

The Political Economy of Ethnic Conflicts and Governance in Southern Kaduna, Nigeria: [De]Constructing a Contested Terrain

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Résumé: Les conflits ethniques dans le Nigeria du 20^e siècle peuvent être considérés comme une lutte, à la fois violente et subtile de reconfiguration du paysage politique du pays. Une lacune constatée dans la plupart des analyses existantes, l'absence d'une compréhension des conflits ethniques en tant que produits de phénomènes et contradictions sociaux plus complexes, et donc, en tant que manifestations de crises plus profondes. Il demeure le facteur d'inclusion et d'exclusion: ceux qui se croient appartenir à des groupes ethniques dominés, se mobilisent pour faire face à ceux-là qu'ils croient les dominer. Au cœur du débat et des enjeux politiques, c'est la question de la réorganisation des relations inter-ethniques et du partage du pouvoir. Lié à cela, la réalité selon laquelle la gouvernance, de par sa nature et ses fonctions, a été un facteur majeur dans la génération de conflits ethniques autour de l'équité sociale, des droits de citoyenneté, la paix, la démocratie, et la survie de l'Etat nigérian. Le présent article, se concentre sur une petite localité certes, mais son but est d'éclairer la grande scène nationale — et peut-être même au-delà. A moins qu'il y ait un élargissement démocratique du pouvoir, une garantie des droits ethniques et collectifs, une société civile et une gouvernance démocratiques, ainsi qu'une répartition équitable des ressources, les conflits ethniques ne sauraient être réduits au minimum.

Introduction

The current epoch of the construction of the new world order is full of promise. There is an expectation of a world of democratic governance and peaceful relations among peoples. However, it is also an epoch full of dangers, with the possibility of a series of explosive conflicts.

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In Africa, the spread of a mighty wave of ethnic tensions and conflicts, and indeed civil wars, is already threatening the survival of some states. Several complex crises are currently manifesting themselves in ethnic forms (Markakis 1994). Michael Ignatieff (1993:2) argues that 'the key language of our age is ethnic nationalism'. Not all aspects are gloomy, however. For alongside disintegration and separatism in some states emerge calls for renewal and democracy. Current dynamics could also be viewed as efforts by dominated and marginalized groups to assert themselves, to fight for equality and to guarantee their rights. Ethnic conflicts have become the serious challenge of our times, which perhaps explains why ethnicity is seen by John Markakis (1994:5) as 'the reigning concept in African studies at present'.

A major contributory factor to ethnic conflicts is the undemocratic nature of governance. Many African regimes and rulers have repressed sections of the people and, by implication, ignored their aspirations (Ibrahim 1995a). Some have employed divide-and-rule methods in governance, and created more ethno-religious divisions than the colonialists ever did. Once degenerate regimes find their legitimacy put in question, because they no longer care for the majority of the people, or protect the public good, and fail to defend the peoples' rights, they tend to intensify the process of repression. When governance decays, the people retreat into sectarian enclaves, which are seen as providing security (Ibrahim 1993).

Ideas of a Nigerian state with common citizenry, free from ethnicity, religious bigotry, regionalism, and statism, have been pursued by many patriots during the twentieth century. They have generally envisaged a state with equality, united in common political practices and under the same law. In the post-colonial period, this dream of civic nationalists has not materialized. Attahiru Jega (1997) states that the post-colonial project of constructing a common citizenry

with the same aspirations, one Nigerian identity, secularist, with a cosmopolitan outlook instead of 'tribal' loyalty, has largely failed. Over the decades, the deepest attachment has tended to shift increasingly towards primordial tendencies, as ethnic and regional consciousness has become more important (Nnoli 1995:158-159). Ethnic nationalism has increasingly won support in an atmosphere of greed and clientelism. What has made the situation worse over the years is that military regimes, with their foreign occupier-like practices of oppression and repression, have awakened forces and organizations which fight for ethnic, statist, and regional goals (Davidson 1992:228 and 313). This has been exacerbated by the implementation of unpopular policies such as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP).

The Southern Kaduna zone has occupied a volatile position in the in the twentieth century history of inter-group conflicts and tensions in Northern Nigeria. It has experienced complex conflicts, occasionally violent, and mostly assuming an ethnic form. Linked with these have been questions of social equality, citizenship, community rights, and democracy. All this has taken place in a rural zone, which is a miniature Nigeria, with about forty ethnic groups. Until the mid-1960s, most of its now predominantly Christian population — also a component of what is referred to as northern minorities — were followers of traditional African religion(s). There is a Muslim population, mostly Hausa and Fulani, which is in a minority in the area, although part of the majority at the regional and national levels. Recent conflicts erupting in the zone have taken on a national dimension. This study analyzes the ethnic conflicts and the crucial matter of governance. It attempts to penetrate the nature and essence of these by exposing the structure and operations of the socio-economic and political systems in the historical process, the notions and perception of people about who does what to whom and who controls what, how justice and truth are perceived, and how reactions which affected the historical process were influenced both by

the memory of concrete human experience and also by what is located in the realm of the imaginary (Diouf 1997 and Mbembe 1997). A study of a relatively small historical specificity, to borrow from Archie Mafeje (1991:7), aims to throw light on a particular context and also add to our understanding of the wider scene.

Nature of Society, Inter-ethnic Conflicts and Governance: The Late 19th Century

In the period preceding European colonization, there were various communal polities in the Southern Kaduna zone. The people were mainly of the semi-Bantu family of Niger-Congo languages, sharing similarities in traits and culture (Gunn 1956:36). Archaeological and ethnographic evidence shows that despite continuous local migration within the zone and from the neighbouring Jos Plateau area, most people were autochthonous (Jemkur 1992:1-20).

In the late nineteenth century, state organization was less developed than in the northern emirates. Within the different social formations no single person wielded power as the chief of an entire ethnic group. The emergence of contradictory classes was still at an infant stage. Political power, which was not completely separated from spiritual power, was controlled by the clan elders. There prevailed a broad popular participation in the affairs of society and daily life. Even the chief priests of the religious shrines had no executive power, but exercised limited authority through the clan elders and the lesser priests (Kazah-Toure 1991:97-100). Clan and spiritual leaders of each ethnic group discussed the affairs of their homeland and held broad consultations with the different sections of their constituencies before collectively taking decisions. The different polities had some elements of democratic governance. Stanley (1935) depicts this in relation to the Adara people: 'The 'government' of an average pagan village is a queer combination of autocracy and communism. The controlling influences are essentially 'religious' and the police force is marginal'.

