasons behind the cancellation.... The cancelled polls, which were supposed to start by 8 a.m. and end by 3 p.m. local time, could not start until late in the day. As at 3 p.m. election materials were still been [sic] shared at police stations where they were kept for security reasons. The delay is the reason why PLASIEC must take a large portion of the blame.

Only God knows when elections will ever take place in Nigeria without thuggery. At Zawan A ward in Jos-South Local Government, election materials arrived at about 5 p.m. [sic: a.m.]. From there they were supposed to be shared to the different polling units of the ward but the struggle between rival parties each of which wanted to guard against cheating, frustrated the sharing of the materials despite the presence of a huge contingent of the police. Our colleagues who monitored the polls at Riyom reported remarkable violence leading to injuries and hospitalization of some individuals. Thus there were enough reasons to warrant the cancellation of the elections.³³

After the botched March elections Jang sacked his first PLASIEC and appointed a new one, telling them to “get it right this time”: “you have the responsibility to deliver free, fair and credible elections which will be acceptable to all.”³⁴ At last, sometime in October, the elections were reset for Thursday, 27 November, and on that day they actually were held, for the most part smoothly and peacefully all over the state. A big “Well done!” to PLASIEC then – although the tallying of the votes was badly botched in Jos North. But should it be surprising? PDP was declared the winner of the chairmanships in all seventeen local governments in the state. It is said that Jang had strong incentives for producing this result, and went to whatever lengths were necessary to do so.³⁵ Where the truth of it lies I cannot tell.

³³ Richard Nanshep, “Plateau Local Polls Cancelled”, *News Tower*, 14/3/08 [sic: 15/3], internet edition.

³⁴ Tongnaan Dada Bawa, “Gov Jang tasks PLASIEC on free, fair LG polls”, *Nasarawa State Newsday Weekly*, 5 May 2008, internet edition.

³⁵ Strong incentives: “[A] new trend which arose under Obasanjo is the tendency for the party in power in each state, to ensure that it ‘captures’ all the local governments in its state. It does not matter that it is a PDP, AC or ANPP state; the outcome is always the same. The party in power ‘wins’ all the seats.... Every state has a SIEC, the contraption which state governors use to install puppets and sidekicks as chairmen of local governments. The ‘secret’ of the process is that governors will not allow other parties but their own to win seats, so that the boat of local government ‘Joint Accounts’ will not be rocked by the ‘gate crashing’ of any other party into the fray. From the popular hearsay in Nigeria, monies in these accounts are the most abused and most corruptly misappropriated in Nigeria. It is at this level that ‘do-or-die’ is exhibited at its most brazen!” Is’haq Modibbo Kawu, “Jos Killings: Failure of politics and leadership”, *Daily Trust*, 11 Dec. 08, p. 56; and I heard this same opinion from interviewees on both sides of the Jos divide. “Joint accounts” are created for projects funded jointly by the state and local governments; the state, through which federal allocations to the LGs must pass, withholds the LG contributions to the joint accounts before sending the rest along; the general belief is that the LG chairmen and state officials then conspire to loot the joint accounts.

In Jos North, the voters were polarised. For PDP: most Christians of all ethnic groups, some Berom Muslims, perhaps some other Muslims. For ANPP: the Jasawa, probably most other Muslims, and most Afizeres. The Christians worked and prayed for victory:

This time the Christians [except evidently the Afizeres] managed to unite against the Hausas. The pastors were preaching in the churches that everyone should go out to vote, that they must not vote for any Muslim, the Muslims are infidels and we must not have them ruling over us. They want to Islamise the place. Don't vote for any unbeliever. We have voted for them before, they have disappointed us. Everybody should pray, get out to vote, etc. etc. There was a heavy turnout among the Christians this time. The Hausas always have taken voting seriously, this time the Christians did too. (interview 11 Feb. 09)

On the ANPP side it was believed that the election was winnable. "Before the election it was said, 'PDP can win anywhere, but they can't win in Jos North' " (interview 7 Feb. 09). The Hausa praise singers inflated expectations:

The praise singers were saying that the JNLG chairman would be more powerful than the governor, because of the nature of the LG [the commercial and political capital of Plateau State]. "Chairman of the chairmen! Anything you say the governor must listen to you. If you say this won't happen, there will be no Plateau". People listened, read meanings into it. (ibid.)

