

The Nigeria Police Force: An institutional ethnography

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

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St Cross College, October 2012

I hereby certify that this thesis is the result of my own work except where otherwise indicated and due acknowledgement is given.

Signed

Abstract

This thesis is an institutional ethnography of the Nigeria Police Force. It concentrates on evidence from 18 months of fieldwork in one particular police station, in the pseudonymised town of Dutsin Bature in central Nigeria, and draws comparative evidence from examples and locations elsewhere in Nigeria. The fieldwork evidence is also supported by analyses of public discourse, literature reviews, some formal interviews and historical research.

The thesis aims to fill a gap in empirical scholarship by looking at policing in Nigeria primarily from the level of everyday practice, and deriving understandings of the ways the overall system works, rather than by taking normative structural approaches and basing suppositions of actual behaviour upon these. It also aims to document emic perspectives on policing in Nigeria, in contrast to most existing scholarship and public discourse which takes an external perspective, from which the voices and worldviews of police themselves are absent.

The thesis situates this ethnography within three theoretical terrains. First, developing understandings of policing and public security in Africa, which have often neglected in-depth studies of formal police forces. Secondly, enlarging the ethnographic study of formal institutions in African states, to develop a closer understanding of what state systems are and how they function, beyond the overtly dysfunctionalist perspectives which have dominated recent scholarship. Thirdly, informing ongoing debates over state and society in Africa, problematising understandings which see these as separate entities instead of mutually constitutive, and drawing attention to the ways in which the two interpenetrate and together mould the public sphere.

The thesis begins with a historical overview of the trajectory of formal policing in Nigeria, then examines public understandings and representations of policing, before moving inside the institutional boundaries, considering in turn the human composition of the police, training and character formation, the way police officers do their work in Dutsin Bature, Nigerian police officers' preoccupation with risk and the systemic effects of their efforts to mitigate it, and finally officers' subjective perspectives on their work, their lived realities, and on Nigeria in an era of transition. These build together to suggest some conclusions pertinent to the theoretical perspectives.

Papa Die Yesterday

Papa die yesterday
And dem give us compensation.
Papa die yesterday
Na armed robber kill am.

Papa die yesterday
After ten year work for force.
Di suffer papa for suffer for life,
Armed robber wipe dat commot.

Papa die yestertlay
Him gratuity not for talk.
Di suffer we suffer wen he die,
No pass de one wen he dey.

Papa die yesterday
Dem pay we five hundred
Dem make fine speech
And commot us from quarters.

Sufferhead man sufferhead man
Wetin dey sweet you for belleh?
If armed robber no kill you,
Na poverty go finish you.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been a while in the making and a lot of people have helped along the way. First I'd like to thank the ESRC for the scholarship that enabled the research, and a further grant for an Overseas Institutional Visit to Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, where I began writing up. The Institute of Social and Cultural and Wolfson College's Lienhardt Fund also provided funding for an initial fieldwork visit. The Inspector-General of the Nigeria Police Force kindly permitted my research, which was enabled by 'F' Department at Force Headquarters. The British Council's Security, Justice and Growth programme facilitated my access. OAU Ife's Department of History hosted me in Nigeria and took on my immigration responsibilities.

In Oxford Dr David Pratten has been an engaged and hugely supportive supervisor from the beginning. Drs Raufu Mustapha, Paul Dresch, Fernanda Pirie and Jonny Steinberg gave helpful critiques in PRS and confirmation examinations. At ISCA, Harvey Whitehouse, David Gellner and Robert Parkin all helped to develop us as anthropologists; Vicky Dean sorted out more things than I can count. Morag McCormick-Power put a friendly face to the ESRC's procedures. Paul, Tony and Anne in the lodge made me feel welcome at St Cross College. David Anderson, Nic Cheeseman and Wanja Knighton among others made me feel part of the African Studies Centre. Thanks to Tony Kirk-Greene, Chukwudum Ikeazor and the Nigeria Police Association for linking me to so many NPF veterans, including the late Edward Eates.

In Nigeria, the staff of SJG, especially Dr Bob Arnot and Dr Muhammad Umar, opened so many opportunities for me, and special thanks are due to Professor Debra Willoughby, who taught me exactly how not to be judgemental. In the Nigeria Police Force, the community policing team at NPF Force Headquarters and across Nigeria were open, helpful and supportive beyond the call of duty and continue to be so; the anonymity condition prevents me thanking them all in person. So many other officers of the NPF pointed me down the road; I tried to listen carefully and I apologise for where I have got it wrong. CLEEN Foundation's Innocent Chukwuma and Kemi Okenyodo (nee Asiwaju), and Professor Ettanibi Alemika at UNIJOS were also very helpful.

Thanks to all past and present staff of the Centre for Democracy and Development for making space for me, and for bringing me to Nigeria in the first place; especially to Dr J. 'Kayode Fayemi, and to current director Dr Jibrin Ibrahim, also Morten Hagen, Dr Ike Okonta (in Oxford

as well), and Dr Otiye Igbuzor. Raf, MamaTee, Uche Idoko, Nengak Daniel all made it more fun.

In Abuja and outside, Jeremy Weate, Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, Simon Gusah, Chris Newsom, Will Connors, Ellie Sandercock, Andrew Walker, Abiola Sanusi and Esohe Iyamu shared a journey trying to make sense of dis Naija life. Tunde Afolabi, Mohammed Ibrahim, Egghead Odewale, Mike Utsaha, John Ikubaje have been there throughout. Chuka Mordi, Cosanna Preston, Lucky Idedia, Giles Omezi, Tunde Williams, Hassan Na'ungo, the late and much missed Usman Umar, all provided welcomes and reasons to travel. Rudi Gaudio and Ridwan Siddiqi, flatmates in successive years, were advisors in Nigerian anthropology and Indian cooking respectively, and were great companions and friends who introduced me to sides of Nigeria I would never have seen.

In 'Dutsin Bature', thanks to the successive Commissioners of 'Gida State', and the officers of the State Command; most especially to the person who appears in this study as ASP Patricia Jibrin, without whom I probably wouldn't have got very far. Thanks to Sly, and to Abu Auditor, KBY and all of the members of NUJ Press Centre, and Sunday who ran it, for making me feel at home. In Ife, I was as ever made welcome by Dr Charles Ukeje and family, as well as Dr Rotimi. I owe them all huge thanks for helping me to still be here. The staff of the Department of History, especially Opeyemi Iroju, made me welcome, and Lawrence Obokoh was a mentor and neighbour. The Bight of Benin has some heavy tropical diseases; thanks to Drs Paul Buckingham (Corby), Lawrence Leaver (Jericho) and the UCL Hospital 'trop shop' for their professional efforts. While writing, I was lucky to be part of a great community of intelligent and fun people, including but not limited to, Marco DiNunzio, Adam Higazi, Henry Mang, Jason Moseley, Zoe Marks, Tara Kelly, Elizabeth Rahman, Alejandro Reig and Kate Fayers-Kerr. My ISCA colleagues in No. 43 were great, Insa Koch and Charlotte Bruckermann especially were sanity companions in our joint race to the finish.

The late Dr Sue Benson sent me down this path a long while back. For that, thankyou. My mum, dad and sister have been unquestioning, supportive and patient since the start. But the most thanks are due to Nicola Thornley, who really has put up with a lot.

We don reach.

This thesis is dedicated to Assistant Superintendent Salisu Haliru, ambushed and shot dead while answering an emergency call at Ogori, Kogi State in July 2012, and Deputy Superintendent Lawal Ibrahim, gunned down in Katsina in April 2012.

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Glossary

ACP – Assistant Commissioner of Police

AIG – Assistant Inspector-General

ASP – Assistant Superintendent of Police

CP – Commissioner of Police

CSP – Chief Superintendent of Police

DCP – Deputy Commissioner of Police

DIG – Deputy Inspector-General

Division – the basic unit of territorial policing

DPO – Divisional Police Officer, executive manager in charge of a division

Federal – pertaining or belonging to central government

IG - Inspector-General

JWC – Juvenile Welfare Centre – a police service for juveniles

LGA – Local Government Area – Nigeria is divided into 774 such districts

Mobile - abbreviation of Mobile Police

Mobilise – to join Mobile Police

MOPOL – abbreviation of Mobile Police

PC - abbreviation of constable

PMF – Police Mobile Force, official title of Mobile Police

Signal – an official police order from headquarters

SP - Superintendent of Police

State – Federal division of territorial government – Nigeria has 36 states

State CP – Commissioner of Police in charge of a state

Supol – Abbreviation for any rank of superintendent, from signal

W/PC - abbreviation of ‘woman police constable’

Wahala – trouble, hassle

Wayo – cunning, trickery

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: A Crime Report

On 11th October 2006 I was staying with friends on the outskirts of Maraba, one of the fast-expanding satellite towns of Nigeria's capital Abuja. The house which my host Mohammed rented was one of six in a walled compound on a street which petered out into the fringes of town, bordering fields and the concrete-block foundations of half-built homes. Electricity supply was irregular, even by Nigerian standards, so we tended to sleep early and wake early. That night I went to bed by eleven, but woke between 1.30 and 2am to the sound of gunshots. Around seven shots were followed by the loud bang of someone trying to break open the metal gates of the compound with a heavy object. I immediately realised that this was an armed robbery (the house had already been robbed before I stayed there) and that I had limited time before the robbers gained entry. Aware that a foreigner found without money would risk a beating by irate armed robbers, I took out my cash and put it in the middle of the floor. I hid my passport under the carpet. Then, to minimise the risk of being hit by stray bullets, I dragged my mattress directly underneath the window, and lay there awaiting what was to happen next. Yet nothing did happen, and eventually after straining my ears for signs of activity, I fell back to sleep.

When I woke in the morning, housemates and neighbours gathered to discuss the night's events. A gang of between six and eight robbers, at least three of whom were armed with automatic weapons, had approached the compound through the bush, overpowered, beaten and tied up the night-guard,¹ fired shots to scare the residents and then tried to

¹ Lower middle-income families in this area usually employ night-guards from north-east Nigeria, Niger and further afield as nightguards; known generically as *buzu men*, some are reputed to be ex-combatants from as far away as Chad. Usually they sit outside compounds at night brewing glasses of tea, periodically ringing their cutlasses against the concrete to warn away robbers.

gain entry by smashing the gate and climbing the spike-topped walls. But while they were attempting this, armed police from the Maraba police post turned up and the robbers ran into the bush. I was told that a wealthy Alhaji who lived a couple of plots away had called the police. There is no general emergency response number in Nigeria, so I said to my host that we too should get the cellphone number for the police post. That would be no good, I was told, as they only come for the Alhaji because he pays them. Maybe we should pay them too, I suggested, upon which next-door neighbour Barnabas informed me that he had already tried visiting the police post to offer them N3,000 (around £12) monthly on behalf of the compound. He was told however, that the amount was too small. The only solution to the problem, then, would be for everyone to make sure they had the Alhaji's phone number. We took stock of our situation, poked fun at each other about how scared we'd been, counted ourselves lucky, and Mohammed vowed once more that when his lease was up, he'd move to a more secure area inside town.

This incident contains within it many of the issues pertinent to this study. Here is the perpetual concern with crime and security which pervades Nigerian society; the *de facto* semi-privatisation of public goods by police officers who have made provision of an essential emergency service conditional on payment; systemic dynamics which are only partially captured by the language of 'state breakdown' and 'corruption'; the self-provision of security alternatives; the social networks and hierarchies in which these are embedded; the demographic shifts and new spaces in which crime and policing takes place; the uneasy relationship – part-resentment, part-reliance – which the public has with the police. And underneath all of this the seemingly contradictory fact that in certain places, under certain circumstances, the police *do* actually perform a crime-fighting role; a duality which will run through this thesis. This, then, is the starting point for our enquiry.

Overall, this thesis is intended as a contribution to three existing bodies of literature. Firstly, it is intended to contribute to the study of policing in Africa with some much-needed empirical research into the actual nature of everyday policing by a formal state police institution. Secondly, it can be a contribution towards developing the anthropology

of the state by crossing to the other side of the looking-glass and looking *inside* the state, and from the state out at wider society. If much of the existing anthropology of the state begins by looking at how citizens and wider society experience, understand, and are shaped by encounters with the state, this study takes a formal institution of state and attempts to understand how it and its practices approach, engage with, and are shaped by, encounters with wider society. Thirdly, by taking one of the prime institutions of governance and looking at its formation, its structure, its means of shaping and mobilising people, its internal incentives, disincentives, logics and rationales, its formal purposes and informal practices and the mutually constitutive dialogues between them, it can be a meaningful extension of the study of the Nigerian state beyond the limits of existing structural and political perspectives.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria police is an example of the systemic contradiction at the heart of today's Nigerian state. The police are caught in a tension between two roles: the stated public-service role of providing effective security to persons and property, and the obverse, a post-colonial force for internal repression, applying force to keep the populace subjugated to the interests of a surplus-extracting elite. This tension is reproduced in each police officer, as they are seen sometimes as the repository of public hopes for security and a just social order, but also as the embodiment of repressive violence deployed by a non-legitimate authority. More often than both of these, too, in Nigeria's fluid and iterative contemporary system, where parameters are constantly renegotiated, they are an ambiguous organisation employing significant leeway to pursue their own agendas.

Each police officer, as a uniformed and usually armed embodiment of the state, is seemingly one of the country's most powerful citizens. And at the same time, many ordinary officers are at the extreme end of a political economy infused with corruption and embezzlement in which they themselves are the greatest victims. This compounds the problems with morale and professionalism already caused by poor conditions of service in a dangerous profession. Relations with the wider public are characterised by mutual mistrust, yet by accommodation as well as opposition. Meanwhile policy initiatives to reorient the police from the top are severely compromised by the highly contested nature

of government itself, which in times of political competition also draws the police into its partisan battles.

Yet the police force, as a centrally controlled organisation in which officers can be posted to any part of the nation during their lifetime of service, is one of the few truly national institutions in a country tending towards ethnic and regional particularism. Along with the Federal civil service and the military, it is an arena in which people serve and live primarily as Nigerians, whatever their more locally-rooted or sectional identities. In fact, this piece of the state itself constitutes a fairly large piece of Nigerian society – 377,000 officers may easily have 1.8 million dependants at a conservative estimate, a constituency larger than the population of some of Nigeria's smaller states.² And like a number of other organs of the Nigerian state, the police is a kind of self-contained institutional world, having not only its own institutional culture, rules and values but even its own internal economy; of which police-only markets and police-owned businesses are only a part.

The starting-point of this enquiry is then to attempt to discover what is distinctive and important about the NPF which makes it function in the way outlined in the opening passage? As such, this is intended as an open question, rather than a test of any particular proposition or theory about policing. As the plethora of issues thrown up by our initial encounter suggest, policing as an activity and as an object of study is deeply and fundamentally polysemic. So my study intends to do this due justice; not by testing a particular theory which would entail pre-selecting a particular activity, aspect or set of attributes as the subject, nor by setting up a straw man to oppose, which would allow us only to point out its inadequacies instead of offering much in the way of explanatory power, but by working through some aspects of the police institution, the work it does, and the people who do it, from historical roots and external perceptions, via the practices

² If the conservative assumption is made that each officer has a spouse and three children, we get a figure of 1,885,000 police and their nuclear families. Family sizes are however often larger, and marriages are sometimes polygamous. The number of officers alone puts the NPF in the second rank of major global employers, behind giants such as the Chinese Army, Wal-Mart and the Indian railways. The number of dependents in the wider police family points out the comparison with Nigerian ethnic groups who have been successful in making claims to have their own states on the basis of their numbers: If the NPF was an ethnic group, it could have its own state.

with which it engages with the public, to the internal preoccupations and emic worldviews of its officers, in order to draw out the duality of its function and disfunction, and the ways in which these reproduce a certain kind of society and state.

1.2: Why study the Nigeria Police now?

This work is primarily intended to fill a gap. Very little scholarship exists on formal policing in Nigeria. Of this, much is historical (Tamuno 1970, 1993, Rotimi 2001, Ahire 1991, Alemika 1993), which will be explored in Chapter 2. The vast majority of empirical research on contemporary Nigerian policing has been conducted by criminologists Innocent Chukwuma (of the non-governmental CLEEN Foundation) and Etannibi Alemika (University of Jos). Their work (notably Alemika and Chukwuma 2000 & 2004) embeds three basic propositions. Firstly, the NPF does not work well and is not popular; secondly, that it is intrinsically postcolonial in its limited and primarily upward accountability; and thirdly that it is distanced from the mass public whom it purports to serve. Their statistical survey works (Alemika, Igbo & Nnorom 2005; Alemika and Chukwuma 2006; Alemika 2009) indicate a further interesting quality to policing in Nigeria – that it is significantly uneven, performing better at certain tasks, and in certain places, and worse at others, across this large and heterogenous country. Since Marenin (1985), Hills has been virtually the only non-Nigerian scholar to attempt sustained study of Nigerian policing. She contends (Hills 2008) that politics dictates that crime control activities are put second to regime representation and public order, although later (Hills 2012a) she allows that in a situation of pluralism, the police leadership also brokers peace by diplomacy. Further, in an otherwise problematic piece (Hills 2012b) she argues that scope for reforming the situation is limited both by external politicisation and by personal interests entrenched in the fabric of the institution. Meanwhile, advocacy-oriented literature by non-governmental bodies such as Human Rights Watch (2005), Amnesty International (2009), CLEEN (2006), the Network on Police Reform in Nigeria (<http://www.noprin.org/> and Nigeria Police Watch (<http://www.nigeriapolicewatch.com/>) document narratives of police failures largely without interrogating the deeper causes.

These limitations mean we must look to the wider study of policing in Africa for cues to shape our enquiry.

Bruce Baker's argument (2004) is that policing in contemporary Africa is intrinsically plural, with official police forces of limited competence complemented by (and in no more than parity with) assorted militias, vigilance organisations, private companies and other state and non-state bodies. Thus, he says, the study of policing in Africa should de-centre formal police forces and consider security sector governance more broadly (Baker 2010), as suggested by Bayley and Shearing (2001) who note the increasing global multilateralisation of policing, wherein the state stays relevant primarily as the agent which authorises activities carried out by others. Hills (2000) concurs, characterising policing in Africa as being about a 'police system' which includes both state and non-state actors. She contends that state policing shows the limits of 1990s political liberalisation, retaining a limited focus on regime security to the detriment of human security, in providing which police forces have ceded ground to competing actors.

Recent scholarship has developed in a direction consonant with Baker and Hills. Few in-depth studies of police in Africa (outside South Africa) have been conducted over the past two decades, with much greater interest shown in non-formal actors such as vigilantes. Nigeria, with its efflorescence of vigilance militias from the mid-1990s, has been fertile ground for such studies, which can help to mark out the security landscape and highlight some of the issues we must integrate into our study of the police. Baker (2004, *ibid*) notes that across Africa, alternative security forces were never entirely displaced by state police. But vigilantism has been notably resurgent in Nigeria since the mid-1990s, amid the state failures and political instability which marked the transition from military to democratic rule.³ Some studies Nolte (2004, 2007) emphasise vigilance in Nigeria as combined crime control and political vanguard. In Nigeria as in Africa more widely, vigilante movements became evidence for a 'crisis of youth' linked to the collapse of state patronage systems. Meanwhile Ekeh (2002), Ukiwo (2002) and Meagher

³ As the reader will ascertain in the course of this thesis, demilitarisation should not be seen as an event which occurred with the return to civilian rule in 1999, but as a continuing process.

(2007) emphasise the rational and civic origins of vigilance groups such as *Bakassi Boys* in Igbo-speaking south-eastern Nigeria. The modalities of vigilante practice also entail ‘retraditionalisation’ – the reactivation and reinterpretation of indigenous concepts and repertoires of power (see Chabal and Daloz, 1999). As these ‘innovative traditionalisations’ multiply, some authors (Casey 2007) have had trouble disaggregating the blurred lines between law-makers and breakers, criminal gangs and vigilantes, while a debate has continued between the ‘rationalist’ and ‘culturalist’ poles of interpretation. A better lesson is that vigilantism in Nigeria has revealed and articulated a gap between the ideals of legitimacy in formal law, and powerful popular understandings of legitimacy, power and security which continue to exist in parallel with state power and justice. Pratten (2007, 2008a) for example shows analogies between the treatment of thieves and witches in Annang, renewing Austen’s (1986) point that witchcraft has persisted as a powerful template for understanding social deviance across Africa. Similarly, Last (2008) sees in Northern Nigerian vigilantism the revival of a deep-rooted Islamic understanding of security redirected toward the anxieties and physical and spiritual dangers of the postmodern world. We must recognise these, because as we will see, competing conceptions of legitimacy, fairness and rectitude even interpenetrate the world of formal policing.

Globally, anthropologists have presented vigilantism as an activity which problematises the state by usurping its sovereignty; challenging Weberian monopolies of violence and legitimacy. Jensen in Cape Town (2005) notes the strong “anti-apartheid notions that the real and true sovereignty is located in the community rather than in the state”. The particular modernity of vigilantism is situated within the logic of late-modern capitalism and the neoliberal state. Buur (2007) calls vigilante policing in South Africa sovereignty ‘outsourced’, and for Goldstein (2007) the mob lynching of thieves in Bolivia is the direct result of the state’s retreat from policing, and the consequent cutback-led ‘responsibilisation’ which withdraws state violence to protect the ramparts of privilege.

But as well as supplanting formal policing, vigilantism can also influence its modalities. Comaroff and Comaroff (2006) opine that in the neoliberally transformed postcolony,

official policing deliberately mirrors the spectacle and dramaturgy of public vigilantism, in ‘detective fictions’ – stagings of state power which reverse modernity’s transformation of punishment from spectacle into rational institutional power (after Foucault, 1977); in their formulation the deconstructed state no longer has this omniscient capacity and must once again substitute symbolic images of its potency in order to stay in charge. Other recent studies similarly find repertoires of vigilantism incorporated into state power in the postcolonial world: Jauregui (2012) describes the ‘encounter’ killings of criminals by police in India amid a failing criminal justice system as ‘police vigilantism’.

As Loader and Walker (2007; 2) observe, global movement is not unidirectional. ‘On one hand’ they say, ‘the state is being de-centred from security, and on the other it is resurgent’. Moreover, the idea that security *should* be primarily provided by the state remains strong and persistent (and both of these facts will be evident in the thesis which follows). So clearly this prompts us to redress the study of policing in Africa by bringing the state back in. The theoretical literature on policing in Africa is littered with assumptions about the role of police in the neoliberal era which have not been adequately proven, because the characters missing in the discussions above are formal state police themselves, what they do, and how, and why.⁴ Therefore an in-depth empirical examination of an African police force – especially one which is a key focus of public debate and of contested reform, as in Nigeria – can be a useful contribution.

1.3: How to approach a study of the police?

The question then becomes what approach to take in studying the Nigerian Police. Classic Euroamerican police sociologies are of limited use. Although valuable in pointing out the universality of professional ethics around, for example, secrecy (Bittner 1970) or the extralegal use of force (Klockars 1980), they do not venture far outside the bounds of policing to ask what we are learning in the process about the nature of the wider state and its structuring effects on society. Secondly, they usually consider policing in reference to

⁴ And whose generalisation is immediately challengeable in situations such as Nigeria, which is more distinctively statist than it is neoliberal.

terms such as democracy, liberalism and the rule of law which are taken as normative and self-evident. This limits their applicability to contexts where such concepts are neither normative, nor self-evident, nor perhaps particularly entrenched. So we need to begin by understanding the constitutive relationships between policing and the state in the broadest possible sense. Once we have done so, we will be in a better position to see how a consideration of policing in Nigeria can also speak more broadly to a better understanding of the state in Nigeria.

1.3.1: Disaggregating the state

Miliband (1969; 117) states the issue clearly: “There is one preliminary problem about the state which is very seldom considered (...) this is the fact that the ‘state’ is not a thing, *that it does not, as such, exist*”. The state does not actually exist in any form other than its institutional manifestations and the imaginaries they produce. Abrams (1988) notes that we only cloud the picture by taking the political imagining at its word and studying an abstracted state as a concept separate from what its component parts and agencies actually *do*. Thus when Marenin (1982; 384) tells us that “the police are a crucial nexus between the state and the people”, his terms unwittingly subscribe to the state’s own fiction, implicitly assuming that the state is located above, at a displaced elsewhere, instead of consisting partly *in* the police. Some attempts to broaden our definition of the state lose explanatory power; Migdal’s (2001) concept of ‘the state in society’ includes the whole wider terrain of a national political system, thus losing sight of what is ‘state’ about the state. This can of course be bypassed with the simple definition that state bodies are those which derive their foundational authority from laws and constitutions. A more effective critical understanding is found in the work of Tim Mitchell (1999) on the ‘state effect’. He notes that state practice also serves to *create* the imaginary – the state itself, partly through legal fictions, draws its own lines which define what is state, what is private sector, and what is (civil) society, even as these roles can often disguise the same actors, involved in the same processes and relationships, under their multiple various guises. Elsewhere (Mitchell 2002) he disaggregates the processes, persons, interests, institutions, materials, and relationships of which state and government

consist. In fact as Slaughter (2005) points out, even at an international level states more often interact in their disaggregated functional parts than as holistic polities; therefore we should integrate the same lesson in our understanding of what happens inside individual states.

1.3.2: Studying the African state

A study of policing in Nigeria also comprises the study of what the Nigerian state actually *is*, in the confrontations and interactions which make it salient and real to its citizens. This also speaks to an ongoing debate in the political science of Africa, which perennially reconsiders the nature of the postcolonial state and its relationship with society. Over the past two decades, African states have been overwhelmingly portrayed through dysfunctionalist perspectives which accent and attempt to explain their deviation from rationalist formal logics. Basil Davidson (1992) argued that the colonial grafting of a state with foreign cultural roots onto a non-consenting society was the essential underlying problem of the African polity. More recently, a school of US political science has argued that the central problem is in fact the inability of the African state to be independent from society, from particularist forces which have captured and colonised an ideally autonomous structure. Bayart's (1993) formulation of state logics pictures formal institutions which overlie rhizomatic social networks formed to access and distribute resources gleaned from rentier statist political economy, thus infusing the institutions with a particular (and *particularist*) logic. And Chabal and Daloz (*ibid*) go further in portraying such networks as deliberate producers of a disorder they instrumentalise. Both have evident application, yet both too fall short of the observed realities of the Nigerian context; while there is clearly a huge and subtle social-capital-reliant neopatrimonial structure at work, it is inaccurate to reduce the operations of the state to only this logic. It is closer to the truth to acknowledge an inherent duality; in that the state and its institutions retain also a capacity to function according to their formal logics, and *do* sometimes operate under those rationales, even whilst their neopatrimonial uses may seem more salient. The degree to which any particular institution is infused with either logic remains unpredictable, fluid and notably uneven. We can open up our perspectives a

little more by understanding that there *is no* abstracted state, outside the people employed in it and the offices they fill, and that these are themselves interested and structuring actors in society. Examining the state as embodied in institutions, and those institutions as embodied in the practice of what they actually *do*, allows us to see past these contesting models.

1.3.3: Studying the state in Nigeria

Existing examinations of the state in Nigeria either, as with Joseph (1987) or Suberu (2001), deal with the formation of the state at a political and constitutional level, or through the abstracted prism of its structuring effects on national society and public culture. For the latter school the state is, respectively, a fount of destabilising meaning (Apter 1996, 1999); a conduit for promoting the trope of corruption (Smith 2008); and the producer of abjection (Adebanwi & Obadare *et al* 2010), which abuses its citizens even as ‘they also depend on (it) to authorise and actualise their existence’ (*ibid*; 2). The latter volume aims to define Nigeria ‘by presenting it through encounters with its ‘subjects’’ and does so perceptively, but only as limited to one manifestation of the state, its adversarial political relationship with its subjects. This and other studies however remain silent on the functional attributes of the state, which include even the public universities many of the volume’s contributors inhabit. For Adebanwi and Obadare, the state remains throughout an ‘impersonal abstraction’ (*ibid*; 11). But I argue that even if the functional attributes of the state have been co-opted to the interests of an elite, and their resources re-directed to private advantage, their official roles and functions – and therefore the study of what they actually do – still matters. Of recent scholarship, only Mustapha (2007) takes care to encompass both the dysfunction of Nigeria’s state-centric system, and the simultaneous evolution of functional rational institutions designed to solve such problems, in his studies of the positive-discrimination Federal Character Commission. I suggest that what is otherwise missing from this discussion, the apprehension of what the state *is* by examining what its bodies are *doing* (and how they do it) can be meaningfully supplied by ethnography.

This thesis, therefore, will be informed more widely by anthropologies of the state since the mid-1990s. Gupta's (1995) influential work took a bottom-up approach to understand how the state in rural northern India is created as an imaginary construct via interactions with its most routine sites and functions. He contends that the everyday practice of local bureaucracies is the main input into the discursive construction of the trans-local state in public culture. "At the local level it becomes difficult to experience the state as an ontically coherent entity: what one confronts instead is much more discrete and fragmentary – land records officials, village development workers, the electricity board, headmen, the police" ([1995] 2006; 220), yet it is these manifestations through which an abstract state is construed as a social and political imaginary.

This valuable starting-point has one shortcoming, in that strictly, Gupta's and similar works cannot be described as anthropology of the state, but as anthropology of *encountering* the state; essentially an external perspective on how the state is perceived and related-to by its subject-citizens. This selective perspective is reproduced in Sharma and Gupta (2006) edited volume of anthropology of the state, and adopted explicitly by Adebani and Obadare's *Encountering the Nigerian State*. Such studies are valuable qualifiers of normative assumptions about what states are and do, but as outside-in perspectives on how state institutions are construed they are of limited use as a model for my study. What I need instead are models for a more emic study.

1.3.4: Ethnography inside African states

Some recent studies of African bureaucracies have built on the study of interaction with the state to view it from both sides. Janet Roitman (2005, 2006) examines how the interactions of state agents and publics (customs officers and bureaucrats, cross-border smugglers, their financiers and fences) mutually compose and construct the structures of state in the Lake Chad basin region, where its grip is least tenacious. In her work, the voices of customs agents and civil servants are co-present with those of smugglers and traders in creating mutually advantageous, but shifting, relationships and an 'ethic of illegality'. Blundo and Olivier de Sardan also cross the outside/inside boundary in what

they call “a socio-anthropology of African public spaces”, giving more room for exploration of the social totality in which ‘corrupt practices’ are embedded (2006; 4). Although their work enters inside the state institution, it does so partially, and with limited insight into the life-worlds of those state employees themselves. But it has given rise to related studies by the collaborative project *States at Work: Public Services and Civil Servants in West Africa*.⁵ This project and its successors, including dedicated studies on bureaucrats in uniform, were conducted at the same time as my own work and provided helpful comparisons, some of which will be cited in the pages to follow. Bierschenk’s (2009) foundational document provided two insights which were of particular value in informing my own analysis: First, the strong historical path-dependency of present-day bureaucracies in Africa, from authoritarian and unaccountable colonial foundations, combining powers, evolving ad-hoc ways to straddle differences between cultural norms, and with an expatriate dominance which gave rise to a successor separate political-bureaucratic class. Secondly, the complex and contradictory normative universe in which African bureaucrats operate, which necessitate what he calls ‘the production of informal norms’. More specific manifestations of these insights will be invoked in the discussions. Yet even in the *States at Work* corpus, voices and perspectives of state actors themselves are limited, so in this thesis I aim to bring them to the fore.

1.3.5: Ethnographies of policing as studies of the state

Ethnographies of policing are among the few works which redress the external perspectives of most anthropology of the state. Some of the works in this small field are deeply embedded in consideration of the wider nature of the states which the subjects both represent and police. Hinton (2006) and Steinberg (2008), although not specifically anthropological, take policing primarily as an instance and indication of the state’s presence, political transformations, and powers in wider society. Glaeser’s ethnography (2000) looks inward at the police institution itself; examining relations between two

⁵ Run by the University of Mainz, and LASDEL, Niamey between 2006 and 2011, and focussing on the education and justice sectors in Benin, Ghana, Mali and Niger.

elements of the Berlin police force to understand the mutual construction of ‘east and ‘west’ in the process of German reunification. Glaeser sees the differences between west and east embedded in different conceptions of crime, of law and order, and of career, ultimately derived from two different political economies, a pointer to look for the heterogeneity in Nigeria’s police too, and for the ways in which changes in the internal institutional world mark changes in the wider state. Jeffrey Martin (2007) studies policing in Taiwan as applying state authority to public space, in a context where liberal democracy and its conception of the rule of law is recent, and custom maintains a stronger hold on ideals of legitimacy. Police officers negotiate between social action and legal category, between public and city bosses, to maintain *ganqing* – sentimental feeling – between station and public; and in order to achieve ‘the “reasonable” management of an intersection between two entirely distinct spheres of social logic, i.e., “law” and “sentiment.”’ (*ibid*; 28). And Jauregui (2010) in research which is loudly resonant with the Nigerian experience, uses policing as a locus to detect the ways in which the state, apparently a powerful monolith embodied in police officers, actually renders them into a state of internal subalterity, their agency tightly constrained by disciplinary hierarchy. Internal bureaucratic matters such as transfers become echo-chambers for the labyrinthine wrangles of India’s caste- and faction- ridden democratic politics, and policing practices themselves embody the tension between non-violence and militancy in India’s political culture, prompting us to look for the everyday social politics of Nigeria as played out within its police.

But even ethnographies of police which do not intentionally implicate the state still embed plentiful evidence as to its wider nature. Thus Barker (1999) while maintaining an intention to focus on police values, also reveals a lot about the labour relations of the US public sector, the spatiality of its political economy, and the production of conservative ideals in both politics and gender relations. Practitioner-anthropologist Malcolm Young (1991, 1993, 1995) provides a corpus of work on British policing which encompasses changes in society and state over three decades, the use of police statistics in the social production of senses of security and precariousness, and the differences between urban and rural England legible through the prism of its policing practices and structures.

Policing therefore both reflects, comprises and shapes the wider public sphere and provides a text through which we can read it.

1.3.6: Studying formal institutions

So states are composed of institutions, and institutions make sense as part of their state systems. To study policing most effectively, then, we must make use of wider literature on formal institutions. To understand how an institution behaves in its wider context, it is vital to understand its *internal* structures, practices, logics and political economy; simply put, you can't understand what an institution *does* unless you can examine how it works. I found a hugely useful cue in Singer's (2003) analysis of global private military companies, by far the most valuable among a crop of such studies because it analyses them as businesses, subject to their own internal logics and responsive to marketplace imperatives, and thus uncovers insights which 'outside-in' perspectives fail to draw out. Polices, as bureaucracies with whose survival their employees' interests are intrinsically bound, are no less concerned than companies with self-reproduction, and in the competitive and plural environment of African policing sectors, with competition for primacy, not just against non-formal alternatives but against other state bodies. This will become amply clear through the historical sections in Chapter 2 and in the mapping of other security bodies in Chapter 3. Formal institutions have their formal rationales, and these create particular incentives and imperatives for those who serve in them. But they also create the types of persons who serve in them, to particular functional ends, breaking down old subjectivities and inculcating new ones, as explored in Chapter 6. The study of police benefits from comparison with other professional bodies and their shaping of persons, such as the medical profession (Sinclair 1997, Wendland 2010); as well as – especially for a police which lives with a paramilitary heritage as in Nigeria - militaries and their internal values and politics (Ben-Ari 1998), including Nigeria's own army (Siollun 2009).

Beyond this, however, the particular study of police institutions globally suggests some recurrent and common considerations. Young and Barker (*ibid*) both vividly convey the

sense of sodality accreted on top of the formal institution, as embodied, inhabited and performed. They also encompass the shared sense of professional understanding, as well as the additional familial aspects to institutional lives. And both additionally highlight the externally invisible but internally important division between frontline police and those in managerial or service roles in creating an internal hierarchy of values. Young (critically) and Barker (uncritically) depict polices also as agents of conservative social values, both in their externally-focussed work and in their internal regimes, a theme also picked up in Jauregui's work where, for example, police take it upon themselves to patrol the moral boundaries of intercommunal relationships among young people. In many of the works, the issue of reform and reorientation of forces in consonance with wider political change looms large. And throughout virtually all ethnographies of policing runs a central concern with risk, both the physical dangers of the policing job but moreover the wider risks, including to the officer's own career, of the possibilities of unforeseen consequences with which police work is fraught, as we shall explore in Chapter 8. Consequently, researching in formal institutions, and in police institutions specifically, requires some particular considerations.

1.1 Methodology

1.4.1: Research methodology

Kemi Asiwaju's interview with Commissioner Olatunji Alapini, of the Police Training College, Ikeja in the journal *Police Practice and Research* (2004) begins "It is not that we do not trust ourselves but due to the inherent problem that is obvious to all of us, I personally feel it is easier to police the community than ourselves". It ends with an author's note 'the questions on research were not answered because he believed that the answers were quite obvious'. Clearly, then, direct questions and formal interviews are of limited use in elucidating the nature of those inherent problems. Participant observation was my primary methodology then, not simply because it is the default research mode of social anthropologists, but because of the leeway, discretion, initiative, and independence

from managers involved in police work, it is the only way to get an accurate picture of practice.⁶ But participant observation brings its own problems: In Nigeria, social research, understood as positivist sociology, is about clipboards, surveys, questionnaires and formal interviews (especially elite interviews)⁷; participant observation however comes across as deeply suspect, tantamount to spying.⁸

Therefore, as advised by my supervisor, I shaped my initial research to respect those expectations. At the outset, surveys provided a useful way of understanding the typical backgrounds, social and educational profile and career trajectories, as well as allowing me a semi-formal way to meet and introduce my work to as many officers in the division as possible. Around 30 formal elite interviews illuminated parts of the picture missing from grassroots perspectives. I was also able to take advantage of unplanned opportunities such as training courses, where senior officers in a classroom environment had both time and inclination to help me design my research. With their help I first explored, then eventually abandoned, some potential experimental tools, and refined particular lines of enquiry which would subsequently be relevant and useful.

My research design was reshaped several times. My original intention had been to compare two fieldwork sites, before and after the intervention of community policing reform programmes. When this proved impractical, I attempted to compare the internal perspective on police work with the users of other, informal providers of security and mediation. Again, this proved impractical. In the end, I settled on the combination of a fieldwork project based in one policing division with brief comparative visits to other police formations. In the course of this, I visited 13 different divisions, four sub-stations or posts, and 15 specialist units and formations over the course of 18 months; a tiny

⁶ 'Participant' should in fact be in inverted commas because one cannot of course fully participate in the work of the police without being an officer. It was only towards the very end of my research I realised that I was as able as any other onlooker to participate in the ad-hoc courts of public opinion and judgements which took place at the counter.

⁷ In this highly unequal social system, the views and opinions of the powerful are automatically assumed to be intrinsically of higher worth than any grassroots perspective. Truth becomes a function of the status of the person uttering it.

⁸ In Nigeria, with its problematised national sovereignty and popular preoccupation with security, the idea of a 'spy' – despite its apparent cartoonish absurdity – is a live and charged category.

fraction of the total number but some grounds for comparison with my main fieldwork site.

1.4.2: The question of access

The peculiarity of formal organisations as fieldwork settings, say Gellner and Hirsch (1999), are that they set themselves up as consciously distinct from everyday life, maintaining rules and regulations to mark this apartness.⁹ For the anthropologist therefore, boundaries are especially important, and our own crossing of them especially problematised. Police researchers Reiner and Newburn note that “Outside outsiders such as academics clearly face the greatest barriers in getting access to police forces for research”, and formal access once granted can easily be withdrawn at any time, especially with changes in the political climate (2008; 357). In Nigeria, policing is often highly politicised, police leadership is highly sensitive to critical research findings from outside, and all state agencies are subject to very direct and hierarchical central control, all of which make access very difficult without top-level authorisation. I was fortunate to secure the support of the British Council’s DfID-funded Security, Justice and Growth project in approaching their counterparts in the NPF. I was also fortunate to receive an enthusiastic and supportive response from the NPF’s community policing team, and from the Deputy Inspector-General ‘F’ Department (Research and Planning), who secured my formal research permission from the Inspector-General. Police support even extended to sending official signals to my potential fieldwork sites. This pleasant surprise at the outset confounded negative portrayals of the NPF’s disposition to research and reform.

Yet, as Gellner and Hirsch (*ibid*) note, access is not “negotiated once and then forgotten about”, but forms a continual and often transformative influence on research. I was careful to present my credentials, official permission, and copies of signals, when arriving at fieldwork sites. In my prime fieldwork site, I was assigned office space and placed under the responsibility of the community policing team for that state; in addition it later

⁹ These authors, thinking specifically of workplace ethnography in business and bureaucracies, implicitly counterpose this to the often *unconscious* or informal rules and regulations which mark out other organisations, communities or fields of sociality which anthropologists take as subjects.

emerged that the entire station had been briefed on my imminent arrival at the periodic DPO's lecture. I have no idea what they were told but it perhaps conditioned my research access in ways which I will never know.

Beyond that, access remained an issue in each and every relationship with an individual officer, in every new situation, and sometimes in extending work parameters in existing situations. Much as my official status may have helped to remove the nebulous fear of actual espionage present in the security mentality, it also removed lower-ranking officers' ability to refuse me anything, and thereby may have made them feel potentially open to the scrutiny of their own seniors via my research. As Chapman (1999) notes, institutional ethnography is fraught with concerns and misunderstandings that the researchers' own role is in the service of enhancing managers' oversight, a kind of internal espionage by the bosses. On only two occasions (when I requested to access crime records, and when I requested to travel with the police to a remote rural post) did management-level officers try to refuse, and both times I eventually and reluctantly resorted to my official paperwork to override that.¹⁰ On other occasions, officers openly counselled each other in front of me to give favourable 'official' answers to my questions, a kind of paradoxically open closed-ness which also made it possible for me to reassure participants and informalise the conversation. The sole weapon remaining to the unwilling was obfuscation and avoidance, and this, in a situation where the researcher is a complete outsider not only to the institution and town but to the country, of course retained considerable utility. Some officers successfully avoided interacting with me in any meaningful way whatever throughout the best part of two years' research.

Neither should the concerns around my presence be automatically assumed to be nefarious – the DPO of 'B' division's evident discomfort at having my presence imposed upon him (implying a responsibility for my well-being) was amply validated by my getting robbed during my stay, a development which he accepted with neutral

¹⁰ Managerial reshuffles definitely did matter, however; changes in the leadership of the state command, and in the country's Inspector-General and senior leadership, gave my research permissions a definite sense of use-by date.

resignation.¹¹ Yet on other occasions, officers incurred considerable inconvenience to incorporate me into their routines, and made allowances for me to be able to see aspects of police work which I requested. Various officers, from the State Commissioner to ordinary constables, were very generous to me in their personal capacity. In times of unexpected need - when I was robbed, and when I became sick - they even opened their houses to me to sleep in.

The final observation on access is the most obvious – not only was I the only person in the station not employed by the NPF, I was very visible as a white European outsider, and would always remain so. Although Nigeria's historical experience has not included a radically politicised attitude to race, a gulf of privilege, life experience and income differentials separated me from my research subjects. Yet I was surprised how rapidly the station became used to my presence, which became noteworthy only to visitors or new personnel. Nigeria – and Dutsin Bature – also have a long history of expatriate technical assistance, and it seemed to be this category in which my presence as a researcher was understood and assimilated.

¹¹ Had I tried this project a year later, when Islamist insurgents were targeting police stations and kidnapping expatriates, the situation would have been much more difficult, and I might not have been able to carry out this kind of research.

University of Oxford

School of Anthropology AND MUSEUM ETHNOGRAPHY

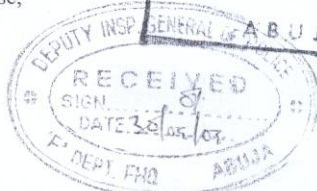
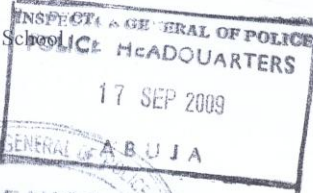
51 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 6PE



From the office of the Head of School

Inspector General of Police,
Louis Edet House,
Abuja

30th June 2009



Dear Sir,

This letter is formally to introduce doctoral student Olly Owen, who is currently enrolled in studying towards a DPhil on crime and policing in Nigeria, for which he has secured funding from the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

He has previously taken an MSc in Social Anthropology by Research Methods from this department, and has undertaken extensive literature review on the aforementioned topic.

He plans to continue his study later this year, with more empirical research in Nigeria, studying the problematics of policing, law and order in a transforming society. I will be grateful if you will support this research with your cooperation.

We expect Mr Owen to contact you subsequently this year.

With best regards,

Yours faithfully,

Harvey Whitehouse

Harvey Whitehouse
Professor of Social Anthropology
Head of the School of Anthropology
University of Oxford

MS-F'
Ms assist him.
Off
28/5
CRMSD
Kindly assist
hampden
9/8
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③ DC MSD
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21/10/09

The School of Anthropology incorporates:
The Institute of Human Sciences
The Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology
and the academic activity of The Pitt Rivers Museum

Tel: 01865-274678 Fax: 01865-274630
E-mail: harvey.whitehouse@anthro.ox.ac.uk

POLICE WIRELESS MESSAGE

DTO: 291353/1/2010

FROM: NIGPOL 'F' ABUJA

**TO : COMPOL E
AIG ZONE '7' FCT ABUJA.**

INFO: INGENPOL SEC ABUJA.

**CE:3380/'F'DEPT/ CPP/FHQ/ABJ/VOL.1/ X COOPERATION
WITH GOVERNMENT BODIES X INGENPOL HAS APPROVED
AND DIRECTS YOU TO ASSIST X SUPPORT OLLY OWEN X
DOCTORAL STUDENT UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD X
RESEARCHING ON CRIME AND COMMUNITY POLICING IN
NIGERIA X WITHIN YOUR RESPECTIVE AREAS X ABOVE FOR
YOUR INFORMATION PLEASE. XXXXXX XXXXXXXX XXXX**

XXXX XXXX


NIGPOL 'F'

'M/IMMEDIATE'

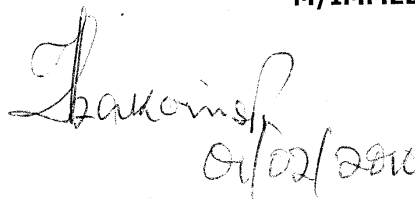


Fig 1 & 2: Research access in the security bureaucracy. The official letter bears the endorsement of the hierarchy through which it has progressively passed. The signal (on which I have obscured identifiable locations) is the prime medium of internal communication and follows a standardised format, grammar and terminology.

1.4.3: The issue of information

David Mosse notes that “organisations ... are among other things systems for the production and control of information” where “contrary to the tenets of academic research... information is rarely viewed as a ‘public good’” (Gellner and Hirsch, *ibid*; 271). Anthropologists may find their access blocked by sceptical elites within organisations, or by those who wish to protect their own status by preventing access to knowledge. This is particularly an issue in researching the police, as Reiner & Newburn note: “Much policing is dangerous, ‘dirty’ work... The tactics used for accomplishing this are almost inevitably going to be controversial even if they are legal, and they are very frequently of dubious legality or clearly illegal.” Furthermore, “there is the particular skill officers are likely to have in tactics for covering up that which they do not want known” (2008; 353-354). Researching controversial issues may run into what Skolnic (2002) calls the ‘blue code of silence’. Young (1991) adds that the police as a surveillance organisation have their gaze directed outwards, and as a closed society do not take kindly to monitoring or outside criticism. All of these observations were to prove relevant; but I also found that my approach to research had to be framed by the way police themselves are used to conceptualising and using information.

Firstly, police themselves use the information differential (as readers will see in Chapter 6) as a prime means of manipulating suspects, taking advantage of outsiders’ usually scant knowledge of law or police procedure in maximising their agency. Secondly, knowledge, hard-won through experience, to a large extent *defines* status, as officers articulate in their comments on ‘real’ police in Chapter 9. Consequently, acquiring, conserving, managing and deploying information is central in the construction both of police work and police-ness, and the distinction between those who possess it and those who do not becomes a sorting mechanism. Insiders know the fundamental truths of the policing world, and will understand what needs to be communicated with the minimum of exegesis; meanwhile those who do not know (even if they are officers) are outsiders, and do not merit being told. It is primarily the possession of privileged knowledge which entitles one to possess more. Thirdly, the act of writing is fetishised and powerful in the

police world (see Chapter 6), and is a source of potential risk (as attested to by officers themselves in Chapter 8). Information once recorded becomes *evidence*, a very meaningful and potentially incriminatory category in the police world. Besides, police values of discipline and a concern with security sense promote continence, especially in the disclosure of information. Thus, very much about the police world and police culture in Nigeria promotes silence and discretion above openness and information-sharing.¹²

These dispositions towards information had two practical implications. First is that I was generally unable to take notes simultaneously with observing (with the sole exception of compiling statistics, which is itself something police do and understand as relatively unproblematic).¹³ Instead I noted important or salient information during breaks, and the fractured nature of my fieldnotes reflects this. Secondly, questions were generally productive only if presented on the basis of my displaying knowledge already obtained. I was reminded of this, for example, when returning to fieldwork after an extended break. I asked a friend recently promoted to Inspector if she had to spend money to pass her promotion course – the question was answered with “Eeeee! You want to do your research on *me*?” When I apologised and rephrased it in the language of shared knowledge and humanity – we all know that ‘to go on course’ costs money, but really, was it expensive for you? – the answer was immediately forthcoming. I, like police officers, quickly learned the value of observing more and talking less.

Yet these issues around the control of information were partially compensated for however by the fact that Nigerian Police Officers are also Nigerians; and thus raised in a public culture which largely favours personal assertion and expression. Furthermore, embedded in everyday police sociolinguistics is a tendency for those who are acclaimed as expert or experienced practitioners to articulate and pass on their wisdom in extended monologues to their peers, as the reader will see throughout this study. Therefore in balance with the officers who were uncomfortable speaking to me, there were many

¹² Equally, police stations as workplaces are spheres of gossip as much as information-management. So many issues which officers (especially senior officers) tried to conceal in case they reflected badly upon them were in any case disclosed and widely discussed by others (especially juniors) in front of me.

¹³ For the same reason, sound recording was completely off-limits, except in the few formal interviews I did where respondents agreed to be on-record and attributable.

others who enthusiastically seized the opportunity to talk to me, to clarify issues, impart their opinions and worldviews, and to use me as a conduit for their voice. In Nigeria at least, the subaltern often can speak, eloquently and at extreme length.

1.4.4: Research ethics

Access is predicated on trust. In order to forestall any suspicion that I might come with a critical predisposition, I stressed from the outset that I was looking at the police holistically, with a remit that included service conditions and the challenges of crimefighting as much as it did critical public perceptions. Trust also entails confidentiality, so I was repeatedly explicit about the anonymised nature of my research. In this thesis, I have pseudonymised as much as is practical to protect the confidentiality of my informants. While I have identified the general region, I have given new names to the policing division, the town, the state, and to ethnic groups whose names might otherwise indicate the location. All police officers are likewise pseudonymised to protect their identities.

But Norris (1993) suggests that protocols and parameters will only take the researcher so far. Eventually, ethical considerations will rear their head in concrete form. The police researcher, he says, is essentially presented with the same problems as confront one working with any deviant or criminal group, namely: “To what extent does the researcher become personally implicated with deviant activities? To what extent is one implicated by mere presence, and does one’s presence condone such activities? At what point does the researcher feel that their subjects’ rights to anonymity and confidentiality is overridden by other claims (eg the public interest)?” (ibid, p124). The issue of witnessing serious human rights abuses, for instance, raises the serious question of a participant observer’s responsibilities to his/her informants as against wider moral imperatives. Few anthropological texts display a satisfactory approach to such issues; one exception being Scheper-Hughes (2006) in which she is explicit about her problematic positioning between two modes of action – ‘straight’ academic research and wider efforts to mitigate some of the violent abuses she witnesses. I have justified my position to myself by

hoping that this research may eventually contribute to a base of evidence for the public debate on policing which has been lacking.

Yet even these pointers leave the question of unforeseen ethically difficult situations (and their psychological effects on the researcher) wide open. How, for instance, would I handle being confided in by the perpetrator of a crime or abuse I find abhorrent? How to handle spending time in the company of people whose values I might find repellent? These are questions with which anthropology does not often explicitly engage. I searched widely in the literature and amongst my colleagues for guidance, and received instead mostly woolly fudges and platitudes on the theme of ‘personal choices’. Finally Dr Paul Dresch furnished me with practical and useful advice for which I remain grateful, to wit: “In a study like this one is going to see a certain amount of shit, and you’re not Batman”.

In writing my thesis the ethical question reappeared in terms of representation. I found myself repeatedly trying to maintain a satisfactory and truthful course between the pressures of expectations that I would be truthful about the negatives of policing in Nigeria, and on the other hand the expectations of my informants (many of whom had grown cynical about one-sided representations of the police), that I would be capable of representing their worldview. Shyrock (2004) helped to inform my self-awareness with regards to what informants and ethnographers – both separately and in colluding together – keep ‘off-stage’ and what is put ‘on display’.

Finally, there is a practical ethical question around anthropological research outputs. Many fieldwork-based studies have a unidirectional flow of information. Information is the joint product of informants and ethnographer but is then compiled and circulated under the ethnographer’s authorship and control in the context of their choosing. Often this means that information produced in developing countries is exported and used primarily to add value in developed countries, in the process being rendered functionally inaccessible to those who are its main stakeholders, and making research an extractive industry. This is particularly hard to forgive when the research is also a potential opportunity to make a contribution to a current public issue. In order to redress this

within my own work, I will be prepared to make an accessible summary version of my final thesis available to police authorities and other stakeholders in Nigeria.

1.5 Thesis structure

The research question is, as defined above, an open enquiry into the nature of policing in Nigeria, a collection of essays which begin with external viewpoints and move progressively toward the inside, ending with police officers' own subjective realities. The thesis is divided into eight substantive chapters.

The historical chapter charts the evolution of formal policing in Nigeria from colonial times to the present day, as the creation and spread of state power and governmental sovereignty in Nigeria. The creation of formal policing as a certain type of power; the capturing of populations, social life and public affairs within those modes of enacting power; decisions over what *is* and what *is not* the subject of policing; the erasing of competing loci of legitimacy and enforcement; and the particular distributions of power, are all themselves the essence of governmental sovereignty, and so the history of policing can help us to trace the fluctuating adherence and application of the polity of Nigeria itself. In doing I so make use of scholarship on sovereignty, following both Agamben (1998) and Hobbes (1651). From its plural colonial roots, through paramilitarism, political centralisation, oil boom, military rule, the rise of ethnic militias to the present, the NPF's prime challenge has been to successfully occupy the policing space in a milieu of multiple competitors, both formal and informal. This brief history also allows us to note the inherently political nature of policing from its inception, the emergence of persistent problems such as corruption, and the establishment of an (originally racial) internal officers/men class dichotomy within the police.

The third chapter contextualises the research, beginning with an outline of the structure, originating legislation, constitutional and legal powers, and formal accountability of the Nigerian Police Force. It then sets that within the context of other Nigerian security agencies with overlapping mandates. Most of this information is not publicly available

elsewhere and thus is of value in its own right. The second part introduces the primary fieldwork site ‘Dutsin Bature’ in Nigeria’s savannah ‘middle-belt’, an area of rural hinterlands and urban centres of trade and administration, of ethnolinguistic diversity and mixed Christian, Muslim and animist traditions. I also illustrate the general sociocultural milieu, local political economy, structures of power and governance, and party-political dynamics as the context in which policing is carried out. The third part introduces ‘B’ division police station, as a series of specialised spaces within which policing functions take place.

Chapter 4 sets a point of departure for our subsequent examination from the inside, ‘outwards’, by first examining the perception of the police from the outside, ‘inwards’. Normative academic, policy and ‘grey’ literature records public aversion to the police (based primarily on corruption and dysfunction) which is integrated into self-perpetuating media tropes. I attempt to disaggregate the differential *salience* of types of corruption in state agencies, and of the problematic legitimacy of the state itself, c.f. Pierce (2006). I then examine public discourse on policing embedded in texts such as popular films, and in everyday public conversation, anecdote and caricature. Thence I break down the terms on which the public express dislike of the police. This also entails deconstructing the assumption of *a* singular public. We are then better able to discern a duality– while dissatisfaction with the police is expressed in the formal public sphere, the particularistic field of social action is the site of more mutually instrumental and accommodative relations with police. This can offer the non-police party to the encounter greater leverage than may be imagined within the formal frameworks of engagement and accountability. Having identified this central dissonance between discourse *about* the police and interaction *with* the police, I attempt to capture the confrontational disposition of police as constrained within particular socially-dictated boundaries of possibility.

The fifth chapter looks at recruitment using Richard Joseph’s theory of prebendalism, which aims to explain how people attempt to gain a stake within the state for material ends, as a ‘broker’ of power in dyadic relationship with supporting constituencies. I re-apply Joseph’s argument, developed to explain the electoral politics of multi-ethnic

federal Nigeria, to the strategies of securing state employment, especially in such a strategically important institution as the police, which is both a route to advancement and the provider of security as a valuable public good in an insecure society. The chapter uses evidence derived primarily from the 2010-11 police recruitment exercise to illustrate the premium on being ‘inside the state’. The chapter then considers the actual strategies and pathways of insertion, which interact with official policies on ethnic federalism and positive discrimination. It identifies the constituencies which form around them, which encompass familial, associative and communitarian links. Overall, the ‘arms race’ between competing imperatives of particularism and professionalism re-iterates through the recruitment process.

Chapter 6 illustrates the institutionality of the NPF as created in the formation of its officers. It portrays institutionality as processual, beginning in the police college, where the work of personal de-construction and re-construction as new kinds of subjects can be observed. Using officers’ own recollections and testimonies, I compare the process with Goffman’s concept of a total institution. In the police college, pre-existing socialities and subjectivities are broken down to re-create police officers as a *type* of persons, inculcating certain dispositions and qualities. Central to this reconstructed personhood is subjection to hierarchy, and internalisation of a sense of rank. In identifying rank as the key to understanding differential agency, personhood and incipient class relations within the police, I follow Jauregui’s (*ibid*) detailed depiction of the internal subalterities created within the police in Uttar Pradesh, India. But the formal institutions also create their own shadow – police colleges create systems of course-mates, and officers quickly learn to use these, and other networks, to creatively navigate career possibilities within the police, especially in the form of opportunities for postings. By using posting as an alternative register of success to promotion, officers’ agency is ‘put back in’ to a system which would appear formally rigid, allowing them sometimes to bypass their own subalterity.

The seventh chapter examines the way officers go about their emblematic activity of criminal investigation. The chapter relies upon a reading of practice to reconstruct the ways in which police negotiate between bureaucratic rules and rationalities, and the

exigencies of practical police work. Ethnographic observations in Dutsin Bature's Divisional Crime Bureau (DCB), are complemented by (and compared with) the station's written records. I identify police casework as a social process which involves the categorisation of persons, adoption of roles, utilisation of leverage, play and improvisation. The importance of police craft, heavily informed by necessity in the absence of material or technical resources, become apparent. In this police are similar to other developing-world state professionals. I define craft as knowledge formed and deployed in practice, after Marchand (2009). Police craft encompasses creative use of the resources provided by society itself, and violence – often discussed in isolation by anthropologists as a separate terrain of action, but which I instead portray as contextualised and integrated with other modes of action in a functional and instrumental manner. Craft also includes mastery of paperwork, the bureaucratic power to create (or choose not to create) written facts which record, fix, and entrap; and the ability to creatively weave personal advantage and financial reward into the conduct of a case investigation. Overall, it becomes evident that a preference for and a tendency towards mediation often becomes apparent in the process of, and often as the goal of, investigations. As such, criminal investigations become also negotiations, in which all parties, including the police, make plentiful recourse to particularist structures, networks, social capital and claims as resources to maximise their agency.

Chapter 8 examines how police officers learn to protect personal interests whilst serving the public (an alternative reading of the official NPF motto which forms the chapter title). It aims to establish how working practices aggregate into dynamics which structure the institution as powerfully as do formal rules. The chapter identifies career risk as a central concern of police officers, and explores the mitigation strategies they employ, especially in creatively utilising relationships formed in the course of their work. It outlines the 'snakes and ladders' potential of police careers, and in exploring the sources of risk reveals something about how the police see the public. The chapter closes in an extended discussion of management and motivation, which considers the workings of managerial power and subaltern responses within the police, in the light of Mbembe (2001) on the

production of disempowerment, which also highlights the ways that social relationships *inside* the police are projected into modes of interaction with the public.

The essence of Chapter 9 is to determine an emic understanding of ‘a policeman’s lot’ in contemporary Nigeria. I attempt to reconstruct the experiential worldview of police officers, using a number of extended ‘testimonies’ as texts. Attempting this entails also considering their self-understanding as situated historical actors. It includes recognising a subjective moral economy which echoes other recent scholarship on African state employees, and the relativistic ethics of how to deal appropriately with ‘bad people’, familiar from other police ethnography. Officers’ understandings of what it is to be a ‘real’ police officer, in nature as well as in form, are central to the chapter. This is defined as a matter of both *being* and *doing*, of deploying wisdom not just in police work, but in mastering the internal workings of the institution itself. In the chapter, I find that the ability to master and work in two repertoires at once – both the mode of formal professional skill, and the instrumental craft of maximising personal advantage - is fundamental to police officers’ self-understanding as they negotiate daily contradictions.

The conclusion draws together common threads in the chapters above to determine the essential characteristics of the Nigerian Police. Among them are a dialogue between function and dysfunction, between formal role and informal usage, which are perhaps less separable than we might have assumed, and which also implicate the discussions on the nature of the state we visited in this introduction. Another is the powerful and generative disjuncture between a formal, rational institution intended to interlocute with a system of ‘blind’ justice, and the reality of an extremely particularistic society in which the formal logics of the state have limited reach and limited material capacity. A third is, as suggested above, the mutually constitutive interplay between function and practice in defining what an institution is and how it generates meaning. Everyday practice is as important as stated purpose; what the police actually do matters in defining what they are and how they are understood by wider society.

We will return to consider what, if any, wider conclusions we can draw about the nature of the Nigerian state, and how this may problematise normative formulations of the relationship between entities labelled ‘state’ and ‘society’ in Africa and elsewhere. As we shall see, these interpenetrate and shape each other and their shared public sphere.

Overall, the study will demonstrate that in contrast to the analyses which portray formal police forces in Africa as just one, comparatively weak, component in a situation of plural policing options, the Nigeria Police Force, despite its many problems, retains currency, is used by the public, and continually attempts to reassert its primacy.

In as much as this work has an ideological position, the study of an African bureaucratic institution is itself a contribution to a work in progress. Within the academy, where subtler analyses of the modernity and hybridity of both ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ seem self-evident, it is easy to forget that for many outsiders, anthropology remains the study of ‘tribes’. Therefore, its mobilisation in the study of Africa is seen as renewing the representation of ‘Africa, where the tribes are’ – and thus allowing lazy public debates in which ethnicity and ethnic diversity is taken as an explanation for negative political and social phenomena, not as a phenomenon itself requiring explanation.¹⁴ Nigeria has been a particular victim of the shift in gaze to ethnicity-as-explanation, especially perhaps because Nigerians themselves make much of the issue in contrast to other potentially salient social divisions such as class or gender. Most scholars (with rare exceptions such as Suberu, *ibid*) fail to interrogate how this bias is deliberately produced and renewed precisely by formal state practices. The importance of formal institutions, their composition and imperatives is *de facto* backgrounded. Overall, in the study of African states we need to remember that society is shaped by states as much as the other way round, and that formal institutions, as much as ‘primordial’ or neo-traditional groupings, are powerful organisational units, interest groups, and meaningful founts of identity. This thesis is over and above everything else, a contribution to that exercise in rebalancing.

¹⁴ It is an uncomfortable truth that for this reason in many African universities, anthropology is often taken as fundamentally anti-modern, and as a mode of study is seen as implicitly construing its subjects as pre-modern and primitive.

Chapter 2: Policing Nigeria: Towards an history of state sovereignty

This chapter is an effort towards an ‘history of the present’ of policing in Nigeria. In present-day Nigeria, policing - the professional control of crime and maintenance of public order - is problematised by public disenchantment and alienation, politicisation and political interference, uneven allocation of resources, multiple and competing state law enforcement and security agencies, and numerous non-state vigilance groups. Therefore, investigating present-day policing requires understanding the historical roots of this array of forces, conditions and sentiments. The history of the Nigeria Police Force allows us to trace the origins and evolution of contemporary structures, dynamics and practices. But it also fulfils a further purpose: Policing is not only a specialised activity of the state; it is central to the abilities, claims and writ of states, and so the history of policing can help us to trace the fluctuating adherence and application of the polity of Nigeria itself. To police, to enforce the law within a jurisdiction, is to enact Weber’s monopoly of legitimate violence, the basic principle of statehood. To police *is* to govern. The story of policing in Nigeria is the story of two fundamental aspects of the Nigerian state and its dominion over society; its sovereignty, and its legitimacy.

2.1: Policing, sovereignty and legitimacy

The meaning of ‘police’ as a verb is to regulate, monitor, allow and disallow, and to manage; and to be *able to* police formally is to exercise sovereignty.¹⁵ Policing is the creation of an order, just as crime is *sui generis* the contestation of an order – there can be no crime without the law which defines it. Policing therefore produces the state and can also show us what sovereign power actually *is*. Re-determining the location of

¹⁵ For Charles Tilly (1990) the origins of states themselves are as entrepreneurial security-provision groups who entrenched their legitimacy upon the ability to protect populations from other threats; an analysis which might fit the late 19th-century paternalist rationale for colonisation nearly as well as the European contexts it was devised to explain.

sovereignty - the authority to exercise power without reference to higher founts of authority, has been the basis of numerous recent analyses of non-state policing (see Hansen and Stepputat 2005) mainly with reference to Agamben's (1998) emphasis on the right to decide on (and thus take life and death decisions over) the rights and statuses of human subjects. But most such studies of non-state law enforcement assume a counterposing coherence to the internal sovereignty of states themselves. In Nigeria however, Fourchard (2008) emphasises the long history of multilateral policing and the comparatively short interim reign of the state monopoly on security provision, as we will trace in more detail below. So we must seek to understand the particular distribution of the state's sovereign power - both spatial and institutional - which have been set up since the advent of formal policing in Nigeria, and the limits on its capacity dictated by police forces' resources, aims, and encountering of other nodes of para-policing authority.

Sovereignty, then, is the capacity to act effectively. But efficacy itself is dependent in part on those actions' legitimacy as perceived by those on whom (and nominally at least, *for* whom) they are performed. So our history must also consider the legitimacy of state policing in Nigeria. Beek and Goepfert (2011) observe that Weber understood legitimacy as a work continually in progress. Equally, the top-down introduction of the colonial state (and the work of convincing subjects of its legitimacy) was a *process*, not an event, and one which even postcolonially continues to be enacted, resisted and negotiated. State policing had to work to acquire and retain currency and meaning, especially where pre-existing ideals of legitimacy, justice and security retained strong social resonance. Hobbes' (1651) conception of a sovereign is a Leviathan able and prepared to deploy force as final arbiter between social forces, and aggressively monopolistic of *meaning* within its domain; excluding the possibility of external founts of authority. The continued existence of other ideals of legitimacy then, should problematise our understanding of state sovereignty.

We will see below that the nature and fortunes of police institutions are not separable from the fluctuations in fortune of the Nigerian state, which can in many ways be 'read off' from them. The constitutional and political positioning of the police, and moulding

and remoulding of its structure, have informed the operative principles of policing, and of both the public's and police's imaginings of their role. Much present-day public rhetoric on policing portrays a decline of capacity and professionalism from previous heights; historical study enables us to nuance this by understanding that policing Nigeria has always been constrained in various ways, not least by the wider nature and political-economic logics of the state throughout successive periods of change. We must situate the fundamental nature of policing in Nigeria in the historical context of the creation of wider systems of political economy and social inequalities, and the search for ways to regulate and contain the conflicts which arise from these. The chapter illustrates the consequent advent of particular modes of policing power and kinds of relationships between policing authorities and the publics they were tasked with policing. It also provides insights into the human composition of the state itself. Finally, we should remember that the creation of a state, and of a particular *kind* of state, through governmental institutional technologies such as policing, demands also reflection on *who* and *what* is being policed, implicating the longstanding debate on policing as either a mechanism of class and social control, criminalising the dispossessed in the service of the propertied establishment, or a neutral enforcer of law and order for the common good.¹⁶

2.2: Colonial policing

2.2.1: *Early constabularies*

The origins of formal modern policing institutions in colonial Africa are well-documented, but did not originate in a vacuum. Precolonial Africa featured a large array of communal institutions which exercised functions of law maintenance, dispute resolution, and punishment of wrongdoers. These include masquerade societies, membership sodalities, shrines and their keepers, oaths, oracles, age-sets, ad-hoc courts, rulers and their courts, elected and appointed popular representatives, and institutions which combine multiple of these functions. In Islamic polities communal jurial norms

¹⁶ As we shall see elsewhere, this tension is not only unresolved in the academy, but poses a continuing dialectic in the project of practical policing.

coexisted with codified Islamic laws and legal specialists. African forms of justice are frequently typified as restorative rather than retributive, particularist rather than general, corporatist rather than individualist, spiritually imbued rather than secular, and punishing by fine, loss of free personhood, or death rather than carceral or corporal punishment.¹⁷ Neither did these forms and norms vanish with the advent of colonial rule, meaning that the story of policing and governmental authority in Nigeria is in part about competition for control, reach and legitimacy with these other institutions and notions. Precolonial practices have persisted and adapted in conversation with modern policing; as Okereafoezeke ably illustrates ad-hoc forms of community justice prove especially pervasive due to their simplicity, broad base, low cost, participatory nature and legitimacy (see Okereafoezeke 2003; also Pratten 2007b). Even in colonial hubs, professional policing was a relatively recent invention – London’s Metropolitan Police was founded in 1829, only 32 years before the Lagos constabulary.

Policing in British colonial West Africa saw recruits from ‘martial’ races and tribes, freed slaves and other mobile young men from across the northern savannah regions, often generically known as ‘Hausas’, modelled into small private armies such as the Royal Niger Company’s Hausa Constabulary, designed to enforce peace in the service of trade.¹⁸ Charles Orr, one of the architects of colonial administration in Northern Nigeria, records that “A force of constabulary was organised under British officers, on the same principles as those already existing on the Gold Coast, and at first numbered about 400, though as the responsibilities of the Company increased it was strengthened until it eventually reached a total of 1,000” (Orr 1911; 27). At the turn of the century, with the penetration of formal colonial rule, these private forces were taken under public control and reorganised into a minimal police to protect government itself: “A civil official was placed as Resident (...) having a handful of native police to assist him in civil duties, and

¹⁷ All these are true generalisations but not exclusively so; there *are* examples of gaols and of retributive justice from precolonial Africa.

