THE DYNAMICS OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AMONG ETHNIC GROUPS IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Lord God Almighty for his ever loving presence, strength and inspiration from the commencement of this work to its end.

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Abstract

Since colonial times, identity construction and reconstruction has been a recurrent trend among ethnic groups in contemporary Benue State, Nigeria. Violent contestations have emerged from these reconstructions leading to loss of lives and properties. Understanding the dynamics of identity construction is critical to understanding the recurrence of violent contestations in Benue State. While a plethora of information exists on these contestations, there is dearth of data on the dynamics of identity construction in the State. This study, therefore examined how social thought and *significant other-groups* influence the dynamics of identity construction among the ethnic groups in Benue State.

The research was anchored on Berger and Luckman's constructionist theory. Descriptive and exploratory designs were adopted and respondents were purposely selected. Fifty In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) were held with gatekeepers among Tiv (10), Idoma (10), Igede (10), Etulo (10) and the Jukun (10) ethnic groups in their major traditional towns of Gboko, Otukpo, Oju, Adi respectively, to elicit information on social thought and *significant other-group* relations in identity construction. Ten Key Informant Interviews (2 per ethnic group) were conducted with individuals aged 60 years and above to provide information on identity construction in historical perspective. In addition, 20 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held to elicit information on identity construction in contemporary times as well as the social relations of identity construction. Different FGDs were held for males and females ages 18-39 and < 40 years. Archival research and 5 case studies of individuals, who were 18 years old at the time of the 1950-60s Tiv protests, were used to examine identity construction in historical perspective. Data generated were subjected to content analyses.

The Tiv and Idoma were the *significant other-groups* whose perceptions and attitudes influenced the reconstruction of identity of other ethnic groups of Etulo, Jukun and Igede. Their designation as *significant-other groups* was based on population, recognition by the State as the 'majority' and the creation of the Tiv and Idoma traditional *rulership* institution. The *significant other-group*s constructed their social thought identities based on their dominance and control of State resources while the other ethnic groups constructed their social thought as 'enslaved' and 'dominated' with a desire for change. The other ethnic groups of Etulo and Jukun reconstructed their identity as distinct from the Tiv. The Igede reconstructed their identity as distinct from the Idoma. Hence the Etulo, Jukun and Igede created social thought to emphasise and reify their distinctiveness. The Tiv and Idoma had a disparaging identity construction with regards to the 'minorities'. Identity construction was spear-headed by charismatic individuals and groups who had a vision for the liberation of their ethnic groups. Spearheads with varying characteristics emerged as the need for new identities arose.

Ethnic groups used identity construction to attract development from the State through facilitators and the creation of socio-cultural organisations to mobilise for community development. Government should ensure equitable distribution of resources and empower 'minority groups'.

Keywords: Identity construction, *Significant other groups,* Ethnic dominance,

Word count: 492

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The concern of Sociology from the time of its emergence todate has been to understand and provide causal explanations of human social interactions. This has not been without challenges as individuals and groups constantly construct and reconstruct boundaries and differences in the course of social interaction (Kolb 2013, Ray 2010, Storr 2009, Scholte 1996). The history of many societies is replete with the creation, emphasis, and manipulation of distinctions and boundaries among individuals and groups in the society (Elfert, Miguel and Posner 2010). Identity is a vital aspect of human existence which is often used to create, emphasise and, in some cases, contest these distinctions and boundaries. In the past, identity was seen as given, fixed throughout life, and could not be changed irrespective of events in the social environment (Brumley 2013, Howard 2000, Cerulo 1997). Social groups were portrayed as homogenous and fundamentally different possessing some innate and invariant set of characteristics (Grande 2000). On the contrary however, the works of Charles Horton on Cooley (1864-1929)[1], George Herbert Mead (1863-1931)[2] as well as Berger and luckmann (1966) on Social Constructionism[3]have shown the constructed, fluid and open ended nature of identity (Ashley and Orenstein 2007, Abraham 1982, Ritzer 2008, Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Also racial, religious and ethnic movements and contestations that have been witnessed globally further point to the fact that identity is constructed. The fact that identity is constructed is also an indication that identity is dynamic (that is it can be constructed and reconstructed) depending on the social context. Hence Omobowale and Olutayo (2009:77) explain that

> The construction of identity involves a combination of social processes which work together to attach contextual meanings to the evolved identity. As members gain interpretative understanding to the meanings... attached to the constructed identity they tend to deemphasise their physical and social dissimilarities and rather

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[1] In his works on Looking Glass Self, identity is created through interactions in the social environment

[2] His works on Symbolic Interactionism where he regarded the self as being social deriving from interactions in the social environment and the fact that people act and react on the basis of meanings they attach to events in their social environments.

[3]Social constructionists believe that identity emerges from   dialects between the individual and the society

accentuate their similarities and oneness (Omobowale and Olutayo 2009: 77).

The fact that meanings attached to the constructed identity are contextual, points to the dynamic nature of identity as it can be reconstructed to reflect the changing contextual subjectivities of members of the social group. Furthermore, identity especially for the ethnic group, is made up of past ancestral construct and the future aspirations and can be modified and redefined down the generations according to the contemporary interpretations of shared ancestry and evolving traditions (Weinriech, 1998). Moreover, identity is episodic in nature as its form, content and utility value are constantly altered depending on specific historical antecedents and contending social and economic problems (Gandu 2001).

Identities have historically been significant in Nigeria especially during and after colonial rule. After the creation of Nigeria through the amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates by the colonial masters, suspicion of deliberate administrative divide and rule policy warranted the inventions of identity-based constructions, pitting the Northern and Southern parts against each other (Suberu and Osaghae 2005, Kalu 2004, Jega 2000). During this period and the immediate post independence era, only three ethnic groups were noticeable – the Hausa-Fulani, the Igbo and the Yorubathough other ethnicities existed. Over the last four decades, various ethnic identities have emerged and are still emerging. A classic example is cited by Suberu and Osaghae 2005 where the Ikwere who were Igbo during the civil war redefined themselves as Ikwere after the civil war. The post-colonial Nigerian State has had the undaunted challenge of grappling with the rising tide of identity mobilizations and contestations among new ethnicities that have emerged.

North Central geo-political zone (The Middle Belt Region) has witnessed numerous identity mobilizations and violent ethnic conflicts in the history of post–independence Nigeria (Alubo 2006; Ajene, 2006; Best 2006; Thomas, 2002). The United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), a regional group was created in this region to contest the non-inclusion of minority ethnic groups of the Middle Belt in the Nigerian political structure (Best 2006, Agbu 1998, Osaghae 1998, Ajene 2006). This region forged a united front to resist the Hausa-Fulani domination. At this time, the various Middle Belt linguistic groups saw one another as of one social identity. Lately however, the Middle Belt has witnessed a lot of fierce identity contestations showing a considerable break down or suspension of the wholesome Middle Belt identity (Alubo 2006). Many of the ethnic groups in the Middle Belt have engaged one another in violent identity

conflict for example Tiv/Alago, Tiv/Fulani, Tiv/Jukun, Ebira/Igala, Ebira/Bassa, Tiv /Igede, etc (see Okafor 2007, Alubo 2006, Best 2006, Tenuche 2006 Alubo 2004, and Ibrahim 2000). Furthermore, within the Middle Belt, numerous identities have evolved claiming to be 'nations' and/or 'races' like Tiv nation, Idoma nation, Igede nation and the like. One trend that is noteworthy is the fact that even within these 'nations' other groups have emerged; not with a different name or language but have redefined their identity as different from the larger groups and are even beginning to undermine the so-called 'nationhood' of the ethnic groups. These trends point to the fact that identity construction is dynamic and therefore suggests the need to examine the social relations of identity construction.

 The fact that identities are constructed in the course of social interactions show the critical place of 'significant other groups' in identity construction. Identity is actually constructed through the social dialectic of an ethnic group and 'significant other group(s)' (Storr 2009, Itenkel 2005, Abubakar 2001, Skeldon and Jowet 1995, Jenkins 1994, Nagel 1995). A 'significant other' group as far as identity of an ethnic group is concerned is/are other contesting ethnic group(s) within the social and physical environment of that particular ethnic group. This emphasises the need to also examine the ethnic groups' perception about one another and the possible influence on identity construction and reconstruction. Furthermore, identity construction involves the creation of boundaries and distinctions. An understanding of the meanings attached to these distinctions and boundaries is also important. This research therefore aims at examining the dynamics of identity construction among ethnic groups in Benue state.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Conflict has been a recurrent reality in the North Central Region of Nigeria through the colonial era to date. All forms of ethnic religious, communal violence have been witnessed in this region leading to loss of lives and property and the reconfiguring of social interaction from that of mutual peaceful coexistence to that of mutual suspicion. Although conflict has been recurrent in this region the nature and character of the conflict have been changing over time. The earliest conflicts witnessed in this region were aimed at resisting colonial rule; hence there were pockets of resistances (Ibrahim 2000, Mustapha 200,0kpe 1994). Classic among them was the Ogbiloko resistance of 1928(Odey 1980). The conflicts witnessed in the 1940s to the early days of Nigerian independence were aimed at contesting the perceived/

real non-inclusion of the North-Central Region in the Nigerian political process and structure (Suberu and Osagahe 2005, Obi 2004). Examples include the Tin Mine riots in Jos in 1945 where the natives of Jos contested the control of the Hausa- Fulani in the Jos tin mine and the Tiv riots in 1959, 1960 and 1964 which also resulted from the repression of the Tiv by the Hausa-fulani and the government in the defunct Northern Region[4] (Obi 2004, Ojie and Ewhrudjakpor 2009).

However, the nature and character of the conflicts after the return to civilian rule in 1999 changed. Ethnic groups in this region shifted from conflict aimed at contesting their non-inclusion in the Nigerian state to conflicts against one another. Some of the conflicts assumed genocide dimensions as some ethnic groups designated others as settlers, non-indigenes, strangers as well as visitors and as such were marked for extermination (Alubo 2006 AJene 2006, Best 2006, IDMC 2008). This trend led to the designation of some particular areas like present day Benue state as a hot bed for conflict. The recurrence, as well as, the change in the character of these conflicts raise a number of issues that are important for probing. Why are conflicts recurrent in this region in Nigeria compared to other regions in Nigeria? Why have there been changes in the character of conflict? Could it be as a result of the fact that the ethnic groups are reconstructing their identities? If this is true, why and how are they reconstructing their identities, what are the dynamics of identity construction and reconstruction among the ethnic groups, who spearheads identity construction, and is identity construction linked in any way to access to resources for development?

Some scholars have linked the recurrence of identity related conflict in this region to globalization and its attendant effect of the need to survive and guard against extinction (Adetula 2007, Abubakar 2001, Ali 2007).Others have linked this trend to the reconstruction of identity among the ethnic groups where groups that hitherto regarded one another as having one identity. This position sees the reconstruction of identity here as a result of a gradual breakdown of the *wholesome* middle belt agenda to the emphasis on distinct ethnic identity. This research further explores this position focusing on Benue state. Benue state is chosen for this study because of the role of the Tiv in the formation of UMBC as well as the agitation for the creation of the Middle-Belt state. Moreover, observations of social relations among ethnic groups in the state show identity reconstructions and identity contests.

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[4] Joseph Tarka spearheaded the formation of the UMBC to contest the control of the Northern Peoples Congress NPC which was the dominant party in the defunct Northern region. The victory of the UMBC in the Tiv speaking areas resulted in the repression of the Tiv who consequently rioted to protest their repression.

In the defunct Benue province which was part of the former Northern Region, two major ethnicities were *visible*: the Idoma and the Tiv. With the creation of Benue state[5], other ethnicities became *visible* like the Igede, Jukun and Etulo. Presently, other groups like, Utonkon, Agatu and Akweya which were historically regarded as clans under Idoma are reconstructing their identity as distinct from the *wholesome* Idoma identity. Apart from these groups, others like the Nyifon Abakwa and Arago are other groups that exist in the state apart from the dominant ethnic groups. This trend raises pertinent questions as to the social relations that may have influenced the construction and reconstruction of identities among these ethnic groups.

 The Idoma and the Igede were under the Idoma Native Authority during the colonial period (Odey 1980, Ode 2003). It was common place for the Igede to be regarded as Idoma. These two ethnic groups had and still have one king known as" Ochi Idoma" literarily translated" king of the Idoma". The longest serving Ochi Idoma in history was of Igede origin. These two ethnic groups share cultural values. They exhibit common characteristics in terms of staple foods consumed and festivals. Economic transactions are deeply entrenched and inter-ethnic marriage is common. In recent times however, the Igede prefer to be addressed as Igede and not Idoma. There have been very strong agitations for a first class chief for the Igede and the creation of more council wards among the Igede. All these point to efforts by the Igede to construct a distinct Igede identity away from the Idoma.

 The Tiv had a 'one Tiv nation' agenda in their contests with the Doma, Fulani, Alago, Jukun, and Igala. Clan relationships like, Nanev, Masev, Nongov Ukan, Hyarev and Kunav are becoming points of emphasis over and above the Tiv ethnic group as a whole. These are attempts among smaller groups within the ethnic groups to construct a distinct Tiv identity away from the wholesome 'Tiv nation Agenda'.It is in the light of this, thatthis research is aimed at examining the dynamics of identity construction among ethnic groups in Benue state.

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[5]When Benue was created in 1976 the Igala was one of the major ethnic groups but with the creation of Kogi state, the Igala was removed from Benue and joined to Kogi state.

1.3 Research questions

1. How does indigenous social thought depict ethnic identity among groups in Benue state?

2. What is the trajectory of identity construction and reconstruction among ethnic groups in Benue state?

3. Who spearheads identity construction and reconstruction?

4. How relevant are *significant othergroups* in the construction and reconstruction of identity?

5. How is identity construction and reconstruction used to attract development projects?

1.4 Objectives of the study

In order to answer the above questions, the thesis generally interrogates the fundamental basis of identity construction and reconstruction with a view to exposing the possible reason for such, the ideas and ideologies developed to achieve it as well as the personal characteristics of spearheads of identity construction. Specifically therefore, the thesis:

1. Examines how the social thought depicts indigenous (ethnic identity) among ethnic groups in Benue State.

2. Traces the trajectory of identity construction and reconstruction among ethnic groups in Benue state.

3. Identifies and examines the spearheads of identity construction and reconstruction?

4. investigates the relevance of the 'notion of the *significant other groups*' in the construction and reconstruction of identity

5. examines the implication of identity construction and reconstruction for development

1.5 Significance the Study

Identity and its construction is a subject that has engaged the attention of academics and members of the society in general. In recent times, it has occupied a place of salience in most societies of the world. Beyond this there appears to be a surge and resurgence of identity politics suggesting a need to understand the dynamics of its construction and impact on social interaction and existence in the society. The incessant conflict in Nigeria especially the

North-Central region has been linked by scholars to identity construction. Though a plethora of data exists on the dynamics of identity related conflicts, there is a dearth of data on the dynamics of identity construction among ethnic groups. This research is focused on Benue state for the following reasons;

Benue state is a pluralist state with diverse ethnic composition and a high level of consciousness about identity and the mobilization for its defence and territorial space. This study will result in giving an in-depth understanding on identity construction dynamism and its social relations. This study also has implications for integration among ethnic groups in Benue State. Benue state produces the bulk of the food consumed in the North-Central region. The negative effects of identity reconstruction can have implications for food security.

Also understanding identity and its constructionare central to understanding the rights of citizenship. This is because; citizenship determines access to resources, rights of residence, benefits and opportunities in a place. Reconstruction of identity can also translate to reconstruction of citizenship. Understanding identity construction and reconstruction is central to the understanding of incessant violent contestations, mobilizations and consciousness in Benue state and in the middle belt region. Studies have focused on examining the dynamics of ethnic conflict in this sub-region without focusing on identity construction and reconstruction which many times are the basis of these conflicts. The 'indigene', 'settler', 'native' and 'stranger' question can be addressed through theunderstanding of identity construction and reconstruction. Researching into ethnic identity construction and reconstruction is central to understanding and arriving at solutions to the ethno-regional conflict in the Middle Belt Region.

1.6 Conceptual Clarifications

In this subsection, the various concepts used in the study are operationalized as follows:

Ethnic group refers to groups with ascribed membership usually but not always based on claims or myths of common history, ancestry, language, race, religion and culture and territory. All these variables need not be present before a group is defined. The important thing is that such a group is classified and categorised as having a common identity that distinguishes it from others.

Identity is any group attribute that provides recognition, or definition, affinity, coherence and meaning and distinguishes an individual or groups of people from others. Beliefs, language customs, music, dressing, are attributes of identity. Identity distinguishes one group from another. It could be at various levels such as ethnic, race, religion, occupation and nation.

Identity construction refers to the process through which individuals and groups construct markers, world views, beliefs and attitudes that differentiate them from others.

Identity contestation refers to competition or struggles which revolve around the protection of identity. It also refers to struggles to move into areas of perceived or real marginalization. Identity contestations most times are related to access to resources, territorial space, political positions etc.

Identity reconstruction refers to the act of constructing a different identity from a previous or larger group identity. It involves creating new world views or markers to make the group different from a previous or larger group.

Significant Other Group(s) refers to other ethnic group(s) within the social environment of an ethnic group.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Introduction

Identity construction, reconstruction and politics have engaged the attention of the academia and contemporary society in recent times (Alubo 2006, Sergeant 2006, Suberu and Osaghae 2005, Berstien 2005, Harshe and Patel, Ryan 2001, Jega 2000, Anugwom 2000). This is not unconnected to the rise in identity consciousness and politics as well as the resurgence of identity related conflicts in many countries across the world. World over, there appears to be a pull from the state towards ethnic/ regional/ religious enclaves. As such, in many countries, the "centre" appears to be losing its hold. Violent contestations have occurred in many countries such as Rwanda and Burundi, Yugoslavia, Sudan and the like. Some scholars have attributed this trend to globalisation and its attendant characteristic oferasing of boundaries between nation-states(Adetula 2006, Abubakar 2001, Ali 2006)while others have attributed this trend to the aftermath of colonialism and its consequences and the need for resource control((IDEA 2000, Ikime 2002, Osaghae 2002,Otite 1990, Suberu 1996, Mustapha 1998).

Another group of scholars link this trend, to the introduction of structural adjustment strategies by governments of various African states (Jega 2000, Ibrahim 2000, and Mustapha 2000). This group of scholars, though not necessarily in concert, believes that, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) created a desire to scramble for access to the "centre". Hence, identity construction, reconstruction and movements were viable tools of this process. As such, in many nation states, the identity movement became a huge project which was threatening the centre and pulling people towards regionaland ethnic enclaves at the expense of the centre. Although identity construction and politics are consistent aspects of the social reality of human existence, it is more salient among ethnic groups especially in developing countries. Hence, the literature here focuses on identity construction under the following themes:

I.   The Nature and Dynamics of Identity Construction.

II.   Identity construction, identity politics and identity conflicts.

III. Concept and Structure of Ethnicity.

IV.   Power relations, Identity construction and development concerns.

2.1.2 The Nature and Dynamics of Identity Construction

The subject of identity occupies a central place in social psychological theorising and research. It's origin in the social sciences can be traced to the psychological and sociological works of Erik Erikson (1968), Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929) and George Herbert Mead (1863-1931). Erikson works focuses on the psychological aspect as he looksatidentity as a person's sense of belonging to a group anchored both in physiological 'givens' and in social roles. Identity has attributes which are reflected in individuals as commitment to a cause, love and trust for a group, emotional tie to a group, as well as obligations and responsibilities relating to membership of a group with which a person identifies. Cooley evolves a concept of *looking glass self*[6] where he posits that people possess consciousness that is shaped in continuing social interaction. Mead is associated with Symbolic Interactionism, specifically the mind, self and the society[7] where he believes that the social whole precedes the individual mind both temporarily and logically. To him,theindividual was a product of a group and a self-conscious and thinking individual was not possible without the social world. The works ofErikson, Cooley and Meadfocused on the individualas a dynamic beingthat was a reflection of his social environment, pointing to the fact that identity is constructed in relation to one's social environment.

 Their works also challenge the essentialist notion of identity being innate and remaining fixed throughout life. The essentialist view of identity sees identity as reflecting the essence of an individual or group. Watson (2003) identifies three core features of the essentialist viewof identity. Firstly,identity understood as "who one is", "who one wants to be ", is a fixed phenomenon regardless of social and institutional context. Identity is fixed and cannot be changed irrespective of events in the social world. It also implies that who one is at birth is how one remains throughout life irrespective of changes in the physical and social environment. The second feature is that identity is natural and God given and should be maintained. Threats against such maintenance should be fought against. The third feature is that identity remains constant regardless of time and space. Essentialism defines

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[6]See Cooley on Human Nature and Social Order

[7]Mind Self and society was published by the Chicago press in 1934

racial, gender, cultural groups as homogenous entities suppressing differences between them. Essentialist definition of identity is actually based on what is "essential" to the group and what is not. One could argue about the impossibility of defining essence without specifying in relation to what it is established. In order to distinguish group's essential traits from the accidental ones, specific behaviour or outcome is used as a reference. Some traits become salient only within specific context. But such external reference; linking the group to a particular context is precisely what is denied in the essentialist perspective. Also once identity is defined on the basis of assumed essence; such identity is deterministically seen as the source of the group's specific behaviour and outcomes. This denies individuals belonging to certain group full subjectivity, casting them as mere manifestation of the groups they belong to. This means that individuals are mere manifestations of the groups they belong and not agents. In essence, essentialism "fixes" and "idealizes" identity. The works of the trio of Erikson, Mead and Cooley, beyond challenging this notion, dominated micro-sociological thinking through the 1970 but recent sociological works show a shift in focus of identity related research from the site of the individual to the collective. According to Cerulo (1997), this is fuelled by three important trends of:

> Social and nationalist movements of the past three decades have shifted scholarly attention to issues of group agency and political action. As a result, identity studies have been relocated to the site of the collective, with gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity, and class forming the "holy trinity" of the discursive field. Writings attend, in particular, to that which constitutes a collective and the political implications that result from collective definitions.

> Intellectual concerns with agency and self-direction have re-energized the study of identification processes. At the level of the collective, scholars are examining the mechanics by which distinctions are created, maintained, and changed.

> New communication technologies have freed interaction from the requirements of physical co-presence; these technologies have expanded the array of generalized others contributing to the construction of the self. Several research foci emerge from this development: the substance of "I," "me," and the generalized other in a milieu void of place, the establishment of "communities of the mind," and the negotiation of co present and cyberspace identities (Cerulo 1997:386)

These trends, in addition to the violent identity contests and conflicts witnessed across countries of the world, beyond relocating identity to the site of the collective have created

renewed interest in the subject of identity and its implications for social existence. This is an interest that spans the academia to contemporary societyin general. As a result, many scholars have attempted to look at the nature, process and dynamics of identity construction.

Alubo (2009) describes identity as a set of socio-cultural characteristics which individuals share or are presumed to share on the basiswhich one group may be differentiated from another. He further explains that it is a group concept in the sense that it is based on traits which provide responses to who am I? And it has a combination of ethnic, religious, class and gender which refer to the same person in self definition or in definition by others. Here, Alubo looks at identity as a definition on the basis of socio-cultural characteristics that are unique to social settings. His definition suggests that the multi-layered nature of identity creates opportunities for particular layers to be mobilised and emphasised depending on the social situation. Breslauer (1996) focuses on markers of identity where he seesidentity as the values, categories, symbols, markers and world views that individuals construct to make sense of their place in the world. To him identity answers the questions who am I? , what am I? and what am I not? Individuals are not born with a conscious identity but they are able to form their personal identity through relationship with parents, teachers, newspapers, television, religious organisations etc. So, identity is formed in the course of socialisation, training, education and other forms of experience.(Gandu 2001) further elaborates that it encompasses the social, cultural, psychological and economic distinctions put in place by social actors to distinguish between the self and others; this self refersto individuals, group or groups and community or communities. These two definitions point to the constructed nature of identity and the fact that identity construction has a meaning for those who have constructed it. To Lewis (2007), identity is the way in which individuals principally identify themselves in the social- economic system. Identity to him reflects the spontaneous affiliation that people choose to emphasise among various attributes including occupation, income, ethnicity, religion, gender, age or individual qualities. In Fearon's (1999) view, identity is a social category, a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and alleged characteristic features or attributes. These definitions abovego beyond emphasising that identity is constructed in social interaction.It is open-ended; it has various layers spanning ethnicity, religion, gender, which can be emphasised depending on the situation. It has meanings for those constructing it and significant other groups are principal actors in the construction of identity.

Gosine (2002) describes identity by highlighting two levels of identity construction. The first level concerns the defensively situated, collective identities and essentialisms that radicalised communities, construct in relation to a dominant culture that represents them in a homogenous and stigmatised terms. This level of identity construction represents communal efforts to challenge dominant representation through the construction of positive but equally essentialist images of community. Although the marginalised communities may attempt to portray this counter hegemonic collective identity as static and easily recognisable forms of consciousness in a romantically imagined homeland, they are cultural forms that are constantly being altered through negotiations with a broader continually shifting social context.

The second level of identity construction is what Gosine refers to as the complex multifaceted subjectivities that seemingly homogenous defensively situated"collectivities" often mask. This refers to group divisions that exist within larger groups that are many times concealed by a dominant group identity. These two levels of identity construction suggest that identity construction can be in reaction to a dominant group identity and multiple group identities exist within a larger group identity, which is a further pointer to the fact that identity construction is dynamic.Leornard (2012) sees identity and its construction as multifaceted, always in the state of being and not static. At different times and in different places people prioritise one identity over another or they may simultaneously hold multiple identities which are worked and reworked according to the social, economic and political circumstances they find themselves in. In politically sensitive societies with competing allegiances to the nation state, nationalism assumes underlying importance as a basic feature of identity. He cites the example of Cyprus which is a politically contentious society where there are competing claims regarding the legitimacy of national identity. Here the notion of "who we are" and what makes us different needs to be reiterated. Cyprus historically had a clash of two nationalisms and over the years tried to create an identity. Here, the national identity is concerned with asking questions about what binds the groups together and what makes them different from others. It involves asking questions about the past as well as the future. In essence, identity and its construction here rely on a reconstituted past, that often needs affirming in the present. De-Castor (2006) sees identity construction as being embedded in the specific cultural dilemmas of nations and regions of the world thereby, creating both particular opportunities and constraints for subjective transformation. He further discusses identity construction in two perspectives where one is focused on the impact of the adhesion

to modern values such as progress and development in its material and symbolic realisations and ultimately in its postmodern values of consumer culture, in countries of the periphery in the world economy. The second perspective of identity construction is linked to the interplay between such values and enduring social inequalities ingrained in the history of the country. This two-fold perspective leads to an unfair structure of opportunities for self-construction for an enormous contingent of youth, especially those of the lower class or stratum of the society. Beyond the issues of identity construction among youth in Brazil, he further discusses the unequal positions among countries of the world with regards to globalisation and the implication this has for identity construction. To him, peripheral nations seem to be atthe crossroads, captured by the demands to follow their northern counterparts in their strife for industrial, technological and social development, which may originally stem from northern countries trajectories.This global inequality, coupled with local underdevelopment has implication for identity construction especially among the youth. Jukarainen (2003) also focuses on the dynamics of age and specifically on the place of youth in nationalist identity construction. Here, he treats the youth as active agents instead of passive consumers of national identity. In this article, he presents some examples of identity political practices which he categorised as cultural and spatial and further explanation for the persistence of national thinking and behaviour even in current times of globalisation and spatial restricting. To him, the construction of collective identity is a process instead of a thing and it changes depending on the fields of power. Collective identities according to him can be differentiated into two,passive (identity potential) and politicised articulated identities.

Identity is constructed not only in relation to a social environment but the physical environment. A study conducted by Flynn (1997) at the border between Benin and Nigeria illustrates the fact that identity can be constructed in relation to a physical environment. Individuals at this border, though from the two different countries, were able to construct a border identity in which they refer to themselves as "we are the border". This border identity according to the study owes its origin to the economic and political instability in these two African states along with the colonialist's designation of boundaries between countries without recourse to the history and social interactions of natives of the countries involved. This group of people was able to utilise state inconsistencies and social control to construct a border identity as owners of the border and even earn a source of living from thereby dealing in goods like second hand clothing, electronics and cars which are regarded as contraband by the Nigerian government. So strong is the identity that they are able to collectively challenge

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the custom arrangement and successfully transport these goods from the Republic of Benin to Nigeria. They further view themselves as above the border regulations which restrict movement between the two countries. This according to the study is recognised by the custom officers at the border. Despite the construction of this border identity, they still hold unto their identities as citizens of Nigeria or Benin as the case may be, but their attachment to the border led to the construction of an identitycalled border identity. This study presents a kind of identity construction with regards to territorial arrangement and further shows that identity construction also has links with broader issues of survival and access to resources. Furthermore individuals have multiple identities and the utility value of a particular identity defines its use at any point in time.

 Emiov (2007) studied identity construction among the Pomaks of Bulgaria and posited that the durability of an identity is contingent upon its ability to provide security, social status, and economic benefits. People, according to him, construct identity according to their experiences, perceptions,interaction with neighbouring groups and official state definitions. This shows that identity has meanings for those who construct them and can be used as a tool for survival in the face of unfavourable social circumstances.

In concert with him, Storr (2009) also elaborates on the situational nature of identity where he posits that identity construction or the definition of identity when in conflict situation is different from when not in conflict. There could be an all inclusive definition in situations of conflict and this could be redefined in other situations. He furthermore posits that power to construct identity resides with powerful agents such as the state, religious institutions and intelligentsia who objectify the group and set in motion processes of self definition or affirmation and recognition by others. From most of the literature reviewed above, identity and its construction are seen as fluid, open-ended and subject to continuous re-definition. Identity is also seen as having a value which could be used to create, enforce, contest and maintain distinctions and boundaries. Identity has several markers and there are also ways through which identity is constructed. In essence, identity has building blocks and ways through which it is constructed and transferred to the next generation.

 Hancock and Lorr (2013) see music as a cultural formand a tangible resource that is used in the construction of identity. People draw on music as a resource to construct individual and collective identity. Music serves as a mode of interaction that is expressive, constitutive and embodies cultural assumptions about social relations. Music and its meanings inform people

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quite profoundly about who they are and what matters to them. Music is embedded in social life and is used as a resource and socialising medium to shape how individuals understand themselves, their communities and their social world. The relationship between music and the group flows in different ways. Music is identified by people inside the group(and outside the group) as belonging to it and membership of the group is marked partly by embracing musical practices rather than being epiphenomenal.Music sensitises aesthetics and experience through understandings of the senses and constitutes the meaning of interaction between self and society as well as makes possible the consumption and embodiment of the cultural norms that are embedded as a vehicle for self-constitution. In essence, music can move from a technology of the self for individual identity construction, to a technology of the collective by binding groups together through collective corporeal; and symbolic interactions expressed in mutual practices.

According to Regev (2007), Pop-rock music is portrayed as a major embodiment of the transformation of national cultural uniqueness from purist essentialism into aesthetic cosmopolitanism. In his article, he examines the local production of ethno-national pop-rock, and its public reception and legitimation through half a century.The article demonstrates how forces within the national context greatly contribute to cultural globalisation. He looks at three aspects of the rise of ethno-national pop-rock music to national legitimacy: the agency of musicians, analysed as structurally stemming from the intersection of the field of pop-rock and the field of national culture; a four phase, half-century long process, called here the 'historical musical event' of pop rock; and the consequence of pop-rock legitimacy for performance of national uniqueness. He illustrates his general arguments and theoretical points with reference to the cases of pop-rock music in Argentina and Israel. For him, the constitutive power of music for nationalism goes deeper than the mechanical attachment of the specific national community. With music, membership in a national community becomes an experience of the body. This is because music, in ways unlike any other form of art, moves the body. It does so either 'internally', by vibrating inner organs and arousing emotions, or 'externally', by prompting actual movements of the head, hands, feet or the whole body, with dancing being the paradigmatic example. With musical nationalism, membership in the nation is calibrated to specific genres and styles and through them to specific forms of corporeality, of feeling intensely present.

Appelrouth (2011) in his works looks at boundary-work playing a fundamental role in the struggle to create and recreate the cultural distinctions that sustain social hierarchies,

particularly those based on class and status. This discourse functions in two ways. In the first instance it assists in creating an emerging field by establishing boundaries between it and extant related practices. Second, it works to structure a field by establishing internal hierarchies of worth and credibility. In the case of the arts (pictorial, film, theater, music, dance), this has meant detaching its production from the control of religious and political institutions and the development of autonomous standards by which works are either exalted as 'artistic' or deprecated as 'folk,' 'popular' or 'commercial'. Aesthetic judgments become the purview of trained professionals who alone possess the expertise necessary to render informed, 'legitimate' evaluations. At the time of jazz's diffusion into the mainstream, the institutional and musical boundaries separating highbrow culture from popular entertainment had been in existence only for some 50 years. This was accomplished in important measure through the establishment of non-profit symphonies maintained by the largess of city elites. The legitimacy of this distinction and the value of music were symbolically reinforced through the decorum of audiences as well as the settings in which performances took place Real' music was to be performed in concert halls for educated audiences that passively comprehended the 'sacred' texts written by European composers. In a word, this was 'classical' music, a form of music rooted in the 'educated European tradition' of the late 18th and early 19th centuries and conventionally defined as 'balanced', 'elegant', 'restrained', and 'refined' A form of music that by its very name – 'classical' – denoted its rank and significance.

Ray (2010) discusses the cultural meanings of recent revivals in Yiddish music in the USA and central Europe. It does this with reference to Adorno's critique of lyrical celebration of the past as a means of forgetting. It examines the criticisms that recent 'Jewish' cultural revivals are kitsch forms of unreflective nostalgia and considers the complexity of meanings here. He then explores the ways in which klezmer might be an aural form of memory and suggests that revivals can represent gateways into personal and collective engagement with the past. He further argues that experimental hybrid forms of new klezmer potentially open new spaces of remembrance and expressions of Jewish identity. In particular, it examines the transatlantic phenomenon of the revival of klezmer music and how the meanings associated with these revivals are mediated by local histories and ways of addressing the past. On an individual level, music has a significant bearing on emotional and cognitive systems since it is encoded in the perceptual memory system (the way we process objects) and music awakes us, arouses us and engenders specific emotions which have an effect on cognitive functions.

At the social level, music is an artefact of memory and has, as 'a special status by virtue of its temporal and non-representational character'(something is missing here. The sentence isn't complete). (Find the missing part of the last sentence and let it beautifully flow into these questions. If you don't do it that way, the two parts will be disjointed) But how should these revivals be understood? Are they kitsch forms of superficial nostalgia or authentic reconstructions of social memories and engagement with a lost past. Do attempts to recollect a pre-Holocaust past signal a denial of persecution and a false nostalgic reconciliation? What is the relationship between music and nostalgia? The complexity of these questions is increased further by the development of the multiple media of archiving and transmitting memories. Recalling the past and reconstituting lost forms of sociality will never, then, be an act of repetition but of renewal through new media.

Kolb (2013)analyses diasporic versions of *Schuhplattler* (slap dance), a German-Austrian folk dance as a community activity among German and Austrian émigrés. He offers two case studies: one focusing on the anti-Nazi emigrant youth organisation 'Young Austria' in the late 1930s, the other on the practice and politics of Schuhplattler dancing by German émigrés to the USA in the late 2000s. He addresses how the dance has been deployed to serve starkly differing cultural objectives and political ideologies. The paperstudy draws on concepts from nationalism, globalisation and multiculturalism to contextualise the dance's role as a source of national and regional identity. An article in the weekly German periodical *Der Spiegel* claimed in 2006 that 'Germany still has no idea how to present itself, because Germans still have no idea who, or what, they are'. This comment, from a piece on German national identity, appeared in the press just a few days after the soccer World Cup's opening ceremony in Munich, which had featured presentations of Schuhplattler dance as a special highlight. The tournament prompted critical reflection and heated nationwide discussions about Germany's status within Europe and worldwide, in particular addressing issues of the nation's representation and the use of symbols to construct its national identity.

Representational strategies to promote a sense of belonging include an emphasis on tradition and continuity, often grounding national identity upon the idea of a pure, original folk or constructing narratives of nations, for instance in popular culture. The *Schuhplattler*, an Austro-German folk dance, is frequently mentioned in public discussions of German national culture, and for many foreign observers stands as a potent symbol of German identity. According to him, in countries as geographically removed as Australia and New Zealand,

German restaurants entertain customers with commercialised versions of folk art which frequently include forms of *Schuhplattler* dancing. And during heightened moments of national awareness (such as World Cups and Olympic Games) *Schuhplattler* often features prominently on the official itinerary as a practice seen to constitute *Germanness*. The name '*Schuhplattler*' derives from a rhythmic hitting of the shoes and thighs. The dance was originally performed by country folk, such as peasants, hunters and woodcutters in the mountainous regions of Bavaria and Tyrol. In its early forms, it constituted a couple and courtship dance with improvised elements, during which the man, displaying male prowess, wooed his girl whose movements mainly consisted of spinning combinations.

In a departure from focus on music and dance, Omobowale (2008) focuses on language and identity construction. To him language serves as a medium, through which people engage in social relations, are shaped and even internalise the culture of their immediate environment. In essence, language is a medium through which identity is constructed, maintained and communicated to both those with and without the identity. Ahearn (2001) further argues that in the course of social interaction people construct meaning and social reality as they communicate in the context of the culture in which they exist. To him, language does not just reflect and existing reality, it also helps to construct that reality. Reality here shows the world view of individuals and groups and is related to social settings. One's view of reality also determines identity and identity construction. So language is used to create reality cum identity. In concert with him, Errington (2001) sees the capture and use of indigenous languages by the colonialists and missionaries as a way of recreating the world identity of the indigenous people of Africa and Asia. To him, the coding and reduction of African languages to writing in European languages gave the colonialist the power to define what was right and wrong as well as impose their philosophies on the indigenous people.In addition, Henkel (2009)posits that identities are shaped and reinforced by strong and stable communities and the social processes within them. He further states that identity construction entails a process of being initiated into a community through understanding a language which enables one to interpret the world. This language further places one in a social structure and defines ones relationship within and without the group. Identity and its construction can also be used as a tool for survival. Several scholars attribute identity construction as a survival strategy adopted by social groups in the phase of structural adjustment, government restructuring and globalisation and the fear of becoming extinct. Identity construction is then used to ensure survival in the phase of these trends.

Ignatow (2008) discusses the environmental activism of the Aukuras and Romuva movements in Lithuania, and of several organisations opposed to a dam project in the Tunceli region of Turkey. Since the late 1980s, these movements have combined celebration of cultural traditions and identities with environmental protests, lobbying and education projects. Implicit in these movements are a response to criticisms that environmentalism has become overly bureaucratised and perhaps hegemonic, and a challenge to theories that view global environmentalism as a homogeneous movement. Ignatow further argues that although these movements are similarly shaped by globalising forces – including economic liberalisation, migration and international institutions – globalisation has, paradoxically perhaps, given rise to social movements blending traditional, local identities with global concerns such as the environment. These movements suggest that environmental activism in developing nations subject to forces of globalisation may bear little resemblance to past movements. In recent decades, two arguments have been developed that purport to explain how globalisation has given rise to environmental social movements in developing nations like Lithuania and Turkey. In the first argument, environmental activism in developing countries is thought to mimic activism in Western Europe and North America. Global environmentalism is thus a product of the 'cultural power') of both the western media and of international non-governmental organisations based in the West. Cultural diffusion arguments posit that activism in developing countries results from flows of information radiating from global centre to periphery. Through the global media, global civil society and even multinational corporations, environmental politics in developing countries is seen to be influenced by the concerns of the developed world as much as by local grievances and interests. In the second argument, which is based on theories of global economic inequality and dependency, environmental activism is seen as a response to the ecological damages brought about by global economic liberalisation and industrialisation. In dependency arguments, environmental movements in developing countries are seen to be opposed to the encroachment of multinational corporations into local settings. While cultural and dependency arguments disagree on the causes of environmental activism in developing nations, they do share a basic understanding of how globalisation works. In both perspectives, environmental politics is thought to result from trends originating mainly in the West, be they primarily economic, political or cultural. In this way, these perspectives imply that instances of environmental activism take roughly the same form worldwide, because they are driven by homogenising processes originating in the global core and spreading outward to the periphery.

Brumley (2013) is of the view that collective identity is shaped and constrained by particular socio-political context. The socio-political context here was an economic crisis during the 1990s which led to the emergence of a movement known as *Elbarzon*. *Elbarzon* literally refers to the leather strap that attaches the mule to the plow. This movement was a farmer's movement which united a diverse group of agricultural and livestock producers, other small business owners and home owners. A collective attribution of shared injustice and unfair banking and economic policies unified this diverse group. *Elbarzon* negotiated the local socio-political context over time, created boundaries, and solidified group consciousness. This they did by creating a boundary between the "we" as responsible debtors and the "them" as money owners responsible for the debt crisis. Their activities as a group enabled them to confront local and economic elites who defined the debtors as trouble makers. As the local conditions changed, the identity shifted from responsible debtors to engaged citizens encompassing the group's organisational focus beyond the debt crisis. Group consciousness raising activities helped to create the new identity enabling the group to stay active for over a decade.

Aigbiboa (2013) argues that colonialism bequeathed the enthronement of ethno-religious identities – the kind that dethrones national identity and national interest. As at 2012, ethnicity, religion and language remain the touch stones of personal identity and the albatross around the neck of a true national identity in Nigeria. According to Madibbo (2012), elitist debates in Sudan confined the countries diverse identities into two dicotonomous categorisations of Arabism associated with Islam and Arabic descent and culture and Africanism linked to Christianity, indigenous beliefs and culture. These polarised views along with the dominant ideology of the imposition of Arabism and Islam triggered a national identity crisis. This crisis contributed to the escalation of armed conflict, notably the civil war between the north and the south and the current conflict in Sudan's western province of Darfur. According to him, the boundaries between Africanism and Arabism are fluid. Multiple identities also resurface as a result of globalisation, migration and social ties among the ethnic groups.

Bosker-liwerant(2002) focuses on the place of globalisation in the construction of identity. Globalisation here implies processes that are not uniform as they take place in undifferentiated manner over time. The process of globalisation is also multifaceted and contradictory in nature. This process, according to him, gives rise to new identities with different levels of aggregation such as global identities and has given renewed importance to

ethnic and religious identities in shaping and re-ordering of global, regional, national and local spaces. He defines collective identities as patterns of similarities and dissimilarities constructed in order to build social boundaries: social construction and the maintenance of social solidarity among members of a collectivity becomes a central core. The construction and reproduction of collective identity is effected through the promulgation and institutionalisation of models of cultural order; thus the construction of collective identity and membership of different collectivities is combined with the codes available to those participating in such collectivities. Identity and its construction is hence influenced or shaped by distinct codes such as primordiality civility and sacredness or transcendence. The primordial code focuses on such components as ethnicity, gender, kinship or language from which to construct the boundary between the inside and outside. Taforidi et all (2002)sums up the nature of identity and its construction where they say, identity is about solidarity and setting of boundaries between those who are considered members and those who are not. In essence, identity is used to create a sense of "otherness" meaning and hope to the insecurity of everyday life or what is deemed to be an unjust treatment by other groups in the society. This study borders on the identity of ethnic groups so it is important to examine the concept and structure of ethnicity.

2.1.3 Concept and Structure of Ethnicity

Ethnicity occupies a place of salience in the politics of both developing and developed countries. Although modernisation theorists regarded it as a barbaric aspect of the culture and structure of the third world countries which was bound to disappear as the third world countries became more modernised and Dependency theorists also regarded it as false class consciousness utilised by manipulative elites in the society, ethnicity has remained a salient aspect of the structure of many societies across the world. Ethnicity has been defined variously by scholars. Otite (2000) defines ethnicity as the contextual discrimination by members of one group against others on the basis of differentiated systems of socio-cultural symbols. This definition points to the fact that ethnicity is constructed and employed as a tool for competition and contestation. In line with this, Osaghae(1995) defines it as the employment or the mobilisation of ethnic identity or difference to gain advantage in a situation of competition, conflict or cooperation. Abbink (1997) takes a less radical position as helooks at ethnicity as a cultural interpretation of descent and historical tradition by a

group of people as opposed to others and expressed in a certain behaviour or style. He further explains that it is a kind of expanded fictive kinship, which has a variable quality in the cultural and historical identity of a human and it occasionally overlaps with regional, political and economic differences. It is often a part of a person or groups social identity which is articulated in situations of conflict, such as conquest, marginalisation or incorporation.