Religion as an institution was used to mobilize its followers, to maintain norms, and to preserve law and order. However, religion was also used as a means of exploiting women by imposing fines on them for showing what was considered to be disrespect towards their husbands, and also as a means of putting a check on youth. Gerontocrats appropriated some surplus wealth through the control of political and religious power. In spite of their leadership positions, however, they were also involved in production. There were no sharp contradictions between the ruling strata and the ordinary people. These acephalous societies experienced limited conflicts amongst themselves. These socio-political formations were generally non-expansionist (Kazah-Toure 1991:77). Inter-ethnic disputes and conflicts were based on the question of land, control of fishing and hunting areas and the ownership of other resources. Armed clashes occasionally occurred — such as the ones between the Bajju and the Ham — but these were on a small scale (Kirkpatrick 1926).

Inter-ethnic conflicts featured more in the relationship between the Southern Kaduna zone and the neighbouring emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate such as Zazzau (Zaria), which was feudal, predominantly Hausa and Muslim. M. G. Smith (1960:2) relates the migration of Hausa people into the zone to the expansion of international trade. The history of some of the Hausa settlements, such as Zangon-Katab, established as mid-way bases for Hausa traders on their way to or from the southern forest region, dates back to around 1750. This development led to beneficial economic interaction, mainly in terms of trade, between the zone and the emirates. Agents of Hausa merchants began to emerge among the so-called indigenous peoples. By virtue of what accrued to them, as agents for foreign trade, they constituted an incipient social stratum. On the eve of the colonial era, some of them had started to take Hausa titles, but did not enjoy recognition by their own people as chiefs (Brandt 1939). Later, these were to be the main collaborators with foreign interests.

Arnett E. J. (1920:16) advanced the argument that Zazzau played a leading role in slave raids and the slave trade, and that its economic prosperity was attributable to slavery. Yusufu Turaki (1982:85) and Simon Yohanna (1988:78) argued forcefully that slave raids were the dominant forms of relations between the Southern Kaduna zone and the emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate, and that these involved the enslavement of the non-Hausa and the non-Muslim peoples of the zone. The crucial issues are here analyzed from a simplistic ethno-religious perspective. The reality was more complex. Although aggression, slave raids and enslavement were directed more to other societies, slave raids and slavery existed within the emirates and were directed at both the Hausa and the Muslim population. As Tukur (1992:105-109) puts it, more complex factors and explanations can be found by analyzing relations of production, class relations, the designs of the emirate ruling classes and their expansionism, and by placing the slave raids and slavery in the context of a phase in the development of contrasting socio-economic systems and territories.

In the emirates, the feudal ruling circles used slaves, as a separate labour force to work on their estates. There was also a flourishing export market for slaves, in connection with the trans-Saharan trade. Owing to the communal nature of Southern Kaduna polities, with a relative low level of development of productive forces, there was a limited scope for the exploitation of man by man. There was no internal market for slaves nor any significant need for slave labour. The few slaves were basically captives taken during inter-ethnic conflicts over land, and in counter-attacks against emirate slave raiders. Slaves in the Southern Kaduna zone formed an integral part of household labour (Bonat 1985:108).

Massive slave raids were launched against the communities in the zone. The heaviest were carried out in 1849, 1858, and 1897 (Kirkpatrick 1926). Thousands of people were either killed or captured

as slaves. These acts of aggression devastated, destabilized, and even depopulated some of the communities with serious economic, demographic and other consequences (Omotosho 1988:78; and Yohanna 1988:77). Most studies have neglected the internal linkages which facilitated slave raiding. The Hausa settlements lacked the capacity to carry out such ventures against the host communities they had pacts with. There were swift reprisals against local Hausa suspected of collaboration (Kazah-Toure 1991:83). In both the Hausa settlements and the host communities, however, were elements recruited by slave raiders as secret spies, who carried out espionage activities which aided the capturing of slaves by external forces. Whenever these elements were uncovered, society meted out severe punishment (Kazah-Toure 1991:68-69). Stubborn resistance by the various polities to violent slave raids and to military and political aggression by the emirate forces, continued. Until the British colonial conquest, no other external power had been successful in establishing political control over the people.

In spite of prevailing internal contradictions, the polities of Southern Kaduna did not develop oppressive institutions, and there was no taxation or forced labour. Major forms of domination, exploitation, oppression, and repression — associated with the feudal emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate — hardly existed. Yet, the British colonialists and most colonial anthropologists branded these peoples as ‘raw pagans’, ‘savages’, and ‘uncivilised’ (Orr 1904). The ‘Rukubas who inhabit the hill east of the Piti are the most raw of all’, claimed Resident J.M. Fremantle (1913). However, B. Swai (1991:7-8) states that despite attempts to reduce their culture to a superstitious and primitive way of life, all this was neither ‘ridiculous nor undignified’ before such people made contact with either feudalism or capitalism. Although such communities were called primitive, ‘it is this very phenomenon which helped reduce the need for violence and brutality as means of control,

something which was much pronounced in the so-called civilised societies' (Swai 1991:8).

Transformation of Socio-Economic and Political Relations: The Generation of Ethnic Conflicts Under Colonialism

British colonial incursions into the zone began in January 1900.¹ The West African Frontier Force (WAFF) encroached on some territories, claiming that its troops were on a crusade to stamp out slave raids (Adeleye 1971:244). People generally interpreted the acts of encroachment as territorial violations and physically resisted. In the ensuing military confrontations, the WAFF burnt and destroyed a number of towns and villages (Adeleye 1971:244). With the conquest of Zaria in 1902, the British created Zaria Province and declared most² of the area of this study part of it. By doing so, the colonialists made the polities into parts of the emirates.

