Placing Conflict

Religion and Politics in Kaduna State, Nigeria
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List of articles


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Abbreviations

ACF – Arewa Consultative Forum
CAN – Christian Association of Nigeria
ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States
FOMWAN – Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Nigeria
HRW – Human Rights Watch
JNI – Jama’atu Nasril Islam
LGA – Local Government Area
MSS – Muslim Students’ Society
NEPU – Northern Elements Progressive Union
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
NPC – Northern People’s Congress
PDP – Peoples Democratic Party
SCSN – Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria
SOKAPU – Southern Kaduna People’s Union
UMBC – United Middle Belt Congress
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Stockholm, September 2015
Map of Federal Republic of Nigeria
Map of Kaduna State Local Government Areas
1. Introduction: problem and purpose

African states have since independence faced the challenge of forming a national identity in states whose boundaries, on one hand, divide communities and, on the other, contain multiple ethnic groups. While there have been few border disputes in Africa since independence, internal conflicts have been intense, and conflicts over resources and political authority have become entangled in disputes over identity and citizenship.

In many African countries, decentralisation is promoted to counter problems of over-centralisation and exclusion. This is also the case in Nigeria, where different forms of decentralisation are deployed to accommodate ethnic and religious diversity, primarily through federalism and the local government structure. The federal structure of the Nigerian state has helped contain and moderate ethno-regional demands on the federal government through various forms of inter-elite cooperation. These include a proliferation of federal states and local governments and the “federal character” principle, which requires that all parts of the country are represented in key institutions.

However, decentralisation creates other problems, notably local conflicts about resources, identities and demarcations. Such conflicts are intense in many countries, but perhaps especially in Nigeria. The stakes in local politics are comparatively high because of federalism, and the federal character principle tends to politicise territory and identity. Nigerian society has also become increasingly polarised along religious and ethnic lines, not least in the central, religiously diverse, part of the country. Crises have erupted when people in various places have been set against one another.¹ In Kaduna State, in north-central Nigeria, there have been outbreaks of violence between

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¹ This is in contrast to more organised violence, such as that of the Boko Haram insurgency. Boko Haram attacks are not easily described as communal ethnic or religious violence, although they are committed by a militant Islamist group. Boko Haram aims to challenge the state through indiscriminate attacks on Muslims and Christians alike.
Hausa-Fulani Muslims and Christian ethnic groups since the 1980s. The conflict did not diminish following the decentralisation that came with the shift from military to civilian rule in 1999. On the contrary, expanded local political space seemed to further fuel conflict. This situation cries out for an analysis of the politics of identity and territory.

The aim of this thesis is to explain how it is that while decentralisation may contribute to national stability, it may simultaneously generate local conflict. In this endeavour, the analysis adopts the concept of geographical scale, understood as a structuring principle for how places are constituted and disputed, in order to examine different actor-strategic perceptions of the conflict. Earlier studies of identity conflict have analysed state strategies and instrumentalism (e.g., Nnoli 1998; Berman, Eyoh and Kymlicka 2004a; Dorman, Hammett and Nugent 2007), but not the links between state processes and actors’ views of the conflicts. What does such links or disconnections mean for conflict dynamics? That is the problem this thesis addresses. It investigates different actors’ conceptions of how specific identities should relate to the spatial organisation of the state. There is contestation over who should have privileged rights to be associated with a specific territory. The first question is accordingly: how do actors make use of “scalar politics” to conform to or challenge boundaries set by the state? The way in which the hierarchical division of territory and social space as, for instance, local, regional and national scales is framed has far-reaching consequences in terms of the inclusion or exclusion of particular actors and ideas. This leads us to the second question: how do actors invoke and shape different identities to justify their demands? While territorial belonging is articulated in ethnic terms, religion represents an additional aspect. When religion increasingly becomes the basis for self-identification, other scales come into play. World religions provide links to transnational proceedings and connections for actors in specific places, but may also link people with no previous territorial connections through common ideas and agendas.

The conflict in Kaduna State has been given violent expression in relation to specific issues and events. Examples include the proposed introduction of an Islamic sharia penal code in 2000 and the presidential election of 2011. Christian ethnic groups see themselves as excluded from politics and the economy. They perceive this exclusion as resulting in the lack of develop-
ment in the southern part of the state, where they constitute a majority. Muslim groups, on the other hand, assert that this underdevelopment of Christian-dominated areas should be blamed on the leaders of those areas (Abdu 2010:1). The conflict revolves around politics and state power, and groups are mobilised on the basis of ethnicity and religion. In Nigeria, political demands are often legitimated on the grounds that specific groups of people should have privileged rights to control certain areas of territory. The federal character principle and recurrent restructurings of the federation tend to reinforce the ties between identity to territory, since certain groups of citizens, associated with specific locations, are to represent and to be given the opportunity to govern specific territories. However, it is precisely this, the ways in which geographical areas and identities should relate to the spatial organisation of the state, that is a key part of the Kaduna conflict.

Accordingly, it is essential to analyse the ways in which influential actors in Kaduna frame the conflict by using references to local, regional and national dimensions of scale in order to understand how ethnicity and religion are politicised. I apply the theoretical concept of geographical scale as an issue to be studied rather than accepted as given. Geographical scale is treated as a structuring principle as well as a structured field. What is considered, for example, as “local” is dependent on perspective and circumstance and is likely to differ among actors. The localisation of politics, which decentralisation implies, may accordingly trigger disagreements over what should constitute the local unit and the local population. This appears to be the case for the conflict in Kaduna. Different views on the scope and content of what “Kaduna” is and should be are a critical component of the conflict.

The political demands and statements the contending parties in Kaduna articulate have scalar aspects that are central to how the conflict evolves. This may involve how groups are associated with a specific area – for example, who is conceived as being “local.” It may also involve what types of political authorities are invoked and how the scope of these authorities is perceived. An example of this phenomenon is whether neo-customary institutions, one bone of contention in Kaduna State, are regarded as being connected to local or to regional scales. These institutions may, however, not follow the boundaries of federal states and local governments.
In the research on ethnic conflict, the state is recognised as central in explaining why ethnic diversity sometimes translates into ethnically defined conflict. State actions, however, interact with constitutive meanings of ethnicity (Kanbur, Rajaram and Varshney 2011:151). Just as with the state, ideas and frames of understanding from which ethnic cognition arises bring different scales into play. Studies of ethnicity in Nigeria have privileged the role of the state and elites in ethnic mobilisation, while popular agency has been given less attention (Ukiwo 2005:20). Religion figures primarily in analyses as a tool for political actors to gain relevance (e.g, Ibrahim 1991; Usman 1987). In relation to the conflict in Kaduna, two perspectives are here suggested to complement more state-centred studies. One is analysis of how the state connects with various ways of framing and understanding ethnic and religious identities. The other is to recognise that not only the state is constituted across different scales, but so too are processes associated with ethnicity and religion. The focus on the state needs to be linked to an analysis of the ways in which other actors regard ethnic and religious relations as part of a conflict, and how these conceptions are linked to state politics. Actors invoke different scales in ways that conform to the aims and objectives that groups strive for. Scales are accordingly not neutral “levels”: they are constituted as part of social and political projects (Delaney and Leitner 1997). Narratives of scale shape how conflicts are defined and hence what types of solutions are seen as possible. In this way, narratives of scale are part of how ethnicity and religion are politicised in relation to the state.

In this study, the conflict in Kaduna State is analysed as a case of decentralisation of political authority in a diverse setting in terms of politicised ethnicity and religion. It examines how actors make use of scalar politics to uphold or reconstruct the boundaries of the territorial units of the state and of identities. Nigeria is particularly pertinent in this regard, as the political geography of the country is in many ways unsettled. This is reflected in, for example, the many reconfigurations of the federating units: from three in 1954 to 36 plus a federal capital territory today. A study of how actors use scalar resources to challenge or conform to boundaries is crucial to understanding why decentralisation often generates local conflicts over resources, identities and political authority.
Apart from this introductory essay, the thesis consists of three articles. Articles I and II present an analysis of how influential actors in Kaduna frame the scalar dimensions of the conflict. The question addressed is: how are different social and political projects articulated in relation to hierarchically structured state authorities and state boundaries? In the two articles, I analyse how Christian and Muslim actors respectively frame the tension between the boundaries of ethnic and religious identification and state institutions. Article I examines this through the demands made by Christian ethnic groups to divide Kaduna State into two. Article II analyses how Muslim actors give a regional perspective two separate meanings: on one hand, as a political community and, on the other, as a religious community. Article III addresses how the spatial organisation of the state affects the ways in which political issues create ethnic and religious tensions in specific places. The question is investigated through the so-called sharia crisis in Kaduna, and the article considers the way in which this issue was introduced in Zamfara State, the national political dimensions of the issue, and how it subsequently resulted in violent confrontations in Kaduna. While federalism and decentralisation are assumed to meet demands of self-determination, these articles combined demonstrate a discrepancy between the spatial organisation of the state and the ways in which actors frame their spaces of engagement, thereby making the scalar construction of political authority part of the conflict.

The rest of this introductory essay is structured as follows. Following this introduction, I place the study in theoretical and empirical context and present the theoretical underpinnings on which the analysis is based. I elaborate on how to conceptualise ethnic and religious conflict; how to understand the relationship between the state, decentralisation and conflict; and how a relational understanding of scale can yield new perspectives on these issues. The second section describes the context of ethnic and religious relations in Nigeria and in Kaduna State. This is followed by a third section on previous research on conflicts in Nigeria and in Kaduna. Here I particularly consider research into federalism and ethnic conflict in the Nigerian context. Research into the conflict in Kaduna is presented along with a chronological account of the major outbreaks of violence in the state from the mid-1980s to 2011. In the fourth section, I discuss methodological issues, including methods of data collection, the basis for the selection of sources, and what type of genn
eralisation the Kaduna case invites. The next section offers an overview of the articles, including major findings, followed by a concluding section in which the broader implications of the results are discussed.
2. Theoretical and empirical context and analytical framework

Ethnic and religious conflict continues to be one of the major challenges to democratic nation-building in many parts of Africa. States simultaneously divide communities and enclose multiple ethnic groups (Dorman, Hammett and Nugent 2007:5-6; Herbst 2000). Conflicts have been intense, with struggles over identity and citizenship being seen as at the heart of most internal conflicts and civil wars in Africa today (Adejumobi 2001:148; Keller 2014:6). One expression of this challenge is that processes of democratisation and decentralisation in large parts of Africa in the 1990s raised questions of who is eligible to stand as candidate and to vote in a specific area, suggesting that people are defined in relation to different localities (Geschiere and Jackson 2006). Conflicts have been intensified through citizenship manipulation, with descent being taken as the reference for political belonging, and by the divisive tactics of politicians (Herbst 1999). This has contributed to ethnic mobilisation in relation to territorialised belonging, which in numerous countries has triggered tension and often violence (Keller 2014; Geschiere 2009; Bøås and Dunn 2013). These conflicts over who is to control and to benefit from state resources in a specific area illustrate that the continuous process of state-making involves struggles over space and identity (Bøås and Dunn 2013:32). This trend has been further strengthened in the context of globalisation, which involves a transformed role for state regulations and responsibilities, and a simultaneous localisation, of which decentralisation reforms are part. Localisation of politics results in widespread contestation regarding the scope and basis of the communities that are to benefit from democratisation and decentralisation, especially where access to the state and citizenship is unequally institutionalised, both between groups
of people and between territorial areas of the state (Stewart 2008b; Boone 2003).