¹⁸ A form of privatised policing which continued in the form of the ‘supernumerary’ or ‘spy’ police auxiliaries attached to oil companies operating in enclaves in the Niger Delta. They were also used by the RNC’s successor in the palm-oil trade (and Unilever progenitor) the United Africa Company.

act as gaolers, court messengers and so forth”.¹⁹ Soon afterwards the force was increased and “turned into a constabulary, with the object, amongst others, of protecting Residents when touring through pagan districts” (*ibid*, p170). Policing therefore from its outset was para-military in origin, and centrally concerned the protection of ruling state elites, as well as punitive actions to enforce the new colonial authority (Anderson & Killingray 1991).²⁰ Such forces, under public control but tied closely to the demands of colonial business and governmental operations, were later joined by small civil constabularies in the main urban and administrative centres.

2.2.2: Professional police forces

From the late 1920s, the police were aggregated into new professional forces for each colony. In general they were modelled on the blueprint of the Royal Irish Constabulary, a gendarmerie designed both to provide public security and enforce the interests of London’s government over Ireland’s colonised populace (see Brogden 1987; Heidersohn 2007). The system embedded a principle of ‘strangers to police strangers’ which ensured loyalty to governmental authority rather than to local populations.²¹ Killingray (1986) observes that formal policing in much of colonial Africa was from the outset an urban affair, visible at points of articulation of the colonial economy and polity, but invisible in the rural areas of ‘Africa inutile’ where traditional authority, community mechanisms and customary law held sway, and where police forces were usually government-endorsed and augmented versions of ‘traditional’ law-enforcement institutions. Clearly then, there were nodes where the formal colonial state was dense and vast tracts where it was minimally present.²²

¹⁹ Orr also notes the very small size of these civil forces; at first there were fewer than twelve men of the constabulary in each province (*ibid*, p133).

²⁰ This duality is retained until the present day in foundational laws which define the police role – in addition to maintaining law and order – as performing all *military functions* as may be required.

²¹ The RIC model was clearly influential across Britain’s colonies and protectorates; Brogden (*ibid*) argues that it also had a powerful and usually unrecognised influence upon the development of domestic policing in the United Kingdom.

²² An uneven sovereignty which Ferguson (2005) argues is reproduced in the postmodern post-colonial state.

2.2.3: *Commonweal or coercion?*

After Reiner (2000) we can recognise two opposing analyses of the evolution of policing. One is ‘orthodox’, portraying the establishment of professional police forces as protecting the commonweal; the other ‘revisionist’ radical reading meanwhile understands policing primarily as protecting the interests and values of the ruling propertied class. Both have implications for the public’s recognition of the legitimacy of police forces. Two comprehensive histories of the police in Nigeria take opposing sides of this debate.

Tekena Tamuno’s (1970) essentially uncritical conservative institutional history can be read as the story of how policing evolved in response to challenges to the colonial order, at the same time both ‘criminal’ and ‘political’. One peculiarity of Nigeria was a dual system of national and local policing which saw Native Authority (NA) police directly accountable to local rulers (supervised by the District Officer), while the Nigeria Police were a national and centrally-accountable force for areas under direct rule. In the immediate prewar period colonial authorities in Nigeria looked to the Palestinian force as a model for policing a dynamic and multi-ethnic colony. From an early core of ‘martial’ Hausas, and Yorubas favoured by their proximity to the capital Lagos, recruitment and the ethnic composition of the NPF changed to become majority-Igbo from the 1930s to 1960s.²³ Tamuno also records corruption on the roads from a very early era, as well as public complaints over abuse of office, and use of what was then called ‘the third degree’ in interrogation.²⁴

Ahire by contrast explicitly rejects any consensual basis to colonial policing. He argues that colonial society had no single ‘pervasive consensus’ and that “conflicts between colonial policies and indigenous realities perpetually threatened public order” (Ahire 1991; 79). He sees the police as another technology of rule in a repertoire of disciplinary exploitation which also included tax and labour recruitment, sanitary inspectors and

²³ Tamuno attributes this to geographical mobility, overpopulation in south-eastern Nigeria’s Igbo homelands, the failure of Islamically-educated Hausa applicants to reach English-literacy requirements for recruitment, and the dominant Yoruba preference for clerical work. This growth in Igbo staffing was also evident in other government employment including the military officer corps (Siollun 2009).

²⁴ Early precursors of the common present-day checkpoints where police demand N20 ‘tips’ from drivers.

‘The third degree’ would now be called torture.

planning officials, a complex which connected public order with moral hygiene. For Ahire, formal policing was extending the penetration of government in the service of colonial capitalism, and he contends that “crime control was never central to the police role” (*ibid*; 96). This argument ignores the indivisibility of category and purpose, wherein colonial definitions of crime and illegality *also* served an overall political-economic systemic intention. Ahire does however pertinently note that British common-law concepts of ‘blind’ justice are counter to the spirit of much African community justice, which tends to be particularist and takes context and relationships into account. As Ibhawoh (2009; 446) notes of the attempt to apply a common-law judicial system cross-culturally, “the paradox of accommodating native difference and universal standards was not easily resolved”.²⁵ Yet neither did colonial justice cleave entirely to Britain’s own domestic standards. The Nigerian colonial police, directly responsible to the unseparated executive powers of the District Officer at the local level, were subject to much more direct political control than British police. In addition, the nature of colonial society meant that black police officers of the NPF had difficulty in enforcing their authority over white law-breakers.²⁶ And Ahire, like Tamuno, documents early police corruption: Ibadan’s *Egbe Agbekoya* peasant protests complained of “police officers who spent most of their time harassing us... to milk us for bribes day and night” (Ahire 1991; 74). He portrays today’s NPF as an unreconstructed direct descendant of the colonial force using ‘strangers to police strangers’. But even by the postwar period, posting of African personnel was being adjusted to ensure that some constables and NCOs from the same language communities, although not the same actual localities, were posted to appropriate stations,²⁷ a play-off between imperatives of rule and loyalty on one hand, and professional performance on the other. In fact, both the orthodox and radical versions of this history have a weakness in failing to acknowledge dynamism: Neither Tamuno nor Ahire acknowledges the evidence for a partial evolution from paramilitarism to civil policing during colonial rule. Still less do either acknowledge the inherent duality of

²⁵ Interestingly, Ibhawoh also notes that by the postwar period UK-based appeals judges sitting on cases referred from Nigeria acknowledged the focus on redress and cohesion and the fluid nature of many African jural norms.

²⁷ Interview, retired colonial officer, Oxford 24th June 2010.

policing (and government and states in general) as being both self-sustaining power structures and providers of public goods at the same time.

In colonial Nigeria, where the military West African Frontier Force was relatively marginal and inconspicuous (Siollun, *op cit*) the police were at the core of the symbolic pomp of state. Regional Governors had senior police Aides-de-Camp and the police were expected to take on ceremonial duties such as guards of honour for visiting dignitaries.²⁸ At the same time the military roots of the police persisted internally, and not only in the retention of military ranks such as 'sergeant-major'. A former colonial Assistant Superintendent described the role of Divisional Police Officer as being like that of a regimental officer in peacetime soldiering, encompassing welfare and oversight more than organising day-to-day operations; which as well as giving a window into the social origins of the (originally racial) hierarchical divisions between senior and junior officers, should give some idea of the level of supervision and leeway enjoyed by lower-ranking African personnel.²⁹

2.2.4: Colonial administration and mixed jurisdictions

Colonial Nigeria had two roots; the older trading-based settlements of Lagos and the Oil Rivers Protectorate in the south, and in the north a military suzerainty constructed on the foundations of the Fulani Sokoto Caliphate. Twin administrations of Northern and Southern Nigeria reflected these dual heritages in their approaches to administration, and even after amalgamation in 1914, continued to guard their respective traditions. Their two police forces were not amalgamated into a unitary Nigeria Police Force until 1930. Even then their different antecedents were remembered and preserved by some. A retired expatriate colonial police officer remembers that by the 1950s the NPF was still circulating orders that Southern Provinces police insignia were no longer permitted:

²⁸ Meanwhile NA police were used in many ways as an extension of traditional courtly officialdom and household attendants.

²⁹ Interview, Edward Eates, Exeter 24th August 2010.

I ordered my Inspector to take down the names of all those wearing Southern Provinces cap badges at parade. He brought it to me and I said, you've forgotten someone. Have I, sir? Yes, I said, me. So he wrote my name down. Now, I said, what should we do with these men? 'I don't know Sir.' So I took it from him and screwed it up and threw it in the bin.³⁰

Neither was the inherited difference limited to emotive commemoration; until today, Northern and Southern Nigeria have two different frameworks of criminal law, differing in minor respects. Northern Nigeria's Penal Code and the Southern Provinces' Criminal Code. Meanwhile another system of customary courts continued to rule on family, land and inheritance matters, except where these were deemed 'repugnant to natural justice'.³¹

Nigeria was engaged in building a system of mixed and simultaneous jurisdictions, with interlocking sovereignties distributed across different levels. Rotimi (2001) examines the rise and fall of the independent Native Authority police forces operated by the regional governments of Northern and Western Nigeria, co-opted local court and civic policing institutions which operated in tandem with the national Nigeria Police Force. While new spaces of the colonial state – new towns, strangers' and migrants' quarters, expatriate-only Government Reserve Areas, infrastructure - were policed by the NPF (including special forces of Railways, Ports and Mines police), rural areas and older-established towns operated Lord Lugard's model of indirect rule driven by a triple rationale - keeping down costs; ensuring traditional rulers' loyalty; and building capacity of the Native Administrations. *Dogarai* in Emirate northern Nigeria and *Ilari* or *Agunren* in the Yoruba south-west were officials (often slaves or hereditary bonded servants) who combined roles of policeman, palace retainer, bodyguard, messenger, executioner and tax-collector at city gates.³² While some colonial officers were creating the NPF along

³⁰ Interview, retired colonial NPF officer Michael Thoights, Oxford 24th June 2010.

³¹ This arrangement, which would have seemed untidy in the French colonial and constitutional system, with its emphasis on standardisation, seemingly presented no conceptual problems for the British, whose home United Kingdom was itself an Empire state operating different legal systems in England and Wales, Scotland, and certain offshore islands.

³² They offer possible precedents for the widespread use of police as personal escorts and orderlies in present-day Nigeria. In precolonial south-eastern and Niger delta areas, by contrast, the sodalities which regulated and policed the mainly acephalous communities, often masked and of secret membership, were not ideal for co-optation to the purposes of colonial government; indeed they often formed nodes of

high modern lines in the 1930s, others pushed in the other direction, arguing that this would dilute the power of traditional authorities on which indirect rule rested. Rather than neat historical phases of policing, then, we should recognise an evolving admixture of strategies and policies. Rotimi also concurs with Fourchard that today's mixture of vigilantism and official policing is nothing new. This is partly because early forces such as Abeokuta's *Ode* hunter-nightguards *became* the official NA police, and in part because the history of policing in Nigeria shows an oscillation throughout between official tacit encouragement of non-formal policing on the one hand, and suppression and proscription on the other; not a state monopoly but what Fourchard calls 'hesitant negotiation' with other loci of power.

Nigeria was never a particularly prosperous colony, and with little subsidy from the Colonial Office in London, public services were designed on a very tight budget (Nicholson 1969). Not only were colonial police forces spatially limited and small in number, they were also thinly spread, and where NA police forces existed, not always closely supervised. Former colonial policeman Edward Eates remembers Ilorin Province in 1952; now Kwara State, with 4,654 personnel in the State Command³³ it was then a single division:

The whole province (...) regular police, forty, less than fifty. The Ilorin NA were about a hundred... and then there were some other NA police forces more or less in Dahomey (i.e. near the border with present-day Benin Republic). I went there out of curiosity but they hadn't been visited by a gazetted officer for *thirty or forty years* (author's italics).³⁴

From this, we may draw conclusions about the distribution of colonial state power, and the quite extreme degree of indirectness possible under indirect rule. But even in urban contexts, when towns included both an indigenous pre-existing settlement and new urban growth, jurisdiction was divided accordingly:

resistance to the new modalities of law and order which colonial authorities employed in those areas (see Pratten 2007; also Rösenthaller 2004).

³³ Nigeria Police Annual Report 2008.

³⁴ Eates, interview *op cit*.

The Nigerian Police policed the (...) government compound and the railway, and then the railway police came, and then traffic, and then the NA police, the NA police controlled the town (...) There were some outposts, we had some people in Jebba. (...) And then we had some people in Offa, only a handful under an NCO.³⁵

We can see how little contact rural, and even some urban, communities had with formal state policing even while living under its supposed writ.³⁶ Community justice continued to hold sway except when threats to the peace, or the actions of local judicial institutions themselves, attracted governmental attention and intervention. As Eates succinctly put it, “Outside the towns, I suppose, we didn't know what was going on. but it must've been satisfactory for whoever was living there otherwise we'd have heard about it.”

2.2.5: Policing indirect rule

The mandate of indirect rule dictated that indigenous institutions be maintained and co-opted to the purposes of imperial rule where possible. But even where centralised polities could be incorporated with administrative adjustment, new and unintended meanings were created, as Pierce (2006) relates of Kano Emirate, where British reforms to Islamic constitutions were internalised by the *talakawa* peasant public not as a new order of law, fairness and justice, but as a continuation and intensification of feudal extractive oppression. The challenge of applying colonial law was even more complex where it concerned the institutions of acephalous societies. Green (1964) devotes much of her portrayal of mid-colonial era Igbo village life to judicial, security and ‘police’ matters; here, whilst offences are divided into a schema approximately analogous to the common-law division between ‘civil’ and ‘criminal’ matters (see also Okereafoezeke, *op cit*) most matters in both categories are dealt with by more or less ad-hoc assemblages of peers, and in more serious matters elders and the wider community. Colonial state law exists, but off-stage – recourse to it is made only occasionally, and then usually by plaintiffs who are

³⁵ Eates, interview *op cit*. Jebba and Offa are 75km and 45km respectively from Ilorin.

³⁶³⁶ And some still do not. On visiting one distant rural village within ‘B’ division in the company of some uniformed officers, the whole male population of the village came out to see what was happening; we were told they were concerned it was a punitive raid because of a dispute with a neighbouring village over fishponds.

on the losing end of community justice, and who also risk further opprobrium by bringing the colonial state in.

The deep-rooted quasi-judicial and spiritual sodalities of south-eastern Nigeria, which combined local power elite groupings with instruments for punishment and social control, and the use of oracles, oaths and shrines, provided a direct and persistent challenge to state law, and in some cases, still do. The problems the NPF encountered in confronting the Annang ‘man-leopard murderers’ of 1945-1948 presaged the problems posed by the Okija Shrine and its adherents which it would encounter around 60 years later (Pratten 2007b, Ellis 2008).³⁷

Yet if alternative loci of power, legitimacy, justice and therefore sovereignty were to be successfully suppressed, the state itself had to assume their role. In order to effectively claim to police public and social life, the state had to engage with the full range of the population’s concerns, including spiritual security. While the state remained agnostic on matters such as witchcraft, it integrated local understandings of their meaning and intentionality in categories of crime such as ‘Possession of Criminal Charm’ which took such spiritual aids as evidence of malicious or illicit intent.³⁸ Otherwise such immaterial phenomena could have very material effects if the populace took matters into their own hands; mob justice was a threat to the peace, and anything more organised than that a threat to the state itself. Confrontation was one way for the police to deal with indigenous non-state security actors - an ‘Unlawful Societies Ordinance’ was passed as early as 1905. But quiet cohabitation was perhaps more common: Fourchard (*op cit*) notes that 78 official permits were issued for communities to maintain their own forces of hunter-nightguards in Ibadan between 1948 and 1954 alone. This post-war period was a time of general concern with rising crime, as is today. No expatriate senior officers were recruited during the war years, and a significant number of African rank and file officers

³⁷ The 5,000-odd litigants using Okija at the time of its closure by police show the persistent appeal of such spiritual centres in the range of decision-making forums among which the public may ‘shop’.

³⁸ Offence 217 in the Penal Code. Charms to confer invisibility or protection are a typical part of the thief’s toolkit.

were drafted en-masse into the army.³⁹ At the same time, war production and the use of Nigerian infrastructure for war logistics brought social transformations and economic pressures such as drastic rises in the cost of living. The war economy also brought increasing numbers of people into the towns, railways, camps, and ports – and thus into orbit of formal policing. Crime rates rose drastically; reported offences against persons rose from 2,732 in 1939 to 37,200 in 1949/1950 (Olomola, 1976). At the same time, battling to retain its policing monopoly, government continued to suppress vigilante sodality movements in the east. Tamuno records that 55 people were hanged for involvement in Abakaliki's *Odozi Obodo* vigilante society between 1954 and 1958.

2.2.6: Institution-building, social transformation and public order

In that same period, the Nigeria Police Force was repositioned in response to new political threats to colonial order. The prewar NPF emphasis on de-militarisation continued, complete with the introduction of modern civil policing techniques such as photography, fingerprinting, a Criminal Investigations Department (CID), and public relations initiatives such as police brass bands. But at the same time colonial government increasingly redirected the police to face the challenges of independence nationalist politics, which had notably surfaced during World War II, and which was reinvigorated by returning African ex-servicemen. This is clear in police responses to the 1945 general strike, 1947 Burutu tin mine strike, and 1949 Enugu strike in which police shot 21 coal miners dead. There were also riots in Ikot Ekpene and Aba in 1950. While the most egregious of these incidents was followed-up with a damning government enquiry, they also marked an emergent shift of policing back towards the paramilitary which continued after independence. Former Inspector-General Kerr Bovell noted with irony the difficulty in simultaneously repositioning the Nigerian police as a friendly public service whilst also using it for heavy-handed repression of pre-decolonisation upheavals (Ahire 1991; 115).

³⁹ Police officers formed the basis of one entire army battalion sent to fight in Burma.

Colonial indirect rule rested on a concept of power in which the conduct of public affairs and the resolution of conflicts were the purview of *administration*, the art of a paternalist and non-interested mandarin personified by the executive District Officer; into which its ruder sibling 'politics' intruded in a disruptive and unwelcome manner as decolonisation approached. Of course, administration was a deeply political concern, but its recasting as a neutral technical discipline served to depoliticise it, although perhaps more in the eyes of those wielding such powers than those they were wielded upon. The police, as the final underpinning of law and colonial order, were an essential part of articulating this, and usually in much more subtle ways than the violent showdowns cited above, which may in fact be seen as failures of administration and policing.⁴⁰

Yet the technical discipline of 'administration' could mask particular partisan positions, especially as electoral politics was gradually introduced through the 1950s. The following case shows how policing could be central in decolonisation politics. The Emirate of Ilorin, which had conquered the northern fringes of the Oyo empire in the nineteenth century, was a part of the northern region. Its Emir and aristocrats were the crux of indirect administration as the Native Authority, and at the same time supporters of the conservative Northern People's Congress (NPC) which enjoyed the tacit favour of British policymakers. Some educated elites of the Yoruba-speaking subject population in the southern part of the province however wished to join the the neighbouring Western Region administered by Obafemi Awolowo's leftist and Yoruba-nationalist Action Group. Former Ilorin DPO Eates' notes from the time read:

"John Ikunren, chief agitator of the Igbominas for secession to the west had been called before the emir for a few words of advice [...] the NA is starting to enforce control over public meetings using the NA Ordinance and wanted to see the form under which permits under the Police Ordinance were granted, their powers being similar. Strictly the holder

⁴⁰ They certainly were seen as failures by the Colonial Office, which followed up most such incidents with Commissions of Enquiry to determine blame and lessons to be learned.

of an NA permit still needs a police permit, but not the other way round, so we still have the last say"⁴¹

Commenting on these notes, Eates clarified:

Most of these western people were lawyers anyhow. So they applied to me to hold a meeting in Offa. [...] And now the police - now it maybe in there but - the police were always quite clear that the person who wants to have a meeting or a procession shall go to the police for a permit. And the police *shall* issue the permit *unless* they think there is going to be disorder or some good reason not to. Now in fact, you're just as likely to get disorder by refusing [...] I said alright *but* you must get a permit from the NA as well, so I gave them a permit provisional on getting a permit from the NA. And of course then the NA, well that; well I, they were indignant but I mean it was up to them, they want... the government kept on trying to push responsibility onto the NA, you see [...] and if they, it's up to them to enforce it, so I said yes, if you... all you've got to do is refuse it and it's er... they can't have the meeting. So eventually they refused it, so back to square one, but it was the NA that did it, not the police.

In this case, the formal separation of powers between two police forces which in fact worked in tandem allowed for the Nigeria Police to allow the rally conditional on the NA Police's permission, while it was also expected that the NA might refuse permission. The separation of policing powers and devolution to the NA allowed them to neuter the potentially controversial rally through administrative means, without the central colonial administration taking a 'political' stance on the matter. The procedural selective division of sovereignty as a deliberate technique of rule is thrown into even starker perspective when we remember that in many places, the NA police forces would be under the day-to-day functional command of a European, and therefore the reference back to the NA police was likely the reference back to another expatriate manager:

They had their own ASP normally, I mean he's supposed to be an advisor but in fact he ran it, just like you would a division.

⁴¹ The parts in quotation marks are the interviewee's copies of reports to regional headquarters. Interview Exeter, Devon 24th August 2010.

Here then, in this instrumental use of buck-passing and the formal separation of powers, we can clearly see a colonial antecedent of the dissembling tactic which has become a hallmark of statecraft and government in post-colonial Nigeria. But while such administrative sleights of hand may have seemed to the man on the spot the best way of ensuring the best outcome in the eyes of the superiors to whom he was accountable, it risked backfiring as a provocation to the sectional public it offended, and one which was only averted by use of another archetypal craft of policing, the bluff of force. Eates continues:

So we all went down there, they only had about fortysomething regular police and it was lucky actually nothing happened but... we made a half-unit out of that twenty-five, a bit of tear smoke and you know, three rifles... that put the westerners in a quandary [they] came up to the resthouse where there was the Resident, and the DO, and myself, and he [indistinct] very oppressive and all, [indistinct] and I said well, better tell that to the NA... they decided in the end to call it off, we were lucky.

Eates' dilemma here would be one familiar to a present-day Nigerian DPO. On one hand he must serve the wider interests of the political bureaucracy to which he is answerable. On the other, he must serve the wider professional ends of preserving the public peace as he thinks best, avoiding disturbance, injury or loss of life. And as his discomfort in relating his advice to the NA reveals, the imperfect transitional democracy of late colonial times resembles that of today, in that the local elite occupy a problematic role as both a component of the wider governmental structures to which the police are officially accountable, *and* a highly interested party in the politicised public order issue at stake.

Here we are also vividly reminded that not all developments in policing – inherently often a discretionary and reactive activity - resulted from grand plans conceived in the Colonial Office; perhaps more often expediency, coincidence of interest, necessity or institutional logics were more immediate motivations. As Hills (2008) pertinently reminds us of a later stage of NPF reform, institutional change is usually a dialectic and

iterative process in which the response to previous reform carries more influence than any plan from above.⁴²

Planning is very evident, however, in the transition to independence in October 1960: The indigenisation of the senior cadre had already begun nearly 20 years earlier, but accelerating Nigerianisation throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s meant new positions and fast promotions. The new expanded opportunities of the senior officer career track could be an attractive career option. Sometimes this decision was made by an individual, and sometimes collectively by a family wishing to establish their influence in the institutions of the state: Retired Deputy Inspector-General Parry Osanyande was one of the former; he recalled joining in the independence year of 1960 straight from school in Benin City:

We used to steal time between our lessons to go and watch the police on parade, and I was fascinated... my teacher, Reverend Father Donnelly... any time we did something, he will tell me to go and join the police, that I was a born detective.⁴³

Former Inspector-General Aliyu Attah represents the latter tendency; from the Igbirra royal family in present-day Kogi State, he joined as a cadet Inspector in the same year while his brothers went to other new organs of state, such as the health and diplomatic services.⁴⁴ Indigenisation entailed rethinking recruitment to include ethnic and regional balance in the composition of the police. 1957's Willink Commission of enquiry into the concerns of ethnic minorities gave birth to institutions including the Police Service Commission, designed to ensure that police recruitment would be proportionally representative of Nigeria's ethnoregional diversity.

⁴² Note that Hills' analysis describes a police which enact the agenda of political leadership uncontested. However this does not fully take into account the possibilities for quiet autonomy which characterise the NPF's actions at even quite junior levels, except when powers that be take unusual and selective interest in a particular event or issue. Compare this with Marenin (1985) in which he concludes that the high degree of internal autonomy within the NPF precludes the successful use of the police as a deliberately directed tool of class interest by an elite-run government, except in a few rare selected situations.

⁴³ Retd. DIG Parry Osayande, interview Abuja 25th April 2011.

⁴⁴ Retd. IG Alhaji Aliyu Attah, interview Abuja 16th April 2011.

2.3: Postcolonial transformations, from independence to military rule

Much as colonial legacies are significant, policing has also been shaped by the transforming political economy of post-independence Nigeria. In 1960, Nigeria was a parliamentary democracy with a central government of limited powers sitting above three powerful autonomous regions, and an economy based around 55 million producers of agricultural commodities, who provided most government revenue through income and indirect taxes. Today, it is a centralised federation with a powerful executives in charge of central government and 36 constituent states, relying on oil for 80% of its revenue. Meanwhile a hugely wealthy elite, sustained by privileged access to the state and supposedly public goods and monopolies, exists alongside the vast majority who derive their living from the much larger non-oil economy, most of which is informal and untaxed⁴⁵. This disconnect, in which government is structured by a patron-client logic, but which also offers diverse avenues for avoiding the state, has contributed to a polity which has functionally neglected (even divested itself of) many aspects of governance – including, many contend, the effective provision of security (see for example Ekeh, 2002). Trends in policing, crime, law and order must be understood in light of this transformation and its consequences for the polity's legitimacy and sovereignty over society.

2.3.1: Political unrest and centralisation

In the 1960s, increasingly heated post-independence battles between the Federal centre and opposition-dominated regional governments drew in both the NPF and regionally-controlled NA police. Challenges to public order, primarily in the Western Region (1962) and the Tiv-speaking areas of Benue Province in 1960 and 1964, stemmed from regional opposition to the central NPC-dominated government and their local power-brokers who utilised NA police in a partisan manner (see Ehinmore & Vaaseh 2011). The routine arming of the police was authorised by Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa in 1963 in the face

⁴⁵ Revenue projection from Nigerian Budget Office of the Federation, GDP composition Central Bank of Nigeria.

of widespread political violence. Riot-trained Mobile Squadrons on the ‘quell-and-go’ intervention model used in other modernising and politically volatile states such as Brazil and Malaysia were introduced in 1962, forerunners of today’s Mobile Police. Nigerian street humour quickly adapted the phrase to the derogatory ‘kill and go’.

The misuse of police in the regional crises also resulted in the eventual abolition of NA police forces in favour of a centrally-controlled monopoly force by Nigeria’s first military government in 1966. From that point, the Nigerian Police Force would be unitary, with recruitment, posting, budgeting and training controlled entirely from the centre, and all political accountability coming via the Federal Government instead of the federating units.⁴⁶ The post-civil war period was a particular catalyst for centralisation. In its expansionary phase, all of this was aided by new resources at the disposal of government to enhance the state’s capacity; in fact the oil boom of the late 1960s-1970s, with its statist national development plans, seems perhaps as near as the Nigerian state has yet come to exercising a monopoly on security provision.

2.3.2: The state and bureaucratic politics

The post-independence period further saw the politicisation of the police by changing regimes – as Tamuno (1993) noted, throughout all of Nigeria’s constitutional rearrangements the police have been much less insulated from political interference than has, for example, the judiciary. S.G Ehindero (1993) noted that all major institutional changes in the post-independence NPF had been to do with constitutional and political rearrangements imposed from above, rather than responses to operational or public imperatives⁴⁷

Transformation in political economy also saw changes in the systemic logics of state institutions. Joseph’s analysis of the democratic experiment of 1979-1983 outlines a political system in which ‘brokers’ who captured stated office with the support of

⁴⁶ Military rule-by-decree also reversed the separation of powers introduced when the Resident and District Officer system was replaced by elected local government prior to decolonisation.

⁴⁷ Ehindero became Inspector-General in 2005.

powerful ethnoregional constituencies then recouped their investment by using their offices as revenue-farming ‘prebends’ (Joseph 1987). That system was built on earlier foundations in party and bureaucratic politics, and it equally began to affect policing. Already by 1967 the Gobir Commission had found that lucrative postings and promotions were bought and sold within the force (Marenin, 1985). More recent corruption in higher echelons of the NPF is better understood when one appreciates that in such a prebendal system, the command of the police became another politicised state office to be brokered. The trend was enhanced under the military, although it was perhaps better-hidden than under today’s civilian dispensation. It became so naturalised that Ehindero, complaining that “the police had no governorship post” after the 1976 creation of 19 states, all ruled by military administrators, automatically referred to the police’s capturing of state office in the same way that others refer to ethnoregional constituencies. A few police officers had first become regional administrators – alongside army, air force and naval officers – under the 1967 military government of Yakubu Gowon, but police leadership resented their marginalisation from the highest reaches of central power. Former Inspector-General Attah recalls that in Babangida’s military government, the police were finally “given a slot”.⁴⁸ Thus, at the height of military rule, could bureaucracies of state such as the police and military become rival power networks which vied with each other for office in the wider state itself. The paradox of specialised functional institutions of state competing to control the whole body politic provides an interesting further conceptual prompt to our consideration of the disaggregated nature of statehood in the introductory chapter.

2.3.3: Oil boom and insecurity

The ‘petronaira’ boom and social polarisation of the 1970s and early 1980s spawned its own distinctive challenges to security and public order. This was the era when the spectre of the armed robber, Nigeria’s foremost folk devil, first bestrode the social landscape,

⁴⁸ According to Ehindero in Tamuno *et al* 1993, p283 and Attah, interview *ibid*, this was the Governorship of Gombe state, However, this may be erroneous as Gombe State was only created in 1996. Police officers were also Governors of Rivers State between 1984-1986 and Anambra in 1993 (Kemi Rotimi, personal communication).

parented by the combination of new material wealth, and the twin civil war legacies of widely-available weapons and demobilised former combatants. Another consideration was the post-independence population boom. Nigeria at this period was – and still is – fast outgrowing its communitarian roots into a mass and urbanising society where old particularistic forms of policing social behaviour no longer had the same traction. Besides, the absolute growth in population numbers dictated growth in police numbers and the multiplication of policing divisions. It was only after the 1967-1970 civil war that police numbers grew substantially. Retired Commissioner Frank Odita was DPO at Abakaliki in the 1960s commanding 45 men; the same area is now Ebonyi State Command, with thousands of officers and 13 separate Divisions.⁴⁹ But the particular distribution of this police power also merits some revealing examination.

If the formal police had always been the police of the urban, it seems that they were becoming even more explicitly also the police of the rich. Otwin Marenin's 1985 sample survey in Okene (present-day Kogi state), shows that around 90% of police patrols took place in the exclusive GRA residential suburb. Yet clearly the public had not let go of the simultaneous expectation that the police *should* be protecting the commonweal. Marenin (1987) also shows how the notorious case of the Anini robbery epidemic in Benin City, the impunity its perpetrator enjoyed, and his protective links with relatively senior policemen in the locality, became a headline political issue for the military government of the time, calling into question its basic competence in the core area of public safety. Government was clearly reminded of the linkage between the effective provision of public security and its own fragile legitimacy. The police had an uneasy working relationship with the military during the 1970s; typified by the tension between President Obasanjo and Inspector-General MD Yusuf over rebellious musician Fela Kuti. Yusuf, a pan-Africanist who considered himself a political heavyweight in his own right, used his autonomy within the law both to investigate and to protect the musician from the President (Moore, 2010 [1982]). Military governments relied on Special Branch, a colonial police department designated to investigate political activists, to warn them of potential coup threats. But following their failure to prevent the assassination of President

⁴⁹ Interview, Frank Odita, Lagos, 28 September 2009.

Murtala Mohammed in 1976, that function was removed from the police and given to a separate National Security Organisation, now itself transformed into the State Security Service (SSS). Coup-wary military rulers had other motives too to restrict the capacity of the country's only serious potential rival armed force.

The police were being slowly displaced, squeezed from above by the military and from the sides by multiplying security and enforcement agencies. Most traffic responsibilities were handed to a new Federal Road Safety Commission established in 1988. Police leadership became politicised in the same way as military command structures, where a hierarchical institutional culture made it unthinkable for a soldier to serve under his junior, and so dictated that any time a military officer was promoted to a high office of state, his superiors were retired. Similarly, when a head of state chose to sideline the seniority principle of promotion and promote a particular favourite to Inspector-General, his seniors were retired. Inevitably, this had the effect of encouraging ambitious officers to court political favour, and of demotivating other 'non-political' officers. At the same time, the police were physically on the defensive, demotivated, often inadequately prepared to face the high level of violence from armed robbery, and sometimes deliberately targeted by robbers who wanted to seize their weapons. A group of colonial veterans who visited Nigeria in the early 1990s recalled with dismay the large number of police officers occupied with 'policing the police' – guarding their own stations and senior officers.

2.3.4: Economic decline

After the petronaira party came the hangover of the late 1980s; oil prices crashed and Nigeria was left with unmanageable public debt, from which the military government frogmarched the country into a hotly contested structural adjustment programme (Olukoshi 1993). Real incomes of salaried workers dropped 30% each year, with profound effects on society, public morality and crime. While students protested, elites looked for new ways to maintain their lifestyles, and the newly-impooverished middle class either emigrated or turned to new sources of income; the survival options of the

poor were more limited. The advent of ‘419’ confidence tricks – fraud, dissimulation and the conjuring of wealth by trickery - is explored by Apter (1999, 2005) and Smith (2008). The search for resources by state-connected elites was so extreme as to comprise the wholesale criminalisation of the state (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, 1999) encompassing drug trafficking, fraud and smuggling as formal-sector salary-earners searched for ways to supplement their shrinking incomes. The trend penetrated the security agencies: an informant recalled how as a teenage schoolboy in the 1980s, he was used by some intelligence officials to impersonate a Central Bank of Nigeria employee and defraud a western investor. The international impacts of state criminalisation also led to the further multiplication of law enforcement agencies. Multilaterals had already long been irrupting into Nigeria’s economic sovereignty; now transnational illicit flows prompted them to intervene in the sphere of policing – international pressure saw narcotics enforcement taken from the NPF and given to the new National Drug Law Enforcement Agency in 1989 (Klantschnig 2009). Such agencies were however of limited effectiveness in tackling crime which was linked into the higher reaches of the state itself; it is not hard to see how a state elite which had itself become infused with criminality would have reasons to keep police institutions weak and dependent. At the same time, as public mood turned against the military administration, and especially after General Babangida’s annulment of the 1993 elections, the police found themselves increasingly in the position of enforcing public order and conducting politicised arrests on behalf of a state no longer considered legitimate by its own citizens.

By the mid-1990s criminologist Ettanibi Alemika was in no doubt as to whether policing in Nigeria was intended to serve the public or the elite: “In Nigeria the vast majority of persons arrested, charged, remanded ... and sentenced, especially to prison, are drawn from the poor, powerless and politically marginalised groups. However the rich and powerful who committed political and economic crimes which brought the nation to the brink of ruin and collapse... are often shielded from the full weight of criminal law ” (Alemika in Tamuno et al, 1993; 53).

2.4: Police and the return to civilian rule

2.4.1: Civilian rule, economic boom and rentier entrenchment

By 1999 crime, and particularly armed robbery, was perceived to have been at crisis proportions in the country for some time. It was widely understood that the police had severe difficulty dealing with these challenges due to their deliberate sidelining and neglect by military governments who did not want to empower an armed civilian bureaucracy as a potential rival. The 1993-1998 military governments had repeatedly frozen police promotions and forbidden recruitment, leaving the force at 166,000 as of 1999.^{50 51} Instead, successive military governments used the army to take on anti-crime and public order tasks. The military's tactical response to armed robbery, 'no-appeals' Armed Robbery and Firearms Tribunals, met public demand for a hardline approach, but made so little impact on crime rates that communities, traders and development associations made renewed resort to old and new vigilance organisations.

Equally clearly, the political integrity of the country was challenged by ethnoregional and religious movements; while formal manifestations such as NADECO⁵², challenged the legitimacy of the Federal Military Governments, grassroots movements contested the powers of the Federal state by enacting their own governance agendas, in part through claiming powers over public security.⁵³ Organisations such as the OPC in Lagos acted as anti-crime vigilantes, as footsoldiers of opposition to Federal Military government, and mobilised against ethnic groups they saw as supporters of government. The withdrawal of the army from power in 1999 revealed a police force ill-placed to cope with all of these challenges; the internal contradictions of the demands on the service became vividly

⁵⁰ See Abdulkadir in Alemika and Chukwuma (2004).

⁵¹ The judiciary was also weakened, underpaid, and vulnerable to corruption. But the separation of powers re-enshrined in the 1999 constitution allowed it to slowly reconstruct itself and re-assert its independence.

⁵² The National Democratic Coalition, formed in the wake of the annulment of the 12th June 1993 elections to press for a return to democratic rule.

⁵³ Most notably at this time, the O'odua People's Congress, who grew up partly in response to the federal military government's suppression of opposition movements in the Yoruba-speaking south-west.

apparent on 1st February 2002, in a nationwide police strike.⁵⁴ This action caused the downfall of Inspector-General Musiliu Smith, and subsequent renewed attention to police reform. In 2002, under successor Inspector-General Tafa Balogun, police numbers were quickly doubled, to around 325,000 (and have since reached 377,000).⁵⁵

2.4.2: Re-occupying the policing space

By 2012, such charged socio-economic conditions might seem to have changed. Yet the state continues to run to a rentier logic; political accountabilities remain top-down, because the renewed flood of oil wealth reinforced, rather than undermined, the state's centrality. Despite the advent of new formal sectors, the political economy has not shifted substantially, and the power elite entrenched under the military continues to hold sway. At the same time, the proliferation of agencies continued – in 2004 President Obasanjo responded to international concerns about '419' advance-fee fraud with another new investigative and prosecuting agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The police however remain a centralised institution. The creation of state police forces continues to be a core demand of regionally-based opposition parties, but is just as trenchantly resisted by central government, which fears a return to the challenges posed by the autonomous pre-1970 regional governments with their Native Authority police. Thus parallel security structures continue to thrive, not only by meeting demands for effective locally accountable security, but also due to their appeal to local politicians as locally *controllable* security forces (see Meagher 2007).

Hills (2008) considers the policing doctrine of the 1999-2007 Obasanjo administrations to have been that the police could fight crime as long as core priority was given to 'regime representation and regulation'. This perhaps overestimates the degree of autocracy that is possible in the Nigerian political system, and to underestimate the autonomy deployed by the police, as became apparent during the downfall of Inspector-General Balogun, arrested by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in January 2005.

⁵⁴ In Nigeria as in most countries, the police as an essential public service are not legally permitted to strike.

⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch (2005; 17) shows this to be roughly the same ratio of police to citizens as obtains in the UK and South Africa.

The 70-count fraud charge on which he was tried shows that the operative doctrine might be better described as one in which considerable leeway was granted for eye-wateringly lucrative self-interest, in exchange for political loyalty at key moments.⁵⁶ Indeed public commentators within Nigeria speculated that Balogun's arrest had more to do with political disloyalty than the actual legal infractions.

Throughout the tenures of Inspector-General Ehindero (2005-2007), Okiro (2007-2009), and Onovo (2009-2010) police reform continued, in awareness not only of the NPF's unpopularity, but that effectively occupying the crime-fighting space was the only way to re-establish legitimacy in the eyes of the mass of Nigerians, and thus displace the militia and vigilante organisations which had come to dominate the security landscape.

However, vested interests slowed the pace of reform, which itself became contested between those advocating meaningful structural reform and others of a 'procurement-first' mentality. At the same time, political interference in policing did not stop. The actions of the NPF were cited as major factors in the partisan and non-transparent conduct of the 2007 elections; and in the wake of these polls, powerful backers of new President Umaru Yar'Adua managed to curb the effectiveness of the anti-corruption EFCC by engineering the dismissal of its zealous head, Ribadu, and the mass transfer of its prosecuting staff.

2.4.3: Reconciliations, reforms and reactions

Yet such politicisation was quietly contested: The Police Service Commission, headed by former Deputy Inspector-General Parry Osayande, kept up pressure to exercise its constitutional rights, regularising procedures, reversing 'political' promotions, extending supervision over recruitment exercises, and even observing and assessing police conduct during the 2011 elections. The appointment of Inspector-General Ogbonna Onovo by President Yar'Adua in 2009 was another significant departure: Firstly, because his

⁵⁶ The total amount of cash Balogun was eventually charged with laundering was around N16.3 billion (worth US\$125.8 million at the time of his arrest). <http://odili.net/news/source/2005/oct/16/415.html> accessed 20 June 2008. Plea-bargaining with the return of part of this huge sum, he was sentenced to six months in prison, part of which he served in Abuja's National Hospital, being released on February 9, 2006.

appointment reflected the seniority principle applied strictly without favouritism, an abnormally 'normal' application of procedure. Secondly, Onovo thus became the first Igbo head of a major security institution since the civil war.

During this period too, three separate developments demarcated the Nigeria Police's attempt to retake control of legitimate force in the public sphere. Firstly, the police re-adopted a collaborative 'cohabitation' approach to vigilantism at an official level. By 2009, they formally accommodated and regulated it, with Commissioners of Police issuing identity cards to registered vigilantes; in the conflict-prone city of Jos, for example, police and volunteer vigilantes mounted joint night patrols. It is worth noting that this corresponds with the worldwide trend Bayley and Shearing (2001) term an emergent division of labour between those who police and those who *authorise* policing. By 2011 it was routine for vigilantes recruited and paid by local Government Councils to be briefed and regulated from State Police Commands. This outsourced sovereignty however incorporates a tension due to Local Government Chairmen's potential political influence over vigilantes, who themselves can thereby enjoy a certain measure of impunity before law enforcement.

At the same time, the police moved aggressively against some more formalised vigilante movements. The South-West's large Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC) lowered its profile and was reborn as something more akin to a cellular private security agency. Today, OPC provide armed and unarmed security for business premises, truck parks, neighbourhoods, public events and rallies, in working accommodation with the police. A more direct approach was adopted in the North; after 11 Northern states adopted Shari'a law in 2000/2001, Kano's state-government-funded Yan' Hisba extended their control over what they called public immorality, contesting the writ of police on such issues (see Casey 2007) Matters came to a head in 2008 when the Nigeria Police Force took Kano State Hisba Board to court to define and limit their powers. Yet such showdowns have been rare, and as Hills (2012) observes, in the case of Kano occurred in tandem with an ongoing process of division of labour and jurisdiction in practice. It has been more usual

for the police to carefully reach a working accord through mutually supervisory accommodation.

Thirdly, the police were quietly positioning to address the issue of state policing internally; the most significant development in the first decade of the 21st century was the quiet introduction of ‘back-to-state’ postings policy – which guided that new constables passing out from Police Training Schools should, in the absence of other consideration, be posted back to their states of origin.⁵⁷ Donors too moved to address the issue of public accountability and legitimacy; much of the UK’s £37 million Security, Justice and Growth five-year assistance package was devoted to the introduction of community policing, incorporated with its own NPF department. And a significant subsequent push came from state governors, who occupy a constitutional position as Chief Security Officers of their respective states. They frequently reacted to public demands for security provision in broadly similar ways; establishing special task forces composed of police, military and other personnel. Interestingly, these tentative and emergent redistributions of policing power took place at the same time as a fiscal change; in 2010 for the first time, a larger portion of the Federal budget was disbursed through the governments of the 36 States and 774 Local Governments than was spent by central government organs.

Yet there is one sector from which the Nigeria Police Force has not entertained a challenge. Private armed security firms with quasi-police or police-derived powers have become a part of the policing landscape in many other middle-income developing nations. But Nigeria’s private guard outfits, regulated by the National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), have never been permitted to carry firearms.⁵⁸ Posting of armed guards to homes and businesses and appointment of personal escorts remains a police monopoly, and one for which non-state beneficiaries are usually expected to pay. The result has been a huge amount of police manpower dedicated to ‘beat’ duty which is

⁵⁷ Despite this, older understandings can prove remarkably persistent. Jimi Solanke recalls the Yoruba axiom which translates as ‘it is the Gambaris (colloquial/perjorative term for Hausas) who are the police in Lagos’ (interview, Ile-Ife July 2011). This references not only the NPF’s origins in ‘Hausa constabularies’ but also implies the illegitimacy of an occupying force under the guise of federal nationhood.

⁵⁸ Abrahamsen and Williams (2005) found between 1,500 and 2,000 firms with around 100,000 employees; a significant section of the service economy.

in fact private guarding. In 2011 PSC Chair Parry Osayande told a Senate Committee on Police Affairs that as many as 100,000 officers – 26% of the force – were employed in personal guard duties for “a few fortunate individuals”.⁵⁹

It may not surprise us that the police monopoly on armed guards has been contested by sister security agencies. In 2008 the NSCDC, a state body of unarmed security operatives descended from the civil war’s voluntary Home Guard, began to lobby the country’s National Assembly for a legal change to allow them to carry weapons as routine. As with Kano’s Hisba, the police responded with an assertive defence of their constitutional centrality; escalating the issue by questioning the NSCDC’s constitutional right to exist at all. The growing threat posed by the ‘Boko Haram’ insurgency and bombing campaign decided the issue: The NSCDC were armed in June 2012.⁶⁰

2.5: Conclusion

The present-day position of the Nigeria Police Force, between the pressures toward politicisation on one hand and professionalism on the other, can be read in the appointment of recent former Inspector-General, Hafiz Ringim (2010-January 2012). Commissioner of Police in Bayelsa State when President Goodluck Jonathan was Governor, he was selected as Inspector-General over the heads of more senior officers, thus underlining the continued potential of political connections to disrupt organisational principles. Yet, in departure from previous practice the senior colleagues were not immediately retired, continuing to serve for around six months longer, evidence perhaps of a tempering of political with professional imperatives. Furthermore, Ringim supervised the policing of the 2011 elections in which Jonathan was re-elected, in what was generally acclaimed as a largely problem-free and non-partisan manner. Thus, in the context of a centralised postcolonial state apparatus, the NPF continues to steer a course between fulfilling the ‘upwardly’ accountable political conditions of its existence, and

⁵⁹ *Tribune*, 19th October 2011 <http://www.afriquejet.com/nigerian-police-2011102025454.html> Accessed 15th June 2012.

⁶⁰ <http://saharareporters.com/news-page/president-jonathan-arms-nigerian-civil-defence-sophisticated-weapons> Accessed 15th June 2012.

maintaining both its legitimacy in the eyes of the public, and sovereignty over public security by addressing the demands for effective policing.

The police institution in Nigeria incorporates an inherent tension in the present day as much as in the colonial period. To protect and serve both an extractive state-dependent political elite, and a public in a way which has some degree of efficacy and legitimacy is a task requiring dynamism, compromise and negotiation between the poles of power. The continuing insurgency by 'Boko Haram' Islamist groups, in which much of the violence is directed at the police, shows what is at stake when both requirements cannot be adequately met.

In 1993, at the peak of the military government's unpopularity, Alemika wrote that "the alienation of the police from the people and the perennial crisis of performance ... are partly explained by the inherited and sustained colonial legacy of repressive policing in the society to sustain governability in the face of widespread opposition and legitimisation deficits" (1993b; 187). Crystal, writing of Kuwaiti police, emphasises the importance of origins in understanding police institutions as (following Bayley) she argues that they 'remain remarkably stable over time' (2005; 158). Historical trajectories matter, certainly; but this chapter has charted not the maintenance of an unreconstructed colonial police force into the present day. Instead, we have seen its reification; accreted layers of institutional change, sometimes reversing direction, but overall building into a more extensive and centralised organisation that its colonial founders ever envisaged.

What has been embedded since its earliest origins, however, is the gap between state legality and public ideas of legitimacy. The persistence of traditional notions of legitimacy in crime and punishment in the present day make more sense now that we have seen that many (especially rural) citizens never had them disrupted by any extensive engagement with state policing. Thus, the uneven distribution of government's powers to act, and to define norms are exposed.

Alemika (*ibid*) also states that “the repressive characters of both the state and police in Nigeria derive from the legitimation problems which plagued successive governments in the country.” But this statement is reversible: Instead of finding that governments’ continual emphasis on repressive public order is the primary cause of lack of police legitimacy, we could also consider that (if practice and perception produce the state as imaginary) the state’s legitimation problems are in part caused *by* the nature of policing.

Today, mapping the legitimacy of state policing in Nigeria means investigating how this top-down construct has managed to adhere: What domain over society it has managed to achieve? What currency and use it has for the public? To find out we need to examine the public’s everyday perceptions of, and interactions with, the police; such is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Contexts

Contextualising Policing in Nigeria

This chapter lays out the institutional and situational contexts within which policing in Nigeria takes place, and in which the fieldwork for this study was conducted. Proceeding from the constitutional basics of the control and governance of the police force and the basis of its powers in law, we discuss the establishment, organisational layouts, chains of command and functional specialisations of the NPF which structure the roles and practices of its officers. Since the NPF do not work in isolation, but in the context of a wider ‘police sector’ (Hills, 2000), or what Beek and Goepfert (2011) describe in neighbouring Niger as a crowded and occasionally shifting array of state law-enforcement agencies whose functions sometimes overlap and compete with that of the police, the number, nature, official mandate and size of these other members of the state policing family (empirical information not otherwise publically accessible) is also recapped here. The next section provides the immediate fieldwork context, in the geographical, political, economic, sociological and historical depiction of the location in which I undertook primary long-term fieldwork, and attempts to provide a sense of its social constituencies, public culture and the position and nature of policing and police officers in the town. This study will have failed in its overall intention if it does not also convey a sensory account of the conditions in and under which both police and ethnographer worked, so the chapter continues with a description of the spaces and places in which policing takes place, introducing the police station as a space of work and social action, the persons, roles and activities which inhabit those places, and the daily, weekly and annual rhythms and routines which invigorate and structure police life and work.

3.1: The Nigeria Police Force: Organisation and Structure

3.1.1: Territorial structure

The Nigeria Police Force is a centrally-administered unitary Federal body with a uniform national structure. At a central level, it was at the time of my fieldwork divided into six Departments, each under a Deputy Inspector-General (DIG). These were: ‘A’ (Finance and Administration); ‘B’ (Operations, overseeing specialist functions such as marine, anti-bomb, peacekeeping, and the Police Mobile Force); ‘C’ (Logistics and Supply); ‘D’ (Force CID, the central criminal investigations department); ‘E’ (Training, with responsibility for all of the police colleges and training schools); and ‘F’ (Research and Planning, which also administers the community policing programme).⁶¹

The basic unit of territorial policing is the division, under a Divisional Police Officer (DPO). There are 1,129 police divisions in Nigeria; they may comprise a large rural area, or a group of villages, or a part of a larger town or city, or a section of town combined with rural hinterland (my fieldwork site, Dutsin Bature town, has four divisions). Many divisions, especially when covering a large area or population, have additional stations or police posts under them. Adjacent divisions are grouped together into Area Commands, under an Area Commander typically of Assistant Commissioner rank, who retains additional forces for reinforcing and coordinating the work of the divisions, as well as independent interventions and operations. Most states (including Gida State) have three Area Commands, making 127 in the country as a whole.⁶² The policing of any state is the overall responsibility of the State Commissioner of Police (CP), of whom there are 37 – one for each state and one for the centrally-administered capital, Abuja (other officers of Commissioner rank head specialist central units). The State Commissioner is the state’s policing executive, and supervises the divisions, as well as taking direct control of

⁶¹ On assuming office Inspector-General Mohammed Abubakar added a further ‘G’ Department (information technology), amalgamating the INFOTECH and Communications sections from ‘F’ and ‘B’ departments in March 2012.

⁶² Although Plateau has only two Areas, and Lagos has eight, there are also dedicated railway and airport ‘Areas’.

important operations and investigations, for which he can call on units such as State Criminal Investigation Departments, as well as the human resources of Area Commands and any Mobile squadrons in the state. The Police Mobile Force (officially ‘PMF’; colloquially ‘MOPOL’) maintains 46 Squadrons permanently stationed around the country, under the dual control of State Commissioners and the Deputy Inspector-General ‘B’ Dept. [Operations]) in Abuja. For administrative purposes, states are grouped into 12 Zones, each comprising two or three states and headed by an Assistant Inspector-General (AIG) as a second tier of national management.

For the purposes of everyday policing, however, the positions have different import. Real management of operational policing overwhelmingly takes place at two levels; that of the division, headed by the DPO, and of the state command, under the CP. While Area Commanders and AIGs do keep small forces and occasionally intervene directly in policing activity, those levels are intended to be primarily administrative. An Area Commander may co-ordinate larger operations, such as policing a public event, or deploy additional personnel to back up a division. An AIG rarely, if ever, participates so directly; the everyday irrelevance of that level can be clearly understood if the reader considers the fact that in two years of fieldwork in Dutsin Bature, and in this highly hierarchical institution, no-one at any level *ever* suggested I should visit the AIG (for courtesy, interview, permission or any other reason), despite the Zonal HQ being close to the town while the AIG’s official residence was in Dutsin Bature itself.

It is also worth mentioning that the NPF, unlike developed-world public services which have undergone a neoliberal outsourcing of support services, retains its own specialist support departments – it is an institution in a very maximal sense, including specialists in maintenance, education, works, welfare, cooperative, schools, clinics, tailors, and even Christian and Muslim clerics. Thus it is possible to have a career in police uniform, for instance in a state command’s Works Department, while never, except perhaps in times of dire emergency, carrying out what we would recognise as normal policing duties.

3.1.2: Force strength, ranks and personnel

Table 1: Ranks, establishment and strength of the Nigeria Police Force in 2008

Cadre	RANK	Establishment⁶³	Strength
Superior Police Officers (SPOs)	Inspector-General (IG)	1	1
	Deputy Inspector-General (DIG)	7	6
	Assistant Inspector-General (AIG)	17	20
	Commissioner of Police (CP)	85	99
	Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP)	147	141
	Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP)	417	335
	Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP)	1,154	1,407
	Superintendent of Police (SP)	2,308	1,498
	Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP)	4,616	3,875
	Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) ⁶⁴	9,232	13,221
	Cadet Assistant Superintendent of Police	800	-
Inspectorate	Chief Inspector*	100	1
	Deputy Chief Inspector*	100	1
	Assistant Chief Inspector*	150	2
	Principal Inspector*	300	73
	Senior Inspector*	1,500	634
	Inspector	26,356	27,464
	Cadet Inspector	800	-
Rank and file	Sergeant-Major* ⁶⁵	1,383	123
	Sergeant	52,711	42,852
	Corporal	105,424	41,795
	Police Constable	210,000	178,107
	TOTAL	417,608	311,655

Adapted from 2008 Annual Report of the Nigeria Police Force. By 2010 the number usually quoted for actual strength had risen to approximately 377,000.

⁶³ 'Establishment' is the on-paper number of posts at each rank; 'strength' is the actual number of officers currently serving at those ranks.

⁶⁴ Note that the category Assistant Superintendent of Police is in fact divided into two; 'one-star' ASPs who have recently graduated, and 'two-star' ASPs who have served for longer.

⁶⁵ Ranks marked with an asterisk* are functionally redundant (another give-away in the statistics is the rounded number given as approximation of their establishment strengths). They are in the process of being phased out, but are kept to be used for officers of long service who have not been able to pass the examinations for promotion to the next cadre – a sergeant who is not able to pass the Inspector course may be promoted to Sergeant-Major, and a long-serving Inspector who is unable to pass the ASP course may become a Senior or Principal Inspector. The figures are also slightly distorted by 'specialists' – police officers who are recruited as specialist professionals or tradespeople – IT operators, Works Department, pilots, police doctors, pastors and imams, who are not permitted to rise above certain ranks.

As can be seen above, the plethora of ranks is confusing, especially in the senior cadre. It can be clarified by understanding that there are three levels at which one can enter the police; as a rank and file recruit, who will become a constable when passed-out from training school; as a cadet Inspector; and as a cadet ASP (Assistant Superintendent). These three clades - the rank and file, the Inspectorate, and SPOs (Superior Police Officers) - are significant in the ways police see themselves and the ways their careers may develop. Once recruited nationally, officers can be posted anywhere in the country, although in the last decade the pressure for state policing has led the police to respond by posting the majority of rank-and-file recruits back to their home states on leaving a Police Training School.

3.1.3: Police Laws

The legal underpinnings of the police force are provided for in a number of instruments. The powers and basic formation of the police are laid down in Nigeria's Constitution, and the Police Act, a brief piece of foundational legislation enacted by colonial government in 1943, and superficially revised in 1967 and 1979 to reflect organisational changes. These two documents however contain few specifics pertaining to actual administration and conduct: Those are instead to be found in two important *non*-legislative sets of rules.

The first is Police Regulations. This exhaustive document (little modified from a 1968 version) details organisation, administration, rules governing enlistment, qualifications for recruits, details of uniform, duties of officers at various levels and postings, paperwork to be maintained, internal disciplinary procedures and punishments, and miscellaneous provisions such as those governing the disposal of items held in evidence. Police regulations are widely-available within the force; they are published, often in a cheap paperback edition bound together with the Police Act. Most senior officers possess a well-thumbed copy, along with other basic booklets such as the 'NPF Operational Handbook', and can therefore be easily referred to. Other shorter-term orders and directives concerning the force, particular units, or individuals are sent from headquarters as a 'signal' (see example in introduction).

The second non-legislative set of rules is the Force Orders. This important document is a collation of standing orders accreted over time and dealing with matters not contained in or foreseen by Police Regulations. Thus, they contain a huge array of provisions arranged in the somewhat random order of their enactment. Force Order No. 1, logically enough concerns Force Legislation, and notes the powers endowed to the IG by the Constitution and Police Act, and delegated to other officers in charge of formations. Force Order No. 2 by contrast concerns the installation of telephones in stations and residences. Most of the others deal with sundry eventualities such as Chieftaincy Title Conferred on Members of the Force, Communication with other Govt. Departments or Deaths While in Service for Senior Officers (detailing funeral honours due ranks AIG through IGP). The Force Orders have an ambiguous status in that although they are not statute law made in a legislature, they are of core importance as the rules of procedure and engagement upon whose status the legality and defensibility of police action depends. Yet they are not generally available in a published edition, nor disseminated or made accessible even to police officers. Yet in the legal and human rights sector, they have a certain notoriety due almost entirely to Force Order 237, which sets out the astonishingly broad range of conditions in which the NPF reserves to its officers the right to use lethal force outside of judicial supervision (see Amnesty International 2009, and United Nations, 2006).⁶⁶ Civil society groups have called for this functionally non-available collection of documents to be both revised and made more widely accessible; however to date this has not been accomplished. Therefore we must note at the outset that police powers in part omit fundamental aspects of transparency and accountability.

Police casework is however covered by statute law, specifically the Criminal Procedure Act (1990) and the Evidence Act. The criminal laws enforced *by* the police are largely contained in two slightly different criminal codes; the Criminal Code of former Southern Nigeria, and the Penal Code of former Northern Nigeria, into which Dutsin Bature falls.

⁶⁶ The UN report quoted above notes for instance that FO 237 authorises use of firearms if a police officer cannot “by any other means” arrest or re-arrest any person who is suspected of an offence punishable at least seven years, but that any person who seeks to escape from lawful custody commits a felony warranting a seven year sentence, making the justification potentially circular.

which is slightly more influenced by legal and punitive norms derived from the dual indigenous-Islamic and British military-administrative jural heritages of that region (regarding, for example, adultery, or the use of flogging as a corporal punishment sentence). Officers must be familiar with these statutes, as well as sundry other pieces of legislation, such as the Firearms Act. which are widely available in cheap editions.

3.1.4: Governance of the Police

Notably, although the NPF have a federalised territorial administration, the structures of command are extremely centralised. Nigeria's President appoints the Inspector-General, and not only the ultimate power of appointments, but *operational* control of the NPF, is legally vested in the President. The Presidency is supposed to be assisted in discharge of these duties by a body called the Police Council, consisting of the Presidency and State Governors, but in reality this body is completely moribund. Policy and budgetary oversight is exercised by the Ministry of Police Affairs, a part of the executive headed by a Presidentially-appointed Minister, complemented by occasionally-meeting Committees on Police Affairs in the House of Representatives and Senate.⁶⁷ More significant is the Police Service Commission, a fixed-term Commission which has six members, including a full-time Chair, who are selected to represent each of the six 'geo-political zones' of the country and six different social constituencies, including the judiciary and civil society. The Commission has extensive powers to oversee recruitment, promotion and discipline within the force. In practice, due to capacity limitations, it delegates everyday management of those matters back to the Inspector-General, acting as a regulatory and supervisory body and as an appeals body regarding disciplinary and promotion cases. Its powers do not include investigation of public complaints against police officers, which are investigated by the police themselves. It can thereby be seen that while police governance embeds some fundamental factors mitigating against transparency and accountability to powers other than the Presidency, there are also other loci of accountability of varying potential.

⁶⁷ The quality of legislators is however very variable, and many committees do not perform a particularly well-informed or effective oversight function.

3.2: The wider state security and policing sector in Nigeria

As well as its internal structure, we must also consider the police's place in a broad constellation of other governmental security institutions. These bodies and their are itemised in the table below. The reader will note the multiplicity of such agencies, whose uniforms, insignia, heraldry and liveries constitute salient parts of the Nigerian visual landscape and semiotic world. Nigeria, at least at the largest nodes of the formal state, is notably and visibly a land of uniformed services.

Table 2: State law enforcement and security bodies in Nigeria

<i>Body</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Establishment</i>
Nigeria Police Force	Civil policing	377,000
State Security Service	Domestic intelligence	Not publicly available
Nigerian Army	Territorial defence	70,000
Nigerian Navy	Maritime defence	8,000
Nigerian Air Force	Air defence	9,500
Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps	Civil defence and infrastructure security	Not publicly available
Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency	Narcotics police	Not publicly available
Economic and Financial Crimes Commission	Corruption investigations	Not publicly available
Nigeria Immigration Service	Control of immigration	Not publicly available
Nigeria Customs Service	Control of goods and revenue collection	Not publicly available
Federal Road Safety Corps	Highway safety	Not publicly available
Vehicle Inspection Office	Driver and vehicle licencing checks	Not publicly available
Nigeria Agricultural Quarantine Service	Animal health and quarantine	Not publicly available
National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC)	Pharmaceutical and food standards	Not publicly available
National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other related Matters (NAPTIP)	Control of human trafficking	Not publicly available

The list above details all of the state security and law-enforcement agencies in Nigeria which share some basic characteristics – legal powers to arrest, detain, use violence, prosecute, confiscate property, mount roadblocks, or suspend rights. It omits some related organisations – Fire and Prisons services, which are uniformed servants of the state, but with no behaviour-control purview over the general public; the statutory Independent Corrupt Practices Commission cannot prosecute except through the Attorney-General (and so is not really independent at all) and by using the police. Purely surveillance bodies such as the Directorate of Military Intelligence and the overseas National Intelligence Agency are also excluded. However the Army, Navy and Air Force *are* included as they frequently assist in policing and public order functions. There are also vestigial services such as the Traffic Warden Service, subsumed within the NPF but with a semi-separate career track. Common to a surprising number of these bodies is that their personnel drill with arms – whilst the National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) use of arms is limited to a special squad⁶⁸, uniformed squads of immigration officers perform morning armed drill even at state level. Thus while it may be inappropriately reductionist to call them all ‘violence specialists’ as do Beek and Goepfert (2011), it is notable that many officers of such state agencies, including police, self-describe and emphasise their own para-military nature.

3.2.1: Security-sector governance

Crucially for our study of policing, it must be understood that these specialised bodies in practice often overlap in purview, creating at times collaboration, and at others competition, rivalry, and grey areas of indistinct primacy which are on occasion renegotiated.⁶⁹ This inter-agency nexus of cooperation amid rivalry is an integral part of the structuring context in which policing takes place - albeit in a less intense and muddying combination than the huge overlap experienced between police, gendarmes, national guards and community police in many Francophone states (Beek and Goepfert,

⁶⁸ At least until early 2012, when Boko Haram insurgents’ attacks on state installations led government to meet their demand to be armed.

⁶⁹ Notwithstanding their separate mandates, such bodies do often share much in common. Immigration officer cadets, for example, are trained in the Police Academy, Kano.

ibid). It also forms the wider universe within which police officers understand their own role and structural place, as we will explore when we come to examine police subjectivities.

State Governors' constitutional mandates as "chief security officers" of their states have in practice been interpreted in widely differing ways. While day-to-day control of security institutions is managed via centralised bureaucracies, some governors take an entirely passive role, meanwhile others have created and funded hybrid security formations from personnel of existing agencies, such as Kaduna State's police-military 'Operation Yaki'.⁷⁰ The disjuncture in control and accountability between central and state governments has led to repeated calls for state police; first from the opposition Action Congress of Nigeria (CAN) governors of south-western states, more recently (in August 2012) as a broader cross-party call from state governors (mostly from the south) in the consultative Governors Forum. The call continues to be opposed by central government and others who fear the potential for state police to become armed forces which would speed the breakup of the federal polity. Meanwhile, all states continue to reserve a large portion of public spending as 'security vote' – huge and largely unaccounted sums nominally reserved for discretionary spending on security, which have become a political factor in their own right. And at the national level, spending on security reaches ever-greater heights: spurred by crime, ethno-religious violence and terrorism, Nigeria's 2012 budget earmarked 19.39% (N921.21 billion/US\$5.83 billion) for the security sector (although budgetary allocations are not always used – or funded – to full capacity, leaving leeway for discretionary diversion).⁷¹

An overview of the wider police sector is not complete without a reminder of the extensive array of non-state private and communal security firms, vigilance groups and militias, both formal and informal. Abrahamsen and Williams (2005) found between 1,500 and 2,000 private security firms with around 100,000 employees operating despite

⁷⁰ Others include Edo State's Operation Thunderstorm, and Lagos' Rapid Response Force – a parallel structure under the Commissioner of Police, but with its own emergency number, funded and equipped by the state government and headed by a Chief Superintendent in the governor's office.

⁷¹ Total 2012 budget is N4.749trn. <http://yourbudget.com/> accessed on 13th December 2011

private security firms being forbidden to use arms.⁷² Many of the organisations, especially informal vigilance groups, which comprise it have been the subjects of in-depth research in their own right (see introduction), and so are mentioned only inasmuch as their existence reminds us of a state which has never fully exercised its potential monopoly; of the neoliberal moment in which such alternatives acquire new currency; and of the interlocutions with non-state security providers which policing must also sometimes make.

3.3: Fieldwork location

My choice of physical location was informed by three major considerations. Firstly, while aware that every place is unique and *sui generis*, I sought to avoid more salient locations like the vast Lagos conurbation in favour of a medium-sized Nigerian ‘anytown’. Secondly, I sought an area which mirrored the nation as a whole in having a mixed economy and heterogenous social profile, enabling me to locate my study more within the social context and academic literature of *Nigerian* lived experience than (for example) Hausaphone Islamic public life, or Yoruba culture. Thirdly, certain areas were off-limits to a foreign researcher at the outset of my fieldwork –notably the Niger Delta, and the South-East where a kidnapping crime-wave was at its height. After a preliminary visit, I settled upon the town of Dutsin Bature.

The town, and Gida State in which it is located (both pseudonyms), are located in the region known in official documents as the North-Central geopolitical zone, and more commonly as Nigeria’s ‘Middle-Belt’. The open Guinea savannah ecology ranges from intensively-cultivated farmland to swathes of sparsely-inhabited bush. Geographically, the flat-lands of the Middle-Belt slope gently towards the valleys of the Benue and Niger rivers, although there are also large areas of upland (notably the Jos Plateau), and bluffs and inselberg rocks which punctuate otherwise flat areas. The region’s rains reach their peak in June-August, while the harmattan months of December-January are cool, with

⁷² Although it is not clear whether the (possibly much larger) informal security firms constituted by the subscription-paid OPC and other vigilantes and independent night-guards are included.

temperatures then climbing to 40 degrees in March-April. Excepting Jos, and distant Kaduna (both colonial cities), the rapidly-expanding national capital Abuja is the only metropole and employment magnet for the wider region, which remains a patchwork of rural districts and small towns.

Culturally, the Middle-Belt is distinct from both the Hausa- and Kanuri-speaking dryland savannah Emirates to the north, and the forest-belt societies to the south. The region's diverse peoples share a cultivation complex in which yam is the primary staple and millet used more often for brewing; craftspeople, fishers and cattle-herders are usually separate but economically integrated social groups. Precolonially, the region was organised in a variety of political systems, from the Islamically-derived Nupe emirate in the east to acephalous expansive lineage culture of the Tiv in the western Benue valley, as well as a whole variety of intermediate and mutable political forms. Identities and settlement patterns were also shaped by slave-trade intrusions from the Atlantic economy, the 19th-century Fulani jihad from the north, and by trade routes which crossed the region. Gida State is typical of the Middle-Belt in being inhabited by more than one ethno-linguistic group. In the east of the state, the Bare⁷³ peoples form a majority, in a rural population centred on clan chiefdoms. In the centre and south, Akpai-speaking groups predominate, interspersed towards the north with Edu-speakers along riverine trade routes. In the west, Ajemi people populate rural areas clustered around a few precolonial towns. The relations between these inform the logic of present-day electoral politics. Meanwhile, semi-nomadic Fulani pastoralists graze cattle across the state.

Dutsin Bature itself, in the centre of the state, seems to have begun as a permanent market, craft and transport settlement on a major trans-regional trade route. As these trade routes were penetrated by the Atlantic economy, the town became first a base for British-led trade and treaty expeditions, missionaries and military forces, then an early administrative base during the opening years of colonial penetration and pacification. At the same time, the pre-colonial to colonial transition period saw continuity in increasing

⁷³ Bare, Akpai, Ajemi and Edu ethnic labels are all pseudonymised, as to use the real names of these localised minority groups would identify the location. Actual names have been used for ethnic identities which are more widespread.

habitation of the town as a 'trade colony' for populations of traders and Islamic scholars from regions further north. Colonially ruled as part of the larger Northern Nigeria (pre-1914) and then Northern Region (1914-1966), the mechanisms of indirect rule utilised Hausa Emirate-modelled chiefdom structures to govern the town and hinterland. The gradual inclusion of Bare, Akpai and Ajemi peoples of the rural hinterland in education and formal employment drew increasing numbers of them to the town, in addition to the Edu communities, company and administrative employees, missionaries, freed slaves, Hausas and other migrants who previously made up the urban population. At the same time, Dutsin Bature, though never a major economic centre, grew as a hub of administration, markets, transport and services, and attracted Igbo residents from the country's South-East, Yorubas from the South-West, and a representative scattering of other Nigerians and West Africans. Presently, the town has a population of around 200,000 in both rural districts and an urban area built up around a colonial and pre-colonial core. The town has grown in phases of planned development which continued through the 20th century to the present, which include low-cost high-density self-built housing, as well as spacious planned residential estates of the state's middle-class and the mansions of the small regional elite.