Tukur (1979:153) argues that the British were just as violent and destructive as the emirates had been in dealing with the communal polities, in terms of both human life and property. Some resistance to the British took on an anti-Hausa character. Various ethnic groups embarked on blocking roads, raiding caravans, and attacking itinerant Hausa traders passing through their homelands (Orr 1907). The Hausa were perceived as collaborators with the British invaders. This was partly based on the fact that the Hausa towns, in the zone of this study, did not resist the colonial military offensive. Bonat (1985:191-192) explains the stiff resistance of the non-Muslim peoples such as the Agworok as being due to their history of struggles against emirate expansionism. A critical examination can deepen such an interpretation. The high level of participation in many aspects of

1. This was in the wake of the British formal proclamation of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, by Colonel F.D. Lugard, at Lokoja on January 1, 1900.
2. Few of the polities were included in the newly established Nassarawa Province.

communal life, and the low level of exploitation and oppression in these societies, contributed to their being more cohesive. This differentiated them from the emirate formations, where feudal exploitation and brutality had largely discredited the rulers and isolated them from the people. While the far more developed and militarily strong emirates were defeated by the British in the first five years of the twentieth century, it took the colonizer up to 1915 to crush some of the Southern Kaduna ethnic groups who 'were determined on a joint resistance' (Sciortino 1915).

Colonial military operations against the people went side-by-side with the establishment of administrative structures. The Native Administrations (NAs) were created as appendages to the Provincial Administrations and as local governments, to be controlled by African rulers. The emirs were placed at head of the NAs, and were to be assisted by subordinate principal and lesser officers. By this new formula in governance, the British transformed the emirate feudal aristocracy into a buffer in the power structure between the colonialists and the colonized. Furthermore, the emirate aristocracy were imposed as overlords on the peoples of the zone. In the three districts of Moroa, Kwoi, and Kagoro, which had no Hausa settlements or population, local elements, mainly agents of Hausa merchants in the pre-colonial days or other collaborators, were appointed as chiefs. But they had little power. In matters of finance, recruitment of staff, and major decision-making they were subordinated to the NAs headed by the Hausa-Fulani emirs (Beck 1934).

Right from 1907, when the first set of Muslim Hausa-Fulani rulers were posted into the zone as District Heads and other NA officials, there were continuous outbreaks of peasant revolts in such places as Kachia, and these took ethnic forms (Kazah-Toure 1995). For the first time, all the ethnic groups in the zone were now confronted with taxation, forced labour, and extortion by rulers. A main cause of ethnic conflict was that

the rulers were imposed on communities that were largely different from them, in terms of language, religion and other aspects of culture. The so-called indigenes were occupying only the lowest positions in the scheme of things as hamlet or village heads (Administrative Policy 1935).

Colonialism was not devoid of racism, and its ideology was extended in Northern Nigeria to assessing the different ethno-cultural groups. Lugard's colonial officers categorized the ruling circles of the defeated Sokoto Caliphate, both in theory and practice, as the most ingenious, intelligent, cultured and politically sophisticated. Owing to the key role of Hausa officials within the system, a widespread impression emerged among the people that they were facing 'Hausa colonialism' (Sokop 1940). This perception was influenced by an empirical reading of the form colonialism took in the zone. Nigeria did not have a colonizing settler population and British officials were few. British political officers were not physically based in the area of study, except for the occasional tours. Up to the 1940s, all the NA officials, from the highest to the lowest in administration, judiciary, security services, such as the police and prison, labour, and all other departments, were people of Hausa nationality (Reynolds 1951 and Hay 1929).

In several colonies in Africa, the occupiers introduced segregation among the colonized (Drayton 1995:10 and Nnoli 1978:3-4). A colonial practice in the area of study was the physical separation of the Hausa people from the non-Hausa in settlements and schools. Reforms in the latter were only partly introduced towards the end of the colonial period. Also, although all communities had lost their rights over land to the colonial state, the practice by the NA aristocrats of expropriating land from the peasants of other groups in favour of Hausa elements was a major factor in ethnic conflicts. Although peasants of all ethnic groups, including the Hausa, were conscripted for official forced

labour, unofficial exactions, by the Hausa NA rulers, were directed at the non-Hausa. Illegal forced labour was utilized in the construction of markets and the personal houses of Hausa officials. Non-Hausa women were forced to sweep markets, provide firewood, and exploited as carriers of loads for Hausa officials when travelling. These practices were experienced by Hausa commoners elsewhere in Northern Nigeria but not in the area of this study (Kazah-Toure 1995). Relatively big farmers, middlemen and buying agents of European firms, those controlling local trading activities, those controlling markets and owning stalls, were to be found only among the Hausa.

In the working sites and accommodation of the labour camps, the British authorities introduced ethno-religious segregation. Forced labourers and migrant labourers were separately treated in the tin mines along the lines of 'native Africans', 'non-native Africans', Christian, Muslim, and 'pagan'. The so-called pagans 'were despised by the more sophisticated Hausa, Yoruba, Fulani... of the Christian and Mohammadan communities' (Browne 1939). They were excluded from occupying even the demeaning position, reserved for Africans, of headmen in labour camps. One racist justification the British gave for drafting forced labour was that it benefited the so-called pagans by giving them confidence in 'their dealing with the more civilised Hausa neighbours and encouraged them to lay complaints when unjustly treated' (Ormsby 1909). The British imposed taxes on non-Muslim women in the early part of the colonial period, while sparing Muslim women, on the grounds that non-Muslim women owned property, in contrast to Muslim women, a reason not historically correct (Tukur 1979:575). Both Muslim and non-Muslim women were left out of leadership roles in the system.

The differentiation between the Hausa and the non-Hausa, and the inequality, discrimination, evictions and exclusions that accompanied it, have led to the advancement of the thesis of internal colonialism

(Yohanna 1988 and Kukah 1993). However, it should be noted that the principal ruling class was foreign and British. It ultimately controlled state power and institutions. The Hausa aristocracy, in spite of the power it wielded, derived its authority from the British, and did not have an independent socio-economic and political base outside the colonial state. This negates the idea of internal colonialism. There was a subjugation of all the colonized peoples. British occupiers maintained sovereignty over all the ethnic groups. The Southern Kaduna context differs from the ones with which the controversial thesis of internal colonialism has been associated, as in South Africa (Slovo 1988:148-149).

An analysis of colonial education is vital for grasping the process of class formation and the emergence of an elite, and how this affected ethnic relations. E.P.T. Crampton (1978:102) argues that the exclusion of missionary activities from Muslim areas restricted the spread of education. Turaki (1982:162) proves, with irrefutable evidence, that even in non-Muslim Southern Kaduna, where the missions were relatively more free, their main preoccupation up to about 1940 was proselytizing. Provision of education in the zone was not a central objective of either the colonial government or the dominant Christian mission.