Bozorgmehr (1997) looks at ethnicity as a phenomenon that is not static. He explains that ethnicity is socially constructed by aggregating up from small loyalties and identities to national levels and to supranational ones. Citing the examples of Sicilians and Neapolitans who emerged as Italians in America, he posits that ethnicity can be constructed and reconstructed depending on the social setting. He further lists language, regional origin, and religion as indicators of ethnicity. Mombeshora (1990) concentrates on the mobilisation aspect of ethnicity. According to him, ethnicity is the conscious subjective interpretation of ethnic differences that has the potential of being mobilised to press for ethnic interests. People are socialised into ethnicity as it is an intermittent phenomenon which may become salient in some political situations but not in others. He further explains that ethnicity is composed of symbolic markers or elements real or putative that are culturally defined and used in group differentiation. These symbolic markers include the combination of cultural content such as language or dialects, religion, customs, emblems, values, territorial content – region and locality, biological content such as kinship and descent. These symbolic markers are the markers of ethnic group membership which determine subjective self definition. So ethnicity is both objective and subjective in the sense that: it refers to nature of group membership and is rooted in a consciousness that is differentiated from others by symbolic markers like territory, history and ethnic interests. To further illustrate the character of ethnicity,White (2009), using Rwanda as a case study, illustrates how ethnicity was constructed and consequently mobilised for group action leading to genocide. Pre-colonial Rwanda society had a form of social boundary that was fluid and revolved around occupation comprising of the Twa, an aboriginal group who were hunters, the Hutus who were farmers and the Tutsis who were pastoralists. German colonialism solidified ethnic lines by reconstructing the history of the Tutsi as a separate Hamtic group which migrated into the region from the north to conquer the Bantu speaking Hutus. Identity and ethnicity was constructed as a tool for the effective colonisation of Rwanda. Nagel (2006), in a departure from the others introduces the notion of sexuality into ethnicity. According to him ethnicity

and sexuality join together to create a barrier which includes and excludes individuals and groups. Inherent in the construction of these ethno-sexual barriers he explains is a desire to define who is pure and who is impure to sharpen notions of 'us and them', fashion feelings of sexual desire and notions of sexual desirability, provide for the seemingly natural preferences of some partners as against others thus creating a platform for a taste of some sexual encounters as against others. She cites assertions such as our mothers are pure, virgins and virtuous, their women are spoilt sluts, our men are virile, strong, and brave, their men are impotent weak and cowardly, our women are mothers of the nation, their women are breeders and seducers. These assertions though sexually inclined are a platform for the construction and manipulation of ethnicity for group gain. Nagel (1994) describes ethnicity as the product of actions taken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their self-definition and culture. It is constructed by external, social, economic and political processes and actors as they shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions. Lentz (1995), on the other hand, in a social historical analysis of ethnicity in Ghana lays emphasis on the fact that ethnicity is not supra-historical and quasi-natural membership in a group but is a social identity constructed under specific historical circumstances.

Malesevic (2011), in a departure from the other scholars, focuses on ethnicity in time and space and argues that ethnicity is a phenomenon that requires explanation i.e. instead of ethnicity being an answer to a question it is a question that requires an answer. He engages the concept of ethnicity at the level of temporal and spatial. The temporal dimension of ethnicity refers to ethnicity as a distinct historical stage in the process of nation formation or as a remnant of a largely traditional world surviving in the modern era. The spatial dimension refers to ethnicity in the present. This according to him is a tendency to treat ethnicity as something exclusively associated with cultural minorities or as a distinct phenomenon of the non-western world. The temporal and spatial dimensions of ethnicity to him conceive ethnicity in a culturally reductionist, historically determinist, analytically particularistic and inflexibly collectivist. He tries to take a middle ground where he says ethnicity is a politicised action that draws on some cultural markers of social/ethnic groups as against the whole. Hunt and Evans (2011) see ethnicity as dynamic, provisional and constructed, allowing one to go beyond the static essentialist models of ethnic identity. Their work was focused on the narratives of 100 young Asians in a dance club rave scene. They duo examined how drug use and other consumption patterns shape understandings of Asian-American identity, i.e. how their lifestyle, participation in dance scene and consumption of commodities shape their

negotiation, construction and understanding of ethnic identities. They assert that identity is fluid, volitional and dynamic. People negotiate identity through their interactions within and without their environment. They furthermore explain that people can choose identity within an array of pan-ethnic and nationality based identities. Such choices are made within the context of structural racism and more constraining categorisation by outsiders. The Asians in America negotiate their identity especially with the dominance of American identity through participation in particular networks through which they accentuate and protect their identity.

2.1.4 Identity Construction, Identity Politics and Identity Conflicts

Identity politics refers to any form of mobilisation related to politics, culture and identity. It generally refers to phenomena as diverse as multiculturalism, the women's movement, civil rights, lesbian and gay movements, separatist movements, violent ethnic and nationalist conflicts in post-colonial Africa and Asia (Berstien 2003). It can also be used to describe politics aimed at claimed identities of their protagonists (Caloun 1994) in national struggles over access to the state and avenues of accumulation. It involves the mobilisation of identity consciousness, in order to create a mass base of support for the ruling class and the elite in their factional struggles in the accumulation process. In many nations of the world, the rise of identity politics is a recurrent reality. Identity politics is a product of the complexity of modern life which is responsible for the break up of relatively fixed identity markers grounded in traditional kinship system.

Tsai (2002) posits that Nigeria's most undaunted challenge lies in overcoming the severe divisions among its competing ethnic groups. He recounts that in 2002, clashes between the Hausa and the Yoruba ethnic groups resulted in the death of over 300 civilians. Since the restoration of civilian rule in may 1999, a total of over 10,000 Nigerians have died in civil strife. He also cites the example of the Tiv and the Jukun ethnic groups of central Nigeria who have engaged in genocide raids. He links the nature of Nigeria's identities to the flaws in the Nigerian government,military rule in Nigeria, and abuses of the military through coups. Military rule in Nigeria was motivated by ethno-religious loyalties. Lewis (2007), in describing the nature of identities in Nigeria, posits that ethnicity forms a central theme of Nigeria's post colonial politics. Ethnicity, according to him, waxes strong during election. He further explains that a number of factors influence the intensity of ethnic feeling. For instance, the quality of elections has a strong and visible impact on ethnic affinities. He cites

an example of the Igbo and the Ijaw speakers among whom ethnicity has intensified substantially in recent years coinciding with badly flawed elections in these regions. He also argues that identity in Nigeria is fluid and contingent with substantial variation among groups over time. The strength of ethnic identity varies among groups and regions of the country and fluctuates over time. This argument is against conventional beliefs that identities are fixed and essential in character. He also believes that identities in Nigeria are influenced by urbanisation and education. Ethnicity is stronger in the southern region of the country which is more heavily urbanised, reflect stronger educational endowments and have a higher concentration of economic activity.

Osaghae and Suberu (2005) describe Nigeria as a deeply divided state in which major political issues are vigorously and violently contested along lines of ethnic, religious and regional divisions. Nigeria presents a complex of individual as well as crisscrossing and recursive identities of which the ethnic, religious, regional and sub-ethnic (communal) are the most salient and the main basis for conflicts in the country. Some identities are assumed by citizens for political purposes and some are implicated in the day-to- day contestation over citizenship as well as competition and conflicts over resources and privilege in Nigeria. Identities in Nigeria, they further explain, have historical, geographical and political origins. They evolved from the old regional structures of the Nigerian federation where identities were shaped by leaders of the dominant ethnic group: the Hausa-Fulani in the northern region, the Igbo in the eastern region and the Yoruba in the western region. Identities in Nigeria span ethnicity, religion, regionalism, class, gender and youth.

Osaghae and Suberu(2005) further assert that ethnicity is the most basic and politically salient identity in Nigeria. They base this claimon the fact that Nigerians are more likely to define themselves in terms of ethnic affinities than any other identities. Ethnic identities are summarised into majority and minority identity. Religious identity ranks next to ethnic identity. In the Hausa-Fulani north, religion is more critical than ethnic identity. Religious identity they classify into Muslim, Christian and traditional. In the north, individuals and groups are more prone to describe themselves in religious terms, while the Southerners and Easterners are more prone to define themselves in terms of ethnic identity. Regional identity in Nigeria, according to Osaghae and Suberu, were evolved and consolidated by the colonialist in the process of state formation in Nigeria. The most fundamental cleavages were the north and the south, later the mid-west emerged and in recent times, regional identities are

organised around the six major geo-political zones in the country. The other identities like class gender and age are still influenced by ethnic, religious and regional identities

Jega (2000)believes that identities have been historically significant in the Nigerian political process. During colonialism, administrative exigencies warranted the intervention of tradition and the nurturing and exacerbation of the "us" versus "them" syndrome, Muslim versus Christian, northerner versus southerner, the Hausa-Fulani versus the Yoruba, versus the Igbo and so on. He further states that religion, regional and ethnic differences were given prominence in conceiving and implementing social, educational and economic development policies and project. This was the feature of the indirect rule system introduced by the British. The pact of colonialism set the context of the regional education, economic and political imbalances which later became significant in the mobilisation and the manipulation of identity consciousness, in order to effectively divide and rule as well as in the politics of decolonisation and competitive politics in the post-colonial era. To illustrate this, he cites the example of the differential impact of colonial educational policies which ensured that the northern region was educationally backward relative to the southern region and the colonial economic policies that ensured the southern region was relatively advanced economically compared to the north. This differential impact he further explains was a result of a deliberate agenda of divide and rule which used population as a criterion for representation to give the northern region a greater chance of controlling political power as a contra-veiling factor to southern economic dominance.

2.1.5 Power Relations, Identity Construction and development

Alubo (2006) sees identity and its politics as the basis for contestation for inclusions in opportunities and rights as are available to others. Many of these contestations, he further explains, lead to violence. In such conflicts, holders of particular identities are defined by the attackers and singled out for liquidation, forced to relocate and their properties destroyed. The collective nature of the violence he further illustrates, serves to strengthen the geo-political solidarity. Citizenship in Nigeria has very little material benefits. This gap is filled by ethnic and religious development associations thus, serving to reinforce divisions. This rise in ethnic nationalism serves to weaken national integration, as the first priority of various associations like Afenifere (for the Yoruba), Ohaneze Ndi Igbo(for the Igbo) and the Arewa consultative forum (for the Hausa-Fulani) is to their ethnic groups and not nation building or

national integration. These geo-regional movements according to him are preceded by identity construction and reconstruction which provided the basis for further divisions into new majorities and minorities.

Abubakar (2001) links the rise of ethnic identity and mobilisation to the authoritarian nature of the Nigerian state. He quotes Claude Ake (1994) as positing that the political class that inherited power from the colonialist in Africa regarded the state as the instrument of its will. Not only did they privatise the state but it exploited the state for primitive accumulation and used it to oppress the populace who had to find solace in ethnic and primordial identities. Ake further explains that the state is a formidable threat to everybody except the few who control it. It is a hostile force to be evaded, cheated, defeated and appropriated as circumstances permit. Most people have turned away from the state toseek safety and fulfilment in their communities and ethnic groups. The demands they make on these social formations have turned them into informal politics, in competition with the state. The disengagement of the populace from the realm of the state into ethnic, religious and other identity-based formations has led to a legitimacy deficit for the post-colonial state. The process of "delegitimation" coupled with the imposition of harsh structural adjustment programmes that threw up social forces culminating in diverse crises and conflicts across the African continent(recast this sentence. It is not complete). In places like Somalia, the phenomenon of state collapse has degenerated into clan "warlordism" while in Rwanda Burundi and the Democratic republic of Congo ethnicity has featured prominently as the basis of genocide.

Anegbode and Igbafen (2007) trace the rise of ethnic militia groups in contemporary Nigeria to the internal dialectics of the Nigerian political economy. They view Nigeria as a multi-ethnic state that has been ruled by political leaders who have sought to maintain hegemony by resorting to violence. The nature of politics in Nigeria compels every political organisation at a certain stage in its development to acquire an armed detachment, or to be militarised. Some political organisations utilising their entrenchment in the state use national armies, the police and other security forces as armed wings. The first ethnic militia group according to them emerged in the 1990s when the nation was in the throes of a powerful military dictatorship. The context for the rise of these groups was the Abacha and Babangida regimes. The inherent contradictions and crises of the Nigerian state led to the rise of these groups. He further explains that these two regimes had three salient features that reinforced militarism and promoted primordial loyalties throughout the country. These features include; the phenomenon of personal rule and the high concentration of powers in the hand of the military

leaders. The leaders were able to construct an access map through which they distributed goods and scarce resources. The public sphere was also manipulated for social expression and political action. Both Abacha and Babangida's regimes sought to annihilate any group or individual that opposed them. The issue of marginalisation and social deprivation became rife in the country especially for the ethnic nationalities. He concludes that the rise of ethnic nationalism and its auxiliary expression of ethnic militia are rooted in a sense of insecurity concerning the interest, future and self preservation of ethnic groups.

Obiayo (2007) asserts that identity politics and movements have risen because of the multiplicity of nations within Nigeria. He believes that the resurgence of ethnic identity politics in Nigeria as a manifestation of the fact that Nigeria was only being kept together by what each group felt they could get from her in the accumulation process. Once the access of any group to this accumulation is denied or curtailed, a phenomenon which Nigerians refer to as marginalisation, the group threatens to secede. He cites the case of the Oodua Peoples, Congress (OPC) who threatened to secede when Chief Moshood Abiola a Yoruba was denied the mandate as the winner of the 1993 presidential election. Various movements in the Niger-Delta, namely Movement for the survival of the Ogonni people (MASSOP), Ijaw national council (INC), Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Nationality (MOSIEN) and Egbesu youths also threatened to secede if they were not allowed to control resources in their area or get a larger share of the revenue. Also, the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra(MASSOOB) representing the Igbo nation threatened to secede because of the feeling of exclusion from the socio-economic and political mainstream of the Nigerian state. The Arewa consultative forum has not asked for secession because the north has been in control of power for the greater part of Nigeria's post independence existence. Mobilisations according to Obiayo are linked to the desire for accumulation and control for power.

Nnoli (2003) believes that identities are mobilised for power and control. Historically in Nigeria, people embraced homogenous national identity as a means of resisting the oppression during colonialism, but ironically today, ethnic identity has been mobilised and used against other groups within the state. Ethnic identity crystallises itself holistically; its claims are totalistic, it articulates all signifying interests and attempts to encapsulate the members' whole way of life. Mobilisation of ethnic identity becomes easy because the symbolic capacity of defining the totality of the individuals existence including fears, hopes and a sense of the future. Actions that undermine the group strike at the heart of the symbolic

existence of its members even though the action may not be directed at them personally. The colonialist first manipulated ethnic identity as a tool for administration and to curb Nigerian's nationalism and maintain power. He cites an example of Sir Hugh Clifford who in 1920 effectively dampened the emergent West African nationalism by preying on the ethnic sentiment of the Nigerian members of the national congress of West Africa when they called for the reform of the colonial order. The impact of this colonial machination was disastrous for the nationalist movement. A local Nigerian faction emerged that repudiated the congress movement in Nigeria and organised a pro-government reform club and as a result by 1934, the movement in Nigeria was dead. Nigerians then channelled their political attention and sentiments towards their ethnic groups and organisations. In fact, the colonial state seized every opportunity to spread the propaganda that Nigeria did not have a common destiny with respect to political independence because they were separated by differences in history and tradition. To him, the colonial masters set the stage for the mobilisation of ethnic identity and differentiation as a tool for power and control.

Obiayo (2008) links identity movements in Nigeria to the desire for state power. He posits that churches are involved in political campaigns and power play. Political aspirants now seek endorsement of the top clergymen of the various churches to ensure victory at the polls. Governorship aspirants pick running mates from rival Christian denominations to ensure balance at the nominations in the ticket and to assuage voters from rival denominations as that can become a reason for failure at the polls. In the civil service and other parastatals, the quest for ascendancy by the various religious groups and organisations is becoming pronounced. Religious divisions and denominations are fast becoming the norm rather than the exception. Sometimes offices are turned to mini churches in a display of piety that arises from showmanship rather than love for God. He believes that the political class capitalises on any form of identity to capture state power and public office. Religious identity always follows ethnic identity in the quest for power acquisition. To him, the rentier character of the Nigerian state is responsible for the plunder of the state and then instrumentality of identity in the struggle for state power.

Obi (2001) traces the resurgence of ethnic politics to the nature of the re-invigorated drive by global neoliberal forces to integrate Nigeria into the world capitalist system. Ethnic identity is transformed into a mobilising element, not only for contesting access to the state and oil power within a context of conflicting and competing ethnicity, but also a modality for organising social forces to resist annihilation, extraction and exclusion by the hegemonic

coalition of the ethnic elite. In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria he further explains, the identity politics reflect the changing forms of inter-class, intra-ethnic relations and strategies through which the popular classes (radical, elite, youth, student, women, peasant and professional group) contest the leadership of these movements and pushing a counter hegemonic nation-state agenda that seeks to deconstruct the currently centralised, authoritarian and crisis ridden one. He explains that identity politics in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria may also be linked to location of the oil rich ecology of the Niger-Delta in globalised oil relations. On the one hand, the Nigerian state mediates the relations between the global and the local, facilitating the extraction of oil and the accumulation of oil capital. While on the other, the global is domesticated in the Niger-delta, exercising power, playing politics, extracting oil and degrading the eco-system and excluding the oil landlords from the products of their land and waters. He posits that identity politics responds both to the changing global environment and intensified extraction of oil under adjustment by adopting a global platform of minority rights to resist globalised oil expropriation. In this vein, the identity of the indigenous people being violated by western cooperate interests is mobilised both locally and globally to challenge the state and oil multi-nationals. The social movement of the Niger-Delta adopts an agenda of national liberation (self determination), civic and environmental rights and democracy.

Olurode (2005) examines the identity and citizenship question in Nigeria in terms of the colonial project which left the African continent more disunited than they met it. The colonial project generated more consciousness among groups about their distinctiveness and those factors that separated them (we) from others (they). One result of this colonial contact, according to him, is the creation of self-doubt and the negation of identity formation among the dominated population. He explains that the struggles that culminated in Africa's independence, the various groups were in most cases, forced to coordinate their struggle to be free from colonial domination. He cites the *Mau Mau* uprising in Kenya, coal miners' strike, as well as the Aba women's riot in Nigeria.

Olurode further mentions colonial constitutional development as another historical factor in the explanation of the identity struggles in Africa. The constitution, according to him, made ethnic affiliation a major element of political socialisation and leadership recruitment but at independence the goals that were set included national integration, rather than regional or ethnic solidarity. These goals were incompatible as loyalty to the ethnic or regional group was difficult to transfer to the nascent state. The colonial order was strident in its opposition

to collaborative activities between ethnic groups. As a result of the colonial experience, individuals display multiple identities. These identities are variously expressed. As individual's membership of the new nation state is a nascent form of identity expression, the individual's membership of his ethno-religious group is much older and more enduring than membership of his nation state. The individual may also be a member of his employee association and the trade union congress. These multiple identities come to play in moments of critical decision making. They affect an individual's life chances, socio-economic and political opportunities that can be manipulated by him. These loyalties according to him have waxed over the years and have even influenced the enjoyment of citizenship rights and Africa's democratisation process. These identities are conflicting in their interest; they are not fixed as they are open to activism, suppression and even transformation depending on the events in the social environment.

 In concert with Olurode, Yonen (2005) posits that the colonial creation of Nigeria is a factor in the creation and mobilisation of ethnic identities. The colonialist initially divided Nigeria into three regions so as to exploit Nigeria's resources but they later unified these three regions into a colonial state called Nigeria. The administrative unification he further explains, did not overcome the wide regional and ethnic differences that became the dominant ways of group identity expression in the absence of any kind of group identity building attempt by the colonial authorities. The colonial masters exploited ethnic diversity in order to consolidate their rule. As a result, governance structures were designed with an objective to extract local resources supplemented by the colonial trading houses such as the United African Colonial Trading Company. In other to run the colonial economy efficiently, African labour was extracted by playing ethnic affinities against each other, resulting in efficient loyal and obedient work force. During this period, most development work took place in the southern and coastal Nigeria where colonial administrative and economic centres were located, while the peripheral regions became economically marginalised. He further explains that when the international pressure for the colonial masters to leave became evident in the 1950s, hasty preparations for independence largely ignored the institutional practices and dynamic resources distribution, formed throughout the colonial period. In his own views, the contradictions created in the colonial government led to the first political crises, which pitched the northern elites against the elites of other region.

 Identities have historical significance in Africa. Most of the scholars have examined identities in relation to colonialism and the nature of the state in Nigeria/Africa. Hence,

thegap which this study intends to fill is to bring to light the specific realities of the ethnic groups in Benue State in the light of identity construction and reconstruction as well as the social relations of identity construction and reconstruction.In addition, the study will examine the place of '*significant other' groups* (other ethnic groups) and spearheads in identity construction and reconstruction.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism was first introduced to the social sciences through the works of Berger and Luckmann in their treatise "The Social Construction of Reality" published in 1966 (De Lemater and Hyde 1998). Before the emergence of social constructionism, the prevalent theoretical orientation was phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. Social constructionism emergence was based on the efforts of Berger and Luckmann to bring man to the centre of reality as against the other macro-sociological theorists, which they believe gave man a passive place in terms of the construction of reality. Their constructionist agenda was an attempt to show that no matter how sedimented social conditions may appear or actually be, those conditions are nonetheless produced and maintained and changed through interpretative processes. (Maines 2000:577).

Berger and Luckmann believedthat functionalism and Marxism do not give enough recognition to the place individuals have in the creation of their social world. They aimed at replacing the mechanistic view of society implied by Functionalism and Marxism by viewing the social world as an actively negotiated flexible order, which ultimately resides in the interactions of individuals. They believe that man is biological creation that predestined to inhabit a world with others. This world according to them becomes the dominant and definite reality. Although the limits of this world are set by nature, once constructed, this world acts back upon nature,i.e. there isa dialectic between nature and this world. It is in the dialectic between nature and the socially constructed world that the human organism itself is transformed. In this same dialectic, man produces reality and thereby produces himself. In essence, it is in the construction of reality that man creates himself. Their work shows the power an individual has in shaping society and the open-ended character of history. Their major argument was to establish the role individuals have in shaping their social world and the open-ended nature of history (Maines 2000)

Social construction of reality borrows heavily from the Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge and Schutz Alfred's "Structures of the Life World" (Abraham 1982). Berger and Luckmann began by trying to refine the central ideas of Karl Mannheim the father of sociology of knowledge. Karl Mannheim had asserted that knowledge and ideas were a function of one's social position in the society. The process of knowledge must not be regarded as purely theoretical consciousness because human consciousness is passed through non-theoretical elements which arise from both man's participation in social life and in the streams and tendencies of willingness which work out themselves contemporaneously in that life (Abraham1982). Sociology of knowledge, for Mannheim, was aimed at emphasising the fact that all knowledge was situation-bound. Knowledge was usually tied to a given constellation of social and historical circumstances. Deriving from these assumptions, Berger and Luckmann sought their own sociology of knowledge, which would not be limited to knowledge and social position but would situate individuals in the centre of all ideas in the society. In a bid to redefine Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge, they proposed that Sociology of Knowledge became an inquiry into ways in which every day ideas are created and maintained. They see society as culturally and symbolically constructed. Society, they maintained, was neither a system, nor mechanism nor an organic font. Society isa symbolic construct composed of ideas, meaning and language. Their view of the nature of social reality was derived from Durkheimian tradition. They also modified the Durkheimian theory of society by the introduction of a dialectical perspective derived from Marx and an emphasis on the constitution of social reality through subjective meanings from Weber. The following are the arguments of Social Constructionism on which this research is based.

Individuals are involved in the construction of their reality and this reality is open-ended. Although Individuals perceive the world as ordered, consisting of discrete events and individuals acting independent of perceptions about them, this world is actually created by them. This creation is done in the course of the everyday interactions individuals have with others in their environment. Reality is constructed on a day-to-day basis. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), everyday reality is a socially constructed system in which people give phenomena a certain order of reality. This reality has both objective and subjective characteristics. They believe that

> Everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and
> subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world… the world of
> everyday life is taken for granted as reality by the members of society
> in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives. It is a world that

originated in their thoughts and actions and is maintained as real by
these (Berger and Luckmann 1966:33)

Society though a human product, is an objective reality (though individuals create society, society is still external to the individual person who is in turn a product of society). Society and reality in general, are constructed through the subjective interpretations individuals make in the course of their interactions. These become part of their everyday life and as such they become *habitualised* and then objectified i.e. constituted by an order of objects that [*seem to*] have been designated as objects before my appearance on the scene (Berger and Luckmann 1966). The reality created by individuals act back on the actors as though they were not involved in its construction. This to them is how reality, identity and even social institutions are constructed. This is as open-ended as individuals continue to interact in society. This makes society, social reality, identity, history and social order, an on-going production.

Secondly, language provides a medium through which reality is shared. Language is defined by Berger and Luckmann (1966) as the most important sign system of human society originating in the face-to-face situation. Common experiences of everyday life are maintained by the use of language. According to them, language provides individuals with the necessary objectifications and posits the order within which these make sense and within which everyday life has meaning for individuals, "i.e. I live in a place that is geographically designated; I employ tools from can openers to sport cars which are designated in the technical vocabulary of everyday life" (Berger and Luckmann (1966:36). Language in this sense coordinates one's life, fills it with meaningful objects and makes subjectivity more real for conversational partners and individuals. This makes language a significant symbol in social interaction as it provides the categories, or typifications that we useto classify events and persons in order to order them. Furthermore, language provides a way of viewing reality and placing oneself or a group in a particular social structure (Henkel 2005). Beyond this, language serves as a tool for reification. Language is used to reify the subjectivities individuals exchange in the course of interaction with their social and natural worlds. Reification here also implies that man is capable of forgetting his authorship of the human world. In essence, the producer is lost to consciousness.

The third argument is that the reality of everyday life presents itself as an inter-subjective world. This means that the reality of everyday life is shared. Other persons perceive reality in much the same way as consisting of similar events, persons and order. This reality is shared

basically through face-to-face interactions. This shared or inter-subjectivecharacter distinguishes the reality of everyday life from unusual realities like dreams and fantasies. In face to face interactions, individual subjectivities impinge on the other's subjectivity. Constancy in exchange of subjectivities results in established patterns of behaviour. A change in one social actor can bring a corresponding change in the other social actor. Thus, reality is a product of social interaction. In social relationships, subjectivity is shared or exchanged. Face-to-face interactions between ethnic groups and the significant other groups within the same environment can influence the construction and reconstruction of identity.

Fourthly, identity as a key element of subjective reality stands in a dialectic relationship with society. Identity is formed through social processes.It is crystalised maintained, modified and even reshaped by social relations. The social processes involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure. Identities are produced by the interplay of organism and individual consciousness. Social structure reacts upon the identity to maintain, modify or reshape it. Identity types are products of objective social reality. They are based on specific historical social structures recognisable in individual cases. Also, societies have histories in the course of which specific identities emerge. These histories are however made by men with specific identities. Specific historical structures actually engender specific types of identities.

The implications of social constructionism in terms of identity construction and reconstruction among ethnic groups in Benue state are as follows: Identity is a construction which takes place in the course of the daily seemingly taken for granted interactions that take place in the society. Individuals and group members alike make meanings in the course of interactions. Members of ethnic groups make meanings in the course of their interactions with others in their social environment. These meanings are their social realities and it is in this social reality that they define who they are. So identity cannot be separated from social reality. As individuals and groups continue to interact and make meanings in the course of this, identities are constantly being constructed and reconstructed. This makes identity an open-ended and fluid construction. The identities so constructed actback on the individuals as though they were not involved in its construction.

Identity though created in the course of social interaction acts back upon individuals and groups as though they were not involved in its creation. Ethnic groups construct identities in the course of interaction with significant others in the environment. Since the content of

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reality is inter-subjective in nature, the content of the identity of ethnic groups comprises of the significant others definition of who they are; their own self-definition based on the perception of the significant others. This argument also implies that identity is open-ended and since it is created through social interaction can also be recreated in the course of social interaction based on the interpretations that ethnic groups give to the actions of significant others. These significant others could be other ethnic groups, territory, structural change like colonialism, globalisation, capitalism, state and local government policies. In the course of interaction, individuals give meaning to some kinds of actions and these meanings influence their actions. The construction of identity is done in social interaction and identities could be reconstructed based on the meaning the reconstruction has for the ethnic group.The construction of identity is also not the exclusive preserve of a limited or designated group of people but individuals and groups alike participate in the construction and reconstruction of identity.

Language plays a crucial role in maintaining social reality and identity. Every day constructed knowledge and reality are accumulated in linguistic categories. These can either be passed down from one generation to another or reconstructed based on reinterpretations occasion by real or perceived changes within the social environment. The individual and group identity is dependent on language. Language is both the most important content and instrument of socialisation. An individual becomes what he is addressed as and continues to be what he is by participating in an on-going conversation with significant others.

Language forms the bedrock of ethnic categorisation and further creates a platform for their initiation into particular patterns of thought, behaviour, view, beliefs and attitudes. It actually formsthe bedrock of identity construction among ethnic groups. The interpretations the ethnic groups also make of others' actions through language can influence identity construction and reconstruction. Language is crucial to the understanding of any groups' identity. It is through language that meanings attached to symbols are created and communicated. Members of an ethnic group are socialised to see things in a particular way and give meaning to objects and situations in their environment through the use of language.

The level of the development of a language is also crucial to understanding the level of development of ideas with an ethnic group. Language provides the basis through which subjective interpretations of individual and group actions and reactions are made. Language is a strong factor in ethnic identity. It is a basis for categorisation in terms of in group and

out group and it latently defines who has access to certain opportunities and rights and who does not have. During the Nassarawa / Tiv crisis language, was used as a basis for identifying those of Tiv origin on the Makurdi / Lafia road. Language here is used to identify the in group and the out group.

Through language individuals and groups are able to reify their identities. Through their interactions in the social and physical environment, they able to construct their views of social realities which they also reify in form of social thought, proverbs, wise sayings, folk lore, riddles and other oral indigenous philosophises that serve as building materials of identity construction. According to Berger and Luckmann, objects of everyday life are designated through the categories and typicatory schemes provided by a particular language. This means that perception is structured by language and is essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life as well as identity. Also, Andrews (2012) asserts that conversation is the most important means of maintaining, modifying and reconstructing subjective reality as well as identity. So language used in the course of conversation or the understanding of a people's conversation is critical to the understanding of their reality and identity.

Social constructionism also implies that there is no one true identity as multiple identities of individuals and groups exist in dialectical relationship. This is true of many ethnic groups today. These identities are socially constructed by individuals and groups to make sense of constantly changing social reality and their place in such reality. This is because the constancy in the change of reality requires individuals to constantly negotiate their social identities so that identities can interact with one another or shift to accommodate the change. Specific structures in the society engender specific forms of identity. Identities may be constructed in relation or reaction to a government policy, state creation or a particular social problem. For instance in Middle belt Nigeria, the groups adopted the Middle-belt identity to contest their non-inclusion in the defunct Northern Nigerian political process and structure. This identity was abandoned for distinct ethnic identities after independence and especially with the creation of states. With the freer atmosphere occasioned by the transition to civil rule in 1999, many more ethnic groups have reconstructed their identities and even within ethnic groups, sub-ethnic identities have emerged showing that particular historical structures engender specific types of identities.

Although identity is constructed in the course of social interaction, its construction is usually spearheaded by certain individuals or groups. These individuals or groups influence the

symbolic content of the identity and are able to convince the other group members to adopt the identity. These individuals create the histories that engender specific kinds of identities. Societies have histories in the course of which specific identities emerge.There histories are however made by men with specific identities Berger and Luckmann (1966:194).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research in the social sciences is usually aimed at examining, understanding, explaining and describing the cause, course and consequences of human interaction and social phenomena. The world of humans is plagued with a lot of problems and as such, social research aims at unravelling the mysteries behind these problems and suggesting possible solutions to them. To arrive at a solution, specific methodology which will enhance accurate collection of data must be adopted. There are two types of methodologies in social research; the qualitative and the quantitative. The quantitative method has roots in positivism; a school of thought that emphasises the understanding of social phenomena using the principles of the natural sciences. Here, the researcher attempts to understand social phenomena by measuring, precisely, things about people, and testing hypothesis using numbers derived from the measurement (Isuigo Abanihe, 2002). This method however has the challenge of not being able to uncover motives and meanings attached to certain actions. The qualitative method however is derived from *Verstehen*- emphatic and predictive understanding (Nachmias and Nachmias 1992). This method evolved as a result of the need for social scientists to gain emphatic understanding of social phenomena using both historical and subjective aspects of human behaviour which may be intentionally or unintentionally concealed when the quantitative method is used (Isuigo Abanihe 2002, Nachmias and Nachmias 1992). The qualitative method provides opportunities for probing and observation which are central to the understanding of values, rituals, symbols, beliefs and the meanings attached to them.

This study adopts the qualitative method essentially because it intends to examine the social relations of identity construction dynamism among ethnic groups in Benue state which the quantitative method may not be able to capture adequately if it were relied on.

3.2 Study Area

The study area is Benue state. Benue state is one of the thirty-six states of the Nigerian federation following several political and administrative restructuring. Until 1969, Benue was a province of the defunct northern region that was one of the four regional units of Nigeria at independence (Ayatse 1995). In 1969, Benue was joined with Plateau province as a state in a restructuring that was expected to address the problems of ethnic political domination. In another restructuring, which brought about nineteen states in Nigeria, Benue was separated from plateau to form two states. In that restructuring, the Nassarawa part of the original Benue province was left in Plateau state, while Wukari became part of Gongola. The part of Kwara consisting of Igala and the Bassa ethnic groups were brought into Benue state. The further creation of states in 1987 removed the Igala and the Bassa ethnic groups to join the newly created Kogi state. The ethnic groups in Benue state include; Tiv, Idoma, Igede ,Etulo and Jukun along with people from other ethnic groups that are not considered indigenous to the state. Benue state occupies a land mass of 30955 square kilometres divided into twenty-three local governments. These local governments are grouped into three senatorial zones Ajene (2006). This zoning arrangement is broken down as follows: Zone A comprises Kwande, Vandeikya, Kastina-Ala, Ukum, Logo, Konshisha, Ushongo Local Governments. This zone is home to the Tiv, Jukun and Etulo ethnic groups. Zone B comprises Gboko, Gwer, Gwer-west, Buruku, Tarka, Makurdi and Guma. Zone C is home to the Idoma and the Igede ethnic groups and it comprises Oju and Obi occupied by the Igedes, and Otukpo, Okpokwu, Ogbadibo, Ohimini, Apa, Agatu and Otukpo Occupied by the Idomas. Benue state has a rich agricultural soil, natural resources such as rivers Kastina ala and Benue from which it derives its name. Although this zones arrangement exists, the ethnic groups in Benue state have various towns designated as their traditional towns or headquarters. These towns include Gboko for the Tiv, Otukpo for the Idoma, Oju for the Igede, Adi-Etulo for the Etulo while Abinsi is home to the Jukuns. Data for this researchwere collected from these traditional towns because of the belief that a large number of the natives of the ethnicwould available tobeaccessed for data collection.
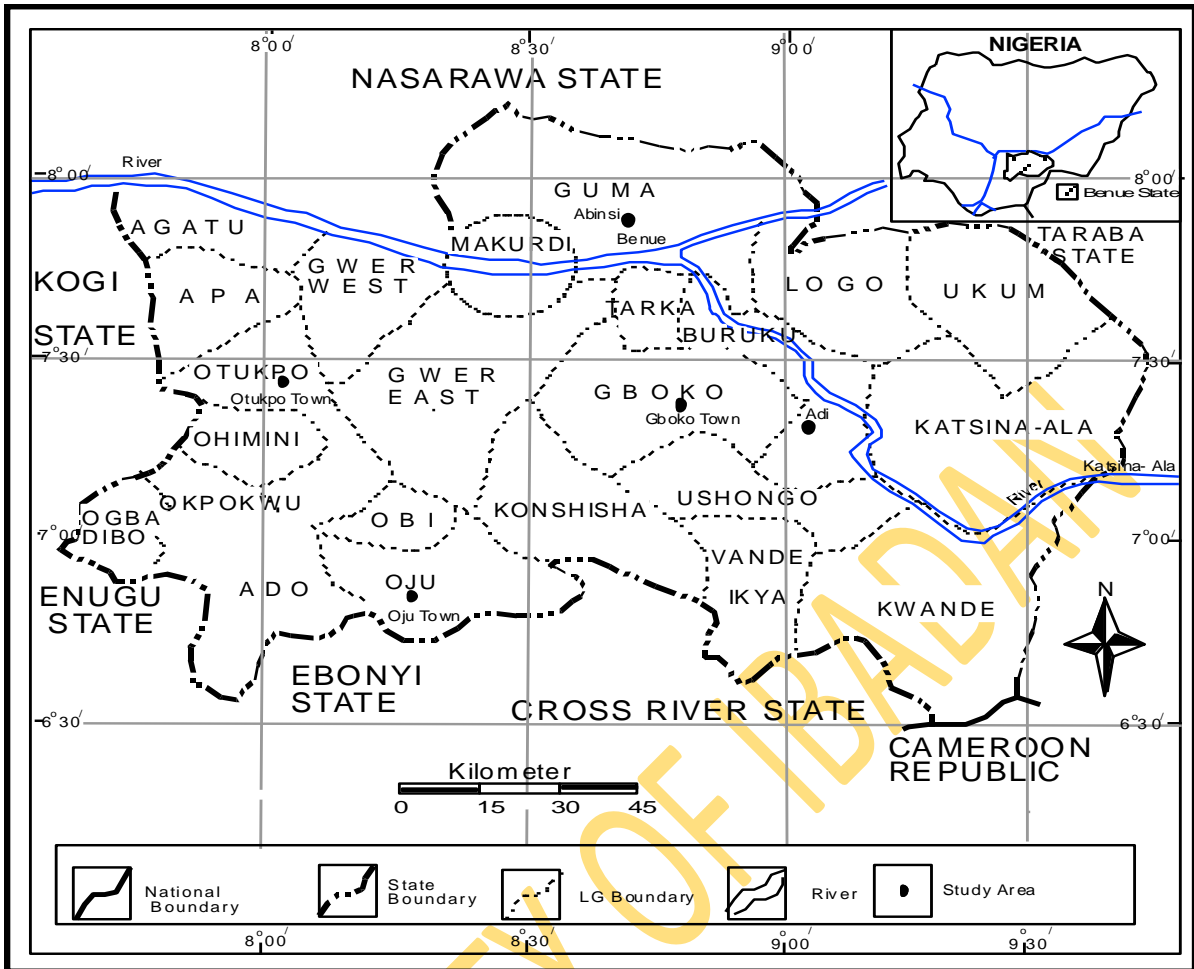
Fig 1: Map of Benue State Showing the Study Areas
Source: Ministry of Lands and Survey Makurdi.

3.3 Historical Account of Selected Traditional Towns

3.3.1 Abinsi

Abinsi is home to the Jukun in Benue state. They are called Jukun *Anwanu*translated as riverrine Jukun or Jukuns of the river. Their lifestyle and philosophy revolves around fishing and the river. Abinsi, which was initially a divisional headquarter of the defunct Benue province in the early 1900s, occupies an area of about 1.5 square miles and is situated on the South Bank of the river Benue, 17 miles east of Makurdi, in the Tiv district of Hyarev East. There are varying versions as to the origin of Abinsi. Two can be found in archival records

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while the others were gotten from in-depth and key informant interviews. According to the first version, the first settlers at Abinsi were Igbirra (Ebiras) but they were driven out by Jukun armies over 200 years ago and the Jukun occupied Abinsi right from then. The second version shows that the earliest settlers in Abinsi were the group of people called Ajoko but popularly known as Ankwa or Ankpa. They historically formed three separate groups; the main body, a short way south of the present location, another group near the south of Kastina Ala and the third Abuni, a mile or so west of the main group. Various feuds arose among them over fishing rights and as a result the larger group migrated to an island known as Yashin Bello. Inspite of this, other feuds arose which led to their migration to an area regarded today in Makurdi as North-Bank. These movements, according to archival records, took place before the first Tiv arrivals who were the Hyarev in the Benue area. Intermittent fighting continued between the Ajoko and the other Jukun clans for many years until the Aku of Wukari summoned the heads of all the Jukun settlements along the Benue and settled their disputes. He ruled that each original settlement should have its independence and its own chief, though they were all to remain under the sovereignty of Wukari. The Aku gave the name Mbitse of Abinsi to Ankwa with its hamlets of Jamido and Abuni. Abinsi was said to mean "those that came afterwards". From that time on there was no more fighting.

Abinsi was historically on the island of Yashin Bello for a long time. At the death of one of the chiefs, the town was moved on to the south bank of the river. Later on at the death of another chief, Soga, the successor to the office and grandfather of the present village head, moved once more and built the present town. The traditional administrative system of the Jukun was autocratic with the chiefs' power being complete and unquestioned. Prior to British occupation, Abinsi kept close touch with Wukari: all serious matters were referred to the Aku for his decision. Tribute was also paid annually to him. Within the individual settlements the local chief was supreme though assisted by a hierarchy of assistants. All chiefs and office holders were appointed by the Aku of Wukari to whom they usually go to receive their chieftaincy gown and cap.

Another version from oral interviews holds that the migration of the Jukun-Awanu into this area commenced after the collapse of the Kwararafa confederacy that saw the different Jukunoid migrating into various areas in today's Benue Valley. The Jukun Awanu first settled at a place around Abinsi called Ananga while some of their brothers proceeded to settle alongside the Igala and Egbirra (also Jukunoid) around Idah. The Jukun Awanu's desire to bring back their brothers from Idah made them to engage other ethnic groupsinbattles. In

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the process, they even had disagreement with other Jukunnoid. For instance, the Igala, in opposition to the Jukun *Awanu*, poisoned the stream that was claimed to be the only source of water and a place of ritual for the Jukun *Awanu*. This resultedin the death of several Jukun *Awanu*. In frustration, they left the area and came back to settle permanently at Abinsi establishing their chiefdom. On arrival, the Jukun-*Awanu* met some Igbira in the area but the Igbira later departed to join their other brothers at Idah. After few years, the Awanu were joined at Abinsi by Tiv and the, Kabawa, and Hausa came later to join.

With the numerical strength of the Tiv, Abinsi was subsumed and became part of Tiv land. With colonial penetration of Tiv land, Abinsi was made headquarters of the Benue province until later in 1927 when the headquarters was moved to Makurdi and the building that serves presently as the Benue state Deputy Governor's Office was used as the administrative office. Abinsi was declared an all settler town, alongside Katsina-Ala and Makurdi because of the influx of different nationalities like Igbo, Hausa, Kabawa and Yoruba amongst others.On the arrival of all these groups, there was an unwritten division of labour. While the Jukun *Awanu* concentrated on fishing, the Tiv concentrated on farming while the Hausa and Igbo were traders. The issue of land ownership was at this time the exclusive reserve of the chiefs, who gave portions of land to all ethnic groups to settle. This division was also noticed in the area of traditional authority. The Jukun *Awanu* produced the district head, the Hausa produced the kindred head, and the Tiv occupied the post of the tax collectors. This division of traditional authority may have been influenced by Islam and or/colonialism. Other ethnic groups that needed land usually go through the kindred head after consultation with the tax collector to get the approval of the district head.   Today, Abinsi is a district under Guma local government area of Benue state and the village head, though regarded as a chief by the Jukun is recognised by the state as a district head under the Tiv traditional council.

3.3.2 Gboko

Gboko town is the headquarters of both the Gboko Local government and   the Tiv traditional council. It is the seat of the Tor Tiv who is the paramount chief of the Tiv. Until 1932, Gboko was a mere conglomeration of compounds which gradually expanded to become the headquarters of the Native authority. Gboko town is located in the kindred of Mbawav of the family group of Mbakper sub-territorial group area in Mbayion. Before this time, the missionaries at Mkar, a settlement close to Gboko and a farm settlement, was consequently

established. This, among other factors, influenced the designation of Gboko as the administrative headquarters of the Tiv division.

The development of Gboko was largely due to Christian mission influence. According to oral traditions, Gboko was historically occupied by the Hyarev section of the Tiv. They were displaced byMbakor, Mbayion, Mbatiav, Mbatierev, and others who moved in a north westerly direction and finally settled at the place known today as Gboko hills. Their settlement in this area gave rise to the town. Their movement was said to have also posed a serious challenge to the *Udam* who at this time occupied the North western bank of the Konshisha River (very close to Gboko). As such, the settlement around Gboko was marred with strife as the migrants engaged the original settlers in strife. Consequently, the clans moved in different directions. Some occupied Mkar, others west of Gboko hills and others went to the Asukunya hills. Other migrants apart from the Tiv subsequently began to settle in Gboko. Some of these include the Hausa who were involved in trading and the nomadic Fulani who came through Wukari and afterwards settled in Gboko. The Hausa were said to have been highly interested in the Tiv textile industry especially the Tiv cloth known as *Tugudu*. The coming of the Hausa was said to have given a boost to the textile industry as the Hausa brought styles that were not common in Gboko at the time and they also learnt from the Tiv. This led to a competition that gave the industry a boost. There was no central authority at this timeas social life stemmed from a network of simple relationship and interaction. Indigenous cultural ceremonies and festivities, traditional drinking practices and intermarriages further served to cement the relationship among the people until the coming of the colonialists. 1n 1932, Gboko was made the headquarters of the Tiv division under the leadership of Captain R.M.Downs. It was believed by the colonial administration that Gboko was central to all of Tivland. In the 1940s when the Tiv progressive Union agitated for the creation of a Tiv traditional council, Gboko was logically seen as the place where the palace of the Tor Tiv would be sited. This invariably made Gboko the traditional headquarters of the Tiv. Although the Tiv division was later split into three autonomous divisions under the Tiv Ntive authority in 1970, Gboko still maintained its status as the "center" of Tiv land. Today, most Tiv see it as prestigious owning a house, land or business concern in Gboko

3.3.3 IkpeseEtulo (Adi)

Ikpese Etulo also known as Adi owes its origin to the agitations made by a former kindred head of the Etulo. The Etulo historically settled in Kastina Ala, a town named after river Kastina Ala. The Etulo, who are predominantly fishermen, are said to have settled in the Kastina Ala area. Migration by the Tiv into the town, which was very fertile, led to the displacement of the Etulo who subsequently moved to the present location which is actually situated on the opposite bank of the river Kastina Ala. Though a few kindred stayed behind at the banks of the river Katina Ala, the rest migrated to the present location at Adi. This location was hitherto a settlement with few compounds under the headship of Adi Amazanma. According to oral history, he was invited by the colonial government to Kaduna and was asked to choose a particular project that he would like to be sited in his area. He was said to have chosen a market. The market was approved by the colonial government. Before this time, the people were said to have settled far away from the road and close to the river but the siting of the market closer to the road made the inhabitants to move outwards. The market hence made Adi popular as it attracted people from Abakaliki, Takum, Kastina Ala and Wukari. It was also prestigious because the land was fertile for growing rice. It became a very big rice market. It was subsequently named after Adi the founder of the market, though some still refer to it as Ikpese Etulo meaning Etulo Land. Presently, the palace of the Otse Etulo is sited here thus further making it the traditional headquarters of the Etulo. Although the market at Adi still exists today, it no longer has the prestige it had during the colonial Era. Factors such as the creation of other markets like Kastina Ala market as well as Local government, and the yam market in Zaki Ibiam have led to its loss of popularity. In spite of this, the Etulo indigenes have made efforts to develop Adi through the stepping down of electricity through communal efforts, building of schools and hotels to enhance the status of the town.