The public culture of Gida state reflects its heritage as a part of the former Northern Region, albeit a southernmost and ethnic-minority part of it. In part, this influence is formalised, for example in use of the Penal Code (see above). Traditional courtly institutions also take forms influenced by Hausaland Emirates. In Dutsin Bature, title-holders of distant rural jurisdictions 'under' the town reside close to the Maigari's⁷⁴ palace, as do aristocrats in Hausa Emirates. The town is equally home to another culture of English-language education and Christianity, spread by missions which were present here even before formal colonial rule, and a newer Pentecostal Christian culture and consciousness which has spread through the last quarter-century. This coexistence is typical of many Middle-Belt areas, although in the last decade (and especially since riots in Jos, 2001 and Kaduna in 2003) those areas where the admixture has violently distilled into a politics of opposing identities have been more prominent.

⁷⁴ The title means 'Master of the Town' or more prosaically, town chief.

Significantly, all of the state's major ethnic groups have adherents of *both* global faiths, as well as traditionalists, even though the majority may be generally accepted to be either Muslim or Christian. Many are fluent in both as pragmatic spiritual repertoires; I watched a Bare lady testify on an evangelical Christian television channel that she had prayed 'Muslim-fashion' before being cured of her disease by witnessing the host's televised spiritual curing session. Yet this is not to say that society is a creolisation; more a jigsaw of social, spiritual and communitarian codes and modes, in which many inhabitants are plurally fluent. The uneven admixture of governance modalities and social blueprints – the 'mixed jurisdictions'⁷⁵ within Dutsin Bature can be seen even in satellite imagery of its urban grain, wherein old and new, 'native' and 'modern' townships, and even the particular zones of their hybridisation, are clearly recognisable: We will recognise them again in the course of police work.



Fig 3: Urban grain 1: High-density, low-income housing in northern part of the town. This area has urbanised for around 130 years and comes under the traditional authority of the Maigari.

⁷⁵ The terminology is from <http://www.nairaland.com/pkriz/posts> quoted by this author in Owen (2009; 579).



Fig 4: Urban grain 2: Low-density elite housing in the expanding GRA elite suburb.⁷⁶ This upper-class area is close to the seat of government and is not subject to any traditional authority.

Both pictures are to the same scale. Note the different size of buildings and the absence of enclosed private space in the upper image, in contrast with the large walled compounds in the lower picture. The difference is reflected in approaches to security; communitarian in the above, private security and dedicated police beats below.

3.3.1: Politics and political economy in Dutsin Bature

Politically, both town and state are typical of the region, and probably of the majority of Nigeria's 36 states which do not often grab headlines. Electoral politics is arranged around an ethnicised formula, which divides the chief offices (Governor, Deputy, Speaker of the State House of Assembly) within the ruling party along lines of ethnic numerical dominance which are sometimes challenged, but rarely successfully. Beyond this, it also depends on the lasting influence of a few extremely wealthy political

⁷⁶ GRA is Government Reserved Area; a terminology originally used for colonial expatriate-only areas, today used for many elite enclave estates.

‘godfathers’ in the state, who fund, broker and control alliances (see Hoffman, 2010). These established figures contest with each other, and with two rival counter-elites – new emergent leaders in the state, and the ‘off-stage’ big men who represent the state’s constituencies in the National Assembly in Abuja. Gida is a ‘one-party’ state, which is to say that all politics of significance take place within, and are *about* trying to gain place within, the nationally-ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Other parties exist, and are ‘relevant’ in Presidential votes, but in state terms they largely serve as second-choice platforms for politicians unsuccessful in gaining position within the factional politics of the multi-ethnic PDP. Dutsin Bature town’s electorate are usually a dissident minority in the state’s ethnic algebra of rule, and often support opposition candidates, but are unable to make numerical impact on the rural hinterlands and small towns which deliver the majority vote.⁷⁷ It is a given that underneath all this, political logic remains consistently about locating personal gain and the alienation of state resources within a communitarian patronage structure. Electoral mobilisation rests not only on distribution of these same public goods but, especially in a notorious handful of towns across the centre and east of the state, on a mobilisation of youth vanguards which is fundamentally unstable.⁷⁸

For the top strata of the elite, the state is a domain for rent, revenue and political capital to fund a cosmopolitan life spent mainly in the capital and overseas. The state Governor throughout my fieldwork was a Bare man with a successful and remarkably lucrative background in the hotel business. He was said to spend little time in the state. Rumours about his private activities – habitual cannabis smoking, investment of public money in hotels in Abuja and abroad, extended holidays to South Africa for the World Cup, naked pool parties at his Abuja hotel – were well-known if not discussed in polite company. In the foyer of his private residence he was reputed to have a full-length photograph of his predecessor and main rival (who fell from grace in a politically-engineered scandal) in handcuffs. Even by Gida State’s unimpressive norms, he was known to have done very

⁷⁷ Both by actual votes and by providing enough statistical-geographical ‘grey’ areas to facilitate election rigging.

⁷⁸ During the drafting of this chapter, I received news that a community policing programme in the state designed at engaging youths had been suspended at the *request* of officials in the Local Governments, who were nervous of the destabilising potentials of allowing youths to assemble in any public forum they did not control.

little for the economic or infrastructural development of the state, but kept political consensus through generously distributing public money to key stakeholders and constituencies.

Economically, the state remains prime locus of personal enrichment, opportunity and capital formation; the regional economy is poor (67% of Gida-ites subsist on less than US\$1 per day)⁷⁹ and sits on a narrow economic base. The rural hinterland is predominantly reliant on agriculture, fishing and livestock, and while the state does have a few major industrial installations, it is largely what Nigerians call ‘a civil service state’ – in which the salaried formal sector is largely on the government payroll. Dependent on the twin economies of urban salaried and rural producers, Dutsin Bature town is a centre for marketing and services. It lies on two major transport national routes, and has two large motor parks; a large number of hotels and guesthouses, three major markets, a popular tertiary education institution, retailers, private schools and clinics, newspapers, local broadcasters, semi-neglected heritage sites, and plentiful religious institutions, churches, mosques and madrasas. The town also includes its share of Federal Government; a Federal Medical Centre, military and other government installations, including the police. In many ways it is typical small-town Nigeria, and its criminology reflects this, as we shall see subsequently. The quality of sociality in the town is imbued with a strong sense that the state is a backwater; while youths struggle for opportunities to advance locally or migrate, adult men (and some women) seem to spend much of their time in religious observance, drinking or extra-marital affairs. The prevailing atmosphere lies between boredom and sleepy charm, making Dutsin Bature the kind of town which finds its literary equivalent in the Monterey of Steinbeck’s *Tortilla Flat*, full of local ‘characters’ trying to hustle enough money to get drunk for the afternoon.

⁷⁹ Adjusted Purchasing Power Parity. Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics, NBS Press briefing on Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010 Report downloaded from <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/> accessed 13th February 2012.

3.3.2: The police in Dutsin Bature

The torpid local economy has made the uniformed services a historically popular avenue to mobility for many indigenes of Gida State, so the police are a significant factor in the town itself, as we shall explore in the chapter on recruitment. Beyond that, the CP (and other senior officers) are inevitably well-known and significant figures in local society, especially if prone to socialising, or to ‘playing politics’. The CP during the earlier part of my fieldwork was especially so; a charismatic but capricious character, a former MOPOL commander known as an active ‘operations man’, he was given to driving round town in the evenings, alone, unarmed and unescorted in a new Jeep SUV (‘a friend gave it to me’) touring the outdoor bars, playing pool, meeting friends and making his presence felt as a kind of self-cast town sheriff in the Wild West mould. His charisma was considerable, as was his capacity to unnerve. One on occasion I witnessed him resolve a fight between drunken soldiers by voice and presence alone, without leaving his chair. On another he taught me a subtle lesson about control and manipulation by tricking me into carrying his (Pierre Cardin) briefcase into a meeting for him. His unpredictable changes of mood left many of his officers terrified of him. One orderly resigned his post, telling an acquaintance of mine that “I have served six CPs in this role, but this man makes me so nervous I can’t sleep”.

As a posting, Dutsin Bature suits many Gida-ites sent ‘back-to-state’ well enough. Police officers from other areas however often see it differently, and it is not a popular choice. A British colonial-era police officer I interviewed in 2009 remembered Dutsin Bature as a ‘punishment posting’ due to its unpleasant climate and unimportant nature. Today, out-of-state officers seem to share perspectives very much in the colonial mould, characterising Gida indigenes as lazy, stubborn, tribalistic and intractable, and contrasting them with the productivity or integrity of people elsewhere (usually their own home areas). At the outset of my fieldwork, I asked the Commissioner what the indigenes of the state did (meaning economically). He replied ‘Nothing. They just gossip’.

There is little money or fame to be made in Gida State; it is neither the place to learn ‘real’ policing nor to ‘acquire relevance’ (come to the attention of career-making superiors or public figures), and there is little fun to be had, especially compared to the country’s great cosmopolitan centres of Lagos, Abuja, or Kaduna.

Gida is a quiet posting, a poor posting, (a punishment posting?) It’s not for the cream who get Kaduna, Lagos, Abuja. Therefore there is a notable proportion of Gida state indigenes in late career who serve there; (ASPs and above) – it suits them to plan for retirement in a posting that is easier to get because no-one else wants. DPO of B and E divisions and DCO E division are all in this category. But for a junior officer it’s a backwater. Housing is expensive (because of small land area of town). Average rent is 120k and they ask for two years up-front, you have to beg them down to one [year]. And it’s hot. ASP Patricia Jibrin tells me ‘when I got posted I was on the phone to my mum and dad “Aah! I got Gida! I won’t learn anything!”’ Fieldnotes, January 2010.

Very few officers seek transfer to Gida, and newly-graduated ASPs who find themselves posted there usually quickly start to ‘work their transfer’ elsewhere. A minority of officers have different motivations. ASP Jibrin’s coursemate, previously posted to Dutsin Bature sent an SMS from their new ‘plum’ posting in Force Headquarters, Abuja saying that he wished for a transfer back as his new job was too intensive and he wanted somewhere they could just ‘go to sleep’. Indeed, policing Dutsin Bature cannot be compared with busy Lagos, where a DPO can expect to work 14-hour days, and one friend of mine in charge of a medium-sized station complains that he has not had a full night’s sleep in three years; when he does sleep, he says, his wife can only wake him by whispering his radio call-sign in his ear. By contrast, even Gida State’s Commissioner of Police has usually left for home by 5 or 6pm. Yet this is not to say, as we shall see, that there are not occasions when this can quickly change into a major and dramatic crimewave or crisis.

3.3.3: The State Command

Gida State police command has approximately 4,000 uniformed personnel, divided into around 200 SPOs, 400-odd Inspectors, and 3,300 rank and file. 32 Divisions, headed by DPOs of ranks between ASP and CSP, are grouped into three Area Commands. The State Headquarters includes central functions, such as Operations department, control room, Provost in charge of discipline, State CID (plainclothes detectives dealing with serious crimes such as homicide), CIB (plainclothes intelligence-gathering and surveillance officers), administrative, payroll, works and public relations departments. A Mobile squadron provides public order intervention capacity. The state also has a resident detachment of Federally-seconded SARS – the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, and a number of other Federally-seconded functions such as a small Community Policing training team.

3.4: ‘B’ Division

My primary fieldwork site was in Dutsin Bature’s ‘B’ Division, the largest of four in the town. The jurisdiction included the central commercial and administrative areas of the town, the majority of the 20th-century urban residential areas including both elite and working-class areas, the ‘old town’, and a large section of rural hinterland. ‘B’ Division also encompasses a smaller police station in the residential-commercial high-density Dogonyaro suburb; a small police post within the exclusive Government Reserve Area; and three distant rural police posts, the nearest is at least two hours’ overland journey away, via dirt tracks best passed on motorcycle. ‘B’ Division, as the largest Divisional headquarters in the town, also hosts some central departments for which there is not office space in the State Headquarters.

Table 3: Staffing of Dutsin Bature ‘B’ Division, December 2010

Cadre	Rank	Number	% of total	Of whom female	Of whom Gida State indigene	Of whom transferred out within three months ⁸⁰
SPOs	Deputy Superintendent	2	1.1%	0	0	2 (100%)
	Assistant Superintendent	1	0.55%	0	0	1 (100%)
Inspectors	Inspector	11	6.1%	1 (9%)	3 (27%)	0
Rank and File	Sergeant	12	6.7%	3 (25%)	5 (41%)	4 (33%)
	Corporal	19	10.6%	4 (21%)	8 (42%)	3 (15.7%)
	Constable	134	74.8%	22 (16.2%)	96 (71%)	13 (9.7%)
TOTAL		179	100%	30 (16.7%)	112 (62%)	23 (12.8%)

Source: Nominal Roll ‘B’ Division Dutsin Bature

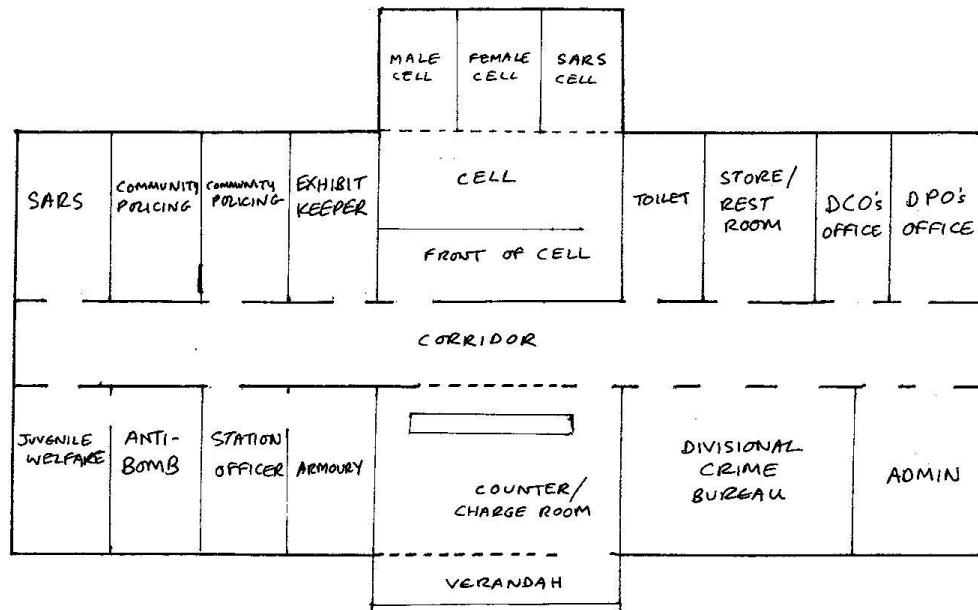
As well as force number, rank, name and state of origin, the station’s nominal roll lists each officer’s Local Government of origin, home town, tribe, date of birth, date of enlistment, date of last promotion, date of transfer to command, date of transfer to division, state last transferred from, level of educational qualification and duty post. Except in case of officers permanently seconded to particular roles, in most cases this last category lists officers as ‘G/D’ – general duties – no matter their actual daily role and function. Note from the table above that the majority of constables (but the minority of all higher ranks) are Gida indigenes – the largest number of those, as with the population of the state as a whole, were Bare people. Note also from the last column that personal mobility increases with ascending rank.

⁸⁰ I went through this list with the Station Officer’s clerk three months after its compilation – 22 officers had been transferred away from ‘B’ Division, either within or out of the state, while one had been dismissed for theft. These officers were not replaced until the very end of my fieldwork, leading to a semi-permanent understaffing problem.

3.4.1: The police station

Since the functions of policing and the people who carry them out are embedded in the spaces they occupy, let us tour them sequentially. The station's layout can be seen on the accompanying plan drawing.

Fig 5: 'B' Division Station plan



'B' Division Police Station

The station itself lies in a spacious town-centre compound, behind walls topped with broken bottle-glass. A few small trees shade the parked cars of senior officers and visitors. By the gate, in a plot edged with stones, a small flagpole flies the colours of the Nigerian Police Force. A wide open space leads to the verandah of the station. To the

side, a small tree provides a pool of shade for officers to catch some cool in the heat of the afternoon when the electricity fails. Behind the station, between old and new barrack blocks, a few goats, chickens, and dogs roam around scavenging, and after school hours, children play. On both sides are vehicles in various states of disrepair. Some are broken-down police vehicles; many more dust-covered cars are held as evidence in cases. Behind the cars are a number of fuel tankers. Two or three have visibly not moved in years, and are full of crude oil, evidence of bunkering (theft from pipelines). A handful of movable tankers are parked behind these, and occasionally come and go. I am told that they are brought here by their owners for secure parking. Screened by these, a few unobtrusive corrugated-zinc-roofed lean-tos against the compound wall house an ad-hoc café, makeshift garage, and the shack residences of several Inspectors.

Outside

A wide verandah features a sagging armchair and a wooden bench worn shiny by a shifting assemblage of waiting supplicants, complainants' and suspects' relatives, as well as officers who want to catch a breath of breeze, and to survey those coming and going. Here, hawkers bring herbal medicines, *fura* (yoghurt drink) in the morning, boiled corn in the afternoon, cuts of meat to take home at the end of the day, shoes, films, and other items. Also here, or inside, or in the shade off to the side - is the armed officer detailed as Station Guard. This role is taken by many different officers, including some who have recently demobilised from a MOPOL squadron, and who continue to wear those units' distinctive fatigues for their guard duties. Another was a young constable transferred in from Lagos who had his black uniform tailor-made in a shiny fabric, and who vocally paced up and down during busy periods, 'forming' (posing or showing-off) and ostentatiously and noisily arranging complainants and their issues. This behaviour, and his relentless chasing of women, made him notorious. In his company, Godwin the Station Officer's clerk said to me, beaming "Station guard is a fucker. It is not good to have station guard who is a fucker". Taking this for a joking insult, I missed its literal import until some days later, sitting under the tree with two older corporals while the guard was missing from his post, one remarked "station guard doesn't like to take time",

and nodded at the *fura*-seller emerging from the lean-tos in the distance, adjusting her clothes and hurriedly leaving the compound.

Counter

An upturned yam-mortar props open the door through which visitors and officers alike enter. A concrete grille allows air and light from outside into the corridor behind. To the left a concrete bench built into the exterior wall, runs the length of the room. Opposite a doorway leads inside the station. To the left of this is a concrete built-in counter with a chest-height top, which gives the room its name. In front, at a wooden table, sit three female officers, an Inspector, a Sergeant, and a Constable, who are responsible for entering cases in the Station Diary, keeping prisoners' possessions, screening visitors who come to feed prisoners, and maintaining other paperwork, including the crime diary; incident diary; routine diary; duty report diary; prisoner lock-up register; and SPOs visiting rounds register.⁸¹ The records are written in exercise books kept in their desk drawer, alongside room keys and a carefully tied cloth bundle of detained prisoners personal effects, which are counted in and out at the end of each shift and the number solemnly recorded. This record-keeping is a large part of the counter ladies' job, and one of them is detailed as 'Writer'.

The room is arranged like a stage set, with a very few things in it, and each chosen with significance. Near the door posters for police communications equipment, HIV awareness, and posters advocating electoral fairness, are joined from time to time by postings notices or photocopied posters *In Memory Of* officers in the command who have died. A creaky fan hangs from the ceiling next to a bare bulb; both sometimes work. A clock above the counter is flanked by framed photograph portraits of (left to right) the Inspector-General, Zonal AIG, Commissioner of Police, and the State Governor. Next to them is a blackboard, with painted categories into which every day is chalked the date and the number of male and female prisoners currently held. Behind the desk, at the foot

⁸¹ This is the bare minimum. Regulations require that ideally, there should also be a telephone call book; a visitors book; a sick report book; an inspectors' visiting rounds register; NCOs visiting rounds register; a book of recognisance to appear at the station; and a book of recognisance to appear before a magistrate.

of the wall, a long wooden crate previously used to ship rifles contains prisoners' clothes, belts and mobile phones. Above it, hung like a warning from a peg on a wall, is a black truncheon, which is taken down to 'deal with' a rowdy detainee, or when the officer detailed as Station Available takes it down, calls over his shoulder "book me" and accompanies a complainant out to attend a case. A cooler is tucked into the corner from which a female officer sells sachets of cold water.

The counter is manned by a duty Inspector, the CRO (Charge-Room Officer). The counter is a prime site of action; supplicants and complainants must first make their case at it; suspects are stripped to underwear and detained temporarily behind it; police officers being disciplined may be ordered to sit or stand behind it; officers coming on duty check the day's orders and postings on it; arguing parties appeal to it as a court bench; favoured prisoners may be allowed out of the cell to air themselves behind it; temporary detainees eat behind it; supplicants make deals on it; charge-room officers going off duty get changed back into civilian clothes behind it. Since the counter is the prime site for social action, bored officers intermittently go there to see what is going on; as do I, being once accurately upbraided for it by a female constable who greets me "So, you have come to counter to fill your eye?"

Since the CRO is the first – and sometimes the only – port of call for visitors pursuing cases, he can exercise considerable power, as well as considerable additional revenue-earning opportunity, if he so chooses. Thus an Inspector in financial hardship may lobby the SO's office for additional shifts at the counter. Yet as it is a role which also requires judgement and experience, it is unlikely to go to an inexperienced or untrusted Inspector. During my time the post is filled by Inspector Daniel, an expansive and friendly veteran of three decades who decides to educate me; Inspector Tajudin, who coaches me in Bare language; a sour-faced scarified Inspector whose name I never learn, who says little and gets a lot of shifts, and Inspector Fidelis, who lectures the female counter officers on correct marital behaviour, and is reading a bootleg copy of Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* on the cover of which he has written in biro 'And the ugly ones refuse to die': Quick to reassure me that he will soon secure a transfer to

Abuja, he is an avid collector of money and quickly becomes embroiled in a controversy which gets him transferred instead to an isolated rural outpost.

Inside the building one enters a corridor running the whole length of the building, with a window at each end for light and air. Rooms along it each have their purpose in neatly stencilled letters above the door. We shall tour them in turn.

The Station Officer

The first room on the left belongs to the Station Officer, known as ‘SO’, in charge of the day-to-day running of the station and its staff. The SO is one of the clade of experienced Inspectors who form the day-to-day backbone which ‘really’ runs the police in the same way that senior NCOs ‘really’ run the military; his remit includes disciplinary matters and staff allocation; as he is in charge of postings his office is a necessary port of call for those trying to get a better beat within the station; maintaining a better beat was best assured by staying on the right side of the SO, usually by remitting a little of the allowance; failing to do so was likely to occasion a row. In the pursuance of disciplinary matters, the SO also acts in a *pater familias* role akin to that of a military Sergeant-Major; thus when a constable who has impregnated a local girl stops paying the paternity support he has agreed, or when a police officer has beaten his wife, it is to the SO that the offended party brings the issue. ‘B’ Division’s SO was an elderly Inspector, of a pleasant, simple and straightforward demeanour. During quiet periods he tied a sack, cutlass and locally-made gun to his Chinese motorbike and headed to a nearby forest reserve for a peaceful afternoon’s poaching. SO was also popular for his wordplay, a reliable source of amusement for the counter ladies. It consisted of ‘blowing grammar’⁸², coining nonsensical but verbose phrases such as “the sun is too rowdy” or “the question is too philomenous”. Much of his actual work to be done by his clerk, a very capable, good-natured and perennially overworked constable named Godwin. Since the SO’s duties involved making sure officers turned up for duty on time, Godwin routinely used his own

⁸² This form of wordplay, part exhibition of oratorical prowess, and part self-parody, is a recognised trope in Nigerian popular culture; the current leading practitioner is popular politician Patrick Obahiagbon.

phone credit to call them and his own motorbike to pick them up when late. But he also enjoyed the devolved influence of the job, as he was often sought out by officers lobbying for a better (more lucrative) beat, and so was able to operate an occasional derivatives market in shifts, wherein officers haggled and traded slots when possible. From the SO's office also led the only access to the station's armoury, secured with two strong barred doors. Another of the SO's clerk's jobs is to book weapons in and out in the bound folio register. On handing in a weapon officers are supposed to cock and click the trigger to show it is empty. A number of holes in the ceiling, cement floor, and door (at waist-height) indicated where weapons had not been carefully unloaded. After a careless constable added a hole in the thin dividing wall from a 12-bore cartridge, I took to avoiding the vicinity whenever weapons were being handed in or out.

Anti-Bomb

The other side of the dividing wall is the room occupied by the state anti-bomb unit. In addition to identifying and defusing explosive devices, this busy specialist unit is also tasked with screening and securing venues before important public events and VIP visits, investigating explosions and fires, and supervising the storage, issuance and use of explosives by construction and quarrying companies. The unit has the reputation of an elite; their olive-green uniforms are starched and pressed, their different insignia prominently displayed, they have all been specially selected, and receive training including from overseas experts. They also have noticeably higher morale; bomb squad are spared the normal rut of routine duties, and like MOPOL have a dual chain of command in that they are partially autonomous from the State Command, also reporting to their own 'CP Anti-Bomb' in Abuja.

Juvenile Welfare

After the bomb squad is the Juvenile Welfare Centre unit (JWC), a female-staffed unit, established within each State Command, to deal with all cases involving juveniles and/or domestic violence. In 'B' Division this means two things – handling cases of abandoned

babies - liaising with social services, finding orphanage places, tracing mothers and trying to re-join the child to the family; and secondly, intervening in those paternity and maintenance disputes which reach the police, to broker settlement between the protagonists and their families. As cases are infrequent, and the work (being done by women, and not being lucrative) is not prestigious within the police, the posting is considered a career backwater. Usually the room is empty apart from a baby's cot near the window, two benches, and a table upon which one of the three plainclothes female officers who staffs it, or one of the police cleaners – often widows – will be asleep.

Special Anti-Robbery Squad

The office across the corridor is supposed to belong to the officer in charge of the JWC; but she is rarely present, and in an incongruous juxtaposition of the 'softest' and 'hardest' ends of policing, the room is instead more often occupied by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The SARS (pronounced as a word), a force of specially-selected detective officers established to deal with the paradigmatic folk devil of Nigerian crime, the armed robber, occupy a unique place in popular perceptions of policing. Heir to the 'no-appeals' Robbery and Firearms Tribunals established during the military era, they are selected and commanded from Abuja. Detachments attached to each State Command plan their own operations in response to local priorities. Sometimes they operate out-of-state in support of other SARS units. SARS operations are both investigations and tactical engagements; they both report the results of their investigations to Abuja, and take an executive role in the active pursuance of cases when it is required. Constable Blessing described their role to me:

“They are SARS. We are ordinary police, we didn't have the right to kill, but they can take case of armed robbers, shoot them, bury them for bush.” (4th February 2011)

The actual modus operandi of SARS units seems to depend upon the operating environment.⁸³ Where violent crime is rife – states such as Abia, Akwa Ibom or Rivers, the bodies of criminals who 'died in exchange of fire' are commonly exhibited for the

⁸³ A 2009 Amnesty International report highlights shocking cases in Abia, Enugu, Lagos, and Abuja.

press and public; whereas in the quieter environs of Gida State, this happened only once at the State Command during my fieldwork, and then it was not clear whether or not SARS often sent cases to Abuja for ‘further enquiry’ – but whether this phrase was accurate or euphemistic I cannot answer. The SARS detachment in ‘B’ Division was a group of around ten plainclothes Inspectors; their Toyota Hiace van was decorated to resemble a commercial minibus, with pink and green plastic flowers on the dashboard, and they specialised in undercover and ‘sting’-type operations. SARS officers worked mainly at night, so they were present intermittently and unpredictably; they used the JWC office to relax, or to interrogate and torture suspects, sometimes both at the same time. The unit projected a cultivated air of competence, intelligence and menace. While some SARS officers avoided company, a number of them – “the popular ones”⁸⁴ - would also stay around the station for social reasons, and were helpful and friendly informants, who took time to enlighten me on policing matters; they saw themselves as ‘serious’ police officers trying to do a serious job, and voiced their concern about defects and corruption in police administration and policy. Other non-SARS officers also deferred to them, as serious and professional detectives, of whom most were in awe and a little fear. They were indeed, as demonstrated on many occasions, both very competent and brutal.

Community Policing

The other side of the wall was the suite occupied by the Command’s Community Policing team, a federally-administered and donor-supported project rolled-out across selected states. Composed of two SPOs and a supporting constable, their role was mainly a training and outreach role, designed to promote collaborative partnership between the police and the public by engaging both. The pace of activities were set at a national level. During my stay, officers were often waiting for directions to begin new activities, as events such as the 2011 elections held up programme implementation. This was also the room in which I was allotted a desk; the open and progressive demeanour of the Community Policing team being counterpointed by the ammonia smell of the cells and

⁸⁴ As a constable explained to me, using the term in the sense of ‘well-known’.

the occasional screaming and gibbering of suspects being tortured in the SARS office next door.

Exhibit Keeper

The next room to the right is the Exhibit Room, an Aladdin's cave of material evidence presided over by an experienced Inspector, the Exhibit Keeper, whose official role is to log and store evidence; so his room is filled with a shifting array of stolen, or allegedly stolen, goods – fridges, sacks of roofing nails, bags. Weapons and tools used in offences are also kept here, so the walls are hung with a selection of daggers, cutlasses, spears and local guns, identified by handwritten slips of paper. As some court cases drag on for years, some of the exhibits have been there a very long time, and are thickly covered in yellow dust. In the case of perishable evidence, the police may apply to the court to be allowed to dispose of it themselves, as I found out on asking after the fate of a live goat tethered in the compound for some days. The Exhibit Room is a quiet place, which explains why a particular pair of female constables use it to play scrabble in on slow days, and also why on occasion officers vanish into it to count large rolls of money under the watchful eye of the Exhibit Keeper.

Cell

Facing the counter is the cell, a world of itself which could be the subject of an ethnography all its own. The front of the cell has a locked door and a large internal window, at which prisoners often stand or lean in the hope of catching a glimpse of what is going on outside. As a short period 'inside cell' is a common punishment for absence from duty or other minor disciplinary offence, such prisoners are often as likely to be a police officer as a criminal suspect.

Inside, a concrete wall masks the rest of the cell space. I was not invited into the cell area and did not press the issue, but mid-way through my fieldwork a constable invited me to take the opportunity when the DPO entered the cell 'on the warpath' about its state of

cleanliness. In the inner yard prisoners, some in chains, sit in their underwear (detained police officers are allowed to keep their uniforms on) on bare concrete floors. Behind this are three other cells, with open fronts barred with iron. One is for men; one for women; and one is the SARS cell, for armed robbery suspects under interrogation (their eventual prospects are not good). If denied bail by a court, prisoners can be kept in the police cells for a long period – one female prisoner, held for stabbing her policeman lover to death, was there for at least four months during my fieldwork. During these extended incarcerations, the cells develop their own culture. Long-timers, a constable tells me, are organised into official positions which are in part modelled on police terminology, and new inmates are subject to initiations, often painful or costly.

In the cell they have hierarchy – Chairman, Vice-Chair, Exhibit Keeper – he collects the money, right down. And the senior ones get to sleep first if there's limited space, and they will collect certain things from you, and na wah (too bad) if you don't [comply]. (14th June 2010.)⁸⁵

In the largest stations, cells become arenas for religious movements too – in the evening the hundreds of prisoners in Lagos' SARS Annexe can be heard uplifting their voices in revival session. The toilets in 'B' Division's cells have become blocked, so prisoners urinate and defecate into plastic bags and tip them out of the window. There the mess is burned every morning by cleaners, but the sickly ammonia smell builds again in the heat of the day to permeate the entire back of the station.

The station's toilets have three cubicles, segregated by rank – for SPOs, Inspectors, and Rank and File. The first two were kept locked with a key, leaving only the third usable. This acrid, stinking and stain-streaked room was avoided by officers (and me) whenever possible, and most people preferred to use a pit-latrine behind a corrugated iron screen by the compound fence.

⁸⁵ A human rights researcher showed me a copy of cell rules given her elsewhere in Nigeria, a code of offences and fines written in pencil on a cigarette packet – upsetting toilet bucket, fine: two cigarettes.

The next room was formally a store. It was also common knowledge (although never explicitly referred-to, as the practice was forbidden by regulations) that at least six officers without accommodation lived there, sleeping on foam mattresses. These were mostly junior constables, but also included the friendly but eccentric Inspector known as ‘Obama’, who was widely known to have mental health issues, and was therefore kept on simple duties.

The DCO

The next room houses the DCO – Divisional Crime Officer – officially the second-highest-ranking officer in the division, responsible for making decisions on criminal cases. His narrow office, masked by an orange curtain, is bare apart from his desk, chair and a suite of battered armchairs, in which groups of complainants, relatives, or lawyer may be presenting their case in earnest and hushed tones. In a large station in a major city, the DCO may be assisted by a DCO II. In a medium-sized station such as ‘B’ division, conversely, the job is constrained as the station’s DPO will take the final decision to detain, prosecute or release. The DCO’s job is also pre-empted from ‘below’, as the Inspector Crime who heads the DCB (Divisional Crime Bureau) may already have made most of the groundwork and advised on decisions. ‘B’ division was lacking a DCO for the first part of my stay, and the experienced Inspector Crime was doing a capable job of understudying; when the post was eventually filled, by an ageing plainclothes ASP with a limp, the new appointee did not take much visible interest in his role and the real work continued to be done by the Inspector Crime. Indeed, it was widely known that the DPO detested the DCO and was constrained only by his inability to sack him.

The DPO

The last office belongs to the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), the executive manager of the station. The décor attested to his seniority. As well as a desk, armchair, metal filing cabinet, and suite of sofas and chair facing the desk, there was a ceiling fan and air-conditioning unit, a fridge and a wall clock inscribed ‘donated by the Police Community

Support Committee'. A DPO is a significant person in the community, and so as well as applicants and suspects, his office is frequently visited by minor dignitaries, politicians and traditional rulers, who wish to embed a personal relationship with the DPO. The DPO is the final arbiter of all that goes on within the division. His final approval is required for postings, arrests, charges, bail, release of prisoners and virtually everything else. By the same principle, he also takes personal responsibility for everything which happens, which is where the element of personal risk comes to the fore. During my period in Dutsin Bature, the DPO was Superintendent of Police Bernard Okechukwu, one of the state command's most experienced SPOs, who had previously served as a UN peacekeeper, and as Gida State's Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO). He was known as a strict disciplinarian (at least before the fall from grace described in Chapter 3) and it is likely that he felt the presence of an overseas researcher a considerable potential for headaches; in any case his disposition towards me was, while not unfriendly, extremely reserved and risk-averse. His expressionless dealings with me followed the letter of the cooperation my research permissions ordered him to give me, and not a jot more; he never volunteered information, but was as welcoming as he considered appropriate (his wife, also a police officer and part-time gospel recording artist, was by comparison very friendly and outgoing). When he was temporarily transferred, his post – one of the best in the state command – went to a young Superintendent from the CP's home state, recently 'demobilised' from MOPOL, who had his eyes on greater heights and soon transferred once again, to the new national anti-terrorist unit.

Admin

Opposite, and within easy shouting distance of the DPO, is the Admin Office. It is staffed by five uniformed female officers, under a female Inspector Admin. They sit at five desks jammed into a limited space, shared with filing cupboards, in-trays and mechanical typewriters. The admin staff work an unpressured daytime routine, during which younger constables will wander in to flirt, exchange banter and generally waste time. In neighbouring 'A' division, a computer occupies pride of place, self-consciously operated

by a young female constable in plainclothes who dresses and positions herself to catch the eye of the fit and youthful new DPO.

Crime

Finally, abutting the counter through which we entered, is the long room called the DCB – the Divisional Crime Bureau. This is the domain of the dozen or so plainclothes Investigating Police Officers (IPOs). Here witnesses are interviewed, statements taken, suspects interrogated, and outcomes brokered. Inside the room's open doorway, benches and two long wooden tables run the length of the room. At the far end are two lockers. The one on the left contains IPOs' effects and case files, and the one on the right contains records of crimes under investigation, and is the domain of the only woman in the room, whose job it is to update these records. At the door end, in a little open space, is the desk of the Inspector Crime, who when present presides over the DCB like a schoolteacher. An experienced Inspector Crime is needed not just to effectively handle cases, but also the IPOs; when the Inspector Crime is sent on a promotion course, the Exhibit Keeper was directed to replace him since "you know these young constables [in DCB], they will just be doing anyhow". Indeed, with the exception of the Inspector, and the older corporal known universally as 'Egbon' (elder), the DCB staff are young constables and corporals.

Out of sight, in mind

Much of my ethnography was station-based, with occasional visits to rural and satellite posts, and specialist units. Therefore I was much more familiar with those staff who operated in station-based roles than those with distant postings who were infrequent visitors. Up to the end of fieldwork I was still meeting staff of 'B' Division for the first time. The resource-poor State Command had centralised its motorised response, leaving the division just one vehicle – named the 'frying pan' for its sputtering engine noise – for the four or five men detailed to armed patrol under the Inspector 'P&G' – Patrol and Guard. Their activities involved routine patrol, emergency response, 'raids' on locations

where suspects (or potential suspects) were likely to be, and likely also mounting roadblocks. The vast majority of officers at any one time operated on off-site static guard 'beats' – outside banks, important infrastructure, or the homes of VIPs, while a select few plainclothes police performed 'surveillance' – undercover observation of sensitive sites such as banks. All staff were liable to be occasionally reassigned when needed for Special Duties such as public-order policing at rallies or celebrations. This tour has not included the MOPOL barracks, with their sentry post and parade ground; the old satellite station in Dogonyaro suburb, where the women constables bring their babies to work and the counter is beset with family disputes; the ultra-quiet GRA police post in which the highlight of officers' days was to wave at the Chinese construction workers as they came home at 4pm; the distant rural posts in villages with virtually no shop or cash economy, where two or three officers squat in a mud room with only a kerosene lamp and an incident book for company; the administrative offices at Headquarters with their steady stream of supplicants for transfer or other attention; the Public Relations Officer's bungalow office where a sundry array of journalists, businesspeople and youth corpers keep up a round of 'courtesy calls' amid the piles of newspapers and recruitment files. Neither should we forget the CP's office, with its waiting room, shiny-booted orderlies, expansive desk, glass conference table, icy air-conditioning, red plush velvet armchairs; chrome-and-leather seating for 30 visitors; huge TV; dried roses (gift from an Indian horticultural company); shelf of silver trophies; and prominently-displayed roll-call of previous Commissioners.

3.4.2: Police time

Police worked a variety of shifts – those in office-based administrative jobs had the least anti-social, from 8am to 5pm, or later when ordered by the DPO. Otherwise officers across the state command worked a three-shift rotation, changing each week on a Wednesday. Officially these were 6am-2pm, 2pm-10pm, and 10pm-6am. Yet most of the time, personnel shortages meant that in order to cover 'B' division's commitments, everyone instead worked two shifts, 6pm to 6am and 6am to 6pm. Since these changed weekly, and since some officers were shifted around to cover shortfalls, this meant that

one day per week many officers worked two shifts – 24 hours *continuous* duty. On-duty time also frequently ate into off-duty time. Unlike bigger urban centres, this did not usually impact so much on senior managers as on rank and file officers, especially IPOs, who could be called any time in connection with their case.

Barker (1999) notes that different shifts attract different kinds of characters and create subcultural lifestyles within policing. It is interesting to note that many of the considerable number of younger constables and corporals who were enrolled at local higher education institutions were allowed to select night-guard beats so they could attend daytime classes. This tends to surprise non-police Nigerian friends; very few of them apparently attribute to junior police officers that level of agency and desire for educational self-advancement very apparent in other walks of Nigerian life.⁸⁶

Several informants in larger cities mentioned to me at various times that ‘real’ policing happens at night. But Dutsin Bature is not a large city, and the policing day was accordingly different. Early mornings were typically quiet, with staff arriving, changing clothes at the counter, night staff handing in weapons, and relatives arriving to feed prisoners. Mid-mornings were work periods, to interrogate prisoners, while more cases arrived as markets opened and economic activity gathered momentum. Towards the heat of early afternoon, officers would leave for a single large meal. By 6pm night-shift beat officers were again coming in to be posted and issued weapons; families were bringing food to prisoners, and by 7pm another peak of crime was often discernible, as people visited evening markets, returned home, frequented beer-parlours. By 10pm things were often quiet again, and barring a serious incident, a visitor to ‘B’ Division at midnight would find only a few officers on patrol, and perhaps SARS ‘on operation’; while a few counter staff dozed, and other police (and sometimes prisoners, if the DPO was not expected) chatted or slept on benches, desks, and car bonnets.

⁸⁶ Equally it produces some unexpected perspectives, such as the constable studying political science who gave a radical socialist critique as to why it is a waste of everyone’s time for him to be guarding a Senator’s house, provoking me to wonder how the Senator would feel if he knew the personal opinions of his uniformed guards.

The week in 'B' Division was structured by repeated rituals; DPO's lecture on a Tuesday, the four-day cycle of market days, dressing for weekly Juma'at prayer on Friday lunchtimes. Fridays, after prayer when businesses closed to transact banking for the week, were also a prime-time for bank robberies. Saturdays were often a day for public occasions and thus Special Duty assignments, while Sunday morning church time was quiet, after which the town socialised, while in the police barracks officers' hometown and ethnic associations met in circles of chairs in the shade of the barrack buildings.

So too for the month, marked by the monthly CP's lecture, and pay-day on the last day of the month (sometimes inexplicably delayed, much to the anger of the officers). The policing year too has a rhythm – most notably the pre-Christmas crime boom in November and December when Nigerians, including both criminals and police, sought to accumulate money for the extended holiday, in which many took an annual opportunity to travel to 'the village' (where they would be expected to provide largesse). Notably, the moving Ramadan-end feast of Sallah (Eid el-Fitr) did not appear to have the same effect.

To concentrate on events, however, is to mislead as to the *qualities* of time in Dutsin Bature. The nature of policing, and of all other social life in the town was imbued with a sense of dependency on a pace of events imagined as being set elsewhere, as I noted in fieldnotes from January 2010:

Slow. Waiting for NEPA because you can't afford generator. Waiting for Oga. Waiting for results to come out. Waiting for posting. Waiting for development. The slowness. People visit each others' offices just to gist and sleep.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ NEPA is the acronym for Nigerian Electric Power Authority; although the state provider has now been superseded by Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) the word 'Nepa' is synonymous with electricity (also 'light'). *Oga* means boss, from Yoruba and in general Nigerian colloquial English usage. To *gist* is to chat.

3.5: Conclusion

It will have become apparent from a reading of this chapter that the study which follows deals with a body which is huge, national, centralised, and which is formally granted enormous powers under limited accountability, and that only focussed in an upward direction. Yet it also takes this body in one particular local instantiation, in which those abstract powers and potentialities operate under very particular conditions and constraints, which mean that the work of a supposedly uniform national institution manifests in very particular ways. ‘Anytown’ Nigeria does not of course exist, and Dutsin Bature’s conditions and problems, while representative of a very many locations across the country, are inflected with particular dynamics of history, economy, sociology, public culture, political relationships, and limited available resources, which shape the kind of policing which takes place as much as do universal national conditions such as jurisdictional overlaps and rivalries with other agencies.

Chapter 4: The Public and the Police

This chapter is an effort to determine public attitudes and discourse regarding the police, but also the actual modes of interaction between the two; whether or not the public do use the police as a public service security provider, and if so, in what ways? Established literature on the police and security sector in Africa (Hills 2000, Baker 2004, 2010) suggests that publics make little, infrequent, and cautious use of the police, often preferring alternative security providers. Equally, in Nigeria there is a well-established trope of negative feeling about a police force whose malfunctions are a common topic of public debate. So it is important to examine the realities carefully, to see whether this negative disposition is reproduced in the everyday; whether the public in Dutsin Bature do shun the services of the police, and if and when they do engage with the police, in what modes and to what ends?

First, the chapter lays out the normative public discourse about policing, backed up by academic and policy literatures. It reviews quantative data on public attitudes to the police, and recounts findings specific to the fieldwork location, (with historical caveats). Thereafter, the chapter qualifies these responses by arguing that public perceptions of police corruption should be framed with particular and careful regard to the issue of salience. It then attempts to draw out deeper substantive issues around aversion to the state police, including their limited formal means of holding the police to account. It then moves to the sphere of public culture to further examine the poles around which negative images of the police are constructed, and interrogates the ways in which negative images of the police come to be mobilised in the public sphere, in cultural discourse and media product.

In the second part, the chapter moves to re-examine the superficially self-evident findings we can draw from the quantative data, cultural texts and vocalised opinions. First, it interrogates the validity of a generalised concept of ‘the public’ in contemporary Nigeria,

and introduce caveats on its use, as being itself instrumentally and consciously invoked. It then outlines ways in which actors move between on one hand the civic formal sphere where a public subjectivity applies, and on the other, particularist informal strategies, in interactions with the police. To explain this more fully, it relates and interprets a particularly illustrative example from fieldwork.

At the core of this chapter lies a discrepancy and a measure of cognitive dissonance between what people *say* about the police and what they *do* about the police. On one hand lie the opinions people give about the police when vocalising their views, whether in conversation, cultural discourse or creative media product, or when prompted to vocalise them in structured formats such as qualitative research surveys. On the other lie the modes of behaviour people display when relating with the police, the strategies of approach and accommodation they use when negotiating their own exceptions to the negative generalities through which they imagine and construe the world of interactions with the police. This dissonance and instrumentality is not least salient to police officers themselves, who exhibit their opinion through frequent comments of the ilk “Nigerians are very funny people”, “Nigerians like to make noise”, and “Nigerians can be very interesting”. This chapter is an effort towards unpacking the contradictions such phrases are coined to recognise.

4.1: The Police in public perceptions

It is an unavoidable and unignorable fact in Nigeria that the police are both a perennial subject of public discussion, and perennially portrayed in a negative light. The history of negative public discourse on policing in Nigeria is long and well-documented, emanating from both domestic and international, popular and elite sources. For brevity, let us take just one typical starting-point. In July 2010 Nigeria’s National Bureau of Statistics and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission presented the (delayed) results of a joint survey of business leaders and executives, funded by the European Union (EU) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The survey, typical of donor-sponsored efforts to produce data upon which to base institutional reform and

development policies, found that members of the business community named the Nigeria Police as the most corrupt public institution impeding economic operations in the country. This finding echoes numerous previous surveys such as the 2007 Nigeria Corruption Index by the Independent Advocacy Project (IAP), which memorably found that 99% of all respondents found the police to be the most corrupt public institution.⁸⁸ The report was followed, and supported by, a Human Rights Watch report, entitled *Everyone's In On The Game: Corruption and Human Rights Abuses by the Nigeria Police Force*, whose contents underlined the connection between the two issues highlighted in the title. These dubious citations are meanwhile only the quantative partners to the voluminous public rhetoric about police corruption, inefficiency, arbitrariness, extortion, brutality borderline criminality and simple bad attitude.

Usefully, some of the data relate directly to my fieldwork location, in the form of an *Impact Survey on Community Safety and Community Policing* conducted in November 2009 (just prior to my fieldwork) on behalf of the Department of International Development (DfID) UK Security, Justice and Growth Programme (henceforth 'SJG') managed by the British Council. These surveys were carried out as a monitoring and evaluation tool for a seven-year assistance programme centred on community policing. They document 17 states including my fieldwork location. In Gida State, the 1,000 respondents (across socio-economic classes) were drawn from five police divisions across the state, including Dutsin Bature's 'B' division, and two of the town's other divisions surveyed. Although these results are aggregated into state-level data, my research location is thus responsible for a significant proportion (513 respondents) of the recorded data. Most of the questions were propositions to which respondents were invited to agree or disagree. Only the extremes ('strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree') were collated in the SJG data, as documented on the table below. In addition there were four more exploratory questions, documented on the second table.

⁸⁸ *Punch*, 14 June 2007

Table 4: SJG survey responses

Question	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree
<i>Personally experienced police corruption within the last 6 months (yes/no)</i>	54% (yes)	46% (no)
<i>Personally experienced unacceptable behaviour from the police in the last 6 months (yes/no)</i>	54% (yes)	46% (no)
<i>Witnessed unacceptable behavior from the police within the last 6 months (yes/no)</i>	54% (yes)	46% (no)
<i>Whether respondents fear crime in their environments/communities?</i>	58%	42%
<i>Whether the police is effective in responding quickly to calls for assistance</i>	32%	65%
<i>Whether the police is effective in preventing crime</i>	30%	55%
<i>Whether the police is effective in detecting crime</i>	24%	55%
<i>Whether the police is effective in respecting the rights of suspects</i>	28%	55%
<i>Whether the police is effective in dealing with disputes between people and/ or groups</i>	24%	46%
<i>Whether the police is effective in dealing with road traffic accidents</i>	39%	34%
<i>Whether the police is effective in dealing with violent disturbances</i>	23%	44%
<i>Whether the police is effective in treating all people fairly irrespective of status or position</i>	9%	63%
<i>Whether the police is effective in dealing with people who wish to report crime or incidents</i>	13%	56%
<i>Whether the police is effective in service delivery</i>	12%	59%
<i>Whether the police is effective in maintaining good relations with the community</i>	14%	61%
<i>Whether the police is effective in dealing with female complainants in rape or similar cases</i>	27%	42%
<i>Whether the police is effective in dealing with cases of domestic violence</i>	28%	44%
<i>Whether the police is effective in taking cognisance of public opinion when setting police priorities</i>	12%	56%
<i>Whether the police is effective in working with other agencies to improve security & access to justice</i>	13%	58%
<i>Whether the police is effective in handling peaceful demonstrations</i>	11%	63%
<i>Percentage of respondents who prefer reporting crime to the police or IPS⁸⁹</i>	18% (police)	56% (IPS)

The table below further illustrates the exact issues which mainly influenced public opinion:

⁸⁹ IPS stands for Informal Policing Structures, a term covering vigilance organisations, neighbourhood watches and other non-police and non-formally professional security bodies.

Table 5: SJG survey particular issues

Question	Most frequent response and %age of respondents	Second-most frequent response and %age of respondents	Second-least frequent response and %age of respondents	Least frequent response and %age of respondents
Nature of crime experienced by those who said they had experienced police corruption	N20 demanded at checkpoints (47%)	Cash demanded for bail (43%)	Unlawful arrest (26%)	Various others (7%)
Type of unacceptable behaviour <u>experienced</u> by those who said they had experienced it	Abuse of power (50%)	Excess force (39%)	Threatened with gun (22%)	Unspecified others (11%)
Type of unacceptable behaviour <u>witnessed</u> by those who said they had experienced it	Abuse of power (50%)	Excess force (39%)	Threatened with gun (22%)	Unspecified others (11%) ⁹⁰
Type of crimes feared (12 categories in addition to which some respondents added arson – used to ‘settle scores’).	Corruption (49%)	Theft (36%)	Murder (11%)	Rape (8%) ⁹¹

Note in the above that members of the public in Gida State exhibited negative evaluations of the police across the board, regarding corruption, ineffectiveness, and abuse of office. While evaluations of police performance in all areas with the single exception of road traffic accidents are strongly negative, respondents’ personal experience of negative behaviour in the preceding six months is more evenly split. In many respects the attitudes to police documented in these results are much more negative than are SJG’s data from

⁹⁰ As these are exactly the same percentages recorded for the previous question, perhaps an error?

⁹¹ Note that the respondents were 72% male.

many other locations in Nigeria. Revealingly, the original compiler of survey results notes that:

“Survey results in ----- State are noteworthy for one cardinal reason: public confidence in the Nigerian Police is at its lowest ebb. It is important to mention here that a few days prior to commencement of the survey there was a bloody clash between the citizens in the State capital and the police. During the survey the gory signs of the clash were still very visible, burnt cars littered the streets and a respondent pointed at a fresh mound of earth, the grave of younger brother who met his *“untimely death at the hands of the police who were supposed to give him protection!”* (SJG, 2009)

So an element of historicity is embedded in the survey data, and without repeating the research it is not possible to know how much had changed between then and during the time I conducted fieldwork.⁹² The survey gives are powerful numbers, to be sure, but it won't do to simply take them as self-evident facts.⁹³ They are certainly a useful baseline for our enquiry, but we have to go behind and beyond such findings to see what is really at work. If we enquire further and deeper into this relationship, we may certainly find that the police are widely disliked, feared and avoided. We may equally discern that this rhetoric also disguises some extremely instrumental relationships with the police initiated by members of the public. And we will also find, less intuitively, that the police are also at times themselves very wary of, and even intimidated by, the public; that however will be examined in a subsequent chapter.

4.1.2: The salience of police corruption

We begin by interrogating the assumptions which inform the statistics. It is clear that police corruption is a particular concern, especially for the designers of the SJG survey, who put it top of the list (and perhaps more than for most respondents, who seem to

⁹² Neither was it possible, given the scope of this study, to explore an avenue which the data obviously suggest, namely the nature of vigilante or IPS groups, their operations and their relationship with wider publics; this seems however a fruitful avenue for further research.

⁹³ At the very simplest, note for instance the framing of all of the questions as negative or around problematic issues, which (unlike the broader CLEEN survey) limits the possibility of reporting satisfaction with services rendered.

express stronger opinions on fear of crime and police effectiveness).⁹⁴ In general, though, questions about corruption leave what constitutes corruption to the respondent's own interpretation. If we choose to define 'most corrupt' as either the amount stolen, or the distance to which an office-holder's actual behaviour deviates from their office's formal stated aims, it seems abundantly clear after even a cursory consideration that the police are *not* the most corrupt institution in Nigeria; Under those criteria, the distinction must surely go instead to the country's political institutions. Presidents, Honourable Ministers, Special Assistants, Senators, State Governors, Local Government Council chairs, and assorted other legislators, executives and functionaries' annual depredations in even the smallest of Nigeria's 36 states easily out-steal even the highest estimations of what might be extracted in the course of policing. That holds true even if we take Human Rights Watch's estimate of US\$3.3 million in annual illicit checkpoint revenues accrued by police in just one (large, commercial) state, or the recent projection that N20.53 billion (US\$135.7 million) may have been realised from 'dashes' at roadblocks nationwide in a single 18-month period.⁹⁵ In a centralised and executive-led pseudo-democracy, politicians after all operate with very little effective oversight or formal transparency; whereas the police have at least a nominal chain of superiors mandated to exercise oversight, a chain of command and an (admittedly imperfectly) functioning disciplinary code and mechanism.

I suggest instead that the key reason that the police are so easily named as 'most corrupt' by the public is because of the *salience* of police corruption. Whereas the cake-cutting of politics takes place behind closed doors and way over the head of the ordinary man or woman, encounters with police graft, though usually more petty in extent, are a routine experience for everyone. So much so, in fact, that the request-and-demand for a 'dash', the outstretched hand at the roadblock, the pay-at-point-of-use 'standard operating

⁹⁴ Thereby the survey designers possibly assume corruption has an explanatory primacy which in fact may remain to be demonstrated.

⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch cites the civil society organisation Intersociety's 2009 estimate that each of the approximately 70 checkpoints operating in the state generated around N20,000 (US\$132) daily, making N504 million (US\$3.3 million) annually (*Everyone's In On The Game*, p26). At the report's launch, Intersociety's Chair Emeka Umeagbalasi reportedly cited the N20.35 billion figure – broken down by region - as the estimated 'take' from January 2009 to June 2010 (*Next*, August 18th 2010). To 'dash' is to give away or tip.

procedures' of access to justice and public security have become archetypal parts of the Nigerian experience, constitutive acts in the fabric of daily life. Note that CLEEN's survey (2009) also credits the police with the highest proportion of bribe 'asks' of Federal agencies, with 51% of interactions resulting in the mention of cash. An Assistant Superintendent explained the salience issue to me in the following terms: An institution such as the Customs Service, he contended, may be as corrupt as the Police, but they relate only with a small number of businessmen, whereas:

“When we arrest someone and demand bail money, the father will then go home and take out one cloth (bolt of fabric) he has been keeping under the mattress, and try to sell it to one of the neighbours, and before he gets the 1,000 or 1,500 Naira, maybe ten of them will know he needs to sell cloth to raise money for bail”.⁹⁶

Equally, as the pervasive atmosphere of public insecurity can be directly correlated with police underperformance, their failures of service delivery tangibly affect everyone. In fact, this is borne out by the available statistical evidence: Preliminary findings from CLEEN Foundation show that of 13 listed Federal institutions about which members of the public were asked if they had contact in the last year, the top-rated were PHCN/NEPA (42.5%) and the police (29.7%) while the numbers who were in direct contact with agencies such as the customs, courts and road safety were in the low single digits (CLEEN 2009; 7). Thus other agencies and institutions may not necessarily be 'cleaner', but their failings may be less visible or less tangible. In addition we should note that police corruption is uniquely *morally* salient because of the noteworthiness and persistent shock-value that the institution given guardianship of the law exhibits such proclivities to breaking it. Meanwhile, due to their media headline potential, survey findings become self-reinforcing social facts with a life of their own in public discourse. Alemika (2009; 6) notes in his analysis of survey data that “perceptions of corruption are generally much higher than actual incidence of corrupt practices.”⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Interview, male Assistant Superintendent, North-Central zone, November 2009. In Nigeria, as in the UK, only courts have the right to set a cash amount for bail; police bail is in theory (but almost never in reality) free.

⁹⁷ We could therefore argue that the question which is being answered in such surveys may be more realistically understood as 'what is the most visibly corrupt institution in Nigeria?' and 'which institution's

4.1.3: From surveys to experience

Those moderating considerations aside, it is undeniable that the police have a terrible public image in Nigeria and this extends beyond non-governmental and donor surveys and the educated-readership media which reproduce them. Negative evaluations of the police are reinforced and reproduced in daily encounters which expose the public to two common dynamics; petty extortion of the roadblock type, and the possibility of entrapment in the process of engagement with the police, such that the risk of getting expensively bogged-down in Byzantine and expensive proceedings is often invoked as a deterrent to bringing a case to police attention. Engagement with the police is widely seen as a risky inconvenience to be avoided, and a further reason to make recourse to alternative methods of dispute resolution. It is fair to add that this disposition also applies to other agencies of state, and to government more widely; “a sense that contact with the state causes problems permeates popular discourse about interaction with the government” asserts Pierce (2006; 891) Bureaucracy here is Kafka’s, not Weber’s; a maze of barely-understood and selectively-invoked rules and regulations incomprehensible to the ordinary man or woman, used as a web within which to entrap the unwary and from which it grows harder to escape the more one persists in pushing for a resolution.

4.1.4: Impunity and the limits of formal accountability

Faced with such a mystifying bureaucracy (and one whose procedures are often kept carefully veiled in mystery by its own officials), the citizen has relatively limited formal avenues for accountability and redress. Those who know their rights, or those who can afford good lawyers, are in a position to challenge the police on matters of legality and procedure; at the probably cost of police cooperation and goodwill. As complaints against the police are handled by the police themselves, the efficacy of a complaint depends on

malfunction affects you most?’ As further regards survey evidence, I would argue that repeated perceptions surveys produce self-sustaining ‘facts’; as a former respondent to the Transparency International *Corruption Perceptions Index* I can confirm that previous placings strongly influence responses.

the level at which it is handled, and on the complained-against's placing within the police institution. Therefore this is in part itself a matter knowledge of how to access the police institution. While a complaint to the state Public Relations Officer may have some traction, a person trying to report a complaint against an officer at an ordinary counter may likely encounter short shrift; officers frequently connive in Skolnic's 'blue code of silence' (see Introduction) and refuse to document such complaints. A complaint routed via local governmental structures likewise has limited formal influence, as the police are officially accountable to central, not local, political authorities. Therefore the efficacy of such lobbying or complaints depends upon the goodwill of the local political officeholder, and of the influence they can exercise locally over the police. The situation is of course worse for those who are relatively disempowered: the illiterate, the unsophisticated, the status-less, those without kin, community, association, patron or influential friend to support them.

The limited accountability of officials and institutions has contributed to a 'culture of impunity' which is also deeply-rooted in the everyday experience of Nigerians. Failures of policing and criminal justice have produced a weary suspicion that most times, offenders may be expected to get away with it. It is further embedded in a national political narrative in which rule-breakers have consistently evaded or retrogressively changed the rules. At the same time, it seems to have plural roots: The broadly reintegrative and conciliation-based ethics of indigenous community justice may play a part; so, surely, does the deliberate production of political 'forgetting' utilised for national reconciliation after the 1967-70 civil war, and thereafter usefully employed in the 'forgetting' of all manner of past misdeeds and misappropriations among and by the ruling elite. Impunity implies a process where justice is either absent, or is endlessly deferred (and the presence of that potential for deferral in state processes is itself arguably one of the motives for utilising more immediate summary or vigilante forms of justice). In Nigeria, the use of procedure to dissemble, delay and overrule may be used to

turn court cases into forums of endless deferral and irresolution.⁹⁸ Even on the level of the everyday, since law enforcement is variable and since (as we shall see) status can be deployed in various ways to attempt to evade or temper it, Nigerians have become used to the non-finality of justice, and thus forgiveness is more of a relevant concept in daily life than the purely pulpit ideology a Western analyst might suspect it to be. The everyday admonishment that “God will punish you” evocatively embeds the pervasive idea that ultimate justice is located in the spiritual realm.

4.1.5: The nature of police unpopularity

Nigerians, including police officers, often think that in the developed world police officers are uniformly popular. In fact, they are surprised to hear that even in the UK, which is often upheld as a model of consensual and public-oriented policing, police officers and institutions often have ambiguous status and limited appeal. Derided as low-status by middle classes, and as treacherous objects of suspicion by many working-class people, the police in many developed nations are often caricatured as funspoilors or fascists, when they are not simply low-status untouchables doing society’s dirty work, and are most often appreciated only in emergencies when members of the public become victims of crime. Bittner (1970) noted that the police is a ‘tainted profession’ in the public’s view; carrying the contamination not only of its own functional illegalities, but of the murky worlds with which it must engage.⁹⁹ Policing is typically often even less consensual, professional and popular in developing nations. But even despite this, the extent of public dislike of the police in Nigeria is noteworthy and abundantly clear in everyday life. And in fact ‘dislike’ is a broad and general term about which we need to be more specific.

Firstly, the police are not *liked*, insofar as the public display little empathy with them, have little sympathy with their problems, and readily blame them for problems to the

⁹⁸ The situation may not be as bad as India’s choked-up courts (see Mehta, 2005) and it is certainly possible to move criminal prosecutions relatively quickly, but Nigeria certainly has its share of civil cases which have stretched two or three decades.

⁹⁹ See also Young (1995) for analysis of the police as symbolic ‘pigs’ consuming and transforming society’s dirt, and being thereby polluted.

extent of regularly accusing them of active collusion with criminals. Anecdotes abound in which police leak information, tell suspects who has informed on them, tip off thieves about where rich pickings are to be found, rent out weapons to armed robbers, take off their uniforms and commit robberies, hire themselves out as assassins, and so forth. Sometimes these are rumours and apocryphal urban myths and at others, attributable incidents. The everyday effect of these concerns is to make most members of the public extremely wary of communicating information to the police.¹⁰⁰

Secondly, the public have an *aversion* to the police; the police are feared and avoided. There is an operative sense in Nigerian society of fear being associated with respect. For example, I have seen a new yam masquerade explained as being about making the community/audience “fear us, respect us and love us” (the royal lineage performing the masquerade); and it is equally manifest in the mix of fear, awe and pride with which people discuss the army. This however seems *not* to be the primary sense in which they express fear of the police. Fear of the police is fear of illegitimate force, of avoidable trouble, of costly entanglements.¹⁰¹

Thirdly, the police are not *respected*. The manifestations are multiple. Few non-police families with educated offspring hope for them to join the police,¹⁰² and popular culture is full of representations in which the police are the butt of jokes and mockery. Reproduced here are examples of the comic strip *Sarge*, which ran in Vanguard newspaper for many years; the representations of police therein speak for themselves. So do the representations in the email joke (seemingly based on pictures of a real incident) which

¹⁰⁰ Likewise a South African constable tells Steinberg (2008; 127) that squatter camp residents fear “that the detective will sell the information to the culprit and they will be in trouble. People do not talk to just any cop. They talk to a cop they trust”. This gives us a pointer to the particularistic relationships within which we will discover policing in Dutsin Bature to be embedded.

¹⁰¹ On the subject of cost, it is also interesting that many members of the public believe the police are richer than they in fact are. Witnessing a quack medical salesman pitching patent Chinese magnetic cures to assembled police personnel, I was interested to note that his estimation of their disposable income seemed hugely optimistic; his opening price was more than six times what even the most affluent of them were able to pay.

¹⁰² The persistent economy of permanent crisis however means that it ends up being a career option for many nevertheless. It is telling meanwhile that most graduate officers did not have the police as their first career choice, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter.

follows, which combines its mockery with an evident lack of sympathy for the hapless policewoman.

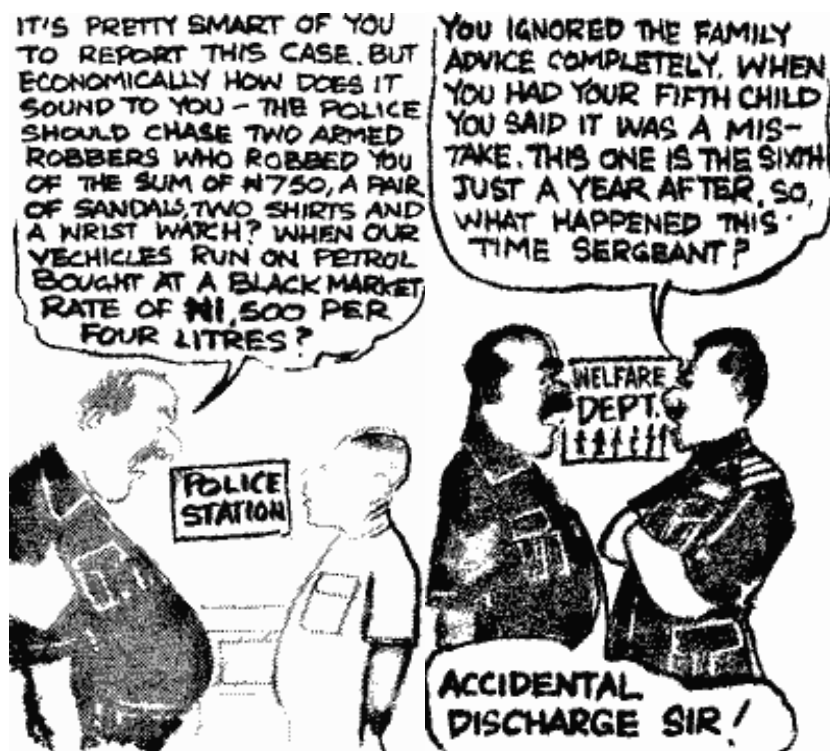
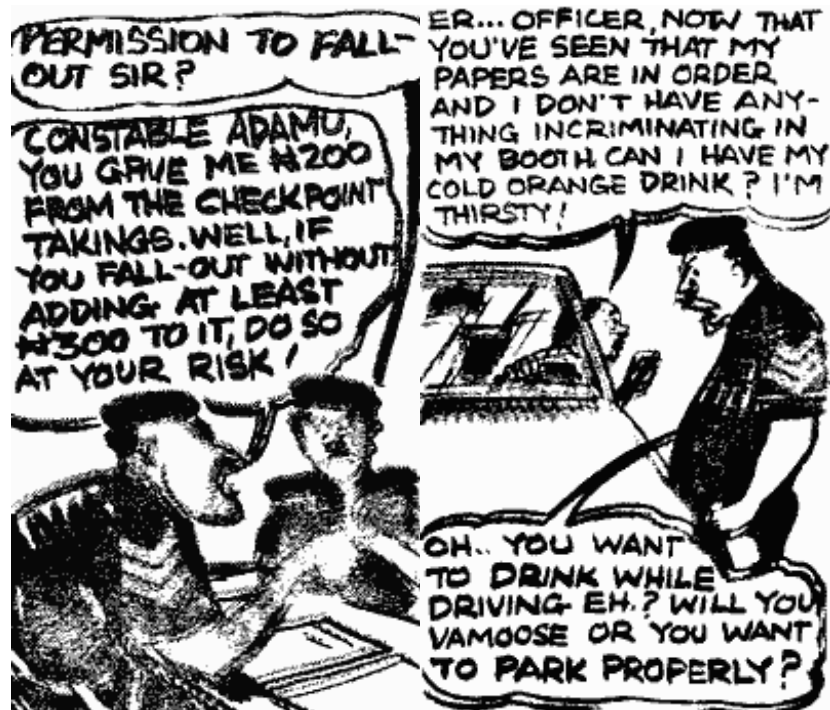


Fig 6: Frames from the long-running cartoon 'Sarge' in Vanguard newspaper, circa 2007

Drama for checkpoint



Policeman; Wind down and open ur door!

Policewoman; God don catch u. U no fit go anywhere today. Na here we go sleep!

Lady driver; Abeg comot for road make I go! Wind down ko, roll down ni!



Policewoman; Yeeee!!! Dis woman don kill me o! Constable! U dey look me?!

Policeman; Who send u message say make u go stand for the car front? Dem no teach u safety first?

Lady Driver; You never die. Abi no be ur voice I still dey hear so?



Policewoman; Na only God go save me from this yeye job! Na my fellow woman dey treat me like dis? I don suffer! See my cap for ground sef. E be like say my leg don break sef! Constableeee! Constableeee! ! Constableeeeeeeeeee!!!

Fig. 7: Illustrated tale about police circulated by email in 2009, making fun of traffic officers' ineffective attempts to stop a driver.

4.1.6: The police in popular culture

Nigeria's thriving film industry has amplified popular representations of the police. Films celebrating the heroism or ingenuity of action cops or detectives are notable by their absence. Instead police are most often figures of fun or derision. The Hausa-language film *Ibro Police* (circa 2010) in the tradition of *wawa* ('slapstick' or 'clowning') humour, stars the comedian Ibro and a cast of regular collaborators in the story of a hapless corporal who is cursed by the consequences of his own actions.¹⁰³ Ibro's salary has not been paid, and although the DPO has warned them not to collect money, he is under pressure from his landlord, who wants the rent, and from his wife, who wants satellite TV and threatens to leave him if he can't provide for her. So he enlists a pair of constables to

¹⁰³ Ibro is a former prison warder, plucked from obscurity when a director spotted his talent in a minor role. Interestingly, the credits state that the film was made with the cooperation of NPF Area Command, Zaria.

help him extort money. He tries to extort money from Baba Chinedu, an Igbo motorcyclist¹⁰⁴, slaps him and confiscates his ignition key; thereafter he is surprised to find that he cannot stop slapping people – first his child, then his colleague, his neighbour, his wife, the neighbour’s father, even the DPO. Ibro realises the hand is possessed, and approaches a carpenter to cut it off for him; goes to a herbalist healer; a hunter-magician; none of them can cure him. Just as he is giving up hope, he re-encounters Baba Chinedu, apologises, recants, gives back the ignition key, and is released from the spell. Baba Chinedu’s closing homily, delivered in vernacular English, is instructive:

“In the whole world they are respecting police; it is the first [most important] security in the whole world you are calling police. But some are spoiling it [...] I took my son to school and I’m taking him to police.”¹⁰⁵ According to the constitution, the first security in the whole world na police. But you have to know that either you safeguard people’s interest or there is a repercussion. ”

Ibro Police encompasses both what *does* and what *should* happen; as such it’s also a resolution of two tensions, between how the system works in the everyday, and how people know it should ideally work. The film acknowledges that Nigerians should look to the police to enforce the law and provide security, and should send their sons, who they have gone to the expense of educating, to join their ranks. But, it says, we also know that they are extorting and harassing us. This tension is not only an issue for those living the experience, but for academic analyses, which have repeatedly foundered on the apparently contradictory truth that there is a systemically coherent informal system whose rules people know well and can work, and at the same time a very high level of awareness of the ideal from which these practices deviate. Smith (2007) emphasises the high public awareness of the deviant nature of the public sphere; while Blundo and Olivier De Sardan (2006) emphasise the public’s fluency in both the formal logic and the

¹⁰⁴ The viewer assumes a commercial motorbike taxi – *okada* or *achaba* – a favourite target of both police enforcement and extortion.