The Muslims too worked and prayed for victory:

Some Muslim preachers were saying: if you are in PDP or vote for PDP you are a pagan. Some would say: if you vote PDP who is not a Muslim you are a pagan. (interview 12 Feb. 09)

Members of the Hausa/Fulani community were being sensitised in mosques to vote for the Muslim ANPP chairmanship candidate and threatened to vigorously resist any attempt of manipulation by the ruling party in the state.³⁶

"The indigenes believed that there would be a fight, especially if the Hausas didn't win" (interview 9 Feb. 09). Especially if it looked like the process was being manipulated by the ruling party. Unfortunately this is exactly what happened.

Certainly everyone understood that efforts would be made by all sides to rig, and no doubt before and during the election all sides did the normal unlawful things to try and influence the outcome, from fraudulent voter registration to fraudulent voting and ballot-box stuffing.³⁷ These things happen in the wards (twenty of them in JNLG), and at the many polling places scattered around the wards; the PLASIEC and party officials

³⁶ "Nigeria: How Jos Crisis Erupted, By Reps Committee", *Daily Trust*, 29 March 2009, internet edition.

³⁷ Close friends of mine, on the Christian/PDP side, admitted to voting multiple times and described other methods their side used to inflate its vote and deflate the other side's. No doubt the other side did the same.

on the ground in all these places who are supposed to stop them, instead, for small bribes shared out among themselves, conspire to let them happen. It is unclear if any of this was determinative in Jos North. In any case nothing that happened during the actual voting on 27 November sparked off any violence. It was only after the voting was over, the ballots were in the boxes, and the results were being collated that what looked like manipulation of the chairmanship outcome resulted in the outbreak of violence in the early morning of 28 November. “Nobody should blame the crisis in Jos on the election, because even leading members of the opposition parties, ANPP and AC, admitted that this was the best election ever held”, said Nuhu Gagara, Plateau State commissioner for Information.³⁸ Jang said: “We had a very wonderful and in fact the most peaceful election ever conducted in Plateau State, and suddenly, when we were relaxing, awaiting the results of the elections, we heard that some parts of Jos city were on fire.”³⁹

After the polls close, votes are first brought from the polling stations and counted in the wards: in the presence of PLASIEC and party officials each ward tabulates its own votes for LG chairman and for councillor from that ward, party by party. Official results sheets are filled and signed by the PLASIEC and party officials there present; in short the local results should be known to all concerned. PLASIEC returning officers then are supposed to collect the ballot boxes and the tabulated results from each ward and take them to the LG collation centre. There the chairmanship results from the wards are added together, as they come in, to finally determine the winner. It was at this stage of the process that the election in Jos North went wrong.

The Jasawa had said that they would “vigorously resist any attempt of manipulation by the ruling party”. In fact they have a slogan: *A kasa, a raka kuma a tsare*, meaning “cast your vote, escort it and guard it.” As the polls closed and the votes began to be counted, this is what they did, or tried to do: follow the ballot boxes and results sheets from the polling places and the wards to the central collation centre to make sure no hanky-panky went on there. In fact partisans of both sides were doing the same.

But where were the returning officers? Where was the central collation centre?

People waited for the returning officers to come collect the ward results. They didn't come. This at least was the experience in the Muslim-dominated wards. So they went looking for the collation centre. This had always been in the Jos North local government headquarters [recently moved out of the Hausa quarter to another location downtown]. So they went there. But there was no sign of any activity there. Nobody – not only the Muslims – knew that the collation centre had been moved. They didn't know where it was. Finally, at 9 or 10 p.m. [my informant, A] was phoned by an ANPP official, Bala Muhammad, who was slated to represent ANPP at the collation centre. Bala said it had been moved to Solomon Lar Amusement Park. So Muslims started moving there, including A. No sign of activity there either. A then went home. Around 12 midnight, the

³⁸ Anza Philips, “Jos killings: a recurring decimal”, *Newswatch*, 8 December 2008, internet edition.

³⁹ Seriki Adinoyi, “50 foreign nationals arrested over Jos riot”, *This Day*, 26 November 2008, internet edition.