In historical reality, the British school system was established for the scions of the ruling feudal aristocracy. Since the NA ruling circles were Hausa and Muslim, colonial education was restricted to them up to the early 1930s (Kazah-Toure 1991:245-250). It was indeed only in 1928 that the first school for the sons of NA officials — their daughters were excluded — was opened in the zone. Later, when the authorities introduced education among the non-Hausa groups, it excluded the children of commoners. It was directed at the children of village heads and prominent elders (Morgant 1933). An argument often advanced by analysts (Bonat 1985:235) is that Hausa rulers opposed the spread of

schools in the area on the basis that secularism was going to undermine Islamic education. This is not valid, because the colonizer's interests had prevailed in other sectors in spite of local opposition. Therefore, if the provision of education for the non-Hausa had been central to the objectives of the colonialists, the negative views and attitudes of Hausa rulers — employed by the British — would not have prevailed.

It is important to emphasize that the missionaries established their first school in the zone in 1929 — and it was a Bible school. The predominant mission in the zone was the puritan Sudan Interior Mission (SIM). The SIM made the zone its sphere of influence with the collaboration of the colonial authorities. In 1933, Dr. A.P. Strirett spelt out the mission's general policy and line on education:

Don't lead them into English, Maths, Science etc. Keep the Bible as the textbook and the only one... Thus sending out successive relays of young men with the word of God in their hands and Christ of God in their heart (as cited in Turaki 1982:206).

In ideological and practical terms this type of education was aimed at producing docile and subservient characters. The SIM was 'more interested in the preaching of the gospel than establishing schools' and was suspicious of and hostile to missions that were inclined to the opposite (Crampton 1978:104-105). That was why the education provided in government schools was more secular and superior to the type obtained in the mission schools up to the late 1940s. The change came when the SIM and other missions began to establish schools and to create an African clergy, as part of their decolonization reforms. It was when the Church became a viable means to secure a place in school that proselytism started to make an impact among the non-Hausa and non-Muslim peoples. By the late 1950s they were fast overtaking the Hausa in the field of education (Wreford 1957). However, the system continued to exclude and marginalize them. They were mainly kept out of the NA bureaucracy, government jobs, and the private sector. Side-by-side with the tremendous awakening among a frustrated elite,

were their increased roles in the struggles for assertion by their ethnic groups.

The focus of this study now turns to the anti-colonial struggles, which took mainly ethnic forms of different magnitude and dimensions. As Mamdani (1996:24) argues in relation to Africa in general, once domination took an ethnic form, resistance to it was bound to assume the same form. Peasant revolts and other social and political struggles in the zone were directed against the Hausa (Kazah-Toure 1995). The Hausa people continuously faced the threat of political exclusion by the other ethnic groups. The former were never viewed by the latter as citizens in the area. The state itself had a contradictory position, to the extent that on paper citizenship was not on the basis of residency but on the basis of ancestral origin (Mustapha 1997:216-219).

In 1910 a peasant revolt broke out in the Atyab community of Zangon-Katab District against forced labour and taxation, and the people showed an 'open resentment against their District Head' (Gills 1910). In 1922 the Bajju and Atyab waged a joint struggle which involved non-payment of taxes, non-compliance with forced labour demands, and physical attacks on Hausa officials. The uprising was quickly suppressed by military intervention (Laing 1922). In 1934 there occurred a revolt by the Gwong people, which witnessed civil disobedience in Kagoma District. They targeted the Hausa-Fulani officials in charge of the district and demanded the creation of a Gwong Chieftdom out of Jema'a Emirate (Turaki 1982:194). One aspect of the agitations was connected with what the colonialists called the Muslim Courts, in which there was widespread discrimination in litigation involving non-Muslims and Muslims. The colonial authorities admitted to the prevalence of injustice in the judicial system. In 1924 Resident E.H.B. Laing of Zaria Province noted that: 'I am not altogether satisfied with the Native Courts generally. In the pagan areas little or no use is

made of the Moslem Alkali courts except by the minority Moslem population' (Laing 1924).

During World War II, ethnic conflicts escalated in the zone. The thorniest issues of the times were tyranny, brutalization, lack of employment, and oppression by the Hausa rulers. Militants of the movements engaging in the struggle mobilized their communities on the path of civil disobedience. The state responded by arresting, torturing, and jailing the activists. In May and June 1946, major revolts broke out among the non-Hausa communities of Zangon-Katab District. The people were fighting partly to be detached from Zaria. Civil disobedience in the revolt included a refusal to pay taxes, a boycott of the market, and non-compliance with the orders of the authorities. Attempts were made physically to attack and expel the Hausa people. A.D. Yahaya (1990:8) observed that in the struggle the British gave their backing to the Hausa rulers 'but never to the genuine demand by the people for improved social and political conditions'. It is worth noting that it was the same Hausa feudal rulers, against whom the others fought, who presided over the trials, passed prison sentences, and were in charge of the NA prisons where the activists were dehumanized and some died (Kazah-Toure 1991:386-387).

In the course of the decolonization process, political parties and organizations, which occupied more prominence among the non-Hausa ethnic groups, focused more on reforms in the NA system, integration of the elites within the system, the issue of ethnic discrimination and inequalities, rather than on the concern for national independence. When the Northern Nigeria Non-Muslim League was founded in 1949, it found acceptance among the embryonic educated stratum in the Southern Kaduna zone. The league's viewpoint was directed at challenging what it called Hausa and Muslim domination (Okpu 1977:66 and 127-128).

Within the terrain of politics, the Non-Muslim League, led by an emerging Christianised elite (largely mission-trained teachers and evangelists who were not in government employment), made demands for the same concessions and opportunities in the system as had been given to the Hausa elites. The league was organised under the umbrella of ethnicity and religion. In 1950 it was transformed into the Middle Zone League (MZL). In reality it was a conglomeration of loose organisations, each defining its objectives within its immediate environment. That is why Bryan Sharwood-Smith (1969:217) describes the MZL as 'an untidy complex of non-Muslims and tribal unions.' MZL's president in the zone, Dauda Kwoi, listed the organisation's preoccupations as 'the future of the pagans whether Christianised or not', the creation of a Middle Belt Region and 'saving the pagans from Hausa domination' (Political Bodies 1958). It excluded the Hausa from its ranks. In January 1954 it organised demonstrations to protest against Zaria's dominance, and the non-Hausa groups were up in arms in a joint anti-Hausa revolt which was suppressed (Administration of Southern Zaria 1954). MZL propaganda further fuelled animosity and hatred towards the Hausa in a most negative direction. The MZL was incapable of transcending ethnicization in politics. For the MZL, the colonizer should not allow national independence in Nigeria, lest the peoples of central Nigeria be dominated by the Hausa (Kazah-Toure 1995).