3.3.4 Oju

Oju which is predominantly occupied by the Igede people is located in Oju local government area of the State. It is the administrative headquarters of the Igede of Benue state. The secretariat of Oju local government as well as the seat of the Adutu of Igede is located here. Oju is the headquarters of Oju local government which historically was known as Egedde District. It was the main scene of operations of the Ikerri-Egedde military escort which left Igumale in 1922 for the purpose of bringing Igede and Ikerri under the administrative control of the British and delimiting the Southern provinces boundary in this area. Before this time, the Igede district had been under the Ogoja division and was

practically designated as unknown land. Archival records up to the 1940s refer to the land and the people as Egedde but in present times they are referred to as Igede. Reason for this change was not given but views from oral interview show that it may have been a matter of semantics or the Egedde was seen as the bastardised form of the name Igede. The Egedde district was initially visited by military escorts in 1909, and hostilities were encountered in 1911. The eastern part of the district was visited by administrative officers from Ogoja in 1916, 1917 and 1919. The Igede's attitude during the last visit was so threatening that the escort had to withdraw. The 1922 escort was actually aimed at introducing definite administration. No organised resistance was offered but independent attacks were made on the escort a number of times by individual villages or portions of clans.

At this time, the Igede existed in clans but there was no common administration or coming together except at the urge of a very stringent threat to their lives or to the possession of their territory on the path of alien people. This district was incorporated into the Okwoga division in March 1923 when the military escort was replaced by the police. It was subsequently made the headquarters of the Igede District, a status it occupied until the creation of Benue state in 1976. At the creation of Benue state, the whole of the Igede area comprising Igede and Ito district were united into one local government and as such Oju town a small settlement in Igede District where the District officer's house was historically located, was made the headquarters. This thus made Oju the Administrative Headquarters of the Igede.

The Igede do not have a paramount ruler but second class Chiefs under the Idoma traditional council. The spokesman of the Chiefs of Igede resides at Ibilla a town near Oju and is officially regarded as the Adu Utu of Igede meaning the father of the Igede. The choice of Oju as the headquarters historically brought contention between Oju and the Ibilla who were said to be the original inhabitants of the land, as well as the owners of the land where the district officer's house was situated. In spite of their contention, the place is still regarded as the traditional headquarters of the Igede.

3.3.5 Otukpo

Otukpo is the traditional headquarters of the Idoma ethnic group in Benue state. It is also the headquarters of Idoma traditional council where the Ochi Idoma oversees all issues with regards to the Idoma. Otukpo as the traditional headquarters of the Idoma owes its origin to the colonial designation of Otukpo town as the headquarters of the Idoma Division. Before

this time, archival records show that the original inhabitants of Otukpo were not known. The first human inhabitants of Otukpo are the people of Oglewu who came over from Apa (Kwararafa confederacy). The Oglewu people were eventually driven away by the present Otukpo people who came down from a place called Utiya on the North Bank of the River Benue. Otukpo is divided into three sections; Otukpo Icho (high Otukpo) or Otukpo Nowa (Red Otukpo), Otukpo Nobi (black Otukpo) and Aigboko. In precolonial times, all these were under one chief with the title of Oche and salutation Oddu. Much later, Otukpo Icho separated. No reasons were given for the separation. The Oche died in 1918. Otukpo was made a district headquarters in 1925. The Otukpo claim descent from Oko whose sons Ona and Adaji are recognised as the founders of the present group of people called Otukpo. Nyoko is believed to be the totemic ancestor. There are six main kindred groups who lay claim to Otukpo. These are AiOdoju, AiOgwuche, AiOno, AiOkopi, AiOde, AiAgboko. Not all of these are politically significant today as a result of the fusion of lineages.

Otukpo was first visited by the Niger Cross River expedition of 1908-09 and formed part of the Okwoga district of Onitsha province nominally obeying the Okwoga native court. In 1918, it was handed over to the Northern Provinces but was not often visited until the advent of the railway in 1921. In 1921 Otukpo began to pay tax and in 1923 following an administrative reorganisation, Otukpo became an administrative district. A native court and a district headquarters were started in Otukpo. In February 1924, the district headquarters which was initially at Okwoga was moved to Otukpo. In 1924, Otukpo which was more or less a settler's camp because of the railway became the headquarters of the Idoma division of the erstwhile Munshi Province.

The Niger Company began trading there in late 1926. The *Och'Idoma* institution was created in 1947 with headquarters at Otukpo. This institutionalised as well as centralised authority over all the other Idoma speaking ethnic groups in contemporary Benue state and legitimised Otukpo as the traditional headquarters of these ethnic groups. In 1967 when Benue Plateau state was created, Otukpo was the headquarters of the Idoma division and in 1976 when Benue state was created, Otukpo was made the headquarters of Otukpo Local Government

3.4 The Study Population

The study population for this study comprised adults of franchise age in the traditional towns (headquarters) of the five ethnic groups in Benue state. These include Gboko for the Tiv, Otukpo for the Idoma, Oju for the Igede, Abinsi for the Jukun and Adi for the Etulo.

3.5 Techniques of Data Collection

3.5.1 Secondary Sources

a) Historical Records

Secondary datawere gathered through historical records including archival records and extant confidential records. Archival research was conducted at the National Archives Ibadan and Kaduna. Archival materials such as colonial reports, memoranda, annual reports, minutes of meetings and white papers issued by the government were used to examine issues of identity of the ethnic groups in historical perspective.

3.5.2 Primary Sources

a) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

A total of ten focus group discussions were held. Since suffrage rights starts from the age of 18, the participants comprised natives of the ethnic groups from age 18 and above. Members of the FGDs comprised artisans, traders and farmers. Two focus groups of males and females exclusively were held with natives of each ethnic group. Issues of identity construction in contemporary times along with the social relations of identity construction were discussed.

b) In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)

 50 In-depth interviews were held with traditional title holders, youth leaders, community leaders and political office holders, heads of households, market women, transport workers, teachers, religious leaders and traders in the traditional towns of these ethnic groups. A male and female in each of the ethnic groups for all the categories listed formed the respondents for the in-depth interview.

c) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Ten key informant interviews were held. This was held with elderly male and female of over 60 years of age within each ethnic group to elicit information about the identity of the ethnic groups that the political class and leaders of association may not have. Furthermore their responses on identity construction in historical perspective were corroborated with archival records.

d) Case Studies

Case studies of individuals who were at least between 18 – 20 years of age at the time of the first series of identity protests by the Tiv in 1959, 1960 and 1964 were also conducted. These Tiv riots signalled the initial stages of popular protests against the Hausa Fulani domination and attempt at the construction of a new identity culminating in the "Middle Belt Movement

e) Observation

Observation was carried alongside the interviews in each of the traditional towns of the ethnic groups. Relevant data on interactions within the ethnic groups were also collected and recorded in field notes.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The primary data collected from the IDIs, FGDs and KIIs were transcribed and subjected to content analysis after careful organisation of the responses in line with the study objectives and research questions. The secondary data collected from the archives were also subjected to ethnographic summaries and corroborated with the primary data. Differences and similarities along with issues that emerged in the course of the data collection that were not covered by the research objectives but were of relevance to the study were also subjected to critical examination and analysis and conclusions drawn fromthem.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 1

4.1 IdentitySocial Thought of Ethnic Groups in Benue State

Ethnic groups irrespective of size and geographical locations have peculiar features or characteristics (material and non-material) that they create to portray their uniqueness as well as assert, communicate, contest and even redefine their distinctiveness. Beyond the fact that these groups create these to assert their difference, is the fact that these constructions are a reflection of the social thought of the ethnic group at a particular time in history depicting their supposed trajectory. The social thought is very critical to identity construction as it provides the members of an ethnic group with a way of viewing things, themselves and "others" within the social environment. The social thought is also a reflection of the meanings they have made of their interactions with their physical and social environment. Through social thought, ethnic groups are able to create a social basis for their beliefs and practices. This social thought is usually encoded in proverbs, riddles, sayings, idioms, songs, folklore and other oral sources of knowledge which have survived over time (Olutayo 2012, Omobowale 2008, Agbaje 2002, Tatira 2001). The social thought of a group is transmitted through language.

Language provides the basis for which individuals make sense of the world. Common experiences of everyday life are maintained by the use of language. It is a medium through which people are shaped and internalise the culture of their environment. In essence, language is the means through which people create, internalise, preserve, transmit and recreate reality. Luckmann and Berger (1996) demonstrate the importance of language thus:

> The common objectivations of everyday life are maintained primarily by linguistic signification. Everyday life is life with and by means of the language I share with my fellowmen. An understanding of language is thus essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life (Berger and Luckmann, 1996).

Through language, people are able to define and express in words, reality as they perceive it. Language is able to construct immense symbolic representations that tower over the reality of everyday life. In line with this, David Kuhrt (2003) asserts that a normative discourse is possible only because the existence of the world to which his party belongs is self-evident. Language provides the only medium through which this self-evident reality can be communicated. Likewise, Errington (2001) cites the case of most colonial African and Asian countries where the indigenous languages were captured and used in the subjugation, reorientation and administration of the local population. By gaining control of their social socio-political system and codifying and reducing indigenous languages to writing, they were

able to redefine what was acceptable socially through the imposition of European philosophies cum social thought and culture using the languages of the colonised people (Omobowale 2008). This has resulted in a situation where European or third world cultures gain prominence over African social thought and way of life. So much that what is accepted as social reality in Africa has to be subjected to European scrutiny. This has resulted in a mass importation of alien ideas and as such most African cultures have to grapple with the disjucture between this imported social thought and their own *Verstehen*. Olutayo (2012) even asserts that this is the reason for the failure of most development initiatives as they are conceived outside the social structure, culture and everyday philosophy of the people. In essence, social thought communicated through language is critical to the creation of reality cum identity of social group. Language provides individuals with words and meanings which are critical to the creation of reality cum identity and reflects the world view or social thought of a particular group of people. Through language, ethnic groups are able to create, recreate, transmit and preserve their values, norms, statutes, hate, rivalries, and contentions in proverbs, idioms and songs and transmit same from generation to generation. These proverbs, idioms, songs and folklore originate from the peoples observation and interaction with natural phenomena as well as other human beings within their physical and social environments. For instance, Shapan(2001:739) with regards to proverbs states that

> Proverbs are oriented towards experience. They report on accumulated experience, human and natural; they make those reports efficiently available to people who mean to act in the world; they recommend courses of action in the light of experiences; and therefore … represent a widely distributed form of expertize. The expert is after all, someone who has relevant experience and expertise in that embodied experience

While Akiwowo(1983: 139-140) sees proverbs as reflecting the continuity of the ancient in the consciousness of the present. So in essence, social consciousness is brought to the realms of the present through proverbs and this enhances constructive relations and social order. In deed proverbs, songs riddles and oral traditions are significant to the examination and explanation of the construction and reconstruction of identities of social groups. This section of the research is concerned with examining the indigenous/oral philosophy (social thought) of the ethnic groups of Tiv, Idoma, Igede, Etulo and Jukun as encoded in songs, proverbs as well as stories about their origin. The next subsection starts with the Tiv
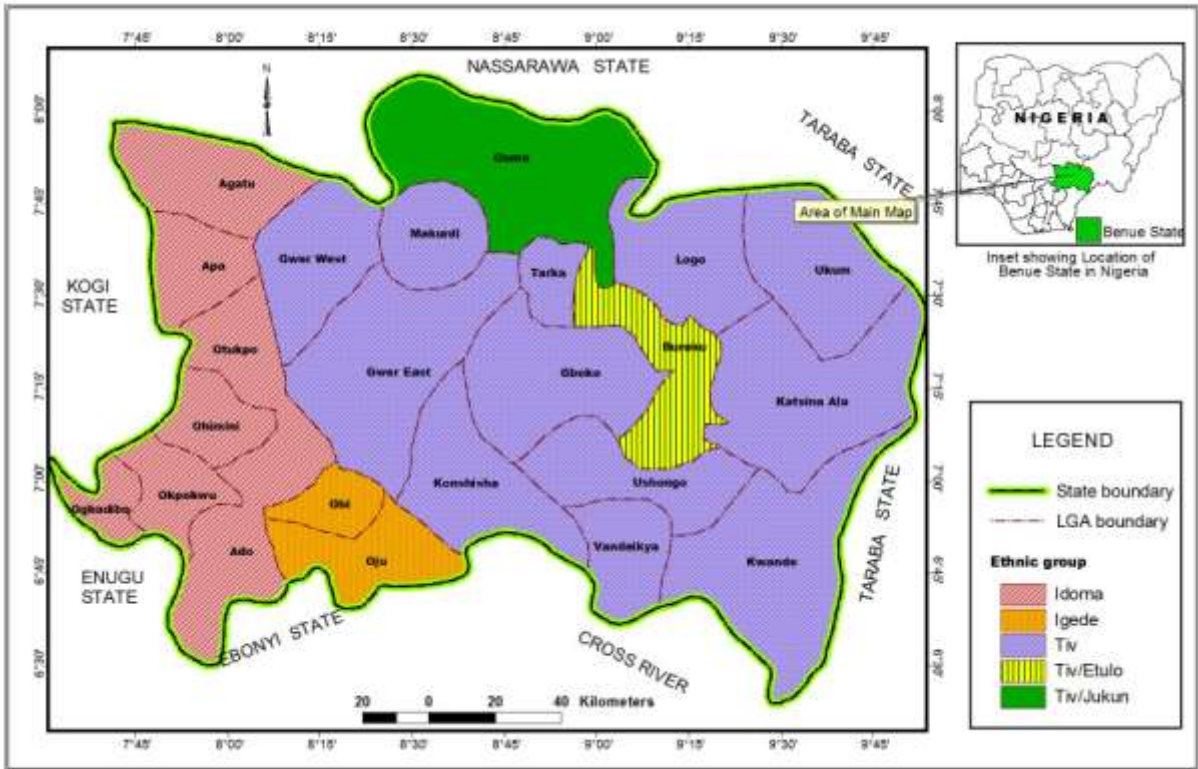
Fig 4.1 Map of Benue State Showing the Ethnic Composition of Benue State

4.1.1 The Tiv Identity Social Thought

Demographically, the Tiv are the dominant group in Benue state occupying 14 out of the 23 local government areas. They are also found in Taraba, and Nassarawa states though Benue state is popularly regarded as the home of Tiv people. Archival records describe the Tiv as the largest pagan tribe in the Northern Protectorate as well as the Northern Region (Abraham 1933, Bohanan 1953,). They are predominantly farmers and hunters. They speak Tiv language which has been classified as belonging to the Bantu group of languages (East 2003, Makar1994).The Tiv have various traditions about their origin. The existence of various traditions of origin shows that these myths are not an "essence" that cannot be subject to change or redefinition. Rather, the myths are handed down from generation to generation and they may have been modified on the basis of subsisting experience and successive realities. This is in line with and Gandu (2001)and Weinriech (1998) where they emphasise the place of the redefinition and reinterpretation of history and historical antecedents in the construction and reconstruction of identities.

One tradition of origin traces their origin to a man called *Anyamazenga* who had a male child called *Takuruku.Takuruku* married a woman known as *Aliwe*, who gave birth to a son named Tiv who in turn had four children out of which two of the children known as *Ipusu* and *Ichongo* produced children who now constitute the Tiv people. The descendants of the remaining two children are believed to have been integrated with the children of *Ipusu* and *Ichongo.* The Tiv believe that when they were few in number they lived on a particular hill known as Ibenda hills. On this hill they interacted with Ugenyi (the Chamba) from where they dispersed as a result of a quarrel and subsequent fighting. The cause of the disagreement was a hunting-net. A Tiv borrowed a net from his Ugenyi friend but didnot return it. When the Tiv went to Ugenyi country again, his friend came and asked him about it; the Tiv said that the net was all right, but his best friend had come to take it and he said he would go and get it and return it immediately. The Tiv returned home, but didnot give the Ugenyi his net. So when the Ugenyi went back to ask for the net from the Tiv friend, the Tiv said there was no net. This led to an exchange of words and subsequently Tiv beat up the Ugenyi who fled into the bush and told his people about it. The Ugenyi then sounded their ivory horn. They gathered and came down to the bank of the Katsina Ala River and crossed a little above Kasimbila (present day Taraba state) ford. They came to the Ibenda hill while the Tiv were asleep and attackedthem. Some fled but the Ugenyi captured the others. The contest led to the migration and subsequentlythe settlement of the Tiv this time according to their major

divisions of *mbapusu* (the people of *ipusu*) and *mbaichiogo* (the people of *ichongo*).This myth shows that the Tiv view themselves as dominant, having assimilated or subsumed all other groups within their social environment. This myth also has another version which is similar to the biblical story of Esau and Jacob. According to oral traditions, *Takuruku* had two sons named *Uke* and Tiv. Tiv who was the younger son was the father's favourite. When Takuruku was about to die, he asked Tiv to come for the last blessing but before Tiv who was a farmer could come, *Uke* impersonated Tiv and got the blessing that was meant for the Tiv. This blessing actually conferred on the receiver the right to rule over the other. Thus, by the very act of impersonating Tiv *Uke* possessed the right to rule over his brother. When *Takuruku* realised what had happened, he was very sad and in a bid to console Tiv, he sprinkled Tiv's hoe with dust from the earth and assured his son that his farm will produce so much that his brother *Uke* will have to depend on him for food. The Tiv regard other ethnic groups as *Uke*. This myth gives a social basis to the *rulership* of the Hausa-Fulani during the colonial period and the Tiv's consistent resistance of the dominance of the Hausa-Fulani as well as that of other ethnic groups. The Tiv also pride themselves as great farmers who feed the *Uke*. Oral tradition has it that *Takuruku* instructed Tiv to cut off his head and preserve it afterhis death. This was preserved as a skull and handed over from generation to generation. By the time it got to a man named *Karagbe*, it had become very fragile so he grinded it to powder and kept it in a small pot known as *Swem Karagbe*. Anyone who touched this pot was said to overcome his problems immediately. Today, the Tiv regard *Swem* with all sacredness as the home of their original ancestor as well as the most important force that intervenes in Tiv affairs. Political office holders are most times made to swear at Swem and it is also an instrument of social control. This myth overtly portrays the Tiv as dominant hence the reference to the fact that there were two groups of people in the world, the Tiv and *Uke*. Here, they also construct a social thought to portray the fact that other ethnic groups took away the blessing and prosperity hence there was need to struggle to reclaim the lost blessing. The myth in essence is used to legitimise their struggle and conflicts with the Hausa-Fulani as well as other ethnic groups within their social environment. The Tiv through this myth create a superior identity as well as legitimise their struggle for dominance and inclusion in the politics of the Benue valley. This myth also gives a social basis to their "expansionist" tendencies. In essence, expanding to another territory and taking control whereever they find themselves is part of reclaiming the blessing that *Uke* scrupulously collected from *Takuruku.*

Another tradition of origin has *Aondo* as their progenitor. *Aondo* in Tiv mythology means sky or firmament. *Aondo* was said to have power to control the forces of nature. *Aondo* had a son called *Takuruku* who got married and produced two sons called Tiv and *Uke*. Tiv later got married and had *Ipusu* and *ichongo* who produced all Tiv clans. *Uke* on the other hand got married and had children who are regarded as the non -Tiv today. The Tiv through this myth have created a superior Tiv identity, hence they believe that there are two groups of people in the world; the Tiv and non-Tiv. Identity construction involves a self-definition in relation to "other" where the "self" is portrayed as superior to the "other" (Alubo 2009, Lentz 1995).Another tradition of origin is cited by Makar (1994). According to him Tiv elders suggested three names as the possible ancestors of the Tiv. These are Shon, Takuruku and Awange.

The existence of various traditions of origin is a further pointer to the constructed nature of oral philosophy/ social thought cum identity. It can be reconstructed depending on the social circumstance per time. Oral traditions occupy a place of significance as far as identity construction and reconstruction is concerned. The existence of various myths of origin is a further pointer to the possibility of a reconstruction of history cum identity based on the redefinition and reinterpretation of contemporary realities. The Tiv emphasise their identity to reflect the fact that they are not Hausa-Fulani, neither were they [Tiv], conquered by the Hausa-Fulaninor any other ethnic group in Northern Nigeria. The Hausa-Fulani were hitherto a dominant composite identity group in the Northern region during the colonial period and as such the identities of other ethnic groups within this region were created using the Hausa-Fulani as a reference point. There were also attempts by the colonialists to subsume the identity of all the other ethnic groups under the social structural system of the Hausa-Fulani through the imposition of Emirs and *Sarkis* and on the whole, the incorporation of all the other ethnic groups into the Emirate and Caliphate system of the Hausa-Fulani. Hence, the Tiv construct an identity of dominance to contest the imposition of this identity and portray themselves as superior to all other ethnic groups. They emphasise this constructed identity of dominance through various cultural displays such as *Kwagh-hir,* as well as social thought encoded in proverbs, songs and their wise sayings.

Kwagh-hir literally means folk tales and/or something magical. It is a unique form of cultural performance which tells stories about human relationship, human relationship to animals, relationship between animals as well as relationship between humans and the spirit world especially among the Tiv. Although this is seemingly aimed at entertainment, it is a

representation of Tiv world view. It contains a semiotic universe which corresponds to the reality of held beliefs, customs and attitudes of the Tiv people (Hagher 2003). It is used to preserve the cultural heritage, hopes, fears and expectation of the Tiv. It comprises many art forms which include storytelling, poetry, puppetry art, music, dance and drama which are used to construct, reconstruct as well as accentuate Tiv dominant identity within their social environment. According to Hagher 2003, *Kwaghir* originated first and foremost in Tiv consciousness and predilection and is a vehicle for consolidating social and political egalitarianism. *Kwaghir* emerged after the Tiv riots of the 1960s to challenge the existing structure, preserve Tiv art forms and oral traditions that had been destroyed by the *Hakaa*[8] and other colonial structural arrangement. *Kwaghir* among other things is also used as a tool to enhance nationalism among the Tiv and accentuate their identity among those without. This they do through puppetry displays such as *Igedde, Iorvaa, Swem Karagbe, Shawon, Kasev mba vinen Dasenda, and Abagon kya*.Althoughfor *Kwaghir*,the performance involves a dramatisation of Tiv folk lore regarding animals, man and spirits; it inherently portrays the Tiv as those who have conquered the world of animals, humans and spirits. It is usually performed in the evening/night. This is because it is believed that at night the spirits come out to interact with humans and wild animals are usually very active. Hagher (1990) and (2003) further elaborates on the various performances that comprise the Kwaghir theatre/ performance as thus: The ***Igedde*** is a human puppet of a man with scrotal elephantiasis, the testicles reaching down his knees. These testicles are fixed under his legs with small metal hinge and a rubber strap as well as string that lead from the large scrotum to the leg which is mounted on the portable booth. The *Igedde* puppet is never tied to the top of the booth in a stationary position. Rather the manipulator holds it by the controlling rod and together with the string achieves various movements. The result is an extremely funny performance of the *Igedde* puppet jumping and dancing against all odds of the physical incapacity. Although Hagher (1983) and (2003) further elaborate that this performance is aimed at portraying the

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[8]*Hakaa*originally known as *Namakaa*is a Tiv word which is literally translated "give me things". During the early years of colonial occupation in Tiv land the colonialists found it difficult to penetrate the Tiv in terms of their social structure, beliefs and practices. The Christian missionaries also raised issues about the Tiv being a group of people who held tenaciously to the beliefs of their forefathers. In other to disentangle the Tiv from their religion cum identity, the colonialist embarked on a movement which was named *Hakaa* aimed at collecting artefacts that represented the gods of the Tiv as well as things the Tiv held sacred. Having done that the Tiv felt their source of existence cum identity had been taken away from them and so *Kwaghir* was a way of creating or recovering a lost identity

foreigner in a negative light and a call to the Tiv people to appreciate their language and culture as against that of *Uke* or *Atotiev* (foreigner), it inherently portrays the Tiv as those who are dominant and as such superior and have or are able to control "others" within their environment. It portrays the others within their environment as having inferior cultures cum identity, hence the performance of the puppet with scrotal elephantiasis. Furthermore, the use of the genitals is an analogy that can be related to the origin of the other ethnic groups. This performance as well as their myth of origin, portrays other ethnic groups as inferior to the Tiv and as such should be under their control. Other puppetry performances further portray the Tiv culture cum identity as superior to other ethnic groups. For instance, a performance known as **Ioravaa**is a performance that depicts Tiv traditional setting as opposed to the western traditions as well as those of other ethnic groups. *Ioravaa,* a woman dressed in Tiv traditional attire grinds corn on a grinding stone while her husband, also dressed in the Tiv attire, contentedly looks on smoking a pipe. This show emphasiseson the Tiv traditional settings as against the modern world and that of other groups. It overtly portrays the colonial imposition of western culture as well as the imposition of Hausa-Fulani identity as an imposition of an inferior identity compared to the Tiv identity which is superior.

Kasev mba inen Dasenda is also another *Kwaghir* play that is aimed at portraying the Tiv traditional dance of the females as superior to that of other ethnic groups. Awooden drum is beaten by a hare and this provides music for the dance along with other songs sung by the female dancers. Although it is aimed at reminding the spectators that even animals enjoy the dance and music of the Tiv, it also portrays the Tiv as those who have conquered the world of animals and as such are superior so much that they can make and tame an animal that is regarded as smart and cunny (in Tiv mythology) to serve them to the extent of playing a drum. The Tiv overtly have constructed a dominant superior identity which they perform through the instrument of *Kwaghir* puppets to create a strong consciousness and sense of nationalism among themselvesand accentuate this identity among those without.

SwemKaragbe is another puppetry display which portrays the original homeland of the Tiv as a paradise, a kind of place that they should be proud of. There is usually a mountain and a huge cave. Different animals come out of the cave signifying the fertility of the place. Different kinds of fishes and wild life are depicted. Young energetic men and women are seen coming out of the cave. This is aimed at creating a notion of superiority among the Tiv in terms of their origin. It is also aimed at creating a sense of appreciation about their origin. Related to this display is ***Shawon,***an ancestor of the Tiv who is dressed in typical Tiv

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traditional attire, the *anger*. *Shawon* carries the Tiv all-purpose leather bag called *Ikpa* as well as a metal staff a symbol of authority. This further encourages and enhances Tiv appreciation of their culture cum identity.

A play featuring a basterdised Fulani identity known as***Orfulani***is also performed during *Kwaghir* festival. *Orfulani* is a puppet performance that depicts the Fulani as herd's man with an elongated neck, with his Adam's apple protruding. The shoulders are stooped to give the effect of a hump just like the Fulani cows. This puppet display shows the Fulani as moving round the field, widely hitting his cow and then in balanced position staring vacantly into space. This depiction is aimed at performing the identity of the Fulani in a *bastadised* light. The display depicts a perceived ridiculousness of the Fulani culture cum identity. *Kwagh-hir* performances also feature imaginative forms of wild beasts dancing to the tune of the melodious tunes of the humans. This, in essence, portrays the Tiv as a people who are powerful and possess superhuman powers or/and have powers over their physical and social environment. Wild animals here could take the form of enemies or other tribes or ethnic groups who can no longer threaten them. Their enemies are like the wild animals which they have conquered and can make them (i.e. their enemies) adopt the Tiv identity hence the wild animal dancing to their music. The *Kwagh- hir* is in essence a performance of the superiority of the Tiv identity over and above other identities around the Tiv immediate environment that are rather depicted as "wild beasts and animals to be tamed by the Tiv". This can be related to an example in Ecuador cited by Corr (2003), where cultural performances are actually performances of identities through which ethnic /cultural groups are able define who they are in a way that they want others within and without their social group to see them. *Kwaghir* festival is held every six months in form of a competition among the various Tiv clans. In the 1980s, it was adopted as a Nigerian Television Authority Network programme which was aired every week. This overtly created an avenue for the Tiv to assert and accentuate their constructed dominant identity at the national level. A classic aspect of this *Kwaghir* is the opening montage which further reinforces the identity of Tiv as dominant with the power of benevolence. The opening glee starts with lights where a dancer is brightly lit with torchers and moves round the arena proudly taking over the environment and portraying the Tiv as people who are in control of their environment.

The Tiv have traditional attire known as *anger* which is worn during such cultural performances and special occasions. The *anger* is a locally woven material with black and white stripes. The white according to the Tiv symbolises brightness or daylight while the

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black symbolises darkness and night. The Tiv believe that life comprises of good and bad things, light and darkness as well as day and night. The traditional attire is further used to portray the Tiv as a people with a power of benevolence or harm against other ethnic groups. The researcher also observed that the black and white attire is synonymous with Tiv identity so much that the catholic diocese of Makurdi, chose black and white striped material as its diocesan uniform and it was rejected by the other ethnic groups. A new uniform that did not have the traditional colour of the ethnic group had to be adopted. The other ethnic groups overtly regarded this as an attempt to impose Tiv dominant identity on them as well as subsume their identity even in the religious sphere which in most African society gives a sense of existence, reality and "being" to individuals.

Likewise the researcher observed that,"unity" attire which comprises the colour of all the other ethnic groups is woven and mostly worn by the Tiv. Though this seemingly portrays an effort to unite all the ethnic groups in Benue state, it covertly portrays the Tiv as those who are dominant and hence have been able to swallow up or subsume the other identities under a Tiv identity. Apart from the fact that the Tiv see themselves as dominant and conquerors, they also believe that strength comes from unity, communalism, care for one another. The Tiv believe in the idea of a universal brotherhood of all Tiv irrespective of geographical location. This idea of communality is reflected in the following proverbs:

Yanaangbian   "eat and give your brother [to eat]"
"*angbian gbega*", " a brother is not fallible"

Ya-na-Angbian is a Tiv conception that preaches cooperation, togetherness and mutual sharing of resources, positions, opportunities etc. It is a philosophy of sharing material goods and privileges with others who are Tiv in the society. The morale of the proverb is that an individual should not use resources alone but resources should be shared with others. Anyone who does not share with others is regarded as *Nyimough* -- a degenerate character. The Tiv society is agrarian in nature. The ideology of communalism emphasised the pooling together of resources to establish community projects like schools, hospitals, roads, etc. communication rests on the mentality of everybody being his or her brothers' keeper. *Ya na Angbian* entails immense love, which compels a person to share what he or she has in order to alleviate the suffering of a brother in need. It is a philosophy that preaches communalism and portrays the Tiv as a communal oriented people. This philosophy forms the basis of the rotational political system among the Tiv. In line with this, Hembe (1983:88) says

> Obligatory sharing generated the Tiv belief that the efficacy of the individual must be reflected in the lives and fortunes of all the members of the community. From this arises the firm belief that, the fortunes of one should be the fortunes of all, and the destiny of one is shared by all.

The proverb further portrays the kind of value the Tiv attach to resources and position. They are viewed in terms of their consumption value. So when one has a position or resources they are meant to be enjoyed cum consumed. "*Angbian gbega*" essentially demands Tiv universal brotherhood. A brother in this sense is not necessarily a biological brother but anyone who is Tiv. This is actually a call to believe in fellow Tiv man as the person would not lead one astray. The Tiv irrespective of state of origin regard one another as brothers. The proverb while preaching the conception of universal brotherhood also calls for trust in one another. A brother could be trusted. The proverb also places a responsibility on all Tiv to be sound in their judgement as this could lead to either success or failure of their fellow Tiv. This proverb expresses a belief in the infallibility of a Tiv brother and to trust their judgment above and against the judgement of the non-Tiv.

The Tiv also have philosophies that reflect views of being stronger than other ethnic groups around them. An example is the philosophy of "*Ayatutu Ka Uno*" with the response "*Kase*" meaning "Who are the brave hearts -- we are" which is a philosophy encoded in a slogan and it is used in rallies and Tiv gatherings to create in the Tiv the consciousness of their dominant identity as well as the fact that their strength comes from unity and fighting for the cause of Tiv. This slogan is written on buses and even converted to a jingle which is relayed in the state radio station every morning. This philosophy is literally translated thus:

Aya- eat

Tutu- hot

Ka uno?- who are they?

Ka se – we are

The Tiv believe that they [Tiv] can eat hot food and so they are brave and daring. It portrays their belief that they are braver and more daring compared to other ethnic groups. Eating of hot food here could be likened to handling very difficult assignments. Hot food has to be eaten with tact and is a sign of bravery. They believe that they are capable of handling difficult assignment and challenges. This bravery comes with fighting the course of Tiv over

and above personal interests. The Tiv also have songs that depict them as conquerors and superiors compared to other ethnic groups. For instance,

Mnyam chierm Uke mile,
O O uke mile,
Mnyam chiermo er Uke mile,
O O uke mile,
Ishima yam ngi a awambe! Awambe!
hon ngi awambe! Awambe!
Ishima yam ngi awambe! Awambe!
Oon ngi awambe awambe.

I have dreamt that all the foreigners (non-Tiv) have drowned
 Yes, they have drowned
I have dreamt that all the foreigners (non-Tiv) have drowned,
 Yes, they have, drowned
My heart is filled with blood to make the foreigners drown
 And yes, it is filled with blood
My heart is filled with blood to make the foreigners drown
 And yes, it is filled with blood

The Tiv, through this song, emphasises their constructed dominant identityof other ethnic groups. As far as the Tiv are concerned,the other ethnic groups are drowned or are swallowed up in Tiv identity. This song portrays the Tiv, those who have conquered the *Uke*, as dominant. The analogy of drowning here is reminiscent of an identity being subsumed or "drowned" in Tiv identity.So strong is the philosophy of dominance that the Tiv believe that *Hoon me kpe.*

I will die (if he was to subjugate himself to another authority).

And a related song which goes thus

Nyian Alu Ikuior a bam se O
hoon se kpe! hoon se kpe!.

Meaning:

 Today, should foreign aggressors attack us,
 We shall all die by fighting them.

Angbian ka nan lu sha ipungo uya i eren

If a brother is on top of the *ipungo* tree, you eat the ripe one.

This proverb is a further pointer to the communality, the universal brotherhood of the Tiv and the fact that the Tiv regard the community as greater than the individual. *Ipungo* is a valued fruit in Tiv land. The tree is not found in every forest and climbing it is not easy as it is curly and not very strong. Getting to the top of the tree to get the fruit is a difficult task. The Tiv regard this fruit highly and believe that it should be shared with others and even the best i.e. the ripe fruit should be given to fellow Tiv in spite of the difficulty in getting the fruit. This proverb is analogical as it further portrays the communalnature of the Tiv as well as the universality of Tiv brotherhood. The brotherhood should be placed above the individual i.e. individuality should be minimised in the interest of the clan as a whole. Itplaces a responsibility on Tiv to always consider their fellow Tiv whenever and whereever they find themselves. It also places an expectation in the hearts of fellow Tiv as they always expect the best whenever one of them is in a position of authority or a position where they are in control of resources.

The Tiv also have a philosophy of freedom encoded in a proverb as well as a song. For instance,

Haan ma tar kpa kar tar wam

Everywhere is home for me

Or

Everywhere is my home

Another saying

Mnugu sha jiki wam

I am on my own

Also a related song

Haan ma tar, ma tar kpa ka u wam tar la,
Haan ma tar, ma tar kpa ka u wam tar la,
Yio oo oo orya kpa kpe- orvanava kpa ka nan kpe

 Translated thus;

Every land, every land is my own
Every land, every land is my own
Yio oo oo, the landlord dies and the visitor (settler) also dies.

This proverb points to a philosophy of freedom that can provide meaning for what is popularly regarded by other ethnic groups as the expansionist tendencies of the Tiv. In Tiv traditional society, no one owns any resources like land. It is kept in the care of the most senior person. Land is highly valued as a resource since they predominantly farm for a living. Their occupation is such that they have to migrate into other areas in search of virgin land to farm. Hence, the philosophy that everywhere is home for me. They can settle anywhere and grow crops anywhere. It also points to a constructed identity of dominance hence the belief that everywhere is home. No other person can limit them. They can go into any territory and dominate.

Tiv identity and social thought portrays a constructed dominant identity which through *habitualisation* and reinforcement has, in line with Berger and Luckman (1967), become objectified and it therefore acts back on them as though they were not involved in its construction. It portrays that the Tiv see one another as one irrespective of geographical location and they have been able to create a common consciousness which forms the basis of existence. Their identity and social thought portrays a belief in the fact that they are superior to every other ethnic group within their social environment.

4.1 2Idoma Identity Social Thought

The Idoma occupy seven Local Government Areas (LGAs) out of 23 in Benue state. The Idoma are regarded as the second largest ethnic group inthe state. The name Idoma is the name of the ethnic group, the language as well as the land. Idoma belongs to the *Kwa* group of African languages (Armstrong 1955). The name Idoma is actually interpreted as the children of Idu. Archival records reveal that the name Idoma is used to describe a heterogeneous group that did not have a common sense of identity before the advent of the

British into the land and further show two variations of origin. The first records them as being descendants of the Jukun founders of the Igala state in Idah, in Kogi state while the other account traces Idoma origin to the Jukun who settled at the lower Niger area (Benue Province Annual Report 1931:730). According to Idoma social thought, the Idomas originated from Apa which is associated with a onetime capital of Kwararafa[9] confederacy under the reign of a king known as *Abakpawariga*. The Idoma were said to have migrated from Apa because of the growing state of insecurity arising from warfare both from within and from without the kingdom. Apa subsequently disintegrated and this led to the migration of the Idoma people. This migration was under the leadership of various leaders. These leaders became heads of the various clans in Idoma today. The second tradition of origin still traces the roots of Idoma to Apa but specifically links them to Ototu'baitu who is also believed to be the progenitor of the Yala in Crossriver state, Igala and Igbirra(Ebira) in present day Kogi state. Ototu'baitu was believed to have had two wives. The first wife gave birth to two male children Idu and Ode who are regarded as the fathers of the Idoma and the Yala while the second wife equally had two males Attaché and Eje who are also regarded as the fathers of the Igala kingdom today. Ototu'baitu was said to have lived among his kit and kin such as the Gwari, Jukun, Nupe who were all part of the Kwararafa confederacy. This confederacy suffered persistent attacks from the Hausa states to the North West as well as the Kanem-Bornu to the North-East. Ototu'baitu subsequently dies and his children decided to migrate due to the insecurity. Idu and his brother went their own way while Ottache and his brother went their own way. Their separation was largely due to the activities of the Fulani jihadists. Idu subsequently settled at the banks of river Benue while his brother Yala moved further. Idu subsequently died while still at the bank of the river Benue.His many children formed the various clans of Idoma. Other variations of traditions of origin have been captured by other scholars. For instance, Imaogene (1993) links the Idoma origin to the coming of the Igala which resulted in the displacement of the indigenous Akpoto people groups that were not absorbed. The displacement of the *Akpoto* led to their migration towards the direction of the present Idoma territory. He further says that most of the clans with traditions of Igala origin have simply displaced *Akpoto* groups who have moved en-mass. Another tradition of origin which gives pride of place to the Igala, relates to the Fulani in what the Idoma refer to

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[9]The Kwararafa refers to a confederacy that existed in the Benue valley in the sixteenth century. It was believed to have been founded by the Jukun who remained the rulers till its disintegration in the 18th century. Many ethnic groups such as the Idoma, Etulo, Afu, Arago, Ebira, Igala, Doma and many others in the Middle Belt region trace their origin to it.

as the Fulani horse war. This war popularly known as the Fulani jihad caused the migration of whole groups of Idoma people to their present location. All these traditions are constructions aimed at giving a social basis to their social identity. Another related version is captured by Crowther(1854) where he anchors the origin of the Idoma ethnic group on the *Akpoto* (*Okpoto*), an ethnic group that once lived in the territory presently inhabited by the Idoma, Igala and Ebira. Though it is widely believed that this group has gone extinct, Crowther as well as other ethnic groups in present day Benue state believe the idoma are a remnant of the *Akpoto* group that was believed to have hitherto inhabited the Niger-Benue confluence area. Against this background, scholars have been involved with researching on the identification of the group and its possible links with the idoma, Igala and the Ebira. Armstrong (1955) argues that a possibility of the existence of such a group exists drawing upon the wide application of the *Akpoto* nomenclature in the area. Ukwedeh(1986), in agreement with this view, refers to the *Akpoto* as an autochthonous group that probably gave birth or played a critical role in the emergence of present day Igala, idoma and Ebira ethnic groups. In addition, Okpe and Ochefu (2005) claim that evidence gleaned from the oral traditions of the Igala, Idoma and Ebira ethnic groups showed undoubtedly that the *Akpoto* were the earliest inhabitants of the present locations of these ethnic groups. Despite these views by scholars, the present day idoma regard the *Akpoto* identity as derogatory. This may be predicated on the fact that the group is believed to have gone extinct.Moreover, the acceptance of the *Akpoto* identity may link Idoma origin with the Igala and Ebira group instead of the Kwararafa confederacy whichgives them an identity that is dominant compared to the Tiv and the Hausa-Fulani. The Idoma reject this identity and insist that the *Akpoto* are the present day Igala of the present day Ankpa region that were known as *Akpoto* but speak the Idoma language. This identity appears to have stuck to the people in the Eastern marches of Igalaland in the region of Ankpa. In addition to the fact that among those sections of the Idoma who sometimes trace their origins to places in Igalaland, the use of the term Akpoto to describe them and their language appears to have persisted until comparatively recent times (Okpe and Ochefu 2005).Although the Idoma reject the *Akpoto* identity as reflected in the responses during the interviews, other scholars posit that that the Idoma identity still has significant links with the *Akpoto*.

> We are not Akpoto as the colonialists have portrayed. We are and always have been Idoma. The Akpoto is a group that existed but has gone extinct. These people just sit and look for convenient things to say about ethnic groups. The Akpoto are a group of people who are

inthe boundary between the Idoma and the Igala. They are neither here nor there. The original ones have gone extinct…

Idoma female/IDI/ October 2011

Can they write such things about their own people? They just came and wrote what they felt about the Idoma. That is why the historians of Idoma extraction have been researching into the origins. Imagine even Erim wrote that Idoma ethnicity is a contemporary one. That is fallacy. Rubbish…

Case Study Interview/ 72 yr. old retired civil servant/ Otukpo September 2012.

Hence, scholars of Idoma extraction make the following conclusion about the Akpoto. Okpe and Ochefu (2005) posit that *Akpoto* may be of a geographical application describing a kingdom of that name. This kingdom must have covered the entire area presently occupied by the various ethnic groups in the Benue valley region. The people of this kingdom must have also been known and referred to as Akpoto. But that this name persists till date between the Idoma and the Igala could well be an alternative explanationfor the depth of wide-ranging contacts and inter-mingling between them. According to Erim (1981),Idoma kindred groups, in the course of the Idoma migrations into their present location, sojourned and cohabited with the Igala in Igalaland. Ochefu (2002) supports this view as he posits that that the greater part of present Idoma homeland was originally occupied by the *Akpoto* who, over the ages, were assimilated by other groups including the ancestors of the Igala, Idoma and Ebira migrants. This suggests a possibility that the *Akpoto* were either a proto-ethnic group which gave birth to the Igala-Idoma-Ebira ethno-cultural complex or in fact played an important role in the development of these ethnic groups.

Other views of Idoma origin link the Idoma with the Igala and latently the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria. One of such is expressed by Baike (1956) where he views the Idoma as being an extraction of the Igala, the Igala also believed to be a subset of the Yoruba. Here, Baike advances an argument that the *Okpoto* and the Igala occupied separate territories on both sides of the River Niger. By the first decade of the fifteenth century the Igala were driven east of the River Niger where they settled among the *Okpoto*. He then suggests that the Idoma were a hybrid of the two groups of Igala and Okpoto. He further suggests that the Okpoto and Igala were originally Yoruba speaking and hence the present day Idoma was a fusion of the two, so the Idoma origin could be traced to the Yoruba. This view is further

supported by the classification of the Idoma, Igala and Yoruba under the Kwa sub-unit of the Niger -Congo family of African languages. A colonial anthropologist, Robert Armstrong, who did extensive research on the ethnic groups in the Benue valley suggest that the idoma, Igala and Yoruba formed the same social complex in the Benue region until about 6000 years ago when the group disintegrated. According to Armstrong (1955), these three ethnic groups had the same conception of time, had the same totems, taboos and worshipped a host of local gods and even had a common language. With the split, the members of this group migrated to various regions where they speak the various dialects of the original language. He also suggested that the original dialect of the Igala invaders became mixed with the language of the original Okpoto. The Idoma so deeply divided by dialects that he suggest that it should at best be considered as a dialect cluster of whichthefull name might be Idoma-Akpoto-Iyala (an ethnic group in present day Cross River State which the Idoma claim and Igede claim as their kit and kin) dialect cluster . Five of these dialects are found in present day Idoma land (part of defunct Idoma division) are as follow:

i. The Central or Otukpo dialect spoken in Oturkpo, Adoka, Boju, Oglewu and Yangede (Onyagede)
ii. Igumale- Agala
iii. The Western dialect spoken in Otukpa, Orukpa Ichama, Orokam and Edumoga
iv. Agatu spoken in Agatu Distrtict and also in Ocheku and in the Agatu district North of Nassarawa, North of the Benue
v. Okwoga dialect which resembles the Igumale dialect.