Muslims finally learned where the collation centre was: at one primary school located in Kabong, a Christian-dominated area of Jos, heavily Berom. Muslims went there. Bala Muhammad went there. Results started coming in from various wards. Large numbers of youths from both sides gathered outside to “defend” their votes. (interview 6 Feb. 09)

The reader can imagine that the already-paranoid Jasawa will have been put very much on edge by the highly suspicious way in which the reigning officials of Plateau State had hidden and manipulated the location of the collation centre. Perhaps it was only incompetence, the usual short-sightedness, high-handedness and lack of transparency. But the Jasawa will have thought that something less innocent must be afoot.

Results came in to the collation centre from fifteen of the twenty wards, and were successfully collated by 3 a.m.. With those, according to the Jasawa, ANPP was ahead in the chairmanship election by more than 30,000 votes (or was it 13,000? – accounts differ).⁴⁰ In their view the total possible votes from the remaining five wards could not have made up the difference. So the Jasawa thought they had won. Perhaps PDP supporters feared the same. Outside the collation centre, the PDP supporters among the youths began chanting “PDP must win! PDP must win!” From the Jasawa came back: “*Ba za mu yarda ba!*”: “We won’t agree!” As the results from the missing wards were awaited, the situation became tense. Several PDP officials, more than the one representative they were allowed (although they may have been there in their capacities as state officials not party officials), appeared inside the collation centre, conferring together. At some point the police came. The people inside the collation centre were told to leave: “your safety cannot be guaranteed”. Outside, people began throwing stones. Fighting started. People – Jasawa polling agents, a policeman – may already have been killed at the collation centre, this is disputed. The police finally succeeded in dispersing the crowd. All those angry youths went out into the town, talking on their cell phones. Before long the looting and burning and killing started, exactly where, and who started it, and how it spread, are all disputed. Already by mid-morning on Friday, 28 November, the warfare was general and parts of the city were in flames. “Warfare” is perhaps the wrong word. The youths, the “footsoldiers”, did not so much come out to fight each other as to kill each other’s innocent civilians, including women and children, and to loot and burn their property. All the usual atrocities were committed by both sides. The one that most outraged the nation was the slaughter of three Yoruba youths, recent university graduates, serving their year in the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), who when the trouble started happened to be visiting the home of the uncle of one of them in Jos; a gang of Jasawa (or someone fighting on that side) broke in, cut their throats, and burned the house down; this was part of a general Jasawa devastation of that

⁴⁰ 30,000: interview 6 Feb. 09; also Philips, “Jos Killings: A Recurring Decimal”, *Newswatch*, 8 Dec. 08, cited above. 13,000: Mahmud Lalo, “Why we gave up our council seats - Jos North councilors”, *Daily Trust*, 8 Feb. 09, internet edition.

neighbourhood.⁴¹ In the end, though, the Jasawa seem to have suffered the most casualties, particularly after the soldiers and the mobile police came in on Saturday.

Human Rights Watch documented 118 cases of alleged arbitrary killings by the security forces that took place between 7 a.m. and 1 p.m. on November 29 alone. The majority of killings documented by Human Rights Watch were allegedly committed by the Nigerian police. In 15 separate incidents of arbitrary killings by the police, at least 74 men and boys, all but two of them Muslims, were killed. The vast majority of police killings were perpetrated by the anti-riot Police Mobile Force, commonly referred to as the mobile police or MOPOL. Human Rights Watch also documented eight incidents involving the alleged arbitrary killing of 59 men by the military. According to witnesses, all of these victims were Muslim men, most were young, and nearly all were unarmed at the time they were killed. Human Rights Watch believes the actual number of arbitrary killings by security forces may be substantially higher than these figures.⁴²

Many Jasawa are convinced that the crisis was part of “a deliberate ethnic cleansing agenda by the state government to exterminate specific tribes and creeds in Jos [i.e. the Hausas, the Muslims], using politics as an apparatus.”⁴³ But of course the HRW findings are disputed. The totals killed or wounded are disputed, each side accusing the other of inflating its casualties and property damages for the sake of propaganda. Each side accuses the other of having planned the fight, the massacre, the destruction, in advance, of arming themselves, bringing in reinforcements from outside, arranging fake army or police uniforms for their partisans, using the security forces, all allegedly instigated and funded by big men behind the scenes, for nefarious reasons variously hypothesised. The state government has been widely blamed for failing, at a minimum, to put security measures in place in advance that would have averted or contained the outbreak that was clearly likely to happen unless everything about the election went perfectly. Once again, a number of commissions of inquiry have been set up to investigate the whole fiasco.