The struggles waged by the communities did not lead to significant concessions. In connection with inter-ethnic relations, the only reform introduced was the creation of village group councils for some of the non-Hausa communities in 1955. A president of council was appointed for each ethnic group, with the village heads placed under that leadership. But all the presidents were strictly subordinated to the Hausa district heads. On the whole, village group councils were not democratic and the NA feudalists ensured that only their tested loyalists

were appointed. Thus the people were not satisfied with the reforms (Yahaya 1980:163).

In 1955 the MZL merged with some other groupings to form a political party, the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). R.L. Sklar (1983:372) points out that the UMBC lacked coordination and there was 'no effective central authority.' Its most conservative wing remained the MZL, as the various organisations were allowed to retain their identities. By the late 1950s when the British and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) — the pro-colonialist and pro-feudalist ruling party of Northern Nigeria — began to give MZL's leaders such opportunities as political appointments, jobs, loans, and so on, which gave them personal and class advancement, their rhetoric about Hausa and Muslim domination mellowed and their agitation became feeble.

Only a bit of the ethno-religious agitation was maintained, as a weapon to bargain for crumbs of concessions for a tiny opportunistic elite. Later the MZL went into alliance with the NPC, and some of its leaders took appointment in the regional government, without informing their followers and their allies in the UMBC (Kazah-Toure 1991:494-495). Billy Dudley (1968:98) shows how a leading member of the MZL in the Southern Kaduna zone, Maude Gyani, kowtowed to the Hausa ruling circles and the British in the regional assembly and thanked them for 'civilizing' and 'uplifting' the non-Hausa groups. By 1960 the MZL faction of the UMBC in the area veered completely and crossed over to join the NPC (Yahaya 1980:154-155).

When Nigeria got its independence from the British in 1960, the various contradictions and points of inter-ethnic conflict had not been resolved. The post-colonial order was founded on the same socio-economic and political structures which were already in existence. The institutions and mechanisms for generating conflicts remained intact. Thus ethnic conflicts were to remain part of the historical process.

Political Development and Ethnic Conflicts: The Post-Colonial Era

The ruling class which inherited political power from the colonialists was composed of the most conservative and aristocratic forces, who were the main agents of colonial domination. Owing to their class nature and interests, their entrenched control of power, their ideological orientation and world-view, coupled with their ethno-religious chauvinism, they were not favourably disposed towards reform in managing of ethnic relations. Their history and survival were rooted in class and ethnic inequalities as well as in undemocratic governance. So, introducing serious reforms would have amounted to their embarking on a suicidal path.

A significant development was the level of intolerance which the ruling NPC demonstrated in dealing with the political opposition, both in relation to political parties and groups seen as belonging to it. The NPC government tightened its control of all NAs. In pre-1960 years the NPC won no single seat at any level of elections in Southern Kaduna. In fact, despite rigged elections, the NPC only secured a third of the votes in the entire Zaria Province. This was drastically altered, after independence, when the Emir of Zaria started a vigorous political drive to reverse the situation, by cracking down on opposition of the radical and most popular Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and that of the UMBC.

The various organs and layers of the NA were put together as a machinery to pursue the objectives of the party of government. A few non-Hausa supporters of the NPC were recruited into the service of the NA. For the first time, two people from Southern Kaduna were promoted into the senior cadre of Zaria NA. The Emir of Zaria invited UMBC leaders, offered them personal concessions for self-advancement, and 'made it clear that if he had his way he did not want to see any other party in the Emirate' apart from the NPC (Yahaya

1980:138). Those leading members of the UMBC who refused to defect — after some of their colleagues had been enticed by way of small loans and jobs — were arrested on trumped-up charges and subsequently imprisoned.³

Mostly die-hard members of the NPC were posted as district officials in Southern Kaduna. District authorities went all out to clamp down on opposition to the feudal aristocrats and the NPC. Taxation (on children and the old who were legally exempted from payment of taxes), forced labour, physical brutalization, imprisonment, and murder by state agents, were used as instruments of repression against many in the opposition. Basic facilities and services were denied to most of the Southern Kaduna districts, and their educated youth were mainly not employed, because they — and their area — were defined as being predominantly on the side of anti-government forces (Kazah-Toure 1995).

The NPC government was characterized by massive repression of popular organizations, and there was no demarcation between the ruling party and the government. NPC's northernization policy involved only loyalists of the party. Ethnicity was a factor, but Hausa elements who were members of the radical and popular NEPU were even more vigorously excluded. From 1959 onwards, there was an explosion of mission schools in Southern Kaduna, and a massive influx and output were recorded. Christianity was rapidly embraced by the non-Muslims. An educated elite continually emerged, which felt it owed more to the missionaries and the ethnic communities than to the state. Christianity came to be interpreted as a kind of liberation by many in the Southern Kaduna communities, in contrast to the government, which they portrayed as having links with Islam (Achi *et al.* 1987). The

3. This cross-checked information is derived from field-interview with a former leader of the UMBC and a member of the Federal House of Representative from Southern Kaduna, Shekarau Kau Layyah, who was incarcerated.

educated elements from these communities were, on the whole, working as mission school teachers and in other voluntary agencies. The political fortress of the NPC was built around NA officials, their agents, at all levels, and the rich Hausa merchants. It was the latter who monopolised government contracts and loans, distribution and retail trade, and were the buying agents of the government owned marketing boards. The petty traders among the non-Hausa communities were completely subordinated to the Hausa merchants and had no real chance to compete or prosper. Government projects, services, and infrastructure were concentrated in the Hausa settlements, partly because there were the district headquarters, and thus the centres of rural power.