The existence of various myths of origin is a pointer to the open-ended nature of social thought which can be constructed and reconstructed to give a social basis to identity construction cum a constructed identity. Traditions of origin are significant to the ways the ethnic groups see themselves, the way others see them as well as the way the ethnic groups want others to see them. The discussion above evidently portrays that ethnic groups constantly define and redefine who they are in an effort to portray their real/perceived dominance, communicate this dominance as well as reject what they regard as derogatory as far as their identities and social existenceare concerned. The history of an ethnic group is significant to identity construction in that it traces their real/ perceived trajectory and it is used as a tool to define and accentuate their conquest, contests, real and perceived enemies as well as subjects. The existence of various traditions of origin as well as the various arguments advanced by scholars brings to the fore the fact that identity construction cum reality is not

the exclusive preserve of the high and mighty but represent the *Vestehern* -- every day constructions in the course of interaction that become objectified and begin to act back on the creators as though they were not involved in the construction. The myth of Idoma origin further agrees with the social constructionist view of the place of language in identity construction. Some of the scholars who have traced the Idoma history here have used the language as a unit of analysis. Pointing to the fact that identity construction for an ethnic group could be predicated on their language. The colonial anthropologists, in the course of their research in Northern Nigeria, tried to link other languages like Ngas in present day Jos (Plateau state) to Hausa where they posit that Ngas was primitive Hausa. This suggests covertly that the Ngas were primitive in their thought, philosophises and traditions with regards to the Hausa. Social constructionism posits that language is critical to the way reality cum identity is constructed. Language defines reality in a particular way and as such socialises people in line with it. Here, the colonialists created an identity which the Idoma presently regard as derogatory since it supposedly has to do with groups considered as extinct, through the use of language. The rejection of the Akpoto identity, which invariably links the Idoma with the Igala may also be linked to the fact that before 1991 when Kogi was created, the Igala was also a dominant ethnic group in Benue state. In terms of population and ranking the Igala were actually next to the Tiv. The imposition of this identity may be regarded as an attempt to lump them with another dominant group where they will not have a platform for competition and for access to the "centre". In spite of the traditions of origin that exist, the present day Idoma trace their origin to Apa, associated with a one-time capital of the Kwararafa confederacy under the *rulership* of Abakpariga. The idoma left Apa because of the growing state of insecurity arising from contests and warfare from both within and without. There were dynastic tussles associated with the ascendancy of the Jukun on the corridors of power as well as attacks from the Fulani where they were defeated by the Alhaji Ghaji(1476-1503). These led to the disintegration of the Apa kingdom and the consequent migration of ethnic groups like Ebiraand Igala etc. The Idoma then migrated and began to spread out over large areas of the Benue valley and as such they became thinly dispersed over much of the territory now inhabited by the Tiv, Igala, Ebira and the Idoma. The idoma began to migrate from Apa towards the middle of the 15ᵗʰ Century. The migrations continued till the late eighteenth century when the Tiv began to push their way into the Benue valley. The arrival of the Tiv according to Okwu(1975)dispersed the peace and tranquillity that existed in the Benue valley. According to oral traditions, the Tiv were more numerically and had a political structure that was more organised than that of the Idoma and the Idoma were spread

thinly over the Benue valley, hence the Tiv were able to displace the Idoma to assume a position of dominance in the Benue valley even before the coming of the colonialists. According to Idoma scholars, the Tiv migration was so aggressive and extensive that the Idoma, with their disadvantaged numerical strength, were not able to put up a firm resistance and as such they were displaced and had to migrate further down the Benue valley. The Tiv, according to oral traditions, were able to hedge in the Etulo, an Idoma speaking group within the Tiv territory. The Doma and the Keana, other Idoma speaking groups, moved further up north of Benue and are found in present day Nassarawa state. This particular view of origin is popularly accepted among the Idoma because it traces the origin of Idoma to the Kwararafa conferedaracy which was dominant in the Benue valley and also shows the Idoma as people who were dominant in the Benue valley before the migration of the Tiv. This tradition of origin creates a perception of previous dominance that was allegedly usurped by the Tiv. Here, social thought is used to create and accentuate a dominant Idoma identity.

The Idoma demonstrate their identity and social thought through festivals where songs and proverbs advancing Idoma identity are chanted. One of such festivals is the *Ejaalekwu* which is a celebration of the link the Idoma believe they have with the ancestors who are believed to be the guardians of Idoma land. The festival is a reinforcement of that link with the ancestors. *Alekwuafia* meaning the *Alekwu* masquerade is believed to be the link between the living and the dead. They represent the invisible protective guardian of the family and communities. The celebration of the ancestors by the Idoma is aimed at showing that they have a distinct identity from the dominant group. During the festival, the *Alekwuafia* chants the *Alekwu* chants which tell the story of Idoma migrations conquest and contests. It portrays Idoma identity in proverbs and wise sayings. The *Alekwu* chants reinforce Idoma identity as well as communicate this identity to the younger generation. Although the festival is regarded as a period of communion with the ancestors, it is actually an avenue for the creation and accentuation of Idoma identity. It is aimed at creating a sense of awe of the Idoma among the Idoma as well as other ethnic groups around. *Alekwu* is also a medium of social control as erring individuals are threatened with punishment from *Alekwu.*

The Idoma have a high regard for masquerades as they are regarded as their links with the ancestral fathers of the land. This is also reflected in their use of the subject of masquerades in their proverbs and wise sayings to drive home issues of Idoma identity construction and accentuation. For instance

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Ai kabo eyi-nei glan

Although the masquerade may appear in different attires, the dance step is still the same.

This proverb is usually used with reference to the fact that though Idoma comprises several subgroups who speak different dialects of Otukpo, *Agila*, *Agatu*, *AkweyaUtonkon* and *Otukp* they are all Idoma. Dialectical differences in essence do not mean they are separate ethnic groups but they are masquerades appearing in different attires with the same dance step. They are all Idoma emphasising Idoma identity in different ways. This proverb is used to enhance unity among members of the ethnic group and guard against any attempt at breaking away as this may threaten their dominance within the Idoma division as well as their goal of becoming a self-sufficient and independent ethnic group. This emphasis on unity may not be unconnected to the assertion by colonial anthropological reports that Idoma ethnicity was a contemporary phenomenon occasioned by colonialism (Armstrong 1970). This means that the various dialects listed above may have been independent groups who had been brought under one identity, Idoma. This is in concert with Erim, a foremost historian who conducted one of the earliest indigenous studies on Idoma history. According to him,

> Recent investigations into the early history of Idoma have shown that Idoma ethnicity is a modern phenomenon. In other words, the heterogeneous groups which today answer Idoma did not have a common ethnic identity prior to British rule in this part of Nigeria… evidence strongly indicates that the ancestors of these groups have come from different sources and directions therefore to lump every ethnic group in idoma land as deriving from the Idoma tribe represents an effort to synthesize fragmentary evidence covering an enormous complexity of historical development which took nearly four hundred years to produce the present Idoma culture… the various groups in Idoma land did not possess a common political identity prior to British rule. In developing the indirect rule system among the Idoma, the British showed more concern for administrative tidiness and efficiency than for cultural identity. Idoma land was portioned into twenty three administrative units which ignored pre-colonial political units… in several areas where the pre-colonial units were considered too small to form a modern administrative unit, an amalgamation was effected… the various groups in Idoma land by the 1950s began to apply the name Idoma to themselves… (Erim 1981: 3, 7& 11)

In essence, the Idoma ethnicity was a contemporary phenomenon which had been constructed over the years through colonial policies and as such had been adopted by the ethnic groups as efforts are being made to enhance and entrench a sense of idoma unity and oneness in the

Idoma people. The partitioning and the re-partitioning of the pre-colonial unit created a foundation for the contemporary Idoma identity. So the proverb in essence emphasises the fact that though differences may exist, the various groups in Idoma land are all Idoma.

To further enhance the Idoma appreciation of their identity they have a proverb that goes thus;

Ege dodu ne-ekwu pia,ikpi je kunu eikpo

No matter how ugly your mother is, she is still your mother.

Mother in this proverb is reminiscent of one's origin. Here, the Idoma are encouraged to accept their identity even if they felt the culture or identity non-dominant/native or supposedly barbaric. The Idoma have historically been designated by the British colonialists as backward and barbaric savages who engaged in head hunting as well as slave trade to the South Eastern part of Nigeria (Benue province Annual Reports 1931&1932). They were also regarded as people among whom the scarcity of currency is the highest in the whole of Benue province (Benue Province Annual Report 1933). These colonial documents portray Idoma as one of the most backward ethnic group in the Northern provinces. This proverb shows an effort by the Idoma to encourage their natives to accept and accentuate their identity irrespective of the *bastardised* light in which it is portrayed. The Idoma also further encourage cooperation and unity in the following proverb

Ege joju neon bobile, owe no kpo

One finger cannot wash the face

The finger here represents an analogy of a hand with many fingers which represent the various branches or dialects of the Idoma from one root i.e. the hand. One finger cannot wash the face, it involves the whole hand. In the same way, their goal of accentuating their identity and self-determination cannot be achieved by only one dialect or part of the Idoma but could be achieved if all the Idoma come together. The washing of the face here is also analogical as it could refer to washing off the barbaric or bastardised identity, pagan identity, Akpoto[10] as well as Tiv identity imposed on them by the colonialists. The identity and social thought of the Idoma portrays a reification of subjectivities they may have constructed in the course of their interactions with others in the social environment. Their social thought also portrays

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[10]The *Akpoto* identity was based on a colonial ethnographic survey that lumped the Idoma and Igala together under an identity of *Akpoto*. The Idoma regarded this identity as derogatory and have resisted it over the years. Presently some ethnic groups like the igede and the Tiv still call the Idoma *Ikpoto* and *Akpoto* respectively.

aneffort to create and emphasise a wholesome Idoma identity that did not exist pre-colonially. It also shows an effort towards the construction and emphasis on an identity to counter perceptions about the Idoma. In concert with this, Abubakar (2001) asserts that the construction of the identity of one group can only be meaningful in relation to the waysin whichthe identitiesof others are constructed and not in isolation.Likewise, Netto(2008) posits that identity is partly shaped by recognition or the absence of recognition as well as the misrecognition by others.

4.1.4 Igede Identityand Social Thought

The Igede are the contemporary inhabitants of present day Oju and Obi local government areas of Benue state. In the recent past, the Igede occupied only Oju local government which was bothered to the North-West by the Idoma in Otukpo Local Government, to the North-East by the Tiv in Gwer-West Local Government, the Izis of present day Ebonyi state and the Ukelle and Yachi of present day Cross River State to the South-West and South-East (Odey 1980).The name Igede describes both the people, their language and their land. The Igede language in the wider context of African group of languages falls within the Kwa sub-group of the Niger-Congo family (Odey, 1980). It has five dialects;which are -- Ito, Uwokwu, Ainu, Igabu, and Itakpa, and Igede-Central which is regarded as the purest form of the language. The Igede emphasise their identity and social thought to consciously indicate that they are not Idoma.

The Igede like the other ethnic groups previously discussed have various traditions of origin. Omaogene (1993) describes the Igede as a fusion of immigrant elements with one another and possibly with a people which they found inhabiting the present areas. The main immigrating groups appear to have come from the South and of Igbo stock. Though there may have been an admixture with other elements that came from the east in the direction of the Jukun region. Years of living together and sharing led to the evolution of a people with common customs and way of life designated as Idoma. This myth of origin here may be a pointer to an earlier time when the Igede were regarded as Idoma. Odey (1980) discusses two traditions of origin. The first tradition links the cradle of Igede peopletoa place called *Oyihu*.Literarily, *Oyihu*means 'beside a river'. The name of the particular river is not certain. Some have linked it to river Niger and others to the *Oyongo* River at the boundary between Igede land and present day Crossriver State. The Igede tradition of Origin is actually

associated with the creation of man. That at *Uhiyu*; the legend goes, there was only one man called Penis or *Ogbe*, and one woman (wife) called virgin or *Imwo*. As time went on, the man and woman continued to mate at regular intervals. Someof his informantsgave the name of the man as Adam and his wife as *Ihu* (Eve). Consequently, the virgin gave birth to a female child. At her matured age, the child inturn mated with the man – supposedly the father and gave birth to a male child. Thus the process continued until there were so many people of about twenty to fifty family of villages – called the "black people" or *Alonyobiri*.

At Oyihu, the Igede people were known as the *Alonyobiri*. Meaning "black-people" from a different stock of people called the "white people" or *Alonyoru*. The *Alonyoru* are the area, living side by side with the Igede, but totally a different stock. As time went on there at *Oyihu*, Adam – the first man on the face of the earth was said to have fathered the grand-father of Igede called *Orumanyi*, the legendary father of Igede himself being *Agba*. Agba is also said to be the father of *Ikwuro* and *Ala* peoples in CrossRiver State. This myth of origin is an effort to portray the Igede as superior to others thus their links with the biblical Adam and Eve. It portrays the influence of religion in identity construction. With the introduction of Christianity which was regarded as superior to the indigenous forms of worship found in most pre-colonial African states, efforts were made here to link the Igede to the biblical characters who incidentally were believed to be the first man and woman created. In essence, this myth of origin says the Igede have always been there, they are not migrants from Ogoja province as colonial records portray them and they are also not Idoma as portrayed by both the Idoma and other ethnic groups in Benue state. They have an origin that can be traced to the first man and woman on earth. So the Igede were there at the beginning of time. The construction here is a pointer to how ethnic groups through interactions with their environment, as well as the meanings and judgements they make, create social thought to give a social basis to a constructed identity. The second tradition of origin is more widely accepted by the Igede and over time has become the *official* origin of the Igede.

According to this tradition of origin, the Igede were natives of*SabonGidaOra* in present day Edo state. They are said to be the descendants of a certain *Agba* a high chief at *SabonGidaOra* in contemporary Edo state. He had fourteen sons which are today regarded as the founders of the fourteen clans of Igede. The clans are actually named after these fourteen sons. They were predominantly involved in farming, fishing and hunting. Oral history traces Igede's migration to an altercation between an Igede woman and an Ora woman. Trouble started when an *Ora* woman broke the (earthen) water pot of an Igede woman at the stream.

The *Ora* woman apologised and offered to replace it with another pot but the Igede woman refused and insisted that she wanted that particular broken pot replaced. This led to a quarrel initially involving the two women, butit later spread to other members of the society and a full scale quarrel and exchange of words ensued between the *Ora* and Igede men and women. After a long time of quarrelling at the stream, an uneasy peace agreement was eventually reached. Subsequently, an Igede borrowed the cutlass of *Ora* man. In the process of using it, it fell into a river. This time the *Ora* man demanded the same cutlass that had fallen into the river. A consequent quarrel resulting from this altercation between the two groups resulted in a full scale war, which Igede lost.

Igede's defeat was followed by the imposition of tribute and the harassment by the *Ora*. In the course of Igede migration, oral tradition says they were betrayed by the Idoma (*Edumoga*) who invited the *Ora* to deal with the Igede. An ambush was laid by the *Igede* armyand it vanquished *Ora's* invading army. The *Ora* dead were decapitated and raised as symbols of Igede victory. This victory led to the creation of a warrior cult/dance group known as *ogirinye*. This dance is used to accentuate the Igede identity as those who had conquered their enemies. The Igede finally settled in a forest area known as *Ipinu* Igede meaning Igede forest.

The Igede also accentuate their identity to reflect the fact that they are not Idoma through *new* yam festival called *IgedeAgba* festival. *Agba* is the name of the progenitor of the Igede. The festival is named after him as a reminder of their origin as well as a celebration of land fertility in terms of agricultural productivity. The Igede had always had new yam festivals celebrated from time immemorial on village by village basis but the creation of the Igede *Agba* festival was reaction to reconstructions in the Idoma Native Administration, which was perceived by the Igede working there as a threat to the survival of Igede identity. Igede *Agba* was then created to create, enhance and accentuate Igede identity. The festival owes its origin to the efforts of four members of the defunct Igede Youths Association; Ambassador Oga Okwoche, Eje Iyanya (late), Isegbe Ikape (Late), John Idikwu (source). The four of them were staff of the defunct Idoma Native Authority. They initially created the Igede Youth Organisation in 1950 which was aimed at promoting Igede distinctiveness and culture among youths of Igede extraction. They were able to sensitise other Igede youth to join the association which later became a clan affair as the movement was hosted within clans. In 1956, they in concert with the Igede elders, decided to set a day to celebrate Igede culture and distinctiveness on a yearly basis. This led to the emergence of Igede *Agba*

celebration. During the festival, dances as well as other cultural displays which portray a performance of Igede identity are performed. The creation of the festival to perform identity, points to a shift from the earlier notion of festivals and dances being avenues for relaxation, recreation and the display of cultural heritage, to their use as tools for identity construction, reconstruction, accentuation and enhancement. Over time, these have become handy tools for political mobilisations as well as the performance of identity in the way social groups want "their others" to see them. During the Igede Agba festival, songs that celebrate the Igede identity as well as create a sense of nationalism among the Igede are sung. Some of them are as follows;

Obe obe lobe
Aligede amam le
Obe obe lobe
Aligede amam le

Thank goodness, thank goodness
I was born by an Igede
Thank goodness, thank goodness
I was born by an Igede

Ahi le ahi ri ochi che ka
Ahi le ahi ri ochi che ka

We (the ethnic group) are not small
We are not small

The first song refers to the celebration of their identity as Igede while the second may be a possible reaction to the colonial depiction of the Igede as migrants from the Ogoja Province (Southern Protectorate) as well as a collection of people with linguistic affinities who had created myths of origin linking them to one progenitor. The songs portray an effort by the Igede to create a distinct ethnic identity away from the colonial identity imposed on them, indicating that they are not small as generally perceived by other groups. They may be small in number but their attempts at reifying their identity are not small.

Upa de de de
Upa ka ahilo yawhu

The hawk flies de de de (describing the flying movement of the hawk)
The hawks plays and eventually marries a wife

The hawk in Igede mythology is a bird of prey that is detested by both birds and other animals. It is a bird that can eat up other birds as well as animals when they are not watching.

It is a bird that picks its prey without permission. According to Igede mythology, no other bird will accept to marry a hawk because of its characteristics but it eventually marries a wife by the way it flies. the Igede believe they are marginalised and detested by other ethnic groups just like the hawk but they will eventually achieve their goal of having a distinct identity just like the hawk is able to marry a wife despite the fact that other animals hate it. This song actually creates hope in the hearts of the Igede that though the journey towards creating a distinct identity may be difficult, considering the fact of their numerical strength within the state, it was still achievable. When this song is sung, the performers usually dance with their hands in the air portraying a flying bird.

Call: *Iyam imin ka okpeje*
Res: Iyam *imin ka okpeje*
Call: *Iyam imin ka okpeje*
Res: *Iyam imin ka okpeje*

My own did not work out
 It brought problems/ suffering/ contention/ judgment

This song makes reference to the activities one engages in or projects one embarks on that fails and results in suffering and loss. It refers to things one can engage in without gain. This song tells a story of investing resources in ventures that do not pay off at the end of the day. According to oral traditions, the contest that led to Igede migration was a contest over a water pot. The contest as well as the migration has brought about suffering for the Igede. Their present location is a place where they have to contend for things they believe are rightfully theirs. They have to contest for their identity, social and even physical space. This song, though loaded with regrets of leaving their original homeland, still communicates the fact that the Igede are different from other ethnic groups in Benue State. It also creates a sense of nationalism among the Igede as they are encouraged to continue to struggle for the things that are rightfully theirs, more so since returning to their original homeland is not an option. This song is also a message to the Igede who have migrated to South-Western Nigeria in search of "greener pastures". This song is also a call for them to come back home. It is popularly believed among the Igede that those who have migrated to South-Western Nigeria as farm hands, house girls, hotel stewards and the like have gone to *Kurumi*. *Kurumi* means forest. It is also popularly believed that their migration is of no benefit as it has only brought suffering because many of them are exposed to a lot of hazards and are not able to remit

meaningfullyto their villages. Beyond the issue of remittance, the fear of them "going native" in the South-West could also be another reason why there is a call for them to come back home. During *Agba* celebration, many of them usually go to the village to visit their kit and kin. This song among others is used to encourage them to come back home and contribute their quota to developing Igede society as well as ensuring that the dream of having a distinct identity apart from the Idoma and achieving full recognition in Benue State is achieved.

Rume rume
Adu ki aligede je awule le
Rume rume
Adu ki aligede je awule le

Leave leave or go go
Is how igede knew one another
Is how igede became united

The theme of this song is the fact that the igede were living in Sabon Gida Oraindisunity but the migration from Sabon Gida Ora was what brought about unity. The migration from Sabon Gida Ora made them know one another. This song is a pointer to the fact that trouble or struggle/suffering though painful can bring about unity and that unity should not be taken for granted. The Igede, through this song, are reminded of the painful price they had to pay for unity and are encouraged not to take one another for granted in their fight towards creating a distinct identity. This song is a reminder that adversity has united the Igede and thatthe tool of unity should be used to advance the course of the Igede.

Call:*Am le mjela Lala adam*
Res:*Mjela mjela lala adam mjela*

Me, I am as sensible/ knowledgeable as my dad
I am sensible/ knowledgeable as my dad I am sensible/knowledgeable

This song makes reference to the fact that contrary to the assertion that the igede are primitive, backward, degenerate and barbaric natives, they are sensible. This song is a cell for the Igede to see themselves as sensible though they may not be so regarded by other ethnic groups. It is a further call to the Igede to believe in themselves and celebrate their cultural heritage because it was sensible. Furthermore,it points the attention of the Igede to their fathers and the need to continue to promote their cultural heritage as well as the sayings of the fathers.

The Igede also have a dance which owes its origin to the contest between the Igede and *Ora* soldiers at Edumoga. This performance is an exclusive male performance which owes its origin to the contest between Igede and Sabon Gida Ora soldiers at Edumoga in Benue State. According to oral history, the Igede in the course of their migration from Sabon Gida Ora after the war camped at Edumoga. Unknown to the Igede the Idoma who are the natives of Edumoga had given information to the Sabon Gida Ora soldiers, information about the hideout of the Igede. The Sabon Gida Ora as a result came after the Igede. The Igede got wind of the plan and decided to leave Edumoga at night. Realising their powerlessness compared to the Sabon Gida Ora who had ridden on horses and had bows and arrows, they decided to dig a large pit across the road and then covered it with thatch. The Sabo Gida Ora soldiers who had no knowledge about what the Igede had done fell headlong into the pit and died. The Igede then went into the pit and cut off the heads of the Sabon Gida Ora soldiers and displayed them as a sign of victory. This according to oral traditions was the beginning of *ogirinye* the warrior cult dance. Historically, membership of this group was open to men who had both killed and obtained a human head in battle or had been able to kill an animal like lion, tiger or leopard single-handedly. These people are regarded as *Aleng* translated as men as against the others which are regarded by members of the group as *Anyang* women. The *Ogirinye* has a reputation of fierceness and members of the group are highly revered in the Igede society.

The instruments used for *Ogirinye* performance include the highly revered *Ogirigbo*. The *Ogirigbo* is a wooden musical instrument made from a log of a tree by a carver who is believed to be specially gifted in the art. It is believed to be carved in secret. It is actually an idiophonic slit drum in a hallowed log. This log usually has two openings. These two are played in rapid succession with the aid of two sticks. The *Ogirigbo* is accompanied by three drums- the *Uba*, *Egbon* and *Okpiri*. Although these drums play supportive role to the *Ogirigbo,* they each have their distinct rhythms. A metal gong known as *Ojeh* is also played along with four calabash horns. All these are meant to give a kind of rhythm to the performance. The music of the *Ogirinye* dance is basically rhythmic in nature. No songs are sung.

It is actually a dance drama where members of the group are clad in wrapper and a singlet. They also place *ehwong* – a hand covering made from the wool of a ram on their left hand. They also hold a horse-tail on the other hand. The dance is warlikeand is according to the

rhythm of the drum. The dancers come into the dance arena with *ikongo* in their hands. *Ikongo* is a double-edged sword which is usually used in wars. The members of the *Ogirinye* come into the arena and demonstrate how a war is fought. They kneel as if hiding from the enemy, they stand, search the environment; they also retreat reminiscent of when there is danger. In the course of the performance, members take turns to perform in front of the instrumentalists as others watch. There is usually an *Ogirinye* masquerade that appears without warning and its movement is usually rapid and its presence usually causes a stir among those who are not members of the dance group. The masquerade actually runs and jumps up twice in the presence of the musicians as a form of salute and then runs off. The *Ogirinye* masquerade is covered from head to ankle in a crocheted body-stocking in gray or caramel, possibly with a few black and red horizontal bands added according to the location of the association. A half-life-size carved head coloured either black or red is placed on the head of the *masqurader.*

In the past, the display of human heads was one part of the performance. Human heads were usually displayed by those who had killed others in the course of war. The use of cutlasses by members as well as the swift move by the masquerade points to an attempt to create fear and awe of the Igede in the hearts of both members of the ethnic group and significant other groups, as well as send a message to the other groups that the Igede were unrelenting in their efforts to create a distinct identity and were not going to give up until they arrived at their "promised land". These responses in the courses of the IDIs further show the significance of the performance for the promotion of Igede identity.

> *Ogirinye* is a sacred dance that tells the story of Igede bravery and conquest over the enemies. In the same way, one day we will conquer those that have subjugated us over the years. Igede will be free again.

47 yr old Male/ 31 May2012/Makurdi

> Performances like this make us believe all hope is not lost. Right now in Benue State, Igede is one of the most marginalised ethnic groups. We do not have any significant political position at the state level apart from the commissioner for rural development. We are so side-lined in the state. The Idoma count us as Idoma when they use our number to get something from the federal and state governments. But when the benefits come, we are called Igede. The Tiv refer to us as house maids and servants. Economically, Igede is backward. In the recent employment for theState television, only one Igede was

employed out of 104 people that were employed … We hope that things will change for the better one day… No one can advance your course like you. So the Igede have to rise up and fight for their own share of the national cake…

60 yr old politician/ Male/ 15 May2012/Oju

The Igede, like other African ethnic groups, believe in the existence of a universe called "*Ebina"* where creative energies of mysteries operate (Agocha 1986). Birth was regarded as a transition from *Ijalegwu* to *Ijalehe* (from the abode of the dead or spirits to the abode of the living). The Igede at this time believed that Man originated from *Olegwu* (spirit). *Olegwu* enters the womb of the woman and takes on a body. If a woman has sexual relations with any man at this time, the result is pregnancy. The woman will not be pregnant until the spirit enters her body. Death is regarded as a transition from *Ijalehe* to *Ijalegwu* (the abode of the living to the abode of the dead). The Igede also believe that there was always a reason for the death of an individual. According to Agocha (1983), man's death could be as a result of witchcraft, a natural illness from the gods or his sins against the deities of the land. Man's destiny was believed to have originated from *oheoluhye* -- the great god whose abode is the sky. Apart from this god, there were other lesser gods through which one could reach the supreme god. These gods, according to Ikonni (1986), were *Ohe-Ogbadadogogo*,the god who keeps the ancestors, *Ogiga Utodi*, the god of medicine, *Ebina Omeno,* the god of harvest, *Egede ohyeoyobi*,the god of misfortune, *Afuruja*,the god of madness. No sacrifices were offered directly to the god of the sky. These sacrifices were offered through the lesser gods.

The Igede also had some secret societies like the *Akpang, Achukwu, and Evo* cults, which were exclusively for men and the *Imwo* which was meant for women. On the days of the cult festivals, women, children and the uninitiated were not allowed to move about freely (except the cult meant exclusively for women). All the clans in Igede pay obeisance to various deities. For instance, *oyita* is associated with Oju, *Ebi* with Ukpa and *igahi* with *Ainu*.

The Igede have various sayings and proverbs that reflect their world view and their identity. They believe in the concept of *Okpeika. Okpeika* connotes gentleness, desire to maintain status quo, one who does not challenge existing oppressive structure. The Igede at the slightest challenge or sight of trouble calls him/her *okpeika* and adds the surname for instance one could *okpeika onyi Ode* meaning the gentle daughter of Ode. When singing praise - *chienyi* in Igede or tracing genealogy which can be likened to what the Yoruba in South-

Western Nigeria call *Oriki,* the first line usually makes reference to the fact that an Igede is an *okpeika.* For instance

Okpeika onyi nyi Ona
Onyi yi ogila Ogbaka
Onyi nyo na Ogbaji

Okpeika the son of Ona
Ona the son of Ogbaka
Ogbaka the son of Ogbaji

The concept of *Okpeika* is so entrenched among the Igede that they always tend to avoid trouble at all costs. It preaches a gospel of conservatism and the need to pay any prize for peace, to accept any situation as ordained from *ebina* meaning creation. If there was a need to challenge any structure, a passive but assertive means is preferred to violence. This stance may be in reaction to the Igede experience at their homeland *Ora*, the repression, human and material loss suffered after the Ogbiloko[11] uprising in 1927. They may have drawn a conclusion that no good thing comes from violence. Hence, the Igede advocate and entrench humility and gentleness through which they may negotiate their reconstructed identity. In essence, what they cannot get through violence they can negotiate with the dominant identities. Apart from the philosophy of gentleness, the Igede emphasise communality and the community is seen as bigger than the individuals. Hence, the proverb;

Ongongohe m' eru ny' ehe / gbu igwuh ny'eheh kaka
 No one answers the call of the community and dies for answering a public call
This proverb is used to encourage members of the ethnic group to be loyal to the community. Efforts should be made to advance the course of the community as the ancestors and other members of the community would support him. Loyalty to the community here would advance Igede identity especially in a place where the dominant ethnic group would rather subsume the Igede and utilise all possible means to achieve this even through force, persuasion and material resource enticement.

Odumwo dumwo aa dediye ochika

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[11]Ogbiloko was traditional physician who was believed to have possessed mystical powers. He led a revolt against the British colonialists in 1927. His revolt led to a patrol that lasted for one year. In the course of the patrol scores of the Igede were killed and many villages sacked and the Igede were forced to pledge to be loyal to the British as well as assist the British to apprehend Ogbiloko

A careful and consistent movement does not stop ones planned journey.
M'ediye ojuju r'ediye odayi ka ka
 A tiring trip is not a postponed trip

This means that though a journey may be prolonged, one would still get to the destination. It is a proverb that demands perseverance in the quest to achieve a purpose. Therefore, no matter how long it takes, despite the consistent failure in colonial and immediate post-colonial period, Igede distinct identity is achievable through perseverance (what are you saying here. This shows that identity can be used to create in othersa sense of hope and meaning to the insecurity of everyday life. The identity and social thought of the Igede focuses more on recreating or creating an Igede identity in resistance to a colonial *basterdised* identity as well as imposed Idoma identity. Identity is created in relation to structures as well as meanings ethnic groups make of others' judgments, actions, inactions as well as perceptions. It involves the creation of a consciousness of subjugation and marginalisation with regards to a previously imposed identity and the promise of liberation with regards to the recreation and acceptance of a new identity.

4.1.4 Etulo Identity Social Thought

The Etulo occupy the banks of River Kastina Ala (an extension of the River Benue) in present day Kastina Ala and Buruku Local Government Areas of Benue State. According to Etulo social thought, the Etulo were historically part of the Kwararafa confederacy which existed in the Benue valley in the 16th century. The disintegration of the confederacy led to their migration from Kwararafa to their present location. Tersema (undated) gives an elaborate version of this history. They were historically part of the Kwararafa kingdom along with other groups such as Alago, Igala, Igbirra(Ebira), Idoma. Initially all of them lived happily together but as time went on, unhealthy conditions began to develop. Some of these conditions, according to him, include constant quarrels among members of the royal family, outbreak of dreadful diseases such as small pox and leprosy which also gave way to famine and general instability in the kingdom. Kwararafa was thus politically disorganised and militarily weakened and could no longer withstand the external force that was renowned for its use of Calvary.

Oral traditions of Etulo refer to these wars as *ado tu iku mmua le gbile ika bye* meaning enemies who rode on horse backs while they fought. When Kwararafa eventually

disintegrated within the 16th century, many of the inhabitants did not feel safe and hence began to migrate. The Arago moved and occupied Doma in the Lafia division, followed by the Idoma and the Igala who settled in their present locations. The Idoma, according to Tarsema(undated), attempted to rebuild Apa but it was destroyed in the 16th century by the Tiv. In this period, the idoma had begun to spread widely in the lower Benue valley. While the Idoma where spreading, the Etulo detached themselves from the Idoma and travelled to the South-Eastern direction until they came to a place known as Agbarike on the Nigeria-Cameroon border. The Etulo left this area as a result of attacks from the Ugenyi (Chamba). The Etulo then moved to the *Ikwo* Mountain which is located at *IkuravYa* which can easily be viewed form *KastinaKla* town.

According to Etulo oral history, *Ikwo* was a virgin land and life on the hill was good at the initial stage. It was a kind of Canaan as there was plenty of food and water. This experience was short-lived as they began to suffer attacks form a beast known as *Nmbwaba* which disturbed their peace greatly. Any time any one came down from the mountain he or she was immediately killed by this fierce animal. The Etulo historically had a great hunter known as *Agida*. One day,*Agida's* hunting expedition took him down to the foot of the mountain where he came across this wild beast and killed it. The Etulo as well as other groups were very happy with Agida and as such Etulo made him their leader. After this, the Etulo lived peacefully until the nomadic Fulani as well as the Chamba came in contact with them. The Chamba, according to him had used iron weapons and were numerically superior to the Etulo. The Etulo, after being attacked by the Chamba and the Fulani began to migrate gradually towards their present location led by Agida. The Etulo settled at Adandera at Ibenda hills where they enjoyed a level of peace until they were chased away by some Tiv migrants in the 18th century.

The Tiv, migrants according to him, came at night when the Etulo were sleeping and started attacking them. They woke up to the sound of *Akwo* ika and began to run away. Within a short time they all gathered behind their leader and started moving north wards until they settled at *UlokoMbaazagee*, kindred in *Mbagen* clan. While they were leaving this place one of them did not leave as a result of stubbornness and uncooperative attitude. He was left behind and became the father of the Etulo who presently live in *Nanev* district among the Tiv. According to this version, the Tiv could not pronounce the word *Mnana* and corrupted it to *Nanev*. One version argued that, the Tiv submerged the descendant of *Mnana* and became part of Tiv who are now called *Nanev* in Kwande Local Government. According to him, the

first group of Tiv to encounter the Etulo were the *Iharev* and *Masev* when Etulo was under the leadership of the Abe Okakwu, the 7th Otse Etulo. According to this narration, the Iharev kidnapped Etulo's beautiful daughter and migrated away with her and she begot children for him, this accountsfor the reason some *Iharev* who reside around Adaka in Gwer west are referred to as *Utur*, a corrupt version of Etulo.

Apart from the capture of their daughter by the Tiv, the Etulo experienced brutal defeat from the Tiv. According to this version, *Adzongo*, a Tiv artisan had decorated one of the wives of the *Otse* with silver and brass rings on her legs, this was perceived as an abomination by the *Otse's* son who manhandled *Adzongo*. On getting home after escaping death from *Otse's* son, *Adzongo* mobilised his relatives toattack the Etulo at night inflicting devastating defeat on them. Frustrated, Etulo left this place and settled at Ikpese-Etulo, the land they have continued to occupy todate. While in *Nanev* they witnessed the migration of the Tiv en mass and as such conflicts began to arise between the Tiv and the Etulo. This led to migration to their present location at Ipese Etulo. The conflicts with the Tiv were as a result of the violation of Etulo cultural practices. One of the conflicts resulted from a sexual act between a Tiv man and an Etulo widow. In annoyance, the Etulo attacked and killed the man. Before this time, it was rare for the Etulo to have dealings with anyone outside their group. They strove to maintain a pure blood as they felt they would be polluted by mixing up with other ethnic groups.

The killing of the Tiv led to a full-scale war where the Etulo were so defeated that they had to send to the Jukun at Wukari for aid. The Aku of Wukari helped the Jukuns and even sent some of his satellites to live with them and helped them in the war. The Etulo subsequently migrated to their present location at Ipese Etulo. This movement occasioned by a myth where they say they were led to the present location by birds who travelled in that direction and came back with fish and nuts for their young ones. This happened many times and was noticed by the people. One day a hunter from one of the clans decided to follow such birds in the direction they went. In the course of his hunting, he came across a stream which came to be known as *Ogaturu* in present day Etulo land. The hunter was able to get fish from the stream which he took back to the elders. Other hunters began to go there to hunt and came back with very big game. Gradually, the Etulo became attracted to the place and built their shrine very close to the stream. That place became a place for ancestral worship to date. The Etulo subsequently moved to this area and have settled in the areauntil today.

Tabe (2007), in his own account of the origin of the Etulo, says the Etulo were children of *Ibagye* the progenitor to whom they trace their descent. *Ibagye* was believed to have had many children including *Itsikpe* who in turn became the father of three children, namely*Okakwu*, *Ozi* and *Okwe*. These children later became leaders and subsequently established three royal families in Etulo land. Although his own account of the origin of the Etulo links them to the defunct Kwararafa kingdom, he says the Etulo came from the east into the Benue valley or Kwararafa. His own account traces the origin of the Etulo beyond the Kwararafa kingdom. They were members of the Kwararafa kingdom along with the Jukun, Goemai, Idoma, Afo and Alago under one king known as *Ongyufa*. He also cites dynastic squabbles, outbreak of chicken pox and small pox as well as Fulani invasion as the reasons for the disintegration of Kwararafa and the subsequent migration of the Etulo to their present location.

The Etulo migrated along with other groups, but parted from them and moved in a south easterly direction and settled at the foot of *Aamgbe* and *Andandara* mountains. They migrated from this area as a result of attacks from the Chamba to a place known as *Oyaawari* in present day Kwande local government of Benue State. Much later, the Etulo desired to be close to their own relatives from whom they parted from Kwararafa. They then moved away from *Oyaawari* in search of the others with whom they migrated from Kwararafa. This search was not successful as other events took over and the Etulo subsequently settled in their present homeland leaving behind one of their kit and kin at Uloko en route their present location. In concert with Tersama, Tabe emphasises the fact that the Etulo arrived the Benue valley before the Tiv and that the Tiv dominance in the Benue valley was a contemporary dominance.

The Etulo, through this oral history, give a social basis to their identity as fishermen, hunters and warriors. They also emphasise their links with the Kwararafa kingdom as a way of portraying their previous dominance in the Benue valley and emphasise the fact that they arrived the Benue valley before the Tiv. The Kwararafa kingdom was hitherto a very strong kingdom which was said to have waged war against warriors from Kano and defeated them. It was a very strong confederacy during the 16th century. Making reference to this kingdom was a way of accentuating that they were once dominant, irrespective of their present subordinate status in Benue State. The Etulo, through this tradition of origin, create a social basis as well as justification for their present status in the State and also create a sense of hope in the younger generation who are made to believe that reclaiming their lost identity is

possible. This social thought may also have been constructed in reaction to the Tiv dominance in present day Benue State. This social thought shows a resistance to Tiv dominance in the Benue valley through appeal to history where they make reference to their previous dominance that had been taken away from them by the Tiv.

Furthermore, according to oral traditions, the Etulo left Kwararafa straight to the present day Kwande local government. At this place, an Etulo hunter, Onatse Otseyi in his quest for games moved deep into the forest and on the way saw a fish on the sand. He therefore sought to know the source of the fish and discovered river Katsina-Ala. On this discovery, he ran back and informed his people who being anglers, migrated immediately to occupy the place around the riverbank by a thick forest made up of mainly *Utur* trees. According to this version, some Etulo people refused moving away from their Kwande settlement and were referred to mockingly as -*bunana alua* (just be foolish). This is why according to this version some Etulos were left in today's Kwande Local Government Area and are referred to as *Nanev* (the foolish ones).

This version argues that, on the arrival of the *Etulos* around the banks of River *Katsina*-Ala, they met the Tiv around the *Ugbema* area and the Etulo left them there to migrate and settle at *Abwa*, establishing good relationship with the Tiv. Later on, the Etulo discovered that some Tiv people of *Kusuv*, *Shorov* and *Ikyurav* were also settled deep inside the banks of the River. When the Etulo came in contact with these Tiv groups, their relationship with the *Kusuv* particularly made them (Etulos) believe that the Tiv of *Kusuv* were their lost brothers. This accounts for why when an *Otse* is installed, he is taken to *Kusuv* for overnight rituals before going back to Etulo land. The Etulo regard the ritual site in *Kusuv* as "*Mgbadufu*". The present settlement of the Etulo was historically a thick forest of *Utur* trees and when the Tiv go to visit them, they would simply say we are going to *Utur* (*Me za shin Utur*) meaning, I am visiting the *Utur* trees or the people residing among the *Utur* trees. This version further gives a social basis for the fact that the Etulo are found in various settlements among the Tiv.

The Etulo, though hedged in by the Tiv as a result of local government demarcations, emphasise the fact that they are not Tiv. Their main occupation is fishing though they also grow crops like yam, maize, guinea-corn, cassava, rice millet and beniseed. The Etulo have a centralised system of government with the head who is known as *OtseEtulo* (Etulo Chief). Succession to the throne is rotational among three royal families of Okakwu, Ozi and Okwe families. In the past, Etulo chiefs had to go to the *AkuUka* of Wukari, the paramount Ruler of

the Jukuns to be confirmed. They no longer do this because of the belief that they are independent.

The Etulo have various festivals which are usually periods of uniting ofkit and kin as well as showcasing their cultural heritage. The two major ones are *Okpleka* and *Agishi*. *Okpleka* is a festival that is held after the harvest of yam and millet. It is an annual ceremony which the Etulo hold to honour their ancestors and at the same time install chiefs. It takes place after the millet has been harvested. As soon as millet is harvested, the *Otse* announces that there should be no talking. No talking here means no drums should be beaten in the whole of Etulo land. This may be in preparation for the festival. A date is then set by the *Otse* in council for the *Opleka* after which millet is soaked for *burukutu* – local beer made from millet. On the day millet is soaked; drummers from *Angwawuja* village come out to play drums to announce that people can now talk. Women then begin to practise various dances for presentation on the day of the festival. Plenty of foodstuffs are taken to the *Otse* palace and he in turn distributes to visitors. On the day of the festival, various dances are performed at the chief's palace and there is usually a lot of eating and drinking. Throughout the period of the festival, no one is expected to speak or sing in any language other than Etulo language. It is believed that the gods will not listen to any other language than Etulo. Tabe(2007) argues that this is done to respect the ancestors and even likens it to the Passover of the Israelites. According to him,

> The idea of placing embargo on the use of any language is above all to respect their ancestors. Secondly, our elders feel it is a solemn period for their children to think more about their ways of life and the significance of the *Opleka* festival among the Etulo. It is also a conformist period which they feel had helped to preserve their culture. One is tempted to observe without religious bias, that there is a similarity between the Israelites custom of eating the Passover without breaking any bone; if you ate it and you broke the bone, you erred against God and the children of Israel looked at you as a deviant with great anger. … The Etulo looked at you as a man of no culture with no respect to the ancestors. *Opleka* is therefore a period of reflection on their past, review of their present and forecasting of their future…(Tabe 2007:78)

Respondents in the course of interviews corroborate this as follows:

> This is done in respect to our ancestors. Do your own ancestors understand English? Can you speak to them in another language apart from your own? This festival is meant to honour our ancestors. Speaking another language during this festival will amount to an insult. If we insult our ancestors they will be angry with us and many things that are evil will begin to happen in the land. Our ancestors are

our guardians so we cannot afford to insult them. They are the reason why we have been able to survive despite our marginalisation in Benue State.

KII/ 69 yr old/ Adi Etulo/ 26th June 2011

Another also states that;

Well, we are told that it is a mark of respect to our ancestors. So we believe. The truth is that with industrialisation and education, many of our people especially the young ones have gone to stay in other places. Apart from that you can see that we are surrounded by the Tiv on all sides. Most of us speak Tiv and many of our children are more quick to identify with the Tiv than Etulo. So festivals like this help us to create a sense of identity and pride among our people especially the youth. We want to ensure that we don't go extinct. So beyond the fact that we need to respect our ancestors, we also want our children, our people to speak the language.

Male IDI/ 69yr old/ Etulo/ August 2011

The data above show that this is done to further entrench Etulo identity among the Etulo. The emphasis on the speaking of Etulo language serves to create a sense of nationalism among the Etulo and also discourage the adoption of other identities by the Etulo.

Identity construction could involve the invocation of the supernatural in a bid to give legitimacy to the constructed identity. It also brings to light the importance of language in identity construction. Meanings are made through the use of language and these are communicated through language. Language is used to categorise, and it places one within a particular social structure and social system. Social constructionism emphasises the place of language in identity construction as the objectifications of everyday life can only be made sense of and communicated through language.

The celebration of *opleka* is usually held in the courtyard of the *OtseEtulo's* palace. The use of the *Otse* palace is of special significance as it points them to the seat of Etulo power, which is also the custodian of Etulo culture and practices. Thisgives a sense of sacredness to the festival.*Ebiye* or *burukutu* brewed from the newly harvested millet is regarded as a special drink for the festival. The drink is also regarded as a heritage of the Kwararafa kingdom. During the festival, a traditional cloth known as *Akwasha* is usually worn. The *Akwasha* is a traditionally woven material with many colours; the major ones being black and white. The white according to Etulo social thought presents them as a people with a clean heart. The black according to the Etulo is a Kwararafa colour. The appeal to Kwararafa identity could be

regarded as an attempt to portray themselves as dominant though hedged in by the Tiv. The Etulo, like every other social group, have proverbs that reflect their social thought and identity.

Abo onyi lib o efiba

One hand cannot kill flies unless two hands

Flies here represent an enemy or disturbance. One hand is not usually able to destroy an enemy or remove an obstacle. Two hands are needed. The proverb is a further reflection of the value the Etulo place on working together. This proverb stresses the value of togetherness and communality in accentuating Etulo identity. The flies here represent the Tiv dominant identity. There is a need to come together if they were to successfully do away with the Tiv dominant identity. Here, the Etulo encourage collective efforts to accentuate their identity in the midst of the efforts of the dominant group to "swallow them up".