The reduction of the territorial reach of the central government in many African countries, following the replacement in the 1980s of statist developmentalism by economic deregulation and liberalisation in a context of fiscal crisis and declining state capacity, partly explains the resurgence of regional conflict and the rise in ethnic mobilisation (Boone 2007). Crawford Young (2007:252) argues that the national integration project largely ended with the processes of democratisation in the 1990s, in that ethnic identities have since been recognised rather than suppressed. At the same time, ethnicity and religion are frequently proscribed as a basis for political organisation in formal political competitions, as they are assumed to generate identity-based conflicts. While democratisation has resulted in ethnicity being recognised in the public sphere, there are still limitations connected to the idea that ethnic expressions should be confined to the private sphere (Young 2007). These related processes of localising politics and recognising ethnic identities are part of a new form of spatial and territorial politics, which includes attempts to consolidate power within subnational units and reorder relations among them, as well as to enforce political control of community formations. Subnational variations of how the state is institutionalised are consequently both more apparent and more contested (Boone 2003, 2007), and the unequal institutionalisation of the state simultaneously provides space for institutions and organisations based on ethnicity and religion to compete for public authority. This characteristic illustrates how political authority is under continual negotiation as part of state-building in many African states (Hagmann and Péclard 2010; Lund 2006). Many African states are accordingly not able to claim a monopoly of territorial control, and state armies face competition from, inter alia, urban militias, private armies and private security firms in terms of the right to exercise violence (Mbembe 2003). In the Nigerian case, this is most clearly illustrated by the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-east of the country. In other parts of Nigeria, vigilante groups are effectively the main security agents. These groups simultaneously “spearhead contemporary political contests between the politics of identity and citizenship, and represent divergent aspirations for Nigeria’s future” (Pratten 2008:1), as they often operate as an ethnic or religious platform.
Along with the increase in ethnic politics and conflict in Africa, a coinciding trend is that there has been “a religious effervescence unprecedented since the colonial period” (Marshall 2009:17) and an ensuing revival of religion in the public sphere (Hackett 2005). As with decentralisation and market-oriented political change, this trend is not limited to sub-Saharan Africa but is found throughout the globe, although it plays out in contextually specific ways. Religious organisations have taken on state functions, for example, serving as courts and controlling media, and at the same time state agents make use of religious symbols and narratives to enhance their authority, legitimacy and power (Smith 2012). Following deregulation and liberalisation, religion has generated new forms of social and political identification. For example, liberalisation of media regulations has contributed to a “deterritorialisation” of religion in that place-specific interaction has become less accentuated, which in turn has contributed to the transformation of religious belief and belonging (Hackett 2012). Religious movements in Africa are now often grounded in social and political struggles, rather than revolving around beliefs in transcendental truths beyond political realities (Smith 2012).

At the same time as ethnic and religious identities find new expression in relation to the state in many African countries, Young (2007:262) reminds us that five decades after independence “African nationalisms have evolved well beyond their roots in anti-colonial revolt.” This points to the non-exclusionary relationship between identities. Instead, identities are situational, multilayered and interlinked, as well as being subject to continuous social and political processes – an underlying assumption in this study.

2.1 Identity, conflicts and scale

In the remainder of this section I consider how to theorise scale in relation to ethnicity and religion and the state. I first argue for a notion of ethnicity as constructed in relation to political processes, which results in ethnic boundaries being constantly (re-)constructed. The argument addresses the dualistic tendencies of the African state, which counterposes ethnicity and citizenship,
and points to different but connected types of relations in play. Actors may evoke different scalar frames in relation to ethnic and religious identification and citizenship. It is, furthermore, argued that state policies tie belonging to territorial units. In Nigeria, the practice of “indigeneity” and the so-called federal character principle tend to associate ethnic groups with specific territories, and make spatiality a question of representation for ethnic and religious communities. Thereafter, I discuss the relationship between decentralisation and ethnic conflict, and argue that theories which regard federalism or decentralisation as a way to reduce identity conflict often prioritise a national perspective. However, empirical studies show that decentralisation can instead trigger local conflicts structured around identity-based claims to territory and places. In the last part of this section, the discussion of ethnicity, religion and decentralisation is related to geographical scale as an actor-strategic and relational concept. What is considered as, for example, local or regional is not given, nor is the scope of the meaning of local or regional. Political processes and conceptions of ethnic and religious communities are instead framed with different references to scale by the actors involved. This, it is argued, is central for how actors legitimise or contest decentralised political authority in struggles for state resources and recognition.

2.1.1 Ethnicity and the post-colonial state in Africa

Earlier debates on ethnicity centred on whether or not it should be seen as a primordial factor or a colonial creation (Dorman, Hammett and Nugent 2007:6), but it is now widely accepted that ethnic and other identities are subject to constant transformation (e.g., Berman, Eyoh and Kymlicka 2004a; Scarcelli 2012; Stewart 2008a; Ottaway 1999). Likewise, instrumentalist and constructivist analyses of ethnicity are now accepted as complementary theories rather than as rivals (Scarcelli 2012; Ukiwo 2005; Young 2007). Instrumentalists have stressed how ethnicity is used as a tool in struggles over resources and power, while constructivists have emphasised how ethnicity has evolved and been transformed over time.
The African post-colonial state is central in shaping ethnic relations as it tends to set ethnicity against citizenship. Mahmood Mamdani (1996) famously argued that the African state is bifurcated in that, on one hand, there is the use of “civic” power, associated with civil society and civil rights and claiming to protect rights, and, on the other, there is the use of “customary”, or ethnic, power, associated with community and culture and with the mandate to enforce tradition. Under colonialism, the local state was, according to Mamdani, based on ethnic power, which also came to define the resistance to it. The anti-colonial struggle was directed primarily at the ethnically defined local state (the Native Authority) that enforced the colonial order. In multi-ethnic and multi-religious settings, this has had the effect of reproducing ethnicity and religion as a political divide (Mamdani 1996:16-25). A related argument was made by Peter Ekeh (1975), who argued that colonialism had resulted in two publics in African countries, instead of one as in the Western world. On one hand, there is a “civic” public, associated with the modern state but fundamentally amoral, as it is not rooted in a private realm. On the other, the “primordial” public is associated with ethnic sentiments, ties and associations towards which the individual owes duties and obligations in return for identity and security. Ekeh argues that the amorality and focus on economic value in the civic public leads the individuals operating in that sphere to siphon resources in favour of the primordial public. Consequently, according to Ekeh (1975:108-10), the civic public becomes characterised by “tribalism” and corruption. In this argument, state politics is used for ethnic ends, whereas most other scholars argue that ethnicity and religion are used for political ends to access state revenues (e.g., Usman 1987; Nnoli 1978). In the former case, actors are motivated to support the community as a collective, while in the latter ethnicity and religion are used as a tool for personal advantage. By using religion and ethnicity, political actors appeal to a sphere of symbols, morality and historical reference that are part of people’s everyday life.

Young (2007:250) identifies three dimensions of ethnicity that shape the character it takes in different settings. One is a list of common attributes among people, for example language or social practices. A second dimension is a shared consciousness of belonging to a group. This shared consciousness draws on historical and cultural resources of the past and present
in the attempts to shape the terms of social change (Berman, Eyoh and Kymlicka 2004b:5). The specific symbols and references that are used in individual cases are contingent on a third dimension of ethnicity that Young (2007:250) identifies, namely that ethnicity “requires demarcations: the self acquires meaning through its boundary, the presence of a visible ‘other’.” The demarcations that are stressed and the type of resources that are available are accordingly dependent on the setting and the groups in relation to whom boundaries are drawn.

A similar distinction is sometimes made between internal and external aspects of ethnicity. Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh and Will Kymlicka (2004b:4) characterise the internal dimension as a “moral ethnicity,” a process that involves defining cultural identity, communal membership and leadership. It can be described as a process of “ourselves-ing,” in contrast to “othering” (Lonsdale 2004:76). At the same time as this process fosters trust and solidarity, an essential element is the subordination of individual behaviour to the group’s moral imperatives. Ethnic relations can thus not be defined as egalitarian or harmonious, but rather as “conservative authoritarianism” (Berman, Eyoh and Kymlicka 2004b:4). The external dimension concerns the relations with other ethnic groups or the state and, like Ekeh (1975), Berman, Eyoh and Kymlicka (2004b:5) characterise it as “essentially amoral.” These relations are seen as constructed to maximise power and resources for the “own group,” and result in “political tribalism.” Political competition is accordingly recognised as central to explaining why ethnic diversity sometimes translates into ethnically defined conflict. But ethnic sentiments cannot be mobilised arbitrarily. State processes interact with constitutive meanings of ethnicity (Kanbur, Rajaram and Varshney 2011:151-2), which is an internal aspect of ethnicity. The form the construction of ethnicity takes is consequently relational, and is a process in which political and institutional trajectories are central. In shaping ethnic relations, the state is central both as arena and actor. It is an arena within which parties contend or ally to shape policies and regulations. One example is when sharia became an issue in the Kaduna State House of Assembly. The state is at the same time an actor that shapes social and political processes, for example by the way in which state institutions try to prevent or react to violent conflict. The symbols and references that ethnic mobilisation draws on are to a large ex-
tent determined by the need for demarcation from other groups. In this endeavour, religious differences and resources are sometimes, but not always, part of ethnic cognition.

2.1.2 Ethnicity and religion

The ways in which ethnicity and religion are merged or distinguished are important for how grievances are framed and how collective actions are organised (Ruane and Todd 2011). Religion is often analysed as part of ethnically defined sentiments in studies of ethnic conflict (Scarcelli 2012), but differences in religion do not necessarily result in different ethnicities, as illustrated by the Yoruba in southwestern Nigeria. Frances Stewart (2009) separates ethnic from religious conflicts and tries to single out why conflicts sometimes take an ethnic and sometimes a religious character, or become mixed. She suggests that the identity which becomes salient is determined by the identity used in the allocation of resources, as well as by the demographic situation – the mobilising identity is likely to be that which unites a large and politically effective group (Stewart 2009:45-6). In Kaduna, religion and ethnicity overlap in the sense that the ethnic groups at large are associated with different religions, although there are members within those groups with different religious affiliations. The extent to which the conflict is framed as ethnic or religious may vary according to the actors and issues involved. Differences in religion, according to Barbara Harff and Ted Gurr (2004:31), typically combine with or reinforce other dimensions of ethnic conflicts. However, when conflict takes on religious dimensions, the conflict has certain characteristics that are different from ethnicity, and that have relevance for the articulation of scale. One aspect of this is the global claims of the dominant religions. From the perspective of how people perceive themselves and their connections, both Christianity and Islam place their adherents in a global community of believers and a transnational context is available.

Religion may form part of the common culture that constitutes an ethnie, but ethnicity also requires a territorial and descent-related emphasis. There
may accordingly be tension between the universalistic, trans-territorial and sacred aspects of world religions and the particularistic, bounded character of ethnicity. But there are also cases where ethnicity and religion are mutually reinforcing identities, such as when a group’s myths, values and ideologies are informed by religious ideas. In efforts to go beyond explaining specific outbreaks of violence, Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd (2011:74) argue it is important to understand the form of social divisions, tendencies towards social inclusion or exclusion, co-operation and conflict, and to identify dispositions for action whose actual manifestations depend on political opportunities and incentives. Then not only are the boundaries important but also the content, which is also partially constitutive for the boundaries.

The content is, however, no more predefined in religion than it is in relation to ethnicity. The ways in which religion is part of identification and politics are informed by historical and political context rather than any essential religious characteristic, as is the case with ethnicity. In sum, religion makes global claims and connections available for identification, but the way in which religion helps shape boundaries needs to be analysed in the same way as ethnicity. There is, accordingly, a need to investigate how political incentives and opportunities contribute to the shaping of both religion and ethnicity as actually manifested and the type of resources these incentives and opportunities provide actors.

2.1.3 Ethno-religious politics

Ethnicity is imagined in the same way as a nation, in the sense that it is subject to constant transformation without a primordial basis (Dorman, Hammett and Nugent 2007:6). There is, however, a difference in relation to the types of state processes involved. While a national consciousness is actively and openly promoted by the state to foster national unity, ethnicity is more often activated by policies and politics with other objectives. In multi-ethnic
societies, political architecture always influences ethnic relations in intended and unintended ways, as is evident in the Nigerian context. Federalism, state-creation and the federal character principle are examples that address the national question but at the same time have consequences for the shaping of ethnicity.

Ethnic and religious mobilisation in politics is explained by Ukoha Ukiwo (2005) in terms inequalities between groups. It is, however, not deprivation or disadvantage as such that engenders identity-based action. Instead, it is the prospect of advancement that is crucial. While inequalities associated with the Nigerian federal state have nationally shaped both inter-ethnic animosity as well as efforts to accommodate ethnic and religious groups, most of the conflicts have, according to Ukiwo (2005:17), arisen out of perceptions of local inequalities. Generally, ethnic and religious grievances are identified as stemming from the hierarchical incorporation of different groups within the state system and the subsequent inequalities in terms of access to resources. Since the 1990s, multiparty politics have reshaped the struggles among elites, who seek to defend or challenge the distribution of state resources and power. An increase in ethnic politics and conflict during processes of democratisation is seen as an effect of the enlarged space for articulating elite and communal cleavages, which creates parties with core ethnic constituencies and a regionalisation of political competition (Berman, Eyoh and Kymlicka 2004b:9). Ethnic and religious politics in Nigeria are, however, seldom linked to parties with ethnic constituencies, although parties tend to have regional strongholds. Struggles on ethnic, regional and religious bases also play out within parties. The prospects for correcting perceived inequalities and grievances are, however, more favourable in a democratic setting as politics, at least theoretically, are assumed to respond to popular appeals and aspirations. When the latter are based on ethnic and religious sentiments, questions about citizenship and belonging are raised.
2.1.4 Decentralisation, federalism and ethnic conflict

Along with democratisation, decentralisation has since the 1990s been prevalent across sub-Saharan Africa, as in the rest of the world. Together with federalism, it has been promoted as a way to, among other things, reduce ethnic conflict. The arguments about the impact of political decentralisation on ethnic conflict are similar to those relating to federalism (Brown 2008:389). Ethnic conflict is reduced and political stability is improved when, it is argued, political participation is encouraged and accountability strengthened and policies can be formulated differently according to the demographic particularities of a state (Treisman 2007:238). The assumption is that the preferences of a heterogeneous population can be better met, and that conflicts can be reduced when demands for limited autonomy are satisfied. Some risks for federalism as a means to manage ethnic conflict are, however, identified: granting some autonomy may cement group identities and provide resources and structures for secession (e.g., Ghai 2000:501; Snyder 2000:327). Generally, it is concerns about national stability that are reflected in the debate on federalism and ethnic conflict (see e.g., Erk and Anderson 2009; Horowitz 1985). Accordingly, intensification of conflicts is expected when power is decentralised to groups “whose loyalty to the central government is not guaranteed” (Crawford and Hartmann 2008:23). Another frequently highlighted danger is that regional inequalities may increase and thus also conflicts between regions.