But who won the election? It seems that the vote totals from the five missing wards have never been announced. What was announced, on Friday, 28 November, as the conflict raged, was that the PDP candidates had won all seventeen local government chairmanships in Plateau State, including Jos North. Only total numbers of votes were given, not breakdowns by wards. This announcement of course only intensified the

⁴¹ See e.g. Moyo Fabiyi & Tunde Lemuel, “‘How My Son Was Butchered’—Father Of Slain Corper”, *Online Nigeria Daily News*, 3 Dec. 08, internet edition.

⁴² Human Rights Watch, “Nigeria: Investigate Killings by Security Forces”, 20 July 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/07/20/nigeria-investigate-killings-security-forces>, recounting HRW testimony before one of the panels investigating the Jos crisis. See also “Security Men Killed 133 in Jos--Human Rights Watch”, *Daily Trust*, 21 July 09, internet edition, which recounts some of the drama of the hearing and the response of a police spokesman to HRW’s accusations. HRW’s initial report on this subject, from 19 Dec. 08, is listed in the bibliography.

⁴³ Murjanatu Mohammed Abba, “Jos Mayhem, a Grand Plan By Politicians – NFJ”, *Daily Trust*, 11 Dec. 08, internet edition.

violence in Jos. Some semblance of order was finally restored on Sunday the 30th. The original plan had been to swear in all the new local government chairmen on the Monday, 1 December, but this was wisely postponed to give everyone time to calm down. The swearing-in of the chairmen finally took place on 21 January 2009. In Jos North, at the first sitting of the new Jos North local government council, in the first week of February, with Timothy Gyang Buba in the chair, only twelve of the twenty councillors were sworn in: the other eight, mostly Jasawa, mostly ANPP from the predominantly Muslim wards, said the election had been a sham and they would not participate. Since the council's quorum is two-thirds of all the members, or fourteen, it was unable to function. Since then, however, five of the eight hold-outs have relented and taken their seats, with only the councillors from Abba Na Shehu, Ibrahim Katsina and Naraguta "A" wards still adamant in late July 2009; but presumably the council and chairman are moving ahead with their agenda without them.⁴⁴

9. Conclusion

It would be nice to think that, this time around, one or more of the committees of inquiry would produce a comprehensive report, based on solid evidence, that would answer, to the satisfaction of people of good will on all sides, the large number of the disputed questions the crisis has thrown up; and that those who have committed crimes, including electoral crimes, including big men, would be prosecuted. Unfortunately this is unlikely to happen. Immediately after the crisis, President Yar'adua appeared in several ways to side with the Jasawa against Jang and the Plateau indigenes. When Yar'adua appointed his committee of inquiry, the Plateau indigenes said it would be biased against them and they would not appear before it. When Jang appointed his committee of inquiry, the Jasawa said it would be biased against them and they would not appear before it. Jang filed a lawsuit challenging Yar'adua's right to appoint a committee to investigate problems within Jang's jurisdiction. The Jasawa filed a lawsuit challenging Jang's right to appoint a committee to investigate a dispute to which he is a party. Although both committees have proceeded with their work, each has received evidence essentially from only one side. Little good is likely to come from this process. Lesser committees appointed by the Senate, by the House of Representatives, and by the Plateau State House of Assembly have faced similar problems and will also make little impact. Each side's accusations against the other will live on, neither proven nor disproven; nothing will be resolved, no one's opinions will change, no one except perhaps a few of the footsoldiers will be prosecuted.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Swearing-in of the chairmen: Achor Abimaje, "Jang Swears in New Council Chairmen", *Leadership*, 22 Jan. 09, internet edition. Refusal of eight Jos North councillors to be sworn in, including information about their party affiliations: Lalo, "Why we gave up our council seats - Jos North councilors", *Daily Trust*, 8 Feb. 09, cited above. Information about the position in late July 2009: obtained by email and telephone from sources in Jos.