On 15 January 1966, a military coup terminated civilian rule and banned political parties and activities in Nigeria. Sectional, regional, provincial, and ethnic conflicts had reached a climax elements were leading Nigeria towards disintegration. Yahaya (1980:191) argues that owing to the humble origins and professional training of most of the military leaders, they were less committed to the NA system. To justify their intervention, and to create a base of support, the military had to look into some of the old grievances of opposition political forces and ethnic minorities. As part of their reforms, the military abolished the four regions and created twelve states in May 1967.⁴ In line with this, the powers of the emirate aristocracy were reduced in 1968. The NA courts, prisons and police, hitherto controlled by the emirs, were transferred to the jurisdiction of either the state or federal governments.

4. Six states were created from the defunct Northern Region. Southern Kaduna became part of North Central State — made up of Zaria and Katsina Provinces. Provinces were abolished in 1967. In 1976 North Central State was renamed Kaduna State. In 1987, Katsina State was created from it, and the rest still retains the name Kaduna State.

These reforms slightly weakened the grip of the NA rulers over the Southern Kaduna communities, who pressed for more reforms. For the first time, two non-Hausa district heads were appointed, even though the Zaria Emirate Council only picked its loyalists without consultation with the communities. All this took place at a time when the ruling forces in Northern Nigeria, and indeed the federal government, were mobilizing groups to confront secessionist Biafra in the civil war that broke-out in 1967. Provincial Administrations were replaced by Administrative Councils, in 1969, and three of these were created in Southern Kaduna. With the civil war, and the introduction of a kind of local government structure, the non-Hausa elite was now being absorbed into the state system.

Significant changes occurred in the wake of the termination of the First Republic and the outbreak of the civil war. First, the area witnessed a tremendous increase in the recruitment of both non-commissioned and commissioned officers into the armed forces. Elements of non-Hausa origins, locked out of the state and private sectors over the years, had avenues opened up to them as a result of the violent national conflict. The argument here is that a large number of youth enlisted into the military, not necessarily because they wanted to defend the unity of the Nigerian state against the Biafran secessionists, but because of the job opportunities the war offered. It is important to observe that relative to their population, people from the zone became more dominant in the Nigerian military (especially in the middle and lower ranks) than the Hausa. The emirate ruling circles, the northern bourgeoisie and bureaucrats, and their allies, turned to mobilise the same working people and groups they had dominated and repressed over time. Appeals were made to them to take leading positions in the fighting forces in the civil war, while the ruling class remained prominent in controlling politics.

Secondly, the civil war brought more access for non-Hausa to education, resources, and jobs in both the public and other sectors, as a result of the exit of the Igbo workers, traders, and so on.⁵ Between 1966 and the 1970s, Southern Kaduna took a lead in education. It is claimed that most of the educated elements from the non-Hausa groups were concentrated in the sphere of education as school teachers and in the middle cadre of the civil service, while the Hausa were dominant at the highest levels of the bureaucracy (Bonat 1989:55). All this was contested by the Kaduna State government which always maintained that compared with the population of the zone, the Southern Kaduna communities had more than their quota of representation at all levels in the civil service (White Paper 1987:19).

Thirdly, from 1966 onwards, more contractors, transporters, fertilizer and petroleum products dealers, big traders, and controllers of major economic activities, have emerged among the Hausa than ever before. M.H. Kukah (1993:54) states that whereas the system produced more intellectuals and other educated elements, more military officers and more workers from among the other ethnic groups, the economically powerful class developed more among the Hausa.

Local government reforms introduced changes in government, which marked a complete negation of the NA system. Power in terms of grassroots institutions was now to lie with elected local councils and thus with democratic representatives of the people. Emirs and chiefs were now to take dictates from the local councils, and could no longer appropriate land from the peasants (Guidelines 1976:19-24). The

5. Quite a sizeable number of workers in the public and private sectors were Igbo and other people of Eastern Nigerian origins. This was more so in the railways. With the outbreak of Igbo massacre in 1966, and subsequently the civil war as from 1967, Igbo returned to the East leaving many vacancies to be filled. Igbo community schools were abandoned, and thus taken over by government to provide education for others.

Emirate Councils were subordinated to the Local Government Councils (LGCs). The snag is that what was supposed to lead to democratic gains has been largely eroded by constant military intervention. Emirs and chiefs are supposed to retain only nominal powers in the new order, although in reality this principle has been undermined. Local councils are now instructed to spend five per cent of their monthly budgets on 'traditional rulers'. They enjoy unspent amounts from the state and federal governments (*Tell* 1997: 15). This has not affected the increased entrenchment of the non-Hausa ruling class within the system.

A bugging question is why the emirs, chiefs, and other so-called traditional rulers are still wielding influence in political affairs, regardless of their being less powerful in constitutional theory. The main pillars sustaining these parasitic forces have been the unelected, undemocratic, unpopular and repressive military regimes, which find the equally undemocratic emirs and chiefs to be natural allies. Successive military governments and their leaders continually treat this class as so-called natural rulers and fathers of the nation. The latter too tend to prefer the military and do its dirty work, and in this way, they both have influence and accumulate capital. The military appoints them as chairpersons of companies and government boards, and holds on to them as an alternative to any semblance of democracy, which the soldiers are paranoid about.⁶

Emirs and chiefs support the military because democratically elected civilians see themselves as those with the people's mandate and

6. Whenever there is a military take-over the coupists, appeal for the understanding of 'traditional rulers' and pay them courtesy calls to explain their action. The Emirs and Chiefs are always the first to recognise the military, with appeals to the population to co-operate. That is why they are called 'Any Government in Power' (AGP) in some Nigerian circles. Recently both serving and retired military officers go for chieftaincy titles. Also, more and more of the retired soldiers are displacing civilians in the race to occupy vacant thrones as Emirs and Chiefs. In fact this is the vogue especially in the north.

thus the constitutional right to rule and they tend to reduce the former to the background. The 'traditional rulers' occupy a strong position in relation to lobbying for contracts for themselves and their allies, for appointments including ministerial ones for their own circles, getting the military to locate projects in their areas and in having influence over decision-making behind the scenes. That is partly why the demand for the creation of chiefdoms continues — by the elites — in Southern Kaduna,⁷ while they maintain the propaganda line that chiefdoms are the symbol of self-determination for their ethnic groups (Mallam and Gadoh 1991). Increasingly, ethnic-based political demands in Southern Kaduna are linked with the issue of chiefdoms, but in different conditions from decades ago, as ethno-religious agitations have in part become keenly calculated tools in the hands of different sections of bargaining ruling classes. Today's reality is that dominant factions in national politics use moribund institutions and titles to enrich themselves in a multi-ethnic state, where both ethno-religious chauvinism in politics and authoritarianism in governance are on the ascendancy (Ibrahim 1995b).