Empirical studies on decentralisation and conflict have shown that decentralisation can reduce national competition, but also that it encourages local expressions of conflict (Brown 2008:390) and ethnic mobilisation (Ukiwo 2005:19). In Uganda, decentralisation has increased struggles over district leadership positions but also triggered local conflicts by altering relations between ethnic groups and between the central government and sub-national regions (Green 2008; Sjögren 2015). In Indonesia, too, decentralisation has been followed by heightened local tensions arising from competition over sub-national positions as well as by increased ethno-religious segregation (Diprose 2008). While increased contestation for local leadership counteracts the idea of the local as homogeneous, one of the assumptions behind the
wave of decentralisation reforms (Mohan and Stokke 2000:264), it can also be regarded as being consistent with the goal of reducing competition around the central state. In many places, however, a major aspect of the competition has been increased pressure for further administrative and political reconstruction (Brown 2008:390-1).

Decentralisation may, in other words, help prevent large-scale national conflict that threatens the state itself, but simultaneously intensify local contestation. In the debate on federalism, it is often assumed that ethnic groups are territorially concentrated and that, by implication, their members share interests. Ethnic groups may, however, be more or less territorially concentrated (Coakley 2003) and, in Nigeria, as in many other federations, subnational borders divide ethnic groups in order to weaken ethnic identities and instead foster alternative ones associated with the federating units (Faguet 2014, Crawford and Hartmann 2008). Even so, in Nigeria ethnic and religious arithmetic has been decisive in determining which requests for federal units have been granted.

### 2.1.4.1 Autochthony and being indigenous

Many of the conflicts triggered by recent decentralisation reforms are connected to the question of “who can claim to ‘really’ belong to the ‘community’ that is supposed to profit from a new-style development project” (Geschiere and Jackson 2006:4) or who can stand as candidate in an election. This indicates that it is a community that is seen as the “owner” of a certain place. This ownership is often based on claims of being the “first” community to have settled and thus to be “rooted in the soil.” This concept is commonly referred to as autochthony, but in Nigeria is referred to as indigeneity. The implication is that some citizens claim to have privileged rights in certain places, including how these places are to be governed and who has the right to stipulate the conditions for other people residing there.

Peter Geschiere and Stephen Jackson (2006) argue that autochthony, and by implication indigeneity, is a term of relative emptiness, since it is based only on the claim of settling in a place before others. It is through a connection to ethnicity, however, that indigeneity gets its meaning and works as an instrument of inclusion and exclusion. At the same time, Geschiere and
Jackson argue, the lack of substance makes indigeneity an inherently unstable category: “someone can always claim to ‘belong’ even more than you do” (2006:6). So while it seems to promise security, in practice indigeneity rather exacerbates insecurity. Being an “empty” concept, indigeneity and its association with ethnicity makes it susceptible to political use. Morten Bøås and Kevin Dunn (2013) argue that the rise in popularity of autochthony/indigeneity across the African continent is due to mobilisation by regional big men who function as central nodes for vertical distribution of resources in a neo-patrimonial context (Utas 2012). But they also recognise that this political usage would not be possible if it did not enjoy popular approval. This underlines the reciprocal process evident in the construction of ethnicity. The indigeneity issue also illustrates that “belonging is always relative, and being there ‘first’ is virtually impossible to prove” (Bøås and Dunn 2013:28). Additionally, belonging in this narrative is tied to territory. How to define “here” is consequently one of the issues at stake. Another issue is what “belonging” really means in terms of control and political power over a territory. All of these considerations merge in the struggles over how space and identity are defined in relation to political authority. This practice of categorising fellow citizens in attempts to access not only resources but also state power creates winners and losers (Bøås and Dunn 2013:33). The process of authochtony is argued by John Lonsdale (2008 cited in Bøås and Dunn 2013) to be an effect of uncertainties associated with the specific local forms globalisation takes. Decentralisation has in this way increased conflicts around identity-based claims to territory and places and triggered demographic changes (Diprose and Ukiwo 2008; Geschiere and Jackson 2006). It is in the context of these processes that it is important to analyse the ways in which geographical scale is framed by actors in order to understand how ethnicity and religion are politicised.

2.1.5 Geographical scale

Decentralisation and federalism are intended to separate different levels of government according to scalar demarcations, for instance, local, regional
and national. Geographical scale is in this case tied to territory and a scalar division of the state and political authority with more or less given boundaries – even if contested. Scale is, however, also a structuring principle for how places are constituted, which implies that different locales (rather than levels) are ordered in relation to other locales (Herod 2011:40-1; Jessop, Brenner and Jones 2008). Which the locale is and how the boundaries are drawn is not a given, but is part of the processes by which scale is constructed. Scalar demarcations can in this way refer to categories not recognised by state organisations, but to other processes. Herein lies a potential conflict: ethnic and religious mobilisation may involve claims to authority that do not conform to the spatial organisation of the state.

The presence of a particular state organisation does not mean, of course, that it is effective in terms of authority. Neil Brenner (1998:478) argues that

the capacity of geographical scales to circumscribe and hierarchize social relations within relatively fixed and provisionally stabilized territorial configurations is central to their role as sources of power and control over social space, and thus as stakes of sociopolitical struggle.

Geographical scales are constructed to aid specific social and political projects, and struggles between different projects may therefore also involve a struggle over scale. In relation to decentralisation, this means that it is not sub-national units in themselves that gain autonomy. Instead, it is social and political projects that are strengthened. The character that decentralisation takes depends on what type of forces are to be strengthened or weakened. The wave of decentralisation reforms in the 1990s was, for example, to a large extent informed by a notion that the central state was unable to generate development. Localising politics was seen to be in line with wider market-oriented reforms. But as Mamdani (1996) convincingly demonstrates in analysing colonial policies, decentralisation can also be used as a means to advance central control. Christian Lund (2006:694) asserts that

by imagining the primacy of certain ‘levels’ over others we overlook the central question of how this primacy is established in a
social and political process. Many institutions of public authority frame their cause and *raison d’être* in terms of space and locale.

Public institutions may, however, not be the only type of authority to lay claim to a certain space or locale. The actual exercise of public authority and modes of governance in local politics often include various other actors, such as neo-customary institutions, vigilante groups, religious organisations etc., which assert their legitimacy through certain notions of community that may be articulated in a way that is at odds with the scalar arrangements of the state. People are often mobilised on an ethnic and religious basis, which means that the boundaries for alternative institutions to those of the state may single out specific groups of people. In this process, the span of an imagined community (Anderson 1991) differs depending on setting. This also puts communities in different positions in relation to decentralised state institutions. While some communities are connected to powerful institutions and other resources associated with various scales, others have more limited access to similar resources, but may nevertheless have different strategies to connect with wider processes.

It is thus not possible to equate local politics with local levels of the state, and national politics with central levels of the state (Cox 1998:3). State agencies have at their disposal a varying ability to exercise territorial power. Actions and relations crucial to local politics are not confined to the administrative territorial unit in question. What is considered to be local is the product of diverse spatial practices. This is not to say that the institutional organisation of the state does not have implications for the ability of different actors to pursue their political projects. It would, however, be a mistake to conclude that the actual spatial forms of governance correspond with the boundaries of a particular spatial representation (Allen and Cochrane 2007:1167). Actors with different scalar significance are engaged in a complex set of social and political practices that define a certain space at a particular point in time. This means that the conflict in Kaduna is in different ways shaped by events and processes beyond the control of actors in the state. The ongoing Boko Haram insurgency is an example of how a different agenda, developed in a northeastern perspective and directed against federal agencies and other regional governments, helps shape the conflict in Kadu-
Attacks carried out in Kaduna, directed against the military, individual persons and churches, have triggered violent reactions against Muslims in Kaduna.

It is thus not the case that national actors “come in from above.” National, regional and local actors all define a particular space through their practices. If we take the sharia issue that is analysed in Article III as an example, it was not only in Kaduna that the issue raised tensions, but in several places in Nigeria and beyond. It has been argued by Johannes Harnischfeger (2008:244) that to resolve the conflicts associated with the sharia initiative, “a central solution is not feasible because there is not just one national Sharia conflict, but dozens of local conflicts, each of which involves different actors.” However, he also states that “Christians and Muslims will reach at best tenuous local compromises that are [based] … on changing power relationships.” He poses an either/or situation where actors are defined in relation to specific scales. The approach argued for here would instead emphasise that these “dozens of local conflicts” also have national dimensions, which demand a solution that goes beyond “tenuous local compromises.” Actors do not “belong” to certain scales, but issues are framed within different scalar dimensions by actors. Framing the sharia as local, national or global has different implications for how the issue is tackled by the state and other actors.

Explanations of local conflicts need accordingly to acknowledge that local relations are intertwined with national and international relations. Analysing how scales are framed as a political strategy highlights how actors focus on particular geographical scales not only to define a problem in specific ways, but also to anticipate certain kinds of solutions and actions, while foreclosing others (Mansfield and Haas 2006; Delaney and Leitner 1997; Agnew 1997). Regarding the local and the national in terms of levels implies an ontological conception of scale, but conceiving of scale as relational is also to recognise it as an epistemological concept (Marston 2000). This means we need to analyse how actors consider scalar boundaries and relations as these are not a priori given. Scalar relations are accordingly not given when analysing ethnicity and religion, as both ethnic and religious identification are recognised as being subject to a constant process of transformation. The framing of scalar relations in different ways is part of the
construction of ethnicity and vice versa: ethno-religious relations and mobilisation may contribute to the ways in which scales are framed by actors. Likewise, the scalar organisation of the state is at stake in sociopolitical struggles. This relates to how territorial demarcations are institutionalised and associated with ethnic or other identities, and how different actors are placed in more or less advantageous positions in relation to the state and to each other.

Geographical scale emerges in the fusion of ideologies and practices, which means that the analytical focus is directed to social actors’ conceptions of space and power for how to achieve or resist change (Delaney and Leitner 1997). For example, instead of presuming that sharia conflicts are local, we can analyse how different scales are invoked in conflicts by different actors. Some try to structure conflicts as local and others as national, and the representation that prevails has implications for the kinds of actions and solutions that will follow. Scale can thus also be regarded as dimensions of events, processes and practices (Mansfield 2005). This approach draws attention to the ways in which different scales are (re)produced and given significance at any particular time and/or place, at the same time as it captures the intrinsically relational character of scale: individual scales are created through interaction and exist only in relation to one another. What features constitute local and regional scales are accordingly contingent on which aspects and relations are accentuated.

To sum up, in studying ethnic and religious conflict in the context of a decentralised state, the interaction between state institutions and the constitutive meanings of ethnicity in particular spaces includes processes related to different scales. The framing of scale is a tool for positioning a certain perspective as the proper one. Actors frame scales in different ways for defining problems and articulating demands. The ways in which the scales are framed may contrast with the spatial organisation of the state and thus challenge the possibility for decentralised state institutions to regulate relations in the confined territory associated with specific institutional structures. Political struggles between groups involve defining grievances and demands in relation to scale, not least in Nigeria, where spatial politics are prevalent in managing inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations.
3. Ethnicity and religion in Nigeria and Kaduna State

This section provides an overview of how politics, ethnicity and religion have historically become integrated through processes connected to the colonial and post-colonial state in Nigeria. It describes how the Nigerian federation has evolved in an attempt to accommodate different identities within the nation. Finally, the section places Kaduna in a national perspective and describes the ethnic and religious structure of the state.

Two divisions in Nigerian politics commonly referred to are between a Muslim north and a Christian south, and between three major ethnic groups associated with different parts of the country: Hausa-Fulani in the north, Yoruba in southwest and Igbo in southeast. There are, however, numerous Christians in the north and many Muslims in the south, especially in the southwest, where there are both Muslim and Christian Yoruba. There are also more than 370 smaller ethnic groups throughout the country, with a heavy concentration in the area around the Niger Delta and in the central parts of Nigeria (International IDEA 2000:90). Migration, especially to urban areas, further contributes to ethnic and religious heterogeneity throughout the country.