Ebi bila agida ana mgboga

The fish is only strong when in water

This proverb has to do with the life of the fish. Its strength is only within water environment. On dry land, its power is gone. It is actually used to caution the Etulo not to abandon the culture and practices of the Etulo as their strength lies in their beingwhothey are i.e. Etulo. This proverb may not be unlinked to the fact that the Etulo are hedged in by the Tiv in two local governments and their paramount traditional ruler is more or less a district head/chief under the Tiv traditional council. It is a call, in spite of the seeming attractiveness of the Tiv culture, not to abandon the Etulo culture, as they can never become Tiv.It is also a call to them to remember that their strength comes from their remaining together as Etulo and not allowing themselves to be influenced by Tiv dominant identity.

4.1.5 Jukun IdentitySocial Thought

The Jukun in terms of numerical strength are regarded as the smallest among the ethnic groups in Benue State. They live at the bank of river Benue and are predominantly fishermen. According to oral traditions of the Jukun, they originated from Yemen where they travelled through Borno and Kano. They were part of the Kwararafa confederacy where they held the dominant position as rulers over other non-Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups. The disintegration of the confederacy led to their migration to the present location. The Jukuns in Benue State regard themselves as Jukun *Awanu,* meaning the Riverine Jukun or the Jukun of the River

while those in Taraba state are regarded as Jukun *Awapa* the Jukun of the land (farmers). The Jukun *Awanu* have an *Aku* (chief) whom they regard as their political head. They also regard the *AkuUka* of Wukari as their overall political head. The Jukun regard themselves as synonymous with Kwararafa kingdom. In the course of interview, a respondent asserted that

> Jukun is Kwararafa and Kwararafa is Jukun. We were not defeated by the Hausa or Fulani. If you can have access to Kano chronicle you will see that we even defeated some of the Hausa soldiers in the past. Kwararafa was very strong. We the Jukun ruled over other ethnic groups until issues of jealousy and struggle for leadership came in. but till today we are warriors. The Tiv will never forget us. They will never forget what we did to them during the Abinsi crisis

> IDI/45 yr old youth leader/ Abinsi/ April 2011

The reference to Kwararafa identity is reminiscent of a previously dominant identity which the Jukun create to portray the fact that despite their domination and control by the Tiv, they were once dominant. The Jukuns also emphasise the fact that they got to the Benue valley before the Tiv, all in a bid to emphasise that they were previously dominant in the northern region. They attribute their subordinate status to the disintegration of the Kwararafa kingdom and colonial arrangement in the defunct Northern Region. In a bid to wrench free from what they see as an imposed Tiv identity, they emphasise these myths to give a social basis to their constructed dominant identity. The Jukun *Awanu* also emphasise their links with the Jukun *Awanpan* in Taraba state where they have numerical strength. The Jukun in Taraba are a dominant ethnic group in Taraba so the Jukun in Benue State emphasise their links with andcite occupation as the only reason for their being part of Benue State, hedged in by the Tiv.

The origin of the Jukun *Awanu* has been widely researchedby scholars. Douglas (2010) traces the history of the Jukun *Awanu* to the Kwararafa kingdom where they belong to the large family of all other ethnic groups in the defunct Kwararafa kingdom. They migrated from the kingdom as a result of the collapse of the kingdom.After the collapse, the headquarters was moved to Wukari by Aku Katakpa. This resulted in the mass movement of other ethnic groups including the Jukun *Awanu* from the city to settle elsewhere outside the region. The Jukun *Awanu* migrated towards the southern part of the defunct Kwararafa kingdom. Their movement was mostly in clans, lineage and royal house groupings. Each group migrated with chieftaincy which had a retinue of minor officers and hangers-on. According to him, the Jukun founded a number of towns en-route their present location.

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Some of these towns include Abinsi where they displaced the Igbirras (Ebira) Agyogo, Anmor among others. In every tradition of origin, the Jukun emphasise their contest and conquest in a bid to create an identity of dominance as against their present subjection under the Tiv identity.

Tabe (2007) has a slightly different account of the origin of the Jukun. According to him, all the ethnic groups that made up Kwararafa kingdom came from Yemen in the Middle East. When the Jukuns first left Yemen, they had to go back and help their brothers who were left behind in a war against their enemies. After the battle, the Wapan Jukun left Egypt for short stay, but had to leave due to religious disagreements. From thence, they migrated south wards into Ethiopia, passing through the country of Sudan and continuing eastward through Darfur to the Lake Chad region. The Jukuns still fought another war within this region which sent the people of Kwararafa packing again. They formed the erstwhile Kwararafa kingdom which eventually collapsed in the 16th century leading to their migration to their present location. Benue Province Annual Report (1931) describes the Jukun as being of Hamitic origin and according to their oral traditions came from the Nile region by the way of Fitri and the Gongola River in the 10th century. From the 13th to the 16th century, they maintained a powerful but loosely knit federation known as Kororofa covering Gongola and the lower Benue valleys. The confederacy disintegrated in the 19th century in the course of Fulani and Chamba conquests.

The Jukun social organisation was described as the only example of the type of state which was characteristic of the Middle East prior to the advent of Muhamedan religion and culture (Islam). The kingdom though collapsed, is still run by the Aku of Wukari who is regarded as being divinely appointed to mediate between the gods and the people. A Jukun youth in the course of FGD gave a slightly different version as he said

> The Jukun originated from Saudi Arabia together with the Kanuri, Igala, and Idoma among other ethnic groups. All the ethnic groups there spoke one language called Apa. They all migrated through *Mahu* to Lake Chad then to *Kasgragamu*. After this they parted from the Kanuri at Maiduguri and passed through Kano where they met the *Makosawa* in Kano. The Jukun fought the Bauchi Emirate during the Usman Dan Fodio era. The Bauchi people sought for help from the Niger Republic but the people of Niger Republic declined. They settled for a while in Kano in a settlement they call *Yankase* meaning we are coming back. Also in Zaria where they have a Jukun settlement called *Tudun* Jukun meaning the town of Jukuns. They claim that these settlements exist till date. They migrated from these

areas to their present location…"There is no tribe that has a playmate like Jukun".

This myth portrays the creation of a dominant Jukun identity where they make reference to origin as being from the Middle East. They even link their origin to groups like the Kanuri who historically formed the famous Kanem Bornu Empire. It is important to note that this Empire was not conquered by the Hausa-Fulani. The Jukun youths here create an identity of superiority linking their origin to other dominant ethnic groups. This in essence portrays them as people who are not indigenous to Africa and therefore are of a superior civilisation compared to the other ethnic groups. The reference to Saudi Arabia portrays them as superior to others. They also emphasise their contests and conquest of other groups en-route their present location. Thus portraying themselves a warrior group who were never dominated but for colonial arrangement which brought them under the dominance of the Tiv. The Jukun youth, through this social thought, create a social basis for their constructed identity of dominance. This in essence creates a consciousness of dominance and resistance to other dominant ethnic groups in the region. This gives the members of the ethnic group a kind of hope inthat they were not always a subjected group of people but their present situation was brought about by the colonialists. This also creates a kind of hope that liberation is possible.

The Jukun accentuate their identity to reflect the fact that though they may be hedged in by the Tiv, they are not Tiv. The Jukuns have a fishing festival which is held in April yearly and they also have a yearly Jukun day celebration where they showcase the Jukun culture in form of masquerade appearances and dances. The Jukun day celebration involves cultural displays in dances and dance dramas depicting Jukun identity as warriors, expert fishermen as well as farmers. Songs such as the following are sung to encourage the Jukun to accentuate their identity.

Awanu newe ya yandiye

Achowa nai woi tadiwa awonu newe ya tadiye

Riverine [Jukun] lets go and show case our culture

Other ethnic groups are showcasing their culture

The encouragement to accentuate their identity is not unrelated to the fact that other ethnic groups are showcasing theirs. A possible fear of non-recognition in Benue State as well as fears of extinction may also have informed the call to accentuate their culture which is an aspect of their identity. The Jukun have traditional attire which they call *Adire* which is a

piece of cloth dyed into navy blue patterns. This is usually worn during festivals as well as other occasions of importance. The traditional attire, according to them signifies peace and friendliness. They also have attire called *Acheka* which is regarded as a cloth for war. It is usually worn by the men. The traditional attires of the Jukun *Awanu* are also used by the Jukun *Wapan* in Taraba state. This in essence reinforces their link with the other Jukuns and the *AkuUka* of Wukari whose traditional institution is historically older than that of the Tiv. The use of *Adire* also portrays the fact that despite their status in Benue State, they are not Tiv but Jukun.

The Jukun are at present subject to the Tiv traditional council. Their traditional ruler is a district head under Tiv traditional council. He is also made to dress in black and white (in the Tiv traditional attire including beads) during council meetings. In reaction to this, the Jukun maintain and emphasise their links with the *Awapan* in Taraba State.They also have proverbs that portray their feeling of superiority over other ethnic groups especially the Tiv. For instance,

Ibewonwonyeuo
We are not slaves

The Jukuns in this proverb portray themselves as not inferior to the other ethnic groups despite their size and the socio-political structure in which they have found themselves. In 1906, there wasacontest at Abinsi between the Jukun and the Hausa which led to the destruction of the Royal Niger Company warehouse in 1906 by the Tiv.The headquarters of the Munshi province was moved to Makurdi while the Jukun villages were spread under other districts(Hembe 2005, Makar1994, Tseayo 1975). Moreover, the Jukun paramount headwas reduced from the level of a fourth class chief to a district head. In the light of all this structure which has persisted to date, the Jukun through this proverb instil in their natives a sense of superiority identity by the constant reminder that though the political arrangement has subjected them under a Tiv identity and made them like slaves who have to perpetually remain under the Tiv, they (Jukun) are not slaves. Also related to this is the saying that

Ashido bei kwaei kaseh e ka anwonyeou
God will never reduce any one to be a perpetual slave for ever

Aounoh mako abeye kya
No matter how dark the night is, it must surely break into day

These proverbs point to an encouragement to Jukun that their present subjection and domination under the Tiv identity will not last forever. No matter how long it took, Jukun identity would be recognised one day. The Jukun also encourage their natives to be patient and consistent as it was only through patience and doggedness that the goal of a distinct identity outside the domination of others is possible. This they do in the following proverb:

Apah shishur e lo woyor
You cannot be running and picking something at the same time.

The goal of asserting their identity away from the domination of the Tiv would not be achieved if they did not imbibe patience and systematically strategise and follow their strategy carefully. Furthermore, after the violence of 1906 and other contests with the colonialists and the Tiv, the Jukun may have concluded that patience was needed to achieve their dream of a distinct ethnic identity. They also encourage unity in the pursuit of their goal to achieve freedom from the domination of the Tiv in the following proverb

Awunma kwa akwapi ashine
We should unite before we can bury the corpse on the ground

The analogy of a corpse here refers to something that had to be done away with buried or destroyed. The corpse here may also be used with reference to the Tiv dominant identity which the Jukun detest hence the symbolic use of a corpse. The Tiv dominant identity no longer served their [Jukun] purpose so it has to be done away as the identity socially irritates them. To successfully bury this corpse, they need to be united in their quest to recreate and accentuate the Jukun identity.

An examination of the social thought of the five ethnic groups brings to the fore some issues that can be regarded as salient as far as identity construction and social thought are concerned. Firstly, the social thought here is a reification of their histories, hopes, fears as well as other experiences in the course of their interactions with their physical and social environment. Their social thoughts bring their experiences and expectations to the fore. These are communicated to the younger generation to ensure it is preserved and to guard against possible extinction. The social thought, in essence, is a reification of their identitieswhich they have created through interactions with their environment (physical, significant others such as ethnic groups, government as well as other experiences). The social thought also portrays a struggle for supremacy among the ethnic groups. To Those who occupy dominant

positions, their social thought reflects their feelings of dominance while the others who occupy subordinate positions in the socio-political structure of the state have constructed a highly resistant and subtle identityand social thought to challenge the dominance of others.

The social thought further proves the assertion of Berger and Luckman (1966) that social reality is composed of the subjective and the objective. The subjective is created through *intersubjective* exchanges with others in the environment. Through these, exchanges lead to established patterns of social behaviour that become objectified i.e. act back on the people as though they were not involved in their creation. Their social thought also brings to light the place of language in identity construction. Ethnic groups reify their constructed identity through the instrumentality of language. Language provides a medium through which reality is shared. The objectifications of everyday life are created and maintained by linguistic significations. An understanding of language is thus essential for the understandingof social reality as well as identity. Language is a factity external to humans and it has coercive effect on individual as it forces one into patterns. This also confirms Itenkel's (2005)assertion that identity is shaped by strong and stable communities and the social processes generated within them. The community provides the language through which individuals understand the world. The construction of identity entails being initiated into a way of understanding things.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 11

5.1 A Trajectory of Identity Construction and Reconstruction

The construction of identity is a social process that influences and is influenced by social interaction. Through interaction, individuals and groups create meanings of the others actions, inactions, perceptions and judgments. These become the raw materials as well as building blocks for identity construction and reconstruction. Identity essentially emerges from the dialectic between the individual/group and society. Once it is formed, it is also maintained, reshaped and modified through interactive processes which are determined by the social structure (Luckman and Berger, 1966). This means that identity is fluid, malleable and as open-ended as social interactions continue to take place in society. This section of the work is concerned with the analysis of the interactions as well as social structural processes that have influenced the construction and reconstruction of identity among ethnic groups in Benue State.

The ethnic groups in Benue State, with over a hundred others in Northern Nigeria, historically existed as independent ethnic/cultural groups until the introduction of Islam and Fulani conquest of the Hausa area, the British colonial occupation and consequent creation of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria in 1900. The Hausa had hitherto occupied the Northern half of Northern protectorate while the Southern half was occupied by over a hundred other ethnic groups who had distinct cultural practices, languages and identities. The Hausa existed in various groups/states and traced their origins to different progenitors. For instance, the Kanuri in Borno trace their origin to one Sef who named the whole of the empire after himself –*Sefewa* -- the people of Sef. Other Hausas west of Bornu trace their origin to one Bayajida who founded the state of Daura from which grew the seven Hausa states of Daura, Zaria, Gobir, Kastina, Rano and Biram. The Hausa existed independently in these states until the jihad of 1804-08 which superimposed a central political and religious authority on the fragmented Hausa states through conquest and *islamisation* discourse and reconstructed the Hausa into one political linguistic unit and inscribed Islamic piety as one of the most important markers of Hausa identity (Onchonu 2008, Burdon 1904, Ruxton 1906). Thus, being Hausa became synonymous with being Muslim. This identity persists to date despite the existence of Hausas who are not Muslims.

In essence, identity can be constructed through contest and conquest. Here, the Fulani were able to superimpose an Islamic identity through conquest. Moreover, identity construction is not always a peaceful process. This is what makes conflict in the course of identity construction inevitable. Identity could also be superimposed by a high power and it also involves being incorporated into a particular social structure cum way of life. So identity construction process in the case of the Hausa here presents a homogenising process which was inherently *conflictual* as well as the construction and subsequent (forceful) incorporation into a particular social structure.

An Emirate and caliphate structure was created with a Sultan in Sokoto as a spiritual/religious and political head. The Fulani followed in hierarchy as Emirs over the Hausa states (that had been reorganised as Emirates) who reported to the Sultanate. The Hausa followed in hierarchy and then the *Talakawas* mostly Hausa who were the commoners and the foot soldiers of the caliphate. The jihad was more or less a homogenising or assimilation process for the Hausa and Fulani in terms of culture (religion as well as political and social structure) and it inherently and gradually portrayed Hausa as synonymous with being Muslim. Furthermore, The Fulani adopted the language of the Hausa and improved upon their administrative structure the *Habe* (Ruxton 1906). The whole of the process led to the creation of the Hausa-Fulani composite group as well as identity and nomenclature that is popularly used to describe the North-Western ethnic groups in contemporary Nigeria.

This was the socio-political structure that the British colonialists met and proceeded to impose on the other ethnic groups in the Southern half of the Northern Protectorate. While this had taken place in the Northern half of the protectorate, the other ethnic groups still existed independently as nations, cultural groups, in empires and in some cases confederacies. Some of the groups interacted through trade contests and conquests while some never had a chance at interaction. There were disintegrations and migrations from confederacies but these groups existed independent of one another.

While the Islamic jihad was critical to the construction of a *wholesome* Hausa-Fulani cum Hausa identity, colonial occupation in the Southern half of the protectorate was a critical step in the reconstruction of the identity of the ethnic groups in the Southern half of the Northern region from their indigenous forms (Dudley 1968). The British set up their trading concerns along the Niger in 1878 and eventually the Royal Niger Company with branches in many parts of Northern Nigeria was created (Makar 1994). In 1899, the Protectorate of Northern

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Nigeria was created and the territories of the Royal Niger Company were consequently transferred to the colonial office and Lord Lugard took over affairs as the first commissioner of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria.

The creation of the Protectorate overtly brought all the ethnic groups within this area under the identity of NorthernNigeria. In essence, all the nation, ethnic and cultural groups were under the Northern protectorate. Although the ethnic groups had varying cultures and traditions as well as histories and social structures, they were all defined as 'Northern' by the colonialists, a supposedly higher power. So, though differences may exist within social groups or individuals, an identity can be imposed on them thus bringing them under a particular category. Identity construction is a homogenisation as well as categorisation process.

The colonisation process among the ethnic groups in Benue State was forceful as their source of livelihood and existence was interfered with. There were violent altercations between the people and the colonialists. Lives and properties were lost and as such, the people were forced to surrender to the colonialists (details on page 94). The ethnic groups overtly resisted their being brought under the identity of the Northern Protectorate. These resistances were visited by heavy penaltiesby the colonialists andthatthey had to surrender. So a particular identity though not accepted by the people so defined, can persist. This is in concert with Alubo (2009) who opines that

> Identity as other defined persists irrespective of whether people so labelled accept the definition(s). Thus, people who might see themselves as different may be seen by others as "one of them"…As a label, it can be assumed by, or imposed on bearers. It is also a prism by which objects, people, and collectivities are sorted, organised, mapped and ordered into meaningful [and]understandable units… Alubo (2009: 2)

The identity of "Northern" persists to date despite concerted attempts at reconstructions by these dominated ethnic groups. The identity of 'Northern' was created to overtly organise and order the peoples in this area for meaningful administration by the colonialists. The process of creating the northern identity was characterised by conquest and subjugation. Finding from the study showed that the ethnic groups had varied experiences in terms of the conquest and subjugation process.

Among the Tiv, the colonialists employed various measures to bring the Tiv under their desired identity and place in the colonial social structure. The first contact with the Tiv had to do with the citing of a telegraph which was to pass through Tiv land to Ibi in present day Taraba State. The Tiv destroyed the telegraph and the British consequently responded with an attack on the Tiv villages around that area. One of the challenges the colonialists had with bringing the Tiv under subjugation was their fragmentary way of life and social structural arrangement. Unlike that of the Hausa-Fulani where they could vanquish ruling elite to assert control and redefine identity, the Tiv had leaders in sections so vanquishing one leader of the section could not bring them under domination and control. Furthermore, the Tiv, as discussed previously, are migratory in nature and the colonial policy was to establish centralised groups with representatives where they could rule over people indirectly. Boundaries were forcefully demarcated with the Tiv and all the Tiv were forcefully brought under the Northern protectorate. Despite these measures, the colonialists still found it difficult to successfully bring the Tiv under their control and domination and so they began to combine subtlety with force and were able to achieve a measure of success. To entrench their domination and consequently their identity that was created, the colonialists embarked on certain movements exclusive to Tiv land to ensure that the Tiv were detached from their own indigenous identities and were successfully brought under the identity that the colonialists had constructed for them. One of such movements was the *Haakaa* movement.

The word *Haakaa* simply means surrender things or give me things. It is also sometimes called *Namakaa*. This move was introduced in the early 1930s to rid the Tiv of witchcraftwhich was also known as Tsav. It was an expedition by the colonial government to rid Tiv land of *Mbatsav--* the people of *Tsav*. This, according to Hagher (1984), was necessary because the colonial government was finding it difficult to get to Tiv powerbase, and also the Christian missionaries had problems converting Tiv to Christianity. By launching an attack on *Mbastav*, the colonial administration thought they would liberate the Tiv from the grips of fear of the *Mbastav* as well as help the missionaries in converting the Tiv, now "freed" to Christianity. The Tiv people were simply asked to surrender all artefacts pertaining to *Tsav*. According to Tseayo (1975), anyone suspected of killing people through *Tsav* who failed to surrender his artefacts as required by the administration, underwent brutal beatings and all kinds of torture.

These beatings and tortures were administered by the government messengers and the police who were mostly of Hausa origin. This movement was meant to erode the Tiv world view

and indoctrinate them with a new world view that would enhance successful colonisation. So serious was this process that those who had no artefacts to show had to go carving just to be free from the brutality of the colonial administration. Tseayo also notes that the youths who felt continuously threatened by it(Mbatsav a Tiv settlement in Gboko) supported the district officer while claiming immunity in the Dutch Reformed Church that had been newly established. The local chiefs also used the incident to punish their enemies instead, and were quick in pointing out the *Mbastav*.

The *Haakaa* expedition failed as the colonial government did not succeed in collecting the artefacts. This was because many of the Tiv were clever enough to ward off impending punishment by manufacturing the desired equipment to give. Many of the elders who regarded their artefacts dearly refused to part with them since they were a matter of life and death and quickly provided a whole range of improvised artefacts such as miniature horses called *Nyinyiutu*, *Atsuku* which were carved wooden female figurines supposed to be souls of deceased persons of *Tsav*, miniatures, masquerades and various forms of gourd representation of bird and animals (Hagher, 1983).

Identity construction has building materials i.e. the process of identity construction is built on both material and non-material resources. The non-material includeshistories, oral philosophies, interactions with significant other groups as well as meanings made of these interactions. The material istheir artefacts, dressings and other physical constructions that are a depiction of who they are. These two are related as one provides the social and/or physical basis for the other. The British sought to recreate their identities by attacking the very basis of who the Tiv believed they were. Although it was seemingly aimed at ridding the Tiv of witchcraft power, it inherently was a process of reconstructing the physical and social bases of who the Tiv believed they were. Identity construction and/or reconstruction involve a process of destroying the social basis of a previously held identity and creating a new social basis for a new identity.

It is important to note that the colonialists regarded the Tiv social structure as stateless, classless, and unorganised so they had to be civilised. The colonial administration recognised the fact that the civilisation mission would not be successful if the Tiv were not rid of anything that linked them to the practices of their forefathers and covertly their identity. Here, one can safely argue that though identity is constructed in the course of interaction, there is usually the place of the dominant actor and the subject actor. The

colonialists and the Hausa-Fulani here are the dominant actors while the ethnic groups and, in this case Tiv in particular was the subject actor. The process of identity construction here also involved the forceful detachment from symbolic representations of identity.

The Idoma historically existed as nation groups under the leadership of various clan heads who were semi-independent of one another. The Idoma in present day Benue State were part of the Southern protectorate under the Onitsha province. Today, that area is regarded as South-Eastern Nigeria. Other Idoma clans existed in the Northern protectorate. The colonisation process of the idoma started with a survey of the area and the consequent establishment of the Royal Niger Company business concerns in the area. The British penetrated the Idoma area in 1899 (Ochonu 2000). They capitalised on the age long hostility between the Idoma and the *Abakpa* traders. *Abakpa* is the idoma name for the Hausa and the Fulani. This hostility may have been as a result of the Fulani jihad which they refer to as *efuonya*(Okpe 1994).

The jihad was believed to be one of the reasons for the disintegration of the Kwararafa confederacy which gave the Idoma a kind of dominance in the 16th century. The disintegration of the confederacy and their subsequent migration from Apa as well as the migration of the Tiv into the Benue valley pushed the Idoma further into the Benue valley and created conditions where the Idoma clans were scattered in the Northern protectorate and the Southern protectorate as well as conditions where some Idoma clans were hedged in by the Tiv. This arrangement is historically seen by the Idoma as the basis for Tiv domination in the Benue valley. The British penetrated the Idoma area through the use of force unlike other areas where they signed treaties and agreements. The Idoma resisted this alien rule and as such their protracted resistance was greeted with repression, therebygiving the Idoma a bitter experience. Okpe (1994) cites some of these episodes.

A minor disagreement occurred between some groups of*Abakpa* traders and the Idoma of *Odugbeho* village and an *Abakpa* trader was reportedly killed. This was greeted with an expedition under Major Mackintosh where the whole village was burnt down and a large number of the inhabitants killed. The presence of the *Abakpa* in the Idoma area was regarded by the Idoma as an attempt to impose the Hausa identity on the Idoma and a continuation of their attempt to conquer the Kwararafa tribes and as such their presence was rejected and resisted. Again in 1906, another *Abakpa* was killed in the village of Aku and in 1907 a major fracas occurred while a group of *Abakpa* traders collecting rubber for the Royal Niger

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Company........... (something is missing). The British consequently organised a reprisal raid in which twenty three people were reportedly killed in addition to the burning down of twenty three villages. In addition to this, foodstuffsand livestock were increasingly confiscated from the villagers and used to feed the British troops.

In essence, the Idoma were made to pay for the military incursion into their land. The British set up a base in Ankpa – present day Kogi State and kept patrolling Idoma land until the Northern and Central Idoma land were subjugated under their control. In that same year, a boundary demarcation expedition was carried out under the leadership of captain Byn-Hall through Ugboju and Onyagede in present day Otukpo local government to link the Idoma in Southern Nigeria to the ones in the North. The Idoma put up resistances here and there but these resistances were not coordinated and as such were met with reprisals and repression by the British. There were issues of land disputes as well as disputes over control and ownership of resources among the Idoma, which were further fanned by the demarcation and the uniting of the Idoma in the Northern Protectorate to those in the South.

Although this is seemingly a narrative of contest and conquest relations between the British and the Idoma, it emphasises the ways in which the British colonised the Idoma through interference with their livelihood patterns. The colonisation process resulted in the construction of an identity of the Idoma as a colonised, subjugated and subjected people. To justify their interference, they created a barbaric identity for the Idomain which the Idoma were regarded as primitive savages who hadlittle or no contact with the outside world. This colonisation process was the platform on which another identity was imposed on them. It set the tone for the reconstruction of identity of the Idomaaspagans. The British had preconceptions and deep-seated prejudice against the Idoma as expressed in the following colonial records

> I do not desire to impact the idea that this division (Idoma division) can easily be managed for it cannot. But these natives must be taught obedience and require much firmer handling than has been accorded them in the past. The administration is as yet in the making and its inhabitants are probably more difficult than are to be found comfortable and are, at times depressing (CSO23/664/1905)

Also

> I am fully alive to the fact that the Idoma, in fact the whole people in your division are probably the most difficult in the Northern provinces (CSO19/3/983:1915)

The Idoma were hostile to the *Abakpa* traders for two major reasons. According to oral history, the *Abakpa* traders many of whom were agents of the Royal Niger Company went into Idoma land in groups to collect rubber. Due to their careless method of collecting it, they sometimes ended up destroying the rubber trees. Also these traders did not pay any form of royalty or compensation to the Idoma people. This, most times, resulted in altercations between the Idoma and Abakpa where the Abakpa were usually killed. The Abakpa usually refused to pay the natives because of the support and protection they believed they would get from the British colonial masters. Also the *Abakpa* reminded the Idoma of *EfuOnya* the horse war-- i.e. the Fulani jihad of the 19th century. To the Idoma, it was a case of an old foe returning in the company of another more powerful enemy.

The experience of the Igede was not any different as they were also forced into submission by the British. The Igede area was also formerly part of the Southern Protectorate, specifically under the Ogoja province. As such, they were regarded as migrants from the Ogoja province who had begun to adopt the customs and language of the Idoma. A colonial record also designated them as the most primitive natives in the Southern Protectorate who were too uncivilised to lease out their land (CSO26/18858/1927). Despite this designation by the colonial anthropologists, the Igede were actually in the Ogoja province from whence they were forcefully brought into the Northern Protectorate through a demarcation exercise.

The Igede area was first visited in 1922 during the Ukelle Escort. Before this period, they remained outside any form of colonial domination and control. Before the invasion by the British, the *Abakpa* who were the tools of British civilisation and control were already in the Igede area. Their presence was greatly resented by the Igede because they reportedly collected all the coins in circulation, so much that payment of tax was burdensome for the Igede. The Igede killed one of such traders and the British promptly responded with seven Dane guns, I, 600 arrows and 100 bows. This was aimed at disarming the Igede and also protecting the British agents and interest in the Igede area (Odey 1980). The Igede promptly responded by re-arming and protecting themselves. Also in 1927, some *Abakpa* traders were killed in a fracas at Ainu. A reprisal expedition was organised against the people. This reprisal expedition brought about the rebellion of Ogbiloko. Ogbiloko was an Igede traditional physician who led a rebellion against the British. He personally attacked the District Officer and led the Igede people to destroy the Divisional officer's quarters as well as the Hausa's quarters. The British promptly responded to this rebellion by a patrol

aimed at finding Ogbiloko. This patrol lasted for a year and in the course of it, many villages as well as sources of livelihood were destroyed. The British used their military advantage to force the people to surrender and to even promise they would help them find Ogbiloko. The patrol subsequently came to an end when Ogbiloko was reportedly found and killed. After this, the Igede were subsequently placed under the Idoma in the Idoma division where they were made to adopt the Idoma culture and identity. The colonialists apart from introducing tax, created courts with Hausa and Fulani scribes as heads of the courts and also imposed a Hausa Fulani social structure and culture on the Igede.

The case of the Etulo did not involve so much of a conquest as archival records do not show any records of forceful colonial penetration. Findings from the study show that though the Etulo area, due to its proximity to the bank of the river Kastina Ala, an extension of the bank of river Benue, was one of the sites where the colonialists established a royal Niger trading store. The researcher visited the site and it is presently used as a rice mill. Although archival records on the colonisation process could not be assessed, Tabe (2007) gives a vivid description of this process. According to him, before (1906), the Otse-Etulo (chief or king of Etulo), Ambiwa Sese and his people, were always at war with their neighbours. This bitter war continued till 1885 during which Etulo defeated them. The neighbours did not take this defeat kindly and eventually planned another assault on the Etulo in 1896. The Otse, fearing what may happen to his people, resolved after due consideration with his council men and elders, to seek external military protection from the colonial masters at Abinsi where a detachment of the Royal Niger Company Force was stationed. Although the Otse and his elders did not meet the colonial master, they left the message with his Abinsi counterpart.

The colonial Officer at this time in the person of Captain Gordon, could not go to the Etulo area till 1906 and by the time he got there during the latter part of that year, the Etulo had already been pressured into entering a peace agreement with their warring partners the Mbagen(a Tiv settlement in present day Buruku Local Government area of Benue State). In spite of this agreement, the Otse Etulo still received Captain Gordon and his military force. The Etulo consequently gave the British a piece of land to settle. By 1907, the colonial masters with the staff started serious expansion programmes in the settlements. They also mobilised and sometimes coerced the indigenous people to work for them at their construction sites where they constructed health centres, trading centres, roads, and barracks for the residents, residence for Colonial Masters and Officers as well as quarters

for the civilian staff. The settlement where the colonialists settled was previously known as Otsaazi but was later renamed Kastina ala.

Tabe (2007)further says that the colonialists held open mass meetings with the chiefs and leaders of thought of the various groups and communities in Kastina ala town.This was where the colonialists listened to them, and also took far-reaching decisions regarding issues such as the need for peaceful coexistence by the communities/tribes, community development projects, construction of roads, payment of poll tax by all adult males, judicial matters where criminals were tried and adequately punished to serve as deterrent to others. The Otse of Etulo was said to have occupied a prominent position in these meetings as he was the *IhoAzenga*--the Tiv word for treasurer. The Otse held this position till the Tiv divisional headquarters was moved to Gboko in the 1930s.

Colonial occupation in the Jukun area commenced in the late 1800s, with the siting of the Royal Niger trading store at Abinsi which is the traditional town of the Jukuns. This area was under the headship of Major Bourdon and was administered as part of the Northern Protectorate. Abinsi was the headquarters of the Tiv division before it was moved to Gboko. This contrasts with the view of Tabe (2007) where he says the divisional headquaters was at Kastina ala before it was moved to Gboko. Abinsi was also the headquarters of the Benue province before it was moved to Makurdi in 1932. Abinsi was made a district in 1913 and an alkali court was subsequently set up with members of the court comprising, the Hausa and the Nupe. Consequently,through forceful penetration, through the use of military patrols and reprisals to resistances, the colonialists were able to bring all the ethnic groups under the identity of 'northern' along with the Hausa-Fulani.

Thus, the British were able to successfully bring all the ethnic groups in contemporary Benue State under the identity of 'Northern.' The narrative above brings to the fore issues of conflict in the course of identity construction. The experiences of these ethnic groups show that identity construction is not usually a very peaceful process and most times, the person with more power is able to impose their identity on the other groups.

Findings from the study show that within the Northern Protectorate, or the identity of "Northern", two major identities were created. These were the Hausa-Fulani identity and the pagan identity. The British integrated the Fulani and the Hausa into a wholesome dominant identity called the Hausa-Fulani. All the other ethnic groups/socio-cultural groups in Northern Nigeria were lumped together under a pagan identity. A superior identity was

created for the Hausa-Fulani predicated on the perception that they were superior to the other ethnic groups, in terms of, history, culture, intelligence and social organisation. The British constructed this identity on the basis of supposedly factual assumption as to the origin of the Fulani. Whereas the origin of the Fulani could be traced to Arabia, that of the Hausa was traced to Berber and the Coptic. This overtly meant that the Hausa and Fulani were not indigenous to Nigeria, therefore they were not primitive. Hence, Bourdon 1904:636-637 wrote

> …as with climate and nature, so it is with man. From the light-coloured, straight-featured Fulani, one passes through many gradations to the typical Negro of the coast. The characters of the two types are as different as their looks. Ethnology teaches us the effect of environment on race and it is therefore easy to understand why the forest and swamp-dwellers of the south should be of a lower type than the in-habitants of the open northern plains. But history tells of the southward movement of superior races from the north, and it seems probable that this pressure has forced coastward inferior aboriginal plain-dwellers. Whatever be the cause, the important point to remember is the very great difference which exists, both in character and appearance, between the inhabitants of the northern plateau and the natives of the southern forests. …England pictures West Africa as peopled by "niggers," the type of negro whom it helped to degrade by the over-sea slave trade; for the Mohammedan states of Northern Nigeria this picture does not hold good. The offensive name of nigger is as applicable as it is objection-able to the dignified Hausa and Fulani. Not only did this tract escape this product of European civilisation, but we have there an entirely different type, a higher race, one from which great things may be hoped in the future, and which will assuredly make its mark in the collection of races that constitute the British Empire… (Bourdon 1904:636-637)

Here, a superior Fulani identity was created while other ethnic groups were designated as lower in comparison to the Fulani. They were seen as a higher race among all the other races that made up the British Empire.

Identity is usually created in relation to an "other" and not in isolation. The construction of one identity is only meaningful in terms of the way it relates to the construction of the "others" identity. The superior identity constructed for the Fulani here was in relation to the other ethnic groups which were regarded as "Niggers". Furthermore, for every identity constructed, there is always a social basis. So here, history and social organisation provided the social basis for the construction of the superior Fulani identity.

Charles Orr (1911), a colonial resident officer who also conducted ethnographic studies in Northern Nigeria described the Hausa and the Fulani as

> The true Fulani is not Negroid. His complexion is fair, his features regular, his hair long and straight. He speaks a language which resembles no other African tongue, but which has been stated by more than one authority to resemble that spoken by gypsies, and to be akin to the Indo-Germanic stock. He is nomadic, and is primarily a cattle-owner, driving his herds from pasture to pasture. It is partly for this reason that the suggestion has been made that the origin of the Fulani is the same as that of the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings, who crossed from Arabia and invaded Egypt about 2000 years before our era, and were expelled some 500 years subsequently. However this may be, it is generally believed that the Fulani came from the East, possibly from India, possibly from Arabia …It is practically certain that the Hausas are not indigenous to the region in which we find them now, but are immigrants of comparatively recent date. Their language shows some relationship with both the Berber and Coptic, and, whatever its origin may be, shares with Arabic and Swahili the honour of being one of the three most important tongues spoken throughout the continent of Africa. Some of their old pagan rites and beliefs handed down from bygone generations bear a remarkable resemblance to the customs of the Phoenicians. The Hausas also resemble the latter in another particular, for they are, like them, born traders, and travel far and wide over Africa on trading expeditions. Though black they have neither the thick lips nor the flat noses of the typical Negro, still less have they the straight features of the Arabs… (Orr 1911: 64 &67)

Here alongside historical links with the Berber and the Coptic, physical features were also of the constructed superior Hausa and Fulani identity. Reference was made to physical features such as hair and complexion etc. that were described as superior. One reason for this perceived/ real superiority was probably the fact that the fair complexion and curly long hair was closer to the British than the black Negroes. So the British regarded them as cousins as they felt more comfortable relating with them. So one of the basis for the construction of the superior identity was the fact that they Fulani and Hausa had physical features that the British considered were nearer to theirs so, if their physical features were close to the British then they were superior to the other ethnic groups as far as the British were concerned. So the superiority of the Hausa-Fulani identity had a racial component in it. Consequently, the Northern Protectorate in essence was made up of two racial groups; one superior European like group and one Negroid barbaric group.

Apart from racial superiority, language was also a basis for the construction of a superior identity. The Fulani language was likened to that of the Indo-Germanic stock while that of

Hausa was linked to the Berber, Coptic and the Phoenicians. All was in a bid to create a superior identity for the Hausa and the Fulani. Linking the Hausa to this group shows that the Hausa-Fulani were part of an earlier civilisation; they were not primitive since they were related to the Indo-Germanic stock, the Berbers, Coptic and the Phoenicians. Identity construction is not done in isolation but in comparison or with regards to the definition of others in the same social environment of the ethnic group in question. As such the other ethnic groups in the Northern Protectorate, who had been brought under the identity of pagan on the basis of their cultural practices, were described thus

> Farther in the interior, in the hills that extend from west to east at a distance of about a hundred miles from the north bank of the river, pagan tribes of much lower type are to be found. Many are cannibal, and in many no clothing whatever is worn by either sex. Here we begin to get an idea of what primitive man was like. Absolute insecurity is the day-to-day reality, which of necessity dominates the actions and habits of the people. There is practically no cohesion, no organisation. Villages of little beehive-shaped mud or grass huts are perched on seemingly inaccessible heights, or cunningly hidden in a maze of dense tropical vegetation. At early dawn the men, carrying their bows and arrows—from which it is never safe for them to be parted—sally out to the fields at the foot of their fastnesses to cultivate their crops, whilst the women pick their way down to the springs to fill the earthenware water pots which they carry on their heads. Towards sunset the men may be seen making their way back up the steep rocks to their homes on the summit, with their bows still slung over their shoulders, and carrying in their hands the hoes which form their sole implements of agriculture. (Orr 1956: 67).

Here, a vivid description of the pagan identity was given.The pagan identity was characterised by *primitivity*, they were lower type of human beings compared to the Hausa and the Fulani, they lacked cohesion and organisation and they lived in insecurity. This pagan identity is further illustrated in a comparison between the Hausa-Fulani and the other ethnic groups as follows

> Their [Hausa-Fulani] condition forms a striking contrast to that of the pagan tribes. In place of hidden huts, we find great walled cities containing a dense population; in place of the naked pagan, we find the cultivated follower of Islam, clothed in flowing robes; in place of the witch doctor, the grave and learned judge, well versed in ' Koranic law and jurisprudence; in place of superstition and pagan rites, mosques and schools; in place of ignorance, knowledge; in place of disintegration, cohesion. Picture a tribal raid by the naked savages that inhabit the rocky fastnesses North of the Benue, and then turn to Earth's description of the Bornu army, setting out on an expedition—cavalcades of horsemen, each squadron under its officer, clad in gorgeous attire; the heavy cavalry wearing a casque very much like our knights of the Middle Age, but of lighter metal, and ornamented with gaudy feathers…(Orr 1956:59).

This piece compares the two identities in a bid to show the superiority of the Hausa-Fulani and the inferiority of the pagans. This was done using social organisation, intelligence, religion, physical features, dressing, and education. The pagan identity here was characterised by savagery, cannibalism, backwardness, barbarism, ignorance, disintegration, witchcraft and primitiveness. On the hand, the Hausa-Fulani identity was characterised by superiority, in terms of knowledge, religion, social structure and organisation. A superior identity was constructed for the Fulani, while the other ethnic groups had their identity reconstructed from their indigenous forms to pagans. The Fulani were seen as being of the indo-Germanic stock which inherently meant they were at a higher stage of civilisation while the Hausa were likened to the Berber and the Coptic still showing that they had a higher civilisation and thereforewere superior to the other ethnic groups.

In a further comparison of the Hausa-Fulani and the pagans, Flora Shaw the mistress of Lord Lugard described the Fulani as an aristocratic race, European in form, with Arab blood which penetrated as far as climate could allow and they were a conquering and ruling race that had occupied their present location in Central Sudan by driving the original inhabitants southwards into areas that the higher race of their type could not live (Shaw 1905). The pagan identity, beyond barbarism, savagery, timidity, unsettled, lacking cohesion, backwardness and primitiveness, was also an identity of a conquered people who were forced to their present environment by the Hausa-Fulani. The identity of pagan was used in all official colonial documents. It was common place to find documents with titles such as Pagan administration, Pagan Education, Pagan (raw) Memorandum on the Treatment of, Expedition into Pagan Territory(see references).

The colonialist overtly fancied the Hausa-Fulani culture and then proceeded to impose this on the pagan tribes who had to become *civilised* by leaving their own backward barbaric lower forms of culture to a higher Hausa-Fulani one. It is important to note that the designation of pagan whose common place definition is an offensive term which deliberately insults ones non-belief in a religion or way of life was in relation to Islam. Islam was a religion which had had a civilising influence so pagans needed to adopt it to become civilised. This view is illustrated by C.K. Meek, one of the British colonial Anthropologists thus

> If we consider Islam as a political, social and economic factor, the case is
> very different. Islam has brought civilisation to the barbarous tribes. It has
> converted isolated pagan groups to nations: it has made trade with the
> outside world possible …. The intellectual and political superiority of the

Muslim communities is chiefly due to their religion. Islam introduced the art of reading and writing and the prohibition of the use of alcohol, of cannibalism, blood, revenge and other barbarous practices; it has enabled the Sudanese Negro to become a citizen of the world… Meek 1921:5 &11

The designation of pagan was further categorised into two with distinguishing characteristics. Documentary evidence of this is found on page 2 of the Memoranda on the Treatment of (Raw) Pagans (1921) in the section on Pagan Training. Here pagans were further categorised into

The unsophisticated pagans

a) Timid

b) Savage

2The sophisticated pagans

a) Settled

b) Unsettled

 (Pagans (Raw) - Memoranda on the Treatment Of 1921:2)

In further explanation, it was stated that

One does not expect to find in Nigeria nowadays, pagans of class 1. They have all, one would hazard, fallen into the class of 2 (a) or 2(b) according to their nature or manner of their administration. Class 2(a) calls for no reference save a warning that neglect to nip in the bud local maladies or neglect to protect them from their neighbours of class 2 (b) may bring them into the category of the latter. Class 2(b) are of course the most difficult of all their state being characterized by crimes against the society at large such as the breaking of main trade routes, and by passive as opposed to active, resistance to the law… (Pagans (Raw) - Memoranda on the Treatment Of 1921:2)

It was also common place in colonial records and correspondences to find statements like

The Idoma are only emerging from a state of primitive savagery (Benue Province Annual Report 1932)

And

Economically as well as culturally the Idoma division is the most backward area and there the scarcity of currency is the greatest. They are a serious embarrassment to the administration (Benue Province Annual Report 1933:1175

Also

> The south west in the Idoma division containing the Idoma and the Igede tribes, the later in particular has hardly emerged from a state of primitive savagery into which it occasionally relapses (Benue Province Annual Report 1934:1168)

Further more

> … Contains pagans and sections of tribes in varying stages of culture raging from the primitive Idoma who have recently abandoned head hunting and the equally primitive Munshi …. (Benue Province Annual Report 1931: 709).

And

> A satisfactory control of a quarter of a million of people[Jukun] who have emerged from almost complete savagery within the last few years(Benue Province Annual Report 1921:173)

And

> As one of the members of the team which in 1932 was appointed to carry out anthropological investigation into the social structures of the more primitive and unsettle peoples and make recommendations for their future administration … this has in the case of the Tiv and Idoma been achieved. (Benue province annual report 1953: 2)

And

> The people are difficult of approach and access as their villages. Suspicious and distrustful, particularly of their own kith and kiln, ever on the defensive, the ulterior motive behind every word of action is always presumed until the contrary is proved. .. Extremely backward, they are no less excitable and quick to take offence but perhaps the most outstanding traits of the Idoma character are his instability, perversity, complete lack of discipline and disrespect for authority in any form, rallying overt opposition, falls back on silent insubordination and of the two, the latter is more difficult to comprehend… Benue Province Annual Report 1940: 7

So barbaric was the pagan identity that colonial officials regarded it as a form of punishment or demotion to be posted to a pagan territory while a transfer to the Hausa-Fulani dominated areas was regarded as a promotion. According to Tseayo 1975,

> It is known, for example that officials whose services were highly rewarded served in the Mohammadan areas, also that officials who worked in the pagan areas regarded transfer to the Mohammadan area as a form of promotion (Tseayo 1975:96).