¹⁰⁵ I.e. ‘I have educated my son and I’m sending him to join the police’.

informal counter-reading of bureaucratic officialdom. Both are operative, but the difficulty lies in living in and continually resolving the two simultaneous modes.

It is difficult to find a satisfactory way of describing the public's (and the police's) fluency in a system which simultaneously is a thing and is also its contradiction; the ability to articulate in a system its explicit reading and its implicit counter-reading. Nigerian publics, however, seem to deal with these everyday contradictions better and more smoothly than does academic analysis, with the creative mediating power of cultural products as an outlet for tensions and an aid to digestion. Nigerian popular movies such as *Ibro Police* are consumed as 'edutainment'. Embedding anarchic humour within a moral homily on how things should be done, comedy and fiction provides an outlet for managing and bridging the tension.¹⁰⁶

Neither should we be too presentist in our analysis; perhaps it was ever thus. Soyinka's policemen in the play *Death and the King's Horseman*, set in 1946, are comedic low-class buffoons, Dogberry-and-Verges characters, illiterate colonial stooges whose pomposity, illegitimacy and ultimate powerlessness over society are publicly mocked by the market women who knock off their Fez caps and pull down their 'short knickers'. The externally-derived authority and internal lack of legitimacy experienced by colonial police is evident in the derisory connotation of *Olopa* (Yoruba) as common referent for police to this day. The caricature of the colonial and early-independence police officer was a highly formal, uniform-obsessed, pompous stumbling dolt, who struggled with literacy and mastering complex situations.¹⁰⁷

We should note, too, that neither policing, nor public discourse on police is uniform across this diverse country. It is notable, for reasons I have neither the capacity nor the knowledge to speculate upon in depth, that the most obvious forms of police corruption

¹⁰⁶ The *Issakaba* series of films, aimed at legitimating the Bakassi Boys vigilante group in eastern Nigeria, portray police unambiguously as both limited in capacity and actively in league with criminals (McCall 2004).

¹⁰⁷ There seems to have been a substrate of truth to this, as Police Service Commission Chair and retired DIG Parry Osayande recalls: "I cannot say the quality of recruits in those days were better, well, constables, certainly not, because they were almost semi-literate. But then, they knew where they were going, there was discipline. If you were caught then, you were caught. No 'begging'". Osayande interview, *op cit*.

are more covert and muted in Northern Nigeria particularly. This is something that I have observed and upon which I have heard others remark. Proffered explanations include the lower level of wealth and commerce (and thus implicitly fewer opportunities for corruption), or the heritage of more rigid social controls in colonial-era feudal indirect rule. But prevailing public attitudes towards corruption may play a part. It is possible that in Northern Nigeria, where Islamic values provide a consistent and socially-enforced yardstick against which behaviour, social justice and personal conduct is evaluated, the discourse stigmatising police is most coherently articulated. This is based on a pervasive public milieu in which policing activities as they are otherwise normally conducted are seen to be fundamentally incompatible with justice and legitimacy.¹⁰⁸ Certainly public discourse on police in the North does not pull punches, as some comments illustrate:

If you want to annoy people in the village, tell them you want to join police; but your father must first bless what you do – if you do that one, your father will swear you and you won't make anything from it again [...] People in the village believe that the organisation spoils reputation. You'll go there with good intention, but it's like society corrupts man. If there is one organisation that corrupts people quickly, it's the NPF [...] You are not answerable to society, you're answerable to the organisation.¹⁰⁹

Beyond this, perhaps the starkest indictment is a widespread myth that when policemen die their corpses turn black due to the spiritual evils they have committed:

Once you see a dead body, if that body is fair [light-coloured], definitely it's not a police; but if it's black, you don't need to ask.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Thus the actions of police officers may lead to the institution's unpopularity, and thus heighten the perceived immorality of the state. But we must also remember that for some, the police themselves are already of compromised morality simply because they are part of the state. Islamist ideologies drawing on a long historical heritage portray the secular state and its laws as intrinsically a domain of immorality; and this sentiment can be incorporated in relatively everyday viewpoints (something akin to a religious variation on Ekeh's two public moralities) as well as in the confrontational stance of Boko Haram and other radical Islamist groups.

¹⁰⁹ Sule, from Borno State, discussion on screening *Ibro Police* in Abuja, 16th June 2011. To 'swear you' means to curse.

¹¹⁰ Interview, *ibid*. This was related to me as a 'known fact': i.e. supposedly true, or widely popularly believed. The same informant relates another story in circulation, something between a joke in bad taste and an urban myth, that a policeman goes to the morgue to claim the corpse of a colleague who has been

4.1.7: *Internalising enmity*

Even if the public discourse itself requires geographical and historical nuance, it is undeniable that in general the police have a terrible public image in Nigeria, and one that is based in very large part on actual lived experience; perhaps that is mixed with a measure of public ignorance and scapegoating, but that itself would not be so easy if the circumstances of police-public relations were better to start with. This is known and privately admitted even in circles close to the police, and in the police themselves; in the words of one academic who has worked closely over years with the NPF, “the police in this country are hated, and they have earned it”. The police are highly conscious that they are not liked. They were, after all, not always police, and before they were in uniform they previously partook in the general public’s attitudes and orientations towards the police. They retain non-police schoolfriends and relatives, are often out of uniform on the bus and in the market, and are very aware of the way the police are discussed in everyday life and the media. They are thus extremely aware that such respect as they are outwardly accorded is most often, in the Nigerian phrase ‘in the mouth’,¹¹¹ based only on immediate fear of coercion. This implicates a status anxiety by which the outward forms of displaying respect become even more loaded. Furthermore, the mutual acknowledgement of dislike means there is a feedback at work here; the public’s dislike and low expectations, and the police officer’s expectation of encountering dislike and low expectations constantly inform and re-create each other. The mutually low expectations of public and police cannot be better summed up than in the bumper sticker on sale at the Police Staff College, Jos:

‘IF YOU DON’T LIKE POLICE, TRY CALLING AN ARMED ROBBER FOR HELP’.

killed in an accident, and when the attendant opens the drawers, he identifies him, but the attendant says that it can’t be the correct one, because it is fair and police go as black as charcoal when they die.

¹¹¹ I.e. it is formal and verbal only, rather than heartfelt (c.f. the limited authority exercised by any unarmed police officer interacting with the public).

Much less well-known, of course, is what the police think of the public. This will be dealt with in more depth subsequently in this thesis, but at this juncture it is worth noting some small but revealing windows into officers' attitudes. As everywhere, police work in Nigeria can easily engender cynicism about human nature. Repeated encounters with the sordid aspects of human relations can leave policemen and women emotionally detached in the presence of suffering, prone to stereotyping, and ultimately resigned and determinedly un-idealistic. "You see?" says the IPO to me, as one more shifty petty fraud suspect is escorted out of the Crime Office "that is how they are doing in this state".

As well as the cynicism which is easily produced over the course of a policing career, police in Nigeria often exhibit an air of exaggerated contemptuousness in the treatment of the public, comparable perhaps to the concept of 'bloody civilians' the military deployed whilst in power to justify dismissive, superior and/or violent dispositions toward the public. Paramilitary Mobile Police (MOPOL) particularly exhibit a confrontational ethic. During the 2007 elections in Lagos, I was in queue of traffic held up on one of the city's long causeways by rioting youths. On asking a Mobile sergeant what was causing the delay, he replied that "Seventy percent of Nigerians are thugs. Don't worry, the army will deal with them".

This is however not to say that it is malicious; in fact there is observably little malice in the police's interactions even with suspected criminals. I have been repeatedly struck by the frequency with which the same officers detaining, questioning, extorting and even torturing suspects will also be the ones helping them for instance, to open a tin of condensed milk brought by a relative, or making sure they have eaten. Mild human interest and an overriding detachment are more typical than malice; or perhaps it is true to say that even the violence and power games are at the same time much more socially embedded than I had expected. Nigerian is an authoritarian state, perhaps, but not a totalitarian one, and police officers' dealings with the public are more often functional and tempered with humanity, both in positive and negative ways, as we shall see.

Finally, an overriding trait of the police officer's disposition toward the public is wariness. For reasons we shall explore further below, and in a subsequent dedicated chapter, the public present a much greater source of potential risk to the officer than we may at first appreciate.

4.2: Breaking down 'the public': the civic and the particular

That the public don't like the police and the police don't much care for the public is perhaps not a particularly revolutionary finding. To push our analysis a little further, then, it is necessary to consider how much of a useful operative concept *is* the idea of the civic general public in contemporary Nigeria?

Certainly there is an academic and popular discourse which broadly states that the idea of a public in Nigeria is underdeveloped, and riven by ethnic and religious consciousnesses (whether false or genuine depending on the beholders' analytical leanings) and groupings which prevent the establishment of a meaningful and stable concept of a civic public. Certainly Nigerian publics are very often sectional; but we need to moderate this position for two reasons. Firstly, the formulation spuriously assumes a particular normative or 'correct' development of civic public or sphere against which we can assess deviant examples. Secondly, it is not true that civic publics are irrelevant in Nigeria. At certain points a general public is very visibly present, across divides of ethnicity, religion and even the biggest social boundary in Nigeria, class. Illustrative examples would be the popular pan-national expression of public will leading up to the aborted election of 12 June 1993, or the popular and broad public support for the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) campaign of strikes over fuel prices in 2004/2005. In fact, it might seem that, given the considerable heterogeneity of Nigerian society, it is surprisingly easy to get a civic public non-sectional consensus mobilised in protest. Indeed the *language* of mass protest is most often couched in the terms of the civic.

When we move to strategies of accommodation, rather than confrontation, however, we switch from the civic to the realm of the particular. Accommodation with government,

power, state authority – both as it is sought by sections of the public, and in the terms it is offered by those in power – is most often particularist, in accommodating the interests of a particular communal or identity group or even individual. This is true whether we talk of the ‘macro’ level, for example where the claims of particular ethnic groups are accommodated through national administrative changes (see Suberu 2001) or the ‘micro level’ at which people approach interactions with the police, bringing to bear status and connections, membership of family, descent, patronage, political, professional, confessional or other associational groupings to claim preferential, faster or fairer treatment. This is a system in which it is often more fruitful to locate a claim to exceptional treatment than it is to navigate the formal system of institutional processes and accountabilities.

Peter Ekeh (1975) theorises twin Nigerian publics, the civic and the primordial, defined as alternate and opposed fields of action, values and trust. The civic public sphere, contends Ekeh, is a colonial, imported, imposed invention, a domain wherein morality is fluid and personal advantage can be taken; in fact, where abuses of office are condoned by sectional publics if they act to sustain the other, more deep-rooted ‘primordial’ public sphere of the ethnic group, and its members’ need to access (and alienate) the goods of the state. Certainly the limited investment placed in the civic public sphere and its insurance with strategies located in closer-to-home and more operative networks strongly suggests the validity of this model in considering the importance of particularist modes of interacting with the state. Yet the comparison applies only incompletely, as the notional civic public in this case contrasts with groupings (for example particular religious congregations, trade and artisanal associations, patronage networks, families) which can include, but which range far beyond, Ekeh’s conception of primordial ethnic publics, and which are often much more vertical than any concept of ‘public’ would explicitly acknowledge.

Survey evidence, as cited above, does not ask for and cannot capture the kind of information which would filter the particularisms operative in interacting with the police – whether identity-based affinities, or pre-existing relationships between the respondent

and the particular police officer. Surveys do not record the manner in which approaches to the police and claims on their services are made. Neither are they able to filter whether particular types of people are more or less likely to make use of the police – rich or poor, indigenes or settlers, urban or rural, literate or illiterate, those with a kinship or affinal link to the police, or those without.¹¹² Despite being unable to capture the *modes* in policing is particularistic, the survey research however makes it clear that the respondent public are very sure that it *is* particularistic, at least as regards status: Note that in the table above, only 9% of the thousand respondents thought that the police were effective “*in treating all people fairly irrespective of status or position*”, while 63% thought they were not.

In fact the system of public interaction with the police, as it is manifested in the everyday interactions of criminal cases, complaints, calls for intervention and so forth, implies and involves *both* the formal general system of laws and practices, *and* the particularist system of claims, interventions and exceptions, used in creative interplay with each other. It also often happens that claims to exceptional treatment are invoked simply to navigate the formal system more effectively, for instance in ensuring cases are transferred quickly to court, or prisoners are discharged as the law dictates without extended periods of detention without trial. An archetypal example would be political thugs detained for felonies, who deploy their high-level connections to get the case transferred and then dropped at a court level through insufficient evidence or other technical strategies. It does of course help hugely to have a lawyer who can master the language and procedures of the formal system; yet this formal procedure is just one plank in the strategy, which usually works best in conjunction with the exploitation of associational and vertical networks and social capital – whether that be the Local Government Chair’s Special Assistant, or a wife’s cousin who is a senior police officer in a neighbouring state, or the Imam of the mosque, or the police constable who rents a room in the same building - to

¹¹² Indigenes and settlers denotes vernacular categories referring to Nigeria’s system of *de facto* two-speed local citizenship, with differential rights for those descended of ‘indigenous’ or migrant parents. See Ostien (2009) for a useful summary.

try to exercise influence and make it felt that an exceptional and particular result should be achieved.¹¹³

4.2.1: A Fulani case

In fact such informal networks and strategies can reach a surprisingly long way, from the bush to the tower blocks of the distant capital: The rural areas of the division I work in, and the state in general, experience plenty of disputes between farmers and cattle herders, known colloquially as ‘a Fulani case’. Usually to do with trespass and crop damage, they occasionally escalate into violence, such that (in the opinion of a former boss of the state CID’s homicide section) up to three-quarters of the (usually fewer than 20) homicide cases the state handles in a year can be the result of such incidents. One particular case during my fieldwork in spring 2010 involved the wounding of a youth from a farming community, and as is usual in such cases, the Fulani youth(s) responsible immediately fled the state. The usual strategy is for the police to creatively (and in contrast to formal procedure) utilise the familial and clan structures of Fulani pastoralist society: the *Ardo* (leader of a band of pastoral Fulani) is summoned and detained (or failing the *Ardo*, other male relatives of the suspects) until he successfully summons the suspect back from whichever distant or even cross-border location he has gone to lay low, in order to face investigation. It is noteworthy that distinction and particularism is also maintained respecting the detainee; whilst the elderly *Ardo* was detained at the police station, his age and status was respected in that his refusal to enter the cell with common criminal suspects, and his request to be fed in private with no observers (which would have been disrespectful to his status) were acceded to (with a certain degree of wonder and amusement), and he was permitted to sleep in one of the offices rather than in the cell itself.

¹¹³ It goes without saying that the frequent and repeated recourse to such strategies, when effective, is a cause of huge frustration to police officers who have worked to arrest well-known miscreants; at the same time, as the use of social capital is often also combined with financial inducements, it is also a significant illicit revenue source for some. Equally and conversely for the police, the most important particularism regularly (though not always) applied in handling cases is social status of the accused and the victim.

In this particular case, the aggrieved Fulani elders, who felt themselves to be the injured party in the farmer-herder dispute, engaged the help of an educated, literate interlocutor to help them petition their case. Circumventing legal procedure, he took the issue to the national level, and succeeded in having a party at the Nigeria Police Force Headquarters in Abuja to intervene in the treatment of the case. This was done by transmitting downwards pressure on the state Commissioner of Police, which displeasure was then transmitted to the Divisional Police Officer (DPO). And this downward pressure works, as we shall later discuss, because of the salience of career risk in the world of the police.

On the basis of evidence such as the above, we might then broadly make the preliminary conclusion that whereas confrontations with the police are visible on the level of the formal public sphere; are complained about in the public sphere; and are detected by tools of analysis and data collection attuned to public discourse (surveys, media analysis), strategies of accommodation with the police, both licit and illicit in nature, most often work at the level of the particular and the individual. While formal procedures have limited capacity to deliver satisfaction, they can be fruitfully reinforced by or circumvented with recourse to the informal. The corollary would be that solutions are ‘grey’, semi-formal, and less likely to be advertised, talked about, or picked up by quantitative research methodologies; necessitating a more ethnographic approach.

4.2.2: Enlisting the police

Yet even if we are to take the assertion that the public generally avoid the police at face value (and the author would not assert that the consciousness expressed by the Nigerian public is a false one), some interesting further qualifications apply. It is very important to note, for instance, that the police are not always the agent initiating the occasion for interactions – far from it in fact. The police have few patrol vehicles, most beats are static guard posts¹¹⁴, and except when there is a planned ‘raid’ or sweep of possible suspects, almost all ordinary policing is reactive. Most of the time it is the member of the public

¹¹⁴ ‘Beat duty’ has become so far divorced from its original meaning that when, in 2011, the idea of officers patrolling a local area on foot was reintroduced in some locations, it was known separately as ‘foot police’.

who comes to the police station to ‘lodge complaint’: And complaints are lodged in very instrumental ways.

During fieldwork I witnessed frequent cases in which members of the public strategically sought to enlist police intervention - both licit and illicit - in pursuit of their interest in disputes, for instance between market traders, landlords and tenants, and tradesmen and clients. In fact my experience of such cases began long before fieldwork; staying in the new and ramshackle Abuja suburb of Nyanya in 2004, I was walking past a building site with my host when he spied an electrician who he had paid up-front for repairs on his house; the man had then vanished and failed to answer his phone when called. My friend’s instant reaction was to pick an *okada* (motorbike taxi) down to the police station and return with a constable to enforce a solution, brokering reparation or repayment with the threat of criminal proceedings. Similar cases abounded in ‘B’ division: A carpenter collects money to make furniture, keeps the money and doesn’t produce the goods. The unsatisfied customer visits the police to lodge a complaint, open a Criminal Breach of Trust case, and thereby enlist their help in recovering the money.¹¹⁵

Disputes between neighbours – especially common in parts of town where one-or-two-roomed residences in a compound share communal space and facilities – form another nexus for people to involve the police. A neighbour threatens a householder, and the injured party drags the matter to the police station in order that it be aired and publicly known about. This opening public establishment of victimhood is a pre-statement to any escalation of the issue. It is also a pre-emption of any further development; on occasion I have heard complainants explicitly state that they want the fact that the complained-against threatened them put on record ‘in case anything happens’ or similar.¹¹⁶ The state is to witness the breakdown of relations, document the aggressor and aggressed-against. This role of public airing, of having an issue made visible and witnessed, seems to be a key role not just of the documentation, but of the police station as a public space, as we shall see subsequently. The charge room thus frequently becomes a cockpit for the

¹¹⁵ Although, as one investigative officer warned me, this can backfire if the tradesman is “someone who likes trouble” and is prepared to enlist the police in turn to fight back.

¹¹⁶ Similarly, the police may reassure a complainant that ‘don’t worry, we have it on file’.

playing-out of public drama; with not only the counter staff but other on and off-duty officers, members of the public, passers-by and occasional anthropologists contributing their roles as audience-cum-jury – participant observers documenting events by their active presence.

This witnessing, rendering visible and having-on-record is even more obvious in certain other types of voluntary interaction with the police for its formal logic. There is of course the archetypal bread-and-butter police work of reported theft cases; these form the core of the subsequent chapter on ‘police work’ and so shall not be examined in detail here. But there are also many less obvious situations in which people choose to take their problem to the police for what a western observer might recognise as very ordinary reasons. The discovery of an abandoned baby, for example, often leads to the Juvenile Welfare Centre unit, to trigger the process of social service provision, liaising with voluntary-sector orphanages, and searching for legal wards. It is not possible to ascertain the proportion of such cases in which people do this – and certainly in my fieldwork division, many days went by with the JWC staff doing little but dozing on desks and benches – but this may also be evidence of the small number of cases of infant abandonment in the town. Equally, if a person goes missing, it is frequently reported to the police.¹¹⁷ And, despite the obvious pitfalls one might expect with such a matter given the persistent rumours of police ‘entrapment’ of the innocent for extortion purposes, people do (as I have seen in my fieldwork location) report the finding of a dead body. Presumably at least a part of the imperative to do so lies in pre-empting investigation by exonerating oneself from any suspicion of covering the matter up should it be later discovered or reported by someone else.

Indeed, the need to protect oneself from the potential mischief and slander of others is perhaps likely to be underestimated by a western researcher.¹¹⁸ Yet this consideration,

¹¹⁷ For the police officer, this voluntarism or lack of it is also used as a marker of innocence or suspicion. An IPO explains to me that when a suspect is sought, the family will be asked if they know his whereabouts. If they deny knowledge, they will be asked if they have reported the suspect as a missing person. If they have not, they can be considered potentially guilty by association.

¹¹⁸ How many of us in the developed world have an active mental category of ‘enemies’ which informs and frames our everyday action?

and strategies to defend against them which encompass both practical and spiritual instrumental strategies, dominate many everyday conversations and frame social action to a huge degree in Nigeria. From this perspective, utilising the police instrumentally can be another plank in a strategy to trump the plans of others and to triumph in the zero-sum contests of the everyday. These and other non-formal interactions give a telling lie and an important exception to the public rhetoric around aversion to the police.¹¹⁹ Nor does that normative framing of police and public interaction easily encompass informal and semi- or non-procedural uses of the police which nonetheless rely on their normal authority and *modus operandi*, as shown by cases where the police can be brought into very intimate disputes between families. It is obvious (from the occasional chorus of loud and tearful rows emanating from the JWC room) that some families can and do take the Juvenile Welfare service beyond its formal mandate, using the police unit as an ad-hoc paternity court. Where a man gets a girl pregnant and refuses to acknowledge paternity or pay maintenance, JWC staff may preside over a group hearing and try to broker agreement.

The police can even be enlisted in matters which reach far *inside* the supposedly pristine and non-state-penetrated circle of the family. On two separate occasions I witnessed families bringing particularly badly-behaved teenage sons to the police for disciplining. In the first, a young teenager who had pilfered money from his mother's handbag was brought to the DCB by his family for punishment; after a period of interrogation, caning, slaps, stress positions, threats and humiliations (which also includes a few careful questions to find out if there is some welfare or other reason to explain his actions), the boy is returned to his family tearful, abject and apologetic. The other case involved an older teenager who slapped his mother and was brought by his brothers to a CID officer of their acquaintance. This is a gross breach of taboo, as attested to by the counter ladies' chorus of disgust ('your mother wey born you?' 'Do you know what it is to carry child?'), and so for this more serious offence, the offender was chained up in the SARS

¹¹⁹ An 'epidemiology' of such voluntaristic engagements with the police would be interesting. We might posit that in urban, fluid, anonymous or mass social situations people are more likely to use formal recourse to the police than in 'traditional', rural or communitarian situations. However it seems that even groups of urban traders and low-level manual service workers (*mai ruwa*, okada riders and the like) often prefer to reserve dispute-resolution internally, and some fine their members for making what is judged to be undue recourse to the police (*Welcome to Lagos*, 2010). Clearly distance from the state is not solely a matter of geography.

cell for one hour whilst the detainees, suspected dangerous criminals some of whom had been there for several months, were expected to inflict their own punishments on him. Meanwhile the CID officer chatted to me at the front counter until it was time to bring him out. It is noteworthy that throughout, both of these cases remained firmly in the realm of the informal – no paperwork or official process was invoked. Such utilisation of the police in the intimate and domestic sphere of reinforcing parental discipline may be surprising in the context of the apparent extreme aversion to the police the SJG survey records in the same town (and same division) barely two years earlier. Perhaps it is significant that in the latter case at least, the family were able to use the police in a particular way because of their connection to the CID man. But beyond that, what is interesting about these cases is that the efficacy of using police to discipline children relies precisely *upon* the unpopularity and fear of the police to work its desired result.

4.2.3: Non-normative interactions

In closing, we should also note that there are many and varied ‘non-professional’ interactions between police and public, especially those of an economic nature. They encompass both the (mostly female) informal-sector sellers of boiled corn, medicinal drinks and popcorn who call at the police station throughout the day, and the (mostly male) formal company reps and marketers who seek bulk police patronage via commanding officers, for their bank or mobile phone network. Thus any question of whether or not one avoids the police implies the police *qua* police, in the context of their professional role; perhaps to the exclusion of interactions with police in other modes of social action.

We should note too that this broad discussion of the public and the police has omitted the very specific issue of how the elite section of the public see and interact with the police, and how the police relate to the elite public, who present a very different set of factors as potential providers of opportunity, patronage and goods, and as potential sources of risk. Police authority over elites is ineffective and problematised in a way perhaps redolent of the difficulties of policing expatriates in the colonial era; while the demands elites may

make of the police, and their powers to leverage those demands, can likewise be problematic. This will become apparent in the later discussion of risk.

4.3: Conclusion

This chapter has charted the articulation of public views on the police in both statistical and discursive forms, in which (including in my own fieldwork location) an extremely negative sentiment is manifest. And yet fieldwork observation suggests that people do voluntarily engage the police in varied ways, and enlist the assistance of the police to very instrumental ends. Interactions with the police also takes place in informalised modes, and in pursuance of issues which utilise the police's deterrent and punitive power, but are not an official part of the police mandate, such as the brokering of paternity suits and the disciplining of children. In fact, we have seen that even engaging the police in their official role is often embedded within or reinforced by plentiful recourse to informal networks of social capital. Whilst the formal mechanisms of accountability available to the public are limited, the informal routes may be endowed with surprising power, as the agency exhibited by the illiterate Fulani herders against the DPO illustrates.

Where formal law is complemented by plentiful informal accountabilities, particularist imperatives inflect many social interactions and encounters with the state and its institutions. In turn, those dynamics influence how the state is imagined, construed, and reproduced by its servants and its citizens in their everyday encounters.¹²⁰ Taking particularism to include social class and stratification as well as the more commonly cited particularisms of ethnicity and religion, we can see that applying the law comes to involve a wide array of 'external' considerations, as will be further explored in subsequent chapters regarding police work and risk. The balance of power may be more in the public's favour than first impressions might suggest. If the Nigerian state and the Nigerian Police maintain an authoritarian disposition, it is one which must be negotiated within constrained limits.

¹²⁰ Taking here as a point of departure Gupta's (1994) discussion of the creation of meaning at the 'blurred boundaries' of the state.

The point is partly methodological as well as interpretive. In order to better understand the interactions between the public and the police, we need methodologies which capture actions as well as words. Surveys are of limited effectiveness in that there is much important contextual information they are unable to capture. Fieldwork observation can helpfully complement that to complete the picture. We need to base our analyses on people's embedded behaviour as well as their expressed and articulated opinions – even if we cannot say simply that actions speak 'louder' than words, the divergence and dissonance between the two is itself instructive.

Baker (2010; 14) states clearly his view that “It is in fact non-state policing to which people turn first for their everyday security. It is the principal provider for most Africans most of the time. Those who use it may not approve of every aspect of it, but they prefer it to the police, who they would turn to normally as a last resort”. An assertion of this breadth may be as hard to disprove as it would be to prove. My own fieldwork in Dutsin Bature suggests that we at least need to nuance the assertion with the possibility of significant divergence between times and places. Not only the African continent, but Nigeria itself, exhibits a diverse picture wherein police popularity and the perception of police efficacy varies (as attested to both by the survey data and by the existence of diverse sectional publics and regional public opinions). At least in Dutsin Bature, even where approval of the police has been demonstrably very low, the police are used. So any assertion on the usability and currency of formal state policing must allow for such variation.

Yet there is other evidence that the finding has wider application than just in my specific fieldwork context, and may be true of Nigeria more generally. CLEEN foundation's criminal victimisation and safety survey (2009; 4) asked Nigerians who had been victimised by crime to whom they had reported their victimisation. The vast majority (52%) said their family. That is perhaps to be expected in the first instance. The second choice (20.2%) was the police. That may seem low, but is vastly *ahead* of alternatives such as traditional leaders (3%), religious leaders (2.3%) and, most significantly,

vigilante groups, to whom only 2.4% of persons reported crimes. At the same time, the survey notes in the very next question that less than half of those (42.8%) were satisfied with the service they received from police, as against 44% dissatisfied.

Therefore the conclusions, both from the survey results and from my comparison of discourse with observed behaviour, are clear: Nigerians are both unsatisfied with their police force and make frequent use of it.¹²¹ The problems with state policing in Nigeria have not rendered it irrelevant to those in pursuit of its function as a public service. Even in a milieu of competing (and complementary) service providers, and despite the problematised legitimacy of both the state and the police institution, the Nigeria Police Force remain central to Nigerians' solutions to crime and insecurity. Nigerian citizens' expectations remain centred on what a police *should* do even as they are fluent in how it may deviate from those expectations.

¹²¹ The reasons given for dissatisfaction are also instructive. While 13.2% of those who had reported to police gave bribery as their grievance, and 3.9% cited police collusion with suspects, the greatest number (36.2%) gave police not doing enough to apprehend the offender as their reason. Perhaps therefore we should let the users' analysis lead us to consider that corruption may not be always as inimicable to performance as are factors such as incapacity and poor motivation.

Chapter 5: Recruitment: Positions of Security and the Security of Position: *or* Bureaucratic Prebendalism Inside the State

Introduction

This chapter deals with the processes of recruitment into the Nigeria Police Force, primarily with reference to Richard Joseph's (1987) concept of neo-prebendalism. Joseph attempted to explain electoral politics in Nigeria by adapting the medieval concept of a 'prebend' – an office which conferred not just a governmental responsibility, but the right to personalise the revenues of that office. In postcolonial Nigeria, Joseph says, individuals gain state position by alliance with a constituency – most often, an ethnic group - whose support one can broker into political power. While the individual gains personal advantage, and the ability to treat their office as a personal prebend, they must also reciprocate by aiding the constituency which put them in office. This reciprocal accountability to a particular and sectional support-base thus redirects and subverts the formal aims of political offices. This specific manifestation of neopatrimonialism was developed as an explanation for the patterns and practices of electoral politics in Nigeria's 1979-1983 Second Republic. Yet, as Joseph notes, its advent was before that period, and it has equally persisted after, reappearing refreshed in Nigeria's post-1999 electoral politics.

I argue that the explanatory power of the theory is not limited to electoral politics; it also provides a useful blueprint to adapt for our understandings of bureaucratic politics and institutional procedure. After all, 29 of Nigeria's 51 post-independence years, and all of its preceding 46 years as an amalgamated colony, have been spent under non-electoral regimes, where politics took place largely as internal bureaucratic procedures of particular institutions (primarily the military and civil service, but also others such as the police). So a much longer period has been spent in the mode of bureaucratic politics than in electoral rule. Given this, it is hardly surprising that a great premium has arisen on being placed *inside* the state in order to better influence its workings. This applies both in

the crude sense of accessing public goods, and in the more subtle influences which can be exercised over the course of public events and the nature of public institutions.

Neither is it surprising, given the continuities in Nigeria's centralised statist political economy, that many institutions of state have leaned toward a prebendalist logic which remains the organising logic of the political system. Given the Nigeria Police Force's position as prime civil security agency in an era of unstable electoral and executive politics, it is equally unsurprising that policing has been particularly vulnerable to debasement by prebendalist logics. While the NPF as an institution struggles to respond to public demands for security and service provision, it is unfortunately true that individuals within it can exploit political loyalties or ties of affinity (whether constructed anew or based on imagined primordialisms), to facilitate access to an economy of opportunities to misuse and leverage the particular monopoly powers a police force enjoys. These opportunities can be as lucrative for individuals as they are disruptive to the formal logic of a police institution.

Yet it is less obvious that an organisation such as the Nigeria Police Force also exhibits useful examples of the ways in which prebendalism is refracted down to the micro-level; and of the two-speed pattern of citizenship which arises from being either within or without the state. As much as we can seek to understand prebendalism by looking at the means by which ambitious officers aspire to high position, mundane practices such as recruitment exercises also reveal both the pull and push factors to join a state institution such as the police. After Mbembe (2001) it is worthwhile to note the relevance of this 'inside/outside' the state distinction in creating regimes (and practices) of 'exception'.¹²² Membership of state institutions creates a belonging which can increase both status and room for agency, as we shall see in the penultimate chapter. Strategies of 'entryism' and the leveraging of enabling factors on the level of both family and larger community point us to the value of having a toehold, not just in politics but in the state at all.

¹²² Mbembe uses 'exception' slightly differently in a number of contexts; here it is relevant to consider the concept in the light of the existence of people to whom and for whom rules are applied differently on account of their privileged position or lack of it.

Refocusing on bureaucratic politics, and on the micro-politics of prebendalism, is especially worthwhile today. Since Joseph wrote, destabilisations, reconstructions and reconsiderations of the Nigerian state, amid a continued milieu of scarcity and economic insecurity, have reproduced, reified and intensified the everyday politics of entitlement, inclusion and exclusion, to a point where even the most reduced ‘political office’; that of citizenship itself, becomes contested as a basis for entitlement claims. This chapter looks at the micro-politics of prebendalism in one particular institution, concerned with one particular public good of practical and symbolic importance; the provision of civil security.

The first part of the chapter illustrates how prebendal politics in the narrow, electoral sense, can draw in the police. The second part concentrates on the ‘micropolitics’ of prebendalism in the everyday, at its most visible in the recruitment of officers into the police. An outline of the formal procedures of recruitment situates the ethnographic evidence which follows, illustrating how people renegotiate the formal procedures and strategically navigate them on a personal basis. Then we show how the Nigeria Police Force and its supervisory bodies contest and attempt to counter this in defence of professionalism and standards. We then examine competition for employment, and how the condition of being *inside* the state reproduces itself. Next, I introduce the importance of ‘Federal Character’ positive discrimination practices and how the dynamics discussed previously interact with constitutional provisions on ‘balanced’ representation to create certain differential dynamics in recruitment which carry through into later careers. The seventh part of the discussion looks more closely at strategies of entryism and how they work in mutuality for both individuals and communal groups. Finally, the piece ventures a conclusion that prebendalism introduces dual logics into the very composition of state institutions.

5.1: Policing, politics and prebendalism

In the first instance, policing Nigeria can be seen through a prebendal framework because to occupy senior managerial office in the Nigeria Police Force is to be at the commanding

heights of a hugely important state institution. The NPF employs around 377,000 officers, and has one of the largest operating budgets (a planned US\$1.84 billion in 2011)¹²³ of any Federal institution, controlled by a unitary national command structure. Therefore, to be a senior officer such as a Deputy Inspector-General is to be one of the great barons of the Nigerian state, and of an oil-fed state which continues to economically dwarf the nation's formal private-sector at that. Additionally, we must consider the uniquely powerful nature of policing as an activity which embodies and performs the state's core defining functions of monopolising legitimate force in order to regulate social relations; policing is indeed an activity in which sovereignty *consists*, and whose actions serve to delineate the boundaries of the legal and permissible.¹²⁴

Executive offices in the NPF, whose importance has been renewed by the disappearance of the military from the political (and everyday security) scene since 1999, are therefore of enormous relevance in the unfolding of political dynamics. Hills (2008) examines some high-profile incidents of politicised policing in the recent past and concludes that the 1999-2007 Obasanjo administrations allowed the police to fight crime as long as core priority was given to 'regime representation and regulation'. Hills' piece captures a partial truth, in that while undoubtedly senior leadership of the police may not last long if opposed to the national leadership of the day, in less high-profile episodes I found there to be perhaps a greater element of voluntarism than her formulation allows. A police officer has plenty of opportunities to choose to be (or choose *not* to be) 'political', and they vary in degrees of overtness and subtlety. Executive managers in the police have a great deal of functional leeway in directing resources and operations. The Commissioner of Police of a state, or even an Area Commander or DPO can influence public affairs simply by the provision or, or failure to provide, security (for a rally, for example); or by selective application of the law; or by differential enthusiasm and resources devoted to investigating a particular complainant's case based on their political position or that of the suspected perpetrator. They themselves may see their career prospects best

¹²³ N304,737,303,692 = US\$1,847,600,000 as of 13th December 2011. The figure is from the 2011 FGN Budget (proposal), Budget Office of the Federation Federal Ministry of Finance, www.budgetoffice.gov.ng

¹²⁴ The baronial nature of high offices which are at once powerful, *and* to do with the provision of security, *and* are politically significant should remind us of the medieval feudal derivation of Joseph's original prebendalism theory.

safeguarded by remaining ‘non-political’, or by aligning with dominant political tendencies of the day, or by tacitly supporting an opposition, or in fact by attempting to maximise the usefulness of a close relationship with both sides. As we have seen, the politicisation of mundane police practice came hand-in-hand with the advent of formal politics in the late colonial period, which also required the officer ‘on ground’ to make use of their own discretion and judgement. That the national police leadership may occasionally need to intercede to direct certain outcomes itself in fact *points to* the everyday primacy and autonomy of the on-ground managerial officers. In fact, in the current Nigerian context, where many political actors unfortunately conflate governance with personal loyalty, even remaining steadfastly independent and professional can be viewed by others as an expressly *political* choice: in that it will inevitably affect the handling of any given politicised situation to the benefit or cost of one or other of the parties involved.

5.1.2: The ‘accidental’ politics of policing

If there is an explicit link between politics, prebendalism and the police, we should also bear in mind that policing retains at all times the latent capacity to be ‘passively’ political, even unintentionally. What the police do, or do not do, creates certain public reactions, and this intersubjectivity structures the contextual landscape within which politics takes place. Policing remains charged with meanings which can structure the actions of particular groups and publics. Even the particular form of police institutions can lend itself to political interpretations. One recent example is the position of the police in conflict-riven Jos, in central Nigeria’s Plateau State. In past phases of conflict, the public looked to the army over the police to provide public security; most recently (in 2010-2011) after a series of incidents, the Jos public lost faith in the military’s ability to prevent communal violence, and following the state police command’s deliberate move to a more community-policing oriented strategy, once again seemed to evince a preference to interact with the police. Yet even this generated differential meanings: Although the decline in faith in the military and the renewed popularity of the police occurred across the city’s divided communities, the structure of the military, with a

leadership more directly accountable to Federal government, was believed by some to favour the ‘non-indigene’ or ‘Muslim’ constituency. The police meanwhile, perhaps because their Commissioner was in the first instance accountable in the state, and perhaps because (as a result of the back-to-state policies we have mentioned above) personnel were in significant part from the state, were perceived by some as likely to be more sympathetic ‘indigene’ or ‘Christian communities’. The point here is that these perceptions and meanings were generated from the very structure of the institutions, and in the absence of any evidence that either security agency had acted in a particularly partisan manner.¹²⁵

In the context of these politicising possibilities, and in the light of the continuing accent on security, and access to security, in Nigerian public culture, two concepts emerge as significant. For those outside institutions of state looking *in*, it becomes more important than ever to ‘have someone who is there’. For those inside, exercising the powers of those institutions, it allows them to ‘acquire relevance’, a term imbued with multiple meanings.

So policing is prebendal not just because of its size, or budget, but because policing implies being able to influence certain outcomes in time of crisis, whether these be personal or political. The need to retain the potential to do this also informs behaviour outside those times of crisis. Joseph’s concept of prebendalism is a two-way street: it works reciprocally, both for the person occupying office and for those who put them there. This even reproduces itself – the ability to further *secure access to* access to secure state-payroll jobs is itself one of the goods, equally so for the occupier of that office as it can be brokered into personal status and prestige in the community which has sent them there. This is not just on the ‘macro’ level of extraordinary events, either; the micropolitics of ‘having someone who is there’ matter perhaps more in the everyday.

¹²⁵ Henry Mang, personal communication, November 2011. I have here used ‘indigene’ and ‘non-indigene’ for their currency as political labels rather than as analytical terms: I reserve my own judgement on the relative credibility of those positions. Readers should also note that – as we will explore below – recruitment into the police itself bureaucratically rests on fulfilment of some of those criteria of ‘indigeneship’ whose contestation the Jos conflict is itself *about*. In deeply divided communities, even the faith background of the Commissioner can become grounds for suspicion (see *Sahara Reporters*, 26th August 2012 ‘Tension brewing in Kaduna as some Muslim youths reportedly protest appointment of Christian Police Commissioner’.)

Access to or membership of an institution such as the police is about human security in its most holistic sense; physical, economic, social and existential.

5.2: Joining the Police

The emergent dynamics outlined in the abstract above are revealed more clearly in the actual process of constituting the human resources of the state; in this case the process of recruitment into the police. In Nigeria police recruitment takes place in annual exercises, one each for each of the three cadres – rank and file, inspectors, and senior officers – each with its own entry requirements and training scheme. The exercises are large – the standard 30-year term of service would imply that 12,500 officers need to be replaced annually; the trend however is towards expansion, so recent recruitments have been larger.¹²⁶ Constitutionally, the federal Police Service Commission, composed of Commissioners representing various regional and professional backgrounds and a small full-time bureaucracy, has competence over recruitment, but this is delegated back to the police, over whom the Commission exercises oversight. Recruitment exercises take place simultaneously across the 36 states (and directly-administered Federal Capital Territory) and are handled in the first instance by the State Police Commands themselves. The initial process is conducted by the state's Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO). Formal requirements are that candidates for rank and file admission must be between 18 and 25, and have a minimum of secondary school completion certificate with five subject credits including English and Maths, and may also have a further educational qualification such as National Diploma (ND). Prospective Inspectors must be within the same age bracket, and for them the ND or a National Certificate in Education is compulsory. Those seeking to be admitted to the senior stream as cadet Assistant Superintendents must be between 23 and 28, and have at least a first degree at minimum of upper second class Honours; traditionally, law and social science graduates are preferred, though there are in reality a wide variety of graduates within the police. In addition they must fulfil certain physical criteria on height and build, and must be able to provide attestation as to their place of

¹²⁶ That is however a crude measure, as it assumes that retirement takes place at a steady rate, whereas in reality historical variations in recruitment trends have led to distinct demographics within the police.

origin, probity and past conduct and social status. It is noteworthy that women must not be married and/or not pregnant. After initial evaluation the potential recruits pass up the hierarchy, through successive levels of examination, evaluation and elimination, until the lucky few are admitted to one of the country's Police Training Schools (rank and file recruits), or the Police Academy, Kano for ASP and inspectorate cadets.

5.2.1: Recruitment 'from below'

My period of fieldwork in 2010-2011 overlapped with a rank-and-file recruitment exercise. In the course of this, I became aware of how the official process itself spawned a 'shadow' process which derives from it, and is used by prospective entrants to negotiate and navigate around the official process. The issue of recruitment first surfaced on 14th June 2010, when an Inspector at a small satellite station tells me that he has heard the police are planning an especially large recruitment drive, some 40,000 people across the country; this news is confirmed by an Assistant Superintendent, who tells me she is "dreading" it because of the rush of people she expects will be asking her for help.

I had not previously anticipated quite how big an issue police recruitment would be in Dutsin Bature. In this state, a traditional recruiting-ground for uniformed services, and where there is little in the way of formal economic opportunities for youth, the release of forms for the upcoming police recruitment exercise invigorated the whole town.¹²⁷ In fact, many youths in the town spent a considerable amount of time throughout the year collecting forms for various Federal application rounds – my fieldwork also overlapped with a massively oversubscribed recruitment exercise for the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and several others. But submitting an entry form is not just a matter of procedure. For many people, the matter requires thorough consideration and planning. Answers can be 'spun' and crafted in such a way as to present the best possible chance, and actually submitting the form itself is a matter of giving it the best

¹²⁷ This is standard procedure – in Nigeria many job applications, university admissions and bureaucratic exercises such as obtaining a passport involve collecting or buying forms and/or scratchcards at venues with national network spread, such as bank branches.

possible trajectory from the outset. In this, the advice and assistance of someone who is already serving can be very useful.

With Inspector Daniel at Dogonyaro satellite station. A guy comes past to discuss entry form with the Inspector. The applicant is currently working for a microfinance bank) [...] Later, when I close for the day and go to the internet café, a constable I know from the Commissioner's office is with a friend, who has collected the police form which is on sale already printed out, at web café. (Fieldnotes, 15th June 2010).

Not only the unemployed apply, then: Policing clearly has a particular position in the employment food chain. Even leaving aside the potential powers, perks and privileges of being a police officer, it is also state employment, with a clear and relatively structured career path, national scope and opportunities, and a lot more job security than certain private-sector employers. Equally the police, as a state agency, is a lot less likely to be plagued by the cashflow and solvency issues which affect many private-sector employers and their employees. By the same token, some people already in police employment have a strategic eye to other state agencies which they consider to offer better prospects. So policing differentially appeals to some: it has a certain place in perceived hierarchies of opportunity.

The constable distributing (weekly national in-house police newspaper) *The Dawn* across the command tells me he wants to leave police and join INEC (the Independent National Electoral Commission) – like the constable from a neighbouring state who's gone home to seek Navy recruitment. (Fieldnotes 5th July 2010).

The scale and organisational difficulty of the recruitment exercise is indicated by the large stacks of files stored in alphabetical piles around the PPRO's office whenever I called there. In the year I undertook my fieldwork, the PPRO's conduct of the exercise attracted a lot of unfavourable contrasts with the way his predecessor had run it.¹²⁸ The first stages take a number of days, and as there are usually a large number of candidates,

¹²⁸ Until the PSC recently developed a standardised guideline, State Commands had to develop their own methods of evaluating applicants. In practice this left the PPRO to work it out for himself.

tables are set out on the sports field or parade ground to process them. I was present at the outset, when large numbers of youths milled around waiting to be called. When I returned some days later:

The PPRO is hard to find, apparently because he fucked up the recruitment exercise. Last time around, ASP Jibrin tells me, candidates were screened by their height, or by using tests of their basic literacy such as ‘read this newspaper to me’, and ‘write a letter to CP – or your father – explaining why you want to join police’. This time, the current PRO was losing it, running around with a stick, whipping people. (7th July 2010).

The premium on getting state employment also leads to a measure of desperation and thus memorable incidents which become part of the lore of the command. The ASP continued:

‘You get these people whose dates [on their CV] don’t add up. One man last time – his dates would have made him 3 years old on *leaving* primary school. So PRO asked, how do you explain that? And he answers with a straight face, “Sir, it’s because I’m a genius.” The PRO was just putting on his slipper, he threw it at him - “My friend! Get out of my office! You’re a madman!”’

More often, the officers supervising selection find encountering the tactics born of desperation less amusing. One officer expressed her dislike of supervising exams for potential recruits because:

‘It’s a nightmare: you get people’s mothers standing outside the window with the answer sheet begging, ‘please pass this to my daughter; she’s not too bright, she just needs to pass exam’ and if you refuse, you’re evil; ‘it’s because of you my daughter didn’t join police’.’ (8th July 2010).

Recruitment suddenly renews the value of having a connection with ‘someone who is there’, or with some other powerful patron who can help you; and this too is an opportunity for politics and local power structures to intersect with policing. By 4th July 2010 a constable tells me that of 20,000 prospective rank and file candidates, only 200

were finally recruited from Gida state, because the whole country will supply the 40,000 in batches. The State Governor came to the recruiting-ground *personally*, he said, bringing 100 candidates, many of whom were party thugs, and opined that even if some were screened out at a further stage, many will still get through.

The involvement of the State Governor to ‘open road’ for his constituency of clients points us again towards the ‘micropolitics’ of prebendalism.¹²⁹ It emanated not only from executive political officers but other loci of power as well. An inspector from the SARS unit observes to me that:

‘By the time [names three prominent traditional rulers in the state] and all those small-small chiefs, then three senators from the state all bring their candidates, what poor man has chance?’ (9th July 2010).

Furthermore, the same informant commented on the ways in which the reciprocity implied in such a path to employment made the police institution vulnerable to the infiltration of overtly political logics, which would act to the detriment of professionalism:

‘By the time they are recruited, they will be trying to find ways to influence their posting back [i.e. to the state] and then come election time they do their masters’ bidding’.

Neither is this only noted by police officers. Exactly who from their communities joins the police matters to members of the communities themselves. When political leverage is used to ‘open the road’ for political thugs, it is a cause for concern. The British Council survey of Gida state notes that:

In Ogidi, a community policing focal division where the survey was conducted, community members lamented that miscreants in their community were successful drafted into the police force. “*What is the fate of the police when boys and girls of*

¹²⁹ ‘Open [the] road’ – an idiom evocating facilitating access. Note that at the same time as telling me their observations, most of the officers cited above also had their *own* candidates – sometimes family members – who they wished to bring into the police.

questionable character from this community now wear police uniforms and carry guns and batons?!" a respondent queried." (British Council, 2009; 1).

The link between a connection to local political authority and the chances of success in joining a Federal institution is even more significant because in order to achieve the ethnoregional balance known as Federal Character (which will be discussed further below) the formal recruitment procedure invokes the category of 'indigeneship'. Indigeneship in Nigeria is both a legal and a 'folk' category, used in both governmental and popular discourse to differentiate between the civic rights of those originating in a place and those merely resident there (see Ostien 2009). Although not as charged in Gida State as in Jos or Kano, where it has been a central and divisive political dynamic, the mobilisation of the constitutionally undefined yet emotive category of indigeneship allows holders of local political office a powerful locus of intervention in the process, and an opportunity to filter who is able to fulfil the criteria. Indigene certificates for Federal employment applications must be signed and stamped by the Local Government Chairman, and the police recruitment form has to be signed by village head or traditional ruler, and then signed and stamped by Local Government Chair or Secretary. In some places, the terms of indigeneity may be so contested that local office-holders might refuse to sign forms for those they consider do not 'belong' and so should not be entitled to state employment. Even where that is not the case, the process is vulnerable to politicisation and favouritism.

Two character referees are also required, who must be a magistrate, police officer of Chief Superintendent or higher rank, or army officer of Lieutenant-Colonel or above. In addition to requiring the involvement of the local state, the application also then requires access to a senior officer in the security services and a member of the judiciary. This is sometimes problematic for the applicant; but (given the very limited knowledge they may have of the applicant's character) neither is it risk-free for the officer who is asked to sign, containing as it does the embedded risk of vicarious damage to their own reputation if the candidate proves unreliable. In fact, how signing such forms is handled depends in large part on the individual's judgement and probity. The ASP above continues:

‘Some people do it free: sometimes they change their minds afterwards and deny all knowledge. And most senior police are very careful about who they sign for. Sometimes they don’t even know [somebody, therefore refuse to do it] and the admin constable charges [money] and does a very elaborate [i.e. illegible] signature.’

I witnessed this problem for myself in July 2011, when two youths approached a CSP in my presence asking for references, and when asked who sent them, gave two contradictory names. In such circumstance, the only guarantee is the officer’s own judgement of character. The understandable reluctance of senior officers with careers at stake to take this leap into the unknown for persons unknown to them, and their understandable preference for candidates they know, also reinforces the emergent self-selecting nature of the police as a state class. For the applicant trying to gain entry, ‘having someone who is there’ already helps as a prerequisite – providing ‘access to access’.



AFFIX PASSPORT
PHOTOGRAPH

FEDERAL SECRETARIAT COMPLEX, PHASE 1, SHEHU SHAGARI WAY,
P.M.B. 5188, ABUJA, NIGERIA.

PRINT FOUR (4) COPIES OF THIS FORM, FILL APPROPRIATELY, HAVE THEM FULLY SIGNED, ATTACH ALL RELEVANT CREDENTIALS & SUBMIT TO THE POLICE STATE COMMAND HEADQUARTERS OF YOUR STATE.

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Surname:..... Other Names:.....
State of Origin:..... L.G.A.:.....
Home Town:..... Date of Birth:.....
Mobile Phone:..... E-mail Address:.....
Contact Address:.....
Permanent Home Address:.....
Name and Address of Parents:.....
Height:..... Chest Measurement:.....
(Males Only)

Primary School:.....
Address:.....
City:..... State:.....
Date:.....
Specify the year: From YYYY To YYYY.

Secondary School:.....
Address:.....
City:..... State:.....
Date:.....
Specify the year: From YYYY To YYYY.

Tertiary Institution:.....
Address:.....
City:..... State:.....
Date:.....
Specify the year: From YYYY To YYYY.

(Please tick as appropriate)

- i B.Sc./B.A./B.Ed./B.Eng. or Equivalent ☐
- ii HND or Equivalent ☐
- iii NCE or Equivalent ☐
- iv ND or Equivalent ☐





4. CHARACTER CERTIFICATION (2 REFEREES)

(To be signed by a Magistrate/Police Officer not below the rank of CSP/Military Officer not below the rank of Lt. Col.)

REFEREE A:

Title:.....
First Name:..... Last Name:.....
Mobile Phone:..... E-Mail:.....
Contact Address:.....
Comment:.....
Date:..... Signature:.....

REFEREE B:

Title:.....
First Name:..... Last Name:.....
Mobile Phone:..... E-Mail:.....
Contact Address:.....
Comment:.....
Date:..... Signature:.....

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHAIRMAN/SECRETARY

Name:..... Signature:.....

TRADITIONAL RULER

Name:..... Signature:.....

DIVISIONAL POLICE OFFICER'S COMMENTS

.....
.....
.....

Name:..... Signature:.....

Fig 8: Police recruitment form, exemplifying the twin aspects of joining the police as a matter for both individuals and social constituencies. While side 1 is about the individual and their attributes, side 2 locates the applicant by their relationships to local political structures, to traditional community or ethnic group, and to the national state itself via its police, judicial or military institutions.

5.2.2: Standards, selection and strategies

The profusion of methods and strategies to navigate and/or attempt to outwit formal procedures leads to an arms race within the recruitment process, with new measures constantly introduced to counteract cheating. This is an arena in which the particularism of personal loyalty is in constant conversation with the professional ethic of police as an organisation; while most people might want to help their friends and relatives, few would like a substandard person to serve alongside them. Moreover, the police leadership remains acutely aware of human resource capacity problems. So two logics evolve in tandem. One is the formal policy logic of the institution, devised on paper and in meetings; the other is the systemic aggregate of myriad individual instrumental attempts to undermine or bypass that formal policy for personal advantage or financial gain. Making complicated arrangements to prevent cheating introduced more delays into the exercise I witnessed.

It is last thing Friday; candidates' names are not out yet, and the recruitment exam is tomorrow – it is held everywhere nationally at the same time to prevent cheating. Previously, all scripts were collated nationally and sent to Staff College Jos where selected officers marked them. Now, it is done zonally, but scripts are swapped between states. (Fieldnotes 9th July 2010).

The echoes of this recruitment exercise for rank and file continued to reverberate through the year. When I returned to fieldwork after a break in November 2010, new rumours were circulating:

Inspector Daniel says they cancelled the previous recruitment exercise. I asked how much does it cost, and he said there's no fixed amount but that "I wouldn't join police now – first I wouldn't have the money." [...] Then they tried to do recruitment again but only Higher National Diploma-holders up, but then Northern states complained because it's unprocedural and 'tilts against them because of education'. (Fieldnotes, 11th November 2010).

The Inspector's implication was that the attempt to raise the qualification level of entrants was defeated because northern states complained that this exceeds what is set down as an educational requirement in the recruitment rules: That would mean their own young applicants would be less successful because for historical reasons levels of English-language education in the North are significantly lower than in southern states.¹³⁰

The 2010-2011 recruitment and promotion exercises, subject to continual delays and reschedulings, reflected a tussle for control of the process between Force Headquarters, the Police Affairs Ministry, and the Police Service Commission. While I have no particular insights into the viewpoint of the police hierarchy, I was able to gain at least some perspectives on the PSC's position. From my limited insights, I believe that the Commission's genuine desire was to reassert its constitutionally-mandated oversight of personnel recruitment as key to rebuilding police capacity. When I interviewed PSC Chairman Osayande he highlighted 'absence of well-defined recruitment mechanism' as a key issue, and warned that 'if you put in rubbish people, you are going to get rubbish service'. Recruitment was therefore central to the Commission's ongoing drive to take a serious role in police reform.¹³¹ Yet that is not how everyone interpreted it. Within the police, and in circles accustomed to dealing with the cut-and-thrust institutional politics of recruitment, promotions and postings, some saw it quite instrumentally, a new wrinkle derived from the business-as-usual of bureaucratic politics, and as such just as likely to result in a compromised result. On June 10th an administrative Inspector in State Headquarters (thus in a position which made him well-informed and potentially influential beyond his rank) indicted the PSC's role:

“People will say they are selling forms – HQ won't know but the information will leak out from Force Headquarters or the Police Service Commission. Then they come here to do screening – the first list had only about three names of Gida state indigenes, the rest were Igbo, Hausa, etc”.

¹³⁰ Broadly, to do with colonial policies of non-interference with an existing madrasa-based education system.

¹³¹ Osayande interview 2011, *op cit*. This is not of course to preclude that others further down the institutional 'food chain' might also try to accommodate their personal interests instrumentally in whatever process was finally resolved between the two institutions.

‘Selling forms’ as cited here refers to the malpractice of influential persons hoarding (or conversely, pre-releasing) application forms and selling them at inflated prices for personal gain. In fact, the Inspector’s cynicism extended to even the possibility of a meritocratic ‘clean’ recruitment process, inasmuch as recruitment requires the police institution to interlocute with the logics of other institutions which are *themselves* not clean. He continued:

See, if you try to do thorough recruitment now, you won’t get up to 20. Cos they will have certificate, go to internet their name will be there,¹³² but ask them to work they can’t do.

This is a comment on a rotten school system, referencing the exam cheating and marking malpractices which allow someone to get their secondary school certificate without being able to actually carry out any of the literate and numerate tasks which that level of education would imply, as much as it is cynicism about the possibility of a clean recruitment process within the police itself. In that, it reflects a wider perception of declining standards, as cited by Inspector Daniel quoted previously, who continued:

“HND of today is not up to primary 6 of *then*; it should be dictation and aptitude test - maths, english and aptitude – oral there and then on the spot, not a written exam you can cheat at”.

In fact, no-one realises better than the police themselves the corrosive effects of poor-quality personnel, and the police go to quite some lengths to repeatedly screen and re-screen applicants, especially for the senior cadre. Of course it follows that the impetus to join the senior cadre, with its greater access to mobility, opportunity, pay, progression and social elevation, is correspondingly more competed-for. In fact the recruitment process evolves under twin pressures, the interplay between those ‘cheat-proofing’ the processes and those trying to find new ways to gain marginal advantage. The whole is a continual contest between institutional meritocracy and professionalism on one hand, and

¹³² I.e. on the West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC) or other official results website.

personal instrumentality and particularism on the other. An Assistant Superintendent laid out the recruitment process they had undergone in the recruiting exercise about five years previously. All candidates from the Local Government level were screened by the local Area Commander, who in this case was a very straight and clean old-school Yoruba Assistant Commissioner, known for not taking bribes, and for checking up on checkpoints to make sure that his men did not extort bribes from motorists. Those who cleared that process – about 1,000 in number – were checked at the State Command, where ‘they don’t compromise on schooling certificate’. The 215 candidates cleared from that level were sent to the AIG’s Zonal command (overseeing three states) for another screening and all 215 were then sent on to Force Headquarters in Abuja for more screening, which trimmed the list to 30 candidates. Finally, these were sent for final interview at the Police Academy, Kano, where 15 were dropped and a final 15 selected to undergo the training course.

Eventually, therefore, only 1.5% of the candidates from this particular state (one of the largest states in the north-central region of the country) were successful, and though the odds may be better in a smaller state where there are fewer suitable applicants or where policing is a less popular career option, it can be seen that it is still a hugely competitive process. Of course, the converse of the careful and multi-stage selection process is that it may also allow serving officers – of progressively more senior rank – the opportunity for personal intervention, to influence or attempt to influence, the process as it goes on.

The challenge of securing employment in contemporary Nigeria is such that a sizeable number of graduates from polytechnics and universities even apply to join as constables. Since the official requirement for a constable recruit is Secondary School leaving certificate, and since the minimal educational requirements are also interpreted as *maximal* - i.e over-qualification is made a grounds for disqualification from the already over-populated applicants list - many graduates or diploma-holders hide their higher qualifications in order to be enrolled as school-leavers.

Money, too, is mobilised in desperation. One informant (with, I was aware, a tendency to hyperbole) claimed that by the time it reaches the latter stages, ASP candidates are paying from N200,000 up to N500,000¹³³ to influence the process. This informant was however an Inspector and had not been through that selection personally. Interestingly, a senior officer who *had* been through it recently related that in their cohort of applicants, they knew of some people who paid up to N100,000 to pass and yet *didn't* get selected. Though it is possible that such persons represent disgruntled low bidders, and that some paid more and consequently *did* pass, the officer who related this to me said that they themselves had not personally paid anything, and indeed I knew them to come from a family background which could not easily have mobilised large amounts of money. They deduced that in general – ‘give or take’ – overall the right people (i.e. the best candidates for the job) tend to get in.

That someone who emerged as one of the lucky few selected by the system might seek to vindicate its logic is perhaps unsurprising. But it points us to an important modifier of the literature on corruption and/or informalisation of state processes. The tendency in scholarly, advocacy, and public discourse on corruption is usually to assume – without further interrogation – that bribery and corruption *works* – that it is functionally effective and pays off for the person trying to manipulate the system. The further implicit assumption is that it has entirely displaced meritocracy as the logic of the system. This holds through not only the broader analyses (Chabal & Daloz *op cit*) but also some recent fine-grained ethnographic work on corruption in state practice (Smith 2007; Blundo & Olivier de Sardan 2006).

The assumption however is not fully supported by everything I witnessed during my fieldwork; wherein I came to understand attempts to resort to corrupt practice in such situations as one tactic among many; and neither was it always a successful option. In an analogous process, Willott (2009) documents the strategies used to negotiate access to higher education in a particular federal university, which like federal state employment, is

¹³³ N500,000 = US\$3,031; N200,000 = US\$1,212; N100,000 = US\$606 (all rates as of 13th December 2011).

also a life opportunity and arena of class formation and status. In this, another sphere of competition for a limited public good, corruption can be deployed both alongside or instead of social capital and identity-based claims to secure access. Yet in discussion of these themes, many Nigerian academics asserted to me that such a picture of university admissions is not nuanced enough – they cited, for instance, the existence of a minimum grade ‘floor’ beneath which no amount of favouritism is likely to help an applicant, alongside the continued admission of candidates with no strategy of access beyond merit as based on school grades.¹³⁴ The lesson to be drawn from both the police and university examples is that this kind of corruption is sometimes better understood as a system wherein weaker performers can gain an edge over purely merit-based qualification, not as a system which has entirely *supplanted* the possibility of merit-based performance, as the gloomiest analyses would have it.

5.2.3: *Social capital and the formation of a state class*

What seem more useful than money, however, is *social* capital. The officer who related their own recruitment above added their opinion that, ‘it’s not cash that helps, it is connections’. If you know a Deputy Inspector-General and can persuade them to endorse your application, your chances may immediately look different. And likewise both police and university-sector informants in Nigeria asserted the importance not just of identity-based but *affinity-based* links in forming and imagining social capital. Such practices create at the outset vertical connections of personal obligation and indebtedness; and may structure subsequent trajectories through the institutional career, as a factor in the ‘office politics’ of postings and opportunities.

Thus far, in identifying the emergent self-selection of the state class (or to be contorted but precise, the choosing of the state’s future embodiments by their current predecessors); and in noting emergent ties of loyalty which might cross-cut formal command and career structures, we might seem to be tacitly labelling such practices aberrant. But a managerial

¹³⁴ Note of this latter disagreement that this does not preclude all of these observers’ participant observations being equally truths, in that their observations were situated in different institutions and at different positions within the system.

case may be made that despite the frequent normative assumption, nepotism might not be all ‘bad’. Certainly it is anti-meritocratic in that it is particularist and skews equality of opportunity, but it can also be functional in that it guarantees something about the candidate. Some US blue-chip corporations explicitly recruit on a family basis in order to reinforce labour loyalty with familial ties. This is more fully relevant in Nigeria, where personal guarantee and provenance signifies something of particular importance to police, to whit, respectability and the non-suspect nature of a person –especially important given that central criminal records are not well-maintained or coordinated.¹³⁵

The overall effect, as we have said, is that the state class becomes to an extent self-selecting. Being in the state reproduces itself; and recruitment exercises are also the moments of formation of a state class. And this state class formation, although it incorporates the ethnic linkages on which Joseph’s explanations are centred, and the affinal linkages testified to above, involves a third key factor; that of family. A sizeable portion of the officers I interviewed and interacted with said that they had a relative serving in the police at the time of joining; in interviews, I phrased this question in the commonly understood idiom “did you *follow anybody* to the police?” Equally, many of those now there had a sibling or other relative who had followed them, whose access they had themselves facilitated, and at least one officer I know had both – a police mother and father who they had ‘followed’, and a younger cousin who had ‘followed’ them.

Hereditary occupational policing is not particularly unique to Nigeria; polices, like militaries, perhaps due to the distinct, semi-separate and totalising nature of their institutional lives, tend to reproduce themselves in such a way globally (see examples in Emsley 2009). In western contexts, this tends to be interpreted as the creation of a labour aristocracy, and in Marxist analyses as the distinct separation of a reactionary ‘guard’ section of the working class (Marenin 1982). But I would argue that it acquires a different accent in a situation of scarcity and radical insecurity, and against the context of the ever-present dangers of relegation to the permanently insecure masses.

¹³⁵ Though this prompts a consideration of *who* defines respectability; the need for candidates to obtain formal references directs us back to consider the political aspect of local public office as cited above.

We must note at the outset that there is not the complete divide between communal group and nuclear family that a western normative sociological perspective might encourage us to apply, since extended families and wider kin organisations connect to and subsume into the way that communal group membership is imagined. Smith, writing of securing access to secondary schooling in the historically acephalous and kinship/status-based communities of south-eastern Nigeria, argues that “at least in the Igbo case, the fundamental features of patron-clientism are rooted in the hierarchical reciprocal ties and obligations that characterize kinship relations.” (Smith 2001: 349). So prebendalism does not only rest on a relationship between the individual and the communal group, whether defined ethnically or otherwise. It also, as we discussed above, invokes the much closer and powerfully deployable sphere of family, which is not completely disconnected from the ways in which people understand themselves to be situated in wider communal groups. There is a continuity between the ways in which families and wider communities are imagined as planes of action. And it is evident that families use deliberate tactics of ‘entryism’; indeed, entryism was strongly entrenched even prior to independence; ruling families in northern Emirates would frequently ‘send’ a son to command the Native Authority Police in their domain, to merge political and administrative control of public security. In fact, colonial authorities wanted those with an existing interest in the system of rule to take on the duties of more modern policing, and from 1928 actively encouraged it with a ‘princely liaison-officer’ scheme encouraging the high-born to participate in what was previously a job for commoners and slaves (Rotimi 2001;22). Its intended beneficiaries quickly picked up on its benefits and continued the trend. Ambassador Shehu Malami, a veteran of the aristocratic-political elite of Northern Nigeria, recently published recollections which are worth quoting at length:

“Former President Alhaji Shehu Shagari remembers one such message ... which the Prime Minister [Nigeria's first Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa] asked him to convey to His Eminence [Sir Siddiq Abubakar, the 17th Sultan of Sokoto], namely that members of the family should never be missed in the recruitment exercise for the Military and the Police. [...] Sir Abubakar himself, in his position as the Sardauna of Sokoto, was sent by his predecessor, Sultan Hassan, to the Kaduna Police College where he, and

Prince Usman Nagogo from Katsina, were supervised and trained by no other person than the father of the late Alhaji Audu Bako, a one time military Governor of Kano State. Sir Abubakar was later to become the 17th Sultan of Sokoto and Usman Nagogo went on to become the Emir of Katsina [...] Colonial administrators often encouraged Emirs and others in authority to send their children and wards to Police and Military institutions in order for them later to be personally involved in the maintenance of law and order in their domains. Prince Ado Bayero in Kano; Prince Aliyu Mustapha in Adamawa; Prince Hashimu in Yawuri; Prince Kabiru in Katsina for example took over Police administration as a result of this encouragement.”¹³⁶

Malami’s recollections usefully illustrate that recruitment of aristocratic scions into the police was an act with dual significance: Firstly, because it allowed families who headed traditional polities to consolidate their rule over their historic domains through the re-engineered modernised institutions of state,¹³⁷ and secondly because such recruits and their families found in such institutions a field of play in which to develop their scope and relevance within the wider organs of the ‘new’ colonial state, and entrench themselves in the emergent state class. Indeed, the testimony underlines that policing was one of the organisational spheres in which, as new African technical intermediaries, old orders (as much as new counter-elites) established hegemonic patterns which would endure in the postcolonial era.¹³⁸ Having established that leadership of NA police forces was a key technique of maintaining social and political order, it was but a natural extension to carry this through into the sphere of the national state after the NA police forces were abolished and integrated into the Nigeria Police Force in the 1960s.

¹³⁶ *Leadership*, 6 December 2011, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201112070378.html> accessed 5th September 2012. Malami was Sarkin Sudan (a courtly administrative title) of Wurno in Sokoto, and Nigeria’s first High Commissioner to post-apartheid South Africa; his career thus also reflects the traditional-to-formal sector ‘straddling’ of postcolonial Nigeria, as well as being an instance of the globally common usage of traditional social capital in formal diplomacy (witness aristocratic human component of the diplomatic service in Germany, for example).

¹³⁷ Pierce (2006) argues that colonial backing made the intermediaries in indirect rule *more* autocratically powerful than they had been when independent.

¹³⁸ And it is clear that this was a deliberately planned, rather than an emergent practice: “At that time, at the Sultanate, there was that policy that our children should enlist both in the military and police.” Malami, <http://inwent-ijj-lab.org/Weblog/2010/10/26/day-i-got-a-query-for-opposing-abacha%E2%80%99s-self-succession-bid-amb-shehu-malami/> (accessed 13 December 2011).

Some aristocratic families carried this logic of statecraft far into the sphere of the post-independence state, deliberately and strategically placing offspring in the most relevant institutions. The dynamic persists today; high-status families of northern aristocratic polities commonly ‘send’ a son to the police, while another will be in the army, and yet another in the NNPC, civil service or other institution of similar significance. The salient point here is that entering such an agency of state is not just a strategic choice for an individual; sometimes family is the decision-making unit of relevance, in a technique most especially and early perfected by those families already deeply invested in the art of dynastic rule. If choices are not always made by individuals alone, neither is entryism a pact solely between a person and a communal group, as perhaps might be suggested in strictly following Joseph. Mediated by the narrower family, it is to an extent tripartite. Kinship and family, we should remember, interposes between a crude reading of Joseph’s prebendalism as a pact solely between a person and a community; life choices and strategies are not only a matter for individuals or ‘politically’ mobilised identity-groups, but for families.¹³⁹ In the service of such strategies, policing became - among other things - also one of the spheres for the ‘reciprocal assimilation of elites’ identified by Bayart (1993) as key to the particular social formation of the postcolonial state.