Islam was first introduced in the 11th century in what is today northeastern Nigeria, at the time the Kanem-Borno kingdom.² It arrived from the Middle East and North Africa along the trans-Sahara trade routes. It also spread to the Hausa states west of Kanem-Borno. Recognition of the Hausa goes back to the 12th century, when the so-called Hausa states were established. These came to control much of the region, although there was much rivalry between the states (ICG 2010:2-3). Political leaders and elites took the lead in embracing Islam, and by the 15th century Islamic sociopolitical

² Mainly populated by the Kanuri ethnic group.
principles influenced the political, legal and judicial institutions of many of the Hausa states. Islam was, however, unevenly spread across Hausaland (Iwuchukwu 2013:6-7).

In the early 19th century, the Sokoto caliphate was established. The Islamic preacher Usman dan Fodio led a *jihad* in which the old Hausa states were taken over and replaced by emirates that had considerable autonomy but were still under the caliph. While the *jihad* was intent on purifying Islam from Hausa custom and to spreading it throughout the region, it was also a political project to oust a corrupt leadership and establish an Islamic state in the region (Falola and Heaton 2008:62-73). Matthew Hassan Kukah (1993:2) contends that economic relations were paramount in that the “*Jihadists seemed more preoccupied with slavery, economic, and political expansionism than the spread of faith*” in the north-central area. By the time the British conquered the region in 1903, the previously fragmented political landscape had been consolidated by the caliphate. Usman dan Fodio was of Fulani origin and the emirs ruling the emirates were also Fulani, but elements of Hausa culture were adopted by the rulers and the two groups’ political and religious history has meant that it is now common to refer to a shared Hausa-Fulani identity (ICG 2010:3). This is, however, most apparent in a political context and in urban areas. Both the separate Fulani (Fulbe) language and the pastoralist tradition are largely retained in rural areas.

Christian missionaries became influential in the south of Nigeria from the 1840s. Christianity spread fast in the south and a new elite educated in European missionary schools emerged. In central Nigeria, missionary movements became more prevalent from the 1920s after the area was pacified by the British (Kastfelt 1994:19). North-central Nigeria, including southern Kaduna, was populated by many ethnic groups that had not embraced Islam and had been organised as relatively small, autonomous communities before colonialism. These groups saw Islam as linked to the emirates. As powerful political entities, the emirates extended their influence into bordering areas, and during the 1800s slave raids were common there. Hussaini Abdu (2010:49-50) argues that these raids, as well as the wider relationships between the communities, are best understood in terms of unequal levels of development than in ethnic or religious terms.
Nevertheless, Christianity offered an alternative worldview, and helped to connect the different ethnic groups in central Nigeria that resisted the power of the emirates (Kastfelt 1994). In the Muslim-dominated areas in the north, however, British colonial authorities did not allow Christian missionaries to operate freely in the interests of maintaining stability (Tibenderana 1983:525-6). In effect, the British were forced to compromise to retain the loyalty of the emirs (Yakubu 2006:25-7).

The policy of preventing missionaries in the emirates was a consequence of the system of indirect rule practised by the colonial power. In northern Nigeria, this meant that the British gave the emirates status as Native Authorities and recognised the emirs as the authorities responsible for local government. Under colonial rule, the emir also controlled the police force as well as the so-called native courts, which derived from native law as conceived by the colonial administration (Yahaya 1980:97). These are today referred to as “customary” courts and laws.

While the emirs and other so-called traditional leaders were given extensive political and judicial power, they were still under colonial authority. The subdued emirs and their district heads and village heads were used to govern and control the population. The official argument in favour of this arrangement was that it was cost effective in that it required only a limited British presence (Kukah 1993:3). Mamdani (1996:60), however, argues that the rationale for the system was the existence of

a dependent but autonomous system of rule … that combined accountability to superiors with a flexible response to the subject population, a capacity to implement central directives with one to absorb local shocks.

Decentralisation was, in other words, a strategy to have localised authorities responsible for keeping stability and to counter potential resistance from the population.

The Zaria (Zazzau) emirate has its base in Zaria town in present northern Kaduna State. The southern, predominantly non-Muslim parts of present state were incorporated into the Zaria Native Authority controlled by the Hausa-Fulani political class. However, in the southern districts there were
also Hausa-Fulani settlements established in precolonial times. The degree to which non-Hausa-Fulani groups were incorporated into the emirate structure differed according to geographical proximity to Hausa-Fulani settlements and enclaves in the area (Suberu 1996:49). Three types of arrangements for governance emerged in Zaria Province, the present Kaduna State (Kazah-Toure 2003:37-38; Abdu 2010:51-52). One was that Hausa or Fulani traditional rulers were appointed in northern Kaduna to manage the affairs of districts with a Muslim Hausa-Fulani population. Secondly, Hausa-Fulani Muslims, representing the Zaria emirate, controlled the administration of districts in southern Zaria. And thirdly, areas with virtually no Hausa settlements were until 1934 not under the jurisdiction of the Zaria Province, but the rulers in these areas did not enjoy the same autonomy, power and privileges as the emirate rulers, according to Abdu (2010:52). These arrangements generated some of the first violent confrontations between the various groups (Suberu 1996:50-51; Yahaya 1980:27-29).

A new Christian identity was shaped by the Middle Belt movement in the 1950s, bringing together Christians from many ethnic groups to voice political demands to dissociate the area from the emirates (Barnes 2007). The historical relationship between the Islamic emirate and the non-Muslims made the groups in southern Kaduna particularly receptive to Christian conversion and missionary education (Suberu 1996:50). This has meant that the political leadership of the non-Hausa-Fulani groups has had close connections with churches and religious organisations (Suberu 1996) and has been associated with demands for local autonomy (Yahaya 1980:28). Although the term Middle Belt is used in somewhat different ways (it sometimes refers to a geographical area roughly coinciding with north-central Nigeria), it does connote the political aspiration among small, non-Muslim ethnic groups in north-central Nigeria to achieve independence from perceived Hausa-Fulani political domination (Egwu 2001; International IDEA 2000: endnote 38).

Both Christianity and Islam have continued to grow up to the present day. Since the 1970s, there has also been a growth in more radical forms of both religions. Charismatic movements took root in the south of the country in the early 1970s, but soon spread to educational institutions in the north, which laid the foundation of a wider movement there (Ojo 2007:179). The emergence of the independent charismatic and Pentecostal movements is by Mat-
Matthews Ojo (2007:178) considered “the most remarkable and significant development within modern Nigerian Christianity.” Today, tens of millions of Nigerians adhere to Pentecostal Christianity, constituting “the single most important sociocultural force in southern Nigeria,” according to Ruth Marshall (2009:2).

There has, at the same time, been a rise in radical reformist Islamic groups. While some, like the Izala movement, have been preoccupied with the purification of Islam and “to struggle against the innovations and ‘un-Islamic practices’ of the [Sufi] brotherhoods” (Ibrahim 1991:122), others like the Muslim Students’ Society (MSS), have been more active in political issues than in theological debate and stress Muslim unity (Loimeier 2007:55). In terms of conflict, the first type of movement has first and foremost generated intra-religious conflicts, and the second inter-religious conflicts. There is also a history in northern Nigeria of radical Muslim movements challenging the state. Boko Haram is the latest in a series of similar movements. In the 1980s, the so-called Maitatsine movement based in Kano turned against affluence, Western materialism and Western technology. The sect disintegrated after repeated violent confrontations with the police and military, which resulted in as many as 10,000 deaths (Isichei 1987).

3.1 Federalism to accommodate religion and ethnicity

While the Nigerian state has been central in shaping ethnicity and religion as political categories, political mobilisation around ethnic and religious identities has simultaneously contributed to the spatial organisation of the Nigerian federation as it attempts to diffuse conflict.

At independence in 1960, Nigeria was a federation of three strong regions (Northern, Western and Eastern) with far-reaching economic and political powers (Olukoshi and Agbu 1996:84). These were associated with the three largest ethnic groups (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, respectively), which together make up about 60 per cent of the country’s population. This structure was soon contested. The Northern Region was larger than the other two combined both in terms of population and of area. Additionally, the more than
370 smaller ethnic groups were aggrieved at being treated as minorities. Moreover, the Eastern and Western Regions were more integrated into the international economy and had a greater number of people with a higher education.

Since 1963, when a new federal region was created (Midwestern), the federal state has on several occasions (1967, 1976, 1987, 1991 and 1996) been divided into ever more federal units in an attempt to create a more stable system. Today, there are 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). The replacement of the regions by 12 states shortly before civil war began in 1967 was, according to Adebayo Olukoshi and Osita Agbu (1996:84), an attempt to dampen secessionist demands in the Eastern Region and to heed the demands of the smaller ethnic groups for autonomy from “the tyranny of the majority ethnic groups that dominated the independence regional system.” The argument used in dividing the regions into more states was “the so-called need to bring government closer to the people” (Alapiki 2005:57). Another official principle guiding further divisions of the state has been “to minimize minority problems in Nigeria” (Federal Government Views on the Report of the Panel on Creation of States, 1976:53 as quoted in Alapiki 2005:59). The regions have, however, continued to structure ethnic relations even after they were dismantled (Osaghae 1986:161-3). The new states in the old regions have maintained numerous ties, in the form of jointly owned educational and financial institutions and of regular meetings between governors, commissioners and senior officials to discuss common problems and formulate policies.

New states have, however, been met with demands for additional states from groups that have become minorities in the states. As more states have been created, there has simultaneously been greater fiscal centralisation and increased dependence on federal resources for financial survival (LeVan 2005:210-1; Olukoshi and Agbu 1996:84). Centralisation was pushed by consecutive military regimes. New states or not, centralisation can be expected to follow military power. It is notable that new states have only been created under military rule, but pressure from local elites for the creation of new units has not diminished. A current suggestion to create 18 additional states is discussed below in Article I.
In 1976, a third tier of government was introduced when a uniform local government system was created. Three hundred and one Local Government Areas (LGA) were recognised, and these have now increased to 774. The reform in 1976 preceded the transition to civil rule in 1979 and was aimed, according to Dele Olowu (1986:290), at ensuring that the federal government’s programmes of social and economic development benefited not only urban areas. While local governments have no legislative power and are administrative and advisory in character (FGN 1999, fourth schedule), the councils are elected and can make by-laws. The local governments have some resources of their own and, more significantly, intergovernmental transfers from the federal state. They are furthermore assigned their own personnel and budgetary powers (Olowu 2001).

3.2 History of Kaduna

Kaduna State is the third largest in the federation,\(^3\) with slightly over six million inhabitants according to the 2006 census. Kaduna city, the state capital, was created by the colonial authorities as an administrative centre for northern Nigeria, and has since the 1940s attracted people from all over Nigeria. In 1948, the population was about 20,000, and in 1960 it had grown to 149,000 (Oyedele 1987:417). According to John Paden (1986:580) Kaduna also “becomes northern in style” around that time. This was at a time when there was constitutional development, with the gradual growth of parliamentary democracy and the three regions being defined as units in the Nigerian federal system. Kaduna became the capital of the Northern Region. There was a gradual transfer of political power from the British to the Nigerian ruling class, which included programmes that led to rapid growth of the public sector and government employment. According to Gunilla Andræ and Björn Beckman (1998:87), the northern bureaucratic elite, connected to the emirate system, built Kaduna as their principal power base. With the growing administration there was also a building boom, which was reinforced by

\(^3\) After Lagos and Kano States
major state and transnational investments in the manufacturing sector and, later, an automobile factory and an oil refinery (Andræ and Beckman 1998:89-90). These developments attracted migrants, especially from the north. The political importance of Kaduna was second only to Lagos, and together they served as the two main poles of political power in Nigeria. Kaduna at this time became a second home for many in the Northern Region and “a node through which people, goods and messages flow,” according to Paden (1986:315). Kaduna’s history of attracting migrants from all parts of Nigeria as well as its position within the Nigerian federation links the state to national politics as one of the more important players.

When the Northern Region was divided into six states by the time of the civil war (1967), the political importance of Kaduna started to diminish (Andræ and Beckman 1998:89-90), although its symbolic significance has been sustained even after the federal capital has moved from Lagos to the less distant Abuja. After the regions were replaced by states in 1967, Kaduna became the capital of the North-Central State. In 1976, it was renamed Kaduna State. In 1989, Katsina State was carved out of Kaduna State, while in the reorganisations of 1991 and 1996 Kaduna State remained untouched. Even now, most retired generals and former heads of state from the north have homes in Kaduna and visit regularly. Kaduna is often the preferred location for elite meetings among politicians and neo-customary rulers based in the north of the country.