The State, Degenerate Governance, Growing Constraints on People's Rights, and the Escalation of Ethnic Conflicts

From the 1980s, ethnic conflicts have intensified in Southern Kaduna and throughout Nigeria in general. At the national level several groups have used ethnicity, statism, regionalism and religion, as instruments either to include or exclude others from power and access to resources. These weapons have now taken centre stage in the process of political mobilization as well as marginalization (Ibrahim 1977). In Southern

7. In October 1995, this author attended a seminar where a former Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, in the previous civilian government of Kaduna State, openly cried-out seriously that he wants a chiefdom to be created in the area he hails from so that his chief can go to Aso Rock (the Nigerian Presidency at Abuja) to lobby for him to realize his dream to become a federal minister!

Kaduna, in recent times, ethnic conflicts have assumed the additional dimension of a Muslim versus Christian dichotomy. The Kafanchan crisis of 1987 was a major departure from previous conflicts, which were essentially inter-communal in nature. For the first time, a conflict arose from religion, and spread to polarize mainly Christians and Muslims in Nigeria — other religions do not matter. It was not just a matter of lives being lost, places of worship burnt, and a reign of insecurity over who lived where and who was a neighbour to whom, but the Nigerian press, with many distortions and partisan reports, inflamed the conflict in a most polarised fashion over the Muslim and Christian divide (Muazzam and Ibrahim 1997).

The 1980s saw a rise in religious fundamentalism, with an influx of foreign influence, ideological and material, on Muslim and Christian sects. The Nigerian state also politicized religion. The escalation of this division can also be connected to the patronage of sectarian ethnic and religious organizations, and the extension of largesse to their leaders, by the regimes of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and later Sani Abacha, which have gone round in circles looking for legitimacy, even at the expense of undermining national unity (Ibrahim 1997). The regimes have also made ethno-religious bases relevant in the recruitment of their agents. The Babangida years (1985-1993) witnessed the growing of ethno-religious consciousness, tensions, and conflicts. The ethnic groups claiming to be indigenous in their areas have been experiencing a tremendous rise of their ruling class elements in the military, public and private sectors, and so on. At a psychological level they have a particular memory of the past, based on revenge. More important, however, they now compete in the political and economic domains with their Hausa rivals (Ibrahim 1977). The main issues involved in the battle are the land question, political power and who provides the leadership in governance, the control of plus access to and distribution of resources, citizenship, identity, justice, and democracy.

Inter-ethnic conflicts have been heightened by the economic crisis which started in Nigeria in 1982, and worsened with the introduction of the SAP from 1986. This reduced people's wealth, and they tended to perceive their enemies as those who belong to other ethnic or religious groups. Inside the same group, the sect, district, class, or gender could be the yardstick. As the various tiers of governments increasingly relinquish responsibilities towards the citizenry, class- and ethnic-based political oppression and economic deprivation are galloping. Militarism is making governance more repressive and authoritarian. The military dictators have been reducing guarantees of minimum rights and the protection of the citizenry. The collapse of state institutions and the onslaught on civil society — such as labour, students' movements, and professional bodies — have made many in society fall back on ethnic associations and religious organizations. People now also tend to rely on these new found terrains to struggle for reforms 'or to demand autonomy and self-determination.'

The working people in Southern Kaduna have been enmeshed in serious difficulties. The SAP has been characterized by a collapse of the school system, public health system, and so on. Rural poverty is growing and the majority of the people face massive destitution. School and hospital fees and those in other spheres have increased. Peasants are paying more for agricultural inputs, while the prices of consumer goods and services have been escalating with the skyrocketing inflation. Retrenchment of workers is part of daily reality, and many of them have been thrown back into rural communities. School leavers and even university graduates have been swelling the number of the rural poor as unemployment grows. Even the majority of the elite have been pauperised. There has also been a massive retrenchment by the military, which had been a major employer in the zone. In an area with a shortage of land suitable for farming, the pumping of ex-soldiers back into the peasantry, without any concrete resettlement scheme, has made them restive. This is linked with the growing ethnic and communal conflicts

(Mahmood 1992). These are now fought in typical military style. Some of the retired military officers, partly in search of new relevance, join ethnic and religious groupings and become spokespersons in all kinds of agitations (National Impression 1992:22). It is argued by some analysts that the military have somehow been responsible for triggering conflicts and insecurity so as to perpetuate themselves in power (Usman 1987).

The roots of the present phase of the ethno-religious conflicts can be traced to January 1986 when the military government took the controversial decision for Nigeria to join the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The Jama'atil Nasril Islam (JNI) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) started vicious and emotional campaigns on the country's membership of the OIC. They paraded themselves as representatives of Nigerian Muslims and Christians respectively. CAN called on Christians to rise and resist what it tagged as the march of Nigeria towards Islamisation. Powerful Muslim leaders sponsored demonstrations in favour of joining the OIC and embarked on a huge propaganda campaign against the domination and marginalization of what they called the Muslim majority in Nigeria by a Christian minority. Both sides called on their faithful to rise in defence of their religious persuasions (*Newswatch* 1986:12-17). The regime, headed by both Christian and Muslim dictators, watched as religious hostility and hatred deepened in civil society. Partisan sections of the media waged a press war, and the chauvinistic elite were at each other's throats in a conflict which engulfed ordinary people.

The new malady of ethno-religious hysterics precipitated a crisis. On 6 March 1987, there was a Muslim-Christian clash among students at Kafanchan, the biggest town in Southern Kaduna, over what were considered blasphemous remarks about Islam by a Christian preacher. This exploded into a full inter-ethnic confrontation between the Hausa community and the other local ethnic groups. People were killed,

mosques were burnt, and a lot of property was destroyed. The crisis took a serious religious dimension and spread to all the other major towns in Kaduna state. In the process hundreds of people were killed, many churches were set ablaze, hotels were destroyed, and there was massive destruction of property. The conflict was the most spontaneous inter-ethnic religious carnage in the history of the state. As Kukah (1994:453) concludes, it is the 'poor people (who) remain the victims in the macabre dance as they are the ones that get killed; it is their relations that are destroyed'.