The colonialist then embarked on a civilising mission through a provincial administrative structure where the Hausa- Fulani social structural system would be imposed on the pagans as an instrument of civilisation. According to Lord Lugard,

> The future of this …protectorate lies largely in the regeneration of the Fulani. Their ceremonial, their coloured skins, their mode of life, and habits of thought appeal more to the native population than the prosaic businesslike habits of the Anglo-Saxon can ever do… nor have we the means at the present to administer so vast a country, this then is the policy to which in my view the administration of northern Nigeria should give effect: viz to regenerate this race so that they can become worthy instruments of rule. (Lugard 1904:8)

In concert with him, Bourdon (1904) a colonial resident said

> Our aim is to rule through the existing chiefs, to raise them in an administrative scale, to enlist them on our side in the work of progress and good government. We cannot do without them. To rule directly would require an army of British magistrates which both the un-healthiness of the country and poverty forbid. My hope is that we may make of these born rulers a high type of British official working for the good of their subjects in accordance with the British Empire but carrying on all that is best in the constitution they have evolved for themselves, the one best understood by and therefore best suited to, the people. Our present task is to gain their confidence. Without this there can be no real progress. The first step is to strengthen their authority over their subjects (Bourdon 1904:649)

The colonialists then strengthened the Power of the Caliphate over areas that were under the *rulership* of the caliphate and by conquest, in many cases, imposed Hausa-Fulani chiefs called *Sarki* on the other non-Emirate controlled areas. Alkali courts were also created and imposed on the non-Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups in the Northern protectorate. In essence, the pagan areas were reorganised for administrative convenience. Provinces were created and the pagan ethnic groups were lumped together for administrative convenience. Hence, Munshi province was created for the ethnic groups in Benue State. They had been designated as pagan tribes by the British colonialists so they were lumped together without recourse to their histories, cultures and previous social interactions. Within this provincial arrangement, *Sarkis* and *Alkalis* were imposed on the ethnic groups as a way of creating a central administration to incorporate the ethnic groups under the Caliphate structure as well as ensure that these ethnic groups were *civilised* to the standard of the Hausa-Fulani. Apart from these, police men, messengers and interpreters of Hausa-Fulani extraction were deployed to these areas to act as middle men between the District Officers who were British and to ensure compliance with the various rules that the colonialists had established.

In 1914 Dan Afoda, a Hausa speaking Yoruba Muslim who served as an interpreter for a number of British District Officers, was appointed Sarkin Makurdi meaning chief/ king of Makurdi (Northern Provinces Annual Reports 1914, Makar 1994,Hembe 2005). In the Idoma division which was home to the Idoma and Igede ethnic groups, a Hausa speaking Yoruba trader who had become more or less Hausa and had adopted the Hausa name Abubakar was appointed the chief of Ugboju, a settlement in present day Otukpo which is the traditional headquarters of the Idoma (Okpe1994). The chief had an apprentice of Idoma origin who was to learn under him. Apart from this, all the other messengers, clerks, policemen, were Muslim men of Emirate origin. They were responsible for tax collection(s), census, agricultural statistics and the day-to-day details of the colonial administration (Ochonu 2008, Hembe 2005).

This social structural arrangement had implications for the identity and social interactions among the ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria. The ethnic groups had to learn Hausa and adopt the Hausa way of life which was synonymous to Islam (Tseayo 1975). Language is a significant aspect of the reality of any individual or group as it is a means of communication which also imposes a way of seeing, understanding and ultimately being. Language does not merely reflect an existing reality; it also helps to create that reality (Ahearn 2001). Language here overtly imposed a Hausa-Fulani social reality and identity on the other ethnic groups in the Northern Region. Today, most of the ethnic groups in this part of Nigeria are popularly regarded as Hausa by people from other regions. It is an identity that has remained despite reconstructions by these ethnic groups.

The identities created by the colonialists did not go on without resistances from the 'pagan' groups. In 1906, the Tiv had a contest with the Hausa at Abinsi which was the headquarters of the Munshi province and the colonial station. Scores of the Hausa were killed, others drowned in the river Benue while over thirty were taken as captives by the Tiv. This skirmish was an aftermath of previously held prejudices and discontentment held by the Tiv. A misunderstanding between a Hausa female trader and a Jukun trader created a forum for the articulation of their resentment against the British. The misunderstanding arose from a bet or a lot which the Hausa female trader lost and refused to redeem her pledge. This led to an altercation between the Hausa woman and the Jukun man and consequently many more Hausas and Jukuns got involved and a full-scale fight began.

The Jukuns were overpowered and one wounded Jukun sought for refuge among the Tiv. The Tiv then based on their previously held resentments, came out in scores to attack the Hausas and the British colonialists as they were seen as agents of the colonialists. The Royal Niger trading store at Abinsi was looted and subsequently burnt, scores of Hausa were drowned in the river Benue and others were taken captive by the Tiv. The captives were eventually released after many patrols by the British into the Tiv territory. A Munshi expedition was planned but had to be abandoned for the *Saratu* uprising in Sokoto(Munshi expedition, 1906, Makar 1995).

In 1928, there was a popular uprising among the Egedde (Igede) who were thenthe inhabitants of the Idoma division of the Munshi Province led by one Ogbiloko. This was in a bid to protest the imposition of tax which the Igede regarded as alien to their culture and identity (Northern Province Annual Records 1928, Odey 1980, Okpe 1994). In the 1930s a*Nyambuan* movement emerged among the Tiv. This movement was started by the Jukun in Taraba State and subsequently borrowed by the Tiv. *Nyambuan* means 'meat gone rotten' or 'meat is rotten.' This was in reference to the British colonial structures that had been set up in Tiv land. The Tiv believed that these structures had *vihitar* - spoilt the land. This cult which was characterised by the setting up of a parallel institution to rival the British emerged to contest the colonial structure and presence in Tiv land. Details of *Nyambuam* are given in chapter six of the work.

The movement was seen as competing with the colonial structures as they set up their social structure with a district officer, a police man, a messenger, and a missionary. They more or less set up a mock colonial structure. People were initiated and as such they became powerful and refused to pay tax. The cult promised eternal life and the ability to recognise *Mbatstav*-witches and wizards, and immunity from the British authority. Members of the group were arrested and an order banning their activities was established. These resistances point to the problematic in identity construction. It is usually not a peaceful process. An identity can be constructed and imposed on a group of people while these people continue to resist.

Identity construction can be characterised by conflict in a bid to impose the identity and also to resist the identity. Subjection, domination and interactions dominate identity construction. Here, the destruction of colonial structures as well as resistance was aimed at resisting the imposed identity and emphasising who they were as against whom the British said they were.

Because the British had the military might they were able to suppress these groups and subsume them under the pagan identity.

Although the ethnic groups seemingly accepted the imposed identity, they formed tribal unions to protect and preserve their unique identities. The formation of tribal unions was a departure from the earlier method of violent resistance. The formation of tribal unions here was a process of identity construction and was a non-violent resistance as against the active violent resistance. This might have been due to the fact that the previous violent resistances failed as they were no match for the British in terms of weapons and organisation. The formation of tribal unionswas a process of identity reconstruction from the barbaric pagan and Hausa identity that were imposed on them towards the emphasis and reemphasis of their distinct ethnic identities. The formation of these tribal unions was occasioned by the pagans who were educated through the efforts of Christian missionaries who had set up their stations within the 'pagan' areas of the Northern Region, those educated in the schools set up by the colonialists, rich traders, ex-service men as well as those who had been privileged to work in the Native authority. Among the Tiv, a Tiv progressive Union was created by the Tiv Native Authority (NA) staff while the Idoma Hope Rising Union was created by the ethnic groups in the Idoma division. The identity agitations of these groups led to the creation of three traditional councils in Benue province, namely the Tiv traditional council for the Tiv, Utur for(Etulo) and Jukun, the Idoma traditional council for the Igede and Idoma, the Igala traditional Council for the Igala and Bassa. This arrangement in later years became theatre for identity reconstructions and contests. Although these councils were created, they later were at loggerheads with the tribal unions as they were more or less stooges of the Northern regional government (Hembe 1995, Okpe 1994).

The introduction of party politics in the 1940s subsequently created more room for the articulation of the reconstructed (preserved) identity. The Western Region of Nigeria had created the Action Group (AG) while the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) dominated the Eastern Region. The Northern region in 1951 transformed a cultural association known as *Jam'iyyarMutanenArewa* meeting or gathering of *Arewa* people into the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC). The NPC was formed also in fear of Southern domination. According to Hembe 2005,

> The North was so backward in terms of western education that the
> leaders believed that if independence came at the time their Southern
> colleagues were advocating, it would simply usher in an era of Southern

suzerainty over the north… as late as 1953 Southerners provided 82% of the clerks employed in Northern Nigeria, and as the Europeans got ready to depart, the Northerners became seriously worried, threatenedthat the Southerners would simply move into the places vacated by the Europeans in the North…(Hembe 2005:48)

This party was formed to reinforce the Northern identity already created by the colonialists through the creation of the Protectorate. The Northern identity created by the colonialists was to enhance colonialism and the extraction of raw materials as well as the definition of an area of control. The political arrangement at this time was such that a center was created from which resources were drawn/controlled. Identity was the key or the platform for access to that centre. At this time the three regions, and later four regions, were the basis for identification or access to the center. The Northern identity being emphasised was to ensure that the North had a firm hold at the regional level and at the centre. At this time, the Federal structure was lopsided in favour of the North. This was because the North used the advantage of population in which they hadincluded the other non-Hausa nations and cultural groupings under their Caliphate and Emirate system.

Identity and its construction have utility value. The identity being constructed/ emphasised here had the utility value of access to the "centre" and control of resources. It was emphasised to achieve an end. This is what makes identity fluid because it can be reconstructed when the utility value is lost. So identities continue to be a constant feature of social existence because it is intrinsically linked to the struggle for survival which has been the pre-occupation of man from time immemorial. As long as an identity has a utility value, it is adopted and it remains. Once its utility value diminishes or is lost, reconstructions take place in order to ensure that man continues to achieve his age long goal of ensuring survival. The Northern identity was formed to ensure that the dominant position at the centre was maintainedand to ensure that the North did not go extinct or lose out in terms of valued resources which are critical to survival.

Apart from the party creation, one of the ways this was done was a propaganda slogan accredited to Sadauna "One Monolithic North". The concept of one monolithic North connoted one indivisible and homogenous entity. This, in essence, meant that all the ethnic groups had been homogenised into one monolithic identity. The "uniquenesses", differences, various histories and cultures of over a hundred ethnic groups had been forcefully deemphasised to make way for a homogenous entityand one identity. Since the dominant

structures in the North were the Caliphate and the Emirate, all other groups were subsumed underthe Emirate and Caliphate system. This meant that the other entire non-Hausa Fulani groups were part and parcel of the Emirate system. In essence, the 'Northern' identity was synonymous with the Caliphate and Emirate system. Indeed 'North' or 'Northern' becomes synonymous with being a Hausa-Fulani as well as a Muslim. This identity, despite reconstructions by the Non-Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups, has remained. This means that identity, so defined, can exist irrespective of the people so-defined's resistances and non-acceptance of the identity. Hence, in many parts of Nigeria, people from the Northern part of Nigeria are believed to be Hausa and are treated as such.

The Southern part of Nigeria was defined as a threat to the North and efforts were made to ensure that the concept of one monolithic north was maintained. The 'other' is usually portrayed as a threat as far as identity construction is concerned. Emphasis is laid on the otherness of the 'other' and the dangers of accepting or "adopting" the 'other's identity. The dominance of the South was considered a threat to the survival of the North, so efforts had to be made to maintain the supposedly monolith structure of the north to ensure that access and control of resources is maintained. So, identity construction involves categorisation of groups and individuals. Inherent in this categorisation is the definition of an out-group which is seen and portrayed as a threat to the existence of the in-group.

Identity construction also involves power relations in various dimensions. One dimension is that identity is constructed in relation to position of power and authority to ensure access to resources. Here, the case of the construction of the Northern identity further emphasised the one monolithic north agenda. Another aspect of the power relations here refers to a situation where a supposedly dominant power imposes identity on supposedly inferior or weaker people. Here, the Hausa-Fulani and the British imposed a 'Northern' identity on all the pagan ethnic groups in the Northern Protectorate/Region. This is a case of a dominant actor constructing and imposing identity on a supposedly inferior/subject group. Identity construction furthermore informed the definition of Southern Nigeria as an out-group and those of Northern origin as the in-group. For instance, the following statements were credited to the Sadauna

The Ibos have never been true friends of the North and never will be.

The amalgamation of 1914 was the mistake of 1914.

The constructed Northern identity was then mobilised to consolidate the dominance of the North at the centre. It is important to note that whoever controls the centre controls power and resources to the exclusion of others. Hence, identity construction here was aimed at controlling the centre of power and resources.

In essence, the identity was not just created for a sense of selfhood. It was aimed at defining the self in relation to others in a bid to gain access to the centre and control of valued resources. The NPC actually provided an organisational platform for the articulation of the Northern identity and the tool to contest for the centre. This party was more or less the party of the government of the Northern Region, as members of the Northern House of Assembly were members as well as Emirs and Members of the Native Authorities. All the non-Hausa Fulani ethnic groups were coerced into joining the party. The imposition of this party overtly re-imposed a Northern identity on all the ethnic groups in addition to the pagan identity already constructed and imposed by the colonialists. The NPC subsumed the identities of other cultural groups under that of the Hausa-Fulani. Although in principle, they preached one monolithic north, in practice they abhorred the cultural practices and beliefs of the non-Hausa Fulani groups. For instance, according to Hembe (2005:128)

> When a branch of JMA(NPC) was established in Zaria, it had Tiv members, including Tyotume Nor who was elected the secretary and Gbile Gundu who was the member of the rules and regulations committee of the organization. The first disagreement … arose when one Hadiza Mallam applied for membership and paid the appropriate dues. At a meeting of the organization held in Tudun Wada Zaria, her application was rejected on the grounds that it would be against Islamic tradition to admit her being a woman. The Tiv and the non-Muslim members of the party protested arguing that JMA was a non-religious body but the Muslim members used their numerical strength to throw out the application, the Tiv and other non-Muslim members left the party in protest… (Hembe 2005:128).

It was an identity of convenience (to the Hausa-Fulani) which was aimed at achieving a goal of control of resources at the centre. In many 'pagan' areas, brutal force was used to ensure that all the people joined the NPC. The NPC mobilised all resources at its disposal to ensure the acceptance of this identity. Efforts were made to portray to the whole world that all the ethnic groups in the Northern region had accepted the *rulership* of the Hausa-Fulani. Hembe further explains that

> The world was told that only the Hausa-Fulani really existed in the North and that the non-Hausa-Fulani group had accepted the suzerainty

> and hegemony of the Hausa-Fulani not only politically but religiously. The point was stressed by the Sardauna of Sokoto when he stated that… must not be forgotten that almost the whole region as it is today and a great deal outside of it was ruled by my great grandfather through their lieutenants or by the Shehus of Borno. Hembe 2005:124

Although the ethnic groups were coerced and, in some cases, wooed into becoming members of NPC and adopting the Northern identity through the Chiefs, *Sarkis* and other Native authority staff, they began to pull out when they realised their ideals, cultures and beliefs were not taken into consideration by the party. So, the Northern identity did not have any value for them. Access to the center as well as control of resources would be the exclusive preserve of the Hausa-Fulani and as such the other ethnic groups would be mere stooges tobe used to advance the course of the NPC.

A possible realisation of the fact that independent resistance and reconstructions by the ethnic groups may not, on its own, help them realise their dream of breaking the hegemony of the Hausa-Fulani, the various tribal unions began to merge so as to have a stronger force that would articulate as well as result in the achievement of their dreams.A Northern Nigeria non-Muslim League(NNNML) was formed by The Birom Tribal Union(BPU) though aided principally by the Sudan Interior Mission(SIM) and the Sudan United Mission(SUM)(Dudley, 1968). This eventually reconstructed as the Middle Zone League (MZL) led by Pastor David Lot. The MZL had many affiliate unions such as Yergam Union, Nzit Tribal Union, Bachama Progressive Union and Katung Progressive Union. The Tiv Progressive Union, the Igbirra ProgressiveUnion as well as other non-Hausa-Fulani tribal unions came together to form Middle Belt Peoples Party (MBPP). In 1954, the MZL and MBPP were merged to create the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC).The idea of the Middle- Belt or the construction of the Middle Belt identity was aimed at liberating the non-Hausa Fulani ethnic groups that had been designated as pagans and subsumed under Hausa-Fulani social structure. This is reflected in the following responses

> The idea of the Middle Belt was to protest the imposition of the Hausa-Fulani social structure on the ethnic groups. The idea did not actually originate from Tarka. There was a motion to stop the spread of Christianity in the Middle belt area in the Northern House of Assembly and a reaction to it led to the creation of the NNNML. It was led by a pastor who was in the northern house of assembly at that time. That was one of the reasons why the government of the northern region saw the Middle Belt idea as a Christian idea. It was created to fight for the place of the other ethnic groups who where neither Hausa nor Fulani
> Male KII/ 70 yr old retired Prof/ Gboko 13th November 2011.

Still another Idoma respondent state:

> The Middle Belt covered the areas of Benue, Plateau, Nassarawa, parts of Southern Kaduna, Taraba and I think parts of Bauchi states. Through the UMBC the middle belt party, we were able to contest the domination of the Hausa-Fulani. Even though along the line people began to decamp as it is usual with politics, the party helped to organise the tribes in the middle belt into one group
> Case Study Interview/ 72 yr old retired civil servant/ Otukpo September 2011

According to another,

> You see. To us Christians, Middle Belt is strategic. It represents a belt that holds a cloth in place. So without the Middle Belt the whole of Nigeria will disintegrate. The Middle Belt is a belt that holds the cloth in place. We were being marginalised under the northern regional government. But we recognised that we are important as far as the survival, future and resources in this country are concerned. So we formed the middle belt to show that we are not as irrelevant as the Hausa-Fulani and the British colonialists felt we were. We were important. Without us there will be no Nigeria.
> Case Study Interview/ 79 yr old retired pastor/ Kastina Ala September 2012

The Middle-Belt identity was constructed to resist Hausa-Fulani domination. The construction of the Middle Belt identity had a meaning for liberation for these ethnic groups. Through this constructed identity, the so called 'pagan' ethnic groups agitate for the creation of a Middle Belt State. This agitation was aimed at creating a physical as well as social space for self-expression and cultural accentuation as a counter to the 'pagan' identity. Remaining under the Northern region was regarded as repressive. This was articulated by J. S. Tarka during the proceedings of the Minorities' Commission in what he called the fearsof the people in the middle belt area. These included fears of religious and cultural domination as well *hausanisation* of the civil service.Here are some of the excerpts from our data

> `Supporters of the Middle Belt state feared that after independence, the whole of the North would be turned into a Muslim state. Muslim women would not marry non-Muslims men but non-Muslim men could marry non-Muslim women and the latter in this event were required to embrace Islam. The Koran did not permit social intercourse between Muslims and unbelievers and; in fact, there was none. Members of the house of assembly mixed with each other for purely political reasons. *Maliki* law was being enforced on non-Muslim as well as Muslims in most areas of the Middle Belt… it was

the desire of Muslims to convert the whole of the North Islam and there were fears that the attainment of self-government, the government of the Northern Region would imitate the action of the Sudanese government (which) to hasten the *Islamization* of schools had caused all schools to be nationalized… another fear is that Islam in the north will come to communism as Colonel Nasser had done in Egypt… These facts with recent journeying of members of the Northern Regional Government to Egypt and to Sudan strengthened the force of the market rumour that the Northern Regional government was contemplating the secession of the Northern Region from the federation of Nigeria. If this was attempted it would be resisted by the Middle Belt peoples. Minorities Commission 1958:2&3

Also

…the Muslims looked down upon non-Muslims and even those from the middle belt who had been converted to Islam were regarded as an inferior brand of Muslim. They were called *BagwarinMuslimi*. They feared that if they continued to remain part of the Muslim state they would be dominated by Muslim ideology and administration… the Fulani imposed Fulani chiefs on the peoples of the Middle-Belt. The Kamberis, for example appointed chiefs from their own tribe to rule over the peoples of Obi, Asako district (all these are found in present day Nassarawa state). The Middle-Belt areas had also been neglected in that most of the regional government's educational institutions has been located in the far north (Minutes of Proceedings of the Minorities Commission 1958: 3&4

Furthermore

The Northern region was divided into what had been called the true north and the false (banza) north. Broadly speaking, the false north consisted of the Benue, Zaria, Niger, Plateau, Bauchi, Adamawa, Kabba and Ilorin provinces…in the south a person's religious beliefs made no difference to his career, and Christians and Muslims worked together without any difficulty. But in the north the Muslim faith was fanatically held… Minutes of Proceedings of the Minorities Commission 1958: 20

Still another says

The present electoral system is designed to enable the party in power win elections. Members of the NPC at the last regional elections were appointed polling officers. Alkalis and district heads campaigned openly for the NPC and threatened voters with punishment if they failed to support that party…1n the 1956 election, the UMBC and NEPU candidates were threatened with trouble and indeed

imprisonment if they opposed the NPC… indigenous chiefs had little prospects of advancement unless they sympathized with the NPC and became Muslims…Muslim chiefs were imposed on many non-Muslim areas. The late chief of Makurdi, a Muslim had been imposed on the indigenous people without their consent. On his death, Makurdi and Tiv divisions had asked that a Tiv be appointed chief. This was opposed by the Hausa and a riot resulting in the loss of life broke out in1947. The matter is still unsettled… Minutes of Proceedings of the Minorities Commission 1958:4

These fears informed the construction of the middle belt identity to resist exclusion, dominance and subjection as well as contest for both social and political space. The Middle Belt identity can be likened to a resistance identity which is one of Castels (2010) typologies of identity construction processes.

According to Castels, a resistance identity is constructed by those whose social and economic positions in society has either been devalued or stigmatised by the logic of domination. Resistance identity groups construct and build trenches of resistance and survive on the basis of principles and strategies different from or opposed to those institutions or groups permeating domination in the society. History, geography, and or biology provide collective platforms for collective resistance against what a group perceives as unbearable oppression. Reference to history, geography and biology also makes it easier for identity groups to mobilise and construct effective boundaries of resistance. This kind of identity arises out of alienation, on one hand and resentment against unfair exclusion on the other hand whether political, economic and social. In essence religious fundamentalism, territorial communities, national self-affirmation are all expression of the exclusion of the excluders by the excluded (Castles, 2010:9). So the building of defensive identity in terms of dominant institution ideologies, reversing the value judgment while reinforcing the boundary is ways in which groups construct a resistant identity.

Here, the 'pagan' and 'Northern' identity was created using culture, biology reminiscent of races while the Middle Belt identity created by these ethnic groups was to contest their perceived /real oppression. The pagan cum northern identity created a platform for exclusion of the Middle Belt from the "Centre". The pagan and northern identity alienated the Middle belt and excluded them unfairly. This now led to the creation of a resistant identity through appeal to culture, biology and geography. These gave the pagan ethnic groups a platform to collectively create an identity. The creation of the middle belt identity in line with Castels assertion can be described as the exclusion of the excluders by the

excluded. In the case of the ethnic groups, they created an organisation to articulate their new identity in the form of a political party. The UMBC was a platform for the articulation of this constructed identity. It composed of ethnic unions who wanted to do something about their status in Northern Nigeria. They rallied round in1956 to agitate for the creation of a Middle belt state in which they hoped to have a better opportunity to better realise their social and economic aspirations. Identity construction here involved mobilising a "collective" consciousness to resist exclusion, subjection as well as create a space to articulate their collective goals.

Although the groups who constructed the identity had various histories, cultures and social organisation and structure, they united to resist the Hausa-Fulani. So inherent in the Middle Belt identity were other ethnic identities which had been voluntarily/involuntarily deemphasised to accentuate and emphasise the collective identity. The construction of identity is a social process that overtly involves the de-emphasisation of individual, personal or group identityin order to emphasise the goal of the collective. This collective identity is mobilised and used as long as it enables the group to achieve the goal of the constructed identity. It can be reconstructed as soon as the group realises that that identity no longer has value for their expected end. There are usually cries of marginalisation whereby groups now redefine their relationship to the collective andthereby reconstruct their identities as distinct either within or without the collective.

The Middle Belt Identity, as it is with most reconstructed identities in relation to a collective, was resisted by the government of the Northern Region who saw it as the handiwork of Christian missionaries. The government regarded the construction of the Middle Belt as principally originating from outside the region as other regions felt the Northhad a higher population and the pagan ethnic groups were too weak to make such agitations. The data below attests to this

> …Covering the area of the old Fulani and Kanuri empires and the old Jukun Empire and the Igala kingdom. The Fulani and Kanuri empires included a non-Islamic element of conquered peoples whose awaking political consciousness largely under Christian mission influence from a long cultural slumber combines with the individualism of unconquered pagan kingdoms and their associations such as the large Tiv tribe which never came under Islamic conquest to form the basis of the middle belt problem which however is regarded by a great majority of the people in the north and the Northern peoples congress as an internal one for the region to solve itself …The north is the legitimate and logical successor to the old Fulani empire and the

medieval kingdoms. Both the Fulani empire and unconquered tribes such as the Tiv and idoma were brought under subjection by the British. There is no bitterness in this view Memorandum of the Government of Northern Nigeria (1958: 3 &14)

The Sadauna of Sokotofurthermore regarded the call for a Middle Belt state as imaginary andso he would not sit over the division of his 'great grandfather's empire'. The Sadauna who was the Premier, overtly fancied the Northern identity and was not prepared to allow for fragmentation. According to him,

> The whole movement is inspired by our political opponents who are doing their utmost to destroy the Northern Region and reduce its membership in the House of Representatives. It must never be forgotten that the whole of the region as it is today and a great deal outside it was ruled by my great-grand father's family through their lieutenants or by the great Shehus of Borno: the only important exception is the Tiv area South of the River Benue curiously enough their neighbours, the Jukuns of Wukari are so much part of the North that in a period of extraordinary activity, raided the far north and once captured the massive fortress of Kano... and nearly took Kastina … if that does not imply close association with the rest of the region, I don't know what does (Bello 1962:216)

The Middle-Belt identity was considered a threat to the access to and control of political space and valued resources at the centre so efforts were made by the leadership of the northern region to frustrate the existence of that identity. Here, the Sardauna appeals to history in order to re-emphasise the 'One Monolith North' ideology. Hence, the description of the Middle-Belt movement and identity as a mere inspiration of political opponents. He furthermore tried to legitimise the 'Northern' identity by the assertion that the pagans had hitherto been under the control of the Sultanate and the Caliphate so the Northern identity was one which had historical foundation that could not be done away with.

Identity construction and reconstruction are not peaceful processes particularly in the case of a resistant identity. While the excluded make efforts to exclude the excluders in their resistant identity projects the excluders also make concerted efforts to include the excluded not for the benefit of the excluded but for the purpose of achieving the goals of the excluders to the detriment of the excluded. Identity construction and reconstructionis a problematic process as it overtly involves conflicts between the "self" and the "others" where the self tries to emphasise the constructed identity and the "other" tries to suppress the constructed identity. According to one of the advocates of the Middle Belt identity,

Before the arrival of the British, the peoples of the Middle Belt lived under their own independent chiefs. They had never been conquered by the Fulani Muslims. The four national groups intermarried and traded together, and had repelled the attacks of the Fulani. Lugard himself was defeated at Abinsi. The Muslim tribes in many cases led the British to believe that they were in control of areas which had never recognized their rule and as a result today the middle belt people today found themselves under the authority of Muslim emirs… when the British came the Kanuri had persuaded them that the Aragos were their vassals… . Proceedings of the Minorities Commission (1958:2)

The data above shows an effort by the creators of the Middle-Belt identity to justify its existence. Efforts were made by the individual to destroy the social basis of the 'pagan' as well as 'Northern' identity and then justify the construction and existence of the middle belt identity.

Beyond these, Hembe (2007), Alubo (2004), Dudley (1965) not necessarily in concert, report that there was widespread repression of the people in the Middle-Belt in a bid to ensure that the pagans remained under the Northern identity. The Middle-Belt identity was regarded as a threat to the sovereignty of the north so it had to be suppressed. The UMBC which was a vehicle for the articulation of the Middle Belt identity was also described by Sir Bryan Sharwood, the then governor of the North as a separatist movement which was occasioned by:

The utterly irresponsible behavior of a relatively small handful of people has transformed the self-seeking demands of a few dispersed groups with its axe to grind into the beginnings of a widely spread movement covering in some degree all the riverain provinces

The government of the Northern Region used the traditional rulerslikethe Emirs, Sarkis and the NA to repress the members of UMBC. This brings to light the problematic process of identity construction as it involves contests between those creating the identity and the "others". While the others struggle to frustrate the existence of the new identity the creators of the new identity struggle to accentuate it. In the case of the Middle Belt identity, it assumed violent dimensions as a result of both physical and other forms of repression from the Government of the northern region.

Identity construction is consequently a process that involves conflict and since identity construction is open-ended, conflict becomes a consistent reality in Middle-Belt Nigeria as

well as other regions in Nigeria. Although the Middle Belt identity provided a platform for the pagan groups to contest their non-inclusion, it began to experience a crack almost immediately it was created. This crack resulted from several factors. The first had to do with the party which was the organisational platform of the articulation of the Middle Belt identity. As a result of unresolved differences, the UMBC was divided into two factions; the Tarka led faction and the Pastor Lot led faction. The pastor Lot led faction re-allied with the NPC overtly reconstructing their identity back as Northern while the Tarka faction allied with the Action Group of South Western Nigeria. This overtly meant that there was a crack in the identity and as such the identity of middle belt began to lose its relevance. The pastor, who re-allied with the NPC, was given a ministerial appointment showing that identity construction is strongly linked to access to power, prestige and positions in relation to the Centre.

The second factor is based on the fact that the Middle Belt comprised of ethnic groups with different histories and culture and as such none had dominated the other unlike the Hausa-Fulani composite group. J.S. Tarka had divided the ethnic groups into four National groups (see Minutes of Proceedings of the Minorities' Commission 1959). This arrangement has subjection and dominance issues as some ethnic groups were not reflected in the arrangement. Today, many ethnic groups that were not reflected in that arrangement now exist in the Middle-Belt and specifically in Benue State Nigeria. The issue that begs the question is whether these groups have always existed or they are recreating their identity as distinct from the larger group.

Today, the Middle-Belt has over 150 ethnic groups. It brings to light the fluid nature of identity and its construction as it is open-ended and continues as long as individuals continue to interact and exchange subjectivities in the society. It also points to the place of the suppression of other distinct identities under a collective identity. As long as this identity delivers valued resources, it is accepted but once people feel the identity no longer has value, a pull from the collective identity become inevitableand then, groups begin to emphasise their distinctiveness and create identity boundaries.

Another factor which influenced the breakdown of the middle belt identity was perceived/real dominance and subjection issues. Some of the ethnic groups saw the Middle belt identity as a Tiv idea more soas it was spearheaded by J.S.Tarka, a Tiv. These groups of people then allied with the NPC to frustrate the identity of the middle belt and also ensure that a Middle Belt

state which would have been a physical representation of the Middle Belt identity space did not see that light of day. The following data attests to this

> The Middle-Belt question had been put to this people among who were Ibos, Fulani, Yoruba, Jukuns and Igede and they did not support the middle belt state at all. He had been representing the Idoma in the legislature since 1951, there was no religious discrimination. He himself had married a Muslim girl. The people were satisfied with the scholarship arrangements and had schools and colleges in their area receiving government assistance. The mission schools were given grants by the government… Hon Obande on the floor of the Minorities' Commission sittings in 1958

And

> …his people were contented with the Federation and the Northern region and were opposed to the Middle Belt state. The Idoma Western districts had told him that they were opposed to the creation of a Middle belt state…they did not suffer any form of discrimination, they were living in harmony. They feared that there would be domination by Tivs in the Middle Belt state… his people took part in Muslim festivals and ate with the Muslims. In a Middle Belt state, other Christians may be dominated by for example the Catholic Missions, or pagans by Christians or the reverse. Apart from religion they may be dominated by the Action Group. The people who joined action group were mostly disgruntled employees…Hon Obekpa on the floor of the Minorities' Commission sittings in 1958

Furthermore

> …There was no discrimination against anyone in the Middle-Belt people. The deputy premier of the Northern Region was a Nupe and a Commissioner from Kabba There was no fear of any domination since each Native Authority had freedom to develop in its own way .the people were free to worship as they pleased and could associate themselves with any particular political party . if a plebiscite were held 95 percent of the would be found to be against the middle belt state.

Another said

> The middle belt issue had recently been raised by politicians unfortunately at a time when the federation was seeking self-government. There was full freedom of religion. The only discrimination had been by Christian missionaries who in the early days had made the acceptance of Christianity a prerequisite for obtaining western education… There has been intermarriage between the Fulani and the Nupes over a long period of time.

The Middle Belt ethnic groups began to reconstruct their identities away from the Middle - Belt towards distinct ethnic identities and because of this, there was a pull from the Middle - Belt agenda towards ethnic enclaves. The ethnic groups who had collectively created the Middle Belt identity began to engage one another in violent identity contests. As a result the Middle Belt region in the wake of the civilian regime in 1999 was described both by national and international media as a hot bed for ethnic/communal conflicts (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) Report 2008, Alubo 2006, Best 2006, Alubo 2004). The ethnic groups reconstructed their identity from the middle belt agenda towards ethnic enclaves. This inherently created a we/them dichotomy among people who had created the identity of the Middle-Belt. Thus, concepts of settlers, stranger, and visitor emerged with regards to social existence, sources of livelihood, access to factors of production as well as recognition within one's place of abode. This was also manifested in non-violent identity contests which revolved around regarding other group in derogatory terms. The data below attests to this.

According to a Tiv

> The Idoma does not like the Tiv man and so also the Etulo and the Jukun. The Tiv man is not wanted in any place in Nigeria. Looking back at the killings in Taraba, Nassarawa, Plateau and Wurukum and the destruction and killing in Zaki biam (Tiv female / IDI/ 12TH September 2011).

Yet another Idoma affirmed that

> The Tiv are very wicked and domineering. The Igede used to be very close but now they seem not to accept us. The Jukuns; am afraid of the Jukuns because we believe they are mermaids and witches and wizards. While the Etulo, we are not that close so I don't have anything to say about them (Idoma female/IDI/ October 2011).

Another Tiv also said

> The Jukuns and Idoma are troublesome and I cannot marry them. The Jukuns also practice witchcraft. The Idoma have no regard for widows. Anyway I would rather marry another tribe apart from Tiv because they are lazy (Tiv female/IDI/12TH September 2011)

An Idoma respondent further says

> The Tiv people refer to us as a tree, an object that you beat and it stands still while the other ethnic groups like us (Idoma male/IDI/15TH October 2011

While an Igede asserts the fact that

> Other ethnic groups refer to us as their servants and they do not want
> to give us their daughters in marriage yet they marry our girls (Igede
> male/IDI/ 12th September 2011)

Perceptions, differences, judgements and boundaries which were hitherto subsumed/deemphasised to pave way for the existence of a Middle Belt identity began to be mobilised to redefine who they were in relation to the collective and to others within the collective. A possibility also exists that these differences were not perceived at the time of the creation and emphasis of the middle belt identity but as the middle belt identity failed to achieve access to the centre as well as valued resources in the society, various ethnic groups began to create/recreate boundaries and differences in order to create a platform of access to the centre and as a way of emphasising the otherness of the other.

The trajectory of identity construction here shows a progression from independent distinct identities to identities homogenised by the jihad and colonialism. Further categorisation and reconstruction of identities based on cultural, racial, religious and physical superiority, resulted into two broad categories of the Hausa-Fulani and the pagans. The Hausa-Fulani social structure cum identity was consequently superimposed on the other pagans and this led to reconstructions back to their indigenous forms. These pagan groups consequently created a *wholesome* middle belt identity to resist the imposition of the Hausa-Fulani and pagan identity. Within the middle belt, ethnic groups have begun to reconstruct identities as well as emphasise distinct ethnic identities.

Having examined the dynamics of identity construction, one can argue that identity construction is a categorisation process which involves the creation and recreation of social boundaries as well as a homogenising process where similarities can be accentuated and dissimilaries deemphasised (Omobowale and Olutayo 2009, Storr 2009). Inherent in one constructed identity are multiple identities which are many times voluntarily repressed in pursuance of a particular goal. These can find expression as the utility value of the collective identity is redefined by the members. Identity has utility value which can be redefined based on contemporary realities as well as contemporary interpretation and misinterpretation of histories (Gandu 2001). The building materials for identity construction and reconstruction i.e. histories, socio-economic dynamics, contending and contesting issues are probed into existence by the social actors. Social actors in this case are the colonial masters, the Hausa-

Fulani as well as the so-called pagan ethnic groups. Identity construction/and reconstruction, in essence, involves agency challenging a structure to bring about a change. Usually, there are shifts after such encounters either towards a change of structure or a further repression of the agent.

5.2 Spearheads of Identity Construction

Societies have histories in the course of which specific identities emerge. These histories are however made by men with specific identities (Berger and Luckman 1966). Findings from the study show that identity construction is spearheaded by charismatic individuals as well as associational/community/cultural groups. The legitimacy of their leadership of these spearheads is based on the possession of certain exceptional qualities (Giddens, 1971, Weber 1968). These essential qualities are predicated on the quest to liberate the minority from domination and accentuate distinct identities. Findings from the study reveal that spearheads of identity construction had huge followership because they canvassed for the identities of their ethnic groups.

One of the earliest charismatic leaders that emerged in the Middle Belt as well as present day Benue State was Ogbiloko in 1927. Ogbiloko was an Igede traditional physician. He was particularly displeased with the subjection of the Igede under Hausa-Fulani rule as well as the imposition of taxes. He got followers by claiming he had powers to deflate the bullet of colonial forces through water from the River *Oyongo*[12]. The people recognised his powers because he claimed he stayed under the river for three days. According to archival records, he mobilised the Igede to resist payment of tax from which he promised them immunity. He also personally attacked the colonial Divisional officer and led the Igede to destroy the Hausa settlement at Oju (Benue Province Annual Reports 1927, 1928 &1929, Njelele patrol 1928, Odey 1980 Okpe 1994). This revolt was a violent way of resisting the imposition of culture and identity that Ogbiloko considered alien to the Igede. His revolt was actually aimed at conveying grievances to the British that the imposed identity was not accepted as reflected in the following responses.

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[12]*Oyongo* is a river located at the boundary between Igede land and Ebonyi state. The river is a critical aspect of Igede social history as the indigenous belief system claims it divided into seven to provide passage for the Igede in the course of their migration to their present location.

> We were told that Ogbiloko used to work for the British in their office. He saw the way his people were being marginalised and treated unjustly so he led the people to destroy the structures that they had set up in Igede land. Maybe that was his way of letting them know that what they were doing was not accepted and they should leave the Igede alone… Male IDI/ 55 yr old/ Oju/ 15th June 2011

Another also says

> The colonial masters were very wicked and all they did was to collect tax. We were told that they made women pay tax and even punished them if they did not pay up. They also increased the tax that was why Ogbiloko revolted against them. I believe the Igede people were suffering in silence with no body to help them out. That was why when Ogbiloko came up the people followed him. They believed he was going to save them from the oppression of the British… Female KII/ 65 yr old/ Oju/ 17th June 2011

Ogbiloko overtly led the revolt to resist the imposition of an identity that was considered alien. The taxes and other British physical and social structures were considered symbolic representations of the imposed pagan/Hausa Fulani identity and as such the revolt was a way of resisting it to emphasise an Igede identity. Ogbiloko was able to mobilise the group consciousness to resist the imposition of alien British culture.

Identity reconstruction at the group level involves being able to mobilise and manipulate group consciousness to resist an earlier imposed identity. Violent contestations usually accompany identity construction/ reconstruction either in a bid to resist or impose. Findings from the study reflect the fact that Ogbiloko's revolt was heavily suppressed by the colonial forces leading to heavy loss of lives and property among the Igede. Ogbiloko was also killed. This further confirms the fact that identity construction/reconstruction is usually accompanied by conflict. The data below attest to the fact that the process of reconstruction from the imposed identity was characterised by conflict and suppression of the Igede people by the British.

> It is thought that pressure will have to be used again and probably shooting resorted to in both Njelele and the riverain areas of Ainu before one can hope to achieve ones object at the moment Ogbiloko has so many admirers on either the bank of the Awo that it is difficult to confine him to a specific area. He has a free road everywhere in these places and is invariably assisted with food and lodging.

> Although these admirers are not openly hostile to the government, yet they will have to be taught the lesson that no matter whether a European is present or not, Ogbiloko as a declared outlaw must in no way be assisted. The inhabitants have been warned that assisting in any way will lead to dire consequences. They have also been told that after the next forth night- when the rains start decreasing the patrol will once more operate through Njelele and Ainu and treat the inhabitants as though they were still openly hostile. The only thing that can prevent this from taking place is handing over the insurgent leader or bring in of reliable information which will lead to its capture… NAK 2508:12&13

Also

> The situation is unchanged. It is hoped in the future that the inhabitants will realise that without Ogbiloko being handed over they can expect to have no peace and quietness. It becomes obvious daily that whenever they desire, they can lay their hands on the insurgent leader and hand him over…NAK 2508: 29

Furthermore

> The political situation has undergone a slight but definite change during the last few days. In four of the five villages affected, passive resistance has given way to partial unwilling cooperation. The village area of Adum West has been ordered three times to come in but has thus far taken no notice. He hs been given until tonight to comply. In the event of non-compliance, the patrol will visit this area…NAK 2508:35

In a bid to capture Ogbiloko the spearhead, and nip the constructed identity in the bud, the British colonialists embarked on a patrol of the Igede area killing many and rendering others homeless. The people were repressed and threatened with all sorts of penalty to ensure that Ogbiloko was handed over to the colonialists by the people. Although the people resisted initially, the British had military advantage and as such the people began to surrender and promise the British to assist in capturing Ogbiloko. The data further show that the people had admiration for Ogbiloko which informed why they were ready to desert their villages and even die in a bid to protect him. He was seen as a hero who would liberate them from the imposed British structure so they were prepared to protect him at all costs. This was one of the factors that endeared the people to him. Whatfurther endeared the people to him was the belief that he had a special calling and he possessed exceptional powers that were capable of liberating them from the domination of the British cum the Hausa-Fulani. The following responses below further attests to this

Ogbiloko had special powersand that was why the people followed him. Before he attacked the white man he entered into *Oyongo River* where he remained for three days. By the time he came back he had received powers to challenge the colonialists. He had power and he fought well.

Male KII/ 69 yr old/ Oju/ 15th June 2011

Yet another

Ogbiloko to the Igede is a symbol of power. The Igede initially saw the British as their enemies from Ora who had come back to destroy them. Much later they came to discover this was not so. The people were not comfortable with the British rule and the Hausa way of life was also alien to them. After their defeat at Ora, the Igede saw him as a liberator who would relieve them of the burden of paying tax. Some years ago a young man by name Ikwuba wanted to even produce a film of Ogbiloko's contest with the British.

KII / female/ 59/ Oju/ 17th June 2011

Still another reiterates

Ogbiloko had an influence as a wizard and the superstitious nature of the inhabitants made it difficult for the people to assist in catching him…NAK 2508:5

These data above show the charismatic value the followers of Ogbiloko saw in him. It further attests to the fact that charismatic leadership draws legitimacy from the character of the leader. The people probably saw in him the ability to liberate them from the hold of the British. This made following him very easy. They saw selflessness in him and were willing to defend him with their lives. It was only after much repression from the British that the people could no longer help but promised the British assistance in capturing Ogbiloko. The British through their patrols through the Igede area in search of Ogbiloko had destroyed a lot of villages, rendered people homeless without livelihoods. The patrol went on for one year from 1928-1929. Throughout that year, Ogbiloko was at large from one village to another while the people suffered under the repression of the British. The people eventually surrendered and started helping the British to find Ogbiloko. At first,they first handed Ogbiloko's brother Obo and his half-brother Olim who were said to have been procuring food for him to the British colonialists. Also his wife and family were enticed and arrested and then handed over to the district head at Oju. The patrol and repression of the people came to an end in 1929 when Ogbiloko was reported caught and killed by the colonialists while having an altercation with a village head.

Although archival records show that he was captured and killed by the colonialists, the people had a different view further showing their belief in Ogbiloko powers as well as the charismatic value they attached to Ogbiloko. The excerpts below show that though they surrendered him to the British, they still saw Ogbiloko as their hero and one who had powers above and beyond the British.

> You see women are our problem. At Ora it was a quarrel between women as a result of a broken pot that led to our migration from that place. Ogbiloko too was killed because his wife leaked the secret of his powers. You see when he went into the *Oyongo* River for three days he was told not to use water that had stayed overnight and he should also not eat stale food. His wife knew this secret because she was the one taking care of the home. He was also told that any day he tried that, he would lose his power. Ogbiloko's wife gave him stale water to use to bath and also gave him stale food to eat. This made him loose his power and the colonialists were able to capture and kill him. There was no way the colonialists with all their military gadgets would locate Ogbiloko but for his wife who betrayed him. ..Case study interview/ 69 year old/ Oju/ June 2011

Still another says,

> Ogbiloko's wife betrayed him. If not with the powers he received from the river, there is no way the colonialists would have caught him. But he gave them tough time. For a whole year, they kept looking for him unable to capture him. To the Igede, he symbolizes bravery, intelligence, resilience and power. Sometimes I feel we have not appreciated or honoured him enough. Though there is a statue representing Ogbiloko at Oju [the administrative headquarters of Igede]. Presently there are efforts to institute a series of lectures to commemorate the attempted liberation of the Igede people by Ogbiloko.
>
> KII/ 69 year old/ Oju/ June 2011

The data above further emphasise the charismatic value that the Igede people saw in Ogbiloko hence their doggedness in following him.

In essence, spearheads of identity construction usually possess charismatic qualities such as a vision for the liberation of their people as well as perceived/real super human power capable of withstanding attempts of a higher power to bring them back to subjection. Possessing the vision for liberation as well as the ability to provide immunity in the event of danger are charismatic values that spearheads of identity construction possess. Furthermore, the fact that Ogbiloko did not surrender nor was caught for over a year also strengthened the people's belief in his abilities and powers. Identity construction is spearheaded by charismatic

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leader with visions of liberation for their people, selflessness, as well as the ability to press on despite attacks or challenges from others. Identity reconstruction is also a dialectic process where conflicting parties meet and one had to give way to the other. In the case of the Igede, they had to give way to the oppression by the British and consequently remained under the structures the British had established in the land. Here, the reconstruction from the imposed pagan identity could not be actualised once the spearhead was captured and killed.