Toure Kazah-Toure (2003:33) identifies conflict in precolonial times between small polities in southern Kaduna and the emirates of the Sokoto caliphate, slave raids being the major form. There was also mutual trade, as the current southern Kaduna was a link to the southern parts of Nigeria. When the British incorporated the ruling elites of the emirates into the colonial state and established an Anglo-Fulani hegemony, the non-Muslim peoples of the area to the south of the emirates began to be perceived as inferior, according to Yusufu Turaki (1982, as referred to by Kukah 1993:3). At independence (1960), this trend took the form of a Hausa-Fulani hegemony which, according to Kukah (1993:1), based its legitimacy on political aspirations for Islam. This political domination with an ethnic character is claimed by Kazah-Toure (1999:139) to have triggered ethnically based resistance.
Christians of various ethnicities are, as already mentioned, predominantly based in the southern part of the state while Muslims, mainly of Hausa-Fulani origin, form the majority in the northern part. The religious composition of the population is contested and both Christians and Muslims claim to be in the majority. The Christian ethnic groups have long complained about marginalisation by the Muslim Hausa population. They see themselves as deprived of rights and disadvantaged in terms of development projects and appointments. This has led to demands for splitting the state into two (further discussed in Article I). Such demands have been articulated by the Southern Kaduna People’s Union (SOKAPU), an umbrella organisation for ethnic groups that regard the southern part of the state as being unfairly treated. This perceived marginalisation is closely associated with the history of the area and as the continuance of Hausa-Fulani domination over non-Muslim groups in southern Kaduna since colonial times.

Kaduna has also been a centre for radical religious movements in the north, in part because as a fairly new and rapidly growing city it has no brotherhood tradition. Sufi brotherhoods (the Qadiriyya and the Tijaniyya) have been major Muslim social organisations and teaching networks in large parts of northern Nigeria. However, given increased educational opportunities from the 1970s onwards, the brotherhoods have lost appeal among the younger generation, who turned “back to the basics of the Qur’an, Sunna, and Hadith” (Paden 2005:59). The Izala, founded in 1978, was the main movement to this end (Loimeier 1997:208-31). A growing Islamic radicalisation coincided with the arrival of Christian charismatic movements in northern Nigeria, often along with youth corps and migrants from the south, and by the late 1970s Kaduna had become the main centre for charismatic renewal in northern Nigeria (Ojo 2007:180; Marshall 2009:226). When northern Christians emerged as leaders of evangelistic and charismatic churches in the mid-1980s, religion became more markedly politicised.
4. Federalism and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria and Kaduna

This section looks into earlier research into federalism in relation to ethnic and religious conflict in Nigeria. After presenting three general perspectives, I consider the federal character principle and how the question of indigeneity generates conflict. This is followed by an overview of the crises in Kaduna State and how these have previously been analysed.

The continual recreation of states and local governments has resulted in a more fragmented federation. Many states are dependent on federal resources, but the Nigerian federal system has been judged relatively successful in preventing national conflicts by dampening ethno-separatist pressures (Ejobowah 2008; Onwudiwe and Suberu 2005:7). Rotimi Suberu (2001:4-6) argues that federalism has defused ethnic conflict in that multiple centres of power have been established, state boundaries that cross-cut ethnic identities have diminished the dominance of the three largest groups, smaller ethnic groups can play an active role in national politics and contribute to reducing tension between the three largest groups, and state-based identities are promoted as alternatives to ethnic identities.

Although the above attributes are recognised, there is a wide literature that faults Nigerian federalism. Eghosa Osaghae (2005) discerns three major narratives. One is the centralisation process connected to military rule, reinforced by the dependence of the state on oil revenues. Ladipo Adamolekun (2005) argues that Nigerian federalism has become what he calls “bastardised,” in that the federal government has too much power relative to the federating units, has concluded that “[o]nly devolution can unleash the forces for consolidating democracy and achieving accelerated socioeconomic progress in Nigeria.” (Adamolekun 2005:405, emphasis added). Devolution is in itself portrayed as an answer for democracy and economic prosperity, and assumes that “the local” has inherently positive value. The introduction of
sharia was made possible by devolution in that the states were empowered to implement the laws. Sharia has, however, mostly been regarded as a threat to Nigerian democracy (Adamolekun 2005; Nmehielle 2004), although there are those who point to the positive aspects of this development from a political perspective (Ostien 2002). Sharia can, furthermore, be seen as a form of cultural expression – an argument used in defence of sharia – of the sort promoted by devolution advocates.

The second narrative relates to how states and local governments are dependent on federal resources. Suberu (2001:chap. 3) identifies three problems in this regard. One is an imbalance in vertical revenue-sharing. The federal government collects revenues from oil as well as in the form of major taxes, such as those on imports, exports and businesses. This implies that governors and local government chairmen need to align themselves with the federal government. There is, however, a formula that allocates 52.68 per cent of such revenues to the federal government, 26.7 per cent to the states and 20.6 per cent to local governments. This can be compared to the federal government’s share of public expenditure in 1995, 74 per cent, while the states’ share was less than 20 per cent. Secondly, equity and population account for 40 and 30 per cent respectively in horizontal revenue-sharing between states. The emphasis on equity as the most important principle reflects a redistributive strategy to maintain national unity and reduce interregional differences. Given the differences in size and socioeconomic conditions between states, the impact of the resources differs among them. The high weighting afforded inter-state equity can also be seen as contributing to the many demands for state creation noted above. More resources are allocated to an area if one state is divided into two. Thirdly, Suberu argues that weak administrative and institutional frameworks mean that the financial integrity and autonomy of local governments is low and that in practice state governments decide how allocations are spent.

The third faulting of Nigerian federalism relates to “the non-resolution of which the federating units in Nigeria actually are” (Osaghae 2005:vii). States are constitutionally recognised as the federating units and local governments as the third tier of the federation, but there are also references to ethnic groups, religious groups, “places of origin” and indigenous groups. This affords some legitimacy to these categories as building blocks in the federa-
tion. Osaghae (2003) argues that ethnic and regional organisations have become intermediaries in political relations and taken on functions associated with political parties and the states, whether in selecting political candidates or providing security. This has accordingly weakened states and local governments as centres of power. It is in this category of investigation of Nigerian federalism that this thesis can be placed. Political demands do not necessarily take state delineations as their point of reference. When claims on the state are made “more on the grounds of ethnic, communal, religious, indigenous, regional and geopolitical (zonal) identities than state or local government” (Osaghae 2005:vii), scalar state delineations are simultaneously challenged.

4.1 Federal character and indigeneity

The “federal character” principle was formally introduced before the Constitutional Drafting Committee in 1976 and aimed to “give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging in the nation” (as quoted in Kendhammer 2014:406 from Kirk-Greene 1983:460-2). It states that the composition of the federal government or any of its agencies should reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity. This includes appointing one minister from each state, having one member from each state on the electoral commission and so on. The principle is to ensure that power and resources are balanced between different federating units, and in this way to address ethnic and regional demands. No area of administration is to be dominated by one ethnic or regional segment of the population (Kendhammer 2014; Suberu 2001:111-6; Kirk-Greene 1983).

In implementing the federal character, the indigeneity concept and practice is central (Kendhammer 2014:407). This links states to ethnic identities, as it is the “indigenes” of the different states that are to be appointed when

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4 According to the 1999 constitution the “‘federal character of Nigeria’ refers to the distinctive desire of the peoples of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation” (FGN 1999, section 318, subsection 1).
the federal character of the nation is to be reflected. Several studies have analysed the ways in which the designation of who is to be regarded as an indigene generates conflict, as this is a basis for inclusion and exclusion (e.g., Adebanwi 2009; HRW 2006; Kraxberger 2005; Mu’azzam 2009; Sayne 2012; Suberu 2001). The power to issue indigeneity certificates rests with local governments, but there is no clear definition of the concept in the constitution: indigeneity is to be granted to those whose parents or grandparents are indigenous to the state (Fourchard 2015:41; Ejobowah 2013:734).5 In practice, indigeneity is determined by whether a person belongs to an ethnic group regarded as having settled in a place before other groups. The latter are then viewed as settlers.

Being an indigene is, however, not only a basis for national appointments: indigenes are also privileged in terms of employment, the civil service, access to land, admissions to secondary and higher education, scholarships, standing in elections, etc. In other words, representation and full citizenship rights are dependent on having an ethnically defined territory within a state. There is an irrevocability associated with the principle that contributes to the shaping of ethnic relations: there is no possibility to convert from “stranger” to “indigene,” although state and local government creation have reconfigured the indigene/settler structure (Kraxberger 2005:18; Alubo 2009:4,7). The lack of clear definition has made the practice of issuing indigeneity certificates susceptible to ethno-religious partiality (HRW 2006:48-9) as well as to commodification of the certificates (Fourchard 2015:48-51). In territorial terms, indigeneity sets national citizenship and state- or local government-based citizenship against each other (Kraxberger 2005). But there is also the need to tie group-belonging to a territory, and ethno-religious conflicts have erupted as groups contest symbolic territoriality in the competition for indigeneity (Adebanwi 2007). While the federal character principle is one “innovative feature” that contributes to national stability (Bangura 2012:86), the practice of indigeneity raises the issue of the competing forms of representation that the federal system is to accommodate.

5 The constitution states that “‘belong to’ … when used with reference to a person in a State refers to a person either of whose parents or any of whose grand parents was a member of a community indigenous to that State” (FGN 1999, Section 318, Subsection 1).
There are different scalar associations that stand apart from the constitutionally recognised federal, state and local government tiers, and which also help to structure Nigerian politics. These include the six so-called geopolitical zones, the north-south distinction, north/east/west/middle belt, but also religious and ethnic groups (Ejobowah 2008:243-4). In federally defined processes, people from different states play a representative role that takes territory and identity as a simultaneous reference point, as if these coincide. While this may diminish regional, ethnic and religious competition nationally, it raises tensions among different groups in many states – not least Kaduna.

4.2 Kaduna State crises

Although violent conflicts in what is now Kaduna State have a long history (Kazah-Toure 2003), some crises in past decades stand out as particularly significant for ethno-religious relations in the state today. The first major crisis was in Kafanchan in Jema’a LGA in the southern part of the state in 1987. It was set off when an evangelical “Born-Again” Christian students’ movement at Kafanchan College of Education hosted an event at which a Muslim convert to Christianity was accused of blaspheming the Prophet (Falola 1998:179-81. The Muslim Students’ Society (MSS) organised a protest march, which according to Ibrahim Mu’azzam and Jibrin Ibrahim (2000:76-77) was controversial, given the majority Christian population in Kafanchan town. Muslims however controlled political power, the neo-customary institutions and much of the commerce in the area (Ibrahim 1989:67). A tribunal was set up after the violence to try the offenders, and as Kukah notes (1993:197), those accused were seen as either Christian or Muslim. This was a shift from the past, when ethnic affinities were the basis for political expression. It has been argued by Osaghae and Suberu (2005:19) that the Kafanchan crisis was a turning point in Nigeria’s return to inter-group strife following a period of relatively peaceful relations after the civil war (1967-70) and that the crisis revived tensions throughout the north and beyond. After the crisis, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)
became “the mouthpiece for the political and religious rights of Christians in Northern Nigeria,” according to Ojo (2007:182). CAN was formed in 1976 as an umbrella body of Christians in Nigeria to have a united voice in social, educational and political issues. Muslim organisations had a corresponding body, Jama’atu Nasril Islam (JNI, Society for the Victory of Islam), formed in 1962. Although CAN presents itself as an ecumenical organisation, Ibrahim (1989:76) contends that

CAN represents Christian unity not in a theological or even ecumenical sense but in a clear political sense: to defend the place Christianity occupies in Nigerian society. That is why CAN has systematically responded to and challenged the JNI and other Muslim organisations.