5.2.4: Trends in competition, employment and inclusion

The patterns and means of recruitment into the NPF bear a little contextualisation. The force has moved a long way from the colonial era in which various groups were recruited into state employment on the basis of stereotypes of supposedly ‘martial’ and ‘clerical’ ethnicities. Today formal institutions exist to ensure that the post-independence Nigerian police are nationally representative. But this does not entirely negate the fact that there evidently are regional (and generational) patterns to employment in the police; and that these choices have latterly been inflected by economic scarcity and insecurity, particularly in the quarter-century since structural adjustment programmes altered the

¹³⁹ Smith (*ibid*) pertinently notes that “Curiously, in his examples of social groups, Joseph leaves out kin-groups, though it is clear in the full body of his work that he recognizes the importance of kinship ties” and that “this omission of kinship and the emphasis [instead] on ethnicity is characteristic of a considerable body of scholarship on the nature of Nigerian politics generally”.

nature of the formal economy and employment market. In the latter respect, I found it interesting that a very great many officers of Assistant Superintendent and above with whom I interacted disclosed that they had joined the police only after several years of either fruitlessly searching for a job, or of trying another career which they found unrewarding. In fact some disclosed that they had been unenthusiastic applicants but saw the police as a career option primarily *because* they ‘had someone there’ and therefore felt that they stood a good chance of success. One senior officer, now eminent at a national level, told me when that his friends had brought the application form to him as an unemployed graduate in the 1980s, he had protested that “I don’t love police”. They replied “Who is talking of *love*? This is a matter of *job*”. A number of the rank and file and Inspectors who had joined more recently told similar stories. It seems reasonable to assume that the premium of a secure job on the state payroll become especially attractive amid the economic devastation of the post-SAP mid-80s; neither – with a young population which continues to outgrow the uneven expansion of formal private sector employment – do conditions seem to have changed much since. Policing, at least for some then, is a career choice of possibility, rather than aspiration.

It is worth recognising that there are however clearly certain regions of the country where policing *is* historically a more popular career choice than in others. Since policing requires a level of formal English-language education, but is not highly-paid nor in most cases considered one of the highest-prestige avenues to mobility, it would follow that areas where policing is a popular choice of career will be areas where firstly, English-language education (originally spread by the Christian missions) is widespread; secondly where other economic opportunities for the literate are limited, and therefore from which skilled labour tends to emigrate – for example areas distant from major commercial centres; and thirdly where there is an established tradition of such employment. And this is indeed what we find: Although there is no openly accessible official documentation of such trends, the abundance of police officers from certain areas is noted as a banal fact within everyday policing contexts. The middle-belt states of Benue, Plateau and Kogi; ethnic-minority (often Christian) areas of southern Kaduna State, and of Borno and Adamawa in the north-east; the less urbanised eastern Yoruba-land states of Ondo, Osun

and Ekiti; and areas of the Niger delta or ‘South-South’ states away from the core nodes of the oil industry, such as inland Delta State, northern Edo State, Akwa Ibom and Cross River states, are all known for producing police officers.¹⁴⁰ This observation is supported by Mustapha (2009) who uses statistics from 1998-1999 (i.e. *before* the recruitment screening function of the Police Service Commission was restored) to show that while Northwest, Northeast, Southwest and Southeast geopolitical zones of Nigeria each accounted for between 12% and 14% of police officers, the North-central (or middle-belt) and South-South (Niger Delta) regions, both ‘ethnic-minority’ areas, accounted for 22% and 26.1% of officers respectively.¹⁴¹ In fact, just three states from those regions - Edo, Benue and Kogi - made up 22% of the NPF's staff strength in 1999, despite their representing a much smaller proportion of national population (Mustapha, 2006; 29).

5.2.5: *Negotiating ‘Federal Character’*

We can be sure that the tendencies above have emerged as a result of economic pressures and personal preferences, rather than from state policy, because there is a set of institutional practices intended precisely to *stop* domination of any of the apparatus of the Federal State by any particular ethno-regional group. This is the set of positive-discrimination rules laid down to ensure what is known as ‘Federal Character’; which dictates that any national institution’s personnel make-up should reflect the ethnoregional diversity of the nation. Section 14 (3) of the 1999 Constitution states that

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

¹⁴⁰ In fact this seems to apply to the uniformed services more generally – regions such as Benue, Kogi and Plateau states are notable recruiting-grounds for military and paramilitary services alike.

¹⁴¹ In Mustapha (2007), which cites the same Federal Character Commission data, Table 11 (p16) gives total numbers of police officers as only 6,474; therefore it would be reasonable to assume that only the senior cadre were surveyed.

A host of bodies, including a dedicated Federal Character Commission, exist to ensure this provision is adhered to. In fact the Police Service Commission itself is a product of this concern, being born one of a set of institutions set up in response to 1957's Willink Commission of Enquiry into the fears of minority groups over their positions in a future independent Nigeria. Federal Character provisions which ensure 'balance' through quota and positive discrimination practices have been successful in preventing any single ethnic group's dominance in the organs of state, but have given rise to some unintended secondary dynamics. Chief among these is reification and invigoration of the contested category of 'indigene', on which claims to be 'counted' in issues which invoke Federal Character are predicated, as illustrated above.

In policing there is a more subtle interplay of personal choice and positive discrimination, as analysis of a friend's souvenir yearbook from their Nigeria Police Academy, Kano ASP cadet class shows. In the class (within the last decade) the 615 cadets were, although representative of all the states of Nigeria, somewhat unevenly distributed. The least number from a single jurisdiction was seven – an outlier, from the still-urbanising Federal Capital Territory of Abuja, and the most, 24, from Edo State. The modal average was 15, 16, or 17 candidates per state (which distribution accounted for almost half of the states).¹⁴² Yet this pattern can only be considered equitable if the issues of relative population size, and of the *internal* heterogeneity of certain states are excluded.

First, consider the matter of proportional weighting; Federal Character provides for equal representation of states, but does not adjust for population – huge Lagos, a megacity state whose population likely exceeds 10 million, gets no more places than Bayelsa or Ekiti states, the nation's smallest with just over 1 million inhabitants each. In fact some large urban centres had relatively small numbers of cadets – Lagos, Kano and Kaduna had 15, 18 and 14 cadets respectively - in the year sampled. Yet the competition for these places remains uneven. In Kaduna, a large colonially-founded city with a cosmopolitan

¹⁴² Indicative of a trend towards regularisation, the 2010 cadet recruitment exercise eventually recruited – after multiple debates between police, government and PSC – an even eight candidates from each state. <http://www.punchng.com/news/ringims-son-others-fail-police-exams/> accessed 4th April 2012.

population and ample educational opportunities, and a core historical recruiting ground for the uniformed services, my informant recalled that more than 3,000 people bought the candidacy form in that year. Therefore, it can be seen that the relative ease of joining the police is not just a matter of the places on offer, but of the Federal Character-stipulated competition for those places. There is an interplay between historical recruitment trends and Federal Character. A potential officer recruit from a state which does not have a large population; or in which policing is not a popular career choice; or is not a socially prestigious occupation, may have a much greater individual chance than a candidate from a state where policing is a popular option.

The larger systemic logic of Federal Character further reinforces the dynamic: Some states, especially in the Muslim-majority ‘core north’, historically valorised Islamic education above English-language schooling (its secular bent, and missionary antecedent, both counterposed to the spiritually endorsed nature of Islamic learning). This tends to translate into significantly lower literacy and school completion rates in those states.¹⁴³ Federal government has responded with positive discriminatory practices, such as making special quota provision for ‘educationally disadvantaged’ states in higher education planning. Those who do complete secondary education and secure places in the university system, are comparatively ‘bigger fish’ in ‘smaller ponds’. As graduates they enter a labour market in which their individual chances play differently; since they will not only be able to compete for a reserved allocation in police recruitment, but in other state employment where Federal Character also operates, including more prestigious and desirable bodies such as the Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC), military, and Federal civil service. In fact the combination of lack of interest and shortage of candidates capable of fulfilling the selection criteria may still leave them under-represented in the police; in the sample year, the five least-represented states (excepting FCT), with only 13 cadets each were all non-urbanised northern states.

¹⁴³ In the early 2000s, for example, the six states of north-western Nigeria accounted for 25.5% of population but only 4.7% of university admissions (Mustapha 2009).

Even at this stage, candidates will be aware that it is not just their start in the system that is at stake, but their future prospects. Until very recently promotion to the cadres of senior management *also* followed a Federal Character quota logic, in order to reinforce balanced ethnoregional representation in the senior leadership levels. So the likely future promotion prospects for a new ASP cadet from Benue, for instance, looked very different to, and likely slower than, the prospects for a new cadet from Zamfara. Positive discrimination sometimes even saw juniors promoted over seniors, generating individual resentments which may have mitigated against the fuller internalisation of a de-ethnicising professional *esprit de corps*. We should therefore recognise that representation in the police, and in its senior levels, depends on a complex interplay in which apparently anti-discriminatory and ‘balancing’ practices may work differentially for participants of different backgrounds: A certain amount of asymmetry is present from the outset. These filters and differences of opportunity make both the individual and communal tactics of entryism very different propositions in states of different populations, locations and educational profiles; our discussion of the systemic logics of recruitment needs to acknowledge this unevenness.

5.2.6: Prebendalism, entryism and insecurity

The premium upon state employment, access to security institutions, and a place in the state, is reflected in the tactics of ‘entryism’. More usually employed in political studies to describe a factional takeover of a party by means of membership and infiltration strategies, we may usefully adapt entryism here to describe the means by which communities may mobilise to insert their own members into state institutions. It is worth noting that this cannot always be assumed to be a deliberate and planned approach. As we have seen, historically contingent factors, not just deliberate tactics, made some constituencies more likely than others to join the police. Indeed, a comparative look at the military suggests that in some cases such trends are often emergent and iterative. Siollun (2009) documents the unexpected later significance of military recruitment trends; for instance the fact that Igbo commissioned officers in the late-colonial era generally preferred clerical or technical rather than infantry command posts made

possible the widespread intra-military pogroms against them in the counter-coup of 1967. The trend of entryism may thus be seen as emerging from a combination of personal voluntarism, federally representative constitutional measures, and a growing incentive to utilise these strategically, as postcolonial state practices and social trends began to structure each other in a milieu of unpredictability and the search for existential security.

There *are* however certainly cases where entryism has been deliberately refined over generations. Benue State, a region with a strong tradition of uniformed service, is numerically and politically dominated by Tiv-speaking communities coexisting with Idoma and Igede minorities. Yet the Idomas are frequently referred to as the state's 'effective minority' due to their continued success in mobilising their elites to facilitate enrolment of Idoma youths in Federal employment, to an extent beyond what might be expected of their numerically marginal and thus potentially weak position.¹⁴⁴ What also became clear throughout the period of my fieldwork is that entryism is also *becoming* a conscious choice for some communities who previously did not concern themselves much with it. In this their own communal positions of insecurity seem to be a direct concern.

One officer I interviewed in 'B' division described himself as Jassawa. The term (itself a contested one) refers in his usage to a descendant of Hausa-speaking migrants from present-day Bauchi and Kano States, who moved to the new mining city of Jos in colonial times.¹⁴⁵ Since the creation of Plateau State, Jassawa, often successful traders and urban professionals who once occupied prime position in the city's social order, have been marginalised by Plateau groups identifying themselves as 'indigenes' and original owners of the land. Elections for Jos North, the Local Government in which Jassawa are concentrated, have consistently been delayed, disrupted and deferred, and the status of the Jassawa community has been a central issue in many of the episodes of violence which have racked the city since 2001 (Higazi 2008; Human Rights Watch 2001; Ostien 2009).

¹⁴⁴ This also reminds us to look below the state level, into *which* communities are successful in providing large numbers of candidates *within* certain states in order to better understand the human composition of the police and other state institutions.

¹⁴⁵ The use of the term 'Jassawa' exclusively for this community has itself latterly become yet another site of contestation in the war of categories which runs parallel to the conflict itself.

I observed to the constable that I had rarely met a police officer of his ethnic background and he replied that ‘we didn’t used to join police, *before*, but now...’. The implication was that for his community a place in the security agencies had become desirable in the context of new marginality and insecurity (and no doubt also in light of the economic decline and shrinkage of opportunities that conflict has brought to Jos).

Equally pastoral Fulani informants (perhaps the least likely group that the urban Nigerian public would consider as police material due to their distance from formal education, urban centres, and concerns of advancement in settled ‘conventional’ social or economic registers) referred to their reluctance to join the police in the same frame which they viewed other strategies of engaging with the formal and state arena as *participants*. That is to say, they made reference not just to normally avoiding the state (and the police, which they were explicit about) but also to the emergent need to engage with it, under the rubric (as expressed in English) of ‘becoming wise’. For these nomadic or semi-nomadic herders, often unschooled, and used to dealing with state agencies via communal representation, traditional institutions, or selected brokers, ‘becoming wise’ was the remedy to situations where they had been taken advantage of.¹⁴⁶ Wisdom here refers to the process of ‘wising-up’; having the realities of the world impressed upon one through bitter experience.¹⁴⁷ In the course of fieldwork a representative of the Fulani ethnic-economic association MACBAN¹⁴⁸ asked me what could remedy the prejudicial treatment which he alleged that cattle-rearers received from the police. My liberal reformist suggestions of engaging with community policing programmes were received with a detached politeness which made their irrelevance obvious. This contrasted

¹⁴⁶ There is a selection bias here in that the representatives of cattle-rearing groups with whom I spoke were most often the English-speaking and – though not exclusively – the younger ones; thus those who had themselves in some ways ‘become wise’ and occupied those positions of representative interaction between their communities and the formal world.

¹⁴⁷ Equally, the defrauding of cattle-rearers by a lawyer they had hired to represent them in a trespass case against a parastatal landowner was cited as the reason why ‘we are now sending our sons to become lawyers’. Similarly, increasing conflicts over access to grazing land in neighbouring states led ‘those of us who have become wise’ among Fulani in Nasarawa to acquire formal title for their land, so that their semi-nomadic subsistence was not solely reliant on verbal, tradition-based and therefore easily contestable land-use agreements.

¹⁴⁸ Myetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria.

dramatically with the attentiveness of his response when I asked ‘why don’t you send your sons to the police?’

For those who are latecomers to the strategies of entryism, and indeed to the wider complex of insertion and accommodation within the machinery of the modern state, to be left out is to be left behind, and to risk being structurally excluded from the opportunity for agency in the future; thus becoming permanently disadvantaged persons in the state-reliant process of elite class formation. To be existentially secure, itself a deferred status always seemingly incompletely achieved, is to be active on the field of play of the Nigeria state ‘game’. Having ‘someone who is there’ in the police is a part of that, all the more important in that it gatekeeps the important issue of relative human security from victimhood vis-à-vis others who might manipulate the state against one.

Those groups most effective in entryism have well co-ordinated strategies of mutual assistance amongst their elites which point up the value of having ‘someone who is there’. A lawyer acquaintance in Dutsin Bature, who recently joined the police in a one-off recruitment exercise for forensic specialists, told me that at his board interview he was interviewed by three senior officers, none of whom he had seen before. They asked one question each; two were on policing; the third officer asked only “you are Bare? From Idoko village?” and passed the candidate.

In the end, the stakes are the same for all parties. Joining the state is a route to social mobility, whether newly-achieved or in securing established position. Being *in* and *up* is opposed with the clear and unpleasant dangers of being *out* and *down*, which are communal and familial concerns no less than they are individual. Finally, by way of a postscript, we should note that in outlining these operative structures we should not be over-determinist. The game of prebendalism is a choice, albeit a powerful and attractive one, and we should recognise too the extant possibility of *not* playing this game. Individuals are also free not to approach as a client or to aid as a patron; even though such choices may result in failure or opprobrium. While entryism can be used to advantage both by applicants and by those in position to influence a process, not all

officers are keen to get involved. What represents opportunity for some constitutes headache for others: As one ASP in Dutsin Bature put it:

“If you’re in recruitment you get pressure from everyone – get my cousin in, all that – and if you don’t help or [if you] insist on standards you’re being nasty”.

5.3: Conclusion

In police recruitment, as in Joseph’s political analysis, and like neopatrimonial systems in general, prebendalism benefits both ends. In a milieu where life opportunities are as scarce and precarious as in contemporary Nigeria, it is a sensible strategy for the individual. And where a strongly communitarian understanding of personhood is reinforced by a political system which deals with its citizens on the basis of their membership of ethnoregional groups, it makes sense for communities. ‘Having someone who is there’ for the community and ‘acquiring relevance’ for the individual are reciprocal sides of the same equation. The career advice given to one of my informants by a family friend - ‘be of use to yourself, so you can be of use to them’ - is as neat a formulation of the principle as is needed. This then is prebendalism as it is lived in the everyday micropolitics of state bureaucracies, and it involves more varied constituencies and interest groups than ethnic groups alone. Communities and families facilitate individuals’ career ambitions in the hope that they will continue to use their membership in state institutions to reproduce a privileged avenue to access, an anchor in the process of state class formation, and a stake in the state provider of security at a time when insecurity is a paramount concern. Meanwhile such a mode of action must maintain a complex coexistence with another set of imperatives, the formal requirements of the police institution, designed to ensure the professional and non-partisan functioning of the offices of state through whose same procedures individual careers must be advanced. Yet even deliberate policies of positive discrimination give rise to unintended consequences for institutional careers, which in turn necessitate further refinement of strategies for entering the institution. Thus are dual formal and informal logics present from the start even in the human composition of the police institution itself.

Chapter 6: Government Properties: Making institutional subjects¹⁴⁹

Introduction

To better understand the role of police in Nigerian society and public life we need first to understand the police institution's own internal nature. The principles which structure and guide the police are formed and instilled in the training institution, where recruits are turned into officers, re-socialised into a career which casts them as embodiments of state power. This chapter deals with the Nigeria Police Force as an institution which is engaged in a totalising project of domain over its own personnel. Police training institutions un-make and re-make personhood, turning a 'civilian' into a police officer, with an accompanying set of values, language, allegiances, and bodily regimentation, subject to a new hierarchy reinforced by discipline and circumscribed by rules constituting markers of separation and defined boundaries to wider social intercourse. In the process a cadet becomes an officer of the state, but one in a paradoxical position, both powerful and disempowered, which merits some consideration before we can fully understand the nature and processes of police institutionalisation in postcolonial polities.

¹⁴⁹ The term refers to uniformed state servants, as used by a trailer driver I spoke to in Abuja in November 2010. I have included his comment in full here. Although undoubtedly the boasting of an unhinged drunkard, it is also tacitly informative, illuminating not only this informant's disposition to the state and its servants, but the real risks in police work; the intertwining of drug smuggling, drug use and the world of long-distance road transport; as well as the speaker's unquestioning assumption that to belong to an important security bureaucracy (most especially, the army) is to enjoy a state of exception and exemption from ordinary rules. It also shows the penetration of police terminology into colloquial speech; 'exhibit' is used to mean a rarity of note.

Me: *What's that?* [respondent, whilst driving, is opening sachet and swallowing contents]

Alcohol! I drink because I don't like much of stress, yes. If I drive – if I drive – I *must* drink. I have drive for three years... I mean 14 years... and I never reach accident. If now I enter trailer to Lagos, if I take cocaine, if I drink, I smoke, I can drive for 24 hours straight! If I see police on the road, I will kill them! I will shout that this trailer no get brake – and through. I can drive to America!

Me: *Don't you like police?*

They are very bad people. If I carry passenger, sometimes they carry *igbo* [cannabis], sometimes cocaine, police can't disturb me.

Me: *Do people really take cocaine?*

Yes, is cost. In Nigeria, cocaine is exhibit! Is exhibit! But *there* (i.e. overseas) cocaine is not exhibit. All of these gofaint properties – is it police, customs, immigration – can never disturb me (...) That is why I love army. I cannot join army, but if there is military rule, I will join army, between today and tomorrow, you will see me like that.

Like other police forces, the institution and everyday reality of the NPF cannot adequately be captured by the concept of an occupation or profession. The encompassing nature of the police institution requires us to look for other formulations; the most applicable I have found is to recover the concept of 'total institution' from Goffman (1961). It requires some modification to be applicable to the police force. This is partly because Goffman was not particularly exhaustive in pursuing the implications of his own idea (only pages 15-22 of his original essay are dedicated to discussing the conceptual basis), but moreover because he refers specifically to a particular type of physical institution, bounded by a wall, separated into empowered custodians and disempowered wards (ibid; 19), and combining the three spheres of work, rest and play into a single rational plan supporting the overall aims of the bureaucratic institution. Inmates or wards undergo a process of mortification – unmaking of previous identities and personhoods as part of the construction of the relationships inherent to such institutions. Goffman's model of totalitarian institutions and their enveloping disempowerment was designed to explain extreme manifestations, primarily mental health institutions, but does not explicitly address those institutions whose totalities are otherwise expressed but perhaps equally pervasive.

Uniformed services however exhibit many similar characteristics. In fact their training institutions, closed residential worlds in which personhood and character is deliberately unmade and remade in the mould desired by the wider institution and its functional aims, do fit Goffman's definition well. The work of police colleges and training schools reflect Goffman's emphasis on total institutions' collective regimentation, initiatory and character (re)forming aspects. Selves are transformed, and in the process such institutions necessarily supplant or complement other actual or potential claims on identity. As we shall see, their creation of junior officers as institutional subjects whose agency is circumscribed by hierarchy and discipline is key. Yet ultimately, police and other uniformed services are created to interact with, not remain secluded from, the public. So the totalising work of the institution must also instil values and dispositions which are useful for that purpose.

Outside the training institution however, Goffman's concept requires further modification before we can make use of it in characterising the kind of totality exercised by the police over its officers. It is, after all, possible to argue that police officers are as much professionals as institutional subjects. Certainly their recognised role in society, specialised skills, and status based on their privileged knowledge does make them akin to doctors, lawyers, teachers, and similar bodies of technical specialists accorded status on the basis of claims to exclusive cognitive competence. But even here, the idea of total institutions retains currency. Sinclair, writing on medical students and the formation of the wider medical profession, notes the superficial similarity between the student of a profession and the inmate of the institution, but further argues that training institutions are 'broader and more conceptual than those Goffman originally described.' (Sinclair 1997; 15). Although, he says, medical schools (like police colleges) are physically bounded institutional spaces, he continues 'it is less in terms of space and more in terms of time spent within the conceptually bounded and cognitively limited organisation of the profession itself that students' institutional life should be seen'. The temporary period in the bounded training institution, he says 'will ultimately result in professional cognitive membership of the institution of which they are an inmate ... that may exclude the lay world just as surely as asylum walls.' Sinclair persuasively argues for the validity of adapting the concept of an institution to the wider world of a profession; and this retains even greater currency in the case of uniformed state services than other professions, because the institutions within which they work and live are more holistic.

Goffman's total institutions are places of "residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (*ibid*; 11). Police stations and barracks, (like training schools) may have their walls and fences, but much police work takes place among the public. So we must acknowledge that there are instead symbolic rules and fences, and that institutions such as police forces are circumscribed not by walls but by the 'dotted line' within which they pursue logics, moral, ethics, purposes and plans distinct from wider society; and their members are in many senses not

free to do otherwise. For Goffman, totality is “symbolised by barriers to social intercourse with the outside” (*ibid*, 15) which as we will see below also manifests in the police institution’s formal interest in marriage and family issues. For Nigeria’s police, as well as barriers there also exist manifold extensions of the institution, service functions which have accreted on to the formal aims of the institution over time, and add economic, welfare and other aspects to make the possibilities and scope of the institutional world broader, maximal as well as total.

More significant as identifying characteristics are the *totalising claims* of such institutions. Their claims upon conduct, body, dress, place of residence, geographical location, use of time, sexuality, morality, capital formation and more distinguish the uniformed services as total institutions over and above any ordinary workplace. Doctors, lawyers, and professors, after all, do not find themselves suddenly transferred to the other end of the country with no possibility of objecting, or summarily thrown behind bars for improper dressing. The subjection to hierarchy and discipline which defines identities and constrains agency is central to the nature of uniformed services. Beatrice Jauregui characterises police in Uttar Pradesh, India as ‘an odd breed of subjects who are simultaneously authoritative but also very often impotent, as individuals and as an institution’ (2010; 13). Globally, ‘police have come to be known as the oppressors, not the oppressed ... the instruments of dominance and unchecked power that counter subaltern insurgencies, not the subjects who incite these insurgencies.’ Reflecting on the tradition of studies of power, resistance and subalterity in South Asia, she observes that ‘by virtue of their official positions, ‘subjects acting as representatives of “the state” are always already considered elites and never subalterns’ (*ibid*; 21). Yet, she observes, their position is ambiguous and their placing in networks of power implies both ‘upward’ and ‘downward’ possibilities. To resolve these tensions she introduces the term ‘subalterns of the state’ to explain ‘the co-configuration of the police’s robust power on the one hand, and their stark disempowerment and demoralization on the other hand’ (*ibid*; 13). This has implications in the way police subjects are created and controlled in ranked hierarchies. Police, as a special kind of labour force and social subject are not oppressed, but managed, controlled, “disciplined” (*ibid*; 256).

I argue that Jauregui's observations of postcolonial India apply well to postcolonial Nigeria. Indeed, this is a second meaning of the title, to draw attention to one of the characteristic *properties* of government; the de-personalisation of powers, and the abstraction of personhood, by which an officer of the law is at once an embodiment of government's sovereignty and simultaneously one of its most disempowered and constrained servants. The formation of this kind of disciplinary domain-over, and of empowered-disempowered personhood, can be seen at work *processually*, in the work of creating police officers from civilian material.

The totalising institution extends its reach over space and identity, producing persons who are more consciously *national* subject-citizens than those outside the reach of such thorough institutional character formation. It also extends its reach over time, moulding personal choices and opportunities according to institutional careers, in which the grid of rank hierarchy provides the structuring map of relative empowerment and disempowerment, and interacts differentially with other social categories – notably, gender – to produce different possibilities for different persons, and fields of action differently constrained. As rank is dictated by formal promotional procedures, it confines options for advancement to an institutional pace. Yet we will also discover a second repertoire within which the agency of the subaltern can better find outlet – the sphere of postings, which interlocutes with formal rank but comprises an alternative register in which success can be attained. The official institutional principles also create their informalised shadows – relationships between coursemates, for example – which can be used creatively to navigate the wider world of the police career.

The chapter begins by examining formal police training and its stated purposes. Secondly, it considers the work of the police institution and its training disciplines in breaking apart civilian subjectivities and re-creating an institutional personhood, in the course of which new socialities also emerge as the informal accompaniment to the process. We then examine rank and seniority as ideological structuring principles, instilled in the training institution and dictating institutional life and personhood

thereafter. We examine how these constraints are inculcated, and how they interact with other social categories of subalterity, particularly gender. Next the chapter looks at how the social networks which accrete around the formal structures of policing are used by subordinates to inject agency *back into* the system, and enumerates some of the options which are available to navigate institutional careers via the system of postings which acts as an alternative register of mobility to formal rank. Such informalised mobility can problematise the supposedly rational logics of the bureaucratic institution. Thence we consider the ways in which the police institution casts a further ‘shadow’ institutionality into non-formal spheres which derive from the NPF’s formal role as a total institution – including mirroring of familial forms and functions.

As I was not privileged to spend a prolonged period in any training institution – beyond a week-long community policing training course in Police Staff College, Jos, in what follows I will draw largely on serving officers’ recollections of their own cadet experiences. Most of the testimonies are from those who passed through the senior cadre recruitment process – Assistant Superintendent - ‘ASP’ cadets, who train for 18 months at Police Academy, Kano – so I have restricted my comments to that particular cadre, except where specifically stated otherwise.

6.1: Police training

6.1.1: Formal learning

While formal professional skills training is the apparent prime stated purpose of the Police Academy or Training School, its actual implementation seems uneven. Training institutions are often run-down, mostly lacking in investment, and not built to cope with the numbers of officers who have been put through them in the last decade’s efforts to expand the police. They are not considered prestigious by those who lead them; for many senior officers, a posting out of frontline policing to a training school role is seen as equivalent to demotion. Nor are they apparently a priority in the force’s everyday concerns, with ‘E’ Department (training) having a very low profile in official NPF

documents, publications and events. During my fieldwork in 2010-2011 officers told me that a posting to Detective College, Enugu (either as student or instructor) was particularly disliked as the facility did not even have running water. Thus instructors are often poorly-motivated and conditions are often not conducive to learning: I saw a promotion class of hundreds of inspectors crammed into a lecture hall while tens more sat on plastic chairs crowded around the entrances in the hope of being in earshot. For those lucky enough to be inside the room, the education concentrates heavily on rote-learning. This has a certain utility - an operational police manager should after all be able to recall criminal charges and disciplinary provisions. Fitness and musketry are also obviously directly relevant. But situational training which connects directly to workplace expectations – for instance in crime-scene analysis or scenario planning - is almost entirely missing from the training.¹⁵⁰

Sometimes the training falls so short as to be farcical – during my fieldwork a group of female administrative staff sent to Abeokuta on an information technology training course said they were ‘ready to cry’ when they found themselves taught entirely by paper handouts with no actual use of computers. And some of the training undertaken by would-be investigators is plainly irrelevant. Another informant related a colleague’s visit to cadet recruits of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). A class was repeating by rote the badges of rank of the Ghanaian Navy; elsewhere on their curriculum was ‘Introduction to French Language’ – once a week, for an hour, for three weeks, making three hours *in total*. Most of the key skills a police officer uses, as we will see, are instead learned mainly in practice.

So much then for the classroom education; the active parts of the curriculum, aimed at personal character formation, seem however to be more effective – they were certainly more frequently recalled by graduates. All ASP cadets undergo off-campus exercises designed to build personal confidence and command ability, which merit their own

¹⁵⁰ This situation is seemingly common to African state officials, for whom formal training often starts (and ends) with the ideal professional image. Bierschenk (2009; 9) observes that ‘officials in the countries we studied are given little preparation... in their training which provides them (see for example teachers and police officers) with an ideal image of their future profession. They only learn to deal with reality in a phase of informal professional socialisation which they undergo early in their career’.

passing-out badges, including an outdoors leadership challenge course, and the testing short course run at the Police Mobile Force Training School in Gwoza, in the Mandara Mountains of Borno State, complete with 20-hour endurance trek.¹⁵¹ As we noted previously, institutions like the police differ from Goffman's physically walled total institutions. While the station compound, the barracks, the training school, certainly do have physical walls, boundaries between police officers and the general public or 'civilians' are more often behavioural than material. As such, police training also introduces the dispositions which define the separateness of the police and perform their difference *as part of* personal conduct and character-formation. In fact police training overall is explicitly also directed to produce certain personal qualities and embodied practices and capacities, and these are functionally integral to the job police officers do and the particular ways they do it in different places. So in the US, officers are taught 'command presence' (Barker 1999), while former communist police in Germany show off their confrontational 'fuck-off position' (Glaeser 2000). In the Police Staff College, Jos, I am admonished to learn to 'talk like a police officer' (loudly, clearly, in a commanding manner); Training also encompasses tacit learning of bodily practice; to eat fast, in deliberately curtailed lunch-breaks; and most of all, to endure, to develop the bodily discipline and hardness needed to conduct selves in adverse and uncomfortable conditions, which is perhaps the distinguishing mark of the police officer's pride. On 1st February 2011, for example, my field notes record:

Twice in the last two days – from an ASP and from the CP's orderly, a mobile corporal – I have been told 'you sit down, you're a civilian. I'm a police, I can stand like this for three hours'.

¹⁵¹ All senior officers are trained to command Mobile Police units if the need arises, so Gwoza is a required stop on the 18-month cadet training course. Mobile Police enjoy a special relationship with teargas, which they are expected to become used to without masks; so new arrivals are teargassed by instructors on arrival at the gate. Training continues in like vein, with assault courses and the hills and heat used both to endurance and courage and to inculcate the 'stubbornness' required of the Mobile Police officer.

6.1.2: Re-formation

Police training has a formal rationale as professional skills training and character formation. But as Goffman reminds us, total institutions also aim at something wider; the deconstruction and reformation of social beings according to the overall aims of the institution. Thus police training is about turning civilians into police in a holistic, internalised and embodied way. And doing this, in order to produce an institutionally shaped, functionally useful, nationally mobile subject who is integrated into hierarchical order, requires not just inculcating what is police, but breaking down what isn't. This implies the breaking down of pre-existing socialities. Graduates, as a category, are far from a blank slate. Having passed through a strike-plagued, resource-poor, patronage-inflected Nigerian higher education system abundant in lecherous lecturers and obstructive administrators, graduate recruits will be already well-versed in the arts of resistance and collective action and so are latent with potential problems for the police training process. Therefore police college has a task of deconstructing this and replacing it with new forms of solidarity and identity, cast within a hierarchical mould and oriented towards the ideal of *esprit de corps* of a uniformed service. Cadets must be turned from individuals-in-association, free and self-organised, to a different kind of subject who is an individual and atomised subject of disciplinary power, to be re-socialised within a ranked structure planned by the institution as a grid of power relations and control:

‘The first thing they tell you at police college is ‘you graduates, leave all that ‘we’ at the gate, there is no ‘we’ here, just *I*.’” Field notes, 8th June 2010.

Collective solidarity is broken down and redefined into a corporate ‘we’ defined by the institution. The most obvious marker, of course, is the visible distinction of uniform, which for those who wear it embeds overall corporate *uniformity* (but also, to the familiar, codifies the internally-legible distinctions of role and rank). Another bodily technology for achieving corporate subjectivity is drill. Foucault (1977) identifies the significance of bodily discipline and drill for creating uniformity of purpose, of identity and of subjection to rationalised bureaucratic command power within a military, para-

military or other institutional context. Exercise in drill produces embodied regimentation and obedience. Another modality is subjection to rules of discipline – that ‘the police is a discipline organisation’ is axiomatic, and disciplined conduct is expected to be reflected in physical appearance. An officers’ appearance is synonymous with performance and rectitude. When I asked the AC Operations in Dutsin Bature (a man known as an old-fashioned and hardline officer) how can you tell a good police officer he answered entirely in these terms: ‘They are disciplined, you can see from their appearance, uniform is complete, they look like a policeman.’

The work of re-subjectifying cadets as police is also done by restructuring – cadets are divided into squads (of around 75 cadets) and into halls. This is not a completely dictatorial system - squad leaders are ideally elected, and there is a system of cadet representatives, hierarchically structured (General No 1, General no. 2, Women leader, 2 i/c Women leader, as well as hall leaders’ committees and their Chairmen). In this way, a space is created whereby grievance can be expressed within the bounds of the discipline organisation, and without threat to its overall stability.

Yet dissent dies hard: Privation, crumbling infrastructure, large class sizes, shortages of resources and materials, and staff members who take advantage of cadets, all generate grievance. Jauregui pertinently notes that police officers’ ‘potential for organizing and mobilizing to improve their condition (mostly within, though sometimes across ranks) represents an exceptional kind of threat to both official and unofficial patterns of order’ (*op cit*; 261) for which discipline is the solution. So where resistance is encountered, it is suppressed, sometimes making creative use of those who have already served and have more fully incorporated police values. An officer relates of their own cadet course:

In the case of Squad 8, ‘Igwe’ was imposed by the DC course, because they were stubborn, so this guy – a ‘serving member’ [i.e. an officer who was already serving in the police and was being promoted to ASP] – was imposed upon them. “Everything about him was thick – his head, his arms, even his fingers, his attitude was... we tried making a coup against him, it failed, we tried getting rid of him, it failed, he stuck with us to the end”. Field notes, 23rd November 2010

6.1.3: Emergent socialities

As can be seen above, the shared endurance and participation of training does indeed produce an *esprit de corps*. But as well as the intended sense of pride in corporate and individual police-ness, it is one which encompasses the shared experience of subalterity and the solidarity of attempted resistance. This is further underpinned by the experience of shared co-residence for 18 months, which cross-cuts the squad organisation as halls are mixed-squad and single-sex, and produces friendships, affairs and lasting relationships. One respondent recalled:

‘Men can’t go to women’s hall, but women can go to the men’s hall and some stayed there for full 18 months virtually’.¹⁵²

Both formally, in its attempt to inculcate nationalist loyalty, and informally through sociality, the creation of police corporate personhood notably entails other corporate identities – whether ‘primordial’ or affinitive – being broken down, or at least intertwined, with new founts of identity and meaning. This is not to say that concepts such as home-town or ethno-linguistic community become irrelevant. But they are supplemented and cross-cut by the new structuring solidarity of coursemates. It might be an overstatement to say the police succeeds in producing detribalised subjects, but it clearly is an *agent of* detribalisation, or at least a zone of cosmopolitanism which makes more possible free association across identity-boundaries, in the context of creating a future national leadership cadre which will serve in a *national* career-scape. Since police frequently marry police, and in many cases have offspring who go on to serve, this can in some instances be self-reinforcing. The situation is summed-up neatly by a female ASP during discussion on the subject.

“Being in the police you get used to a lot of different places, and the funny thing is it detribalises you. This one is Igbo, this one is Yoruba, you just get used to it (...) any child

¹⁵² 23rd November 2010, from field notes.

that is raised in the barracks will speak at least 1 or 2 languages in addition to his mother tongue. And intertribal marriage is common. Very common. Look at my parents”.¹⁵³

Upon graduating, the cadet experience is commemorated in a passing-out ceremony, and permanently enshrined as a six-digit force number in which every officer is numbered according to their year of commission. This makes the information immediately visible and index-able to those who are able to read it (who are, of course, only other NPF officers), which is significant for two reasons – because courses and years are immediately recognisable, and because not just rank but also seniority is a structuring principle – two officers of equal rank will distinguish the primacy of one of them on the date of passing-out. The solidarity between coursemates underlines the NPF as an F institution, where despite its size and national spread, officers will encounter and re-encounter each other, and former colleagues and commanding officers, throughout their institutional career.¹⁵⁴ It is a resource of support to officers otherwise atomised in the hierarchical grid. Not only are coursemates and classmates a reserve of assistance in times of need,¹⁵⁵ but they also produce a powerful structure, akin to an age-grade, with which to navigate the police institution, as we will see below.

6.2: Rank and Seniority

It will by now begun to have become apparent that the police institution structures a kind of personhood indivisibly intertwined with *rank*, which inflects everything. Rank orders persons, and goes beyond that to define their relative agency in the overall system, their access to opportunities and, notably, their sense of entitlement as both represented by themselves and defined by others.¹⁵⁶ It imbues official procedures, personal interactions,

¹⁵³ The informants’ own parents were from two different ethnic and regional backgrounds and met in the course of their careers as police officers. Field notes, 8th July 2010.

¹⁵⁴ What functions for the senior ranks at a national level also holds true for the rank-and-file officer’s more localised cohort from the Police Training School.

¹⁵⁵ For example, in the very common situations in which an officer posted far from their original pay-point is affected by an administrative mix-up which as always in Nigeria requires someone’s physical presence to expedite.

¹⁵⁶ Jauregui (2010; 23) argues that the depoliticising of constables via the trope of discipline “work through an imbrication of the ranking structure of the police organization—a legacy of the British colonial military bureaucracy—with 1) broader socio-cultural practices of other-ing based on caste, class, and other lines of

and even the material, infrastructural and spatial dimensions of the organisation.¹⁵⁷ In Force Headquarters, for instance, there are separate elevators for the three cadres of ranks. In most commands, there is a police officers' mess which functions as social club. It is of course reserved for *senior* officers only. The fine gradations of rank allocate even furniture. In the community policing office, the CSP has a swivel chair, the ASP a non-swivel office chair, and the corporal a locally -made wooden chair. In fact for some officers, entitlement seems to be the prime function of rank. At the outset of my fieldwork, when I was concentrating initial interviews on more narrowly 'professional' policing questions, I asked one DPO if there was anything more he needed (i.e. to perform his job effectively). He replied:

'I'm grade 10' he says, so I'm supposed to have a fridge and an A/C'.¹⁵⁸

Rank inflects all social interactions within the police, and transgression of the rank and seniority principle is keenly felt – perhaps the more so because, as with all ideologies, it covers up instances where the system is manifestly contradicted by other realities, as we will explore in the section on posting. Therefore failure to observe the form of rank is a salient point of tension itself demanding to be policed.

That inspector was irate at the way that constable just behaved – that “did you see he just came up and shook me?” I ask what is wrong with that, and he replies: “He should have

cleavage... and 2) *legal* restrictions on basic civil rights of police as a labor force, which emerge as part of the public ambivalence about police violence depicted in Chapter 4.” This comment, with ‘gerontocracy’ replacing ‘caste, class’ could apply equally well to the Nigerian situation. In Nigeria more generally, a strong current of hierarchical ordering and entitlement reflects both precolonial ideologies and formal state practices. Entitlement claims and ideologies inflect relations in workplaces, communities and families, and implicates not just generational or birth-order relationships between seniors and juniors (and we should note here the frequent use of the language of relative age to express concepts of relative ranking) but also gender relations. Nor should we see entitlement as applying solely to goods, material resources or opportunities. Ideologies of entitlement also inflect sexual and reproductive relations and rights, and equally questions of the relative formal agency, freedom and social, cultural and juridical personhood of individuals vis-à-vis their placing in hierarchies of right and entitlement. At the crossroads of longstanding cultural traditions of gerontocracy and colonially-reinforced ideas of institutional and class (and race) distinction and privilege, questions of hierarchy and entitlement are strongly evident in histories of influential state institutions in Nigeria, not least the military, and are also unsurprisingly strongly present in the world of policing.

¹⁵⁷ Even the space in souvenir yearbooks from the Police Academy is carefully arranged according to rank.

¹⁵⁸ A/C refers to air-conditioning unit. The DCO quietly pointed out that I was asking about *policing* needs. Fieldnotes, January 2010.

come up and respected me [and mimes the stiff-armed, straight-backed ‘attention’ salute pose] and then if I want to shake we can, or highest I receive the salute, that is equally respecting him. (...) I will show him, in the usual way. Not now, but when we are in front of people”. Field notes, 16th June 2011.

Note that even the decision on whether to be casual or not is to be taken by the senior party – ‘if *I* want to shake, we can’. Such is the ubiquity of the rank principle that even non-formal interactions become imbued with it, from friendly greetings – “Ranking Corporal! Nothing do you!”¹⁵⁹ – to a very mundane activity like sharing out biscuits.

I offer biscuits around – coincidentally the red-eyed Charge-Room Officer (an Inspector) is first, then the MOPOL corporal who is being detained behind the counter for a disciplinary offence (...) then the W/PC on counter, at which MOPOL shouts ‘seniority order!’ The other more senior officers who are yet to get theirs say it’s OK, but when it gets to Sergeant Rebecca she says ‘I will take two because of my two stripes.’ Fieldnotes 3rd March 2011.

Importantly, rank structures personhood over *time*. Officers can have certain predictable expectations of how they will move up, and how in order to do so one must wait ‘on queue’ for the signal from Headquarters ordering the next promotion exercise when you will ‘go on course’, and in time ‘hang the new rank’. Not that promotion courses themselves are plain sailing. Police college instructor appointments are poorly-rewarded, and budgets do not often reach their intended destinations intact. So it is routine for instructors to create extra income opportunities by selling course materials which are supposed to be provided free, and for course participants to have to self-provide essentials like food which are ideally supposed to be provided. This means that promotion courses can cost money:

Emmanuel Egwu says he spent N100,000 on corporal promotion course (because ‘I must flex every night’) in camp. Blessing spent N40,000 and Onoja Davies spent only 20,000 - he took his own rice, beans and stove – but the cost on course includes around N4,000 to

¹⁵⁹ Meaning ‘may no harm come to you/nothing disturb you’.

buy manual and N4,500 to write exam, which Onoja helpfully tells me to multiply by 678 (new corporals) making N3,050,000 or so extra income accruing to instructors, and you're meant to get allowance which of course you never see. Fieldnotes, 24th February 2011.¹⁶⁰

Going 'on course' provides a break from the tiresome routine of duty, but one that comes at a cost. So while promotion exercises are not without their own problems, they do provide a reasonable expectation of promotion and the ideal of a rational, seniority-based progress through the ranks. Yet at the very highest levels of policing this can be debased and upset by political preferment – the selection of certain officers from the back of the pack who are advanced past their seniors. As seniority is such a structuring principle of the uniformed services, senior officers are not expected to serve under their own former juniors, and so the usual practice has been to forcibly retire those jumped-over. This has two deleterious consequences; one being the damage to *esprit de corps* and professionalism caused by incentivising the courting of political favour, and the other being the damage to human capital caused by these periodic 'decapitations' of whole crops of DIGs and AIGs.¹⁶¹ A significant part of the tension between 'politicisation' and 'professionalism' of the police since 1999 can be 'read off' this particular issue, with the Police Service Commission having reversed some over-promotions to controversial effect. The pendulum continues to swing both ways, and the need to produce a political effect without a procedural transgression can be seen in a recent episode:

ABUJA — Efforts by the Police Service Commission, PSC, and the Police High Command to reposition and reform the Nigeria Police Force appear to have run into a hitch as over 40 senior Police officers, including Assistant Inspectors General of Police, Commissioners of Police and Deputy Commissioners of Police, shortlisted for retirement have rejected directives to apply for voluntary retirement from the Force.

¹⁶⁰ To flex is to go out and enjoy yourself, indicating that a certain amount of the spending is a question of lifestyle preference; but no participant at all is likely to escape minimum costs such as food, or the unofficial exam fee which generates a tidy US\$19,258 (at 27th March 2012 rate) for the course examiners. Compare the amounts with a new constable's monthly starting salary of N42,000, rising to N45,000 when in service.

¹⁶¹ The increasing political significance of the police as it returns to centre stage in the civilian security-political nexus is indicated by the fact that the NPF has had seven Inspectors-General in the 12 years since the return to elected rule in 1999, as compared to three in the previous 12 years.

Vanguard investigations showed that following the elevation of junior Commissioners of Police to the ranks of DIGs and AIGs, due to the present IG's resolve to transform the Police, there was need for members of the old order to give way, hence the PSC directed the older officers like AIGs, CPs and DCPs, to apply voluntarily for retirement as their services were no longer needed.

But the senior officers who felt they did no wrong and that it was no fault of theirs that their juniors were promoted above them, told the PSC that it was wrong for the commission to ask them to put in for retirement because they did not say they don't want to work under the new dispensation. (Vanguard Newspaper, 8th March 2012).¹⁶²

Clearly, we must understand that the rational seniority-based order is sometimes an ideology, rather than an iron principle.¹⁶³ Yet, as the report above shows, it is instructive that it has enough 'hold' to make even those wishing to break the rules try to find ways to stay formally within them.

6.2.1: Relative subalterity

It can be seen that the system of rank-ordered seniority casts the police officer as a kind of inherent subaltern. Most completely subaltern at the outset, but relationally, throughout a career and even when in command of others, always as a subaltern to *someone* else more senior. In India, the most senior cadre constitute a separate national India Police Service, which only recruits 30% by promotion from below, while Non-Gazetted Officers and Men are employees of State Police, of whom a very large number will never surpass, and will retire at, the rank of Head Constable (Jauregui 2010; 385-6). Nigeria however differs in that all serving officers have a reasonable expectation of progress. Promotion

¹⁶² *Confusion as 40 police top shots reject voluntary retirement*
<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/03/confusion-as-40-police-top-shots-reject-voluntary-retirement/>
accessed on 27th March.

¹⁶³ Equally, we can on occasion discern historic policy shifts wrapped in a rhetoric of normalisation or rationalisation. And even more frequently, we find that functions which may be expected to be automatic, such as routine promotion, are instead made to wait on the commissioning of special 'exercises'. This leads to frequent delays in promotions, sometimes for more than two or three years; yet with the entrenchment of procedural ideology, officers expect their eventual fulfilment, perhaps with compensatory back-pay.

exercises are regular and general, and the only reasons someone will not be promoted is if they fail the course, or are demoted for a disciplinary offence.¹⁶⁴ So unless the officer is unfortunate in either of these two registers, they may be fairly described as subaltern, but not irretrievably so.

Police seniority is therefore self-resolving; you are subaltern but will not always be, and officers understand the system as such, which cannot but provide a philosophical outlet for the resolution of everyday frustrations. I encounter Constable Friday Kassam (a perennial player of the system who moved between three different ‘comfortable’ postings in the command during my fieldwork period), washing his commanding officer’s car; he says he is happy to do it because

“He is my boss, I will wash his car, and so someday someone will wash my own”.¹⁶⁵

To note this inbuilt promise of eventual resolution is not to say that varying rates of progression don’t ever introduce divisive structural tensions. A comparatively recently-graduated ASP recalls that

“some of those senior officers who have come up from the ranks after 30 years have that attitude towards the cadet ASPs, that ‘we have worked for this, but you...’ [they have] that anger and hostility. It’s not *all* of them, but some few.” Fieldnotes, 1st March 2011.

Neither is this limited to the ‘big-picture’ rivalries between different elite cadres. It is also keenly-felt in the fine gradations at the bottom of the pyramid. On the same day, I recorded Constable Onoja’s quiet complaint to me against life’s alphabetical unfairness:

Emmanuel Egwu and Onoja are both constables due for promotion to corporal. Onoja is senior to Egwu by 6 months and was supposed to have been promoted first, but instead because of alphabetical order Egwu got his first.

¹⁶⁴ Demotion is a relatively uncommon occurrence – in 2008 232 officers were punished with reduction in rank, out of 3,226 disciplinary cases (*2008 Annual Report of the Nigeria Police Force*).

¹⁶⁵ 7th March 2011.

So promotion is a juddering and uneven process, that much is clear. But the key point to take away from this is that it is eventually and ultimately a *predictable* process, which dictates certain things about officers' agency, and about what is possible for them, within a constant, stable and regularly progressing formal register of personhood, qualifying subalterity as a relational and (eventually and partially) surpassable condition.

6.2.2: Subalterity and gender

Within the police, nothing illustrates the multifaceted nature of subalterity so well as the situation of female officers. Women officers of the NPF are usually constrained to administrative and station-based tasks, or 'soft' duties such as the police clinic or JWC, are not usually allowed to carry weapons (with the exception of a single all-female Mobile squadron); and have been subject to official constraints on their personal liberty, sexuality and reproductive rights, as related below, in addition to being the subject of 'locker-room' workplace stereotyping, stigmatisation and harassment which are familiar from police institutions the world over. Asplund finds that:

“Wherever we went, the male high rank officers we got to speak with told us that: “In the security sector, we are all gentlemen” (...) the phrase expresses that there exists an ideal of neutrality when it comes to gender policies within the security sector, and that the general perception is that the ideal is lived up to. However, the quote also seems to indicate that the meaning of that neutrality is biased towards a masculine and male ideal, taking the male employee as the point of departure. It furthermore mirrors a view where the security sector is seen as set aside from the rest of society, accountable only to its own circumstances and standards.” (2010a; 2)

This finding requires some modification, in that the ideological subordination of women in formal process has not only been limited to the security sector, but also extended to constitutional law (for instance in the stipulation that female Nigerian citizenship is not transferable by marriage, whereas male citizenship is). Within the NPF, the Police Act states that female (but not male) recruits must be unmarried at time of joining; that female

(but not male) officers must apply to marry, and that the prospective spouse must be approved by the police (usually by interview with commanding officer); and that female (but not male) officers must be married or of long service to become a parent, and can be liable to disciplinary procedures if found to be in breach.¹⁶⁶¹⁶⁷ In fact, the whole complex of regulations pertaining to such issues assume an ideology of greater male moral and economic agency, in which women are subordinate and in which their status and likely behaviour is assumed to derive from the males with whom they associate.¹⁶⁸

Police and other law enforcement agencies' rules on marriage and family mean that the organisations also take on policing the sexual morality of their own members. This is built on a British historical foundation in which police forces were tasked with ensuring the moral continence and social probity of their members *as an intrinsic part* of the upholding of the law (Emsley, 2009) which ranged beyond solely sexual morality.¹⁶⁹ Other regulations – still extant but functionally unenforceable – require that police recruits be free of debts, which would create obligations and incentives to behave in an immoral manner. The official rationales of discipline, risk of criminal association and loyalties outside the force are apparent. In actuality they give the police institution the power to police bodies, status (because in Nigeria marriage is a powerful index of full adulthood), and choices of association and reproductive rights. Since a man can become an unauthorised single parent *invisibly*, whereas a woman cannot do so other than extremely visibly, the accent and burden falls much more heavily on women than men; effectively unauthorised *female* single parentage is penalised whereas such behaviour in

¹⁶⁶ Police Act 1999 [1967], Sections 118 (a), 118 (g), 123, 124 in Asplund, 2010a. In addition, other constraints can be imposed due to the ad-hoc exercise of hierarchical authority. During the period of my fieldwork, a national media and political row took place over a (now-retired) Inspector-General's directive that female officers married to civilians should not be given places in police barracks. The rationale was not clearly communicated; it may have been understood as an issue of 'security risk' but seems more likely an attempt to create much-demanded capacity in barracks accommodation, predicate on presumption of a male breadwinner who took responsibility for family accommodation.

¹⁶⁷ The norms are moving, if slowly. Since first drafting this chapter, in mid-2012 both the constitutional stipulations on transferable citizenship and the police regulations on marriage have been modified to equalise the situation for men and women. However neither change has been publicised.

¹⁶⁸ This is equally evident from the structure of Police Officers' Wives Association branches, in which positions derive from the seniority of the husband. There is of course no Police Officers' Husbands Association.

¹⁶⁹ Earlier British domestic forces required also their male officers to obtain commanding officers' permission to marry (Emsley, 2009), and a police wife occupied a social status derived from her marital association with law-enforcement power.

males is not. Personal conduct is a professional matter for all police; but the subjectivity resulting from the rules and practices above make it much more so for female officers. In practice, the rules leave much to the discretion and personal views of the commanding officers. In January 2010 in the (police-derived, but independent) National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) attempted to discipline female officers found 'guilty' of single parentage, causing an outcry from womens' rights groups. Marriage too is subject to the same functional leeway and police managers may use their discretion to honour these regulations more in the breach than the observance. A female officer tells me in February 2010 that in order to marry:

"You're meant to get DPO's approval; many don't, and many DPOs and senior officers turn a blind eye a bit"

Yet the mere existence of rules with which the police as employer reinforces conservative social attitudes opens officers who do disregard them to the possibility of negative consequences. In 'B' division, Corporal Blessing, who had previously been married wished to marry again, but was concerned that a second application to marry would not look good on her record. A colleague told me that:

'What most women do in such cases is to quietly marry and get on with their lives, the police certainly won't make an issue of it [as] they tend to pretend not to be aware which is really charitable of them.'

But in Blessing's case, a spate of insecurity had caused the police to cancel all annual or casual leave, so her senior officer insisted that she should apply formally to marry in order to obtain her honeymoon leave, so that her commanding officer could authorise it without herself being in breach of regulations. Thus does a personal matter provide occasion for fraught and anxious office politics.

A previous attempt to change this met a veto from former senior DIG Ivy Okoronkwo, now retired but then the most senior female officer in the NPF, who was reportedly unconvinced that today's women required preferential treatment, as she had managed to

progress within the system as currently structured.¹⁷⁰ DIG Okoronkwo's resistance should point out an interesting paradox (as well as serving to illuminate that the upholding of conservative patriarchies are by no means male-only projects). True, very few women are chosen for senior command positions. To concentrate solely on the structural and cultural impediments to women in the NPF is however to miss what is hiding in plain sight. The paradox is that the NPF, as one of the earliest mass formal employers of female labour in the service of the state, is at once and has long been, a vector of women's labour-market and social status mobility in Nigeria; 20% of current establishment strength (approximately 80,000 officers) are women embodying state authority (Asplund 2010b), albeit within a patriarchal system which stereotypes and sets limits to their roles.¹⁷¹ ¹⁷² Amidst this, a few women can and do achieve positions of power and influence in the male-dominated domains of operational policing. In the course of my work I met female DCOs and DPOs in high-profile metropolitan stations, and in Dutsin Bature itself, the O/C Traffic division was a veteran and well-known female officer who had managed to maximise her income well enough to become the proprietor of a large supermarket.

6.3: Posting: Putting agency back in.

If the principle of seniority as expressed in the structured workings of promotion formally define what the police officer can be, posting is the counterpart principle, a realm in which the individual officer can attempt to re-assert agency and control over their life and career. It is thus an opportunity for the ambitious to transcend their subalterity. To understand the possibilities of posting, it is worth recapping the huge size and internal variety of the police institution. For a police officer at the outset of their career, the many options can be followed up according to aptitudes, ambition, capacity, ability to play the

¹⁷⁰ Interview, team member, academic-NGO team on gender in policing supported by United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Osun State, June 2011.

¹⁷¹ Asplund uses the figure of 80%+ male employees in 2010b; whilst referencing both Alemika & Agugua's 1993 figure of 4.77% and self-aggregated contemporary data on senior ranks in 2010a.

¹⁷² Archive film of Nigeria's first women police passing-out in Ikeja on 26th April 1956 can be seen at <http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/node/1961> (accessed 20th March 2012) accompanied by an informative written commentary.

system, and above all, opportunity. Some are obvious core police functions and units, such as becoming a detective Investigative Police Officer (IPO); joining the Anti-Bomb Units, lately expanded to meet the challenge of terrorist bombs; aiming for the elite investigative State and Force CID units, or SARS; ‘mobilizing’ – that is, joining the Police Mobile Force (only possible after a period of ordinary service); a career in administration; or joining the traffic warden service stream.¹⁷³

The NPF, like other state bodies in Nigeria, has not passed through the outsourcing revolution its colonial progenitors since endured, so it continues to incorporate some other functions we may not anticipate. The state and central police bands, or the special entry and postings schemes for exceptional sportspeople may perhaps be expected from the para-military traditions of the institution. Others are less obvious: as the police maintain a healthcare service, it is also possible to be posted to a police clinic. As they also offer savings and house-purchase schemes, one can be posted to the police co-operative society.¹⁷⁴ As they also manage a number of educational facilities, one can be posted to a police secondary school. Still in uniform, one could also be an electrician at a state command’s Works department, a police Imam or Pastor, or even an acrobat on the police motorcycle display team.

Neither do all police services command equal respect; some, such as SARS and Force CID, and the 57 Squadrons of the Police Mobile Force (PMF) see themselves as internal elites. Significantly, one feature shared by these, and with Anti-Bomb Units, is their dual chain of command (to a supervising CP or DIG in Abuja, as well as to the CP of the state)¹⁷⁵ which gives them a certain degree of autonomy from their State Commands. Their relative freedom of agency does not go un-noticed by those serving in them. The

¹⁷³ Other specialised functions recruit separately – police forensics experts, IT and computing, police doctors or pilots. All of these departments have undergone severe structural difficulties which see their functions impaired; police forensics, for example, lacking laboratory facilities or the training to use them, has been partially co-opted to another specialist function – recruiting specialists with legal experience to present police cases in court in order to minimise the number of prosecution cases which collapse on technical grounds.

¹⁷⁴ (see <http://www.polcoop.org.ng/>)

¹⁷⁵ SARS is the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, centrally controlled with squads in each state, Force Criminal Investigation Department is a centralised national investigation bureau for exceptional cases, DIG is Deputy Inspector-General, the second-highest rank in the NPF.

disposition of MOPOL towards ordinary police officers is evident in the perjorative nickname '*atura*'. The word is derived from the Hausa verb *tura*, to push; *atura shi* means 'send him', and as a label connotes the short-trousered and self-important but junior office messengers of colonial times: The MOPOL's perjorative name for non-Mobile police therefore approximates to 'push-arounds' or 'messenger-boys'.

6.3.1: Postings, good and bad

Nevertheless, despite the internal variegation, there is a common discourse on what constitutes a good or bad posting. The possibility of making extra income and capital formation are undoubtedly very important; but they are not the sole considerations. Comfort, convenience, safety, and the possibility of reproducing future prospects are also reasons for evaluating postings as good or bad. Postings can be judged by role and location.

Sergeant P says – 'Any commercial centre is good, as they will appreciate you, and any border town, as there are importers and exporters, there is no way but they must thank you. Then within state, CID – but not here (...) No-one likes to be posted here.' Field notes, 9th June 2010¹⁷⁶

Proceeding according to seniority order, we will first examine the postings options open to managerial-level officers, and then the slightly different, but perhaps surprisingly wide, possibilities open to constables and other rank-and-file police officers, before combining the two in discussion of the strategies of navigating postings.

6.3.2: Mobility as a senior officer

The careers of senior officers are national in scope. As the police institution is, as we noted above, an intimate sphere, good and bad postings are well-known within the force

¹⁷⁶ 'Appreciate' and 'thank' must be understood here in the sense of their material implications.

and are famed or notorious as the case may be.¹⁷⁷ Although initial postings of newly-graduated ASPs are equitably-balanced across the country, an internal sorting mechanism soon emerges. Many officers with provincial postings quickly attempt to work their way back to Force Headquarters, which offers both the attractions of living in a large city, proximity to influential seniors and the possibility that ‘if anything good comes, it will touch there first’. But for more experienced officers, an active role such as DPO offers the best chance both to ‘acquire relevance’ and to boost income.

There is a relationship between rank and posting, as some posts are clearly reserved for certain ranks: the Commissioner of a state, for example, must ordinarily be a Commissioner in rank. This obtains at the lower level too; the highest independent command an Inspector could hope for would be a sub-station under another division. But some posts are more fluid in their relationship to rank. The key managerial role of DPO is one of these. Since southern parts of Nigeria are typically of higher population, higher incomes and higher crime, DPO posts in those states are more sought-after, and officers I spoke to considered it axiomatic that it would be unlikely to see a one-star (i.e. junior) ASP in the role in southern Nigeria – while they might serve as DPO in the less economically-developed parts of northern states. For a great many officers, the country’s commercial capital is the holy grail, and DPOs in large Lagos Divisions tend to be of Superintendent or Chief Superintendent level. Such is the demand for Lagos postings that tenure of these posts is unofficially limited to two years maximum.¹⁷⁸ DPO postings are also commonly used as a pre-retirement reward for those ASPs promoted after spending the majority of their careers as Inspectors; sometimes combined with a more regularised expectation; a transfer to their own region of origin to allow those officers to get re-

¹⁷⁷ Ekiti State is a headache because the citizens are reputed to be overeducated – ‘too much book’ – and thus prone to complaining. Meanwhile even before the Boko Haram insurgency, Yobe State in the far north was known as ‘Yobe-for-complaint’ due to its use as a punishment posting. Some are notoriously challenging: Adeniji Adele division, Lagos is ‘hot’ because it is ‘area boy (gang member) central’ - posting to such a location is both an endorsement and a challenge. Others are tricky because of political factors: Sango-Ota division, Ogun State encompasses the residence of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, who likes to dabble in local politics.

¹⁷⁸ The two cases known to me of officers who have been DPOs in central Lagos for longer than two years both concern officers of exceptional ability who also have good ties to decision-makers within the policing world.

acquainted with the social context into which they will retire on leaving the force. There are also temporary postings available to senior officers which give them both advanced professional exposure and additional income – Nigeria’s historical commitment to overseas peacekeeping means there are often opportunities to join UN missions abroad, and the generous allowances provide an income boost for those officers unwilling to engage in illicit means of supplementing income.

6.3.3: Mobility from the bottom

For constables and others of low rank, the possibility of working a good posting offers a way to transcend rank. A constable of ability has a very different set of prospects from a semi-literate time-server. Most constables who are not content to stay in-state have already thought out their strategy for advancement: Some aim to ‘mobilise’ as a paramilitary MOPOL; Station Officer’s clerk Godwin had his sights set on becoming an armourer seconded to Kaduna Defence Industries, while sports specialist Emmanuel aimed to join the potentially lucrative Mechanised Salary Section (MSS).¹⁷⁹ Financial and administrative appointments at headquarters allow constables and corporals to wield influence vastly disproportionate to their formal rank, and in some senses superior to those of their formal superiors serving further from the centres of power and money. In doing so they may accumulate considerable wealth. The disparity is keenly-felt by the excluded. IPO (corporal) Mainassara ruefully points out to me the officer in charge of MSS in Dutsin Bature as ‘that constable that changes his car every month’.

Even within the everyday world of divisional policing, however, there are good and bad postings, permanent or temporary – a potentially lucrative special duty, for example. Axiomatically, for a police officer ‘a good beat is full of deadbeats’ (Barker, 1999, on LAPD). This is even more true in the Nigerian context, where high crime translates into

¹⁷⁹ The other sports specialist assigned to ‘B’ division was a female constable who was a chess player. Sports as a career path has advantages and disadvantages. In everyday terms, Emmanuel Egwu, a handball player, complained that there was ‘no [way to make extra] money’, but duties are lighter and if successful a career in sports can trump everyday service. “A female constable also won the world featherweight title in kickboxing and was adequately rewarded by the Inspector-General of Police with triple promotion”. *Annual Report*, 2008.

capital accumulation possibilities for the police officer, as well as experience and reputation.. Yet as stated above, opportunities for enrichment are far from the only consideration.

The IPO in mufti says ‘They have posted four of us to special duty’. ‘Which?’ asks the uniformed corporal. The IPO replies ‘State CID’. ‘Ehn, that is good now’. ‘I don’t want it’, says the IPO, and the uniformed corporal laughs – ‘Why?’ ‘No, serious’ says the IPO, and then to me - ‘I need something I can get peace of mind’. Field notes May 2010

So it is clear that while many are chasing busy and potentially rewarding postings, significant numbers have the *opposite* motivation and seek primarily a quiet life. Another of ‘B’ division’s constables was recently transferred from Aba (a busy, commercial and crime-ridden centre in the east) and claimed he was happy with the posting because Aba was too violent; to be an officer there, he said ‘you have to be prepared to kill human being’.¹⁸⁰

6.3.4: Securing position

The ways in which NPF officers attempt to mobilise social resources created within, as well as outside, the police institutional context to navigate the postings web are revealing. During the course of my fieldwork two phrases were commonly repeated, almost identically, by officers who wanted to emphasise their own ‘progressive’ disposition. One was ‘I have never lobbied for position’.¹⁸¹ This phrase, designed to draw attention to the exceptional virtue of its speaker, does so by indexing the otherwise assumed mundane universality of the practice. As with recruitment, there are different repertoires for lobbying, and direct mobilisation of money is a poor second to being able to employ social capital. One such tactic is sticking close to power and forming lasting vertical patronage relationships with high-flying senior officers, in order to benefit from the

¹⁸⁰ Some officers create inventive ways to combine a peaceful posting with rewarding profile; for example the dancing policeman at the junction of Aminu Kano crescent in Abuja who has become a city celebrity for moonwalking whilst performing traffic control duty.

¹⁸¹ The other, often accompanying it, was ‘I have never asked anyone to collect money on my behalf’.

boss's favouritism - 'IG boys' and others. Another is appeal to shared identity – 'tribalism' and ethnic favouritism, although not universally mobilised, is often suspected.

Godwin – in uniform – is really upset when I come in – first arguing with some people in the corridor – about posting and – 'it is not a matter of tribalism' and then behind counter in a red-eyed strop, standing behind the duty roster staring out the door, too angry to greet, looking/waiting for someone. Fieldnotes, 14th February 2011.

Another key strategy is - paradoxically - to mobilise the horizontal peer relationships formed in the process of the police institution's creation of a sense of rank hierarchy to navigate the system and attempt to transcend the constraints of subalterity.

Sergeant P tells me: Like peacekeeping, they do it by strict seniority (...) but *we*, we must lobby – some pay money, some it's their classmate (mimes picking up phone, saying 'ol'boy, can you...?'). The Sergeant tells me 'I have classmates in every single command in this country'. I reply that's good if you get transferred, you have a friend. 'Not only that, but if you're travelling through and you have any trouble'. And I also note that MOPOL on deployment from elsewhere frequently stop by the Dutsin Bature barracks for refreshment breaks en route for special duties. Fieldnotes, 9th June 2010.

Even when the system of class- and course-mates is not used to secure posting, it is a prime resource in getting to hear about opportunities in the first place. The 'friend at Headquarters' is an invaluable asset not just for personal advancement, but in other contexts, for risk mitigation. In fact coursemates become a core means of resolving many of the practical problems encountered during a police career. Thus do the subjectivities and networks formed in the training institution retain powerful secondary uses.

6.3.5: The Transfer Window

On one hand, postings are officially made anonymously, bureaucratically and blindly, from the DPO, or CP, or Force Headquarters. And on the other, they can be influenced by agency – lobbying, qualifications, social capital. So even *with* lobbying, outcomes are

rarely guaranteed. Seen from below, the caprices of postings are evidence of the popular epithet that ‘man proposes and God disposes’ than of any more legible rational schema. Nor does bureaucratic power often explain its workings to its own subalterns. As in Kafka’s castle, ‘official decisions are as shy as young girls’ (Kafka 1926; 227) and while the skilful and lucky officer may work their transfer, the opposite possibility exists: One day a signal may arrive ordering an officer to a job they have not requested, at the other end of the country. Since vacancies need to exist for transfers to be possible, the created demand of officers lobbying for popular postings implies its corollary, the created supply of officers for *unpopular* postings, and so the national police career always encompasses the latent possibility of being plucked from a place of relative comfort and flung to the farthest reaches of the institutional empire.

True, the situation is not as bad as in Jauregui’s Uttar Pradesh, where a hyper-politicised system of influencing posting results in a ‘transfer industry’ which constitutes “a kind of four dimensional chess match (...) which at the same time may never fully be understood.” (*op cit*; 103). But it does introduce a degree of uncertainty into police careers, and thus the possibility that as well as having to lobby for postings, one may sometimes have to lobby to stay put. Nothing illustrates the potential for extreme disparities between the dual registers of promotion and posting more than the administrative officer spoken about in Dutsin Bature as having *refused promotion* in order not to have to move from his extremely lucrative posting.

Playing the postings ‘game’, whether an enthusiastic or an unwitting participant, also creates extreme contradictions as regards the intended bureaucratic rationality of the police institution. One example are training courses for specialist roles (as distinct from promotion courses for progression up the ranks). Remaining at the bottom of the pyramid as an operative is not professionally valorised; therefore, since officers are commonly pursuing multiple strategies for advancement concurrently; since the working of favourable opportunity may come by at any time; and since training facilities and opportunities are limited in capacity, it is common to find a situation where, for instance, *after* working as an IPO for three years, someone may be selected for training at the

Police Detective College, Enugu, and immediately on leaving, obtain a transfer to a privileged but completely unrelated post – say, senior security officer at a State House of Assembly, with their recent prestigious qualification proof of their eligibility for the role. Such nonsensical situations are very common, and constitute a clear and to some extent avoidable waste of human resource capital.

Of course, if self-propelled mobility were allowed to continue unchecked, every policeman and woman in Nigeria would be a detective in Lagos, and no-one would be left to do unpopular jobs like guarding TV transmitters in the rural savannah. As it is, unpopular postings like Gida State continually find themselves running short of manpower. So the ‘arms race’ between personal and institutional demands which we encountered in the recruitment process reappears in the realm of posting. During my fieldwork, the Inspector-General issued a new (and of course, unpopular) directive that ordinarily, transfers should only be allowed within the same three-state Zone. The reaction was not slow in coming; as I finished my fieldwork, many officers were strategising to effect postings opportunities into contexts and formations deemed to be extra-ordinary.