⁴⁵ For a sample of the news reports on this whole aspect of the story, see: Plateau indigene boycott of Yar'adua committee: Seriki Adinoyi, "Jos Crisis - FG Not Neutral, Says Hon Kaze", *This Day*, 1 Jan. 09. Jasawa boycott of Jang committee: "Tension in Jos Again!", *Leadership*, 3 Jan. 09. Jang suit against Yar'adua committee: Ise-Oluwa Ige, "Jos Riot - Jang Drags FG to Supreme

Is there any hope, at the national level, for progress on the underlying problem of indigenes vs. settlers?

Abstractly viewed, the question is whether the bundle of ethnic or indigene rights which unquestionably exists in Nigerian law, extends or should extend to political control of LGAs by local indigene groups, at the expense of other important rights enshrined in the constitution and laws, such as the right of majorities of residents of particular places to control, by free and fair elections, who shall govern them from time to time, even if the indigenes do not always win. In short, which trumps which, the rights of majorities of qualified voters, or the rights of indigenes? The nation has not yet made up its mind how to resolve this question, or even if it thinks that free and fair elections are a good idea at all.

No writer that I am aware of is making the argument for untrammelled indigene sovereignty at the local government level, and national integration be damned. All, including the scholars among the Plateau indigenes, agree that the free movement of Nigerian citizens throughout the country, and their right to do business, own property, and, most importantly, to participate in local politics, wherever they choose to reside, must be effectuated if the nation is to survive and thrive. The present extension of claimed indigene rights to political control of LGAs, by fraud or by force if necessary, should be curtailed. But this must apply all over the nation, so everyone is put on an equal footing everywhere. This implies federal legislation or perhaps even constitutional amendment, plus a determined national effort at realisation. For a sample of the thinking of writers closely associated with Jos – some Plateau indigenes, all long-term residents of Jos – see the works of Alemika, Alubo, Bagudu, Best, Danfulani, Egwu, Hagher, James, Jibo et al. and S. Mohammed listed in the bibliography.

One possible step forward, now under active discussion, might be politically achievable. This would be to compromise the rights of indigenes and the rights of resident non-indigenes of particular LGAs, by allowing only non-indigenes who have resided there for a long time (5 years? 10 years? 100 years?) to vote in local elections, but also by then giving them indigene certificates from that place. This would dilute the current rights *de jure* of resident non-indigenes, who already have the right, more or less without regard to length of stay, to vote and be voted for in local elections; and it would dilute the current rights *de facto* of local indigene groups, who would have to share political control and indigene rights with long-term residents of other ethnic groups.⁴⁶ A major question, of course, would be what to do about all the non-indigenes who are already long-term residents of particular places, like the Jasawa, Igobs and Yorubas of Jos. If this could be solved, and if properly administered, such a compromise could

Court”, *Vanguard*, 30 Dec. 09. Jasawa suit against Jang committee: Ahmed Mohammed, “Jos North Community Takes Jang to Court”, *Daily Trust*, 29 Jan. 09. All articles cited are on the internet, and many more are out there covering the aftermath of the crisis.

⁴⁶ Somewhat in this vein, one court appears to have ruled that the indigenes of a place for federal character purposes are those who (or those whose ancestors? patrilocal ancestors?) lived there at Independence, see *Anizaku and Ors. vs. The Governor of Nasarawa State and Ors.*, [2004] 497 Law Reports of Northern Nigeria 2004: Court of Appeal, Jos Division. But the ruling is very unclear.

produce two healthy effects: advance effective voting rights, and encourage the development of new, less exclusive, local identities: “Jossite”, for instance, instead of Berom or Jasawa.

The problem with this or any other step that might be legislated would be, as always, sound administration. This has been Nigeria’s great failing. Many believe that if good government could somehow be realised, this by itself would clear up most of the ethno-religious conflict that is still endemic. This too is being addressed at many levels. One wishes them all success.

10. Bibliography of works related to Nigeria’s indigene-settler and other communal conflicts, with particular reference to Plateau State

The following bibliography is intended to give the reader a sense of the volume and variety of scholarly work, most of it quite recent, that falls under its somewhat vague scope. The bibliography does not purport to be “exhaustive”. Readers looking for more of the literature will find further bibliographies in most of the works cited. They should also consult the tables of contents of edited volumes that are cited: the bibliography usually does not list separately relevant essays in edited volumes cited as main entries. Except in one or two cases, essays published in the popular press, even those cited in the text, are not cited in the bibliography.

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