The Kafanchan crisis represents, according to Kukah (1993:185), “a flash point in the socio-political and historical processes in Southern Zaria in relation to the ruling class in the region.” Non-Muslims in southern Kaduna are said to have reached a point when they had “confidence for political articulation” (Kukah 1993:186), in that people from the area had gained high administrative and military rank and were able to form a rival power constellation in the state. Media controlled by the northern “traditional ruling class” is said to have had a role in the escalation of the crisis in a bid to disrupt a political process in which the northern ruling class was losing relevance. Ibrahim (1989) traces the religious aspect of the Kafanchan crisis to rising Christian and Muslim radicalisation from the 1970s onwards, which contributed to making religion a tool for political coalitions. Religious mobilisation was, according to Ibrahim, instrumental at a time when the power of “the northern oligarchy” was threatened as a consequence of the continuous creation of states out of the former regions. Heightened Muslim-Christian antagonism, Ibrahim (1991:130) further argues, created unity within each religion, in that internal divisions were suppressed. Political entrepreneurs have, according to Ibrahim, subsequently promoted conflict in order to gain from a religiously consolidated constituency.
A second major crisis took place in Zangon-Kataf in February 1992, followed by another wave of violence that spread to Kaduna city and other parts of the state in May the same year. A historical perspective is generally provided in explaining this violence (e.g. Akinteye, Wuye and Ashafa 1999; Kazah-Toure 2003: chap. 4). Toyin Falola (1998:213) views the violence as “the culmination of an age-old conflict between two groups divided by both ethnicity and religion”. The Hausa came to Zangon-Kataf around 1750, when a settlement was established as a mid-way base for traders from the pre-emirate Hausa kingdoms (Kazah-Toure 2003:120). The Hausa community is based in Zango town, encircled by Atyap (Kataf) villages. Atyap representatives define these Hausa in Zango as settlers, and claim ownership of the land (Akinteye, Wuye and Ashafa 1999:232). Zangon Kataf LGA was created in 1989 (when Kachia LGA was divided) and the Atyap controlled local government from 1990. The chairman decided in January 1992 to relocate the mainly Hausa market in order to enhance revenue generation (Akinteye, Wuye and Ashafa 1999:223) and, perhaps more importantly, to break the perceived Hausa economic dominance (Kazah-Toure 2003:153). The Hausa resisted and argued that the new site was inadequate. In the process of moving the market, the crisis was set off. Kazah-Toure (2003:128) traces the present Zangon-Kataf conflict to the colonial policy of segregation of the Hausa from people of other ethnicities and the forced resettlement of the Zango town by the British colonialists to a new site on land confiscated from the Atyap people in 1920. During the colonial period, the main activists were peasants, but there was a shift in the post-independence period as an elite with experience in civil and military state institutions took over. This changed the form of agitation in that it became occupied by an “ethno-religious drive to control power in local affairs” (Kaza-Toure 2003:119).

The aftermath of the clashes in 1992 created further tension as the Kaduna State government as well as the Emir of Zaria were accused of siding with the Hausa. According to Mu’azzam and Ibrahim (2000:73), the crisis and its aftermath came to polarise the Muslim and Christian population across Nigeria. This was reflected in that the press in southern Nigeria sided with the Atyap, while Muslim organisations supported the Hausa (Adebanwi 2007:228-37; Kazah-Toure 1999:156).
Both the Kafanchan and Zangon-Kataf crises are said to have soured inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations across the country. This was even more apparent during the so-called sharia riots that started in Kaduna city in 2000 and in focus of article III. This is the most severe crisis Kaduna State has experienced and was precipitated by a demonstration against the proposed adoption of sharia criminal laws in the state. So-called reprisal killings followed, especially in the southeast of the country, where Hausa Muslims were targeted, and the Christian/Muslim divide became the centre of attention for the national polity (Egwu 2011:66-9).

In looking at the triggers for the “Miss World riots” in 2002, it is evident that the Kaduna conflict is embedded in a national context. The beauty contest to be hosted in Abuja generated heated debate as it was disapproved of on moral grounds by some Muslims. There was also opposition because the contest was to take place during Ramadan. A columnist in a national newspaper wrote that the Prophet would have approved of the contest and probably would have chosen a wife from among the participants. This provoked outrage among Muslims, who found the remark blasphemous (HRW 2003:6). There were protests in many cities and in Kaduna these resulted in widespread violence. All of this happened just three months after a celebrated Kaduna State Peace Declaration had been signed by 22 religious leaders and the state governor.

Then in 2011, Kaduna State was the worst hit by the violence following the presidential election. An estimated 800 plus people died (HRW 2013:90-1; Paden 2012:23). Zonkwa, in Zangon-Kataf LGA, was one of the places where, according to Human Rights Watch (2013:98), “mass killings” took place. The violence escalated when gubernatorial and local elections had yet to be organised.

Previous studies have recognised that the crises in Kaduna had an impact on national ethnic and religious relations, but this has seldom been scrutinised beyond connecting specific events to incidents in other places. Colette Harris (2013) is an exception. She argues in a study of violence in Kaduna city that local, national and international factors have become interwoven. She regards local ethnically based politics as being at the basis of the conflict and argues that religion was employed as a tool by actors to nationalise the conflict and mobilise more groups. She also assigns religion a functional
role: in times of economic crisis, religious organisations have come to perform functions associated with the state. Religious actors, she argues, are trying to take control of the state and she regards the state as too weak to remain free of religious influence. However, the politicisation of religion is by others argued to primarily have been advanced by sections of the political elite (e.g. Mustapha 2004:270). Global aspects of ethno-religious conflict are recognised by Harris in terms of Nigeria’s position within the global political economy as an oil producer. This, Harris (2013:296) argues, gives political elites incentives to use violence to secure resources.

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Before turning to questions of material and method, I will clarify the perspective of the thesis and the contribution it aims to make in relation to previous research. Studies of ethnic and religious conflicts in Kaduna and Nigeria at large have established the instrumental use of religion and ethnicity in post-colonial politics, but less attention has been given to the interaction between ethnic and religious relations and state structures in different settings. Moreover, previous studies of the Kaduna conflict tend to take scalar categories as given and regard the conflict as local, while sometimes having national implications. This study instead attempts to interrogate how scalar constructions of religious and ethnic relations, in conjunction with scalar constructions of the state, are integral parts of the conflict. This, it is argued, gives insights into the conflicting claims of social space in Kaduna State that go beyond an instrumental perspective on ethnicity and religion as tools for political actors. In a wider sense, it can also give insights into why federalism and decentralisation may generate sub-national conflicts, while simultaneously contributing to national stability.

I have argued for a conception of geographical scale wherein actors frame scalar categories such as the local and the regional in ways that support their social and political projects. This can help us investigate a potential discrepancy between the idea that decentralisation provides space for self-determination for different groups and the way in which groups argue to be attached to different places. The actors’ conceptions of the conflict are thus placed at the centre of the analysis. Ethnic and religious conflicts have sev-
eral causes and the political and the economic are often central. What is noteworthy is that mobilisation follows ethnic or religious lines (Stewart 2009:5). In this process, the way in which leaders of different kinds and in different positions articulate the conflict is important to how the conflict is expressed. However, ethnic and religious sentiments must resonate with those who are mobilised in order to have a bearing on how the conflict is constructed (Bøås and Dunn 2013:25).

Previous research on the Kaduna conflict is dominated by state-centred approaches that have identified ethnicity and religion as a means for elite competition and political coalitions (e.g., Abdu 2010; Ibrahim 1989; Kukah 1993). Scalar and territorial dimensions of the conflict are, however, less analysed. The conflict is explained by local particularities, although these may stem from national politics. The alternative approach used in this thesis does not ascribe different processes to distinct scales, but regards the politics of scale as inherent in social and political processes and thus as part of different projects. Thus, an analysis of how scalar dimensions of the conflict are constructed by actors contributes to an understanding of how ethnic and religious mobilisation is part of conflicting claims to territorial control.
5. Material and method

The importance of scale framing for understanding the conflict was a result of the initial coding process of the material when the broad lines of account of the conflict were examined. How scale was an integral part of the different perspectives of the conflict was then analysed in more detail. The analysis is accordingly concerned with how actors use scalar references. The way in which social and political processes related to the conflict are framed as relating to different scales is of interest. These are more often than not implicit and analysed through the assumptions that arguments rely upon, for example an argued majority depends on a presumed scope of social space in which a population is considered. The analysis is also directed at the references that scale categories, such as “local” and “regional,” represent in order to understand how perspectives are legitimised. This includes analysing who is considered as being local and on what grounds, as well as the scope of connections and relations that are referred to when scalar terms are used.

Nigeria is a key case for studying spatial aspects of ethno-religious conflict. It is one of only a few African federations, and thus gives constitutional recognition to subnational institutions. Territorial strategies have been central to the efforts by Nigerian governments to accommodate ethnic and religious differences. The choice of Kaduna State as a case study is informed by several factors. The state has seen some of the most violent ethno-religious crises in a country that has been characterised as one of the most deeply divided in Africa, in that ethnic, regional and religious cleavages underlie recurrent violent conflicts (Osaghae 2001:17). It was also there that the first major ethno-religious clashes erupted after power was transferred from military to civilian rulers in 1999. Politically, Kaduna State is regarded as one of the more important states in the federation and, as noted earlier, has symbolic importance. The selection of a case is guided on the basis of analytical generalisability (Curtis et al. 2000) and the conflict in Kaduna State is in-
structive in the sense that boundaries, territoriality and scale are critical aspects of the conflict there.

Primary material for this thesis has first and foremost been collected through fieldwork. I spent a total of about six months in Nigeria between 2007 and 2012. Two longer visits in 2007 and 2008 were followed by shorter ones. The collected material consists of interviews, memoranda, reports and observation of press conferences, meetings, seminars, etc. I have made some 70 interviews in total, lasting from 30 to 150 minutes. A handful of these were conducted with an interpreter versed in Hausa.

About half the interviews were with Christian and Muslim leaders, renowned pastors and imams, neo-customary rulers in Muslim and Christian areas and representatives of ethnically based organisations. Central organisations and individuals were identified on the basis of information given by informants and from newspaper reports. I have also to the greatest extent possible tried to interview the corresponding Muslim and Christian organisations and individuals. This includes the major religious umbrella organisations Jama’atu Nasril Islam (JNI) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), as well as their youth branches. When there has been no corresponding body I have tried to identify functional equivalents. JNI, for example, has no body equivalent to the women’s wing of CAN. To understand the perspectives of women organised on a religious basis, I interviewed representatives of the Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN). When I visited Zangon-Kataf in southern Kaduna, I had interviews with Hausa elders and with the district head. I also interviewed representatives of the Kataf (Atyap). In Kafanchan, where there was a major crisis after the elections in 2011, I interviewed religious leaders of different affiliations as well as representatives of the emirate. I have, furthermore, interviewed people who try to defuse the religious aspects of the conflict through inter-faith initiatives. In this case I met with Christians as well as Muslims in central positions. State representatives I have interviewed include the two special advisors to the governor on religious affairs, the permanent secretaries of the two Bureaus of Religious Affairs, and civil servants who have served on committees of investigation after outbreaks of violence, as well as former governors.
There is a male bias in the interviews, as only about one-fifth of the interviewees are women. This is because the religious and traditional leaders are men. As noted by Berman, Eyoh and Kymlicka (2004b:5), traditional institutions are inherently patriarchal in character, thereby limiting women’s voices. The women interviewed were politicians or representatives of women-oriented religious organisations and other NGOs.

Many of the people interviewed had been centrally placed in the conflict in that they have written memoranda after crises, have been part of reconciliation efforts, or are expected by media to react when contentious issues are raised. Some of the organisations I selected are the ones that triggered such issues. Many of the respondents are important in shaping opinions and attitudes about the conflict, and are experienced commentators. Other interviewees are less experienced and not in positions of authority, for instance youths and victims of crises. In these cases, selection was on the basis of location, that is, Christian-dominated and Muslim dominated areas affected by crises.

My role as interviewer differs across these types of interaction. When interviewing, for example, a former governor, now senator, the relationship is more equal in the sense that he enjoys high social status and a powerful position (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:147). By contrast, interviews with, for example, youths, for whom the experience may be entirely novel, require a different approach to the respondents (Leech 2002). There is, however, still an asymmetrical power distribution in all situations as an interview is “a one-way dialogue, an instrumental and indirect conversation, where the interviewer upholds a monopoly of interpretation” (Kvale 2006:484). Ethical issues brought to the fore include the expectations of respondents to have their perspective represented as the correct version, and in some cases there are also expectations that the interviews will be instrumental in achieving specific objectives in relation to perceived injustices. Problematic as this circumstance is in its own right, this type of expectation can also be assumed to impact the knowledge produced in some of the interviews. I explained the purpose of the interview and my research project before the interviews to try to limit misconceptions.

The interviews can be categorised as semi-structured. I asked interviewees to describe the conflict and what it is about, and why crises keep recur-
ring in Kaduna, and I also asked about relations with various religious, traditional and political authorities, depending on the respondent. Where applicable, I posed questions about grievances and demands, and sometimes took an “agonistic” position (Kvale 2006:487-8) in order to have interviewees respond to others’ grievances or accusations. Some interviews took place in private settings, while others were conducted in public spaces such as restaurants or offices with people listening in. In one case, a religious leader was interviewed in his home, which also functioned as reception. About 10 to 15 people were eagerly listening, and in such instances the interviewee can be expected to talk as much to the audience as to the interviewer. Interviewing is evidently a social process even when conducted in private settings and the ways in which questions are answered are influenced by, among other things, how the interviewee perceives me and my interest in the subject.