6.4: Police families and the police family

The question of career mobility should redirect us to note once more that the police has a kind of ‘shadow’ institutionality, a reflection of its formal roles extended into non-formal spheres which derive from institutional exigencies. Foremost among these is family. Given the unpredictability and national mobility of a police career, officers do not always take their families with them when they relocate. A very large number of officers I spoke to had families resident in a different place to where they were serving. Mobility is of course easier at a younger age, while later children and schooling make it increasingly difficult. The problem becomes more complex in the case of ‘police-marry-police’, a substantial category of persons which is seen to be growing due to the improving economic conditions of police officers.

The police provide an official mechanism of applications for posting which can allow married couples to stay together. But not everyone is able or wishes to take advantage of it. Many mid-career officers opt to lodge their families in medium-sized accessible towns, where reasonable facilities are combined with a lower cost of living (and sometimes, better security) than their place of posting. Thus an officer serving in Lagos may have a family living in Ibadan, while someone posted to Abuja may lodge their family in Kaduna. In Dutsin Bature, I occasionally met officers who had previously served there and were back to see the families they had left when moving to their new postings.¹⁸² The mobility of both men and women puts additional strain on family life, and when officers are posted away from home, and out of the reach of wider kin and community social networks, they sometimes bring resolution of those problems to ‘elders’ within the police workplace community, especially when police and spouses reside in the barracks – the ideal for many, despite the constant shortage of spaces.

This morning Constable Ibrahim and his wife (with henna’d feet but western dress) brought their domestic problems to the Charge-Room Officer (CRO, an Inspector) to arbitrate. The cause of the row is that she wanted to travel by the end of the month, and the husband refused and said she should wait until he got paid his salary. The CRO refused to arbitrate and told them to settle themselves, because this is not the first time they have argued over the same thing and asked him to intervene. Fieldnotes, 16th June 2010.

In this case it is instructive that when juniors appeal to seniors for assistance as ‘elders’ they do not always accede. Yet they often do, acting as advisors and mediators especially in marital and domestic issues. Officers’ use of their own superiors in non-workplace issues offers an interesting voluntaristic counterpoint to the institution’s formal attempts to extend its control to the realm of the personal, as shown in the rules on marriage and parenthood.

¹⁸² This makes many officers *de facto* long-term migrant labourers, with attendant implications for marital and family life, family structure and fidelity.

In fact, this shadow extension of the institution extends its totality into spheres not imagined by Goffman's, or any other bureaucratically-centred, formulation. We might use the term 'police family' to better describe this additional dimension of sociality. Describing the profession as 'family' is a discourse usually used to portray the organisation as a sphere of solidarity and mutual support. In institutions as in families, this ideology covers significant inequities, tensions and conflicts. It is no bad fit to compare the shadow familial extension of the police with the extended family in West Africa; the paternalism, ranked and relational statuses of persons, generational and gender-based tensions, the suppression and expression of agency and entitlement, the relativity of freedom are all inherent in the comparison. The police, like the family, also functions as a support network in case of misfortune. Civilians in occupations peripheral to, or reliant upon, policing, such as shoe-sellers, uniform-makers, and most of all the office cleaners directly employed by the State Command as supernumerary ('Spy') police are often related to police, especially as widows of former officers who are sustained by their relationship with the institution. The food-seller inside the gate of 'B' Division was the widow of an ASP, and forms of workplace-derived mutual-support activities such as 'contribution' schemes abounded.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ 'Contribution' savings schemes allow money to be reserved out of daily household cashflows for periodic dividends. For example, ten women may contribute N1,000 per month, and take it in turns to be the recipient of a N10,000 monthly payout.

6.5 Conclusion

Police training is as much directed towards creating what a police officer *is* – a ranked, disciplined officer, both representative of, and holistically subjected to, state authority - as training for what they *do*. Formal training may be of variable use in preparing cadets for the workplace. But both formal character-formation and the informal socialities which grow around it create new identities and loyalties, which disrupt previous senses of belonging and create powerful new associative networks with national reach and lifelong duration. The hierarchical institutional system recreates identities based on ranks and careers built on expectations of regularised promotion. While no doubt onerous on its subalterns, it also allows within its formal strictures room for individual agency, as officers learn to navigate the web of postings good and bad. And the official processes of police character formation set up in the training institution (such as the network of coursemates) supply the very tools then used to re-deploy personal agency subsequently in the institutional career. Police officers learn about both the official claims and repertoires of the system and about the possibilities of creatively navigating, manipulating, subverting and bypassing them.

The police institution, as an assemblage of constructed and contested careers, is invigorated by these internal currents. So the rigid system of rank and discipline coexists with an innovative and entrepreneurial institutional counter-culture; the total institution is totalising in its claims but not totalitarian in its lived realities. Such an understanding requires a modification of Goffman's theories to fit Nigeria's fluid and pragmatic daily requirements.

The NPF, only some of whose members live in barracks, falls short of Goffman's co-residential definition of totality; yet it exceeds his prescription in also being a large and partially self-contained institutional world in which economic, leisure, welfare, healthcare, educational and other functions adhere to the institution in excess of its formal aims. Such accretions, twin heirs of 1950s Fabian socialism and 1970s oil-fuelled statism, give Nigeria's police force and other state institutions more powerful domain over their

members than the uniformed services of developed nations from which such service functions have been outsourced; it is a maximal institution as much as a total one. And a 'shadow' institutionality may accrete on to the formal functions of the police; for many of its members the police institution acquires a wider familial milieu of belonging, encompassing friendships, marriage, domestic mediation and economic support. Affinitive networks interpenetrate the official procedures with plentiful informalities. Similarly, we may expect to see this creative admixture of the bureaucratic and the particular, of prescriptive structure and innovative agency, in the way the police in Nigeria conduct their wider work.

Chapter Seven: Police work

Introduction

This chapter is about what takes place in the police station, in the investigation of crimes which remains the ideational core of police work. It is a story about how police officers do their work in a way which values and validates a fluid repertoire of knowledge deployable in practice, over and above (but in dialogue with) formal bureaucratic knowledge and procedures. In this respect, Nigerian police are not different in type, but only in degree, from what Young (1991) or Gundhus (2012) observe in England and Norway respectively, according to the possibilities and demands of their context. Following Marchand (2009), I recognise the centrality of what I term craft as knowledge-in-practice, derived from experience and mobilised and adapted to meet the demands of practical expediency. As this craft knowledge is learned, used and reproduced in everyday police work, it also produces systemic meanings and particular expectations of the police and their work, which themselves shape the way the police are approached by members of the public. I identify police casework as social process, which involves the categorisation of persons, adoption of roles, utilisation of leverage, play and improvisation, and a tendency towards mediation. As such, investigations become also negotiations, and in which complainants, suspects and officers themselves try to maximise their personal agency.

The chapter follows cases from when they enter the station, through their processing, to their eventual outcomes, which as we shall see, are not always finalities. As the conditions of my access and practical parameters made it difficult to follow particular cases from beginning to end, it does so with reference to partial portrayals of a variety of incidents at various stages in their 'life-cycle' or trajectory through police processes. It is structured in three sections. The first examines how cases arrive in the station, and thence how they, and the people who bring them in, are categorised in certain ways which will

dictate how they will subsequently be dealt with. The second part looks at the ways in which police officers investigate cases in the absence of the ‘scientific’ training, procedures and resources of modern policing, instead relying on craft knowledge which I outline in its several aspects, including the use of force, ‘psych’ and writing in obtaining results. The third section discusses the outcomes desired and reached from police cases, and the ways in which the process of investigation becomes a punishment in and of itself in the context of achievement or non-achievement of procedural finality.

The deployment of police knowledge and skills in practice is deeply polysemic. It is fluid, responsive, and makes for unruly data which, I argue, should not be overschematised, or perhaps schematised at all. It is also more or less incompletely legible according to the particular positioning, experience and skills of the observer. Therefore to be truthful, the chapter must also necessarily be polysemic, fluid and unruly. Rather than be tempted to imitate the policeman’s ethic and ‘clean up’ the data into neat paperwork, I have attempted a job of ‘thick description’ using the ethnography of the counter and charge-room to illustrate actions, dispositions, outcomes and rationales, clear or emergent. Thus the reader will be, as I was, witness to partial glimpses of events as they appeared at the time, which we will reconsider to draw out their illustrative insights and complexities. I was also able to examine and compare records of incidents and criminal cases in ‘B’ Division for a three-month period which encompassed my fieldwork, and thus we will be able to make comparisons between the social action which took place, and the ways in which it entered (or did not enter) the written record.¹⁸⁴

Police reliance on craft and the deployment of knowledge gained in practice is intrinsically related to a number of causes. In part, it is the incomplete and incompletely applicable nature of classroom cadet training. In part, it is the misfit between legal ideals and their practical applicability. Both of these have been indicated in previous chapters. But mainly it is the conditions of absolute lack of material and technical capacity within

¹⁸⁴ Some senior managerial staff were uncomfortable with allowing me to see such records. On my first asking, ‘B’ division’s replacement DPO (during the period of CSP Okechukwu’s exile, as related in Chapter 3) did not answer immediately, but asked to see my research permission letter again. On reading it, he pursed his lips and gave me access, saying ‘I hope I don’t regret this’.

which they must operate which dictates their reliance on craft. Nigeria's police operate without fingerprinting equipment or patrol cars, let alone forensic labs or criminal databases. Much of the time, there isn't even electricity. They operate in a wider society without credit records, ID cards or even accurate public records and censuses. Spending on the police remains less than on the military¹⁸⁵ and much of what is budgeted does not reach the country's divisions and stations. Equally, armed crime and public order disturbances are more common than in most developed countries. So the police must learn to do much with little, and to be creative in doing so. They are in a position analogous to the Malawian doctors whose training Wendland (2010) documents; taught from western textbooks and ideals, the new clinicians are released into a system characterised by short supply of (and overwhelming demand for) drugs, equipment, facilities, support staff, and doctors' time. The result Wendland documents is not only a slow epiphany of cynicism, but a necessary reliance on improvisation with the scant resources available, both material and human – drip bags are made into catheters, and patients' relatives are given nursing tasks. Wendland's work concentrates on how trainee doctors articulate their feelings about this state of affairs and their resulting sense of moral order; but it does not offer us a model of how they evolve and deploy their new and hard-earned realist practical knowledge. For that we must look elsewhere.

Trevor Marchand (2009) outlines four aspects of knowledge mobilised by the masons of Djenné with whom he worked. The first is technical skill – practice-based, reliant both on verbal (but more heavily upon non-verbal) communication, and existing as embodied learning. The second he calls design skill, based on knowledge and imagination without formal plans. Third is propositional knowledge, revealed in what a person says about the world and the business they do, and how it is critically received by others. Fourth is the arcane knowledge of secrets – in Marchand's Djenné, propitiations and charms to bless or decontaminate a building, ensure worker safety, initiate an apprentice, make a wall stay up. Adapting from this template, the observations of police work which follow are

¹⁸⁵ 'While we spend an average of N1.6 million per soldier, N9.8 million per sailor and N7.1 million per airman and woman, we spend about N0.87 million per police personnel - about half of what we spend on our soldier.' Former Minister Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai, <http://saharareporters.com/article/budget-2012-6-failing-police-failing-state-nasir-ahmad-el-rufai>, accessed 16th September 2012.

primarily replete with mobilisations of the first kind of knowledge-in-practice, technical skill. Marchand's second category, design skill, has more limited application, although we may analogise the 'design skill' of knowing how to craft a case. Propositional knowledge and experience are also visible in the (limited) oration and explanation occasionally on offer, although this information is more usually ostentatiously reserved, as mentioned in the introductory chapter. This, and the related fourth level, the arcane secrets of police work, are discussed further in Chapter 9, on self-representations and police subjectivities.

There are stories which could be told about craft in many arenas of police work; dealing with public order, or traffic control, for example. But the story is centred on police criminal case work which goes on in the station for two reasons. One is the practical consideration that the station is where I was best able to observe police work in practice. The other is that the station is the prime site of crime-fighting and criminal investigation which is the ideational core activity of policing worldwide, and no less so in Nigeria. This is centred on the station because policing in Nigeria is notably *reactive*, rather than pro-active in nature, and cases seem to be brought to the station more often by parties to the incidents, than they are by officers who have made active interventions. The reactivity of police work, and the willingness of members of the public to 'make case' points us to an emergent realisation of fundamental importance: the very large proportion of police case work which is in fact dispute resolution. The import of this will be rejoined in the conclusion, as will be the police officer's own situation as a 'third party' to crimes, disputes, and other incidents, who whilst representing a formal, impersonal, dis-interested abstract state, simultaneously has personal and very instrumental interests in outcomes and the processes by which they are reached.

Along the way, we will consider the work of police in dealing with complainants, suspects and criminals as a work of categorisation, and an enacting of power with its own ritualisations. As police craft encompasses the dialogue of action and practice with official procedure, bureaucracy and law, we will also draw out the central importance of writing; and the precise and interesting relationship between what is *done*, and what is

written. The two are related but different repertoires of action with different import, and along the way things will pass between the two mutually constitutive worlds, entering the written record from the world of action, and leaving it once again. This leads us to a wider (re)consideration of craft as *including* the other repertoire of how to interact with, and create, a meaningful and efficacious world on paper. Neither does police craft operate in isolation; police work is socially embedded, and police tactics make frequent recourse to the particularities and social contexts, networks, and capital of the society in which they operate in order to obtain results, sometimes to the point of contradicting the law in the wider pursuit of law enforcement.

Police craft also inescapably embeds the everyday use of violence, both as part of the potential power of policing, and of its standard operating procedures. In this thesis, I aim to consider the use of violence as part of everyday instrumental practices, rather than to privilege it as a selected object of study. However, both the salient nature of violence, and the voluminous anthropological and philosophical reflections on the special nature of violence as state power dictate a short digression to illustrate what has informed my treatment of the issue; an interruption of the discussion which is I hope less disruptive than its omission would be. And violence, like other aspects of practice such as brokering settlements, or prolonged or proxy detention, entails breaking the law in the wider interests of law enforcement, broadly defined.

To conclude, we reconsider the salient aspects of police work revealed in this chapter in the light of the main concerns of the thesis. To be effective, police officers blend bureaucratic practices, legal categories and formal procedures with working practices which take into account particularistic differences, and make use of existing social forms and cultural repertoires of action. This constitutes the micro-level operation of the indivisibility and mutual constitution of the fields of action we term ‘state’ and ‘society’. Equally, they show the negotiated limits, temporal, geographical, and jurisdictional of state agencies’ domain over (or within) society. And the evident deployment of officers’ own agency in extremely instrumental forms shows the coexistence of the dual

repertoires of functional governance and personal advantage, in a way which challenges any simplistic, stable and clear division between ‘professionalism’ and ‘corruption’.

This chapter may at first seem a departure from the overall thesis, but it is in fact central. The purpose of this chapter’s evidence is that we cannot properly understand what the police institution does *systemically* unless we study what (and how) it is that police officers *do* individually at the micro level. Once we appreciate that, we can subsequently understand how such action creates meaning, and when aggregated creates the state incarnate in practice. The police officer’s blend of formal bureaucratic requirement and social particularisms as related below shows not only the negotiated nature of authority, and the terms on which the police and public engage with each other, but the mutually generative blending of state and society, and the distribution of the power of each within the other.

7.1: ‘Making Case’

Counter is where you learn police work. If you can do counter you can do any kind of police work. (Inspector Daniel, 3rd February 2011).

What happens in the police station depends in part on how one arrives there. You may come to the station as part of a party of quarrelling neighbours, who have taken their case to the police; run there to fetch a police officer to attend an incident; come by yourself streaming with blood as a victim of robbery or assault; be referred from another station; be brought in as a random arrest by the patrol, or by CID after a ‘sweep’; or SARS after ‘operation’. If you are a VIP, or you have a personal connection with an officer, you may even go straight to an investigating or senior officer directly, or call the police to come to you. But however you arrive, everything progresses from the counter, the opening social space of policing. Young, describing a British police station of the late 20th century, says the counter functions as the ‘prime symbol of the power of the charge room’ (1991: 123)

and in Nigeria this is no different. It is the crux and starting-point of the system and to operate it requires wisdom, agility and skill.

Yet in contrast to the British charge-room, where the suspect usually arrives in a police van, Dutsin Bature's charge-room is a place to which people often come voluntarily, to make a case. In fact it is necessarily so, since relatively few officers (usually three only, in the one functioning vehicle) are deployed in patrolling, while the other staff are either at static beats or in the station. So the first fundamental observation is that policing is predominantly *reactive*; cases are most often triggered by people coming to the station to engage with the police, not vice versa. The direct trigger is very often a dispute between two persons, or families, or parties to a transaction; sometimes disputes occupy police to the exclusion of almost all other work. A constable at a division in a newly-developed coastal suburb of Lagos told me that 90% of the cases his station handled were landlord-tenant disputes. In the more variegated circumstances of Dutsin Bature the number was lower but was still significant.

Therefore, a second observation fundamental observation of police work in Dutsin Bature, and in Nigeria more generally, is the unexpectedly large amount of it which is directly and primarily embedded in disputes and concerned with dispute resolution. In a milieu where people where people routinely avow their aversion to the state, and especially to the police, they are also perhaps surprisingly un-averse to bringing it into their interpersonal feuds (if not to the exclusion of other parallel institutions and repertoires). The police offer the obvious attraction of enforcement capability if their help can be successfully enlisted by a party to a dispute. In disputes, in fact, people come to the police as a deliberate pre-station; their voluntaristic engagement is an opening gambit, intended to establish them in the role of (innocent) complainant, which is strategically vital as outlined below.

When people trust the police a lot, they can even come to the police specifically to *avoid* a problem. On 5th February 2010, I am sitting in the office of the DPO of neighbouring

‘A’ division, which covers a major market and road junction. The DPO, who is imminently retiring, is popular and well-renowned for his efficiency and fairness.

An old woman comes in. She kneels on the floor (displaying respect in the traditional way) and the DPO has to tell her to sit on the chair. She is very old, with a strong face, kohl and teardrop tattoos on her cheek. Her case is that someone sold sweet potatoes from her lockup stall while she was away, then the customer came back to complain they were rotten, and then after three days the guy who sold them gave her the money (N2,000) and ran off somewhere and she doesn’t want anything to do with it, so she hands it to the police – in the person of the corporal who is standing next to her – for safe keeping. The DPO tells her ‘Don’t worry, there is fire on the mountain now, so we will surely catch him.’¹⁸⁶

Sometimes, such an intervention is enough to reassure or to calm the situation. For others, the police station as a public space is a forum to which taking the matter airs the grievance and ups the ante in order both to reach a resolution and to let off steam. The counter, usually host to a floating population of complainants, suspects, family members, witnesses, and on and off-duty officers, can become a spontaneous court of public opinion which mirrors the pre-colonial ad-hoc jury of public space (see Green, 1964). In this way, and even despite the CRO or station-guard occasionally bellowing at hangers-on to clear out, the counter can become part of the town’s wider repertoire of public spaces in which social dramas are played out.¹⁸⁷

There is a bunch of people at counter – men and women – having a row – she is saying ‘your aggression’ [then something inaudible]... and the woman constable is saying ‘rape [something else inaudible]... and the whole thing has turned into an impromptu courtroom. (...) At 13.30 I’m back after lunch: turns out that huge row was about – a

¹⁸⁶ The DPO’s reference is to a song by the artist Asa, popular at the time. The idea of someone *voluntarily* giving money to the police for safe-keeping would be both shocking and comedic to many Nigerians in other contexts.

¹⁸⁷ Sometimes too much of a public space; any throng of people is identified as a threat to security and can indeed be counter-productive. On 30th March 2010: As I’m interviewing Egbon in the DCB, another officer comes in to explain that three suspects just escaped from counter, slipping out under cover of the crowd; they just ‘picked race’. The reaction is surprise, consternation, laughter.

chicken! One man says it's his, the other one says it's his, the first says you have forgotten about it anyway. The other man's wife says let's go to the police. The second guy wants compensating, and after half an hour of massive row which everyone clearly enjoys, they agreed to just drop it. (26th November 2010).

So for some, it may be enough to dramatise an issue in the public sphere of the presence of police. But for the ordinary police officer, the fundamental ultimate question is always does the complainant want to 'make case?' Is the matter to become a police case, with all that involves for the complainant, the suspect, the police officer, and the law? Much of the time, once this barrier is reached, the matter evaporates. Complainant and suspect, faced with the possibility of opening a new and complicated chapter, back down. With relation to the written record, therefore, we should note that there is a huge amount that occurs which does not appear in it at all.

I was not able to repeat enough sustained periods of observation in the charge-room to work out with any degree of reliability what proportion of incidents are dropped without ever becoming cases and being entered in the incident book kept at the counter. However, when I surveyed 'B' division's incident book over a three-month period the largest number of incidents recorded in a single day was eight; on average days perhaps four or five, and occasionally there were none. Yet observing the counter on a busy day it is clear that this four or five actual incidents may occur in just an hour or two, and an average day (excepting Sundays, always quiet) should bring this many in an afternoon. So we can safely say that at least half, and possibly many more, of the incidents which come into the station do not progress to become cases, presumably evaporating before that juncture in the manner detailed above.

When discussing how, and in fact *if*, cases are reported, we should also note that between voluntarism and being detained as a suspect lies a grey area in which engagement with the police is not totally a free choice: By law, one must report certain offences; culpable homicide, kidnap, armed robbery, murder, rape. Failure to do so is described to me as 'criminal', or at least incriminating in that you may reasonably become a suspect. In

addition, cases of missing persons may fall into this category, and possibly also discovery of dead bodies.¹⁸⁸ Conversely, note too that the police do not accept everything which comes to the counter:

Someone comes in to lay a money claim case – referred to C division – so that it's not 'poaching' (says CRO) - or because they can't be bothered? (19th February 2010)

Sometimes however the police officer on duty feels they must accept your case, in order to handle it in a certain way to minimise future consequences to themselves. On 14th June 2010 I witness a case which is tricky to dispense with because one of the parties to it is a police officer, who is clearly in the wrong.

When I get to Dogonyaro (suburban sub-station), all hell is kicking off. There is an old man, his younger wife or daughter, his very mouthy daughter, and her son, who she first shouts at then hugs around the head when he cries. Then there are two other men and a red-eyed policeman with a gun. The issue is that the policeman is their tenant, there has been dispute, he took a service AK-47 and shot into the floor three or four times, so they dragged him to the station. The counter girls are ostentatiously reading today's *Dawn*¹⁸⁹; Inspector Daniel is determinedly gazing out of the window. They shout, gesticulate, speechify. The policeman accuses the boy of being an armed robber, saying 'I'm 25 years in police, won't I know all the bad guys in town'; the boy says 'I've never been in trouble in 30 years', gets tears of rage and frustration, saying 'I won't beg him when he has done wrong', and everyone tells everyone else to calm down. They decide let's take the matter to HQ, but first they write a statement; and Inspector Daniel advises the policeman that 'if issue of gun comes out', a signal from headquarters and even more trouble will be involved (...) The Inspector tells me what should happen is that they both write statements and settle (i.e. reach an agreement). But there has to be a case file in case the matter transfers to HQ. They are told to return on Thursday. As they are leaving Inspector lectures the son on how all this has happened because he acted on what his wife said

¹⁸⁸ A SARS officer tells me that if someone is suspected of a crime, and their family say that they are missing, they will be asked if they have made a missing persons report and if not, this will be taken as indication of complicity.

¹⁸⁹ The in-house weekly newspaper of the NPF, distributed to all stations nationwide.

without checking for himself ‘when you pack a woman talk for your pocket, you set the world on fire’.

7.1.1: Categorisation: complainants and suspects

If you do choose to ‘make case’, however, and if the police choose to accept it, it must proceed on the basis of a distinct work of categorisation. A police case requires two fundamental roles; the complainant and the suspect, around whom the investigation will revolve. The complainant is the injured party, the person on whose behalf the complaint is taken up, and the suspect is the person named as causing the injury or wrong. In order to begin their work the counter staff must identify them both clearly.

Gbenga and exhibit keeper come in from patrol with bulletproof vests and evidence – office supplies stolen from a wholesaler’s house, and a detainee – the female Sergeant they call ‘Mama Hassan and Hussein’ shouts – ‘Get behind the counter! Complainant step forward!’ (3rd March 2011).

Sometimes the case is messier – a fight or dispute, brought in by both parties. Although both might rush to identify themselves as the complainant, it will be up to the police to disentangle who is who. In that case, there are some simple rules of thumb which are applied. The Lagos constable above advised me that when reporting a fight at a police station, it is best to display some visible injury, even self-inflicted if need be, as invisible internal injuries do not ‘count’ in the police’s schema of deciding who is the legitimate complainant.

If it comes to fighting, if police see blood – ah! If you have blood both, we will charge you both with affray. If you don’t have blood, even if you’re hurting inside, we’ll charge you with assault. So that one, you had better get a doctor letter from the hospital first. (22nd August 2009).

7.1.2: Processing

If you are brought in as a suspect, however, the primary work of determining the injured party is already done, and right there at the counter, the drama proceeds to the next stage, which is the categorisation, sorting and ritualised imposition of power on the detainees. For Young the British police's central charge room or 'bridewell' is the central point where 'the conflict over street-level disorder and power is resolved. It is the locus of the conflict between 'prig' and 'polis' (...) it is here that the ability to quickly define and place the individual and his action becomes crucially important (...) and says much for the officers' implicit knowledge and practical mastery' (1991; 125).

Furthermore the bridewell has a central and powerful place in what Young calls the 'drama of correction', being a place where 'a particular set of rules in relation to contact/separation is brought into play to create boundaries (...) the charge room in the bridewell, as a result, is charged with special meanings or those involved in this game of power, discipline and control.' (ibid; 130). 'B' Division's charge room may differ in being often a more public theatre than a British police station usually is, but the process follows similar dynamics in the public rituals of separation, categorisation and subjugation. Young affirms that to observe domination and mockery in the process is not to assume malice, which we can equally observe in the following:

CID did a sweep last night and the detainees number 42, up from 36 last night. Six of the CID officers are in the office. They are screening the detainees. Those that are not connected with known or suspected criminal incidents can go.¹⁹⁰ At the counter one small, uncomfortable-looking older man is being abused by the CID man in red: "You took 400k from someone for land in Kuje village, even the priest of that place swore in my presence you don't have land there." (The suspect protests weakly and unconvincingly). The CID man continues "I should apologise to you? Alright then; (in extremely sarcastic sing-song voice) *I'm sorry*." Two ladies in the white garments of African spiritualist churches bring the detainee a tin of condensed milk and some water. The CID man says "You're not feeding him? That one is very important". She looks for a

¹⁹⁰ Although sometimes this process may itself also be cash-dependent.

nail to open the milk tin. We all try. In the end the CID guy uses his car key to do it. (13th June 2010).

For the working policeman, the process is not about hostility, but about controlling prisoners who are ‘logged, searched, questioned, haggled with, haggled over, harassed, sympathised with, fought with, manipulated, negotiated with, transported, occasionally shackled, *laughed with or laughed at*, ‘nailed down’, fed and watered, charged, bailed, remanded, summonsed, reluctantly released or eagerly processed and ‘got shot of’; but who, in the final count, are always to be controlled by us’. (*ibid*; 129, my italics). Similarly in Dutsin Bature, the domination does not exclude a familiar sociality. More often latent violence and sociality are mixed in subtle and psychologically nuanced ways. On the same day, the processing of other suspects from the sweep continued:

One of the CID haul in the crime room with leg-irons gave his occupation as ‘PA to Local Government Chairman’.¹⁹¹ There were two, leg-ironed to each other. The CID guy came in, slapped one on the back or upper arm in parody of a matey slap, but it obviously stung, as he rubbed it afterwards.

In fact this type of violence, a mockery of intimacy and affection while inflicting pain, recurred so much it became an object for explanation in itself. An officer could for instance cradle a suspect’s head in their arm or on their lap, patting it gently and then squeezing it until the suspect grimaced in pain. It defied my understanding until one day I was spending time in the office of a government official in another location and - quite unexpectedly - he reached over and scratched me under the chin, like a cat. This left me so very deeply bewildered that I asked Nigerian friends for explanation, which they gave by reference to the concept of *petting*; to impose or affirm one’s seniority (and reinforce someone else’s inferiority) by treating them in the physical idiom by which one would treat a child. So, as much as it may have been the official’s affirmation that my own

¹⁹¹ I.e. expressly identifying himself as a political thug, and therefore bidding to display a level of immunity vis-à-vis his close relationship with local powerbrokers. Police may in the end have to grudgingly accord with this, but at the same time self-identifying as a political thug is seen by the police a proclamation that you are an even more archetypal and notorious criminal than the armed robber, albeit one of a type who usually gets away.

status was his extreme junior, 'petting' a suspect reaffirms the suspect's new powerlessness in the hands of police as like a child in the power of a parent. That would certainly make sense in view of the verbal treatment of the prisoner, which reinforces their supplicant or junior status, as we will see during interrogation.

7.1.3: Charges

If a probable offence is determined, the next thing is to assign an Investigating Police Officer (IPO) to the case. The case then enters the Divisional Crime Bureau (DCB) where the IPO will take a statement from the complainant, and usually after discussion with the Inspector Crime, the Divisional Crime Officer (who in 'B' Division was more or less useless) and in more significant cases, the DPO, or simply senior colleagues, will decide upon a charge. It is then, and only then, when accepted by the IPO, that the case will finally be written in the station diary at the counter; for writing is an instalment of finality which cannot be gone back upon without some inconvenience and mess, and police do not like messy paperwork.

The charges are selected from a reminder crib-sheet on the wall, which I was able to photocopy and reproduce below.

OFFENCE	
CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY	
97	BREACH OF OFFICIAL TRUST
103	DISOBEDIENCE OF PUBLIC OFFICERS
114	INCITING DISURBANCE
143	REFUSING TO SIGN STATEMENT ✓
186	SALES OF ADULTERATED FOOD OR DRINK
187	✓ ✓ NOXIOUS FOOD OR DRINK
192	MAKING ATMOSPHERE NOXIOUS TO HEALTH
196	NEGLIGENT CONDUCT CAUSING DANGER TO PERSON OR PROPERTY
201	KEEPING A BROTHEL
212	DISURBING RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLY
214	TRIAL BY ORDEAL
217	CRIMINAL CHARGES
218	CANNIBALISM
219	UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF HUMAN HEAD
221	CULPABLE HOMICIDE PUNISHABLE WITH DEATH
224	✓ ✓ NOT ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
229	ATTEMPT TO COMMIT CULPABLE HOMICIDE
231	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
232	CAUSING MISCARRIAGE
183	PUBLIC NUISANCE
178	GIVING FALSE INFORMATION RESPECTING AN OFFENCE
248	CAUSING HEART OR GRAVEIOUS HURT BY DANGEROUS MEANS
312	CRIMINAL BREACH OF TRUST
322	CHEATING
287	THEFT
288	THEFT IN DWELLING HOUSE, E.T.C
309	CRIMINAL MISAPPROPRIATION
306	BELONGING TO GANG OF THIEVES
298	ROBBERY
291	EXTORTION
299	ATTEMPTED ROBBERY
328	MISCHIEF
348	CRIMINAL TRESPASS
249	HOUSE TRESPASS
364	FORGERY
387	ADULTERY BY A MAN
388	✓ ✓ WOMAN
390	DEFAMATION
118	OFFERING OR GIVING GRATIFICATION TO PUBLIC SERVANT
117	PUBLIC SERVANT TAKING GRATIFICATION IN RESPECT OF OFFICIAL ACTION
116	FALSE INFORMATION WITH INTENT TO MISLEAD PUBLIC SERVANT
150	FAILING TO ASSIST PUBLIC SERVANT WHEN BOUND BY LAW TO ASSIST
399	CRIMINAL INTIMIDATION
175	FRAUD
282	KNAPP
158	SUBORN FALSE EVIDENCE
267	CRIMINAL FORCE OR ASSAULT
95	ATTEMPT TO COMMIT AN OFFENCE
167	SCREENING OF AN OFFENDER
172	RESISTING OF AN ARREST AND ASSAULT ON POLICE OFFICER ON EXECUTION OF DUTY
172	RESISTING OF AN ARREST
1	OBTAINING MONEY UNDER FALSE PRETENCE
317	RECEIVING STOLEN PROPERTY
273	KIDNAPPING
273	ABDUCTION
837	MISCHIEF BY FIRE
196	NEGLECT OF HOUSE
355	BREACHING BY NIGHT

Fig 9: 'B' Division 'crib' sheet of criminal charges is mounted on the wall of the DCB. Offence 219 is my personal favourite. Note that offence 214 'trial by ordeal' criminalises a competing form of criminal investigation and punishment.

In order to get a better picture of the nature of crime in the town, and of the relationship between social action and bureaucratic category, I surveyed 'B' Division's incident book or station diary from 20th November 2010 to 20th February 2011 (three months or 92 days). During the period, there were 302 entries – an average of just over three incidents per day. A small minority were non-criminal incidents such as missing persons. Equally, most incidents of a criminal nature resulted in multiple charges: 511 charges were registered, equivalent to 1.7 charges per incident. Despite the plethora of possible charges, in reality only a very few are much used. Of 45 different categories of crime recorded, there were only 16 which had an incidence of five or more in the period surveyed. More unusual crimes such as forgery, or more serious cases such as culpable homicide, occurred just once in the period surveyed. The six most common charges were as below:

Table 6: Commonest crimes recorded in 'B' division

<i>Theft</i>	86 charges
<i>Assault</i>	65 charges
<i>Using Criminal Force</i>	61 charges
<i>Criminal Intimidation</i>	42 charges
<i>Criminal Conspiracy</i>	37 charges
<i>Causing Hurt</i>	29 charges

Two other categories are worthy of mention. The charges Criminal Breach of Trust (25 incidents) and Cheating (19 incidents) usually represent cases of disputes. A tenant owes a year's rent and refuses to pay; a wedding photographer does not deliver the goods; a mechanic is paid for a windscreen and does not fit it; so in an attempt to enforce restitution, the injured party goes to the police and lodges a complaint to make the incident a criminal matter. The significance of these cases will be revisited below.

When circumstances dictate going beyond the everyday repertoire of crimes listed above, less experienced IPOs are out of their depth. On 3rd of March 2011, I observed a case where a woman's young children, left in charge of the handbag and phone cards which

constituted her small business, were temporarily abducted by a con-artist, before being found upset but safe and well by the SARS officers who went out to look for them.

No-one asked for any money. After they found the girls safe and well, they have to write it up. The IPOs lecture the mother – ‘so far this kind of thing happen again they go know, never follow am’. And then the officers discuss between themselves – ‘I no sabi dis kain case-o’, so the other guy says ‘I will do it with him’. As Corporal Rebecca is writing, they are deciding – the IPO says: ‘It can’t be abduction because we have not discovered them in her custody – so write theft – of the cards and handset – you know say there are different kinds of theft – by finding, without knowing, etc...’¹⁹²

Police work, as I learn, is axiomatically ‘copy-copy’; a craft taught and learned on the job. A new IPO may shadow his more experienced colleagues for some time, before they will let him begin by writing up simple cases, and over time he will progress to working more complicated ones. Part of this learned skill in ‘writing case’ is not only to determine the right charge, but to know how to add other counts which may be relevant or useful. From its frequent occurrence, it is clear that a favourite combination is the pairing of physical injury and material loss – someone is beaten and their phone stolen, for example, and so the charges will read ‘Criminal Force, Assault and Theft’. Yet this is not the craft of the officer alone, because it becomes clear that complainants, at least those who know how to deal with police, do not always simply report cases, but deploy their own agency with relation to the charges, to compound their leverage, especially when the incident reported results from a dispute:

I am reading a case where someone has left N780,000 in their shop to be stolen, and I ask out loud why not take it to the bank? The Inspector tells me ‘that is always their defence,

¹⁹² *I no sabi dis kain case* means ‘I don’t know how to do this kind of case’. The IPO’s dilemma is not unique to Nigeria; similarly Young (1991) and others relate how in the UK ‘possession of stolen goods’ is normatively used instead of or alongside a theft charge due to the greater ease of proving it. Charges cannot be used ‘anyhow’; IPOs make daily use of only a small selection, and when occasionally faced with one of the more exotic offences listed above, it is a cause of interest and a certain amount of confusion.

like if they fought, they will say they have some millions of naira outside the safe; instead it can be about five or ten thousand.’ (3rd March 2011)¹⁹³

At other times it seems to be the symbolic value, rather than the cash value of the material loss which is the grievance. The smallest case in the book is the loss of N140 (55 pence). These gambits are reminders that a police case, while being a discrete bureaucratic category, is actually part of a fluid and ongoing social action moving through its ‘police phase’. There are many possible steps before a matter reaches the police station, and in some cases many left to go after it leaves. While the archetypal crime of armed robbery by strangers does sometimes happen (much like the ideational murder, rape or mugging by a stranger in the west) mostly crime is in fact embedded in everyday social relations, of which the criminal aspect is just one. In this sense criminal harm equates with other social harms such as witchcraft in being a product of social proximity. A driver from Benin City, where spiritual harm is a major cultural preoccupation, summed up the principle in the idiom ‘I cannot hurt you unless I know you’: The Lagos constable interviewed above offered the equivalent police perspective, keen to impress on me that armed robbery also relies on practical matters of social proximity, as criminals need to learn about a victim’s possessions, movements, weak points and escape routes.

7.1.4: Criminal records

Reading the incident book is a sad window into the sordid underbelly of small-town life. Economical phrasings elide small wars and personal tragedies – a woman’s apprentice stabs her with scissors and a razor; a man intimidates a girl because she refuses to be his ‘friend’; a passing MOPOL intervenes when two criminals are trying to wrestle a gun from a policeman; two women quarrel and call each other harlots and witches; two schoolboys lure their classmate to the riverbank and burn him with cigarettes; a vagrant who sleeps opposite the post office is found dead; a man’s home is invaded by a gang of

¹⁹³ Equally, the diary is littered with cases where someone reports an assault by another, carefully detailing whatever clothes were torn or personal property damaged alongside any physical injury.

thugs and his brother is beaten with a shock absorber; a woman gets an anonymous call saying she will never see her father again.

The disputes, petty thefts, acts of jealousy, tragedy, boredom, sadism, avarice, envy and threat are rendered here in biro, in a cheap school textbook, as flat record in standardised official format. Or not quite standardised, as its nuances include personal variations in the house style which are proudly shown off by the counter ladies ('like me, I always begin my own like this...') as a minimal literary form. Inspector Cecilia tells me that 'some start with date, some start with name. Like me, I always start with date, see':

Tuesday 11th January 2011

CRIMINAL FORCE, CAUSING HURT, ATTEMPT TO COMMIT OFFENCE

(...) the thief stabbed her on her chest and hand with a dagger and she sustained injuries and that on the 7th November the same person came to attack her daughter Zainab and collected the sum of N20,000 from her which she reported to Mai Ungwa.¹⁹⁴

The above entry then, is the archetypal mugging by a stranger. More common however are crimes embedded in social relations:

27th February 2011

CRIMINAL FORCE, RAPE, INTIMIDATION

(...) boyfriend met the girl near Zenith Bank quarters, on the way the said K----- directed to GRA [Government Reserve Area, the exclusive wealthy part of town] Dutsin Bature that he wants to pick something at his brother's house. Reaching there he told her that he wants to make love with her and she refused, then he slapped her and applies every force to rape her. Finally he also threatened that she will die within two days hence her report.

¹⁹⁴ *Mai Ungwa* means ward head, so note that the previous incident was reported to a traditional administrative authority, not the police.

The above incident is embedded in inequality of class and gender, as well as the particular nature of personal hurt which mixes sexual assault with threat of spiritual harm to try to silence and further oppress the victim. Alongside such serious cases are also to be found more farcical manifestations of harm such as the following symbolic sully of home improvements born of the petty jealousies in shoulder-to-shoulder ‘high density’ areas of the township.

Tuesday 11th January 2011

CRIMINAL INTIMIDATION

(...) at about 16.15 one bakery worker name yet unknown to him came to their compound and made use of our water system toilet but when I told him to flosch it after use it, he became furious, calling him basterd and that he will deal with him in this town, that he was in this town since 1999 and he would show him the type of person he is, hence this report

Entry amended – later advised to maintain peace

We should bear in mind that the minimalist configurations of the writing are deeply relevant to our previous observation that policing cases reconciles and transforms social action into bureaucratic categories, in that they leave out a whole universe of social action and meaning around *how* what was written was produced and decided. Exactly that process will be the subject of the next section.

7.2: Investigation: Doing much with little

This section will show how police craft is manifested in the pursuit of investigating cases, once they are lodged. I begin with one extended and revealing depiction, and then attempt to break apart some elements (neither a firm typology nor an exhaustive list) of police craft, illustrating each with examples. In a system such as Nigeria, where the capacity for forensic work, small even at its 1950s inception, has decayed to the point of non-

existence; where no central criminal records, computerised or otherwise, are kept; and where police officers are no longer trained in basic criminal detection techniques such as fingerprinting, scene of crime analysis or even the taking of notes in notebooks, the processes of investigation and criminal justice rely almost wholly on three pillars. One is material evidence; another is witness statements; and the third and most important is the suspect's own confession. Therefore in practice interrogation is at the centre of investigation. On 11th June 2010 I am sitting in the Divisional Crime Bureau (DCB) when a suspect is brought in:

A hemp smoker, 16-18 years old, has been arrested by Dutsin Bature old market. He looks terrified – his mum is there to bring food, which he eats in DCB and pure water¹⁹⁵ which he takes back inside cell (...) He goes to sit in front of TV - an IPO shouts 'Sit over there! This football we are watching is very important.' (It is the 2010 World Cup opening game, between South Africa and Mexico).

After a night in the cell, the interrogation continues:

Egbon has the boy's head on his lap, as if cradling it, but applying pressure. With a pained but patient expression he is saying 'You talk anyhow of police and here you are in police station. Go and stand over there' – he points to corner, then goes with him – 'like this' – he acts out the pose he is demanding; 'foot against wall - arms out straight in front – bend knees' and demonstrates, leading the suspect through the paces. 'Down! Down! Down!' The suspect is now crouched back flat to the wall in an uncomfortable stress position akin to a diver about to dive. Egbon sits on a bench to watch him. The Inspector Crime is watching, as is another (non-police) lady here for a completely different matter, and I, and a mechanic with a car battery.

Egbon begins to question the boy - something about 'you set up on your own?' He goes to his locker, pulls out a paper wrap. 'Do you know what is this?' Yes, I know, nods the suspect. 'Who did you sell it for? Is it (the name sounds like 'Mali')?' The boy shakes his head. Egbon continues 'Who?' and names another name. 'But you don't care to call him

¹⁹⁵ *Pure water* is a half-litre of purified water sold in a plastic sachet, usually from a cooler. Costing N10 as opposed to N60 for bottled water it is the everyday drink of the urban working person.

on phone?’ The boy says quietly ‘It doesn’t have to do like that’ and shakes his head. Egbon tells him ‘This is the last time. I swear if I see you selling Indian hemp in old market again, I will fire you.’¹⁹⁶ Stand like I told you’ (the boy has relaxed his posture). Egbon picks up a thick piece of plank with a charred end, raises it high up and cracks him hard across the shin. ‘I don’t mind to hit you even on the shoulders. I can do anything and I’m justified’ (i.e. within my rights). The boy winces with pain. Younger detective Gbenga comes in, sits down at the long table and starts writing up another case. He looks up: ‘If you see this sha’ – Gbenga indicates the boy with his pen – ‘I see him that day, he says “what is police? I will start riot.” I just look him, he have one canvas bag, I’m sure inside that canvas is exhibit, maybe knife, coke, the Indian hemp he is selling.’

Egbon turns back to the crouching suspect. ‘Where do you stay?’ ‘At my father’s in ----, but he is late.’ ‘And where is your mother?’ The boy says ‘she lives at ----- I stay at my father’s house when she’s away’. ‘And where did she go?’ ‘She travelled to Abuja, she just came back yesterday.’ If not for her, I can just take you outside and fire you’ threatens Egbon. Gbenga chips in again: ‘If you see the way he speak to that lady, “give me my daughter”’. ‘Daughter?’ Igwe asks. ‘Yeah,’ says Gbenga ‘he like to do *kerewa*’.¹⁹⁷ ‘Wait there’ says Egbon, and leaves the room. The suspect is left alone with us. Gbenga addresses him directly: ‘See yourself for police station’, and delivers a lecture on how his behaviour has brought him to this point. Egbon comes back, and tells the boy: ‘Come and sit down. That warmed you up for exercise, isn’t it? Even me, if I do it, it’s good for *kerewa*.’ The boy just sits, head hanging.

As we can see from the above, interrogation involves deploying multiple facets of the IPO’s craft. Here is intimidation and mockery; impressing of the police’s power over the suspect; instilling of an ‘appropriate’ measure of respect for police authority; invoking of the exaggerated threat of lethal force; reference back to family as a mitigating agency; and at the same time the implicit admissions of the limitations of police power, making reference to previous occasions when the suspect got away, and to the inability of the police to do what they’d ‘really’ like to do the suspect. Simultaneously, the suspect’s general moral degeneracy is asserted by publicising it to a bystander audience. Not

¹⁹⁶ Indian hemp is marijuana. ‘Fire’ means to shoot.

¹⁹⁷ *Kerewa* is being used here as a euphemism for sex, in reference to the suggestive comedy song by Tiv musicians Zule Zoo, popular at the time (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VrFQqYJ5-Y>).

forgetting that this process intrinsically involves the application, measurement and removal of pain, and the dark humour within which the whole is packaged. The presence of myself and others throughout reminds us that interrogation here is a very public and social drama, very different from the intimacy of a small room and a tape recorder which we may expect from a western model.

The constituent elements of case work include categorising persons; the deployment of ‘psych’; a knowledge of when, and how, to intervene; how to use intelligence; how to make creative use of society’s own networks and capital; how to do good paperwork and lay the right charges. And it also encompasses other subtler and darker arts – how to price a case; how to correctly and appropriately deploy violence; how to maximise inconvenience; and how to create new truths to instrumental advantage. And all of these crafts must be deployed with a measure of trickery and ‘wayo’ which is deplored by outsiders as much as it is valorised by its skilful practitioners.¹⁹⁸ I will illustrate each of these aspects in turn, with examples.

7.2.1: The craft of categorisation

A very important aspect of craft is the ability to categorise *people*. Only when the officer knows where a person – especially a suspect, but also a complainant – fits in the general ecology of malefactors and civilians will they be able to discern the correct course of action. Early in my fieldwork, I accompanied a friend in Abuja to the police to report that their gate-guard had stolen money in order to pay for invisibility magic.¹⁹⁹ The female IPO, tired from an all-night vigil at church, grew more exasperated with the suspect’s inane answers and dumb grin, and finally turned to us saying ‘I don’t see this man as a criminal; he is more of an idiot’. She meant not that he had not committed a crime, which was a matter of interpretation, but that he was not a criminal by *type*. The police worldview may be Manichean, but it is not binary. Between the hardened career criminal

¹⁹⁸ *Wayo* is a Hausa word meaning smartness or cunning, now also in general usage among Nigerian speakers of English and other languages.

¹⁹⁹ While it is also classically used by adulterers, intention to obtain invisibility magic implies a desire to engage in nefarious business, most likely crime.

and the pure innocent victim are ranged an array of more and less respectable people, judged on bases which include class and social standing, but exceed it to also encompass rectitude as judged by the police classificatory worldview. Thus a potentially troublemaking and morally ‘tainted’ lawyer or journalist looks very different to police than does a pastor, for instance; while a ‘well-brought-up’ and modestly-dressed woman cues a different response than a woman whose dress is presumed to indicate looser moral conduct. Equally, between suspect and offender lie a clade of marginal persons – okada riders, ‘runs’ girls, day-labourers and the like, who form a category of ‘streetlife’, the regular clients of police on both sides of the complainant/suspect equation.²⁰⁰ A police officer must develop a knowledge of how to assess all of them and their potentials to cause harm, create risk or confer advantage (see also Young, 1991; 147). This is a craft refined by experience, as the Assistant Commissioner, Operations (AC Ops) in Dutsin Bature explained:

‘Why people say experience count a lot is that see the way that police operate in US, Europe – the way we live in Africa will not permit it. (...) From experience, psychologically, you will look at someone and say ‘this is what this person can do’. You can tell criminals. With drug peddlers, red eyes, or cuts from scuffles. Or if stealing, robbery, we don’t give them breathing space.’ (10th June 2010)

Sometimes the differences are even more overtly marked:

Corporal Simon Peter is telling a group of us about a crime they stumbled into the other night on patrol; they fired three shots after him and he didn’t stop. ‘That was a hardened criminal o! Anyone who doesn’t stop when you fire shots is a hardened serious criminal’. (12th February 2011)

²⁰⁰ *Okada* are motorbike taxis, the most common form of transport in the town; runs girls are young women in casual sex work. Both are common subsistence activities for the economically marginal, such as unemployed students and school-leavers.

7.2.2: *Craft and 'psych'*

A second related aspect of craft is knowing how to deploy what officers referred to as 'psych'. When I explained that British police do not routinely use torture, officers in Dutsin Bature displayed considerable professional curiosity, and asked how then was it possible for them to do their job? The answer was provided by a bored detainee in the DCB, a veterinary surgeon who trained in Wales, and had been brought in on orders from the governor's wife after a business dispute. He told them 'they use more of 'psych'; and this answer was understood with satisfaction.²⁰¹ 'Psych' refers to mind-games, entrapment, destabilisation, which renders the subject vulnerable. A suspect will not, for instance, be told *why* they have been arrested until they reach the station. Psych plays on weaknesses, and is based on the knowledge differential between the officer and the suspect, and on ritualised intimidation. The treatment of detained prisoners, then, acts to scare, and to reinforce the relative statuses of detainee and detainer. But it is not solely intimidation; the mind-games also encompass the tempting possibility of redemption if the suspect cooperates. On 26th November 2010 I witness the o/c SARS telling a suspect, with more than usual gentility:

"The only thing that can give you just little freedom in our hand is that you don't give us wahala when we ask you question. That is it".²⁰² Then there is an exchange about who gives who N500. They call Auntie who sells phonocards, to buy N750 credit. The Inspector SARS says 'We will call (names a name). Is it polite?' he asks rhetorically. Then a short time later, someone is screaming from inside as they are taken out of the cell.

7.2.3: *Judgement*

A third aspect of technical skill in practice is developing a knowledge of when and when not to intervene. The police in Nigeria, no less than in the contemporary developed world,

²⁰¹ The same detainee provided the title of this section. Even whilst under investigation himself, he was keen to impress upon me that the Nigerian Police Force do a lot with scant resources.

²⁰² *Wahala* means trouble or inconvenience.

are a 'thin blue line' of limited human resources and capacity, whose power is built in large part on a deliberate and fictional public dramaturgy of omnipotence. This, and the law, and state power, is fatally revealed as threadbare when the police are defeated. From this perspective, intervening with too little force, and thus being revealed as impotent, is worse than not intervening at all; even without additional regard for the very real prospect of injury or death to the officer themselves. On 6th July 2010 a CID officer teaches me about the practical limit of police powers when he arrives at 'B' division to get reinforcements. He followed up a family case to the suspect's home only for the head of the household to tell him that 'no-one can be arrested in his compound.'

In this particularistic society, and town of mixed jurisdictions, the skill of judging when and how to intervene also involves knowing how the police interlocate with local power structures and social factors. Hence the mistake made by a new CP in Dutsin Bature after my fieldwork period, who reacted to an attack on a policeman by 'invading' the old part of town in strength: Whereas officers with experience in the town knew (although did not like to admit) that the old town was a 'no-go' area for police, where inhabitants took their problems to the Maigari, and where the police intervened on request and with the approval of traditional authority, the new CP was attempting to apply what he had practised in his previous big-city post. The result was the death of an innocent teenager, an embarrassing riot, and a deterioration in relations between the police and inhabitants which required the attention of political authorities. So an ability to weigh and judge the risk likely inherent in specific situations and cases forms a part of this learned judgement. We must also observe here that for many IPOs, choosing what action to take fundamentally includes considering also the potential for risk and for making money, as will become apparent below.

7.2.4: Intelligence

Fourthly, craft invokes good intelligence-gathering. In order to work out *what* has really happened to *whom*, police officers must know their local criminals and regular customers. In this regard, officers of local origin, or those who have served long in an area, have an

edge over those who transfer around and whose particular knowledge must be rebuilt from scratch. On 5th February 2010 two officers interrogate a male youth in ‘A’ Division. The detainee remains silent throughout:

‘I guard you for false accusation – why did the guy threaten you with shard, say he fit cut your neck, tear your cloth, make he naked you for bus stop – what, are you saying you don’t know him? At all? What is the relationship between you and the suspect? Tell the truth my friend.’ ‘No, he’s this Boy Congo.’ (There is a general ‘aha’! around the assembled officers). The sergeant knows him as someone who is always fighting, since 2003, even though he was a very small boy at that time.²⁰³

For those officers who are too mobile or too senior to have this knowledge, the second-best thing is to use someone who does, whether within or outside the force, as the AC Ops explains:

‘For example, if we chase criminals, people selling on the highway will block it. So when you chase a criminal like that, use an indigene who will know the terrain and where they hide their weapons and stolen items’. (10th June 2010).

Using intelligence also incorporates not just the gathering of information but its manufacturing and deployment. Big investigations make frequent tactical use of information, including leaks, deliberate disinformation, setting traps and leveraging information to get other information; often the information obtained from suspects is the main route used to find other wanted persons and resolve other cases.²⁰⁴ But intelligence must also be conserved and protected; the fear of leaks to the suspects from compromised police officers is very present in the minds of detectives such as the SARS, who try to keep their operations as secretive as possible and are only reluctantly obliged to inform the divisional police where and when they plan to operate.

²⁰³ ‘I guard you’ as in ‘I am suspecting you of’; ‘naked you’ means ‘ripped off your clothes’; ‘small boy’ has two possible meanings, ‘young’ and ‘unimportant’.

²⁰⁴ PSC Chair Osayande related the key role of spreading disinformation in the press in arresting notorious 1980s bandit ‘Anenih the Law’ (interview 25th April 2011). Likewise Bauchi State’s private detective/vigilante ‘security consultant’ Ali Kwara is famed for keeping a stable of ‘domesticated’ former robbers and their family members as an intelligence network.

7.2.5: *The craft of creative sociology*

In fact, this leads us to the fifth interesting aspect of police craft – the way it creatively utilises the resources of wider society. We can already see that the police system itself relies on particularist networks and assumes use of them, for example relying on the family to feed a prisoner in the cell. But police work is socially embedded in the particularities of society far beyond just this. In detective work, where communications, resources, and governmental capacity to create and maintain records run out of power, leveraging social institutions and particularities takes over. We have already seen (in Chapter 3) how proxy arrest was used in detaining the Fulani *Ardo* to force the suspect who had fled the area to return. Such tactics are not a one-off.

The cell board says 16 men, one woman – I ask Blessing who the woman is – ‘woman na one woman wey pikin dey beat someone’. (Fieldnotes, 28th February 2011).

In this case, the police have arrested the woman in order to get her son, wanted for an assault. The family, or the spouse, or the sibling, is held to ensure the appearance of the suspect. Just as Malawi’s doctors put family members to work as nurses, here the police put family members to work, against their will, to help in making the arrest. Proxy arrest and prolonged detention without charge are both illegal in Nigeria; but both are so widespread as to be an essential part of normal policing practice. The law is broken to obtain law enforcement, and in a way which relies on the assumed strength of the extended (and nuclear) family amid the weakness of other institutions. In such a way, a corpus of knowledge in established practice is built up that supports, relies on, and is in some senses stronger than the legal codes it is intended to uphold, but which it also directly contravenes. In 2011 Lagos State Attorney-General attempted to have proxy arrest discontinued in the state; but its usefulness is not likely to see the police abandon it overnight. The process has even been mobilised in the state’s fight against the Boko

Haram insurgency through late 2011-2012.²⁰⁵ Even in such high-profile struggles, the state's ability to act is predicate on society's non-state institutions.

7.2.6: The craft of violence

The sixth element of the technical skill of the police officer is the most controversial. The exercise and potential exercise of violence is intrinsic to the nature of police power, legitimised and depersonalised in its backing by the law and in the policeman's embodiment of the state. This most salient of police attributes could be made into a study all its own; here, and despite its latent presence throughout, I have deliberately chosen to subsume it within police craft to emphasise its nature as a non-discrete category of action which relies on, and which is relied upon by, the other elements of police action. Sometimes, police violence can be hot-tempered, unruly and emotive:

Two IPOs went to make an arrest from an ogogoro²⁰⁶ joint because one of the customers beat the proprietress seriously, and the customers surrounded the police, 'insulted them' and beat and attacked them. SARS go out to intervene and march them in, slapping and kicking. The policeman they beat up is there – they push the suspects behind the counter. Sylvester – the one who was attacked – starts slapping one of them round the head and Blessing shouts at him to restrain him 'Ah! Sylvester!' Other officers get behind the counter. The CRO says 'Sit! Look Down! Look floor!' He slaps the suspect twice, then a thump with side of fist, on his back. Then shouts 'bring me baton! You want to drink ogogoro? Look floor! Look down' and slaps the suspect with the side of the baton. 'Look up! Look at me' – another SLAP! And then the demobbed MOPOL to the left slaps one again, and then leans over the counter to get a few more slaps and punches in. (...) Someone – the CRO perhaps – lifts up the tall counter stool, and jabs the leg down on one suspect's head.

²⁰⁵ In the process of being enlisted in counter-terrorism, the practice has itself become an insurgent grievance. 'Boko Haram: Wife of suspected ThisDay bomber arrested' in *Nation*, <http://www.thenationonline.net/2011/index.php/news/47213-boko-haram-wife-of-suspected-thisday-bomber-arrested.html> accessed on 30th May 2012. In the video message posted at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDqv6srmoI4> by Boko Haram in April 2012, the group declared themselves unhappy with the government's strategy of arresting and detaining their women and children even though women and children have not been part of the attacks on the government.

²⁰⁶ Home-distilled gin.

This is the treatment meted out to the police subject Van Maanen (1978) terms the 'Asshole'. Assholes, in 1970s America, are a police category which justifies maltreatment and a subject on which frustrations can be worked. 'Assholes' are stigmatised and treated harshly 'on the basis of their failure to meet police expectations arising from the *interaction situation itself*. They attempt to deny police authority, rupture categories, talk back." (1978: 5). Fighting a policeman is the classic such rupture; "an affront... a challenge to the policeman's authority, control and definition of the immediate situation" made more significant by the fact that the policeman "directly brings the power of the state to bear on the situation and hence makes vulnerable to disgrace, embarrassment and insult that power" (1978: 11).

This is not the typical form of police violence, however. More usually violence took place in a planned and measured manner, the first occasion being a smartly-dressed educated young female IPO in Abuja boxing a suspect's ears during a questioning. Despite my surprise and shock, it quickly became clear that (unlike demanding money) police officers saw this as normal and not wrong, as they did not attempt to hide it from me. Most of the violence I saw were these kind of small acts of applying pain or discomfort, which were routine parts of interrogation, as we have seen. An IPO may choose to administer slaps, or pose a prisoner in an uncomfortable stress position. More serious and intense pain began with suspending a prisoner upside-down from a pole inserted between his handcuffed wrists and ankles and suspended between two desks. Such was not the preserve of ordinary officers, but was usually reserved for prisoners of the CID and SARS. I was in the station during about five or six prolonged sessions of severe torture, of the kind described below, which was clearly audible through a wall into the next room where I was sat:

They are torturing a half-naked limping prisoner again – 'how much you go give us?' They bought bread for him (or he for them?) this morning. We can hear Slap! Slap! (the prisoner moans) SLAP! 'Ha ha, did you like that?' Then follow questions: 'How much? You didn't say you didn't realise? It don reach 3 million.' Another voice – impossible to tell whether it is prisoner or officer: 'There was a time they took 1 million.' Then they're

discussing in relaxed voices to get the information – where, when, etc. Then the threats again: ‘I will get light cane, breakee leg!’ The prisoner is now admitting he stole one briefcase, only he said ‘briefkat’, and the interrogator is laughing at his bad English. ‘Do you think I’m a fool? How did you get access to the place? Is it your sister? SLAP! SLAP!’ The prisoner moans again. ‘Are you ready now?’ Prisoner: ‘Yes’. ‘Are you ready?’ ‘YES!’ Now the guy is really screaming, it sounds like through a gag. Aaagh ooh aaagh ooh – SLAP! ‘Who provide the house... do you know Abu?’ Then suddenly, they stop to answer a phone with perky ring-tone. ‘Hello?’ (16th November 2010).

What I found most disturbing about such incidents was not solely the violence, but the ability of some other officers to casually watch without evident sign of emotion, for instance while standing in the doorway drinking a bottle of coke.²⁰⁷

The nature of police violence could make a thesis of itself. There is of course a voluminous anthropology of violence by the state and its agents, and it is not my intention to recapitulate it here in full. But a short summary will show that much of this work is of little use in trying to capture the nature of situations like the above. Recent studies of violence, power and social control after Giorgio Agamben (1998), including studies of vigilante violence (Jensen 2005), concentrate on violence as performing the sovereignty of its perpetrators, or (Aretxaga 2005) as definitional, constituting categories of friends and enemies and (after Benjamin) the law itself. This may be useful in analysing the actions of non-state forces, but is of limited use in the case of police forces, where a whole armoury of law and legitimation lays the foundation of sovereignty before the action of any police officer is called upon to prove it. The police, embodying the state and having the codified law as reference, do not need to rely only on violence to constitute their power as sovereign. Officers might discretionarily appropriate Agamben’s “monopoly to decide” - on who has rights and status and who does not, or even, in

²⁰⁷ I found resonance in Scarry (1985: 53): Torture invokes “an almost obscene conflation of private and public”. After such sessions prisoners limped back to their cells in chains, without medical treatment. Medical treatment at hospital was however mandated for suspects who had been shot in the leg to disable them during arrest, another common practice in armed robbery and similar cases.

Mbembe's (2003) Africanised reinterpretation, the 'necropolitics' of who lives and who dies, but this is incidental to the intention behind their actions.²⁰⁸

Comaroff & Comaroff (2006: 293) identify the post-modern re-connect of symbolic and instrumental coercion, melodrama and rationalisation, amid the "diminishing capacity of government to control either the means of coercion or the commonweal." Yet the violence of interrogation inside the police station is not for public display; it is a matter between police, prisoner, and perhaps a limited circle of incidental bystanders, so cannot be such a coalesced point at which to display the exercise of state power. Equally Mbembe's (2001) dictum that the actions of the postcolonial functionary mirror those of the dictator, captures the mimetic nature of violence by state actors and how it is legitimised; but Nigeria is not a dictatorship any longer. Scarry's (1985) careful examination of the relationships between torturer and tortured presumes that the characteristic function of torture (in the late-Cold-War contexts of which she writes) is to express and inscribe totalitarian rule. But totalitarianism, requiring not only monopolies of power and violence, but also of meaning, is manifestly not Nigeria's political condition. Scarry does point out that because bodily pain destroys language, it is used to deconstruct the prisoner's voice – as we can see above, into a detached series of answers to questions. Yet she also asserts that the ultimate intention of interrogation is *not* the eliciting of answers to questions but the performance and transmission of pain as power.²⁰⁹

Instead, I argue that the function of torture and pain in interrogation is extremely instrumental, directly related to prosaic demands of the policing task, if at the same time

²⁰⁸ In any case, in Nigeria the police and state demonstrably incompletely possess that monopoly (or Weber's twin monopolies of legitimacy and violence), which as we have seen are contested with other sources of security, legitimacy and sovereignty. Equally, the mixed jurisdictions - and the holistic 'two-speed' model of citizenship which discriminates between indigenes and incomers as the holders of sets of rights (Suberu 2001, Ostien 2009) - render any binary opposition between the rights-holders and the rights-less inapplicable.

²⁰⁹ Scarry implicitly links this to a debunking of any justifiable motive for torture, since "although the information sought in an interrogation is almost never credited with being a *just* motive for torture, it is repeatedly credited with being the motive for torture. But for every instance in which someone with critical information is interrogated, there are hundreds interrogated who could know nothing of remote importance to the stability or self-image of the regime" (1985: 28). The second sentence does not however apply to non-absolutist policing, whose use of violence seems to be for the most part notably instrumental.

it is also symbolic, referential, constitutive and communicative. As with 'petting' above, the form and context in which violence or pain are used illustrates its purpose. To explain this type of violence in its own context it may be more informative to look at the form and thus the symbolic meaning of the pain that is meted out.

Consider for instance the frog-jump. An officer forces a prisoner to squat on their haunches, hold their ears in their hands, thus keeping their arms up, and then they must frog-jump around the station. An odd routine for the eyes of an outsider; but Nigerians will be familiar with this form of inflicting pain as an *army* punishment, meted out to 'bloody civilians' with frequency during 30 years of military rule. I first saw it during 2005 in Plateau State, where soldiers were using it to punish a youth militant who had failed to show them sufficient respect. It arrived in Nigeria's education system in the early 1980s when Generals Buhari and Idiagbon sent military personnel into schools as part of their War Against Indiscipline programme of national moral orientation. A boy who was late for school could expect to be frog-jumped across the playing field to his classroom. So the frog-jump indexes a symbolic history of pain and punishment which humiliates the prisoner and regresses them to the status of a child; meanwhile for the police officer, it not only performs their own authority over the detainee, but re-inscribes the police institution in both a para-military and a pedagogical role, which may be a reasonable approximation to how many officers see their institutional role, as we shall see further below.

Similarly we can talk about slaps or caning as not being qualitatively different from the corporal punishment meted out in many homes and schools. Last (2000) charts the rise of corporal punishment in child-rearing as specifically mobilised in negotiating the parameters of Islamic orthodoxy, an index of modernity and rectitude. Dutsin Bature's historical background may differ but its public culture is arguably similar, as is the Northern Nigeria legal code which retains corporal punishment as a sentence. If the police use violence liberally, we must recognise that wider society does too; the state and

non-state use of violence are mutually constitutive.²¹⁰ The exact forms of violence used, the particular genealogy of pain, hints at its meaning and hence its function. It is best viewed not as a distinct corpus of action but a bodily version of the other techniques of subjection to police power. Furthermore, like the other aspects of police craft it serves a purpose beyond simply reinforcing who is being policed and who is doing the policing; it is to produce operable, actionable, documentable truths to allow a case to be investigated and to progress. And it assumes its primary salience precisely because many other paths to this conclusion – forensics, camera evidence, criminal records – are not available. It follows that to be interrogated is to be tortured, more or less, and for the unfortunate suspects whose cases are transferred during investigation, to be interrogated multiple times is to be tortured multiple times.

7.2.7: Detention

Even more than violence, however, police make frequent and creative use of inconvenience as leverage. Detaining a person, though not usually tenable over the long term, is backed by the implied possible use of legal force and causes maximum inconvenience to the detained at minimum cost to the detainer. Suspects are detained simply in order to cool them off, or ‘bring their head down’; they may be put in the cell, or simply behind the counter.²¹¹ Detention in the wider sense of waiting can form part of the ‘psych’ or ‘wayo’ of softening-up a prisoner – thus is the SARS prisoner forced to stay kneeling by his captors’ desk while they watch TV. Or it can be a way to leverage financial compliance - thus, a traffic officer stopping a motorist may not make an arrest, but simply demand that the driver wait there with him since he is not allowed to leave his duty post until the end of the shift. This will likely produce the likely compliance, such as an ad-hoc on-the-spot fine, in short order.

²¹⁰ And thus the slap, like English, becomes a national language both official and vernacular. While I was redrafting this chapter, a police friend in Dutsin Bature sent me the following text message parody of an SMS special offer: “*Slap d person next 2 U n get 1 FREE! It’s real, I just got mine NOW!!! For more rewards, slap a MOPOL or SOLDIER! Hurry now while d offer lasts!!!*”

²¹¹ As we saw in Chapter 3, detention in the cell is also frequently used to discipline police officers.

Detention has a related cousin, the time-waste or wild-goose-chase, also designed to wear down resistance. A friend, stopped for a traffic offence, had a policeman enter his car and instruct him to drive five miles north before telling him to turn around because the police station was in the other direction; the intent being to waste his time and petrol as a punishment for his truculence. The strategic use of detention means that inconvenience is an inevitable result of being involved with the police – so for instance woe betide the one who is complained-about on a Friday – if arrested, they can expect to spend a weekend in the cells before anyone can work their bail. And in fact the time-consuming nature of investigation in circumstances of limited capacity means that lengthy detention (often without trial, and sometimes without charge) has become essential to the workings of police investigation.

7.2.8: The craft of paperwork

Crucially, the IPO's craft encompasses an eighth aspect, translating the social action into the realm of the bureaucratic category. The ability to lay the right charge, to do neat paperwork, is a realm all its own, and it must be conducted with consideration of the outcome one intends to obtain. Certain charges trigger certain pathways, procedures, and eventually outcomes. In particular, there is an important legal difference between 'compoundable' offences (charges which may be pressed or withdrawn by the complainant) and more serious 'non-compoundable' offences (murder, rape, robbery) in which the state claims its own interest is injured, and which the police are obliged to prosecute no matter the wishes of the victim. Crafting a charge itself requires a balancing of factors:

Gbenga is writing up a case. He reads out loud: 'Conspiracy, wounding, theft...' I ask about it. He tells me that three guys beat up an okada guy²¹² and smashed his bike. Police stopped them at checkpoint by 500 Units [a housing estate, under 'C' Division's jurisdiction], and saw one holding hemp for hand. They now settled them and left.²¹³ After reaching their destination, they blamed the okada rider for getting them caught and

²¹² A commercial motorbike-taxi operator.

²¹³ To 'settle' in this sense is to pay off.

beat him, smashed his mirror, lights etc. Then they stole his wallet containing N4,500. ‘So automatically that is robbery; if we really want to wound them we will charge them with robbery.’ The Okada guy complained to CID, but they didn’t want the case so he brought it here. ‘But one of them is still at large, I am going to get him now. See, that is how they are doing here in Dutsin Bature’.²¹⁴ (12th June 2010).

Gbenga has a choice here; if he wants to ‘wound’ the perpetrators he can write it up as a robbery case, or make it a lesser offence if he wants to offer the possibility of leniency.²¹⁵ Most likely he will use the lingering possibility of the more serious charge as leverage during the investigation. Writing up a case is not simply a matter of fitting the category to the act. Its mastery of the mysteries of the state brings it in some respects closer to Marchand’s fourth type of arcane, secretive knowledge. Much of the power differential between the police officer and the public lies in the policeman’s privileged knowledge of law and procedure, which is why lawyers, activists and others who are fluent with their legal rights and know how to ‘make noise’ are such problematic categories for the officer of the law. With the ordinary civilian, however, the art can be developed to its fullest, safeguarded in the ignorance of the other party. Particularly, it can give free rein to a creative and less scrupulous IPO to change a case to his own advantage. Cases and charges can be batted back and forth between complainant and suspect via the brokerage of the IPO, depending on where the officer perceives the most lucrative leverage. To do so requires experience and knowledge in legal and procedural weak points, loopholes and grey areas, and is hinted at by the way in which in my presence, Constable Egwu hails a junior colleague: ‘He is in Crime; he can turn black into white’.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Gbenga’s last comment is meant to express his opinion that in this town, miscreants are drug-addled, petty, vindictive and nasty.