In 1992 rivalry between Hausa and Atyab, based on economic and political interests, and specifically a tussle over the location of a market, exploded in Zangon-Katab. Old grievances were unearthed and led to a bloody ethnic conflict. In the process many lives were lost and much property destroyed. Trouble extended to other parts of Kaduna State. It went the same way as the Kafanchan crisis. What started as an inter-ethnic conflict widened into a national crisis with a religious dimension. As the Cudjoe Report of Inquiry (*Citizen* 1992:15) noted, there was a 'lack of decisive and prompt action by the government organs in the state' to check the situation. While investigations were still going on, a bigger clash broke out in May 1992, which resulted in a massacre of the Hausa. Hundreds of human lives were lost and a state of anarchy engulfed the entire state. The state finally adopted a repressive solution, in a situation where it was difficult to determine guilt.

Part of the problem is that the military in power are a major obstacle to the emergence of a democratic society (Olukoshi and Agbu 1995). Unofficially the diffusion of power, based on a federal system of government which still exists in theory, has been eroded. The military have continuously undermined the emergence of a democratic culture. State institutions of governance, their organs and official positions are used for repression and the accumulation of wealth. In the new era, governance has become a question of power without responsibility.

Owing to the fact that the roots of ethnic conflicts are not being tackled, cosmetic solutions, such as the creation of more local government councils and chiefdoms, lead to the emergence of new minorities and more agitations. Even within the same ethnic group there are class contradictions, and their primordial political game deepens conflicts along clan lines. The absence of a democratic order has tended to encourage people to compete among themselves for access to the state and for influence in policies. As A. Olukoshi (1995:162) stresses, in the course of this, ethnicity becomes a vital tool to be utilized (both ideologically and otherwise) in the achievement of objectives.

For decades, the politics of the non-Hausa elites have been increasingly organised on an ethno-religious basis. With time, peasants and other commoner strata are no longer mere victims of the virus of ethnicity. Because of indoctrination and the promotion of wrong notions of history, in which the other group is always blamed for all one's problems, the psyche and consciousness of the ordinary people develops increasingly along ethnic lines, with an almost pathological hatred of those perceived as their oppressors (Kazah-Toure 1995). The new struggle, waged under the banner of self-determination, involves a clamour for the creation of the same feudal institutions through which many of the communities in Southern Kaduna were oppressed for decades. With the creation of chiefdoms for some of the communities in 1995, and in a situation of a nominal power shift away from the Hausa, the new question is which of the so-called indigenous ethnic groups is dominating the other. Within the same ethnic group, the battle is over local power and resources. Clans are revived to support the fight. The non-Hausa groups are now turning against themselves in the struggle for appointments, control of local councils and over ownership of land. In a repressive and undemocratic atmosphere, the psychology of fear of domination — real and imaginary — is great. Hatred is induced which could cause more conflicts. Government officials and politicians create

constituencies for their support through ethno-religious propaganda (Bangura 1995:23).

There is a growing wave of migration into the Southern Kaduna zone. Land ownership and control is becoming an ever more delicate issue, the more so because there are no other channels of employment. This is potentially another source of ethnic conflicts. Meanwhile, in spite of the influx of population, there is no strong legal recognition of citizenship based on residency. Groups such as the Fulani, who have been in the area for hundreds of years, are seen as settlers because they do not control land. There are also ecological and environmental problems over grazing land and sources of water, which have been led to clashes between the pastoral and nomadic Fulani and the more sedentary groups who are mainly engaged in farming. All this takes place in a context where political constituencies are solely based on geography, with no provision for proportional representation. This prevents many citizens from making political headway in a hostile environment.

Conclusion

This analysis has investigated the complexity of ethnic conflicts and governance, at different phases of the historical process, and the ways in which the socio-economic and political systems generate ethnic conflicts. At the level of governance, the state plays a crucial role in relations between ethnic groups. At a different level, there is an interesting link between the development of classes and the ethnic category.

In pre-colonial times, the conflict in the area of study was mainly between communal formations and the feudal emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate, and concerned slave raids. The small communal polities strongly resisted these and maintained some kind of sovereignty, with democratic practices in governance which reduced internal conflicts.

With the imposition of British colonialism, there was a transformation in ethnic relations. Alien and undemocratic governance, feudal institutions, and practices were superimposed on ethnic groups to which all these were anathema. Colonial policies — and indeed British pragmatism — with a racist ideology, absorbed the dominant old ruling circles of the Hausa-Fulani emirates into the system, while excluding the other ethnic groups in the zone. Furthermore, there was enforced physical and social segregation over settlements, schools, control of markets, and between the so-called migrants and the so-called indigenous peoples. Both principal and lesser Native Authority employers were, up to the 1940s, of different socio-cultural background from those they lorded it over. Conflict, besides being ethnic, also had a religious dimension, between Muslims, on the one hand, and the followers of traditional African religion(s) on the other. Precisely because of the ethnic character of the socio-economic and political domination, peasant revolts and nationalist efforts also mainly took on an ethnic character.

Post-colonial reforms were superficial, and there was no deep attempt to mediate conflicts in inter-ethnic relations. The social order of the former colonial state, undemocratic governance and its institutions, repressive methods, and even the ideology of the old regime were largely retained. Chauvinistic practices, structural imbalances, rivalries and clashes between different factions of the ruling circles further divided the people and trapped them in ethnic tensions. In recent times more than ever before, the state occupies the centre of the stage in giving impetus to the divisions and complex conflicts which manifest themselves in ethnic forms. Military regimes, with their variant of dictatorship in governance, coupled with unpopular and anti-people policies, have aggravated the situation. The state continues to abandon its responsibilities, and the citizens are left to their own sectarian devices. The way people perceive their history,

confront their realities, become educated or indoctrinated affects their reactions, and this further shapes the process.

The multi-ethnic nature of the Southern Kaduna zone is not the cause of the numerous and deep ethnic conflicts. Some of the problems are located in the conditions of existence and the absence of rights faced by the ethnic communities and the people. Society has not evolved democratic ideals and practices in governance and in civil society. The opportunity for people to participate in running their own affairs and to have a say in controlling their resources is lacking. Only equity, equality, and a democratic order could provide a bed-rock of unity and peaceful co-existence which could soften ethnic conflicts.

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