Material collected in interviews is produced for analytical purposes. Respondents are aware of this purpose and may give answers not in line with what they articulate in other forums (Rathburn 2008:694). In the interview material, I am at the receiving end, and this can be expected to have a bearing on how the conflict is articulated. However, many of the interviews were with representatives of various organisations or communities, and these people can be assumed to be eager to share their views on the conflict. One way to counter the risk of collecting distorted material has been by cross-checking positions articulated in interviews with officially produced material. This material includes memoranda, communiques, press releases, advertisements, leaflets etc. The production of memoranda by groups stems from the government practice of setting up a committee of inquiry after a crisis. Such committees conduct hearings and collect memoranda from people and organisations that see themselves as having been affected by the crisis. The committee then produces a report that is submitted to the state government, which sometimes releases a so-called white paper in which it reacts to the recommendations of the report. Communiques are generally produced after conferences held by organisations. For example, when CAN held a meeting a few days after the “Miss World riots” in 2002, a communiqué was issued. Actors’ perspectives on the conflict are not only articulated in relation to outbreaks of violence, but also in relation to other events. One such event followed the release of the 2006 census results. Some groups challenged the
results, arguing that the population numbers in the northern and southern parts of the state were different from those recorded. These protests were articulated in media releases, advertorials and during press conferences.

Newspaper reports have been of interest in that they publish different accounts of the conflict and crises. It should be noted that newspapers in Nigeria tend to be inserted in the conflict (Adebanwi 2007), and sometimes fuel the crises with their reports (Abdu 2010, chap. 6). The reports, however, provide the reactions of crucial actors and reproduce accounts of events that are of interest to the analyst. Most national newspapers and news magazines are established in the south and are more inclined to report the views of Christians and the non-Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups. These papers include *Guardian, The Punch, ThisDay* and *Vanguard*, which, for example, were highly critical of sharia implementation. But there are also newspapers more focused on the north of the country and associated with an Islamic perspective. *Daily Trust* is the most widely circulated of these. It was established in Kaduna but has since moved its headquarters to Abuja, although it continues to be associated with the north. *New Nigerian* was established by the government of the Northern Region and has its base in Kaduna. Different actors are given different weight in the newspapers, and it has been important to take this into account in assessing the reportage.

The method by which the material has been analysed draws on thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). Themes and accounts in the material have been identified in relation to the research questions and the broader theoretical assumptions of the study (Ryan and Bernard 2003). In this endeavour, scalar representations of how religion, ethnicity and politics are articulated have been the core category for the analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1990:116). In Article III, processes involved in the introduction of a sharia penal code are analysed by being ascribed different scalar configurations following the spatial organisation of the state. In Articles I and II, where the actors’ constructions are the focus, the themes relate to how the conflict is articulated with reference to, on one hand, ethnic and religious mobilisation and, on the other, processes related to the state and political recognition. Within these perspectives, there is some variation in that actors emphasise different aspects of the conflict. In the presentation of the analysis, the focus is on recurrent representations, although I also give an account when divergent views
are common. One such issue is the perceived gains from creating additional neo-customary institutions, which are discussed in Article I.

Another characteristic of the material is that it consists of documents produced in relation to different outbreaks of violence. However, I treat the separate outbreaks not as different conflicts (cf. e.g., Harris 2013) but as expressions of the same latent conflict. This means I have analysed the material with a view to understanding the articulation of positions on a general conflict. The timeframe is that the 1987 Kafanchan violence is the starting point, which means that articulations of the conflict may change over time. In such cases, the changing dynamics are discussed, as for example in Article I with the change of conception from Southern Zaria to Southern Kaduna. Other aspects are more stable and reproduced over time.

Doing research in conflict or post-conflict settings as an “outsider” has advantages as well as disadvantages. The disadvantages are most obvious in some aspects of data collection. “Insiders” are skilled in the everyday languages used by (some of) the actors and may have detailed and first-hand information of events and processes an “outsider” cannot have. “Insiders” may also have exclusive access to primary resources and informants (Hermann 2001). But the obvious limitation is that these advantages apply only to one side in the conflict. An “outsider” may be in a better position to access both sides even if s/he is not perceived as neutral. A European doing research in northern Nigeria is assumed to be Christian and also to have ingrained “Western” values. That may, however, be a lesser problem than being (perceived as) associated with one of the sides in the conflict. Proper introductions to interviewees by people who are trusted are important, and the effort to seek knowledge and hear both sides can be appreciated. In a post-conflict situation, it is unlikely the researcher is the first “outsider” in the area asking questions. In Kaduna, major human rights organisations have made investigations, as have various church organisations. In my interviews with some Muslims, these interventions have been dismissed as representing partisan interests researchers are not presumed to share. One might also imagine that access to Christians would be easier, but that was not necessarily my experience. To gain access to relevant non-Muslim actors for their perspectives on the conflict, I was more dependent on my associations with certain people. This was because there was a fatigue with investigations and
examinations that have changed nothing, according to one of my informants. At the analysis stage, “insiders” are, according to Tamar Hermann (2001:86ff), often less constructive in their contributions. Early socialisation into the conflict makes it harder for insiders to deviate from preconceived notions about that conflict, and this tends to influence their analysis. This is a drawback “outsiders” are less likely to share.
6. Overview of articles

I: Religion, ethnicity and citizenship: Demands for territorial self-determination in southern Kaduna, Nigeria

This article interrogates how ethnic and religious relations are framed by Christian non-Hausa actors in relation to territory and political institutions from a scalar perspective. Actors in southern Kaduna have long requested that chiefdoms be created as a way to gain autonomy, but have also increasingly articulated demands for a separate territory in the form of a new federal state. It is argued that state delineations are conceived in relation to regional ethno-religious mobilisation, which undermines cross-cutting boundaries between groups, and inter-ethnic elite political cooperation is dismissed as serving only personal interests. The struggle for a new state is informed by a notion that Kaduna State has been manoeuvred to serve wider interests beyond the borders of the state. The ethnic groups in southern Kaduna that share Christianity instead claim local rootedness as the basis for state control.

The demands to split Kaduna State follow the practice of categorising citizens in different states as indigenes and non-indigenes and of tying citizenship rights to ethnicity. Christian perspectives tend to construct the conflict as being over the control of southern Kaduna, which in turn is portrayed as a site of resistance to emirate structures. However, local governments are frequently left out of the accounts of the conflict, even though these are the state institutions issuing certificates of indigeneity. This illustrates the fact that indigeneity also has a symbolic function and is a reference point for
structuring local relations: perceived historical subordination results in eth-
nic and religious claims to territory, since indigeneity is associated with ter-
ritorial “ownership.” The ethno-political aspects of territory are further un-
derlined by the Southern Kaduna concept, for which the geographical refer-
ence is secondary to the relationship with the Hausa-Fulani dominated emir-
ates. Not all people in southern Kaduna State are regarded as Southern 
Kaduna people, but Southern Kaduna is described as comprising 53 ethnic 
groups that share cultural practices and constitute a subordinate community 
in the Zaria emirate. But again, territory is central in that Christian and 
Southern Kaduna leaders assert the “rootedness” of the ethnic groups in the 
area as a basis for the legitimacy of their demands, and Muslims are corre-
spondingly portrayed as having their origin elsewhere. Traditions and values 
are in this way linked to territory, and Christianity becomes constructed as 
part of the local, although it is a relatively recent phenomenon. Ethnic and 
religious demands by Muslim groups and the presence of Muslim traditional 
institutions are correspondingly regarded by Christians as attempts by Mus-
lims to achieve territorial control.

A central strategy for attaining cultural autonomy from the Zaria emirate 
has been the requests for new chiefdoms to be created, to which the state 
government has largely acceded. A major revision of the traditional institu-
tions was carried out after the crisis in 2000, which resulted in 22 new chief-
doms in an attempt to mitigate the conflict. However, this also contributed to 
conflict, as new chiefdoms have generated competition over the appointment 
of neo-customary rulers. There are divergent views by Southern Kaduna 
actors about what has been achieved by having new chiefdoms created. 
Some assert that it has given groups in Southern Kaduna recognition, while 
others see the fragmentation of Southern Kaduna and the side-lining of the 
new traditional rulers by the more powerful emirs. This can be attributed a 
hierarchical structuration with reference to scale, since chiefs may be graded 
at the same level, for example as first class chiefs, but their sphere of influ-
ence differs. A way for Southern Kaduna actors to increase the weight of 
their struggle is to place the conflict in a wider Middle Belt project, which 
unites a range of ethnicities that are predominantly Christian in the common 
recognition that Hausa-Fulani political dominance is the obstacle to desired 
development. Christianity not only links Southern Kaduna to global ele-
ments and puts the struggle in a wider perspective, with the possibility of connecting with national and international groups, but more importantly establishes links with other ethnic groups in the region, an important consideration given that the forces identified as interfering with Southern Kaduna are framed as regional.

The demands for state creation by actors in Southern Kaduna are connected to the type of decentralisation practised in Nigeria, which entrusts considerable financial power to the federal government, to be distributed to the states and local governments. The distribution formula that favours equality between states and populations, and the institutionalisation of patronage politics, serves as an incentive to request the creation of new states. Local state institutions are central to discrimination in that they are seen as representing indigenes only, but in the case of southern Kaduna they are largely controlled by Christian ethnic groups. Local state institutions are, however, not deemed to be avenues for territorial control and are therefore essentially side-lined and seen as irrelevant. Instead, neo-customary institutions are reaffirmed as representing the local and as a way to achieve autonomy, thereby fortifying identity-based politics. Ethnic and religious identities are thereby further tied to territory, and community affiliation becomes increasingly important for state recognition, since not only indigeneity but also neo-customary institutions are expressed as the foundation for legitimate claims on the state.

II: Struggles over identity and territory: Regional identities in ethno-religious conflict in Kaduna State, Nigeria

This article focuses on Muslim constructions of the conflict in Kaduna. Muslim perspectives of the conflict tend to stress the regional scale, and the construction of northern Nigeria as an entity is recurrent. This reference has, however, two meanings with different scalar frames: as a religious and ethnic community, but also as a more encompassing political community. The actors consider that both are deteriorating and are in need of revitalisation.
For many Muslims, the precolonial emirates are constructed as a contemporary and powerful ideal, although the emirates of today are regarded as having decayed and as contributing to the deterioration in social relations. It is in this context the Islamic sharia laws gain significance. Sharia symbolises a regional value system with the potential to revitalise society. This does not, however, necessarily translate into institutional support for contemporary emirs. In some localities, other authorities are seen as more relevant and some groups perceive themselves to be disconnected from the leadership of the emirates. In Muslim Hausa settlements in rural areas in the southern part of the state, “the local” is constructed around that particular setting, which in turn is perceived as being challenged by non-local forces, as the Christian ethnic groups are regarded there. Christian groups stress the Hausa ethnic affiliation to regional forces and see instead the Hausa settlements as a threat to the local. Different scalar aspects are consequently emphasised depending on setting and on what is at stake in the specific circumstances, so that the conflict transcends the demarcations of decentralised state authority. While groups share a regional religious and historical legacy, a localised form of traditional authority is preferred as having increased weight in relation to other groups, pointing to the dual role traditional institutions play. They not only sustain community relations, but also render the community relevant in relation to other communities. When competing forces are interpreted as local, localised forms of traditional institution are affirmed, as this strengthens the group’s position vis-à-vis other groups.

Northern Nigeria as an idea – articulated as “One North” – is also relevant to political relations. This implies a united north as the overarching basis for common mobilisation and transcends ethnic and religious affiliations. The idea of the north as a political unit has its basis in the first republic (1960-66) when the regions made up the Nigerian federation. The ideological foundation for the unit was built around the region’s aristocracy, which also dominated the leading party in the north, the Northern People’s Congress (NPC). The “traditional” values of the area are said by proponents of “One North” to be degrading and moral decay is considered to be a setback to the idea of a common northern Nigerian identity, irrespective of religion. The northern political community is constructed with regional references, covering 19 of the 36 states. This adds another geographical dimension to citizenship.
The “Middle Belt” concept, around which Christians in southern Kaduna mobilise, is discarded as it implies fractures in the regional integration project, which is important for national political competition. The question of mobilising a large political community is also connected to a notion of democracy as majoritarian. Democracy is, however, at the same time deemed ill-suited to local circumstances as it is associated with “Western” values. Nevertheless, sharia laws have been implemented in a democratic framework, with claims to religious rights as the basis but also on the argument that it is the right of the majority to have its way. Associating places with religious majorities subsequently became the basis for legal reform in Kaduna. Sharia laws are applied in places with Muslim majorities, and customary courts were simultaneously established in places with non-Muslim majorities. Accordingly, it is not only political and social rights that connect identity to territory through the practice of indigeneity, but this trend is also reinforced by the judicial system.