²¹⁵ Note here too the contrast between Gbenga’s strong condemnation of the malicious unprovoked attack on the okada rider, and the implicitly more lenient view he takes of the (victimless) crimes of possessing hemp and ‘settling’ a policeman.

²¹⁶ And this possibility introduces another differential –those members of the public who know how to ‘use police’ can maximise their advantage over those who do not.

7.2.9: Pricing mechanisms

The penultimate element of craft, interoperating with all of the other components, is the ability to price a case or a person. It is common and widespread practice for officers investigating a case to make demands for money at various junctures. The demands bracket an area between need and profit; sometimes they are clearly needed to provide a resource the police don't have, like transport, and sometimes they are more opportunistic demands and charges. A complainant to pay to write the case up, to provide a case file, to use their vehicle to fetch a suspect, or as a simple investigation fee; or the suspect may be asked to pay during investigation or detention, at release, and especially for police bail, which is free according to the law but invariably not in practice, despite numerous campaigns from Force Headquarters. Yet an officer intent on making money cannot just demand whatever money they like. First, there must be a reason, however real or spurious. Then any payment obtained must take into account a number of factors – likely ability to pay, the strength of demand for the service, the ability to provide, the social status of the person in question, their knowledge of their rights, social connections, or other ability to 'cause trouble', their moral standing in the eyes of the police, and lastly but importantly, the existence of other institutions in the investigation and dispute-resolution business, including a constellation of traditional authorities, vigilance groups, private law firms, other security bodies and even other police units (since CID or the Area Command might take up a case that the division's DCB refuses).

For their part, a police officer's legally-backed powers give them leverage of their own, although all officers who discussed their own involvement in issues of payment with me were keen to emphasise the voluntaristic aspect on the part of the public. In a rural area, where business is slow and clients are not rich, officers are lucky to make what they can. This is evident at the small two-man police post in Gada Biu village, where Inspector Fidelis has been exiled for incurring the wrath of the DPO:

There are two kinds of case here. First is Fulani-farmer cases about animal trespass and crop compensation – there was one last week, and more than ten since this officer came

(last Oct 21st). Secondly, young Fulani women hire the village hall and speakers for all-night parties, and the men fight and then stab each other; then the victim's family comes to police, and police settle the compensation. I ask why they use police and not another agent of dispute resolution 'If not police, they won't pay, then police ('s own) money it is for bail, anything they can give, by a close relation.' The first type of case doesn't go in the book, the second usually does to cover the officer's back if it goes wrong. (26th February 2011).²¹⁷

In the town, the existence of a competitive market in dispute resolution and enforcement sometimes tempts officers into territory which is not strictly-speaking theirs to occupy. Police are supposed to refuse civil cases – business disputes with no element of criminality or disruption to the peace. Sometimes they do – a case of cheating where a venue manager refused to refund a booking deposit is amended in the incident book:

'DPO refused case as civil matter, advised parties go and maintain peace or seek court action'.

Yet on 6th July 2010 in 'B' Division I observe:

Inspector crime tells a young IPO – 'See, this one is civil case. So when they go, no say any money be too small-o, and no go enter it in crime diary, 'cause like that time when they come seize crime diary. You know say police know how investigate police now'.

'That time' references a previous occasion when officers from headquarters seized the division's books to investigate a complaint. It is evident from the above, then, that the police may also try and freelance for civil cases, but the price will have to be competitive and it's at the officers' own risk if caught.

²¹⁷ Note here too the reappearance of the issue of what is and what is not written.

7.2.10: The mystique of police craft

Finally, there remains beyond all these a less tangible element of skill which is embodied and performed, which defies exact explanation, but embeds the wisdom of accumulated experience in place of scientific resources, and which in its performance commands instinctive respect. It is both craft as knowledge in practice, and Marchand's third category, of propositional knowledge, silently evident in what a person can show they know about their work, and how it is critically (and reverently) received by others, a reminder that professional identities are also defined by, and displayed as, unique and specialised cognitive mastery.

A very sweaty plainclothes officer comes in loaded down with three home-made guns and a sword with blood on it. He has come straight from a distant rural place. Armed robbers attacked Fulanis coming home from market in the bush, shot and killed one guy (the shell is still in the weapon), then the Fulanis rushed him and killed two of the robbers. The Inspector Crime puts down his walking stick, leans against his desk, takes the guns, smells them, looks down the barrel, slowly checks the sword, sees the congealed blood, smells it, inspects the shot cartridge in the other gun; opens, closes it, shows how you cannot quickly reload it. Then he nods to Maimalari to take a statement. (25th November 2010)

7.3: Outcomes

When the investigation phase of a case has been followed-up to the best of an officer's ability, evidence has been gathered, suspects arrested, statements and confessions taken, culpable parties and charges identified, the matter must be brought to some kind of an outcome. A neophyte like I was might expect the majority of cases to be routinely processed and charged to court. But as I found, this accounts for only a very small fraction of what actually takes place. To understand the outcomes that are possible, we need to go back to the paperwork.

In the DCB itself, as well as the case files that are continually opened, closed, and added to, there are three important books. The first and most important is the crime diary, filled with entries about significant cases, written up in full. We have already seen some typical entries. There is also the 'Information Book', which is a summary of important cases, and thirdly a register of crime statistics. All these documents are in the custody of the only female officer in the DCB. She tells me that she writes up the diary every now and then, copying from the counter book, and asking each IPO what they did about each case in turn. This is – at times – up to every two weeks, but if a serious case like theft of vehicle, or murder (which she mentioned in that order) it goes in straight away. Each month crime statistics from each division are sent as returns to the State Command - the statistics go to the state's CID and 'F' department (research and training); thence to Abuja.²¹⁸ Guardian of correct terminology as well as documents, she also insists I should use 'offence' not 'crime' on my form. The records are entered in columns. The first contains brief summarised details of the cases, and the second stipulates one of the following entries:

- *Closed* – for a case dropped at the divisional level;
- *Transferred* – to State CID, Dutsin Bature;
- *UI* – under (continuing) investigation;
- *Charged to court*
- *T* – 'terminated' by orders from above the divisional level;
- *KIV* – 'Keep In View', a category reserved for serious cases which may have been withdrawn but which the police still wish to note, or cases such as theft of vehicle where there is currently no suspect but which may in future be attributed to someone.
- *Vide Entry* – some cases are amended with other details which caused the case to be discontinued, such as 'resolved by the DPO', 'didn't come back to make statement' or 'warned and released conditionally'.

²¹⁸ In contrast to modernist models of policing, which fetishise statistics to the point of encouraging police to manipulate them, Nigeria's official crime statistics do not enter the public realm and are not observably connected to policing policy or resource planning.

We may perhaps expect such a selection of categories to take care of all practical eventualities. What is noteworthy, though, is their relative frequency. I compared the records at the counter and as summarised in the DCB records over one month, from 5th to 30th June 2010. I have also included a final row for the cases logged at the counter but not recorded in the DCB. The results were as follows:

Table 7: Cases and outcomes

Outcome	Frequency	Percentage of total
Terminated	1	1.3%
Keep In View	7	9.3%
Case Closed	0	0%
Under Investigation	11	14.6%
Transferred to State CID	1	1.3%
Charged to Court	2	2.6%
Vide Entry/Entry amended	9	12%
Outcome not recorded in DCB records	43	57.3%
TOTAL	75	100%

Note especially the very few cases which are charged to court – only two cases, 3.1% of those handled, actually go on to be prosecuted in the criminal justice system which is the supposed output of police investigation. Meanwhile the vast majority – 68% of cases – simply vanish from the records after they reach the counter. Clearly then, something other than criminal prosecution is taking care of the vast majority of serious incidents which are reported at ‘B’ Division. But what? Clues to the answer lie in the dynamics we have related above. Partly it may be because, as we saw, the complainants in many of the cases logged at the counter simply wish to have their grievance logged and recorded. In case of escalation the history of their victimhood, and their established status as the wronged party, will become relevant and useful in the future, a state-validated fixity to what would otherwise be a matter of accusation and counter-accusation. Partly, it may also be because solutions have been mediated – whilst sometimes these are recorded ‘resolved by DPO’ and the like, as we have also seen above more junior officers find ways to interpose their own solutions and have reason to keep them out of the official record.

In this hierarchical world, some outcomes, too, are clearly out of the hands of officers' own volition at the divisional level. Even for an elite squad like the SARS, who are often called to perform cross-investigations in other states, this is a limiting factor:

[When doing cross-investigation in other states] 'we can't really do much except they give us information, but they don't like to give us information. Most of the time they handle case at division or area commander level, or their SARS, and then someone will write petition to the IG and we will be called to come and investigate. So we just have to look for some trick, like we issue invitation for everyone to come, and write statement, and at the end some big person will say detain this one, charge this one.' (SARS officer, 22nd February 2011).

Equally, some cases are dealt with speedily, effectively, and absolutely by the book, especially when the DPO or other officers feel that the issue is a serious one. During the tenure of 'B' Division's interim DPO, I return from a short break to find that a serious issue has come and gone through the entire legal process during my absence. I am told that:

Six boys (aged 16-18 - they're meant to be 18 but two were younger²¹⁹) gang-raped a teenage girl in their neighbourhood because her mother said she could not see anyone (have a boyfriend) until she marries. So the boys decided to 'teach her a lesson'; laid in wait for her, took turns raping her and took snaps of themselves on their mobile phones while doing it. She had to go for internal surgery. The mother brought the case to the police [despite the considerable stigma attached] but later came again to say that the begging from the boys' families is too much, and the police should please drop it.²²⁰ But on being advised by the DPO, the state CID said the state has an interest in the case, and they speedily transferred it to CID at state headquarters. They already charged it to court last week and now the boys have been sentenced to eight years each in Gida State's federal prison. Constable Blessing says it's good because 'most of the time the IPO or someone might just accept some small money to just drop the matter'. (14th June 2010).

²¹⁹ This unexplained comment possibly refers to two of the boys being prosecuted as adults due to their serious actions, but despite their different legal status – I was unable to confirm.

²²⁰ Begging means entreaties to drop the case and accept compensation.

Some offences, such as the above, and also murder, arson, robbery, and aggravated assault are, as we saw above, felonies non-compoundable under the law and must be charged to court - although as Constable Gbenga has taught us above, the IPO sometimes has the initial discretionary ability to define and categorise an action in terms of such a charge or not. Yet these non-compoundable offences account for only a small proportion of cases – fewer than 30 of the 511 charges in the three-month sample cited earlier.

7.3.1: Settling

More often, actions turn out to be misdemeanours or simple offences – theft, cheating, and the like, as well as the various charges under which disputes are booked. In those eventualities, by far the preferred solution to the police – and presumably in many cases to the other parties – is to ‘settle’. If they reach a negotiated solution, including whatever restitution or compensation may be agreed, the complainant signs a ‘withdrawal of case’ statement, which the suspect also signs, agreeing to keep the peace, and everyone leaves. The idea, from the officer’s point of view, is not to clog up the courts and waste police time with needless prosecutions, except if the complainant absolutely insists. From the complainant’s point of view, whichever is the speediest and least expensive route to an effective outcome is what is usually desirable, whether the issue reaches court or not. The role of the police here has become to preside over dispute resolution, as a third party which can record and legitimate the decision reached, and equally importantly, can then be subsequently easily referred to, to enforce it in case of breach.

This is also revealing in that it reinforces the dissonances between what the public say and do regarding the police which we explored in Chapter 3; here, despite the rhetoric of avoidance, the police station has clearly usefully come to imitate the ‘civil’ dispute-resolution functions otherwise presumed to be the domain of other traditional or communal institutions - which themselves are presumed to thrive in part *as a result* of continued failures of policing (Okereafoezeke, 2003). These institutions still exist in parallel elsewhere in Dutsin Bature, but clearly not all parts of the growing town are

subject to their jurisdiction. So a formal institution with the ostensible purpose of enforcing retributive justice in the name of the state is used instead to achieve the purposes of restorative and reintegrative communitarian justice. Secondly, it is interesting that despite complaints that access to policing is mediated by arbitrary charges, brokering solutions via the police station can still be a more attractive option than official court proceedings with the judiciary, or the hearings of hybridised jural-administrative offices such as ward heads or traditional rulers. The police then, compete as a node of justice with other agencies of the state. Yet they still see themselves as a very distinct function with particular differences. I am told that in withdrawing case, for instance, complainants don't have to write the specifics because:

‘Police is not a court, that one is not police work, that is their own’. (IPO, 16th June 2010)

Ideally, settlement is voluntaristic, and involves the minimum police effort possible. One Friday in February 2010 I am again in ‘A’ Division by the market when a tall man in a green kaftan comes in from the mosque and waits patiently to tell the DPO that a Fulani-farmer crop destruction case is settled between themselves. Barring its elimination of any revenue opportunity for an enterprising officer, this is the ideal scenario. But when parties are less willing to settle, police are prepared to use their powers and craft to leverage settlement between parties. Around the same time, an ASP in the traffic division tells me:

‘We don't keep people inside cells. Except in case of injury, then we keep the perpetrator in cells until the victim is discharged from hospital.’

The driver responsible will be detained until the injured person is discharged in order to ensure they will pay their full hospital bills as settlement. The Area Commander also tells me that typically, Gida people settle – even at fatal accidents:

‘We just get there and find they've settled funeral expenses, so we leave it at that.’

Characteristically, the police prefer their own direct and summary methods to the courts, whose proceedings, integrity, and capacity to deliver justice they distrust, and which they feel frustrate their ultimate aim.

Judiciary is bad pass police. At least if you go to police station make complaint, they will send an officer, bring the person. Here the judiciary are supposed to be (makes hand gesture indicating 'more or less OK') but it is just (a matter of) who brings money. And when you charge to court they will find one mistake, or say to discharge on medical grounds – someone who is on capital charge, is it murder or armed robbery. Tell me, if it is a matter of medical, why can't you transfer from a prison which doesn't have clinic to one which do have? (SARS officer, 9th July 2010).

Procedures of the law, in the even more skilled hands of its courtroom practitioners, can be used to confuse, obfuscate, and miscarry. The inadequate training of the police plays into this. A Dutsin Bature lawyer tells me that one of his favourite ways of having clients acquitted is to play upon police investigators' ignorance of the law that a non-English-speaking suspect must make their statement in the presence of a translator. Since police officers take the statements themselves, the fact that this law has invariably been breached gives grounds for his client's acquittal. Here, the policeman's craft has run up against a superior mastery.

Even for litigants, the courts may provide means for further complicating, not resolving, civil cases. A Fulani cattle-trader tells me of a trespass case with a major corporate landowner which has been dragging on for years, since the lawyer representing the illiterate cattle-herders has been manipulating the proceedings to make extra money from his charges. And as much as court cases can be neutralised on technicalities, they are often also endlessly deferred, by non-appearance of witnesses, constant objections, appeals, and non-enforcement of verdicts which can see dispute cases drag on for decades without final resolution. Court procedures, then, in the words not only of police but other informants, are not always capable of delivering justice that is seen to be fair.

7.3.2: *Summary punishment*

For the police, the unpredictability of legal process re-validates the body as site of control. In the face of frustrations, police often prefer their own summary methods:

Egbon is thrashing a boy of 13 or 14 years with a switch on the floor of the DCB while he and another person question him – he shakes the stick threateningly while asking questions between thrashes – the boy is squealing. Later I find those young guys who Egbon was thrashing (until the bark came off the stick) had sneaked into the police barracks from where they live nearby and tried to steal a radio from the electrician who was repairing it – they are told to go and sit behind counter – and when the next guy comes in, W/PC Rebecca tells them to collect their slippers from the old AK-chest and go! As IPO Abraham says, this is a serious offence - ‘we can even write it in the diary - and if they start down that road, what will they be by the time they fall in with their mates?’²²¹ (Fieldnotes, 2nd March 2011).

So there is corporal punishment, in the process of investigation, but in the end, no charge. This reinforces once again the educative intent of police violence. In this way process becomes punishment; having become guilty by virtue of suspicion, you are punished by virtue of investigation. And during the course of investigation, you may also be punished in idioms borrowed from traditional repertoires of community justice.

In Exhibit Keeper’s office, there is a holly-fringed photo of a thief, taken in the car park here with a TV and DVD player balanced upon on his head – he is in prison now. I ask why it is framed with holly. ‘Yes, because of Christmas. So we said let him do the Xmas in prison while others are doing theirs for house, so he will change his ways’. (22nd February 2011).

Pratten (2008) illustrates the performative repertoires that Annang vigilantes borrow from other institutions within that cultural world, such as masquerade societies, to effect public

²²¹ Note that writing in the diary, entering the world of bureaucracy, getting a criminal record and triggering formal procedures, is seen as much more serious for the offender than the thrashing they are given in leniency.

punishment. ‘*Ino ukudok* or *ntok ino* (small thieves) – are handled in a way that closely resembles the performance of *ekpo ndem* (masquerade). They are stripped naked, painted with charcoal, necklaced with a palm frond and paraded, tied at the waist, around the village and neighbouring markets. At the end of this journey, the thief is handed over to the police or to the family amid cries of *woooo ino* (‘shame, you thief’).’ The body of the thief is central as ‘the primary site of social control’ (2008; 75).

Similarly for the police, a photograph of an offender may well be a technical tool to maintain a bureaucratic record, but the manner in which its subject is displayed clearly also indexes the publicisation of shame present in vigilante practice. In like manner, and despite the illegality and obvious problems in relation to court procedure, the practice of publicly exhibiting criminal suspects once arrested is widespread policing practice in Nigeria. Notorious armed robbers, with hands tied, either dead or alive, are exhibited to journalists’ cameras at police headquarters, with their weapons laid out in front of them. The suspects are not yet convicted (nor may some be ever) but the police’s prize, the body as evidence of social control, is publicly exhibited that justice may be seen to be done.²²²

Pratten argues that as well as recognising that ‘legitimation of this vigilante activity (...) has extended beyond dissatisfaction with current levels of law and order and the failings of the Nigeria Police’ we must recognize, after Hansen and Stepputat (2001: 5) that: ‘Vigilantes seek to open spaces for themselves, and in so doing speak various ‘languages of stateness’ to legitimate their actions’. What the example above suggests is that if the public both identify failings of policing, and imitate the language of stateness to legitimate their innovated response, so too do the police implicitly recognise the failures within their own official procedures, and themselves resort to imitations of vigilante practice in order to effect results which have resonance with public ideas of popular justice.

²²² In fact the body is central to the whole process of law-enforcement. In a system reliant on material evidence and interrogation, without the body of the suspect, there is no case, so arresting *somebody* is vital.

Neither is the police's stepping outside the law to enforce popular ideas of justice confined to Nigeria. Jauregui (2012) uses the concepts of 'immediate justice' and 'police vigilantism' to capture the nature of extra-judicial 'encounter' killings by police in contemporary India. India's encounter specialists are fêted in the press. In Nigerian police practice, the public display of the armed robber is integral as proof of efficacy, as are the public aspects of punishment in vigilante practice. This, as the Comaroffs (2006) observe, is also a reversal of that separation of 'symbolic from instrumental coercion, of melodrama from rationalisation' which the modernist system of criminal justice supposedly enthroned.

So police practice, which may be at first assumed to be investigative and tied towards interlocution with the wider criminal justice system, also functions in itself as punishment, semi-public exhibition, and acknowledgement of a process which has been seen to be done. There is a work of legitimation needed in order to prove efficacy. Even in cases where the parties settle, the police are at least required to put a seal of approval on settlement by not only recording the settlement, but bringing the public matter to an appropriately ceremonious conclusion:

In the DCB, the Inspector Crime is lecturing parties to a case, as a prisoner in underpants stands incongruously against the far wall; the parties are gathered all around, he seated behind his desk and the suspect crouching on his haunches, head bowed like a supplicant in front of his desk. The Inspector is lecturing them on God and morality; 'will we go to heaven if we are seeing ourselves every day in this 'B' division?' Then (looking at me, whose presence he has just noted) he asks them – 'did I ask you for even one Naira?' They all say no. Then the complainant agrees to what has been decided, and they all go off to see the DPO. (16th June 2010).

Van Maanen asserts that teaching, both in terms of degradation ceremonies, and of morally-toned lectures, "occupies a particularly prominent position in the (US) police repertoire of possible responses". In this respect "a display of remorse is no doubt crucial to the police" (1978: 15). The Inspector Crime's homily, and the suspect's submissive response, certainly reflect this; but also index a seam of moral instruction which

audiences expect in Nigerian public pronouncements, and even in creative media products such as Nollywood movies (c.f. Baba Chinedu's sermon in *Ibro Police* which we recounted in Chapter 3). It is also interesting that the Inspector's point in dismissing the issue is aimed not only at the suspect, but at the parties to the dispute in general.

While noting the functionality of police improvisation, we should not be blind to the fact that the ethos of guilt-by-suspicion implies a great opportunity to make money for the enterprising policeman. Custody and suspicion are leverage, and leverage (backed by state power) is opportunity. During my fieldwork a respected community elder from the old town was asked to intervene in the case of a neighbour's adult son. He had paid for a seat in a bus whose other passengers were, unbeknown to him, political thugs. When the bus was stopped at a checkpoint, an AK-47 and cutlasses were discovered in the luggage, so all the passengers were arrested. My informant was enlisted to have the boy released. He told me that 'at least one good thing' was that the officer in charge of the investigation had agreed the boy was not connected with the thugs. But for my informant, this was not the end, but the start, of the process of negotiating release. To be unfortunate enough to be even an innocent suspect in such a serious incident is a costly matter;²²³ to be guilty may preclude release at all, but even the police's acknowledgement of innocence can sometimes only guarantee the possibility of negotiating for a brokered solution.

So we see from the above that police punishment by means of practice, in the course of process, is a more common mode of action than is procedural prosecution. It involves plural punishment, by means of corporal pain, submission, confinement and inconvenience, even when it does not also include money. Centred on the body and morality of the suspect, it involves degradation, education and exhibition, also serving an outward purpose of display. Neither are the elements completely separable; even the possibility of making money is not necessarily prime but integrated into the repertoires of displaying that the suspect has been taught respect. On 22nd February 2011, someone is being released:

²²³ The cost incurred could be seen as part of the punishment for coming under suspicion in the first place.

‘Come! And identify your belt. Identify your wallet.’ His friend or brother gives N100ish in small notes to the CRO, who counts, gives them back to him (refusing the amount offered) then Mama Hassan and Hussein intervenes, says ‘take them’, and the CRO tucks them under charge book. Meanwhile older Sergeant Eunice takes two N50 notes, and as the guy is putting on his belt and watch, the friend crumples up a blue or white (larger-denomination) note in his hand and takes the IPO round the back to give it to him. (...) Then Mama says ‘come, say thankyou’ (to released man) – ‘no be money now, na mouth; money no be everything’.

7.4: Conclusion

The formal purpose of a police institution may lead us to expect police casework to be oriented to the production of procedural outcomes tailored to the wider criminal justice system. Equally, the literature on alternative security provision and vigilantism in Africa may lead to us to expect a policing system which falls short, and creates space for alternatives, due to its inability to meet actual public requirements. Yet a close reading of proceedings inside ‘B’ Division shows firstly that police work here relies primarily on techniques of practice, deployed towards crafted solutions which often detour around official procedures, or short-circuit them in order to satisfy the wider systemic requirements of maintaining law and order.²²⁴ And, just as the nature of building materials dictates the nature of Djenné masons’ craft, the craft and actions the policeman employs are dictated by the limited material resources available to him.

Secondly, rather than abandoning formal policing completely, we see the public utilise it in the same way as parallel institutions, even to the point of bringing dispute resolution issues which are not strictly police matters. In fact, the craft of police work meets some of the same requirements as vigilantism, by utilising some of the same summary methods, and the same cognisance of popular values, in pursuit of efficacy and legitimacy.

²²⁴ Similarly, Jauregui (2007; 24) characterises Indian police work as a ‘juggling act’ of adherence, bending and breaking of the law in the process of serving wider ends of law enforcement.

From entering to leaving the police station, there is a constant dialogue between informal social action and formal bureaucratic procedure; the requirements of each influencing the particular use of the other. Although practice often seems to be foremost, it cannot do its work without recourse to formal procedure. At the same time, the process is fluid, though solidified into writing at certain junctures, and throughout all parties (complainant, suspect, investigating officer) deploy the agency and leverage differentially available to them to the fullest in the production of an outcome. In the process, and most visibly in dispute resolution, a police case becomes holistically a negotiation, a haggle towards a settled outcome which is then witnessed, validated, legitimised by the state in the person of the police.

This has implications for consideration of the nature of policing, and of the state-society nexus in Nigeria (and perhaps more widely in Africa and the postcolonial world). Contrary to both popular narratives and academic analyses and popular narratives which portray policing primarily as oppressive (see Hills 2000), policing as we see it here is sometimes by force or compulsion, but often a choice in a constellation of dispute-resolution and security service-providers which include both non-state institutions and other parts of the state.²²⁵ These other institutions not only have different repertoires of power, but potentially constitute different founts of sovereignty, as discussed in Chapter 1. Policing must therefore not only strive to maintain competitiveness, but to prove and re-prove its wider claims to primacy, legitimacy and monopoly.

At the same time, while vigilante practice is presumed to have taken over from policing, the police themselves are engaged not just in dispute resolution, but forms of immediate and extra-judicial justice. This contests arguments that police become increasingly redundant in the face of widespread resort to vigilantism and other legal and security pluralisms (Baker, 2004). The Comaroffs see police globally attempting to compensate for “the weakening sovereignty of nations and their borders (and) the diminishing

²²⁵ Note that many ‘traditional’ or ‘community’ institutions which are often cited as loci of parallel policing or dispute resolution – particularly traditional rulers and ward heads – were formerly explicitly incorporated as parts of the state in indirect rule; their status remains recognised by, and incompletely detached from, the formal state (see Pierce 2006).

capacity of government to control either the means of coercion or the commonweal” (2006: 293) by resort to the mystique of detective fictions. Exhibiting bodies is certainly this, but Nigerian police are also resorting to more mundane and practical solutions developed over a longer period of incomplete monopoly and resource-shortage. Their craft is a product of systemic demands, and it is oriented to new systemic goals. As continued options of formal procedure and court are not wholly abandoned, although frequently bypassed or supplemented, we see pluralism even within the state, and a system of practice which sometimes bypasses, sometimes interpenetrates and coexists with, the formal bureaucratic role and rationale of the police in criminal justice.

Bierschenk (2009) notes that the official norms of bureaucracies in Africa can be outdated, inadequate and contradictory, ill-adapted to realities and thus ‘necessitating the production of informal norms’ in the process of which officials master improvisation and bricolage. An informality is produced within the bureaucracy which exists in tension with its formal purpose. ‘A bureaucracy is not a machine but a configuration of social processes’ asserts Bierschenk, and its bureaucrats become ‘masters in the selective application of contradictory norms of varying origin’ (2009; 8).²²⁶ In summary punishment, and in settling negotiated solutions to cases, the police interpose between both courts and traditional or community institutions; the state here has been informalised, mirroring society; the state institution is not sidelined as irrelevant to social norms and popular ideas of legitimacy which promote conciliation, but re-purposed to address them.

The formal and informal can be tailored to meet each others’ needs. Here then is no complete divide between society and state, bureaucracy and practice, general law and social particularism. In implementing solutions, we can also see police officers negotiate outcomes which not only fulfil the bureaucratic requirements of the state, and the demands of the clients of policing, but their own personal instrumental agendas of accumulation, career progress and avoidance of risk. The repeated iterations and

²²⁶ This has another significant effect which we should note with reference to the next chapter. Bierschenk continues: ‘As a result, officials navigate in a context that appears to be fundamentally unpredictable and they frequently deplore this “*absence de vision prospective*”’,

enactments of practice in police work accrete and pattern into systemic principles, which come to structure action (both those of the police and of the policed public)²²⁷ as much as do laws, policies and formal bureaucratic requirements. This will be the point of departure for the next chapter.

²²⁷ It is outside the scope of this paper, but worth considering, if the notion of a ‘policed’ versus an ‘un-policed’ public would be useful in explaining the geographical and social reach of the police and the variation in who chooses to use it.

Chapter 8: Risk and Motivation in Police Work

Introduction

If the previous chapter outlined and enumerated the ways in which police, in a milieu of material limitations, rely on craft skills learned and deployed in practice, this chapter expands the frame outwards to look at the systemic imperatives into which such practices aggregate. The repeated iterations and enactments of practice in police work accrete and pattern into principles which come to structure action (both those of the police and of the policed public) as much as do laws and formal bureaucratic requirements. In practice, a case must simultaneously fulfil three separate but interdependent requirements; first, it must satisfy the complainant and deal with the matter at issue; secondly it must allow the officer to maximise their agency and personal advantage; and thirdly must avoid putting the officer at undue risk.

The chapter attempts to resolve the interplay of police officers' craft and instrumentality, within a context of upwards-facing primary accountability and a continually present potential for risk which is often uppermost in officers' minds. This interacts with management practices, which are themselves sometimes designed for instrumental and personal benefit, and sometimes to forestall, minimise, and remedy the 'known unknowns' of risk in the work of policing. The modalities of police work as discussed previously, the preoccupation with personal risk, and the evolved management practices, all combine to produce effects of the state which manifest in the public sphere.

We begin by abstracting and identifying one particular component of these interactions; the exact nature of risk and its consequences in the police world. We begin with the salience of risk, examining what police officers understand by it, and exploring the perceptions of risk which can be damaging either physically to the person or to fortune

and career, either directly or vicariously. The chapter illustrates exactly what is at stake in police officers' overriding preoccupation with career risk, with reference to the constant possibility of advancing and retarding careers and personal prospects, especially in use of informal punishments and management practices such as the system of posting.

The second part notes the nature of management as based on a duality – the combination of bureaucratic rule which accents discipline, and informalised action which has material consequences in the realm of the social and economic – and the consequent patterning of police officers' behaviour, attitudes and expectations. Management practices, which encompass institutional imperatives, personal advantage and risk mitigation, structure action - both from the top downwards, and equally subordinates' responses - in a mutually constitutive relationship, which mirrors similar situations elsewhere in the postcolonial world.

Thirdly, the chapter then illustrates the relationship between such management practices, and the motivations for police officers to carry out their work in particular ways and to particular ends. At the 'sharp end' of both events and institutional disciplinary logics, subaltern police officers also invest in diverse strategies of mitigating risks to themselves. We note the limits to disciplinary modes of managing subordinate officers, and the tendency to produce simulation, dissembling, and inertia. We conclude by noting the implications for our understanding of the wider organisation of the state, and for the meanings it generates.

8.1: A Fulani case, part two.

Let us return to the 'Fulani case' we encountered in Chapter 4. The negative attention transmitted from Abuja to the State Commissioner had eventual, if not immediate, repercussions for 'B' division's DPO, Chief Superintendent Okechukwu. When a new Superintendent (from the CP's home state, and like the CP a former Mobile man, recently 'demobilised') joined the state command, Okechukwu was ordered to vacate his post to make room for the new arrival, and was relocated to the semi-rural division of Ogidi

some 30 miles away, a backwater area with little economic activity, notorious for youth and political unrest, and with an establishment of just over 30 officers (less than 20% of 'B' division's establishment).

Some months after his reassignment, I arranged to travel with a couple of officers to visit my former DPO at his new post. Close to our destination, we encountered a group of five or six youths under the age of 20 blocking the road at a point where it was badly potholed. Carrying picks and shovels, they were ostensibly collecting contributions for their work in repairing the road, but the lack of actual repair and the sheet iron barrier they held across the only remaining paved portion made it abundantly clear that this was a politely glossed extortion.

I was travelling in the company of an out-of-uniform Assistant Superintendent and a corporal, so was prepared for a bout of aggressive status-assertion, and was thus profoundly surprised when the senior officer gave a N100 (US\$0.65) note to the youths as demanded. Registering my surprise, the corporal (driving) furnished the explanation "it is just because of God" (i.e. it was a voluntary act of charity) whilst the senior officer bashfully added that if we hadn't given them something, we could have been there for half an hour. My second surprise was on clearing the roadblock, to discover that we were less than 200 yards from our final destination, the police station.

At first keen to ask the DPO what exactly was permitting the youths to operate an illegal roadblock so close to the station, I soon decided not to, as the answer became abundantly clear. After welcoming us, CSP Okechukwu showed me his brand-new police station, and then pointed out its predecessor, the smoke-blackened ruin next door. It had been set alight by angry youths during the 2007 election, when it had also housed the local headquarters of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

As he described his division, a picture emerged of a hotbed of unemployment and political thuggery, where numerous aspirants, each with their own connections to higher authorities, enlisted youths in vying for limited state offices and goods. He further

outlined the limited human resources available to him; only around half of the officers (15 persons) were of sufficient length of service and rank to be allowed to carry weapons.

The tricky balancing act of policing that area became abundantly clear: With such limited human resources and such a politically vulnerable position, which managerial officer (especially one whose fingers had already been so recently burned) would risk provoking local youths to unrest? Far better to leave them to the relatively victimless crime of petty extortion from passing traffic, which at least provides a relatively peaceful opportunity for them to support themselves, while incurring relatively little trouble for the police and the DPO in terms of potential risks to body or career.²²⁸ From such a position in the outer darkness of the policing career, an officer can do little but try to keep things quiet, lobby his superiors, if he so chooses, and await hoped-for eventual rehabilitation. As we left, I turned to the ASP with me and remarked how close the youths' roadblock had been to the police station. 'I was praying you wouldn't mention that to him' she said 'it would have been in very bad taste'.

The story reveals two things; the first, public order as a balancing act, the finely negotiated limits to the supposedly authoritarian police, the careful art of policing with scarce resources and knowing when not to push the issue; we have already discussed this in previous chapters. The second is the salience of, and preoccupation with, issues of risk, which loom large in the policeman's worldview.

8.2: Risk in Police Work

The constant presence of risk as a preoccupation – as both a capricious unknown quantity in the background and as a constant and explicit reference point– indicate that it merits closer examination. By looking at what officers say about risk, and what can happen to them, we can break risk to the police down into its different manifestations. Risk is of

²²⁸ In fact the militant potential of youth in Gida State is even felt to be a risk by the same local politicians who empower them; a state-wide community policing programme to engage in dialogue with youth groups was suspended after complaints from the state's Local Government Chairmen, who were extremely nervous of the potential consequences of any such gatherings.

course not a concept limited to the policing world. Everyday life in Nigeria as it is experienced by most people is fraught with nebulous, unpredictable and only hazily-known risks, located especially in particular times, places, persons and modes of action; travel is a risk; situations of unfamiliarity are risk; and most of all, other people are a source of risk. This latter clearly relates to and articulates with a general milieu of low trust in society notable in many other spheres of vernacular culture. But risk also manifests in ways which are specific to police officers and their work. Not only the nature of police work, but also the institutional modes of responding to and managing problems, can generate unique risk factors. The following sections elucidate this with reference to what police officers themselves say and do about situations of risk. Many (but not all) of the insights here documented are drawn from particularly illuminating conversations on this subject with a senior officer in the Police Mobile Force (MOPOL), whose public order interventions are fraught with risks both physical, reputational and political.

8.2.1: Physical Risk

The most obvious risk in police work is direct physical risk to the officer. Policing worldwide is a dangerous profession, and no less so in Nigeria, with high levels of armed crime, dilapidated infrastructure, and frequent political and communal unrest. Deaths in the line of duty, whether by violence or accident, are common; and many more die prematurely as a result of infections and preventable diseases, medical negligence, and road accident during travel. For police officers practicing a dangerous profession in a country where average life expectancy is 51,²²⁹ it is a sadly common experience to receive a brief SMS telling that a classmate has been killed, perhaps in a night bus accident, or by armed robbers. Outside police stations, pasted-up A4 photocopied sheets ‘In Memory’ or ‘Gone too soon’ with a photograph and caption, sometimes accompanied by the widow’s bank details for those who want to make a donation, are a common sight. Sometimes police fatalities themselves arise from the consequences of bureaucratic police practice – prior to my arrival a popular DSP in Gida State had bled to death on the

²²⁹ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nigeria_statistics.html accessed 21st June 2012.

floor of a private clinic while begging doctors to treat him, which they refused to do without a police report.²³⁰

My fieldwork period also coincided with the very first stages of the Boko Haram insurgency; this began to hit home when one day in my company an Inspector from Borno State received a call from home, telling her that a family friend, also serving, had been followed home and assassinated. ‘Normal’ crime too involves high-grade weaponry; rockets and explosives can be used during bank robberies; during the writing of this thesis, two officers with whom I worked during fieldwork were shot dead by criminals in separate incidents. Fatality is even more of a preoccupation in the big city: Lagos State Governor Babatunde Fashola recently stated that in the last four years, 603 police officers had been killed in the line of duty in the Nigeria’s commercial capital.²³¹ Police officers know the criminal geography of Nigeria – which places are notoriously ‘hot’, and though (as we have seen), some seek postings to crime hotspots such as the commercial centres of the South-East as places in order to really learn policing, and acquire ‘relevance’ and money, others actively avoid them. On 9th June 2010, a long-serving rank-and-file officer tells a group of us:

Even though I have two years to retirement, if they post me to Anambra I will tender my resignation (i.e. and give up rights to pension) – that they mean to turn my wife into a widow.

Life is also hard for those who survive close encounters with mortality. In March 2010 I am with the Commandant of the Mobile Squadron which is based in the barracks behind ‘B’ Division, a neat military figure in olive-green combat fatigues with clipped hair and moustache. He calls me:

²³⁰ Incredibly, at a point it became routine for hospitals in Nigeria to refuse to treat emergency cases of wounding without first obtaining a police report, lest the doctors themselves became suspects. Despite plentiful orders to reverse the process from successive Inspectors-General, the practice remains widespread and thus hugely increases the likelihood of a person dying even if they do reach hospital.

²³¹ Joke Kujenya ‘Idle hands, devil’s workshop’ in *The Nation* newspaper, accessed online 19th December 2011 <http://www.thenationonline.ng.net/2011/index.php/news/30265-%E2%80%98idle-hands,-devil%E2%80%99s-workshop%E2%80%99.html>

‘Come and see this man’ (he shouts) ‘Sergeant!’ and to me, asks ‘How does a policeman walk in your place? Is it like this?’ He makes the sergeant walk past me, showing a disabling limp. ‘See a man the police has spoiled.’

The Commandant continues to expound on the subject of injury, taking care to impress upon me that for those who are injured, ‘except your colleagues support you’, they can expect to be ‘on the scrapheap’ and will usually be posted out of the favoured Mobile career stream. To further demonstrate what awaits an injured officer, he even sets up two interviews for me, and allows me to use his own office for privacy.

One is paraphrased here to illustrate. It concerns a sergeant of 18 years service. On 14th April 2003 he was on a joint road patrol on with conventional (i.e. non-mobile) police and army. When returning at the evening close of their shift, they were overtaken by a luxury bus from the State Polytechnic, which saw an oncoming car, swerved and hit the police vehicle. The police pickup somersaulted. Of the eight people inside, there were only three survivors. Because Gida State’s hospital was on strike, the sergeant had to seek treatment successively at two hospitals in neighbouring states. From there, he eventually travelled to his family home in Taraba (336km/209 miles away) to see a traditional bonesetter. He was off work for three years, during which time he received his salary, but no contribution towards medical fees. He estimated the medical expenses at N100,000 for the first hospital, N70,000 for the second, and N70,000 for the traditional healer, (which last was paid by his family) totalling N240,000, or US\$1,478. He alleged that the bus’s owner paid compensation to the State Police Command but that ‘one naira did not reach me’. ²³²

²³² To the hardships related in this testimony must be factored in the sergeant’s additional loss of earnings by being unavailable for deployment during the three-year period and since. Note also that the testimony above comes from an injured officer continuing to serve with a Mobile unit seven years after being rendered unfit, showing that sympathetic commanders and colleagues do improvise to provide job security and welfare for those without alternative safety nets. Thus the informal ‘familial’ aspect of the institution is reinforced in compensating for its formal failings. Another interesting avenue of enquiry would have been to see what role hometown associations play in providing welfare support; comparison might provide interesting insights into the importance of professional versus communal identities and support networks.

The police institution does not simply neglect officers injured in the line of duty; there are insurance schemes designed to pay out on loss of life or injury. As in most matters, the institution has admirable capacity on paper. In practice, however, claims and payments can be delayed by evasive or fraudulent activities by the private-sector insurer or persons in the administrative hierarchy, which mean that claimants often do not receive a claim on time or in full, if at all. In such circumstances, it is easy to see how those officers who do not possess the reassurance of a fatalistic outlook or a naturally confrontational personality may shy away from placing their duties before their personal safety.²³³

But even outside their workplace and working lives, NPF personnel often feel no safer than other members of the public. In fact they may even feel *less* safe, as dealing with crime and misfortune on a daily basis they remain constantly aware of their vulnerability and potential victimhood. Neither does their police status itself confer any guarantee of safety once outside the confines of duty hours, especially as in order to limit the potential abuse, loss or misuse of police arms, NPF officers are not permitted to take weapons home.

So police officers are just as vulnerable as anyone else, especially if they live outside barracks. A female senior officer of my acquaintance was forced to move house after being continually shadowed by a stalker; and I also met a constable recently transferred to 'B' division, who was clearly traumatised and unwilling to leave the station after she was kidnapped and robbed in the bush by an *okada* (motorbike-taxi) rider on arriving in the town for the first time.

Moreover, police officers are often especially selected as victims of violence if they are involved in, for instance, an armed robbery on public transport. Therefore some go to lengths to hide their occupational identity while off-duty. I am told that some officers don't like to carry their police ID card when they travel on personal business; to carry it is

²³³ As an outsider to the world of policing, I was surprised to find how vulnerable officers feel in the course of their duty. This is not limited to the Nigerian context; when I asked a British police acquaintance which question he would ask were he in the position of doing my research, he answered 'to find out how safe they feel while doing their job'

a big risk as ‘armed robber will kill you straight’. In the 35°C heat of Dutsin Bature’s dry season, some police constables regularly travelled to work wearing overcoats in an attempt to hide their uniform. And an officer who came into the Community Policing office to read the copy of police in-house newspaper *The Dawn* refused to take it with him when offered, as he did not want to be so easily identified as a policeman. This acute awareness of risk, especially whilst living among the general population in middle- and low-rent areas of town, also found expression in frequent complaints about grossly insufficient accommodation in barracks.

Inconvenience is the ever-present junior sibling of danger. Irksome if not life-threatening inconvenience is an even bigger constant in police life than is life-threatening risk. As subaltern subjects, even at the higher ranks police are likely to find themselves summarily deployed according to the requirements of the job, but often without the implementation of accompanying measures meant to cushion the impact. So while ‘special duties’ and temporary transfers are commonplace, so is non-appearance or shortfall of the funds set aside to facilitate them. The MOPOL commandant gives examples; men transferred to Abuja for 30 days special duty, expected to fund their own transport and given N6,000 feeding allowance (enough for a single cheap meal of N200 per day); men sent East for Anambra State’s election, given one tin of beans as ‘dry ration’ between two men for five days.²³⁴ The inconvenience is writ larger when it comes to permanent posting; any police officer may potentially one day wake to find themselves ordered to report for duty at the far end of the country. In Dutsin Bature’s PMF squadron officers were collecting money for a police wife to visit her husband who had been transferred first to distant Borno, then Delta state, without leave or means to see his family en route. Physical risks, hardships and inconveniences, then are ever-present factors. But they are not perhaps as constant an influence on behaviour as is the preoccupation with the nebulous issue of career risk.

²³⁴ The shortfall in allowances also obviously heightens the likelihood that police officers deployed on such duties will be receptive to cash inducements offered by interested parties who wish to influence events.

8.2.2 Misfortune and career risk

In the State Command's Administrative Office, located next to the CP's private office, a printed A4 poster is tacked to the wall above Inspector Kenny's desk. It reads:

*IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHO YOUR FRIENDS ARE, WAIT UNTIL YOU FUCK UP
AND SEE WHO IS STILL STANDING BY YOUR SIDE. Signed DSP A---- O-----*

We have already seen how apparently routine police work can embed unforeseen risk to fortune and career, as parties to a case attempt to leverage social relationships and situations which may bring the police officer into unexpected controversy, disrepute, or personal danger. In such a particularist social context, where private social capital often trumps or at least contests with the formal-legal citizenship order, the police officer faces a huge amount of career risk embedded in who precisely they are dealing with and what can happen if they get it wrong. Mishandling a criminal complaint by a high-status person, or equally mishandling a high-status person's person, or that of someone intimately connected with them can bring unexpected and swift career reversal. CSP Okechukwu learnt that to his cost, and when we visited him at Ogidi division was still rueing the path by which he found himself there, telling us bitterly that 'the Fulani man is next to the cow in sense.'

Sometimes, however, the fuckup is much less complex in origin. On 19th February 2010, we are sitting under the shade of a small tree in the heat of the afternoon. Conversation, as ever, hinges on the latest gossip of the command. Last week an officer was tricked out of their weapon by a car full of people who stopped to ask for directions; when he drew close to answer them, they grabbed him and took his gun. This serious matter, which has of course been kept as quiet as possible, is reputed to be punishable with a N300,000 fine.²³⁵ 'That's why they say' concludes my informant sagely, 'you're supposed to maintain your distance, and be vigilant'.

²³⁵ The amount is nearly a year's pay for an early-career constable.

Unpredictable events such as these can ruin an unlucky officer's career at a stroke, an act of god or carelessness with lasting consequences and limited prospects for redemption. Sometimes, however, the officers deemed responsible for a fuckup will be given responsibility for remedying it, and a grace period in which to do so. When a pair of prisoners escaped from 'B' Division's cells overnight, the duty CRO and station guard, on whose watch it had happened, were given a week (until one of the escapees' scheduled court appearance) to recapture them or face disciplinary procedures.

8.2.3: *Vicarious risk*

Incidents like the above are caprices of misfortune, things which can happen to anyone as a result of their own lack of skill or luck, and as such are digested by others as admonitory and educational tales; lore as learning. The misfortune officers really resent, however, is vicarious risk – that finger of blame and suspicion which can fall upon one person entirely as a result of the actions of another. This will normally happen because something has happened on someone's beat or under their purview, for which a scapegoat must be quickly found in order to satisfy the demand for accountability from above or outside. Due to the hierarchical and unidirectional nature of information flows in the police institution, where only orders flow downwards and only compliance flows upwards, it takes an officer of rare audacity and backbone to resist calls to identify a scapegoat,²³⁶ more commonly the buck is simply passed down the chain.

As vicarious risk implicates things which happen indirectly under an officer's responsibility, the scope for it, and preoccupation with it, grows with seniority; the job of the managerial officer with hundreds of constables, corporals and inspectors under their command, but very much *not* directly under their supervision, is replete with the daily possibility of incurring this kind of vicarious blame, and bereft of ways to hedge against the unforeseen.²³⁷ Therefore, a senior officer must learn to live with the possibility of

²³⁶ Compare this with the primacy of quickly producing an arrested suspect as the central and *a priori* aim of criminal investigations.

²³⁷ In fact a prominent policing academic and advisor at a Chatham House round-table *Nigeria's Police Force: Corruption and Reform* (15th October 2010) even argued, somewhat hyperbolically, that the

unheralded episodes which can have profound consequences: The Mobile commander talks with feeling of his friend, demoted from Deputy Superintendent to Assistant Superintendent, while his classmates are Assistant Commissioners by now, because someone was killed by an officer under his command, and asks me rhetorically ‘is it fair?’²³⁸

Dutsin Bature’s neighbouring ‘A’ division, which includes a junction on a national transport route, and a busy market right next to it, offered plentiful opportunities for vicarious risk to derail the DPO’s career. VIP convoys of politicians and government officials passing through to Abuja were a prime source. One day such a convoy, accompanied by its own detachment of MOPOL from outside the state, encountered a problem by the junction’s motor park.²³⁹ In the process, one of the MOPOL escorts shot and killed a bystander before the convoy moved on, leaving the local police to deal with the consequences. Due to the outpouring of public anger, the CP detained ‘A’ Division’s DPO at the State Headquarters. Another senior officer drew my attention to this as an example of how blame is allotted instead of addressing the actual problem – a situation made possible because no matter who was responsible, ‘to the public, it’s all ‘police’.

In fact the tendency of Dutsin Bature’s CP to make quick resort to vicarious liability and the culture of scapegoating was particularly resented by some officers in the command, who keenly felt the humiliations endured by fellow officers, such ‘A’ Division’s well-respected veteran DPO, who was embroiled a second time and ended up ‘behind the counter’ at ‘B’ Division just a few weeks before his retirement.

This time the issue was a serious road accident that had occurred on the Abuja route. By a quirk of communication, the Inspector-General had heard about it shortly after it

autonomy and unsupervisability inherent in everyday police work itself makes effective institutional reform impossible.

²³⁸ In a competitive professional milieu of limited trust and plentiful suspicion, it is also tempting for officers to connect such misfortunes with the work of unseen enemies; thus an Inspector detained at HQ on suspicion of allowing theft from detained cement trucks confides in me that he believes this has happened at the behest of his former boss in the State CID, who hates him and has been waiting for a chance to get him in trouble.

²³⁹ A passenger transport depot, where ‘bush taxi’ shared cars to set destinations load passengers.

occurred. He called the CP, who was not yet aware of it, and thus on answering the call felt he was made to look incompetent. For this embarrassment, I was told, the DPO nearly lost his post, and was only rehabilitated after eminent community members went to 'beg' the CP to let him stay until his imminent retirement.

Significantly, this event was related to me by a constable in 'B' division, underlining that these vicarious falls from grace were, like everything else, common knowledge and the subject of gossip throughout the State Command; and thus all the more painfully resented by their subjects who already smart under the perceived unfairness. Neither is this exclusively a concern for managerial officers. Shortly before my arrival in Dutsin Bature, a constable shot a member of the public in a crowded market. His former colleagues told me he been arguing with a mob of local youths in the old town area, who then attempted to take his weapon off him, which would have both put him in danger and meant severe punishment for losing a police weapon. He fired at them in panic, killing one person.

The aftermath of the case is instructive. This was the second fatal shooting by police in a short time in the town, so in order to calm public tempers the Commissioner of Police decided to make an example of the constable. After being going through police disciplinary procedures, he was dismissed, prosecuted by a criminal court and imprisoned. Although this met with public approval, serving officers related the incident to me as an example of unfair treatment and of the unmerited, unforeseeable vicarious risk which plagues police careers. They felt that the severe punishment, for what they considered an act of rational self-defence, was brought about on account of the earlier unrelated case, and the public backlash (and thus local political authorities' disapproval reflected on the CP) that the relatively lenient disciplinary treatment of the earlier shooter had incurred.²⁴⁰ While the public may feel they are policed by a force which is only minimally accountable to them, as we have seen earlier, it is interesting that the police

²⁴⁰ This also demonstrates that there is a level of (usually unacknowledged) public accountability in respect of police actions, which can be transmitted directly, or via the local political authorities, especially the state Governor, who will if called upon to take action and will likely exert pressure on the CP. In fact, this feedback can represent a balance of forces more in the public's favour than the observer may at first appreciate, or than the analyst might discern from evaluating the public, media and policy studies discourses.

conversely feel they are vulnerable to misdirected and populist ad-hoc accountability, making the police often wary of the public, even if (like CSP Okechukwu) few police officers would ever openly admit to it.

8.2.4 The snakes and ladders of police fortunes

Note that in what precedes, contrary to the popular imagining of police officers' complete impunity for misdemeanours committed against the public, as related in Chapter 3, there are in fact consequences. But rather than being formal and public, often they are internal punishments, such as unfavourable postings and transfers, which are comprehensible most clearly in the internal registers of the police system of values, merit and advancement. Note too, that in the incidents of career risk related above, what is at stake is not, as in matters of direct physical risk, simply the misfortune itself.

Instead, what officers fear is a hybrid outcome of the incident or event and the institutional response to it. Young (1991) underlines that in a British police career, fear of the 'wheels coming off' – of uncontrollable and controversial consequences which may bring the police institution, and thus the officer's seniors, into disrepute – is often the prime preoccupation in subjects' situated strategic negotiation of everyday challenges. Thus responses to crime and public order incidents are formed not just in cognisance of the direct response necessitated by the incident, but by an influential consciousness of how it will look from 'above'. The equivalent preoccupation in the Nigerian context is sometimes referred to as 'embarrassment' – a choice of terminology which reflects the acute sensitivity to social status and hierarchy valued by the institution and its office-holders, within a wider society where public performance of rank and respect are heavily accented. Management responses to controversies are tailored to the curtailment of controversy and the minimisation of embarrassment. A typical routine strategy is to immediately transfer and replace a DPO or other executive manager who has presided over an episode in which deteriorating relations with the public have embarrassed the force; a fresh face is a key part of the effort to rebuild relations. This is the fate encountered by CSP Okechukwu after the 'Fulani case', and narrowly avoided by the

DPO of 'A' Division above. This also has a practical utility in separating the officer in question from the environment where they could continue to do damage, and at the same time punishing them by exile. Thus the forlorn constable I meet at the remote post in Gada Biu has been sent there after Inspector Daniel at Dogonyaro sub-station discovers he has tipped-off a suspect that the police are looking for. Such administrative punishment-by-posting has the advantage of being fast, flexible and if needs be, reversible; and as such sidesteps the constraints of formal procedure. It also bypasses the difficulty of finding concrete evidence for a misdemeanour which has been skilfully covered-up but which everyone knows has been committed. Equally, it also references a non-formal register of values – since all postings of the same rank are in theory equal, a bad posting is only a punishment *informally*, in its substitution of income opportunities, comfort, and the ability to mix with people of status, with discomfort, penury and boredom.

In fact, even when there is no specific case against an officer, the transfer is routinised as a failsafe standard operating procedure. In June 2010 I hear that a friend in the bomb squad, who recently transferred to an oil-rich Niger Delta state, has already been transferred again, to another Delta state, apparently because of an explosion which happened at the Government House shortly after his arrival. I ask a former colleague in Dutsin Bature's bomb squad why he was transferred to what after all was not a punishment posting. The Inspector answers:

'No, they even want to issue query to him.²⁴¹ But it's not a punishment posting, they just do like that. Like if anything happen at Government House (here) now, they will transfer them. It's in case of insider.' (9th June 2010)

Such episodic ups and downs add an element of unpredictability to a police career which officers struggle to mitigate. Sometimes it may be possible to cushion the effects of intended punishment with the help of allies external – such as the elders who came to 'beg' for the DPO – or internal: Inspector Kenny complains to me of the officer who has

²⁴¹ A query is a disciplinary procedure common to most government bureaucracies in Nigeria, asking the person queried to give a satisfactory explanation for their actions or face sanction.

not ‘remembered’ him since he used his position to help shield him from a disciplinary investigation ordered from Abuja. But often events are entirely out of the officer’s control. The police officer lives in fear of the episode that can ‘spoil your file’.²⁴² The Mobile commander’s personal lament, for instance, is that his career was held back by a misplaced signal. Having transferred from Abia to Gida State PMF, three years later he got a signal that he was supposed to have been posted to Jos Staff College (i.e. not in the PMF at all).²⁴³ He responded saying he was in PMF Gida and had been for three years, and that any signal to the contrary had never reached him, and he ‘stood to be corrected’ on the issue. The only reply was a note on the file ‘is it the IG that will correct you?’ Because of that, he said, his promotion was held up for two years, leading him to petition the Police Service Commission. They eventually ruled that he was being punished without reason, at which he eventually got his promotion, backdated by two years, in 2010, but without the accrued back-pay.

It may help to think of the wider career of a Nigerian police officer (especially a senior officer) as the board game Snakes and Ladders – slow and routine progress along the board is interrupted by capricious throws of the dice, which may either boost an officer’s rapid advance beyond their expectations, or land them on a snake which busts them back down behind their peers and hopes. But as career risk is a combined product of incident and management, it therefore necessitates our further examination of management practices themselves.

²⁴² And equally in hope of the lucky coincidence which helps them, for example, to come to the notice of an influential senior officer or public figure.

²⁴³ What is significant here is the gap in prestige and earnings between a Mobile posting and the denigrated ‘backwater’ of Staff College.

8.3: Management and Motivation

Police job is a good job, but we ourselves make it to be a sufferhead job.²⁴⁴

Police management, beyond the mastery of routine bureaucratic procedures, is also centrally concerned with the management of risk. Sometimes this is embedded in standardised practice. For instance, in order to minimise the risk of accidental or hotheaded shooting of members of the public, it is a standard rule not to issue firearms to officers of less than three years' service; after three years, when they will be experienced constables and corporals, they are expected to have developed the experience and judgement to be better-trusted.²⁴⁵ Mostly, however, the management of risk in the police is responsive and reactive, as in the incidents related above.

8.3.1: Personal Direct Management

Risk is also productive of a tendency to restrict juniors' formal room for initiative and to reserve decision-making at the highest practicable level – as a police friend tells me when I am lamenting an acquaintances' inability to get satisfactory service from the counter staff at his local station, often 'you have to go up to go down'. In April 2010, I am paying a courtesy call on a friend, a Chief Superintendent in charge of a large Lagos division with over 300 personnel. His phone buzzes with an SMS, which he reads and then calls for the S.O., telling him:

'Someone sent a text saying "one Sergeant Richard from this division just swindled my friend of 4k, I don't believe I have to make this a matter for the CP" – it came from the Area Commander - do we have any Sergeant Richard?'

²⁴⁴ Assistant Superintendent, Dutsin Bature Traffic Division, 16th February 2010. The ASP, an old man nearing retirement, uses the evocative archaic pidgin expression to describe an arduous and stressful experience.

²⁴⁵ They may unfortunately however have forgotten the marksmanship and safe weapon handling they learned at the training school, but that is another story.

The S.O replies ‘No sir.’ Therefore, they conclude, it must be someone from the autonomous SARS unit which shares the building. This sort of thing, the CSP says, is always happening. He means the confusion, but I note instead the prevalence of having to deal with personal complaints from offended ‘big’ people. This prompts us to recognise the heavy, if necessarily intermittent, reliance on personal direct management; the personal intervention and supervision by senior officers which is enacted as and when a matter becomes of consequence. If the job of a DPO still is, at times, akin to the (back-seat, supervisory) regimental soldiering described by the colonial-era officer Eates in Chapter 1, at others it demands the most personal of direct intervention, as after all, direct accountability will be demanded from the senior officer by the police hierarchy, and upon it rests the fate of the senior officer’s career.²⁴⁶

The above also highlights that a large part of even very senior executive officers’ work (up to and above the level of Commissioner) is to carry out specific and particular tasks for different people, and be perpetually ready for situation response. Even the country’s Inspector-General, as well as being responsible for institutional management and policy, will be called to account for or take charge of specific incidents and issues. As, in the final analysis, the political leadership do not place much faith in the subordinate units to carry out their duty without the personal intervention of the IG, he thus must additionally act as the ‘DPO’ for the whole country.²⁴⁷

In fact the tendency is self-reinforcing, as equally risk-averse subordinates frequently learn to take their cue only from the direct orders of the senior, rather than proceeding automatically and procedurally, as we shall further explore below. This reinforces both internal and external expectations of ‘Oga-ism’ – the personalisation of authority in the

²⁴⁶ Personal direct management as a terminology invokes an echo of Mbembe’s ‘private indirect government’: While direct management is more an evolved functional outcome than a deliberate style of rule, and therefore I have not employed Mbembe’s concept directly, it does involve the entangling of public power and private sovereignty which his concept embeds. (2001; 66-101)

²⁴⁷ In the televised handover session of Inspector-General Okiro to Ringim, the IG was presented with a wooden silhouette map of Nigeria. Viewers were told in voiceover that this represents the area for which he is responsible, given over to his charge.

boss (Oga) and their personal disposition, rather than rules or procedures.²⁴⁸ Thus, eventually, is reached today a situation where supposedly regular routine functions such as recruitment and promotion regularisations are in fact only carried out through periodic and specifically ordered ‘exercises’.²⁴⁹ Equally, the fact that supposedly routine promotion *is* done as an occasional exercise, means that when such long-awaited events occur, subordinates tend to attribute them primarily to the munificence of the particular IG, rather than as a procedural function of the institution, thus repersonalising institutional power.

8.3.2: *Discipline as management*

The mixture of a hierarchical and restrictive institution, where instructions flow downward and accountability upward, with the ever-present latent potential for career-destroying risk, produces particular dominant kinds of managerial mindsets. Prime among them is an accent on discipline. That ‘police is a discipline institution’ is axiomatic, and the internal disciplinary code is the usual means to redress the plentiful unintentional or intentional shortcomings of junior officers. ‘A’ Division’s CSP Okechukwu (at least before his fall from grace) was known as a hard man, a strict disciplinarian, who did not shirk from using administrative punishments such as putting officers inside the cell or behind the counter. In early March 2010, for example, I note that:

²⁴⁸ *Oga* is a Yoruba word meaning boss which has entered vernacular Nigerian English usage. Bown (2010) observes that junior police officers in Ethiopia are also reluctant to take decisions, which he attributes as common to party-states where decision-making was reserved in party officials and ‘wrong decisions were severely punished’. Sometimes, too, in an institution where the dealings of seniors and colleagues may be opaque and tied to unseen and personal agendas, sticking to procedure, rather than deviating from it, may equally be a route to downfall. Consider this true story: A senior officer working at national headquarters is detailed to research a particular procurement requirement. He researches and recommends a particular product, available from a range of suppliers. He is then directed from above to use a certain preferred bidder. The products arrive, he inspects them, finds them unsatisfactory for purpose, and makes a report to that effect to his superiors, upon which he finds himself transferred to head border patrol (a minor command and career backwater), where he must wait for a change of IG before he is rehabilitated into an operational post.

²⁴⁹ Such exercises also have the convenient attribute of allowing extraordinary capital expenditure.

Bilikisu is behind the counter for abandoning post, and the evidence is she was not reachable on phone and went off to do private business, having signed in for night duty and bunked off.

Sometimes, the O/C SARS tells me, as many as half of those in the cells may be officers on disciplinary punishment. All senior officers have their quirks – some are sticklers for cleanliness in the station, others for correct uniform, or timeliness.²⁵⁰ But often, discipline is more complex than the simple coupling of misdeameanour-and-punishment. Jauregui identifies discipline as a trope which not only controls the behaviour of junior officers, but also subjects them to particular possibilities of exploitation while severely limiting their options for redress. In Uttar Pradesh, she says, constables feel ‘humiliated and exploited as servants and slaves under the guise of maintaining discipline in performing their duty. Many of them do not see their being disciplined as part of a process of learning the “right ways” to be part of a greater whole; instead they understand that they are considered inferior as subjects’ (2010; 227). Furthermore, ‘the “dictatorship of [senior] officers” allows refusal of leave, loss of allowances, or the enforced toleration of barely tolerable living conditions’ (2010; 226). Discipline, while ensuring conformity to standards and performance expectations, also provides ways for the managers of the institution to more fully own and possess the labour of their subordinates, silence their attempts at formal contestation, and ensure that their will (whether or not it is contiguous with the official intentions of the institution) is carried out.²⁵¹

This disciplinary subjectivity equally applies in Nigeria, where it is more onerous on some police than others.²⁵² MOPOL, says Dutsin Bature’s squadron commander, are luckier than many because of the potential for appeal to their dual command structure (to their own DIG Operations in Abuja, as well as to the CP of the state) but ordinary

²⁵⁰ And some too are notoriously slovenly, lazy, greedy or weak, and all these reputations spread quickly through the intimate institutional world.

²⁵¹ For Jauregui, this is how police become ‘subalterns of the state’, uniquely disempowered in the modality of their membership of a supposedly powerful state class and apparatus, as explored in Chapter 6.

²⁵² Remember too that Nigeria has a long history of hierarchical social relations using ideologies of kinship, servitude and fealty within which labour relations are embedded and by which labour freedom is constrained, so to possess the labour of a subordinate beyond the bounds of formal rules is a habituated practice.

divisional police are in effect totally subject to the authority of the CP, so dare not complain. The heightened personalised institutional powers of public office particular to the postcolony may be central to the particular manifestations of disciplinary management. This is clearer if we understand that the postcolonial state is not just a continuation of colonial hierarchies and autocracies but a reworking and *intensification* of their most unequal aspects. The MOPOL commander contrasted his own police ‘upbringing’ under a British-trained officer, to the norms of Nigerian hierarchical relationships:

‘In the UK, we were taught that they relate – this is my colleague, this is my colleague (gesturing to officers sitting on nearby bench) but here is more master-servant, or do I say master-animal? If you, a constable, are *here* (gestures to spot right next to him, to indicate an inappropriate proximity of subordinate to superior) you will die and go to hell’.

Such relationships combine in particular ways with the abuses which become possible within them. Value-extracting abuses of juniors become more possible when the strictures of disciplinary action limit their ability to appeal against it, so if a senior officer diverts money meant for subordinates’ transport, for instance, there is little they can say. And because the policing job must be done, within the framework of orders backed by discipline which leave no room for argument, lack of resources is not a reason not to carry out duties. Thus officers use their own phones, motorbikes, petrol to do their jobs, a factor which becomes a salient part of their subaltern consciousness. As the MOPOL commander continued:

‘We use junior officer more or less as a tool; or an animal. When he goes to road (mimes an officer raising his rifle barrel, and shouting stop, park well!) he will be thinking first of that 300 naira he took out from pocket to reach that place.’

8.3.3: Management and the arts of resistance: Discipline and dissembling at the roadside

Just as in Jauregui’s India, the particular managerial styles and performance of senior officers are watched closely from below, and understood in particular ways. A mobile

corporal guarding the CP's house later tells me, for example, his approving opinion of the commandant I have been speaking to:

'He will tell you go to so-so place, if you see someone with gun, fire him, collect the gun; if you see someone with cutlass, fire him, collect the cutlass, don't worry, I am behind you.'²⁵³

In this context, then (and in stark contrast to the human rights discourse) the subordinate approves that his boss is, in the MOPOL terminology, an 'operations man', a leader of integrity who doesn't leave his men unprotected in order to preserve himself from risk and controversy. So the leadership style which wins approval here is about the subordinates' feeling protected and empowered to carry out their orders. More often, however, the narrative is one in which the senior officer oppresses, and the subordinate evades as best they can. Jauregui illustrates the dynamic, and its implications, in a passage worth quoting at length due to its strong relevance to the Nigerian situation:

Constables will often adapt, and sometimes even advance, by engaging in unofficial modes of responding to their plight—what some might call resistance, what others might call survival, and what still others might call corruption, cronyism, or indiscipline. Constables wield their own "weapons of the weak" (cf., Scott 1985) including, but not limited to: foot-dragging; falsifying evidence or other data; taking voluntary leave (unnecessarily); taking bribes for seniors and under-reporting the actual loot to pocket some extra themselves, or "doing *jugaad*" and taking the help of a powerful politician or local *neta* (leader) or "system operator" of some other sort, who is sympathetic to them for personal or political reasons, such as shared familial, caste or religious affiliation. Of course, if such practices have any effect at all, they only render temporary "solutions" or satisfactions, not any sort of structural change or improvement. And beyond mere inertia, such practices have detrimental effects on a security infrastructure that is already sagging under the weight of corruption, politicization, and brutalization (2010; 227-228).

²⁵³ 'Fire' means to shoot.

An absolutely equivalent example of central importance in the Nigerian context is the problem of supervising ‘road work’. Throughout Nigeria, police checkpoints on roads, ostensibly deployed for crime control reasons, quickly become opportunities for officers to extort money from traffic, especially commercial transport. They are one of the prime loci wherein a negative public perception of the police is reinforced, at the same time as being one of the most lucrative opportunities for officers to make additional income (see Chapter 3). Public perception is that demanding money at checkpoints takes place as part of a structured revenue-farming practice of ‘returns’ in which a portion of the money gathered is remitted to seniors, even according to set targets. This would provide one plausible explanation why the practice has proved so hard to stamp out in its most lucrative heartlands, the highways between eastern Nigeria’s commercial centres, despite occasional attempts by past IGs. Most recently, shortly after assuming office in January 2012, Inspector General M.D. Abubakar announced the removal of all police roadblocks in the country, part of a raft of measures intended to reorient and restore public confidence in the police. Yet although this has been widely effective, shortly after the initial order media and web forums on policing began listing complaints from areas (notably in parts of the South-East, Rivers State and Lagos) where officers had disregarded the instruction and were continuing with checkpoint extortion.²⁵⁴ It seems that far from being evenly implemented everywhere according to the principles of a rational centralised bureaucracy, the directive had somewhere lost its power. A closer look may illustrate the power of the aggregated ‘powerless’, and suggest a more nuanced picture than simply assuming duplicity and disingenuousness by the police institution.

Contrary to popular myth, on occasion the NPF can and does try to catch and punish perpetrators of checkpoint extortion. Early in my fieldwork, I am told that the Inspector-General’s Monitoring Unit caught the last ASP of Dutsin Bature’s ‘E’ division collecting money on the road. I am also told that the Monitoring Unit must have been tipped off, as they went straight to where they were keeping money in the bush and picked it up. As a

²⁵⁴ For instance <http://www.nigeriapolicewatch.com/2012/03/police-in-river-state-disregard-ig-keeps-extortion-road-blocks/> accessed 6th June 2012.

result of this, two constables were dismissed and the ASP was queried and retired a year early.²⁵⁵

Yet often, such crackdowns take less predictable turns. The hierarchical nature of policing itself introduces room for slippage. In March 2011 an officer recently transferred to Dutsin Bature from the East shared some insights on road work. He pointed out that investigative missions sent from headquarters are only as good as their leadership. Often, the senior officer assigned to the duty will make themselves comfortable in a hotel and order an Inspector to perform the actual task; thus already the decision whether or not to enforce, or to simply use the opportunity to extort the extortionists is instantly devolved down to the Inspector's agency; if he is an avaricious type, says the constable, he may demand perhaps N40,000 (US\$244) to drop the issue. Neither is enforcing such orders free from risk. The same officer related how covert 'sting' operations, in which plainclothes monitoring unit personnel were deployed to catch extorting officers at night-time roadblocks, ran into their own problems; guilty officers faced with the prospect of loss of career and livelihood, he said, sometimes chose to open fire on the officers sent to catch them, claiming afterwards, with some plausibility, that they had mistaken the plainclothes men with guns for armed robbers trying to ambush them in the night.

Often, however, it should not even come to such confrontation, if the investigated take full advantage of the creative possibilities of reworking the logic of disciplinary hierarchy. The same interlocutor continued by telling me that the best way to 'get away with' road work is to go and stand some distance – whether hundreds of yards or a mile or so – from the point at which you have been specifically ordered to deploy. That way, he said, when the commanding officer receives a complaint that the unit has been extorting money, you can defend yourself by pointing out that this was not where you were ordered to stand, so could not possibly have been you. This breathtakingly elegant and insolent solution is a simple and sophisticated response perfectly pitched at the

²⁵⁵ Note the discrepancy in punishment, despite the ASP's presumed greater responsibility. Is this another product of the relationship between hierarchy and discipline – the softer treatment meted out to 'officers and gentlemen' than to rank and file in the institution's internal class system – or lenience towards a long-serving officer near retirement (an ASP in a small division near retirement usually suggests someone recently promoted from Inspector in a final 'reward' posting).

institutional logic itself. It is cast entirely within the framing of obedience to disciplinary authority. As the subordinate's defence is based on an appeal to the evident fact that he could not imagine wilfully disobeying an order, the senior officer cannot possibly argue with the premise of the defence without tacitly but consciously admitting that his orders are being routinely disobeyed. It is a dare, a gambit. Either the complaint is correct, and the senior officer is thereby shown to have no effective authority over his men; or the officer's authority is real and effective, which dictates that the complaint must be wrong. The subordinate's level and calculated response invites his superior to call his own authority itself into question. His logic is straight from Morganstern's *Impossible Fact*.²⁵⁶ And whatever the superior opts for, the disjuncture between what was supposed to happen, and what has apparently happened according to the complainant, adds that element of doubt which undermines the certainty and evidence needed for effective disciplinary intervention.