Archival records as well as interviews do not show that charismatic leaders emerged among the ethnic groups in the Middle Belt/present day Benue State until the late 1940-50s when Joseph Sarwuan Tarka emerged to advance the Middle Belt identity. The Middle belt identity was a resistant identity which encompassed the minority ethnic groups that had been subsumed under the Hausa-Fulani domination. This identity was created in the late 1940s to the 50s to counter the Hausa-Fulani hegemonic hold as well as resist the pagan identity that had been imposed on the ethnic groups by the British cum Hausa-Fulani.

Joseph Tarka hailed from Mbakor clan in present day Tarka local government though formally Gboko division. He was born to the family of Chief Nanchi in 1932 and started his primary education in 1936 at the Native authority primary school Ihugh. At age 12 he was admitted into the Middle School, Kastina Ala and also later attended the Bauchi Rural Science School. After his course there, he stayed a while to teach and later returned to Kastina Ala Middle School in 1954 to teach. Althoughhe was a teacher, he was interested in politics. It was while he was still teaching at the Middle School that he contested the federal elections of 1954. Tarka's interest in politics and the liberation of his people first expressed itself in his participation in the leadership of non-partisan associations and unions. He was the secretary of both Tiv Native Authority staff union as wellasthe Benue Provincial Branch of the Northern Teachers' Association. His election into the Northern House of Assembly probably gave him a concern for the plight, position and place of the people who had been tagged as pagans and subsumed under the Hausa-Fulani identity. Tarka was a member of Tiv progressive union, one of the unions that united with others to form the UMBC. Tarka took over the leadership of the party in 1957 and began to agitate for the liberation of the Middle Belt from the social organisation and structure of the Hausa-Fulani. Although Tarka was not the founder of the UMBC, he advocated for the creation of a Middle-Belt state and identity where the pagan ethnic groups would have their own democratic space and gain access to the centre.

Tarka was one of the educated elites who formed the Middle Belt Party that eventually merged with the Middle Zone League to form the UMBC. Tarka spearheaded the agitation for the creation of a Middle Belt state which he believed was central to the liberation of neither the Middle Belt ethnic groups whom he said were neither pagans nor Hausa-Fulani. Tarka achieved this by presenting the out-group as a threat to the in-group. According to Tarka,

> There was a wide difference between the Muslims and non-Muslims. Even in the days of Lord Lugard the Sultan of Sokoto had described the relationship between the Muslims and the non-Muslims as that existing between a cat and a rat. The behaviour of Fulani to unbelievers bore this out and the people of the middle belt were fully convinced that once the British left, they would be subdued as in the old days...The Fulani made several unsuccessful attempts to conquer them [the Middle Belt ethnic groups] when the British came and conquered the far North and signed treaties with the Sultan, even the British could not subdue the Middle -Belt peoples. They fought the Tiv but the Tiv fought them back with poisoned arrows and drove the white man back …Proceedings of the Minorities Commission 1958:2)

Hembe (2003) also reports that, Tarka, on the pages of the Tiv indigenous newspaper *Icharegh,*told Lord Lugard that by founding Nigeria he was invariably helping the legs to tie the hands. He was aiding the Hausa-Fulani to assert dominion over the people they had failed to subdue by force. He further called upon the Middle Belt people to reject feudalism, social justice, black imperialism and throw overboard man's injustice to man. In the newspaper report, Tarka further told the people of the Middle Belt to oppose the Fulani and Islamic way of life, Islamic rule and the application of Maliki law imported from Sudan and the Arab world. He believed it was therefore the duty of the peoples to fight for a state of their own where they could remain free from all the threats of the Hausa-Fulani. Tarka also emphasised the fact that the platform for the achievement of their dreams was the UMBC whose manifesto was "the creation of the Middle Belt state is our primary objective". Tarka manipulated ethnic and religious sentiments in a bid to achieve the creation of the Middle Belt state and identity. He presented the out-group as a threat to the in-group. He presented their social structure and organisationsas a threat to the existence of the people of the Middle-Belt anddue to this charismatic quality endeared the people to him as reflected in the following responses.

An interviewee states:

> …It was during the parliamentary meetings where people in all other geopolitical zones represented but there was no body to represent the Middle Belt Region. As a result of this the Sadauna of Sokoto was using the seat meant for the people of the Middle Belt as his footstool. Therefore when Joseph Tarka was opportune to see this act, he rebuked it and started the movement for identification in the Middle Belt.

> Female/ FGD/ Gboko/ 25th July 2011

Another respondent also has this to say:

> The truth is that the people saw sincerity and selflessness in Tarka. That was what endeared the people to him. Even among the Etulo there were a number of people that worked with him. They believed he was pursuing a just cause that would benefit the people of the Middle Belt. It's a pity that factional fights within the UMBC did not allow for the actualization of the Middle Belt dream of liberation
> Male IDI/ 69yr old/ Etulo/ August 2011

Although the middle belt comprised of over 200 ethnic groups, Tarka tried to homogenise these groups by de-emphasising their differences and emphasising their similarities. He first of all tried to show the Middle-Belt ethnic groups that biological links qualified him to be their spokesman. In his words,

> My grandfather, Tor Wanune… was one of the six kings of the five divisions of the great Tiv nation. His mother was the daughter of chief Nachi of the Great Gwari nation… my mother's grandmother is an Idoma who traced her ancestry to the great Bachama nation of the Adamawa provinces.Proceedings of the Minorities Commission 1958:1)

Tarka appealed to culture and biology in order to make the peoples of the Middle-Belt believe he was one of them and was going through the same situation as they were. He overtly tried to convince them of his links so he could get their support. This he eventually got.

Spearheads of identity construction also have the quality or character of being able to convince the people of their ability to lead them towards the achievement of their goal. Here, Tarka linked himself with more than one ethnic group in the middle belt to further prove that it was not just a Tiv idea but that he was fighting for the liberation of all the other groups in the Middle-Belt. Although he was Tiv, he had links with other groups in the Middle-Belt and sohe was one of them. Spearheads of identity construction also convince the people of their sincerity and their identification with their injustice, oppression and marginalisation.

Having established his links and justified why he was the right person to spearhead the middle belt identity cum agitation, he proceeded to homogenise the Middle-Belt peoples comprising of over 200 ethnic groups into four national groups. These are described below.

> The UMBC has the support of about 95 percent of the people in the middle belt area. The middle belt consisted of four national groups.
> Igala, Idomas, Igbirras and Gwaris
> Nupes
> Bachamas, chambas, Biroms, Eggons, Yergams and Angwas
> Aragos, Jukuns and Tivs …these four national groups shared similar natural political structure, tribal marks and carried out similar religious practices. Collectively they were known as Banza Bakwai[*Banza Bakwai historically refered to the seven illegitimate Hausa states of Zamfara, Kebbi ,Kwararrafa, Gwari, Nupe, Kebbi and Yauri but during the coloniall era banza bakwai was used to describe Benue Zaria, Niger, plateau and Bauchi, Adamawa, Kabba and Ilorin provinces which were the middle belt area. It was a bastardized identity to showthat the middle belt peoples were illegitimate though Hausa*]Arnas or Kafari [Hausa and Arabic words to describe infidel]
> Proceedings of the Minorities Commission (1958:2)

Here, Tarka emphasised the similarities and de-emphasised the dissimilarities by appeal to religion, culture and discrimination. Tarka further exploited ethno-religious fears of the in-group to ensure that the out-group was seen as a threatandperhaps one of his outstanding charismatic qualities was the boldness with which he approached the middle belt question. He was fearless andhe confronted the Sardauna on the pages of newspapers without fears of being imprisoned or threatened with treason. For instance, Tarka on the pages of a UMBC newspaper *Icharegh* said

> No one begrudges the premier of the North, Sir Ahmadu Bello and his top henchmen, the right to hold whatever religious faith they think fit. This is at least a basic tenent of our constitution. We recognize the Sardauna's weakness as a worshiper of genealogy. On this score, we appreciate that like his great-grand father Sire Othman Dan Fodio, he may have the inspirational urge to push his brand of religion through the unwilling throats of the people. However what we want him to recognize is that there are many such throats who now recognize that incursion on their rights. Such people would like the Sardauna to insulate his religious susceptibilities from his public life… that the great prince of Sokoto is a zealot, there can be no doubt. He had time without number averred his desire to see the emergence of a pan African government as a forerunner of a worldwide Islamic government; he has even recommended special treatment for Muslim policemen. He has consistently turned down offers of aid on religious

ground. In recognition of his efforts, the world Muslim congress has established its headquarters in Kaduna, and Kuwait, a predominantly Muslim country has given 300 ponds for the building of an Islamic college in the North. *Icharegh* 1957: 2-3

The excerpt above shows the boldness with which Tarka approached the agitation for the liberation of the Middle Belt. Furthermore, Tarka had information on the workings of the Sadauna and he was able to communicate them to his people as a way of sensitising them and manipulating their sentiments to embrace the Middle-Belt identity as against the pagan or northern identity imposed on them by the Hausa-Fulani. Tarka had followership based on the charismatic value which his followers saw in him. This charismatic value was the fact that he had the liberation of the 'Pagans'at heart and as such he fearlessly approached the out-group.

Identity construction can also be spearheaded by socio-cultural/community/ cultural groups. Findings from the study reveal that socio-cultural/community groups emerged to recreate, protect and advance their distinct ethnic identities among the pagan groups. These socio-cultural groups evolved in the 1940-50s. They were created by the educated elites, Native Authority staff and ex-service men. These groups emerged in virtually all minority ethnic groups before or after independence in 1960 to protect and advance their distinct identities. One of such socio-cultural organisations was the Tiv Progressive Union.

The Tiv Progressive Union was created in the 1940s by the educated elites in the Tiv Division. This union was created to advance distinct Tiv identity in the phase of the Hausa-Fulanidomination. They were able to spearhead the reconstruction of identity from the imposed pagan identity by agitating for the creation of the Tor Tiv traditional institution. The agitation for the creation of the Tor Tiv institution was to emphasise the fact that they were not Hausa-Fulani as well as create a space for the Tiv in the Northern House of chiefs (Tseayo 1975, Makar, 1994, Hembe 2005). In a further bid to advance Tiv distinct identity, they also presented seven of their members to represent Benue province in the Northern House of Representatives in 1951. This move was largely aimed at emphasising Tiv distinctiveness in the Northern region as well as creating a platform for access to power and other material and non-material resources. Furthermore,they fought to prevent a non-indigene from succeeding Dan Afoda as *Sarkin* Makurdi and also agitated for the establishment of a Tiv traditional Council to be headed by the tor Tiv. This was in a bid to emphasise that the Tiv had a distinct identity from the Hausa-Fulani, had a distinct leadership from them and they were capable of creating their own traditional council like that of other centralised

societies like the Hausa-Fulani and the Jukuns. Although their initial intention was to establish schools and provide scholarship for Tiv sons to study in higher institutions of learning both in Nigeria and overseas, their focus changed in the phase of the happenings in the society at that time. TPU eventually united with other minority groups to form the MBP scum UMBC. Another socio-cultural organization that has spearheaded identity construction among the Tiv is the *Mzough u Tiv* meaning the Mutual Union of Tiv. An interviewee stated that

> The foundation members of the *Mzough uTiv* spearheaded the reconstruction of Tiv identity through the rewriting of Tiv history away from the barbaric light in which it had been portrayed in archival records. This is evident in the works of Makar on The History of Political Change among the Tiv in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Presently, the organisation has a website where they link up and post updates about Tiv culture as well as happenings in Tiv land. This is aimed at maintaining Tiv distinctiveness beyond the boundaries of Northern Nigeria.
> Male IDI/ 45yr old lecturer/ Gboko/ 27th July 2011

Although this union exists, findings from the study reflect the fact that identity construction and accentuationare more clan, lineage and local government based. Among the Tiv, clan-based organisations have emerged to create and emphasise their identity though as Tiv they are distinct from all other Tiv. Although the collective identity as Tiv still exists and is mobilised to contest for inclusion and social space when the "other" is another ethnic group, clan and local government identities are also competing with the collective identity.

Among the Idoma, a group of educated elites/ex-service men as well as staff of the Native Authority came together to create the Idoma Hope Rising Union (IHRU) in the 1940s. This union was aimed at creating and advancing an Idoma identity among the linguistic groups in the Idoma division. The organisation emerged out of the conscious realisation of the subordinate status of Idoma in Northern Nigeria.Therefore, the foundation members concerned themselves with defining the Idoma ethnic group and its interest in relation with other ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria ((Hembe 2004, Okpe 1995, Benue Province Annual Reports 1945, 46 &47). This view is also reflected in the views of an interviewee.

> The IHRU tried to create an Idoma identity for all the linguistic groups in the Idoma division who had hitherto existed independently before British colonisation, through conscientising them to bury differences and forge a common sense of identity…The IHRU advocated for the creation of the Ochi-Idoma meaning King of the Idoma, traditional institution which would bring all the linguistic

> groups in the Idoma division under his leadership as well as have a representation in the Northern House of Chiefs Members…of this union also represented the Idoma division at the Northern House of Representatives in 1950s

Male IDI/ 70 yr old politician/ Otukpo/29th November 2011

Today, the advancement of Idoma identity is largely on the platform of the Idoma National Forum which is an umbrella body encompassing all the socio-cultural groups in Idoma land. This was created in 1989 to advance Idoma identity. Presently, the forum is agitating for the creation of Apa state for all the Idoma. This is aimed at preserving and emphasising Idoma identity and distinctiveness and a platform to access/contest for resources at the national level.

Similarly among the Igede in the 1950s, an Igede Youth Association was created by four men of Igede origin who worked at the Idoma Native Authority. These youths spearheaded the construction of an Igede identity away from the Idoma identity that had been imposed by the divisional arrangement during colonial rule as well as the Ochi Idoma traditional institution, which was expected to encompass all the linguistic groups in the Idoma division. According to an interviewee,

> Ambassador Ogah Okwoche, Eje Iyanya(late), Isegbe Ikape, and John Idikwu formed the Igede Youth Association. They felt marginalised and caged in by the Idoma in the Idoma Native Authority. They spearheaded the construction of Igede distinct through concientising the Igede. It was in 1956 that they and other elders of Igede sat and agreed on a date to celebrate Igede Agba festival.

Male KII/ 69 yr old retired civil servant/ Oju/ September 12th 2011

The Igede Agba festival is a celebration of Igede's distinctiveness (see Igede identity social thought). Findings from the interviews as well as observation show that Igede Youth Movement consequently metamorphosed into Igede Development Association which has become the umbrella body that has been advancing Igede identity over the years through advocacy, cultural revival as well as self-help community projects. In 2010, this body was reconstructed as *Omi nyi Igede* meaning the Voice of Igede. The reconstruction portrays the fact that their agenda is not in projects alone but projecting an Igede voice in the quest for the institutionalisation of Igede identity.

Among the Etulo, an Etulo Cultural and Development Community was created in 1971 by the Etulo educated elite to create and advance Etulo identity. Beyond the identity of' pagan', the Etulo believe were and still are hedged in both geographically and politically by the Tiv. The

main goal of the organisation was the unification of all Etulo to create a platform where the Etulo could speak with one voice in terms of the accentuation of their identity. An interview with one of the founding members shows that this association was created to emphasise a distinct Etulo identity as well as bring development to the people through self-help community development approach.

> We the Etulo elite in 1971 decided that we had to do something about our situation. At least, we were educated and we had seen what was happening in other places. Apart from that, the structure of the government was not helping us. We were under the Tiv during colonial era and even after they left were still under their domination. We did not want our culture to go extinct. We also did not feel government presence in our area. We created the organisation to unite all Etulo, promote our culture and also to engage in self help development. The organisation reminds us that we are Etulo and the contributions we make give us a sense of allegiance to our place of origin.
> Case study/ 69 yr old/ Adi Etulo/ June 2011

Likewise, among the Jukun, the spearheads of identity construction were a group of Ex-service men who created an organisation known as Jukun Development Association to construct as well as emphasisea Jukun distinct identity. The Jukun Development Association became a platform for the articulation of the constructed identity as well as the creation of self-help projects to further project their identity. The founding members of the organisation possessed certain charismatic qualities that endeared the people to them. These qualities are articulated in the response below.

> Those who founded the organisation were selfless people. All they had in mind was the development of the Jukun. We had been marginalised in so many ways. Our chief is a district head under Tiv traditional council even though we are not Tiv. Their aim of creating the organisation was to protect our identity as Jukun.
> Male FGD/ Abinsi/ 18 -39 years/ May 2011

Spearheads of identity construction, in essence, possess charismatic qualities/values such as selflessness, sincerity, a vision for the liberation or development of their people, and the ability to communicate this vision to them. Identity construction is a historical product of human activity that is brought about by concrete actions of individuals and groups (Guess 2006). Elites can transform cultural attributes to political symbols and establish a unique identity for their group as a tool for mobilisation against rivals (Skeldon 1995). Furthermore,identity reconstruction is a means of survival and it is a dialectic process which

involves agency whether on the part of individuals or group of individuals in its construction. The power to construct identity rests with powerful social agents who objectify the ethnic group and set in motion social processes of self identification for affirmation and recognition by others (Storr 2009).

CHAPTER SIX

6.1 Relevance of Significant Other Groups to Identity Construction

Identity has an *othering* dimension which inherently includes and excludes. It can be mobilised depending on the social situation to create, contest, define and redefine social boundaries. The *othering* dimension of identity also implies that identity is constructed with the "other" in perspective. Hence,the construction of an idoma identity will be meaningful much more in the context of the construction of a Tiv, or Igede identity and not in isolation. According to Henkel (2005),

> Identity is shaped and reinforced by strong communities and by the social processes generated within them. Identities are strong and most stable when there is maintenance of strong boundaries protecting the space between groups… social construction of identity takes place in a context marked by power relationships (Henkel 2005:157).
> .

In essence, the identity of one group cannot be understood or examined in isolation from the relationships the group has with "others" within the same social environment. This also means that identity, especially of ethnic groups, is dialogical in the sense that it is created, preserved, reaffirmed and even rejected through a continuous set of contrasts between ones group and others. This portrays the fact that ethnic groups are significant to the creation of the identity of others. The extent of this significance is influenced by a plethora of factors. This section of the work is concerned with examining the relevance of the *significant other* groups to identity construction and reconstruction. *Significant other* groups here refer to other contesting ethnic groups within the social environment of a particular ethnic group. Findings from the study point to the existence of six *significant other groups* which are the Hausa-Fulani, Tiv, Idoma, Igede, Etulo and Jukun. The dominant groups are the Hausa-Fulani, Tiv and Idoma. Their status as *significant other groups* was influenced by space and time among other factors. At the creation of the Northern protectorate and consequent colonisation and *paganisation* of the so-called minority ethnic groups, Hausa- Fulani was the major *significant other group*. The identity of the other ethnic groups was constructed in dialectic with the Hausa-Fulani identity. The following data attest to this.

> Hence every cause, natural and artificial alike, has combined to the one end, of establishing the superior races in the Northern and the inferior races in the southern portions of the fertile belt. The result as we see it to-day is strikingly illustrated in British territory by a journey from the Niger mouth to Sokoto. The river in its windings makes a sectional cut of which the general direction is from north to south, and

leaving the nude savage of the coast to prowl in dusky nakedness through the mangrove swamps of Southern Nigeria at its mouths, the traveller who enters the river sees the natives on the banks ever increasing in decency and dignity as the latitude recedes from the equator (Shaw 1905: 22-23).

Here, the Hausa and the Fulani were regarded as superior races while the other ethnic groups to the southern half of the protectorate were regarded as inferior races. This inferior/superior identity is further illustrated in the following:

Thus it would seem that in quite ancient times the existence of different races within the belt of Negroland was established. There were evidently superior and inferior tribes; and without attempting to follow the question in detail, it is interesting, though not surprising, to observe that along the whole line of the fertile belt the superior races, modified by intercourse with the white pressure from the North, gradually established themselves in possession of the uplands bordering more nearly upon the desert and civilization, while the inferior races were driven back towards the then impenetrable regions of barbarism and equatorial Africa. This movement of all that was inferior towards the south is a fact of supreme importance to the subsequent history of the Negro belt. To-day I believe it will be found that there has been a still further recession southwards of the inferior races, and 9° north would perhaps be nearer to the limit of their northern extension. It is interesting to observe that Northern Nigeria stretches from 7° to 14°, thus including within its limits both classes of natives… It is also in this neighbourhood, about the sources of the Senegal, that the original home in Africa of the Fulani, who count as a partly white race, is placed. The movement of this remarkable people in Africa within historic time has unquestionably been from west to east, but this does not preclude the theory of some more remote eastern origin which may have preceded their African immigration. Whether Phoenician, Egyptian, Indian, or simply Arab, they are evidently a race distinct from the Negroid and other black types by which they have been surrounded, and notwithstanding the marked effect produced on some portions of their people by intermarriage with Negro women, they have kept the distinctive qualifications of their race through a known period of two thousand years. The Fulah of to-day is as distinct from the pure Negro as was the first Fulah of whom we have record. How long they may have existed in Africa before any record of them was made is with our present knowledge impossible to say. The Hausa and the Songhay are other races which, though black, are absolutely distinct from the pure Negro type (Shaw 1905: 21-22)

Here, the Hausa and Fulani were portrayed as superior to the others who were Negroes. Although Negro refers to a racial classification in abstract terms, in this context, it was used

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to underscore the fact that the other ethnic groups were of a different race which was inferior to that of the Hausa and Fulani. This constructed identity was adopted as official colonial policy and as such the other ethnic groups were treated as inferior to the superior races and had to be imposed on these groups as Emirs, Alkalis and Sarkis to in a bid to civilise them. Here, the Hausa and Fulani were a significant other groups in relation to whom the identity of the other ethnic groups was constructed. The relevance of Hausa and Fulani as significant other group is further illustrated by the reconstruction of identity by ethnic groups away from the inferior and barbaric light in whichthey had been portrayed.

The first reaction to the inferior identity imposed on the ethnic groups was the reconstruction of identity by the ethnic groups from the barbaric inferior light they had been portrayed to their indigenous identities. This was manifested in various protests and resistances carried out by the various ethnic groups. Among the Tiv, there was the *Iyambuan* movement which emerged to challenge the powers of the elders in Tiv whom the youth believed had been bought over by the colonial powers. This movement emerged in Tiv land in the 1930s to challenge the authorities and structures that the British had established in Tiv land. It was a cult which promised its adherents eternal life as well as immunity from the British. The Nyambuan was a parallel institution set up and it had a *Tor* which could be seen as a District Officer, *Umasinjer* – messenger, *adugeri* – a policeman, *Ortwe* -- doctor and *Atese* --a female Missionary. *Nyambuan* means meat has gone bad. This was in reference to the barbaric identity as well as the colonial administrative arrangements which the adherents referred to as meat gone bad. *Nyambuan* emerged as a parallel institution to ridicule the political structure in the land and especially the work of colonial agents and missionaries.

According to Makar (1983) There were enactments to ridicule the teaching of the white missionaries by attempting to demonstrate that it was not only through the teaching of the white msn that individuals could secure salvation. The movement attacked all the political forces in their enactments. They ridiculed the colonial arrangements, agents, and missionaries as well as exposed the perceived/real disorder of an alien imposed rule cum identity.

Among the Idoma, various protests and altercations took place as discussed in the previous section. Among the Igede there was a revolt led by an Igede traditional physician named *Ogbiloko*. *Ogbiloko* had previously worked as a messenger with the colonialists and was uncomfortable with the inferior status and identity imposed on them by the British. He led the Igede in a revolt to protest the imposed identity. Most of the resistances put up by the

ethnic groups were largely repressed. Besides these revolts, the ethnic groups created sociocultural organisations to recreate and emphasise their distinct ethnic identity away from the barbaric and backward identity that had been imposed on them. This shows the place of significant other groups to identity construction. Hence among the Tiv, a Tiv progressive union TPU was created. This union was among other things to promote the Tiv values and culture as well as agitate for a paramount chief of Tiv. Among the Idoma, an Idoma Hope Rising Union was formed to create a sense of identity among the groups under the Idoma division. These two organisations agitated for the creation of the Tiv and the Idoma traditional councils in the Benue. These organisations recreated the identity of their ethnic groups from the barbaric light in which they had been portrayed by the colonialists. These groups also sought to create a parallel institution such as the Caliphate whereby they had a paramount ruler with other chiefs or kings like that of the Emirate and the Caliphate system of the Hausa-Fulani. These groups had hitherto been described in comparison to the Fulani as unorganised and unsettled. These groups helped to recreate the identity of their groups as organised and unsettled people to a group of people who were settled and organised into a homogenous group such as the Hausa and Fulani.

Further in the 1940s, realising those independent constructions of identity would not achieve the desired liberation, these ethnic groups created a Middle-Belt identity as a counter to the pagan identity that had been constructed and imposed on them by the colonialists. The construction of a Middle-Belt identity shows the place of *significant other groups* in identity construction. Ethnic groups reconstruct identity with the construction and perceptions of *significant other groups* in view. The Middle Belt identity was hitherto a construction by the pagan members of the house of assembly on behalf of all the other members of the pagan ethnic groups to protest their political alienation, socio-economic marginalisation as well as discrimination by the Hausa-Fulani and the British.

> The Middle-Belt movement was … a political reaction of the non-Islamic groups of the Middle-Belt area, to the colonial type of relationship and domination of their societies by a culturally different group, which had existed within the very political boundaries of the north as a unit of the   Nigerian federation. The reaction took the form of achieving specific types of political identities in the Middle-Belt area in order to produce support for the demands of the Middle-Belt Region. This was meant to separate the middle belt groups and Islamic federation in the context of their identities (Logmans 1985:11).

The minority ethnic groups constructed Middle-Belt identity to contest the imposition and dominance of the Hausa-Fulani identity. The Middle-Belt identity was constructed in a reaction to the Hausa-Fulani identity as well as the pagan identity imposed on the pagan ethnic groups. The identity of Middle-Belt identity, though seemingly homogenous, comprised of several multiple identities which had to be voluntarily/necessarily subsumed for the Middle-Belt identity to thrive. Identity construction here involved de-emphasising differences and emphasising similarities. The data below attest to this.

> The Middle Belt… comprises of four national groups which include the Nupe group: comprising the Nupe proper, the Igbirras, Igalas, Idomas and the Gwaris; The Tiv: comprising of the Tiv proper, the Aragos and the Jukuns; The Birom Group, comprising the Birom proper, the Eggons, the Angas and the Ankwes; The Bachama group: comprising the Bachama proper, the Chamba and the Bolawas …These people shared a common culture, and a common destiny which was different from those of their enemies, the Hausa and Fulani group. They generally have common body structures, identical national marks, a similar habitat or abode, the same geographical problem, and the same customs and traditions as well as the same ways of worship…. The Middle-Belt people are bound together by strings of nature, by their common way of life, by traditions and intermarriage. They are so called pagans or Kafiris or the Banza Bakwai (useless seven)…The Middle Belt people constitute an ethnic and religious minority group compared to the Hausa-Fulani Muslim who constitute two thirds of the total population of the entire North (Tarka 1958: 2)

J. S. Tarka, who was one of the spearheads of the Middle-Belt identity, overtly minimised the dissimilarities and emphasised the similarities to create a homogenous identity to contest the pagan identity imposed by the colonialists/Hausa-Fulani. The excerpt above also further emphasises the fact that the Hausa-Fulani identity was significant to the construction of the pagan identity as well as the middle belt identity. To further illustrate the relevance of the Hausa-Fulani identity to the construction of the middle belt identity, respondents in the course of interviews were of the opinion that

> The Middle-Belt was more or less a platform to resist the Hausa-Fulani domination. The British believed they were superior and concentrated on developing their areas while the other areas were not as developed. For instance, in the Tiv area, the first schools were built by the Christian missionaries. If it was not for the missions we would not have had education in Tiv land as early as we did…
> Male Case study/ Tiv/ Gboko/ 2011

Also

The Middle-Belt was a very abstract form of identity which did not last long. So many ethnic groups were involved in the movement. Although it was short-lived, it was used to fight the domination of the Hausa and the Fulani. They imposed so much of their cultural practices on the other ethnic groups. They did not believe in drinking so they tried to abolish the sale of liquor. And you know the other ethnic groups usually make their own local bear for consumption. That is what they use to unwind after the day's activities. They also imposed their language so much that some of us had to be fluent in Hausa before we could be employed in the civil service. That was why we were happy when Sadauna was killed. He just wanted to operate the whole of the northern region as his father's property
Male ID/ 67 yr old/ politician /Igede/ Oju/ 2011

Following independence in 1960, many ethnic groups in Nigeria, especially among the minorities began to reconstruct their identities in relation to the whole andconsequently, they began to redefine their relationship to the whole of Nigeria. There were secession attempts by some ethnic groups. Isaac Boro declared the Niger-Delta Republic but this attempt was quashed. The Igbos also attempted secession by the declaration of the BiafranRepublic. This led to a three year civil war that was eventually brought to an end in 1969. The result of this was the division of the country into 12 states in 1957. The Northern Region was divided into six states the Northwestern, Kano, North Eastern, North-Central, Kwara and Benue-Plateau State. The ethnic groups in Benue State were part of the Benue-Plateau State along with other ethnic groups like Birom and Ngas who spearheaded the creation of the Middle-Belt identity and state. With the creation of states, ethnic groups became more conscious of their distinctiveness and so, they began to pull out of the middle belt agenda towards the accentuation of distinct ethnic identities.

The creation of states instead of allaying the fears of the minorities sparked up agitations from the minority ethnic groups. Instead of creating a middle belt state to serve as a home to the entire pagan ethnic groups, the middle belt was fragmented into three states. This caused a major breakdown in the Middle-Belt identity. Several identities now emerged within the Middle-Belt identity. First of all, there was a dichotomisation within each state as majorities and minorities emerged. This majority was designated in terms of numbers and determined access to resources, opportunities and rights within the state andas a result,many of the ethnic groups began to engage one another in violent and nonviolent conflict. Apart from majority, minority issues, *indigeneship*, *settlership, visitorship,* and *strangership* emerged. Ethnic groups who had wholesomely created the middle belt identity began to recreate their

identities as distinct ethnicities with regards to others within the middle belt. These reconstructions assumed violent dimensions as some ethnic groups declared others as persona non grata and the subsequent haunting down and physical elimination of such groups. As such Maier 2001 captures it thus:

> Since independence, the Middle belt has been a scene of frequent flare-ups. The Nigerian and international media describe the frequent clashes as religious but in fact they stem from minority ethnic groups attempt to wrench themselves free from what they see as domination by the Hausa-Fulani establishment. Other eruptions involve disputes between neighbouring ethnic groups over land and access to political offices. The people of a given area often claim they are indigenes and their enemies are the strangers or settlers seeking to upset the mythical natural order of things (Maier 2000:194)

Within Benue-Plateau State, there were a lot of reconstructions among the ethnic groups hence; there was a pull from the centre. So strong was this pull that the governor of the defunct Benue-PlateauState in a speech, had to call representatives of the ethnic associations to work together. The following excerpt of his speech shows that ethnic groups were beginning to redefine who they were with regards to others and the State.

> Since the creation of states, we have passed very difficult times in this state, particularly in the sphere of coexistence among the ethnic groups comprising it. I want to tell you that our problems are in no way unique. Every state in Nigeria has its ethnic and sectional problems. In fact this realization is the very reason for the creation of states.it is unfortunate that the newspapers have blown up our problems out of all proportion. We cannot run away from the fact that we are together. We must find ways of removing the false rumours and suspicion that exist amongst us. I have had usefull discussions with all the groups concerned-ethnic associations, professional bodies, civil servants etc… The present trouble has been caused by fear, resulting from mutual suspicions. Unless we can all sit down together and suggest ways of allaying these fears resulting from mutual suspicion. Unless we can all sit down together and suggest ways of allaying this fear….. No single ethnic group has a monopoly of the state…everyone is entitled to share in the good things of the state. We must all lend a hand in removing the ills of the state (Gomwalk 1969:1)

The speech above shows that the ethnic groups had begun to redefine their relationship with one anotherand so the Middle-Belt idea had given way to ethnic distinctiveness. This may not be unrelated to the freer atmosphere created by the exit of the colonial masters, the creation of states as well as access to resources. Findings from the study show that the Benue side of

the Benue-Plateau State cried foul as they said they were marginalised. The following data attest to this.

> When Benue-Plateau state was created, Gowon put the headquarters in his place and put his brother an Ngas man to be the governor. The other part which came from former Benue province was neglected. Development was concentrated in the Jos side. That was why we began to agitate for the creation of our own state. If you notice Jos is more developed than Benue
> Male KII/65 yr old/ retired civil servant/Adi Etulo/June 2011

According to another

> Choice positions in the state went to the plateau side even when the struggle for the Middle-Belt state was aggressively supportedby the Tiv. Infact, a Tiv man J.S. Tarka led the agitation for the middle belt. At the end of the day, they began to develop their own side and leave the Tiv area. For all the years we were with the Plateau people, Benue remained backward economically, socially…
> Male KII/55 yr old/ politician /Oju /June 2011

The data above showthat the ethnic groups in the Benue area were beginning to redefine their relationship with the other groups and so, felt they were being marginalised and cheated out of development benefits. This may have informed the agitations for the creation of a separate state for the ethnic groups in the former Benue province. Although this was the experience of the ethnic groups, data collected from the archives show that the ethnic groups from the former Benue province had a higher population compared to the ethnic groups from the former Plateau province. The data from the table below attest to this.

Table 6.1 showing the population of Benue Plateau state by Local Administration (1963) census

1	Tiv	1,244,185
2	Idoma	497,953
3	Jos	457759
4	Wukari federation	285,646
5	Pankshin federation	276,459
6	Lafia	239,512
7	Lowland federation	214,280
8	Akwanga federation	177,859
9	Keffi	169,696
10	Nassarawa	154,821
11	Kanam	96,178
12	Wase	71,843
13	Yergam	62,750
14	Awe	50,147
16	Resettlement	10,320

Source: Benue Plateau State of Nigeria: some facts and figures. A publication of the Benue Plateau state 1963

Table 6.1 shows the various divisions in the State by Local Administration. The Tiv and Idoma divisions which form the Benue part of the Benue-Plateau State were the majority in terms of population.Their majority status probably did not give them their desired access to and control of the centre. Despite the large population of the Idoma and Tiv division, there were cries of marginalisation by some of the ethnic groups who felt they were not adequately represented in the government. Therefore, agitationsfor the creation of a new state especially among the Tiv and Idoma divisions became so strong.

Table 6.2 below further shows the population distribution of Benue-Plateau State by divisions. The Tiv division was by far the largest compared to the other divisions. The second in terms of population was Idoma followed by Jos division. Despite this population that should have been of advantage to the ethnic groups in Benue State, they claimed they were marginalised in terms of development efforts and opportunities in government.

Table 6.2 showing the Population of Benue-Plateau State by Divisions

1	Tiv division	1,244,185
2	Idoma division	497,953
3	Jos division	457,759
4	Pankshin division	372,639
5	Shendam (lowland) division	359,193
6	Nassarawa Division	324,517
7	Lafia Division	289,659
8	Wukari Division	285,646
9	Southern division, Akwanga	177,859

Source: Benue-Plateau State of Nigeria: some facts and figures. A publication of the Benue Plateau state 1963

Benue State was eventually created in 1973 to house the ethnic groups in the Tiv and Idoma division and then the Igala and Bassa were brought from Kwara State to also from part of Benue state. With the creation of Benue State, the Tiv and Idoma became the dominant ethnic groups as well as the *significant other groups* in relation to the Igede, Etulo and Jukun.Subsequently, they became the rallying point for the reconstruction of identity of all the other ethnic groups in the State. The creation of the State created a space for other ethnic groups which were hitherto subsumed under the Tiv and Idoma identity. In the newly created Benue State, Idoma and Tiv and Igala were the majority ethnic groups while other ethnic groups such as Etulo, Jukun and Igede that were hitherto subsumed under the Tiv and Idoma identity began to reconstruct and accentuate their identity as reflected in the following responses.

> We were initially called Utur. During the colonial era, we were not really recognised. You know, we all came together as Middle Belt to fight for the middle belt state which was never realised. Even in Benue-Plateau State we were not recognised because so many ethnic groups were lumped in the same State. But when Benue State was created, our seniors approached the government for a change of name from Utur to Etulo. Utur means nothing but Etulo means a strong people.
> Case study/69yr old/ retired civil servant/ Adi/ June 2011

Likewise another respondent says

> It's not like the other ethnic groups apart from the Tiv and Idoma did not exist. They did but the divisional arrangement did not allow for

the recognition of their identities. But when Benue State was created, we had to also show that we existed. In Benue-Plateau State, we were under Idoma division. When Benue State was created, a local government was created for us. This shows that the government recognised that we are different from Idoma. Many people make a mistake and think we were once Idoma. No, it was because we were under the Idoma division. In fact, it is believed among the Igede that the name Otukpo was *Oturukpo* which is an Igede word for the cutting down of unripe palm fruit. The area which is called Otukpo today was where we used to *turukpo*. So we gave it that name. It was Morgan Ogbole who used his position in the Benue-Plateau government to remove the 'r' in the name. If you check the very old records you will notice that the name of that place is actually Oturkpo…

KII/65 yr old/ politician/ Oju/ April 2011

The responses above show that though the other ethnic groups apart from Tivand Idoma had existed, their identitieswerelargely subsumed under the Middle-Belt,Tiv,and Idoma identity. The ethnic groups utilised the freer atmosphere occasioned by the creation of states to redefine who they saw themselves as, in relation to the *significant others* of Idoma and Tiv. Although these ethnic groups were given recognition in the newly created State, they were designated as the minority ethnic groups in relation to the Tiv who were the majority ethnic group. Some respondents described their experience in the newly created Statethus:

When we heard that Benue State was going to be created, we were very happy. For some of us, Benue-Plateau was too tight. To our dismay, the State was created and we were still squeezed under the Idoma and even till date we are trying to redeem our identity. In the newly created State, the Idoma, Tiv and Igala scrambled over all the political appointments. The Idoma and Igede were regarded as one so most appointments for Idoma went to them. Even our children were ashamed to identify with Igede some of them began to regard themselves as Idoma especially when theywere outside Benue State. It looked like it was more prestigious to be Idoma than Igede. We had to wait for Kogi State to be created before we could be regarded as third largest ethnic group in Benue State. Till date, only Tiv and Idoma news are aired on the State television. The majority groups simply took everything for themselves and over the years it is the crumbs they have been dishing to us…

 Male KII/65yr old/ retired teacher/Oju/ July 2012

Also in concert another says

When Benue was created some of us thought it was a sign of better things but the reverse has been the case. We have had to struggle for

anything we get from the State. Development was concentrated in the major Tiv and Idoma cities and so we had to come together through self-help to bring infrastructural facilities to our communities.
Female/IDI/ 45yr old/ student leader/ oju / July 2011

The dichotomisation of ethnicities into majority and minorities has implication for the citing of development projects, access to power as well as other valued resources in society. The majority ethnic groups, according to the respondents, took all at the expense of the other ethnic groups who were left with crumbs. In addition, the views expressed by the respondents bring to the fore issues of prestige with regards to identity. The Idoma and Tiv identity were overtly prestigious because they were dominant and their dominance implied control of resources as well as representation of the State at the centre.

The dominance of the Idoma and the Tiv was based on two major premises as reflected in the following responses.

> In terms of population the Tiv and Idoma are more. Actually the other ethnic groups cannot stand them in terms of population. But that we are not large does not mean we should suffer. Benue State is our state so we should enjoy all the good things together
> Male KII/66 yr old/ retired civil servant/Abinsi/May 2011

Another says

> You know even before Benue was created, there were only two recognised traditional chieftaincy institutions; the Tiv and Idoma. The Etulo and Jukun are chiefs under the tor Tiv, while the Igede also has a chief that is under the Ochi Idoma. If you look at it critically, it implies thereare two ethnic groups in Benue State, the Tiv and Idoma. Over the years we the Igede have been agitating for our own first class chief but it has not been possible. The Idoma are also frustrating it.
> Male KII/60 yr old/ retired civil teacher/Adi Etulo/June 2011

Still according to another

> For us the Jukun, I think the colonial era was better. At least, our chief had a status of a fourth class chief. Though we would have wished for more, it was still better than the district head status that our chief now occupies. Our chief is a district head under the Tiv traditional council. He even has black and white beads that he has to wear to their council meetings. So the whole of Jukun is a district under the Tiv. That is what it means.
> Male KII/65 yr old/ Community leader /Abinsi/June 2011

Their dominance was further based on the fact that the two traditional chieftaincy institutions in the State were that of Idoma and Tiv. Although the other ethnic groups had chiefs, they were placed under these two traditional councils. The Jukun and Etulo chiefs were and are

still district heads under the Tiv traditional council while the Igede chief is second class chief under the Idoma traditional council. This social arrangement further reinforced a majority as well as dominant identity among the Idoma and Tiv in relation to the other ethnic groups and overtly superimposed a Tiv and Idoma identity on the ethnic groups in Benue State. The Tiv and the Idoma have a perception of superiority and as such regard the other ethnic groups in derogatory terms. This is evident in the responses below. According to a Tiv interviewee

> The Etulo are migrants and all they do is fishing. We see them as fish. In fact, we have a saying that you should befriend an Etulo during the dry season so that you can have fish. Jukun and the Etulo are the same. If you go fishing and you find the Etulo you have found fish. We regard the Igede as *Udam*[a derogatory name for the Obudu people in Cross River State. *Udam* Also means headhunters]… Anything that is inferior is regarded as Udam. For instance, we call a duck *udam ker* because we believe that if you are pregnant and you eat it you will have a child with bowl legs… also a specie of yam that is not sweet is called *udamyo* meaning *udam* yam… Whenever we want to say I am not your servant we say I am not your Igede
> IDI/ Tiv / female/ 45 year old/ 27th June 2011

Still an Idoma says

> The Etulo are our brothers. The Igede are part and parcel of Idoma but they are a minority in zone C [senatorial zone comprising 9 local governments among which Idomas have 7 and the Igede have 2]. The Igede like *alaha* [cheap things] we do not like marrying their girls because they still practice circumcision.
> IDI/Idoma/ Male/ 46 yr old/ November 2011

This social perception impacts on the relationships between the "majority" and the "minority" ethnic groups and as such fuels a feeling of the enslaved, subjected and despaired identity among the subjected groups of Igede, Etulo and Jukun. The result of these perceptions is new constructions. Hence, the Igede describe their relationship with the Idoma thus:

> We are not an appendage [to any other group] …the Idoma refer to us as Igede *Achich*meaning what can come out of Igede. The Idoma use us to get what they want.
> Male KII/ 60/ member of development association/ Oju/ 16th September

Also

> We speak a different language from the Idoma but they want us to be together. We share the same Ochi Idoma but we want our own *Adi* Igede [meaning king or father of igede]
> Female IDI/ 57 year old civil servant / Oju /   17th June 2011

Still another says

> We were called Idoma in the past because the colonial masters put us under them in the same division. Today, they look down on us and see us as inferior people to them.
> Male IDI/ 69 year old traditional title holder/ Oju 29th September 2011

According to another respondent

> The Idoma see us as inferior to them. They see us as cheap. They do not like to give us their girls to marry but they marry our girls. There was a particular day I went to the market to buy provisions. I saw my customer shouting at another woman who had come to buy goods from her saying "… abeg abeg abeg, na early in the morning. I no *dey* sell market for *Agede* early in the morning. Na only *alaha* market them like. Abeg *commot* make I sell first…" I felt very bad and decided not to patronise her again. That is what we face every day. They see us as house helps who should serve them. They only use us when they need our numbers to get attention at the State or national level. But once they achieve their goal, they throw us away like rags and trample upon us.
> Female IDII/46yr old/ Lecturer/Oju /June 2011

Another respondent further says

> Igede has never been and will never be Idoma. We are not Idoma. I have been ringing it in my children's ears that they are not idoma but Igede. It is only colonial arrangement that brought us together. Now the colonialists are gone so we should be on our own. Some of our selfish politicians always ally with the Idoma to cheat their own people. Posterity will judge them. The idoma count us as Idoma when it is time to fight against the Tiv for any project or opportunity to come to zone c but once it is done we become Igede and not Idoma. They are presently agitating for Apa State with the Igede in mind but the Igede will never support it because we will simply be moving from one subordinate experience to the other.
> Male KII/62yr old/ community leader /Oju /June 2011

Here, the Igede in a reaction to the Idoma identity, reconstruct their identity through appeal to history overtly referring to an earlier time when they were hitherto dominant in their own ranks and blaming the colonialists for their subordinate relationship with the Idoma. They also portray the Idoma as selfish who had adopted the Idoma for themselves at the expense of other Idoma speaking ethnic groups. The Igede also decry the negative perception the Idoma have about them, showing the place of the definition and perceptions of *significant other groups* to the construction and reconstruction of identity. The responses above also show that the reconstruction and emphasis on Igede identity is in a reaction to the dominance of the

Idoma identity. This shows that the idoma is a *significant other group* that is relevant to the construction of Igede identity. The perceptions, attitudes, judgement and definitions of the Idoma are relevant to the construction of the Igede identity.