Muslims, like Christians, identify colonial rule as central to the conflict in its present form. But while Christians, as noted, link it to indirect rule and the transfer of authority, Muslims argue that local norms and values were destroyed when those aspects of sharia relating to criminality were abolished. Some global influences are seen as constantly undermining moral and cultural institutions, thus making morality and values tools for political competition. There are, however, global connections that Muslims see as constructive. These are primarily religious and related to the global community of believers (ummah). The Muslim identity in Kaduna is linked to a conception of northern Nigeria as a basis for affiliation. But non-Muslims are nevertheless considered part of northern Nigeria in a national perspective in terms of state demarcations and political competition. This implies a northern identity with common traits, and transcending religion, which is constructed in relation to a southern Nigerian identity.

The territorial demarcations of the state are challenged by alternative versions of citizens’ scalar connections. This has made state institutions rely on community representation for interaction with citizens. Neo-customary institutions are recognised as the representatives of localities and are seen as appropriate for regulating social relations. This does not, however, imply
that neo-customary institutions in themselves are framed as local, but they are considered to be locally connected in a way the state is not.

III: Political decentralisation and conflict: The sharia crisis in Kaduna, Nigeria

When the military handed over power to a civilian regime in 1999, the first elected governors and state parliaments gained increased power to manage subnational political institutions. One of the first controversies to face the new democratic order was the initiation by some northern states of processes for implementing sharia laws. This triggered a response all over the country, not least Kaduna State, including demonstrations and violent clashes. The article examines the ways in which different scales of politics are mutually constituted around the sharia issue and how the sharia proposal resulted in clashes in Kaduna. It is argued that the initiative, even though it started as a sub-national question, was connected to national power contestation.

The sharia issue demonstrates that the type of political decentralisation prevalent in Nigeria leads to the local playing out of identity politics. The federal government avoided making the sharia into a national political issue and diverted it into the local political space. In Kaduna, the issue aroused local political contention that escalated into violence and polarised people along religious lines. The historical roots of how ethnic identities became politically relevant are traced back to colonial administrative boundaries based on perceived notions of culture, rather than territory. The social and political order this created was reproduced after independence and continues to structure social and political relations.

The introduction of sharia criminal laws was initiated by the Zamfara State governor and had strong support among many Muslims both in Zamfara and in neighbouring states. This put pressure on governors to follow suit, but in states with substantial Christian populations there was equally strong opposition. In Kaduna, a demonstration against the proposal resulted in what the president described as the worst violence since the civil war of 1967-70. Apart from the religious motives, the sharia initiative can be interpreted as a
move by a northern regional political elite to make a statement in a context where the president was a “Born-Again” Christian Yoruba from the southwest, elected with the bulk of votes from the north, but seen as distancing himself from the Hausa-Fulani elite.

The sharia initiative in Kaduna State was inserted into a the conflict in which Christians in southern Kaduna have struggled against perceived marginalisation. It was interpreted by Christian groups as a move by Hausa-Fulani Muslims to strengthen their political and economic control of the state. In response, the demonstration against the proposal was arranged in an attempt to show the numerical strength of the Christians. Muslims similarly rallied behind the issue, and it is widely held that the governor was reluctant to tackle the question, as he feared the tension this would create, given the volatile history of the state. The crisis led to a postponement of implementation, but in a version specific to Kaduna State, sharia criminal laws were eventually introduced 18 months later. Also introduced were customary courts in areas dominated by non-Muslims on the grounds that each group should be allowed to be governed according to its own norms, customs and traditions. Before the new laws and courts were initiated, the state government created new chiefdoms in southern Kaduna in an attempt to concede to long-lasting demands for self-determination and autonomy from the Zaria emirate. The new chiefdoms have, however, tended to create new conflicts, since new majorities and minorities are likewise produced in the process. Furthermore, strengthening these institutions has reinforced the status of religion, culture and tradition as the basis for political identities.

The sharia crisis in Kaduna illustrates the ways in which different scales are mutually constituted, specifically in terms of the state’s scalar divisions. The crisis is shown to be intrinsically linked to national politics at the same time as it is locally embedded in conceptions of domination and marginalisation. In the process, decentralisation further ties identity to territorial demarcation and accentuates religious segregation.
7. Conclusions

This study interrogates how contending parties frame geographical scale in ethno-religious conflicts in order to explore how ethnicity and religion are politicised in relation to the spatial organisation of the state. Decentralisation draws attention to disputed boundaries and tensions between formal and informal boundaries are enflamed. Different groups are tied to territorial demarcations, which triggers conflict over which ties a territory is assumed to reflect. The conflict in Kaduna has been analysed as a case of ethno-religious conflict in polities that uses territorial strategies, such as federalism and decentralisation, to accommodate ethnic and religious differences. In Nigeria, the territorial management of ethnic conflict by creating more states, and measures such as the federal character principle, further associate ethnic groups with specific territories. In Kaduna State, state boundaries are contested and actors frame territory in ways that do not conform to state structures. The state’s scalar arrangements thus trigger ethnic and religious mobilisation to have a territory associated with a particular ethnic group, as this brings privileges in the form of resources and representation.

Competition over state institutions is thus not only about control of territory as such, but also about the type of relations framing the territory, and this involves prioritising different scalar relations. Different parties picture the territory as being in different political spaces. While Muslims prioritise a regional perspective, a distinction is made between a northern religious and a northern political community. The former takes the precolonial Muslim emirates as its point of reference, while the latter falls back on the late-colonial regional unit. This distinction is, however, not endorsed by Christian ethnic groups in southern Kaduna, who reject the notion that there is a political community in the north independent of religion. Instead, they emphasise local particularities and regard Kaduna as controlled by forces associated with a Muslim north. The promotion of a non-religious northern iden-
tity is thus regarded as a strategy to impose an Islamic order. The political project of Christian groups is to have a new federal unit created that would be controlled by non-Muslims and would, it is argued, break Hausa-Fulani dominance. In short, demands for a separate political territory are grounded in prioritisation of the local, constructed as consisting of the largely Christian non-Hausa-Fulani groups. The new state would nurture ties with other north-central Nigerian states controlled by non-Muslim ethnic groups, instead of the northwestern Hausa-Fulani dominated states, of which Kaduna is considered part in a national perspective.

Decentralisation in Nigeria implies that the authorities should be associated with the majority ethnicity in a specific territory. This is why both state creation and the creation of neo-customary institutions are characterised as decentralisation. The approach reflects the general trend of associating “the local” with “community” and with origin and authenticity (Hagberg 2009:6). In Kaduna State, alternative authority structures in the form of ethnic and/or religiously based institutions have been embraced by state authorities as part of decentralisation and articulated as a way to “bring the state closer to the people.” The government has created new chiefdoms and established new customary and sharia courts. This serves to further legitimise ethnic and religious identities as the basis for representation. Decentralisation has, in other words, strengthened religious and ethnic identities by associating specific territories with certain groups of citizens. This is also the reason why decentralisation is expected to bring “a sense of belonging” to the citizenry. But as this thesis demonstrates, community relations are stratified according to local, regional, national and global relations as well. In this way, while federalism and decentralisation are portrayed as a means for achieving local autonomy, they trigger conflict over the relations and connections in terms of which “the local” is defined in heterogeneous and contested settings. It is crucial to gain local recognition to have a chance to be included in wider political processes. The struggle over local “ownership” is, therefore, not only about the local, but also and equally about resources and processes associated with other scales.

Nigeria’s fragmented citizenship geographies have been described as “a collection of citizenship containers” (Kraxberger 2005:23). I argue instead that we should recognise dual citizenship as based on ethnic and state rela-
tions, and that ethnic citizenship tends to become increasingly important for representation. Territorial association with a federal unit is not sufficient to deliver the privileges associated with citizenship in a state. The crucial point is recognition as an indigene of an area, which is less associated with space (as the container metaphor suggests), than with cultural and ancestral ties to a territory. Not everyone in “the container” (the federal unit) is recognised as an indigene, which requires an ethnic link to those conceived to be the first settlers in an area. Ethnically based citizenship is thus stretched out in space: people live in (and may have for generations) a different part of the country from where they can claim indigeneity (if anywhere) and are still regarded as “locals” in the area where they could make such claims. Citizenship based on identity relations provides grounds for exclusion from the state. Grievances associated with this practice are shared by Muslims and Christians of different ethnicities alike, as they are associated with place and context. For example, the indigeneity issue has generated numerous crises in Jos in Plateau State (Andersson Trovalla 2011; Adetula 2005; HRW 2005). In effect, indigeneity creates a dual citizenship in which ethnicity takes priority over nationality. The type of political decentralisation practised means that grievances revolve around how one group is seen as having access to resources the aggrieved feel entitled to, even though in practice only a minority of the group enjoys some of the benefits. This is because sub-national units are expected to express the predispositions of an assumed, but in practice not, homogeneous constituency.

Still, the notion of indigeneity strengthens the association between political authority and ethnicity. A Southern Kaduna State (or Gurara State) would not be religiously homogeneous, but the demand for splitting the current state is based on the idea of communal autonomy. This is in line with the idea that decentralisation better meets the preferences of the population. However, this presupposes preferences based on identity. Given complaints about the purely selfish interests of the political leaders that are to represent southern Kaduna in state and federal processes, political reformation is required for accountability to be strengthened. Likewise, inter-ethnic elite cooperation is dismissed as greed and a quest for personal power. Thus, changes in administrative boundaries do not of themselves improve political rela-
tionships in the constituency – instead new majorities and new minorities are formed.

The sharia issue triggered violence in Kaduna on account of the way a politics of scale localised the issue, although it had regional and national dimensions as well. Recognising that geographical scale is a structuring principle as well as a structured field, the analysis demonstrates how decentralisation triggers conflicts on an identity basis, involving contestation over the hierarchy of scales. While the national crisis may be subdued, religious and ethnic conflicts play out locally because decentralisation in Nigeria makes religion and ethnicity a powerful tool for political mobilisation.

The informal boundary between northern and southern Kaduna has in some respects become formalised, with identity and territory more tightly connected through strengthened identity-based institutions such as the sharia penal code, customary courts and newly created chiefdoms. This development whereby non-state actors exercise political authority has been embraced as “hybrid governance” that will “increase trust” (Johnson and Hutchison 2013), but it is more important to recognise that citizenship becomes ever more based on group belonging. The possibility of finding solutions based on a shared citizenship is thus attenuated. Authority based on community relations is rooted in conceptions of the past, which make issues such as accountability and representation problematic, since legitimacy derives not from actions and achievements but from tradition (Angerbrandt, Lindström and de la Torre-Castro 2011). State authorities intervene in the conflict in ways that underpin the very competing identities: neo-customary institutions are strengthened, interfaith dialogue is promoted and laws are promulgated that divide the citizenry into different cultural categories with the idea that this will bring “government closer to people.” Decentralised political authority, in other words, relies on neo-customary institutions and religious organisations.

The dominant strategy of the state for resolving the conflict is to acknowledge ethnic and religious differences and focus on tolerance and understanding between different groups. As Okwudiba Nnoli (1998) stresses, this strategy tends to be counterproductive in reducing inter-ethnic tension as it reaffirms ethnic and religious identities. But it is not only a matter of subjective affirmation. Given the emphasis on ethnicity and religion,
symbolic representation become more important than substantive representation. Symbolic representation means that an actor is perceived by the represented to stand for them on the basis of a shared culture or religion, while substantive representation means the representative acts on the basis of shared ideas and interests (Törnquist 2009:6). Symbolic representation does not, however, reflect pre-defined social groups. Rather, these groups are (re-)constructed in the political process (Stokke and Selboe 2009:60). When government acknowledges certain actors as representatives of a group on a religious or ethnic basis, these categories are also recognised by the people as grounds for inclusion or exclusion. The ways in which these categories are associated with geographical scale is part of how claims to representation are legitimised. Southern Kaduna groups stress local territorial connections, which trigger demands from Christians for a new state as a solution to the conflict. Muslim groups attach Kaduna to a wider region with specific ideological roots and because the conflict is framed in religious terms, Christian groups also draw support from other groups and individuals that structure the nation in compatible ways, thereby reaffirming “north” and “south” as political categories with religious references. The conflict is thus not only over local relations but helps to shape relations between citizens in Nigeria at large.

This study demonstrates that the argument in favour of decentralisation and federalism as means to reduce ethnic and religious conflicts by better meeting the preferences of a heterogeneous population and their demands for limited autonomy fails to acknowledge the ways in which conflict-ridden relations entangle processes across different scales. Instead of reducing tension, localisation of politics raises the stakes in identity-based conflicts, especially as control of local institutions is necessary for inclusion in wider political processes.
8. References