Likewise the Etulo describe their relationship with the Tiv thus:

> We are not Tiv but Etulo. The Tiv have dominated us in everything. They are the ones ruling the State so they control everything. You see we are on the two sides of River Kastina Ala. Because of the River they divided us into two local governments; a district in one and 12 kindreds in the other. For me this is a deliberate attempt to divide us and make us assimilate with them. Meanwhile, the same River divided the Tiv at the other side; the two sides are still under one local government. They have taken over everything. Even the Akata festival we started has been taken over by the government in the name of tourism. All government does is take over. One day, they will take over our lives…..
> Male IDI/ 65 year old retired civil servant/ Adi Etulo/ 16th June 2011

Still another Etulo says;

> The Tiv do not want us to be known. We were shared into two local government areas Buruku and Kastina ala. So we do not have a local government of our own and a say. Politically, we have been side-lined. We also have no member in House of Representatives. We have been suppressed and dominated in every area due to our number. They see us as few in number, inferior so we should not have a say
> Female IDI / 32 year old /student/ Adi Etulo/ 29th June 2011

Also

> They are busy talking about population, how did they become many?is it not because of their cultural practices? If we do the same things that they do we would have been many. They want to use their advantage of number to cover us so that we will not be recognised. Yes we are not many but we are Etulo, a strong and well cultured people. We will never become Tiv. Yes we speak their language because we live among them, but that does not make us Tiv. We are different.
> Male IDI/52 yr old/civil servant/Kastina Ala /June 2011

And

> Till today they call us *Utur* or *Turu* which is not our real name. That name means nothing. Our name is Etulo and we are proud of it. We are fishermen but we have a very pure culture that we are proud of and we are sensitising our young men and women not to get carried away by the fact that we live among them. We are not Tiv, we are Etulo.
> Female KII/65 yr old/retired teacher/ Kastina Ala /June 2011

Likewise another says

> If not for the breakdown of the Kwararafa kingdom, we were with the other ethnic groups that formed the Kwararafa kingdom in Benue valley before the 16th century. We were dominant at that time but migration made us settle in our present location and the Tiv later came and surrounded us. Today, they are all over the place and we have been squeezed to a corner
> Female IDI/40 yr old/Business Woman/ Kastina/ Ala /June 2011

The Etulo, like the Igede, emphasise /construct their identity as distinct from the Tiv, showing the place of significant other groups in the construction and reconstruction of identity. Here, the significant other group is Tiv from whom the Etulo reconstruct and accentuate their identity as distinct.

The Jukuns in the same way describe their relationship with the Tiv as thus:

> We are Jukun just like our brothers in Wukari. The only difference is that we are Awanu and they are Awapan. We are warriors. Even the Hausa-Fulani did not defeat us. We arrived the Benue valley before any other ethnic group. Even Tiv scholars like Makar attest to that. Even the colonial masters settled in Abinsi[Jukun traditional town], which was the headquarters of the province at that time. It was later moved to Makurdi and ever since then Abinsi has been neglected. Today, there is no secondary school in Abinsi. Our children have to go to other places for education. The Tiv want to keep us as slaves. If somebody denies you knowledge he is reducing you to the status of a slave. Even JS Tarka had his primary education in Abinsi. We are so dominated that our chief is a district head under Tiv traditional council. Even though we have our own traditional attire, the chief has to wear black and white cloth and black and white beads to attend the meeting. Are they not trying to make us like them?
> Male KII/ 59 yr old/ lecturer/ Abinsi/ May 2011

Another also says

> The headquarters of Benue State was Abinsi. It was shifted from Abinsi to Makurdi. Jukun controlled the affairs of the State before now. Now that the Tiv man is more in number and are educated, they have taken over everything
> IDI/ 35 year old Youth leader/ Abinsi / 29th June 2011

Still another Jukun says

> We need to be on our own. We need our own local government area
> and we are not represented in government
> IDI/ 25 year old/ student/ Abinsi/ 30th June 2011

Here, the Jukun reconstruct their identity as distinct from the Tiv and portray the fact that they had been subjected involuntarily under the Tiv. The Tiv here is a significant other group whose perceptions, judgments and actions are relevant for the construction and accentuation of a Jukun identity. The ethnic groups in a reaction to the dominance as well as the superiority of the Idoma and Tiv appeal to history as a way of emphasising their distinctiveness and previous supposed superiority. This confirms Dwyer's (1999) assertion that identity construction or reconstruction could involve placing an emphasis on relationships that existed in the past and reinterpreting them based on present day realities. Additionally, significant other groups are relevant to identity construction.Abubakar (2001) posits that the construction of the identity of one ethnicgroup could only be meaningful in relation to the ways the identities of others are constructed and not in isolation. Hence, the Igede make reference to the fact that a divisional arrangement imposed an Idoma identity on them while the Jukun and Etulo make reference to the membership of the Kwararafa kingdom.

The case of the Jukun presents an interesting case as archival records as well as literature point to the fact that they were a dominant group in the Benue valley as they were the founders andrulers of the Kwararafa a confederacy that existed in the 16th century. Their migration to the bank of River Benue away from their kit and kin in Taraba State according to the Jukun was as a result of their occupation as fishermen. Findings from the study overtly portray that the definition, perceptions and attitudes, of *"significant other groups"* are relevant to identity construction and reconstruction.

An important aspect of the reconstruction/accentuation of their identity as well as significant other relations is the construction of social thought to give a social basis to their reconstructed identity as well as disparaging social thought to describe their subjection/ dominance interactions. Some of them are reported below:

> We call the Tiv *iyoolefume* meaning a wild animal in the bush. It is
> because of their behaviour. They do not have taboos with regards to
> anything. Our culture is a puritan culture. It is so pure and we don't
> like being polluted. That is why we feel bad when our children insist
> on getting married to them.
> Female IDI/60 yr old/ civil servant/Oju/June 2011

Likewise another says

> The Tiv people love meat so much that they can do anything for it. Our fathers told us that in the past, when we offered sacrifices to our gods using animals the Tiv would go and pick the raw meat from the altars of the gods and eat them. We consider this an abomination because we hold the gods in high esteem. They are the fathers of the land. So if one can eat the sacrifice we have offered to our gods thenthat person is capable of anything.
> Female KII/46 yr old/ lecturer /Oju/June 2011

Still another says

> Even though the Tiv will not admit it, in the past when they had visitors, they could give one of their wives to the visitors as a way of welcoming and entertainingthem. We regard this as an abomination and we cannot give our daughters to them so that they will be subjected to that kind of abominable treatment. As it is, any of our girls that gets married to them is always made to suffer some penalties so much that they wish they did not attempt it at all.
> Female FGD/40 yrs and above / Oju /June 2011

Also another says

> The Idomas like gossiping. They are not people to be trusted. Our fathers told us that on their way from Ora when they were running away from their enemies,they had to hide somewhere at *Edumoga* among the Idoma. Do you know that the Idoma people sent to the Ora people to tell them where we were hiding? As a result, the Ora people came after us and nearly killed us if not that we were smart enough to devise a strategy of digging pits and covering with grass into which the Ora fell headlong and were destroyed… so the Idoma are people we should be afraid of.
> Male KII/68 yr old/ elder /Oju /June 2011

According to another respondent,

> They think we are a minority so we are not given our proper place because of our number. Other ethnic groups see us as slaves, servants meant to work in their houses and as concubines, and we as an Igede nation cannot marry the Tiv because of their loose life. The Tiv and Idoma nations are selfish and self-centered who think of only themselves
> Male IDI/45 yr old/ youth leader/ Oju /June 2011

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In concert with this another respondent says

> We are from the same geographical area and so they want us to bear
> their name. They look down upon us politically and we cannot marry
> the Tiv people because of their lack of morals, also the Idoma their
> tradition is bad, they have no respect for widows and also they have
> the tradition of a girl giving birth for her father and the Igede people
> are not in support of such.
> Female FGD/18-30yrs/ Oju/June 2011

Also

> They are more in number than us and they look down on us. We
> cannot stand them in politics. When there is fight, they burn down our
> houses and chase us out. We speak a different language from the
> Idoma but they want us to be together… all the majority groups in
> Benue State look down on us.
> Female KII/45 youth leader /Oju /June 2011

Beyond these, the ethnic groups define and accentuate their culture as distinct as superior to

the culture of the others. Hence, a myriad of non-violent identity contest ensues. For

instance, the Tiv describe their culture as thus

> We are unique. The Tiv man is friendly and hospitable. We welcome
> people to our homes and we give food to people. We are farmers;
> strong physically and in character, hospitable and we speak with
> force. People accuse us that we give our wives to our visitors to sleep
> with. This is not true, our hospitality does not extend to that side. It is
> an attempt by other ethnic groups to paint us in a bad light.
> Male KII/37/ Lecturer/ Gboko/ July 2011

According to a respondent in the course of FGD,

> The Tiv man is proud, arrogant and great farmers. Way back then, the
> Tiv man used to have so many concubines and out of generosity when
> he had visitors, he usually gave the visitors his concubines to sleep
> with for the night….
> Female FGD /18 to 30yrs/Gboko//July 2011

Likewise another

> Tiv culture respect widows and they do not maltreat them and so
> other ethnic groups like us for that. The Tiv man is unique because of
> generosity and hard work, he invites people to share his food etc. the
> Tiv man is friendly and they produce a lot of yams…
> Male FGD/ 40yrs and above /Gboko/June 2011

While the Tiv describe the others as well as their relationship with them as:

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The other ethnic groups accept us but some are suspicious. The Idoma say that the Tiv are dominating. The Igede accept us. The Etulo used to be together with us but now they are trying to get their own identity
Male FGD/ 40yrs and above /Gboko/June 2011

In concert with him, another says

Some ethnic groups feel they are dominant and they want to dominate like the Idoma. They are always trying to dominate others. Personally, I will not want to have any other thing to do with the Idoma. They are so discriminatory. In areas of employment when a Tiv man is qualified for a job, they will rather take their brother than take the Tiv man who is more qualified. They do this even to other tribes that are closer to them than us. There is the fear of Tiv becoming more dominant to another person/tribe. The Idoma man does not like the Tiv man also the Etulo and the Jukun. The Tiv man is not wanted in any place in Nigeria. Looking back at the killings in Taraba, Nassarawa, Plateau and also Wurukum and also the destruction in Zaki Biam…
Male IDI/37/ Lecturer/ Gboko/ July 2011

Still another says;

The Idoma feel we are wicked people while the Etulo are friendly, the Jukun are troublesome and practise witchcraft. While the Igede keep to themselves.The Jukun and the Idoma are troublesome and I cannot marry them. The Jukun also practice witch craft. The Idoma too have no regard for widows…
Female FGD /18 to 30yrs/Gboko//July 2011

In the same way, the Idoma eulogise their culture and practices as superior while that of others are regarded in disparaging and derogatory terms.

According to a respondent,

The Idoma can be trusted   with public matters. Our language, culture attire makes us different from others. We are honest and trustworthy. We are predominantly farmers and brave people. Our people are open to all, quiet and love peace and are peaceful.
Male IDI/50/ politician / Otukpo / November 2011

Another also says

Our people believe so much in our culture and tradition. We have regard for our elders and we believe that those who engage in adultery or any immoral act will be caught by the *Alekwu.* We believe in onesess, we have our language and our traditional attire that emphasises our identity.

Also

> We see the Tiv as animals because they don't cooperate and they are partial. The Igede are simple, the Jukun and Etulo,we treat them like our brothers.
> Male FGD/ 40yrs and above /Otukpo /November 2011

Another further says:

> The Tiv people see us as people who are trying to match up with them so they try as much as possible to suppress us. The Igedeand the Jukun love us so we have no problem with them.
> Female KII/ 4 /Otukpo/November 2011

And

> Though we see other tribes as our brothers and sisters, we have quite a number of issues. Like the Tiv, their girls are very loose and an Idoma man sees marriage as sacred and has much more respect for that institution than any other institution. In that regard, marrying a Tiv girl is difficult because we see them as people without culture. The Igede like to circumcise their girls and an Idoma man likes sex so because of that I have my reservation when it comes to marrying them…
> Male FGD/ 40yrs and above /Otukpo /November 2011

Yet another respondent says

> The Tiv are very wicked and domineering. The Igede used to be close to us but now they seem not to accept us. The Jukun, I am afraid of them because we believe they are mermaids and witches and wizards. We and the Etulo, we are not that close. I don't have much to say about them.
> Female IDI / 60yrs/ former women leader /Otukpo /November 2011

Also the Igede describe their culture cum identity thus:

> The Igede people are hospitable, gentle, and receptive to themselves and to others friendly and hard working. They believe in honesty, justice and are highly moral people whether Christians or Muslims. A thing like armed robbery is hardly found among the Igede. Incest is highly detested. It is believed that if you engage in it your stomach will swell up or a snake will bite you. They don't believe in ritual killing. They give and mostly give to others more than their own

brothers. Other groups refer to us as Igede *Achichi* meaning what good can come out of Igede.

Male KII/ 60 /community leader /Oju November 2011

In concert, another says

As an ethnic group, we are highly moral people, faithful and intelligent. We are nice, hardworking, hospitable and welcoming.

Female FGD/ 40yrs and above /Oju / June 2011

This is in contrast with other ethnic groups whom they describe as

The Tiv are too domineering… They are very rude and vulgar. I can't marry Idoma because they don't take care of wives and they have no respect for widows. I can't marry Etulo because they are Tiv by heart. The Tiv people are people without culture and so it is a taboo to marry them. We see the Idoma as our enemies. The Tiv are *tribalistic*. The Idoma, their men and women are unfaithful in marriage. Fornication and adultery are rampant.

Female FGD/ 40yrs and above /Oju /June 2011

In concert with this, another says

I can't marry a Tiv girl because they don't have culture. I can marry Idoma if she is properly trained. I can't marry Jukun because I am afraid of them. I can't marry Etulo because I don't like them naturally and I see them as Tiv people. Also the Tiv have no regard for other people's culture and the Idoma are self-centered. The Jukun don't associate themselves with others. The Etulo don't know how to manage their homes well.

Male FGD/ 40yrs and above /Oju /2011

The Etulo also describe their identity thus:

Our language   is unique and different… we are honest and hospitable, hardworking, farmers and fishermen. We are highly moral people and this makes us different from other ethnic groups… we share names and words with our brothers from the Kwararafa kingdom…

Male FGD/ 40yrs and above /Adi/May 2011

Likewise, another respondent says

Our language is different from other languages, our cultural practices and our tradition, we are humble and kind…very trustworthy and hardworking.

Female FGD/ 18-39yr /Adi /May 2011

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Still another says

> Our language is unique and different. We are honest and hospitable, hardworking, farmers and fishermen. Our culture and tradition are different.
> Male IDI/ 40yr old/ lecturer /Adi/May 2011

The Etulo look at the identity of the other ethnic groups thus:

> We refer to the Idoma as *Amuwisa* which means people who take *Okoho*. We call the Tiv *Amichi* and also *Okushago* which means back of the hand. This implies that we should be careful when dealing with outsiders… for the Idoma; we call them *ofie* because we came from the Kwararafa kingdom. The Etulo and the Jukun are brothers.
> Male FGD/ 40yrs and above /Adi/May 2011

The Jukun also describe their identity thus:

> A Jukun man is hardworking and highly dedicated to his job. He is proud and sees himself as a king and that is why we usually have problem with the Tiv people because they are also proud and they try to look down on us but the Jukun man will never accept that. The Jukun are highly moralistic people and they have respect for elders. Our men make their hair and shave it in a particular way just like the Hausa-Fulani…
> Male IDI/ 55yr old/ civil servant /Abinsi/April 2011

While they describe the other ethnic groups thus:

> The Tiv man relates with us at an arm's length. The Idoma treat us like brothers except that the Idoma are very cunning. They do not come out to say they are your brothers. If given the opportunity, he betrays you we do not see the Idoma doing anything for us. They are in government but don't help us. The Etulo see us as their brothers.
> Male IDI/ 50 yr old/ lecturer Abinsi i/April 2011

According to another respondent,

> We don't like the traditional way of marriage of the Tiv. You get married to a woman and continue to pay dowry. When I give birth, you ask for goat, pig. That is why we Jukun don't like marrying the Tiv.
> Male IDI/ 35/ Mechanic /Adi/April 2011

Still another says

> We call the Tiv *Amishi* which means come and sit, they are strangers.
> Sometimes we say why you are sitting like a Tiv man [when someone
> is not sitting well]. We do not marry Tiv because of their way of life
> especially among the Jukun living around the airport area. You cannot
> see any Jukun married to Tiv women. We only befriend them. Your
> mother will cry throughout the day if you say you want to marry a Tiv
> girl. Marrying Tiv is like an abomination.
> Male FGD/ 40yrs and above /Abinsi /April 2011

Social thought is critical to identity construction as seen in the discussion of identityand social thought. The construction of disparaging social thought here is aimed at reifying the meanings they have made in the course of interaction with he ethnic groups. These social thoughts are aimed as further entrenching in members of the ethnic groups the 'otherness' of the other ethnic groups. Similarly, among the *significant other groups,*is a dominant identity while the other minority groups have a notion of an enslaved, subjected and dominated identity.

Findings in this section show that significant other groups are relevant to the construction and reconstruction of identity among ethnic groups in Benue State. The Hausa-Fulani composite groups were the first *significant other groups* whose perceptions as well as actions influenced the construction of a Middle-Belt identity. With the creation of Benue State, Tiv and Idoma became the significant other groups whose identities influenced the reconstruction of identities of the other 'minority' ethnic groups. The place of significant other groups in identity construction is critical. *Significant other groups* are not fixed, they are as open-ended as the society, becomes increasing differentiated and groups continue to interact. The data in this section also show that *significant other groups* are not just other ethnic groups within the social environment of the ethnic groups in question. *Significant other groups* also refer to more dominant and/or contesting ethnic groups within the social environment of the ethnic groups in question. Dominance here is defined by majority in terms of population as access to and control of the centre of valued resources in the society. The designation as significant other groups also enjoys reconstruction. It is a designation or construction that is open-ended. A possibility exists that among the ethnic groups, other groups see themselves as enslaved and marginalised within the ethnic groups and are beginning to redefine their identity as distinct though within the ethnic groups. For instance, among the Etulo is another group presently called Nyfon who have emerged from the group and have redefined their identity as

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distinct from the Etulo. To this group, Etulo may be the *significant other group* whose perception and actions may be influencing the construction of a Nyifon identity. Also among the Igede is a group called *Anyaboga* that has reconstructed their identity as distinct and is competing for access to resources and power within the Igede ethnic group. *Significant other* definition is as fluid and open-ended as identity construction and reconstructions continue to take place in the society. Findings from the study overtly show that the definitions, perceptions, judgment and actions of significant other groups are relevant to the construction and reconstruction of identity.

6.2 Identity Construction and Development Projects

Identity construction can be used as a tool to access development projects. The desirability of an identity is its ability to provide security, social status and economic benefits to members of the social group (Emiov 2007). Access to resources over time, has been one of the basis for the construction and reconstruction of identities particularly in North-Central Nigeria as well as among minority ethnic groups (Alubo 2009, 2006 &2004, Best 2006, Ikelegbe 2005, Obi 2001, Ejobowah 2000). This is linked to the fact that access and control of resources in the Nigerian state is based on identity. An individual's identity as a Nigerian which is also based on his citizenship of an ethnic group, qualifies one to benefit from resources in the Nigerian state. This benefit depends on the strength of one's identity relationship to the centre. Although the constitution, in principle, spells equality for all Nigerians, access and control of resourcesare dependent on the strength of one's identity's relationship to the centre. Identity therefore is a critical issue in terms of access to valued development resources in the society. Findings from the study reflect the fact that identity construction is used to attract development projects through facilitators and through the platform of self-help/community development associations.

The Tiv, in the course of interviews, portray the fact that attracting development projects to Tiv land has been relatively easy because since the creation of the State, they have always produced the Governor, the Speaker of the Benue State House of Assembly and a large number of Permanent Secretaries, Commissioners and other political office holders. These political office holders act as facilitators who are able to influence the siting of particular projects to their areas. This is shown in the responses below:

> We have our sons and daughters in government so they are able to
> attract projects to our place. For instance, Benue State has

threeuniversities and they are all sited in Tiv land. I know it is because our people are in government that these projects are sited there.
Female KII/ 65yr old/ retired civil servant/

Another interviewee also says

It actually varies from community to community. We the Tiv believe that if your brother is on the *Ipungo* tree [a kind of fruit], you should eat the ripe one. Various communities approach their sons in government to site projects in their communities. Some have been able to get roads, renovation of schools and hospitals…
Male FGD/ Gboko/ 40 yrs and above/ July 2011

Another respondent says

We the Tiv are the largest ethnic group in Benue State and even in the middle belt. We always produce the Governor, Speaker, and other major positions in the State. With these people in Government, they can site vital projects in our place apart from that, they can also influence employment of our indigenes and the placing of Tiv indigenes in various boards either at the State orFederal level.
Male KII/67/ Lecturer/ Gboko/ July 2011

Likewise another says

We also make efforts to ensure our people are in government and other federal boards and agencies. Besides, that there are quotas assigned to the State and they are shared on the basis of the senatorial zones. When one is made a member of the board or is appointed in a capacity of a minister, it is regarded as an appointment for Tiv people. This means the person has to ensure that he attracts federal presence to the State. We expect such people to remember their people because they were put in the position because of the people. Through such appointments, we have been able to get facilities such as light, water, road culverts, and boreholes. It's a pity that these days many of these people go there and forget their people. We only see them when it is time for election.
Male case study /69/ politician / Gboko/ July 2011

This shows that projects are attracted through their representatives in government. These representatives in government are elected based on their identity/ethnic group. These government officials are expected by their people to attract projects to their places of origin. So having a representative in government, in a way, is synonymous to having access/control of valued resources in the society. In essence, identity construction and reconstruction can be used to create a platform for recognition of identity through which development resources such as infrastructural facilities can be assessed.

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The identity of the Middle-Belt was more or less an abstract identity that did not create a platform for access to resources because there were over a hundred ethnic groups but the reconstruction as well as accentuation of Tiv identity has created a platform for recognition as well as access to resources.The State creation, which was an aftermath of the Middle-Belt agitation, gave the Tiv the position of the majority and dominant ethnic group and as a result,they could mobilise this identity to attract development resources to their area. Furthermore, Benue State has three senatorial zones of A, B and C. Two of these zones are predominantly Tiv while zone C is home to the Idoma and Igede ethnic groups. The table below further explains this.

Table 6.3 Showing the Senatorial Zoning in Benue State

S/n	Senatorial zone	Local Governments in the Zone	Ethnic Groups within the Local Governments
1	A	Buruku, Kastina/ala, konshisha, Kwande, Logo, Ukum, Ushongo and Vandeikya	Predominantly Tiv, some clans of Etulo in Kastina/ Ala and Buruku Local Government Area
2	B	Gboko, Guma, Gwer, Gwer-East, Makurdi and Tarka	Predominantly Tiv but the Jukuns are found in Abinsi District of Guma Local Government Area
3	C	Ado, Agatu, Apa, Obi, Ogbadibo, Ohimini, Okpokwu, Otukpo and Oju	Predominantly idoma with the Igede in two Local Governments of Oju and Obi

This brings to the fore the place of identity in access to responsibilities, rights and resources.

Also among the Idoma, development projects have been attracted to the Idoma through facilitation by government as well as political office holders of Idoma extraction as evidenced in the following responses. According to an Idoma interviewee:

> Though the Tiv have succeeded in siting many projects in their place because they have always controlled the apparatus of government, our sons and daughters in government have also helped in siting various projects in Idoma land. For instance, through the influence of our Senator David Mark, Otukpo has one of the best digital telephone lines in Nigeria. Today, there is a National Open University centre in Otukpo even though Otukpo is not the State headquarters.
> Male IDI/ Otukpo/ 45yr old trader/ November 2011

Also

> We have had directors, permanent secretaries, commissioners from Idoma land. In fact, every local government produces one. These people are able to attract projects to their areas. Some used their position to renovate schools, repair roads and even open transport services to their area.
> Female FDG/ Otukpo/ 39 Yrs and above/November 2011

Responses from the Igede also portray the fact that some development projects have been sited in the Igede area through facilitation by Igede sons and daughters who hold positions in government. The following data also attest to this. According to an Igede interviewee,

> There was a time when an Igede woman was in charge of the Benue Rural Water and Sanitation Scheme (BERWASA). Her position in that organisation was of immense benefit to the Igede as she facilitated the drilling of boreholes in many communities in Igede. Because she was in position, many Igede communities wrote proposals and made minimal contributions which were used to drill the boreholes. Even individuals were able to drill boreholes for personal use
> Female FGD/ Oju/ 18—39yrs / 7th September 2011

Another interviewee states that

> It is easier to appeal for a project to your place when you have your son or daughter in government. Right now, we have a Commissioner from Oju. So we came together and paid him a visit to remind him about his people and the need for light in our place. He promised to help. Some communities have already started enjoying the light. Also, when our son Professor Ojowu became Economic Adviser during the civilian regime… through his influence the road linking Oju to Cross

River was graded. Though the work is not yet complete, it has helped to link communities that had very bad roads and could only be accessible through foot paths….

Male KII/ 70 Year village head / Oju / 7th September

Among the Etulo during a case study interview a respondent says

When I was in government, I influenced the completion of the health centre which we had built through communal effort and was dying…I was the Permanent Secretary during the Family Support Programme. I was able to sensitise our people to form cooperatives through which they accessed a lot of funds from the programme. I wanted to do more but I did not last long in that position. I was even retired before I was due….

Male Case Study/ Adi Etulo/69 yr old retired civil servant/ June 2011

Another Etulo discussant also states

Right now we have a Permanent Secretary in this government. He is building a hotel in the area which we believe will help in the area of tourism. We have the *Akata* fishing festival every year. With the building of the hotel, those who come from far and wide for the fishing festival will have a place to stay in Etulo land as against the former practice where they went back to stay in Gboko or Kastina/ala

Female FGD/ Adi Etulo/ 18- 39years old/ June 2011

In a departure from the experiences of the other ethnic groups, responses from the Jukun show that attracting development through facilitation has been difficult. Their best bet has been communal effort. The views of the following respondents attest to this.

The highest position we have ever had in any government since the creation of Benue State was the General Manager of Benue State Urban Development Board. Our son was there for 8 years but could not attract any development project to his people. He was so handicapped and tied down that he could not even employ a labourer… He was actually appointed during a military regime which lasted only for a year before the civilians took over. In fact, his continual stay in government was political. He was used to down play the fact that the Jukun were being marginalised. Especially during our crises with the Tiv, they used him to prove to President Obasanjo that the Jukun were not being marginalised. At the tail end of the regime he was made a Special Adviser and that led to his death, career wise. Today, he has no house of his own and drives a rickety car….. We decided to go to the Federal level to appeal to T.Y Danjuma who is also a Jukun from Taraba State. We asked him for chiefdom because our cultures are different from the Tiv. He promised but did not do anything about it. We have also tried reaching the present Minister for

commerce and industry who is a Jukun from Taraba State but he does
not want to see us…..
 Male IDI/ Abinsi/ 55yr old civil servant/ August 2011

Through facilitators who are usually highly placed government officials or political office holders, ethnic groups are able to attract development projects to their area. The case of the Jukun presents a situation where a particular facilitator may be handicapped because of his status as a minority as the fact that he has to play along with the dominant group to retain his position in government. The researcher witnessed his plight as a visit to his present office shows that though he occupies the office of the Assistant Director, he has to share his ill equipped office with another officer. Also during the course of the interview, he was careful not to speak against the Tiv because his career still depends on them. Furthermore, he may have lost the loyalty of his people as a respondent in the course of FGD had this to say

> We do not understand him. Whether he was bewitched or whether he is not alright we do not know. He came out of that office with nothing. No house, a rickety car, to date he is not married even though he is close to 50. Abi he is not alright…That man just went and disgraced the Jukun when he was in office. Allah he will regret. He went there and did not even do anything for his people.
> Male FGD/ Abinsi/ 18 to 39 years/ May 2011

Beyond the use of facilitators to attract development projects, findings from the study show that ethnic groups attract development through contributions on the platform of self-help and community development organisations. All the ethnic groups have such organisations. It is important to note that community development organisation is a basic feature of most ethnic groups in the middle belt. Right from the eve of independence where ethnic groups created umbrella organisation to protect and emphasise their identities, community or ethnic associations have remained. However, the situation today in most ethnic groups is such that almost every village or clan has a development/self-help association which now comes together under the umbrella association. Hence among the Tiv, the *Mzough u Tiv* meaning mutual union of Tiv or the coming together of Tiv is the umbrella body. Responses during the interviews point to the fact that various community development associations have been able to site Projects such as culverts, building of schools and markets.

> What *Mzough u Tiv* has done is to renovate the Tiv Traditional Council Chambers so as to give it a befitting status. The Union has also offered scholarships to undergraduates in tertiary institutions. But

at various community levels, people have been able to grade roads leading to their villages, build markets and even established savings and loan schemes to help the members.

Male FGD/ 39yrs and above/ July 2011

Among the Idoma is an Idoma National Forum which has been in the forefront of the agitation for the creation of ApaState. Like the Tiv, the Idoma have various communal and self-help organisations through which members are able to initiate communal development. A key informant's view further buttresses this:

Most of the people you see here are not from Otukpo so they belong to their village, clan or local government development associations. Through these associations, we make contributions that can bring about development. For instance in my community association, we have been able to erect a market, build culverts. To end water scarcity, we also drilled a bore hole where people pay 5 naira before they fetch. This is to raise money for maintenance… Idoma National Forum was formed in 1989 to protect the interests of the Idoma both at the state and national level. We are there to ensure unity in Idoma land. The most important project we have on hand is project ApaState. We have been agitating for it and will not stop until it is created…

Male KII/ 65 yr old/ Otukpo/ November 2011

The Igede on the platform of the Igede Development Association have been able to build a secondary school through the contribution of members. This school is presently being maintained through contributions made by the members. Findings from the study also show that various clans and villages have communal self-help associations through which contributions from members initiate self-help projects. The responses below further buttress the issues discussed above.

The *OminyiIgede* actually existed as Igede Development Association in the past. Through the association we were able to contribute money to build a secondary school at Ibilla.

Female Case Study/ 65yrs/ Oju/ 29th September 2011

According to another interviewee,

We were also able to win an international NGO to our land. The NGO is called partners for development. Today, we have a road and a culvert leading to *Ohirigwe* community. The project cost well above 16 million naira. On the platform of the development association we were able to appeal to them to help us with the road which they did…..

Male IDI/ leader of Development Association/ Oju/ 5th September 2011

Likewise, the Etulo have a development association on whose platform they have been able to initiate development projects. The following responses further prove this:

> When it was obvious we were being neglected we had to come together to do something about our lives. By 1971 &1972, we were able to establish a postal service at Adi. That gave us a positive identity. We raised money for the postal service. We were able to bring electricity to our community. Adi was the first place that electricity was stepped down in 1976. We made culverts, roads so that Adi market could be accessible. A primary and a secondary school were built. I even helped to conduct interviews in the school. We built a clinic but government took over the clinic and modernised it.
> Female KII/ 65 yr old retired civil servant/ Adi Etulo/ 16th June 2011

Another also says

> We have an association where we make personal contributions. The community effort brought the post office, schools and health centre
> Male IDI/65yr old trader/ Adi Etulo / 17th June 2011

The Jukun in the course of the interviews, point to a secondary school which have they been able to construct through contributions on the platform of Jukun Development Association. This, according to the responses, was based on the fact that they had been neglected by the government.

> The Jukun development association was formed for the sole purpose of bringing development to Abinsi. When it became obvious to us that we were being consciously neglected by the government… Through the formation of this association, we were able to contribute money to build a secondary school in Abinsi. There is no government secondary school till date in Abinsi. The one we built is the only one …
> Male KII/ Abinsi/ 69yrs/ May 12th 2011

Also another says

> We have a community secondary school built through community effort. Through the Jukun Development Association we were able to build the school… we are making effort to build a clinic since the government has neglected us. The one in Abinsi is the dispensary the colonialists left that is being renovated for use. We have decided that every Jukun will contribute 500 naira. With that we should be able to build a good hospital and even train some of our children to become medical doctors so that they can man the hospital.
> Male KII/ Makurdi/ 55yr old leader of development association/ May 29th 2011

Findings from the study reflect the fact that identity construction can be used to attract development projects through platforms created my development associations, networking, patronage as well as facilitations. Identities are political resources, just like money and votes, as well as social capital that different groups bring to bear on the political negotiation table in exchange for development projects, political appointments and positions as well as wealth (Kalu 2004).

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

Identity construction is about meanings in relation to social existence. It is an integral part of the objectifications of daily life which emerges from the exchange of subjectivities by individuals and groups but later acts back on the groups as though they were not involved in its creation. Its construction is a social process that cuts and influences group interaction. It is very salient in social interaction because it defines individuals and groups, their placement, status as well as access to valued resources in the society. It is fluid, open-ended, as groups continue to interact and exercise their subjective consciousness and persists irrespective of whether the people so-defined accept the definition or not. It has enjoyed recurrence in North-Central Nigeria, particularly Benue State where this research was conducted with an essentially qualitative methodology to examine the dynamics and social relations of its construction among ethnic groups.

Findings from the study reflect that the ethnic groups create social thought in form of oral histories, songs and wise sayings, to reify their identities, which were created through their interactions with their physical and social environment. This physical and social environment includes their geographical location, significant other groups, government, colonial records etc. Ethnic groups, in essence construct, reconstruct, emphasise and contest identities through reifying their experiences in form of social thought. These social thought, though seemingly every day common stories, are actually ways by which ethnic groups create who they are, communicate and emphasise whom they are within and without their ethnic groups.The study also established that festivals, which were hitherto regarded as avenues for recreation and relaxations, are tools of identity construction as the ethnic groups used these to create, recreate and accentuate their identities to members and *significant other groups*within their environment.

The social thought of the five ethnic groups examined, also reveal subjection-dominance issues as well as identity contests. The social thought of the majority groups of Idoma and Tiv reveal an identity of dominance and a concerted effort to assimilate the other ethnicities under their identities while the identityand social thought of the three other minorities ethnic groups of Igede, Etulo and Jukun reveal an effort to accentuate their identities as distinct from the majority ethnic groups. Their identities and social thought here reveal identity contests

between the majority and the minority ethnic groups. Their social thought also brings to light the place of language in identity construction.

Ethnic groups reify their constructed identities through the instrumentality of language. Language provides a medium through which reality is shared. The objectifications of everyday life are created and maintained by linguistic significations. An understanding of language is thus essential for understanding social reality as well as identity. On the whole, their identities and social thought reveal that identity is constructed and communicated through language and this social thought on the other hand, serves as a social basis for the constructed identity.

Identity construction among ethnic groups in Benue State progressed from indigenous identity to the imposition of a northern identity and a pagan identity, to construction of a Middle Belt identity and subsequently the emphasis on distinct ethnic identities. The ethnic groups in Benue State historically existed as distinct nations/cultural groups in the southern half of what was historically called the Northern protectorate, while the Hausa existed in the Northern half of the protectorate. The Fulani jihad led by Uthman Dan Fodio, homogenised the different Hausa state, and created a social structure which gave birth to the Hausa-Fulani composite group. The colonisation process subsequently homogenised all the ethnic groups in Benue State along with over 100 others as well as the Hausa-Fulani under the identity of Northern.

The imposed Northern identity was further divided into two distinct identities of a superior and intelligent Hausa-Fulani and an inferior and backward pagan identity. The pagan identity was used to describe the non-Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups in the Northern protectorate and it connoted backwardness, savagery, barbarism and primitiveness which could only be addressed by *islamisation*, westernisation and or *christianisation*. Furthermore, under the pagan identity, there were sophisticated pagans and unsophisticated pagans. The pagan identity was resisted as the pagan ethnic groups reconstructed their identities initially to indigenous and subsequently, a collective resistant Middle Belt identity. This identity existed and began to suffer a breakdown after independence in 1960 as the ethnic groups began to reconstruct their identities away from the Middle Belt towards the emphasis on distinct ethnic identities. This process was influenced by dominance/subjection issues, contests for control and access to resources, colonisation, *paganisation*, provincial arrangement, the imposition of

Hausa-Fulani social structure as well as government policies such as *northernisation* and state creation.

The study also brought to light the fact that identity construction was spearheaded by individuals or groups of individuals who possess charisma as well as an ability to convince the people of the danger of accepting the imposed identity as against the new identity being constructed. Among the ethnic groups in Benue State, findings from the study reveal two major spearheads at the level of individuals as well as five cultural organisations at the level of groups.

Ogbiloko an Igede traditional physician spearheaded identity construction among the Igede in the late 1920s where he challenged the imposition of taxes as well as the Hausa-Fulani identity cum social structure by the British colonialists. He physically confronted the colonialists and this led to a rebellion among the Igede which was consequently visited with a year-long patrol by the British, showing the fact that identity construction involves conflict. This conflict is predicated on the fact that there are two or more conflicting interests in the construction of identity. As one party or actor tries to impose the other resists. So conflict is consequently perpetual as identity construction is open-ended.

J.S Tarka emerged in the 1940s-50s to spearhead the Middle Belt identity. Unlike Ogbiloko, who spearheaded at the platform of an ethnic group, Tarka agitated for the existence of a Middle-Belt state as a way of creating space for expression for the pagan ethnic groups. At the time Tarka emerged, independent ethnic reconstructions were no longer strong enough to resist the imposed identity hence the spearheading of a collective identity. This shows the role of place, space and time in identity construction.

Virtually all the five ethnic groups witnessed the emergence of cultural organisations to spearhead their distinct identities. Consequently, there was the Tiv progressive union, Idoma Hope Rising Union, Igede Development Association, Etulo Cultural and Development Community as well as Jukun Development Association. Among these, the TPU and IHRU emerged during the colonial era to spearhead the reconstruction of the identity of the ethnic groups from the barbaric light in which it had been constructed by the colonialists. The other three emerged in the post-independence to spearhead the identity of their ethnic groups away from the dominant identities of Tiv and Idoma further showing that time, space and place are critical to identity construction. The TPU and IHRU eventually united with other ethnic unions to form the UMBC which was the organisational platform for the articulation of the

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constructed middle belt identity. On the whole, identity construction is spearheaded by charismatic individuals or groups of individuals. The character and composition of the spearheads change as the need for a new identity arose.

Significant other groups are relevant to identity construction as their actions and perceptions can influence identity construction and reconstruction. Three significant other groups emerged in the course of the study. These were the Hausa-Fulani, Tiv and Idoma. Their judgements, perceptions, actions and inactions influenced the reconstruction of identities of the other ethnic groups. At the creation of the Northern Protectorate and consequent colonisation, the Hausa-Fulani was the significant other group in relation to all the other ethnic groups in the Southern half of the protectorate. The identities of all the other groups were constructed in relation to the Hausa-Fulani. The ethnic groupsthus resisted their definition in relation to the Hausa-Fulani. Hausa-Fulani remained the significant other group until the creation of Benue State, where the Tiv and Idoma emerged as the significant other groups. The other ethnic groups began to reconstruct their identities based on the dominance of the Tiv and the Idoma and so, violent and nonviolent contests emerged as part of the process of these reconstructions. So, dominance/subjection interactions and perceptions of inferiority/superiority among significant other groups are dynamics that can influence the construction and reconstruction of identity.

Identity construction can also be a tool to appeal for development projects from government as well as collective communal effort. Ethnic groups used identity construction to create a platform of difference and also to contest and appeal for access to the centre as well as valued resources in the society. The ethnic groups achieved this through the creation of socio-cultural organisations. Virtually all the ethnic groups had social cultural organisations whothat mobilised the members of the ethnic groups to appeal for development through communal effort or appeals to the government. Ethnic groups also achieved this through the recreation and accentuation of their identity which created a platform for access to government offices or positions through which such representatives in government are able to influence the siting of some development projects in their areas. Ethnic groups were able to use identity construction as a tool for accessing valued resources through appeals to government on the platform of development associations, as well as facilitation by members of the ethnic groups who are highly placed government officials.

Identity construction among ethnic groups in Benue State is dependent on the social construction of dominance and access to development. As soon as a group creates an identity and it is recognised and can attract development, there will be new agitations within that group and other identities will emerge. Ethnic groups in Benue State comprise of other multiple identities within them and these emerge when the people perceived they are being marginalised or excluded. Among the Idoma, some of the dialects like Akweya and Ufia are increasingly being recognised as ethnic groups even though they were hitherto regarded as Idoma. Likewise among the Etulo, the Nyfon as another group has emerged. News is relayed in these dialects/languages even after it is relayed in Idoma. Identity construction is an ongoing process. Once a particular identity gets stabilised, new identities emerge to contest for space, resources as well as recognition.

Identity construction is, in essence, an open-ended process which involves self (group) consciousness reacting upon a given social structure to maintain, modify or reshape it. It can be influenced by individuals and group perception and subjective interpretations of the actions and inactions of *significant other* groups. Identity construction is also a tool for suppression and resistance as well as emphasising the *otherness* of the other and it is also a tool that creates a platform for access to rights, opportunities and valued goods in the society. Its utility value is influenced by time and place and space and it can be reconstructed as long as social groups exercise their subjective consciousness. There is no one fixed identity that cannot be changed. And the process of this change usually involves conflict between the ethnic group and the "other/others". Consequently, conflict is perpetual and inevitable, as identity construction remains as open-ended as histories and social order.

It is important to note that conflict will always be recurrent in the society because ethnic groups will always continue to construct and reconstruct identity. To understand the dynamics of ethnic conflict, the dynamics of identity construction and reconstruction will have to be understood. The Nigerian State has a very strong "centre" where recourses are accessed and shared on the basis of identity. Access to this centre is usually on the basis of ethnic identification which explains why identity construction among ethnic groups is recurrent. Ethnic groups reconstruct their identities so as to have a platform of difference that can guarantee access to the centre. As long as there are goods to be shared, identities will always be constructed. We should not expect an end to identity construction and conflict. As long as there are goods to be shared, identities will always be constructed to gain access to this centre and conflict will always be part of this process.

Identity construction appears to be a phenomenon that the NigerianState and Benue State in particular, will have to live with. In the future, the present clans in some of the ethnic groups may become ethnic groups contesting for access to the centre. The end product of this is the recurrence of conflict and a consistent pull from the things that "bind us together" to the "things that make us different" with reference to the Nigerian State as a whole. Ethnicity today is a huge movement that enjoys the loyalty of many Nigerians. Since resources are the reasons for the recurrence of identity construction, it is important for government to ensure that there is equitable distribution of resources. A long term measure however, will be a reconstruction of the Nigerian State in terms of regions andand so,people should be allowed to embark on indigenous development within their regions. Ethnic groups will also have to be sensitised to use identity construction positively to enhance the expansion of indigenous self-help projects. Identity construction should not just be aimed at accessing the centre. It should be used as social capital for the design and implementation of development projects. Identity construction can be a tool that ethnic groups can use to emphasise their uniqueness not just for access to state resources but to emphasise their uniqueness in terms of the conception and implementation of development projects within their locality.

This research, at the level of theory, confirms the assertion of the constructionist that identity is socially constructed and is as open-ended as individuals continue to interact. It also, in the larger development discourse, refutes the modernisation methodology or path to development. The modernisation school of thought adopts a top down approach to development where the core controls the periphery andas a result, the periphery has to adjust in line with the core. This school of development emphasises the place of the centre in the development of the society. The adoption of this method in Nigeria(where Nigeria has a strong centre) is the reason for the many top-down approaches to development that have failed over the years. Many times, development from the top is about what is to be shared and not what the people need. But if there are no core/periphery relations or a centre of control, groups would be able to evolve their own indigenous development strategies to make life better and more meaningful for them instead of depending and contesting fiercely for access to the centre.

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INTERVIEW/ DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR (KII, FGD AND IDI)

1   indigenous social thought depicting indigenous ethnic identity

What is the nature of the social thought depicting indigenous identity?

Probe for

   a) Their origin/ progenitor

   b) History of migrations, areas they settled(including their relationship with the people in the areas they settled), contests and conquests.

   c) Their practices, values, beliefs and philosophy of life.

   d) Proverbs songs idioms depicting distinct identity.

   e) Nature of their relationship with other ethnic groups.

   f) What makes them different from other ethnic groups.

   g) Why they think they are different from other ethnic groups.

   h) Why they are emphasising their identity.

   i) What they do to emphasise their identity.

   j) Groups that may have broken away from the larger ethnic group.

   k) Reasons for their breaking away.

1   The social dynamics of identity construction and reconstruction

What are the social dynamics of identity construction and reconstruction?

Probe for

   a) How identity related changed have occurred in terms of ethnic identity creation.

   b) How identities have been constructed in the middle belt.

   c) Probe for social indices that may have informed the changes.

   d) Why identities have been constructed and reconstructed among them.

   e) Events that may have led to the reconstruction.

2 Find out who spearheads identity construction and reconstruction

Who spearheads identity construction and reconstruction?

   a) Probe for individuals or groups that may have influenced the construction of their identity

   b) Find out if their ethnic group was historically part of any ethnic group.

c) Probe for events that may have informed the construction of a distinct ethnic identity

d) Probe for the process through which they are reconstructing their identity

e) Probe for any persons or groups within the ethnic group that have influenced the reconstruction of identity

f) Probe for Persons they feel they owe the identity of the ethnic group to or persons they eulogise as being the ideal description of their ethnic group

g) Probe for possible reasons why they eulogise these people

3 The relevance of significant other groups in the construction and reconstruction of identity.

What is relevance of significant other groups to the construction and reconstruction of identity?

Probe for

a) Their perceptions about other ethnic groups.

b) Perception about other ethnic groups dominance and subjection.

c) Whether there is any group they feel is dominant.

d) Specific examples in relation to C.

e) Any groups they may be resisting to have independent identity.

f) What they think other groups think of them.

g) What they think of other groups.

h) specific examples of how they have been dominated and subjected.

i) Social reality of domination and subjection that may have informed reconstruction of identity.

j) Specific examples in relation to I.

4 How identity construction is used to attract development projects.

How is identity construction used to attract development?

Probe for

a) How they utilize their identity to attract development projects from the state.

b) How they utilize their identity to initiate development projects through communal effort.

c) The processes involved in the utilization of identity to initiate communal projects.

d) The processes involved in attracting development projects from the state.

e) Give examples of specific projects initiated or attracted through appeal to ethnic identity.

f) Their views about the projects.

CASE STUDY / ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW GUIDE

A   give general bio data

Probe for

        a) Pre colonial oral history.

        b) Experience of colonialism , post colonialism till date.

        c) How they were able to construct their identity.

        d) Whether there were/are any contesting groups.

        e) What they have been doing to sustain their identity.

        f) How they have attracted development projects by emphasising their identity.