Nigeria's particular contribution to the arsenal of weapons of the weak, then, is dissembling; the artful recasting of the language of the state into its practical negation. Constables to their bosses, no less than IPOs to their complainants and suspects, can 'turn black into white'. The patient work of subaltern termites can powerfully undermine the timbers of the disciplinary house; and police, like criminals, and in fact everyone else, are fluent in the broad array of evasive and dissembling techniques. 'Nigerians,' Inspector Daniel reflects in wonderment, 'are too clever. In fact, they are *three* clever.'

The additional result of this dissembling and evasion is that it revalidates the accent on personal direct management, as in the absence of direct personal intervention, the mechanistic obedience of the subordinate cannot be assumed. The only certainty a senior officer can really have is that which comes from personal knowledge of what a subordinate is likely to do in a given situation. This is what informs the reason given by a young ASP who tells me why he wants to 'mobilise'²⁵⁷:

²⁵⁶ Christian Morganstern's 1910 poem tells the story of an old man who is run over by a car, and on examining the traffic bylaws and finding that cars were banned from the area, concludes that he is therefore not dead, "for, he reasons pointedly, that which must not, cannot be."

²⁵⁷ I.e. to join the Police Mobile Force.

‘Why mobile? I’ve done everything – DCO, CID, transport – if I become CP how will I know if commander mobile is telling me lies?’

Note also that personal direct management also works in *reverse* – the subordinate must also engage in it vis-à-vis the superior and the wider system. For instance, each officer is allowed a salary increment each year to reflect their length of service. But in order to make sure that the amount is actually implemented on your payroll, rather than diverted by financial administrative staff, it is strongly advisable to visit the Mechanised Salary Scheme office in state headquarters around the correct date, to check personally that the procedure is being followed. Such interactions of course add a huge and distracting burden on officers’ working and off-duty time.

8.3.4: Management, motivation, and morale.

‘The main problem with police is motivation’ claims the Mobile commander, noting that this centrally impacts how officers face the public. ‘Even it’s better for mobile,’ he admits, because a MOPOL constable can – for instance – expect to spend a month on rotation guarding a private company with salary supplement.

‘Because of starting as PSO (Principal Staff Officer) to one Oga who trained with whites I treat my junior as colleague... (they come to you saying) ‘my child has been admitted (to hospital), I need 3k, I didn’t get annual leave since 2 years, make I visit my grandmother’. If you take care of this, your men will be happy. By the time you say ‘go well’ and talk civilly to people, don’t hit them, go well and take care, they will leave feeling good. But if all you know how to say is (acts) ‘What is this? I will dismiss you!’ (the constable will be thinking) ‘What is this to talk of dismiss?’ And this is the attitude they take to the public – transferred anger.’ (18 February 2010) ²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ Contrast the MOPOL commander’s disposition with that of the second-in-command who later succeeds him, and whom I met three times: First when I interview him in his office and he offers me cold drinks and gives me pat, by-the-book and completely disingenuous answers; secondly, six months later when I met him again in his office he appeared to misrecognise me as the rep from Globacom telecoms; and thirdly when I am trying to leave Dutsin Bature stuck in market day traffic, and the arrival of the new commander’s convoy behind me was heralded by MOPOL officers loping through the go-slow like the

Transferred aggression, and the transferred humiliation of the subaltern of the state, then, is a central driver of police officers' frequent aggressive performance and exorcism of their status anxiety on the public subject. Management practices, the experience of subjugation in work (and the Mobile School's rugged training practices, which the MOPOL commander notably does *not* indict), can produce a mindset (again, in the commandant's words) 'that people don't respect you if you don't brutalise them'. Sometimes, this reaches crisis proportions and boils over. The commandant tells me the story of the sergeant who stops a car, and asks to look in the boot. The passenger, in argumentative mood, asks why he should comply, since he didn't do anything wrong. The sergeant sprays the car with bullets, removes his uniform and clothes, and goes home. The interaction has the ring of truth since I have heard it from the other side; a friend, a young professional highly conscious of his legal rights, had an argument with a constable at a roadblock who rudely demanded the papers of the foreign anthropologist with whom he was travelling. The older Inspector called him to the side and advised him never to argue with a man with a gun, since if anything happens, 'we can discipline him, but it won't bring you back to life'.

Between the rock of institutional disciplinary order, and the hard place of being frequently ordered to act in ways which are often designed to benefit a senior's personal, rather than professional, interests, subordinates quickly learn the difference between 'do as I say' and 'do as I do'. In Nigeria the public sphere notably and typically joins paternalist enjoinders to good behaviour and responsible citizenship (such as TV ads from the National Orientation Agency to shun tribalism, or footage of Independent Corrupt Practices Commission staff going to primary schools to teach children songs about the evils of corruption) with the most blatant and shameless manipulations and misuses of public finances and procedures. The energy put into producing this dissonance and hypocrisy is striking. So Nigerians are naturalised to a high degree of fluency and sophistication in mastering the twin contradictory registers of what is espoused and what

Wizard of Oz's winged monkeys, rifles up, yelling orders and whipping cars with their *koboko* whips to clear the road for Oga's gold-coloured 4WD.

is done. In fact Bierschenk (2009) observes that West African bureaucrats in general feel betrayed by the state and locked in a relationship of mutual pretence with their employer and its ideal.²⁵⁹ The MOPOL commander continues by illustrating:

‘If the C.O. gets two million, (sits, and mimes putting in under his seat) and says ‘here, take small’ – why will they not collect money?’

This dissonance, of course, makes the enforcement of discipline even more problematic. In the intimate sphere of the police institution, everything the senior does is visible to the subordinate. If the subordinate is painfully aware of the financial good fortune which may accrue to superiors and the very small crumbs, if anything, which may trickle down to him, what, apart from discipline, is to deter them from working on their own initiative? So paradoxically, while the imperative for personal direct management restrains subordinate police officers’ *formal* room for agency and initiative, keeping them on a short lead, another powerful motive exists for them to deploy their own initiative plentifully in *informal*, instrumental and subversive ways.²⁶⁰

Since only discipline and punishment, and not often reward, flows downwards, and since credit for good work done by subordinates is often taken by superiors, there are conversely few institutional incentives to perform maximally. On 9th June 2010, SO’s clerk Godwin tells me,

‘There is no reward for doing good work in police. If they can dismiss Nuhu Ribadu, who get more prosecution than any other person in fighting crime, then there is no appreciation of good work. If you do good now, do it for yourself, and it’s just you that knows’.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Perhaps not only West African bureaucrats. A Greek civil servant friend describes the public service social contract in Greece as ‘Like the old communist countries. I pretend to work and they pretend to pay me’.

²⁶⁰ And of course, an awareness that the superior themselves may have something to hide can make the enforcement of discipline even more problematic, as we shall see in the closing section.

²⁶¹ Commissioner of Police Nuhu Ribadu, an energetic prosecutor, was head of the anti-corruption Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) between 2003 and December 2007, and was publicly acclaimed for his impact in fighting high-level corruption, but became a victim of his own success when one of his prime suspects, former Delta State Governor James Ibori, used generous campaign contributions

Karl Maier (2000) notes the recurring disjuncture in Nigeria of situations such that two public servants sharing an office may have two different dispositions, one diligent, timely and hardworking, and the other avaricious, absentee and negligent. We should observe then that the mitigating factors in motivation must often come from outside the institutional structure, and thus personal morality, whether framed by often strong senses of personal spirituality or other imperatives, play an unsung part. Even the personal convictions of the diligent have their limits however. Politics in particular presents a risk few can afford to ignore. A month later on 9th July, the same officer tells me what he feels is the ultimate discouragement:

‘If it is threat to the nation, we will engage it strongly. But when it is something political it makes you to just stay back.’

Politics, that most risk-fraught of spheres, also impacts police motivation because as officers know well from their frequent interactions with political thugs, some of those social superiors who occupy high office and must thus be deferred-to, were until very recently the very same characters to whose door the confessions of the suspect might eventually lead. Now, in office, their sponsors are not only functionally and often legally immune from investigation, but are allowed to make the first call on police human resources for their security detachments and gate-guards. This sits high in officers’ consciousness, although not everyone shares the radical Marxist critique of Constable Emmanuel Egwu, who has studied for a degree in political science and says:

‘We are wasting time guarding certain useless people and that’s not supposed to be; that is wrong; we are supposed to be guarding the lives and property of everyone.’

to the election of late President Yar’Adua to buy the political influence to force Ribadu out, using rules on police training and promotion as a pretext.

Once the paymasters are in office, the thugs themselves become untouchable, by virtue of their privileged relationship to the highest levels of state. In the words of a bomb squad officer who had recently been transferred to Dutsin Bature from the Niger Delta:

‘The same boys you arrest in the day, you will see in the Government House in the night’.

8.4: Mitigating risk

8.4.1: Responses tactical and personal

The mitigation of the risks and dangers inherent in police work concerns both the institution and more powerfully, the individual. On an institutional level, commanding officers may evolve tactical responses and working practices designed both to make interventions more effective, and to do so while minimising the risk to police officers.²⁶² Thus the perennially volatile hotspot of Ojudu Junction, where Akpai youth political militias repeatedly and violently clashed with each other and with MOPOL deployed there, necessitated some thoughtful responses. Repeated forceful interventions had limited effect, so police units also tried patrolling in strength accompanied by community elders, in order to combine a display of strength with appeal to mediation and moderation. The PMF force also reversed the usual policy of *not* sending officers recruited from the area to do public order interventions (based on the colonial ‘strangers-to-police-strangers’ logic of avoiding the division of loyalties between police and policed), and deliberately posted Akpai-speaking officers on those deployments, to see if militants would be as ready to fight ‘their own people’. Such tactics serve a dual purpose – achieving the aims of restoring public order, while also trying to deter violence and thus minimising the dangers to the police while achieving those aims. A similar tactic is employed to similar ends by the IPO Maimalari when he plans a trip to the State University in the Bare heartland of Kwara: as an outsider, a non-indigene of the state,

²⁶² Note that this direct risk and police responses to it are historically contingent, and in some places grew noticeably even during my research. As I completed fieldwork, the Boko Haram insurgency meant that many police station compounds in vulnerable areas were being adorned with sandbagged firing points. Even in inner-city Lagos, a DPO showing me round his new-built station pointed out the upstairs vantage-point for a sentry.

he tells me that he will not enter the campus until he is accompanied by some officers of Bare ethnicity from the Kwararafa division.

More personal direct responses to risk are varied. Some resort to repertoires of spiritual power for help in mitigating and warding against the risks inherent in police work. In addition to Christian and Islamic prayer, some officers resort to older repertoires of power and protection. This was not a subject often openly discussed, because many consider forms of traditional spiritual protection the disreputable preserve of dark forces, and often associated with crime and impropriety. However one MOPOL constable from Bayelsa was proud to tell me that he had taken *Egbesu*, the protective Ijaw war cult, in order to protect him in his work. This is additionally interesting, because against the background of the MEND insurgency in oil-producing areas of the Niger Delta, ‘Egbesu boys’ as a label has become synonymous with insurgent groups in media discourse; yet here one of the state’s own warriors saw no paradox in tapping the same cultic source of spiritual power to the service of what would seem in a structural analysis the apparently opposed end of serving the government.

Mostly, however, rather than developing revolutionary consciousness, being involved in planned tactical responses, or trusting to god(s) alone, police officers invest most of their efforts in personal and behavioural risk mitigation strategies.²⁶³ I observe three major strands to such strategies; the absolute minimising of action which could possibly trigger adverse outcomes; the forming and maintaining of potentially advantageous relationships; and the simulation of obedience combined with a minimalist and instrumentally self-serving approach to compliance.

²⁶³ Sometimes risk-mitigation strategies are overt and central in police officers’ interactions with the public. I accompanied a friend to report a street robbery at Maitama police station in Abuja. The (plainclothes) IPO assigned to us gave his phone contacts and first name, but refused to give his surname – ‘just put officer Kayode’. In this way he hoped to guard against unforeseen problems by preserving his anonymity, and thus deflecting his accountability within the overall opacity of the institution to the outsider.

8.4.2: Avoidance

Firstly, police officers may moderate their behaviour to minimise risk in the course of their work, and display extreme aversion to risk to the length that they are reluctant to perform core law and order functions without direct and specific orders from above. Their actions become minimal and designed primarily for self-preservation, especially when such dangerous unknowns as prominent persons, political forces and angry mobs can be at work. At the Mobile barracks, the commander tells me of a recent shooting at Kwararafa. A political event – a high-profile public meeting in which some opposition party activists were decamping to the ruling PDP – was under way, and some Mobile men posted close by had gone there because they knew that the Local Government Chairman would be at such an event, and wanted to meet him ‘because of their welfare’ (i.e. in the hope that he would give them some money). While they were there, at the fringes of the event a group of political thugs abducted another youth political figure, bundled him into a car and driving only a small distance away, shot and killed him. Throughout, the police did nothing.

‘Ordinarily, my men would have just let go, finish,²⁶⁴ but because they weren’t meant to be there they lacked the confidence to deal with it, because of the risk of ‘who told you to’ and who were the guys? Ordinarily you shouldn’t require someone to tell you to do your job.’

Here we can vividly see how officers may develop an extreme aversion to doing anything which may trigger something unmanageable without specific orders – they are after all unlikely to be disciplined for just doing nothing, which is not itself an offence.

8.4.3: Investing in networks

Secondly, many serving police officers devote a lot of time and interest to personal relationships and loyalties which may prove to have potential for leverage when they are

²⁶⁴ I.e shot them, and that’s an end to it.

needed. In this, they are partnered by a public which, as we explored in the previous chapter, often engages police via particularistic relationships with individual officers. One day in Lagos I accompany a non-police friend to visit a police constable at his work; they have become close, says my friend, since the constable stood up for him in a traffic accident and subsequent dispute, against a tanker driver.²⁶⁵ My friend explains that he likes to visit the constable occasionally, and help him with a little money, ‘so that he and I will grow together’. Such dyadic relationships may be formed in the course of police work, or they may utilise pre-existing social capital. In many cases officers may attempt to use the same vertical connections which enabled them to navigate recruitment (as in Chapter 5) and posting to cushion the potential effects of risk in the course of a career. In this way, vertical personal shadow networks of allegiance and patronage continue to thread through the formal institutional mappings of power relations, albeit usually with only the power to moderate, but not to neutralise entirely, the institutional exercise of disciplinary power. The extent to which cultivating dyadic relationships can pay off was vividly underlined in 2010 when President Goodluck Jonathan appointed AIG Hafiz Ringim as the new Inspector-General, over the heads of a whole cohort of more senior officers. Ringim had been Commissioner in Bayelsa State when Jonathan was taking over from his indicted predecessor as Governor.

More broadly, using mutually advantageous relationships as social insurance can form strategic bridges to whole constituencies, including powerful stakeholders such as the media. While the State Command’s Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) role is image-maker not just of the police but of the Commissioner personally, and must try to ensure media representations of the actions of both are ‘on-message’, some officers cultivate their personal networks of media contacts to replicate the same effort informally. Thus, Dutsin Bature’s metropolitan Area Commander frequently drank with selected journalists, at their NUJ bar, or invited them to a bar in the POWA shops near the barracks, nurturing with his bar bill a relationship which safeguarded his public image

²⁶⁵ Tanker drivers are employed by fuel marketing companies with heavy economic and political muscle; therefore my friend took the constable’s readiness to stand up to them as an indicator of his moral courage.

in return for the privileged access to stories (and to the police institution) this gave the journalists.

8.4.4: Dissembling and simulation

Thirdly, although compliance can be commanded and insubordination punished, the practices of dissembling and disingenuousness are not tangible enough subjects to fix punishment upon. Police officers rarely resist, but more often fudge or incompletely implement, orders they do not like. In that any situation where labour freedom is constrained and management is mainly disciplinary may generate similar dynamics, the similarity with modes of resistant subalterity from elsewhere should not surprise us. Superiors and their orders can be avoided; entire systems cannot. Instead much of the time dissembling and dissimulation are the order of the day. But the trope of ‘resistance’, even in the subtleties explored by Scott (1990) is not exact enough to capture the particular mode in which this is produced, and neither does the figure of the subaltern adequately capture the sense of play with which dissimulation is deployed. Mbembe (1992) more accurately recognises that in postcolonial Africa, political domination is met often not by resistance but by connivance, imitation and ‘conviviality’ by the subordinate. The Nigerian vernacular expression which fits best is ‘lack of seriousness’; implying not only lack of gravity but lack of personal commitment to the task in hand. This is manifested in multiple ways: When the diligent Godwin is away, his assistant detailed to log out and issue weapons from the magazine simply piles the AK-47s in a heap on the floor for the evening shift to help themselves and goes to sleep on a bench; Corporal Friday Kassam sheepishly explains that he accidentally shot a gaping hole in the thin plywood wall between the SO’s office and the bomb squad because he had left a cartridge in the breech of his shotgun ‘in case I enter bush, see rabbit’.

Watching the evening shift parade for the SO’s clerk before beat duty at 6pm, ostentatiously yelling their commands, cracking to attention, throwing their arms around, overdoing the marching steps, smirking and generally enacting a very conscious *Keystone*

Cops parody of police embodied discipline, I was reminded of Mbembe's concept of 'simulacre'.

"The postcolony is, par excellence, a hollow pretence, a regime of unreality (*regime du simulacre*). By making it possible to play and have fun outside the limits set by officialdom, the very fact that the regime is a sham allows ordinary people to simulate adherence to the innumerable official rituals that life in the postcolony requires." (1992; 8).

Furthermore, says Mbembe,

"What distinguishes the postcolony from other regimes of violence and domination ... is the way the relationship between rulers and ruled is forged through a specific practice: simulacrum (le simulacre) (...) Strictly speaking, this process does not increase either the depth of subordination or the level of resistance; it simply produces a situation of disempowerment (*impouvoir*) for both ruled and rulers (...) although it may demystify the commandement, even erode its supposed legitimacy, it does not do violence to the commandement's material base. At best it creates potholes of indiscipline on which the commandement may stub its toe." (1992; 10).

I wandered back inside pondering the validity of applying this to the policing context, where the 'ruled' in question, subordinate officers, are also a constituent part of the state. Later I attempted to explain my badly-recalled understanding of Mbembe's concept to the Assistant Superintendent with whom I shared an office. She looked puzzled for a moment, and then said 'Ah, you mean like when the CP calls and you answer (mimes picking up phone, and lying) 'Yes sir, we are on our way there now in large numbers' Is that it?' The fact that Mbembe's concept found such immediate resonance with its own practitioners, who must constantly play at obedience while also maximising their space to evade its strictures, thus convinced me of its analytical utility.

8. 5: Conclusion

This chapter points us towards some preliminary conclusions of significance to the wider questions – of policing, and the nature of the state - in the background of this study. Before we revisit them, one final example embeds much of what we have been discussing above, and draws together these processes and responses in a way which reveals their institutional effects. On the 14th June 2010, the replacement DPO of ‘B’ Division is in a bad mood. My fieldnotes recall:

He’s in the cell on the warpath because the suspect from the cement factory has tipped the Charge Room Officer (CRO) money to be allowed to sit outside, and now some of the CID suspects are there too, or locked in the SO’s office as there isn’t room in the cell. The DPO tells the CRO that as far as he’s concerned, they *are* all in the cell, and it’s on his own head: ‘If anyone escapes you are dead. In fact, let me put it in writing. Because you are just out there playing around.’ Then later, he is starting again, ‘post guard outside that cell – cell guard – I don’t want to hear of any woman going inside that cell.’

This short and apparently simple exchange showcases the double product of a situation fraught both with risk and with an inability to conclusively enforce authority. It is an informative meeting of issues of discipline, management, obedience and vicarious risk, and embeds some interesting dynamics. Firstly, note that the CRO has departed from his formal duty to engage in the activity of allowing privileged comforts to a particularly influential prisoner, an activity which is possibly lucrative in the short term, and potentially helpful in the longer-term creation of future dyadic relationships. He clearly sees the advantage (itself an investment in a sphere which is a mitigant of the risks, discomforts and uncertainties of a police career) as easily equal to the risk to which he is exposing himself. Equally, he can do this under the widely understood rubric of tempering bureaucratic indifference to suffering with humanity.

Secondly, although the DPO’s ire has been raised by the perfectly proper managerial concern of slack cell security and possible escape, in his response the formal disciplinary response has been subverted by risk mitigation. For reasons best known to himself, it is

striking that in re-establishing the correct behaviour, the DPO does not enforce the formal rule; instead, his threat is just to mitigate his own risk by ‘putting it in writing’ and thereby leaving the CRO alone exposed at the mercy of the institution’s disciplinary mechanism. This he later backs up with his own direct personal managerial intervention (to post cell guard) which entirely bypasses the CRO formally detailed to that responsibility. The DPO in question may not have been a particularly good divisional manager – he certainly made it clear that he did not enjoy the job – but his behaviour is still instructive in revealing some of the choices and constraints around risk and the deployment of managerial power.

What do such modes of managerial power, discipline, subversion and ‘lack of seriousness’ mean for policing in general? The prevalence of risk, and of disciplinary modes of dealing with it, and of subaltern modes of evading it, produces two evident dynamics at work in the evidence cited in this chapter. The first is that extreme risk-aversion on the part of officers results in a minimal and reactive, rather than active and interventionist, form of policing. The second is its tendency to produce officers whose primary concern is looking after personal direct interests in order to cushion institutional misfortune, and thus aggregates into a systemic tendency for the institution to do the same.

What does all this imply for the organisation of the state? If what holds true for the police applies to the state in general, we could characterise state institutions, and therefore the state itself as cautious and restrained in their writ and actions over wider society, a reactive, semi-detached and somewhat *laissez-faire* governmental machinery quite different to the intensity and transformational intent of authoritarian or developmental states. Within itself, such a system encourages consolidation of personal position via a diverse basket of non-formal strategies aimed at mitigating risk, at the expense of energetically implementing the state’s formal rationale.

Public interest becomes self-interest; security becomes self-preservation, and short-termism supplants institutional aims. Police officers’ – and the state’s - hands are stayed,

if not tied, by constantly trying to second-guess and protect against amorphous factors of risk and threat, which are conceived of primarily personally, rather than in regard to the wider public interest. Belying its Hobbesian pretensions, the state in practice, subject first of all to the internal concerns of its institutions and their risk-averse, career-conserving servants, is cautious, tentative and uneven. The state itself is both authoritarian and remarkably powerless.

As far as the wider effects of such a state on the society it creates, and of the meanings created by the experience of such a state, both by its servants and subjects, and those such as police officers, who are its 'servant-subjects', we can do no better than to return to Mbembe:

Pretence (le simulacre) becomes the dominant modality of transactions between the state and society, or between rulers and those who are supposed to obey. This is what makes postcolonial relations relations of conviviality and covering over, but also of powerlessness par excellence -from the point of view either of the masters of power or of those whom they crush. (1992; 26).

The hollowed-out or inward-turned state reproduces an impotence. And this in turn points reflexively back at the questions we must ask and the tools of investigation we must use to answer them:

Research must go beyond institutions, beyond formal positions of power and the written rules, and examine the ways in which the implicit and explicit are interwoven, and how the practices of those who command and those who are assumed to obey are so entangled as to render them powerless (1992; 29).

Chapter 9: Police Perspectives

Did you hear about the guy sitting the exam in the last recruitment exercise? He saw the question ‘Name the three arms of government’ and wrote ‘AK-47, Beretta and Pump-Action’.

Police joke.²⁶⁶

Introduction

The last chapter showed how the risks inherent in police work build into systemic imperatives, and patterns into relationships based on those imperatives, thus producing an overall institutional effect. This chapter continues from that point to examine how living and acting within those frameworks and imperatives impacts police officers’ self-understandings, self-representations, personal ethics and motives. The subject therefore lies between an exegesis of institutional culture and an attempt to interpret and synthesise the dispositions and explanations of individual actors, and brings us closer to the conclusions of the thesis as a whole. We are thus not dealing only with the experiential consciousness of police officers in Nigeria, but trying to reach an idea of the subjectivity of the police officer, to see where and how they fit in, and see themselves fitting in, to a wider world of meaning and experience. The primary argument of this chapter is that the simplistic opposition of function with dysfunction, or of duty with corruption, is not subtle enough to capture the combination of both modes which police officers incorporate in their self-understandings. To be a ‘real’ police officer, in the way that many officers understand themselves, is to be able to combine serviceable performance of duty with effective pursuit of personal interest. Police perspectives thus embed this duality, and officers negotiate its challenges with reference to a contextual and relativised morality .

Attempting to reconstruct the emic worldviews of others is of course fraught with difficulties, but to complete our picture we must turn to the untangling of dispositions, attitudes, ethics and principles which are formed in the experience of the institutional

²⁶⁶ I heard this at least twice during my fieldwork, both times related as an apocryphal ‘true story’.

career. Any attempt which tries to fit the diverse experiences and perspectives of different persons into an overly cohesive and unitary account would of course be fictive – the truths are partial, situated, and particular. But in order to reconstruct the landscape of self-understanding and provide some broad conclusions, I have tried to use the comments of various individual officers to determine the meanings which are articulated, created, reproduced, and negotiated in police officers' discourse about themselves.²⁶⁷ I also make use of some data from an experimental methodology I abandoned not long after the research design phase.

The first section will deal with police self-image as they internalise and reproduce it with reference to their status within society at large, vis-à-vis other security institutions, and within the police institution. I contrast their ideas about how the public perceive them, with the externally-derived images and roles by which they seek to re-validate themselves. The second section situates Nigerian police officers' subjectivity in the context of wider understandings of Nigerian society, of 'the way the country is going'; popular discourses of development and change, and dominant ideas of value and materialism, drawing comparisons with actors caught in other contexts of deviated development such as portrayed by Ferguson (1999) and Vigh (2008). The third section portrays a world of police values which must accommodate both a degree of professional and goal-oriented self-image, and a degree of realism with which it often interlocutes uncomfortably in the pursuit of personal success and material security. I attempt to resolve the two by reconstructing a moral economy of policing in which officers, even while stepping outside formal rules, construct their own ideas of what is permissible and what is not. But moral economy is not enough to completely and adequately address the moral relativism implicated in police careers, as policing also concerns the relative permissibility of doing bad things to bad people – when, where and how two wrongs may make a right.²⁶⁸ The fourth and final section aims at recovering an idea, or an ideal, of

²⁶⁷ Everyday social situations in Nigeria are replete with occasions when one or another speaker will embark upon a homily, either intended for the listener directly; or deliberately indirectly via a nominal third party; or declaiming to multiple listeners or participants. Such utterances are intended to convey explanation and advice, to provoke reflection and sometimes to elicit response, so they seem a valid text for my analysis.

²⁶⁸ What Klockars (1980) calls the 'Dirty Harry' problem.

what it means or should mean, to be police, and how these ideals are lived, especially given that they involve the daily negotiation of irresolvable contradictions, and thereby create tensions for those who live them. The chapter ends in some thoughts on the wider systemic meanings and implications of this kind of police subjectivity.

9.1: Police self-imaginings

9.1.1: Security men and states of exception

On a quiet midweek evening in 2010, I am taking a picture of the view from the terrace in an upmarket Abuja hotel. There are few people around, but the waiter comes over and quietly informs me that some men at a distant table wish to talk to me. Three bullet-headed men with shaved heads and polo shirts sit around a plastic table with bottles of Star lager. ‘We are security men’, they tell me, ‘we wish to know what you are doing.’ Their demand expresses both professional suspicion and personal curiosity. I explain, we make friends, and everyone continues with their evening. But the incident stays with me for two reasons. First because such interruptions, where an innocently-conducted activity (especially, but not only, photography) sparks an intervention by a suspicious observer, are intrusively frequent in Nigeria, pointing to a widespread atmosphere of vigilance and guardedness. Secondly, because of the way the men identified themselves as *security men*, not identifying any particular agency; they could therefore have been army, police, SSS or any of the other para-military agencies listed in Chapter 2. For these men, their role as appointed protectors of the country, their right to demand (while seated) my compliance with their demand, their self-image as men, are all intertwined. Something makes them all ‘security men’, self-recognising allies and colleagues in the serious and problematic matter of national security, defenders of the public peace; and it is the same something which to the trailer-driver in Chapter 5 marks them all as ‘gofamint properties’. Partly, it’s because their authority derives from the law; they are all parts of the state. Partly it is because they are professionals, and they draw the line firmly between them and the amateurs who populate self-appointed vigilance institutions which intrude on their business. Partly, too, they recognise a divide between security and paramilitary

agencies and other parts of the state – security agencies do not mutually recognise the same commonality with civil servants, doctors or judges. Between themselves, however, they are all dealers in danger, risk, action and force.

All of them too display this common disposition in similar ways. Prime amongst these is demonstrating their right - whether on-duty at a roadside or off-duty on a hotel terrace - to occupy public space and to challenge others within it. This notably exceeds the exercise of such rights in the course of duty: In Nigeria, security men make full and showy use of the maximal entitlements their roles imply. Walking along a Lagos road, for example, I find the pavement blocked by a group of MOPOL who are buying *gari* from a seller next to their parked pickup. The sergeant, while drinking water, fixes his eyes upon a space above my head and without a word points into the road – indicating that I should walk in the road rather than through their group.²⁶⁹ Not only do they display the first-order citizenship their membership of the state confers by the ways in which they socially occupy space, even off-duty, but the institutions create their own spaces, which are effectively sovereign within the wider Nigeria.

The archetypal such space is the ‘mammy market’ – the market run by soldiers’ wives next to army barracks. Although the public are often allowed access, it is unquestionably an army jurisdiction; in Shari’a states, for example, alcohol is sold openly within the mammy market and no state authority would dream of attempting to enforce otherwise. Police, and other security agencies, as we saw in Chapter 2, model their own institutional imagining on the military ideal. Police are not ordinary ‘civilians’, and the police barracks is not an ordinary space subject to effective civil jurisdiction. The equation is unquestionably based on the ability to use force, backed by a law which will itself be implemented by its servants, and who therefore functionally enjoy privilege under it. The extra-mural lives of police officers, like other institutional members, imply a limited accountability to other founts of authority, which extends the totalising aspects of the institution discussed in Chapter 5. Police, even if to a lesser extent than soldiers, still live

²⁶⁹ Instead, I point out that I would constitute a hazard to traffic and that the pavement is for pedestrians – he silently gives way. The performance of status entitlement only works as far as the audience is compliant.

in a state of exception from that civil life which exists outside the state's own institutional enclaves.

I use exception here somewhat differently to the way that Mbembe (2003) mobilises Agamben's (1998) concept of a state of exception, a rights-less liminality outside the law which Mbembe argues was perfected in the political technology of colonialism. Instead, the exception which police officers (and other security men and state employees) mobilise is one in which, by virtue of their belonging to an institution with control of the implementation and enforcement of a particular set of rules, agents are able to except and functionally exempt themselves from being subject to those rules. For police this works no differently to the customs officers of the Lake Chad borderlands, as portrayed by Roitman (2005), who wield their legal monopoly to extract value from networks of cross-border smugglers. The state's agents enjoy use of the minor exceptions and privileges of their office to aid their own private interests and businesses.²⁷⁰ In recent years, many NGOs working in south-eastern Nigeria particularly patronised a taxi owned by a MOPOL officer who drove in uniform; his twin competitive advantages were his guaranteed non-criminal provenance, and his ability to drive straight through the numerous and otherwise expensive police checkpoints on the major routes of the region.²⁷¹

In fact this particular enterprise points to another juncture at which security men are likely to emphasise their mutual recognition. Many drivers use the semiotic markers of security institutions to insure themselves against inconveniences at police checkpoints. A soldier's car will likely have a 'combatant' windscreen sticker, with crossed AK-47s; a policeman may display their beret prominently on the dashboard. These markers usually serve to guarantee minimal harassment or inconvenience. Not only serving members do this, but spouses, children, retired members also attempt, with varying success, to stretch

²⁷⁰ Modelling themselves perhaps on the constitutional immunity enjoyed by those who hold elected public office.

²⁷¹ Yet these exceptions too are uneven and negotiated: We have already seen that in other contexts, motorists in filling-station queues do not defer to police officers; other minor privileges are equally variable – in southern Nigeria, police travel free on buses; in northern parts, they must usually pay.

and bargain this institutional exception and insurance to cover themselves.²⁷² The other types of signal deployed in this way by those outside the security institutions may indicate the register of status and value into which the insignia of institutional belonging fit: ‘FG’ (Federal Government) number-plates; a chief’s cow-tail fly-whisk or red coral beads; a ‘Missionary’ sticker; a door stencilled with the logo of a major corporation. When even these talismans of exception fail, it is taken as significant:

The lady from National Human Rights Commission (a governmental body) says that going East – she works in Enugu or Onitsha – the police now are very, very predatory on the roads. Usually she stops and lets them inspect the boot, but tells the driver not to give them anything, and when they press the driver, tells them come and ask me instead, talk to me, I’m the boss. Then she infers because she’s in a car with FG plates, usually they’d be leery to stop, and she would move through, so to dare to stop such a car as hers they must have ‘very’ high-level knowledge and therefore condoning-of or cover for what they do. (Fieldnotes 23rd October 2009).

The grey area in which these games of exemption can be played is provided by the totalising instincts of such institutions as illustrated in Chapter 5; jealous of their own purview and defensive against external scrutiny, they tend to guard their right to deal with problems as internal disciplinary matters. When they are infringed upon, especially when one uniformed bureaucracy attempts to assert its constitutional rights over the personnel of another as if they were mere civilians, the reaction is likely to be swift and hostile, as is illustrated further below. Therefore the space between what would be the consequences of ordinary exposure to law enforcement and the likely consequences of internal discipline allow (especially for those with good vertical linkages in their organisation) a measure of flexibility, if not impunity, which they may choose to exploit.

²⁷² The checkpoint is a useful semiotic filter. Even a type of car can be a guide; a friend from out of town, caught driving the wrong way down a central Lagos street at an unseen checkpoint early one Saturday morning apologised to the officers and was surprised to be politely guided to his destination by the patrol vehicle. He only realised afterwards that as a young, educated, fit-looking man, driving a Peugeot 405 (a model of car often purchased by government for official use) with Abuja number-plates, he had been taken for an army officer.

The everyday experience of membership in a security institution is one where exception, and exceptional access, to whole range of public goods, services, and commodities is almost to be taken for granted as a perk of the job, one which is noted and envied by outsiders. The importance of this economy of privileges was underlined to me by an instructive interaction which happened early in fieldwork. Gida State's Commissioner of Police took me out to eat roast fish in the garden of a local hotel. The CP, in civilian dress, introduced me to the female hotel proprietor as an international guest, in order to reinforce that we should receive the best service. She however did not recognise him.

'Don't you watch TV?' he asks (meaning the local channel on state-owned NTA, as in Dutsin Bature there is poor coverage for national independent channels). I ask him if I may introduce him, and do so, saying 'Madam, this is your CP'. She is very happy; says 'You don't mean it?' and says she is very pleased to meet him, to which he is pleasantly flattered. This is quickly dissipated as she continues: 'Now you can help me to get kerosene!' We both look mystified and she explains 'They only bring kero every three months and police, army, SSS, airforce are the ones who get it. People queue with daggers for it. Last time they took teargas to control the queue; I'm so happy, now you can help me to get it.'

In this exchange, the chief of police is of value to the hotelier simply as a way to acquire exceptional privileged access to cooking fuel, a discovery which is less than flattering to the CP's own sense of role as chief defender of the state's civil peace.²⁷³

9.1.2: Hierarchies within the state

Yet even if security men mutually recognise each other, they are not all equal, a fact as obvious as it is to the trailer driver in Chapter 5, who holds his connection to the army as a trump card, as it is within and between security men themselves. These differences are played up and made explicit at times, to and for the evident pleasure of those who are able to gain (or display) the upper hand. In October 2010 I am visiting a politician at the

²⁷³ Despite government's continual desultory efforts to iron out the man-made interruptions to fuel supply, kerosene and other petroleum products were subject to continual shortages throughout my fieldwork.

house he has built in his natal village. He mainly visits at weekends, and in his absence the place is maintained, serviced and secured by a small staff of directly-employed housekeepers, village watchmen, and a team of police and civil defence personnel. I arrive early, and am in the reception room, watching TV with the plainclothes police CIB man²⁷⁴, when the politician enters with his entourage, including aides and SSS bodyguards.

The Personal Assistant takes the plainclothes policeman to task for not standing up or being seen to be working when Oga enters; The policeman answers back and a big row starts which draws in the smart-suited SSS man. In the course of dressing-down the CIB man, the SSS officer keeps on about how he's 'on (promotion) course', and that his new rank is nearly equivalent to Lieutenant-Colonel in the army. The CIB guy protests, appeals to me and generally looks so humiliated and angry he could cry. The SSS then turns to the wider assembled company and says laughingly, as if between friends, 'what is CIB doing inside house anyway? Their job is outside'. This clearly pisses him off even more, because it's a deliberately inflammatory reference to their relative status; while SSS are inside the house with Oga, police are 'outsiders'. (8th October 2010)²⁷⁵

The policeman here has been firmly and publicly put in his place in the pecking-order by the SSS man, who has clearly relished doing so. SSS, while often collaborating closely with the police, clearly define their own professional integrity and capacity against what they represent as a police lack of the same attributes. On another visit, the Chief Security Officer (presumably also an SSS officer) asks me when I arrived (intending to remind me I had not intimated him of my arrival as he thought I should). I reply that I arrived the previous day – I had in fact come two days previously, but was tired and made a genuine mistake. He replied 'Is that so? Anyway, you have been working with police, you must have learned one or two things.' This is a deliberate innuendo, indicating both that he

²⁷⁴ CIB stands for Criminal Investigation Bureau, the state-level plainclothes intelligence and surveillance units.

²⁷⁵ This terminology of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' is in fact the one used by the cook in the house, who tells me that while he cooks for the family, their guests, political aides and so forth, there is another cook who feeds the 'outsiders' – security guards, MOPOL, housekeepers and drivers. The spatial division here mirrors the division between the people of the air conditioning and those of the verandah, in Terray (1986), as well as older idioms of access and distance from power, such as Nkrumah's supporters who appropriated the derisive label 'verandah boys' in the 1950s Gold Coast.

knows when I arrived and that therefore I am not telling the truth, but equally insinuating that by working with the police I would have learned lying and deceit.

The exact contours of the relationships between state agencies are sometimes made much more explicit when, as indicated above, one agency is felt to have infringed on the institutional remit or space of another. Internal *esprit de corps* quickly redirects into external hostility, and the confrontational force the security institutions are supposed to deploy on enemies of the state is deployed on each other, as the following media reports attest:

Lagos - DPO, DCO Killed in Army, Police Clash

By Lukkey Abawuru, 25 May 2011

There was pandemonium in Badagry area of Lagos State yesterday following the killing of a Divisional Police Officer, (DPO) in charge of Badagry division Mr Salihu Samuel and his Divisional Crime Officer (DCO) by gun men, suspected to be soldiers from 432 battalion, Badagry. The incident occurred at about 11.30 a.m yesterday.

The soldiers were alleged to be avenging the death of their colleague who was killed by a policeman in the area, last Sunday. The orderlies of the senior police offices escaped unhurt. The international route that linked the road with Seme border was deserted as drivers and passersby avoided the road. Policemen put off their uniforms to avoid been attacked by soldiers who were on a revenge mission over the death of their colleagues, allegedly killed, on Sunday by Police (...).

A police source who pleaded for anonymity said trouble started on Sunday when policemen attached to Rapid Response Squad, Badagry stopped a soldier on mufti for routine police check but the soldier allegedly challenged the policemen on duty. The altercation later degenerated to a physical assault which made the soldier to contact his colleagues at the barrack. His colleagues who were also on mufti came to the scene and attempted to disarm the policemen which resulted in a shoot out that allegedly led to the death of one of the soldiers.

He added that the death of the soldier worsened the already frosty relationship as both police and soldier engaged them selves in a cold war. The soldiers vowed to avenge the death of their colleague while the police dismantled all road blocks along the road to allow tension to calm down (...).

Worried by the incident, the DPO and DCO decided to meet the Soldier's boss to find lasting peace. "The mistake they made was that they were on police uniform and immediately the Soldiers saw them, they opened fire on them and killed them instantly. Their aides escaped" the source noted.²⁷⁶

If this story highlights the potential for inter-agency rivalry and esprit de corps to degenerate into defensive violence, the story below, while reflecting the same, also hints at the role played by informal economic activities – themselves derived from uniformed agents' states of exception - in exacerbating these rivalries:

How Custom Officers stole my N2m – Police Inspector

By Ifeanyi Okolie

...His behaviour was disappointing – Customs

What would have turned into a deadly confrontation between operatives of the Nigeria Custom Service at Idi-Iroko border in Ogun State and men of the Nigeria Police Force was averted by sheer providence. The experience of a police officer, Inspector Frances Ononiwu, attached to the Border Patrol Unit of the force in the hands of Custom officers manning check points at Ilase axis of Idiroko Road, Ogun State, may have been the triggering force, after the Police officer was accosted at Ilase by Custom officers and it almost degenerated into a deadly war.

At the end of the confrontation, the Police officer was severely injured and he alleged that a large sum of money, both in local and foreign currencies were stolen from him by the

²⁷⁶ *Daily Champion*, 25th May 2011. Accessed at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201105250163.html> on 13th August 2012.

Custom Officers. Narrating the circumstances that led to the ugly incident, the Police Officer stated, “I was on my way to Atan area of Ogun state when I ran into a Custom checking point at Ilase axis of Idiroko Road. They signaled at me to stop and I did obediently. They checked my vehicle after which I was allowed to continue my journey.

“But after driving a few distance, I saw one of the Customs patrol vehicles driving dangerously towards me and when it double crossed me, I parked my vehicle into a nearby bush. As soon as I stopped, six men putting on Nigeria Customs uniform jumped out of the vehicle and pounced on me. The oldest man among them slapped me first, while others started hitting me with their riffle. And one of them hit his rifle on my head and it broke my skull.

However, in their reaction, a spokesman for the Ogun State Custom Command, Chike Nigege, described Inspector Ononiwu’s action as ‘disappointing and unprofessional’(...) “I am aware you know these officers are not crazy for them to have seen a vehicle and without talking to the driver, pounced on him and start beating him. It will interest you to know that this police officer was driving a fairly new Camry car and I am sure that the registration wasn’t complete yet and he approached the custom checking point at Alase which happens to be a hot bed for smugglers ... ‘It is disheartening that a police officer would conduct him self in such a shameful and unethical manner,”he stated.²⁷⁷

Such then are the potentially violent consequences of challenging the powerful politics of institutional belonging. Security institutions jealously protect their comrades, role, opportunities, and niches to the point of physically fighting each other, and when they do it is clear the police are not at the top of the pecking order.

²⁷⁷ *Vanguard*, 14th May 2012. Accessed at <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/05/how-custom-officers-stole-my-n2m-police-inspector/> on 13th August 2012.

9.1.3: Subaltern consciousness

But police officers, despite the outwardly bullish disposition they cultivate, are not only aware of their own relative status vis-à-vis other agencies but *within* their own institution. For lower-ranking officers, a subaltern consciousness is a part of their working identity. On 13th March 2011 I drop by ‘B’ division late, at 8.30pm.

All the guys are sprawled out on car bonnets, including Egbon, who’s just done back-to-back shifts as Station Guard in uniform and then as a plainclothes IPO. I remark – you just change shirt? You never close? You are one of the hardest-working people know. ‘That is why’ he says ‘they say corporal – ‘CPL’ stands for Commissioner of Police’ Labourer – CPL’.

Igwe’s well-worn joke references that the burden of the unfree labour of the police, constrained by discipline and duty, falls heaviest on the corporals, who are low enough in rank to be at the beck and call of any superior, but are also experienced enough to carry weapons and be reliably useful in many situations. This burden is reinforced by the unavoidable fact that in all stations, and due in part to the problems with recruitment processes detailed in Chapter 4, there are a significant numbers of officers who are of limited fitness for purpose, and can be trusted only with simple tasks; making the weight of any more complicated or responsible duty fall more heavily on the smaller number of officers who can be trusted to carry it out properly.

For the most part, a policeman is inured to this lot; but there are a few duties which raise unusual levels of ire. Foremost among them is the phenomenon of doing ‘beat’ for private individuals. For an older-generation police officer like Inspector Daniel, the spread of the police guards phenomenon is a sign of degradation, a painful infringement on the status of the police as an institution, and thereby on the status of the officer themselves.

‘I don’t mind going to DPO’s house, because it is police, he is my officer, but all this any-civilian-who-pays...’

For the Inspector, it seems that if the low-prestige task is internal to the police institution, there is no problem, but when this relegated status is external and rendered highly visible it becomes problematic. The policeman is transformed from incarnation of state power to an adornment of distinction in parity with household servants and private security firms, and in the process the person and institution are both degraded. The idea that posting guards is an abuse of the police is paradoxically most widespread in those parts of the police most embedded in those practices. Many MOPOL officers are most sensitive about their co-optation from action-oriented paramilitaries to VIP guards, even with the substantial cash benefits it brings.²⁷⁸ When Hafiz Ringim, an ex-Mobile man, became Inspector-General in 2010, much grassroots police gossip was about his supposed stated desire to reverse the ‘bastardisation’ of the Mobile Force.

Given all of the above, it is not surprising that the combination of a painfully inferior position in the hierarchy of security institutions; the burdens of being bottom of the institution’s internal pecking-order; the embarrassment of being sent on publicly-visible low-status tasks such as private guard beats; and the public’s knowledge of the very evident limitations to police officers’ ability to exercise their supposed powers (as detailed throughout this thesis and especially in the previous two chapters), all combine to give rise to a considerable and visible measure of status anxiety.²⁷⁹

Especially for the junior officer, the constant awareness of subalterity is rendered most visible when it is packaged and delivered within the bullishness, assertiveness and confrontation which they feel their office *should* entitle them to deploy.²⁸⁰ Yet the particular triggers are most revealing. Among the semi-employed youths in Dutsin Bature, for instance, there was widespread agreement that one of the worst everyday misfortunes you could encounter was to be stopped on your motorbike at a police checkpoint at night in the company of a good-looking girl. This, they considered, would likely result in a particularly hostile and difficult interaction. For the on-duty policeman,

²⁷⁸ Mobile police guards often collect a fee of N2,000 per day.

²⁷⁹ My thanks to Chris Willott for helping me to identify this key theme.

²⁸⁰ It is also tempting to attempt to analogise the overt assertiveness of Nigerians abroad, frequently cited by other African citizens, as an equivalent defensive compensation for the country’s own failure to fulfil its claims to regional hegemony and continental leadership.

the fact that the supposedly low-status (and civilian!) youth was clearly ‘enjoying’ more than he, would likely constitute a provocation for the officer to visibly reassert his own sense of power. The privileges of exception, then, are not enough to compensate such subalterns of the state for their felling of missing out on the finer things in life. This much is evident from outsiders’ interactions with officers; however the question requires some clarification from police officers themselves.

Asking police officers – or anyone - about the relative issue of their own status is fraught with difficulty; it is hard to draw an officer’s own attempt at an objective analysis out past their strong urge to answer the question in a defensive or assertive manner designed to validate their status. After all the question, especially when asked by an outsider, implicitly itself calls into question the status it is asking about. I therefore designed an experimental methodology which involved asking officers to arrange a series of cards with professions (including policing) written upon them hierarchically in the order in which they thought the public saw them; in other words to explain their view of the public’s view of themselves. I structured the experiment in three parts – first asking them to choose from a list of uniformed services only, then adding in other state institutions; then finally expanding to involve a much wider range of private, public and other occupations and status. By discussing the participants’ choices, I hoped to better understand not just their ideas of relative professional status, but the criteria upon which that status was predicate. I originally intended to make this a major part of the thesis, but events and practicalities took my research in other directions, so I abandoned the experiment; not however before revealing some interesting and noteworthy responses.

The most immediately evident was that police respondents universally agreed that the public saw policing very negatively. Interestingly, many attributed low public opinions of the police both to their poor performance in fulfilling their stated function, and their relative lack of prestige as also based upon visibility, social status and wealth. Some officers attempted to explain how they felt the public’s disposition was arrived at. In one ASP’s words:

‘What makes police to be low (in this game) is the attitude of rank and file, who are regularly in contact with the public and the regular impression they give is the decadence within the system. There is no time they try to hide that – the rank and file, the ones who really interact with the people... this is what gives people the idea of not wanting to have anything to do with the police force – because of perception that once you get involved with the police you get entwined with the red tape; you just move from trouble to trouble and never solve your case. So no person who is gentle will want anything to do with them. The only ones who want to relate with police are those who are married to them or who have individuals who are there.’ (January 2010)²⁸¹

In this officer’s evaluation, then, he is well aware of the impact of *wayo* and *wahala* upon public engagement, and suggests that only those with a particularist connection to the institution are comfortable using it.

9.1.4: Transcending the ‘local’ – the value of international peers

In Chapter 3 we discussed not only the overt presence of negative images in both media debate and creative products such as films, but also the absence of positive representations of police in the public sphere. In the absence of immediate positive role-models or affirmation, Nigerian police officers with whom I interacted, especially those who were ‘exposed’ (i.e. to the wider world) frequently validated their own roles by reference to international peers. Similarly, Wendland (op cit; 134) notes that Malawian medical students contrast their own realities with ‘an unmarked international “elsewhere”’ and are both validated and challenged as professionals by their own place in the comparison. In the NPF, this is intermittently visible in the oblique references to imported models of ‘police-ness’, especially on the US model; thus a Nigerian police officer might sometimes be heard referring to themselves as a ‘cop’ in a mode which indexes the action hero or detective portrayed in American media, which they consume via TV or pirate DVDs of TV drama serials. (Joshua, a CID officer I interview, taps on

²⁸¹ As well as referring the location of the problem down the hierarchy to the rank and file, this senior officer raises the thought-provoking possibility that the police’s public – and thus the complainants I have seen in ‘B’ Division – may be a biased sample, composed particularly of those who already have a social connection and thus a pathway to approach the institution.

my notebook and tells me to write him as *Detective Joshua*). Senior officers value and strive for interactions with international peers – there are numerous Nigerian members of fora such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and this is noteworthy beyond the obvious material advantage in being able to access foreign travel opportunities for conferences. Being a professional in part entails validation by being part of a transnational peer group. In fact international travel, and active membership of a community of international professional peers, is not just fetishised, it is a real marker of career attainment for many NPF officers, via the important professional development experience of serving on a UN peacekeeping mission. Those who had served as peacekeepers referred not only to their implicit validation by working as equals alongside mixed teams of global police peers from a wide range of developed and developing nations, but proudly to the generally good feedback and professional affirmation from those peers that they and other Nigerian officers received during such service.²⁸²

9.2: The way the country is going: understanding contemporary realities

Understanding how the police see themselves cannot be separated from how they see wider society, the historical moment in which they live, and their role within it. Police ethnographies from post-war Euroamerica of the 1960s to 1980s, for example, testify to police officers' self-understandings as deeply embedded within an idea of problematic social change, and their role self-defined as patrolling the acceptable limits of this change. For Van Maanen's (1978) patrolman encountering the campus counterculture, as for Young's (1993) rural force encountering non-white publics for the first time, police were uniquely challenged by, and felt mandated to react to, an epochal change in society involving new vices such as drugs, new subjects such as ethnic minorities, and new changes in norms of respect for authority. This is not only at street level: Reiner (1991)

²⁸² Since 1960 Nigeria has a strong tradition of contributing troops and police to peacekeeping missions. A sizeable number of the senior officers I met in Dutsin Bature of DSP level and above had served in Liberia, Darfur, and Kosovo, while at the time of fieldwork large numbers were also being selected for service in Haiti. With reference to the discussion of moral economy below, we should also note that peacekeeping service is paid at internationally-set rates, and provides an important route to capital accumulation, especially for those officers who want to accumulate capital without engaging in private enterprises or large-scale corruption.

shows how a generation of high-profile Chief Constables in 1980s England (ironically themselves mostly products of distinctively post-war class mobility) positioned themselves politically as conservative mediators of public morality, in areas ranging from sexuality to counter-terrorism strategy. We must equally situate NPF officers' sense of self within understandings of the contemporary Nigerian situation.

9.2.1: 'Everything good will come' or 'God will just help us'? Contesting narratives of development, change and reform

Nigeria is a developing country. An in-depth examination of how Nigerian popular discourse constructs ideas of 'development' and related concepts such as democracy, which address specifically Nigerian understandings and expectations, is yet to be done and here is not the place to attempt it. I will therefore confine my discussion to the observation that among police, as among other Nigerians, the term 'development' is frequently used to index material wealth and infrastructure, tied to a teleological process of growth, enlightenment, regularisation, opportunity, self-fulfilment, individual freedom²⁸³ and closer linkage to the wider world as a whole, which sets Nigeria on an assumed trajectory towards an eventual normative convergence with those mythologised offstage places known as 'advanced countries'. Thus, for example, the critical political problems of the present are situated in a context of relatively recent emergence from military rule and thereby excused as inevitable teething-problems of democratic consolidation, while broader trends such as growing numbers of young people going to university, or increasing car ownership, are taken as more truly indicative of the general direction of development. Officers may understand police reform through this matrix too, with every regularisation of procedure and improvement of welfare evidence of how work and lives will change, and are changing, in the course of development; evidence of the 'dividends of democracy' feeding through the system.

²⁸³ That is, individual freedom from extended-family kinship obligations; although modernities filtered through the Christian and Islamic revivalist movements equally substitute these with more appropriate 'modern' kinship subjections, such as monogamous marriage. (Larkin and Meyer 2005).

Yet at the same time, there is also a simultaneous and equally prominent narrative of decline. According to this narrative, Nigeria has failed to perform to expectations, has little validity left as an object of patriotic celebration, and is a failed state incapable of delivering meaning or material good, a land where justice is absent or permanently deferred until the next life. This prominent discourse finds expression in talk of giving up on Nigeria, or of state failure, or most recently in apocalyptic portrayals of the Boko Haram insurgency; and most notably in the course of my fieldwork during Nigeria's 50th anniversary of independence in October 2010, when many public figures, including even members of government, openly talked about there being 'nothing to celebrate'.

Nigeria, then, is caught between contested versions of yesterday and tomorrow. History, though its presence is shallow in such a demographically young country, is mobilised in justification of both versions; and both versions have their reflection in police senses of history and present. One narrative is of a decline in standards, as evident in Inspector Daniel's comments on the quality of recruits in Chapter 4. This goes hand-in-hand with a decline in respect for the police institution, as proved by the casual familiarity and disregard with which the police are treated, as a result of the loss of fear. As a former PT instructor and prominent member of the Association of Retired Police Officers (ARPON) told me in Lagos, in his time, when officers wore 'neatly pressed knicker... if police came to your house, you knew a policeman had been' – the conflation of due respect and fear which he felt had been lost. Yet at the same time, the very same set of changes to past attributes are taken by other officers as evidence of progress. A female CSP who is also a history graduate talked to me at length about how the older generation of police officers exhibit traits of the colonial (or 'kolo') mentality, caricatured as rigid, semi-literate, disciplinarian and force-based, and about how the work of community engagement and police reform is to break down the authoritarian and confrontational ethos in favour of a closer relationship with the public. Her narrative was very clearly one of continuing the work of decolonisation into a fully civilian service.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ Her characterisation of such officers is reflected in the way another officer openly referred to Gida State's A/C Ops as 'that thug' in my presence. Neither is the conflation of colonial attitude with unreasonable and stupid behaviour solely limited to graduates of Ahmadu Bello University's Marxist history department. From their beginnings - connoting a pompous idiot who likes running around in



SERGEANT-MAJOR GARUBA, ILORIN POLICE.

uncomfortable clothes telling other people what to do for no good reason - 'kolo' and 'kolomental' have floated away from their etymological moorings to become popular terms describing crazy behaviour or madness, as for instance in the 2008 song 'Kolomental' by the singer Faze (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4vLWezFsbo>).



Figs 10 & 11: Security men, then and now. Hermon-Hodge (1922), and author.

Nearly 100 years separates these two photographs of Nigerian policemen taken by white British photographers. In the first, Sergeant-Major Garuba snaps to attention in his fez and 'neatly-pressed knicker' for the camera of an expatriate colonial officer. In the second, taken on the verandah of 'B' division, the Inspector saw me with my camera and called me to take his picture. He then spontaneously adopted this 'action' pose of his own accord. Between the kolo and the modern, the rigidity may have been replaced by a less formal stance, but the paramilitarism remains.

So 'kolo' mentalities are here cast in negative opposition to modernity and the present-day police that is self-represented as 'us'. And this is at the same time as other officers, or

even the same officers in other contexts, bemoan decline in standards compared to an idealised past (as we have also seen in Chapter 4)²⁸⁵. The police then are understanding themselves at the juncture of two simultaneous referents. Teleologically an evolution from, and improvement upon, what came before in the unenlightened past. But at the same time they are also a product of deviation from what ideally should have happened, and what is understood to happen elsewhere.

This second understanding can be illuminated by reference to the worldviews of others caught in processes of deviated development. Ferguson (1999) writes of a *Zambian copperbelt* which has become disconnected and set adrift from the wider world to which its commodities, modes of production, social life and culture had been most intimately tied. The logic of a formal-sector ordering has collapsed on itself in tandem with this process of de-linkage: Salaries which no longer provide for needs and flights which no longer connect to European capitals are parts of the same process. Ferguson's account provides a unique insight into a context where lives must be lived amid the decline of formal modernity and its accompanying expectations; of history gone into reverse. Vigh (2008) goes further in describing the exceptional and deviant state of crisis become everyday context in Guinea-Bissau. While Ferguson is more directly relevant to the world of formal institutions, with their expectations of pay-packets, class aspirations and retirements, Vigh's subtler analysis acknowledges that even when the abnormal is everyday, 'normal' as a referential category continues to exist as a painful offstage presence. Pertinently, he recognises that "crisis in this perspective is constantly judged against the way things could or ought to be. It is measured and defined in relation to ideas of other lives and societies: ideas that are constructed through spatial or historical analogy; in relation to how life is presumed better elsewhere and how life was better or

²⁸⁵ It should also highlight, again, that the police are not unitary. Every officer is a situated actor. So we may well expect an officer like the female CSP, who is involved in reformist community policing, to denigrate those same principles which are nostalgically valorised by an old-time grassroots officer like Inspector Daniel. This mirrors a divide between 'old' and 'new' police evident in many 20th-century western police ethnographies, and which equally exists in Nigeria: At another training event I take a tea break (4pm tea and biscuits again underlining the British institutional roots) with a small group of DPOs who have all been psychology graduates before joining the police, and who are discussing the more sophisticated insight into human behaviour they attribute to their education. "We" says one, "are the ones who will change Nigeria police".

could be better in other times.” In short, “‘normal’ relates to how things should be or how we would like them to be” (ibid; 11).²⁸⁶

Contemporary Dutsin Bature, and Nigeria, however do not provide an exact and perfect fit to either Zambia in economic decline or post-conflict Guinea-Bissau. Nigeria is experiencing a different era and a different process, in which decline coexists with efflorescence and growth. Lives in Dutsin Bature are lived amid the reconnection of global centres and peripheries in different and reconfigured ways; in the era of transnational diasporas, commodities booms, Chinese investment, multipolarity, aspirational consumerism and new communication technologies. So the wider world is both more visible and more obviously different; closer *and* further away. At the same time, things are both developing and going backwards. Nigeria today exists as a kind of Weimar Republic, wherein political crisis and a construction boom coexist in the same time and space. An ordinary working person might now be able to have access to a bank account, a motorbike or car, be able to drink Spanish wine available in their local supermarket, host their cousin visiting from London. But at the same time there is less electricity, higher costs of living, inflation is going up, jobs are scarce, the number of destitute migrants from Niger and the North in the streets grows weekly, hospitals are on strike, politics is more corrupt. So to a policeman, it might seem congruent to acknowledge both that wages are going up *and* that standards are dropping.

Things are both ways at once; and many of the connections between the local and global are now via the informalised world which took over the 1990s as much in Dutsin Bature and Nigeria as in the Zambian copperbelt (see also Bayart *et al* 1999); you connect to the internet via the illegal connection someone has ‘cracked’ on your phone; you wear a fake Asian-made Arsenal shirt; you watch HBO mini-series on bootlegged DVD copies. Mainly connected to the world via a kind of second-class consumer citizenship, your hopes thereby remain on the possible, but rare, opportunities to participate in the world

²⁸⁶ Note in this regard that global peers and international peacekeeping (above) are a powerful reminder of that comparative gap between where Nigerian realities *are*, and where police officers feel they *should be*, as well as representing the glimmering possibility of occasionally spanning that gap and embodying the possibility of change in the course of a professional life.

on real parity. You are constantly in the presence of potential empowerment, but usually it remains potential just enough to remind you of your disempowerment. Yet portrayals of such (post)modern modes of marginality such as Vigh (*ibid*) do not often adequately capture the optimism which coexists with the pessimism; an immanence of improvement which is co-present in the present, and which somehow transcends current difficulties on an imagined self-fulfilling track to ‘development’ which is somehow only hiding behind and interrupted by ‘rubbish’ and ‘nonsense’.

But in Dutsin Bature, it often seems like all of these process are being generated from elsewhere. In this backwater town, last of any importance at the start of the 20th century, the primary sensation is most often one of waiting. I pick up this texture of everyday life from the start of my fieldwork; noting in January 2010:

Slow. Waiting for NEPA because you can’t afford gen. Waiting for ‘Oga’.²⁸⁷ Waiting for test results to come out. Waiting for posting. Waiting for development. The slowness. People visit each other’s offices to gist and just to sleep.

The same sense of time, of passive endurance, of waiting, pervades the sense of the long-term too, even if tempered by expectation that, as Sefi Atta (2008) puts it, ‘everything good will come’.

The admin guys, of seven and nine years service, used to be in Gwarinpa, Abuja – on being a constable without promotion, they question what is happening, ‘although we hear by the end of this year promotion is supposed to come.’ (Fieldnotes, 5th February 2010).

Police constables, then, like Dutsin Bature itself, are marginal attendees on modernity, waiting for processes heralded elsewhere to reach their neglected corner of existence. Vigh’s Guinea-Bissau is thrust into an exceptional state rendered unexceptional, a permanent crisis which ends history. In Nigeria, things are not as acute; there are avenues for escape, and for mobility within the system, even if these are slow. But still, police

²⁸⁷ Since as we explored in the previous chapter, management (therefore read also: government) is personal and direct, decision-making and power resides only in the person and presence of the office-holder.

officers, like other Nigerians, experience limited agency against time. Their subaltern world often feels shut out of the mainstream.²⁸⁸ This is contextualised against the imaginary of ‘advanced countries’. At the same time, modernity, progress and ‘development’ lands here too, even in the smallest ways. The counter gets a TV, ‘borrowed’ from the exhibit room, and Inspector Cecilia pronounces soberly that ‘with development, all of the offices will get one, in time’.

But the police are also aware that material development and social problems are not incompatible. In one of his more approachable moments, taking a break outside under a tree, CSP Okechukwu is bemoaning the unappreciative nature of Dutsin Bature’s citizens. He advises us:

‘People here don’t appreciate police. But wait and see, by the time there is development they will appreciate police.’

The appreciation to which the DPO refers is material, as explained in more detail below. His comment refers to the townsfolks’ general stinginess towards the police. As the ladies who staff the deadeningly quiet police post in the exclusive GRA quarter will testify, there is an evident correspondence between absence of crime and neglect of the police. In the elite residential estate, many homes have their own guards and there is virtually no visible crime; the highlight of the police post’s day is waving at the Chinese construction workers as they drive past at 4pm. Once that’s done, it only remains to go back to sleep under the tree. The same officers testify that the most they have ever received from the rich residents is an occasional sack of pure water sachets.²⁸⁹ But with time, warns the DPO, ‘development’ will bring its own challenges; migration and population growth, more inequality, more things to steal; in other words a whole new set of security threats, and with them a new appreciation of the value of police.

²⁸⁸ A sense which applies more generally in Nigeria and thus generates a resentful sense of wounded pride in a country previously a prominent continental leader.

²⁸⁹ Approximate value N250 (£1).

This throws more light upon the understandings of modernity above. To find the contradiction between simultaneous optimistic and pessimistic understandings of the moment is not to find a confusion. It is in fact more a sophisticated and correct identification of a real contradiction – that development and change brings uncertainty and insecurity. And the police are very aware of their own potential positioning and opportunities for agency within that. Even terrorism has its hidden benefits:

The new DPO (a demobbed MOPOL) doesn't like divisional work; he is asking the Inspector bomb about bomb squad work. The Inspector tells him "especially with the way the country is going" – there will be more opportunities for bomb squad – they have shortage of senior officers apparently – and you need a science background. There is lots of VIP work, trainings, overseas work: it's the new MOPOL apparently, only no-one's cottoned on to it yet... (Fieldnotes, 3rd March 2010).

9.2.2: Material concerns

Police officers' interest in how they fit into a changing world is not only a matter of professional identity. As the MOPOL officer above exhibits, it is because it centrally concerns their own material prospects in a highly materialistic world. It is not possible to fully appreciate Nigerian police officers' worldview and perspectives, without first understanding the particular hold material concerns have on ordinary Nigerians. The West African sub-region as a whole exhibits some broad cultural dispositions towards the accumulation and circulation of material wealth which differ markedly from those prevalent in the Euroamerican West. In the West, informed by Judeo-Christian, post-reformation and post-industrial values, money is, if not always 'the root of all evil' at best in an ambiguous relationship to social, kinship and affinitive bonds. Money is seen as somehow antithetical to the presence of trust and purity of motive in relationships, often as the agent which corrodes other - more moral - primary bonds between people. In West Africa, however, a material component in human relations is often held to underpin, confirm, reinforce and prove the genuine nature of bonds between people. Money, property, resources, gifts and food are not corrosive but constitutive agents in social relations. Thus, for example, the wife of Mende farmer Bockarie Carpenter knows her

husband loves her because ‘he feeds me’ (Ferme & MacDonald, 1990), a statement of material relations which is no less a testament to affection because of its material nature.²⁹⁰ This is to some extent indivisible from a patrimonial and communitarian, rather than capitalistic, historical base to economic organisation – whereas in the west money becomes good when it is saved, conserved, marshalled, and rationally deployed and invested (Weber 1905), in West Africa money and material wealth in general must be displayed, circulated and redistributed in the service of sociality to be good, and to help its distributor to acquire status.²⁹¹

But Nigeria today exhibits a materialism which has become problematic even to those who are deeply embedded within it. The historical advent of this is contested; many trace it, like Apter (1996) to the 1970s-80s oil boom, which propelled conspicuous consumption (and in the process, contends Apter, debased previous understandings of value and wealth creation). Certainly the value of money was reinforced, not undermined, by the 1980s-1990s economic collapse, as the link between material wealth as admirable and evidential of spiritual power and personal potency was reinforced by ‘prosperity gospel’ Pentecostalism, which affirmed the reality of an ‘economy of miracles’ (Marshall 2009; 173). Whatever the source, this heightened materialism is presently central to the cultural landscape, to the extent that the phrase ‘monetised value-system’ has passed from sociological debates into everyday discourse. The high rate of economic inequality, punitive costs of living, unpredictable environments which generate continual cashflow problems, the potential for dynamic social mobility both upwards and downwards, the lack of evident linkage between hard work and riches, and the continual sense of an

²⁹⁰ Equally, whereas money would not be an appropriate gift between close equals such as siblings in the west, where it would signify a lack of thought, knowledge and care about someone’s likes and dislikes, and a divestment of that duty and inconvenience back to the receiver, in Nigeria it is appreciated for its usefulness, fungibility and evident cost to the giver. Words, after all, are cheap, while money is hard-won; and this is even more so in contemporary Nigerian vernacular public spheres where trust is low and material proof of intentions is thus the more valued.

²⁹¹ The same ethic underlies the pan-regional archetype of the ‘big man’ or woman who acquires, consumes, displays and distributes largesse, deploying material wealth in the service of constituting their personhood. Money too follows this pattern: in Nigerian weddings brides and grooms are ‘sprayed’ with notes; in church the size of donations is applauded; at the book launch the MC points out the appreciative audience member who has paid three times the cover price for a copy to underline their admiration of the author.

unsecured existence in which one may at any time be relegated to the precariat if not well-enough cushioned from misfortune, do nothing to dislodge this. In the process, the commodification of social relations is felt to have become amplified to a problematic extent. While material gifts remain appropriate sign and evidence of genuine affection, for instance, many students find ‘sugar daddies’ and ‘sugar mommies’ to pay their fees and bills while their economically impotent parents stand aside in wilful ignorance. And yet, such issues have not completely dislodged, but instead coexist with, the pre-existing notions of wealth as social nutrient; money has become thus both good and bad, or rather *amoral*, and its possession become a justification in itself, located in a space which neuters morality. For some, the morality is inverted and the end becomes the justification. Dele Momodu, the publisher of *Ovation* magazine, which celebrates ostentatious wealth and celebrity, puts it simply: “It’s a crime not to have money in Nigeria” (Adediran & Plankensteiner, 2010; 228)

How to survive and even prosper in a world with such a material bent is then a question of prime importance to the everyday concerns and moral worldview of the Nigerian police officer. In a world where costs of living, cashflow, capital accumulation, and achieving economic security are such preoccupations; and where economic security is frequently achieved through highly instrumentalised and commodified social relations, it frequently comes into conflict with, and requires compromise with, other registers of morality, self-validation and value, including both personal morality and formal rules on professional ethics. Negotiating this is central to police officers’ construction of their worldviews and self-understandings. The language of ‘corruption’ is not subtle enough to capture these nuances.

9.3: Reconciling morality and necessity

9.3.1: *Man-mus'-whack*.²⁹² *how to work and get paid?*

To a non-Nigerian, 'I live off my salary' sounds a strange plea of poverty.²⁹³ The world it references is one in which basic salaries are often insufficient to meet rising inflation, growing families, and rising expectations. Salaries, for the Nigerian public employee, are often a basic measure of income which guarantees a minimal predictable cashflow. Prosperity requires additional economic activity; and for many this takes precedence over the actual job. This is notoriously the case with civil servants (and in some states it is expected, as Governors deliberately pad civil-service employment rolls with low-paid sinecures as disguised income-support schemes and patronage networks), but is no less alien to the police. The options span the whole range from petty trade – the constable who sells cold drinks to 'B' division's staff and prisoners; to those who lobby for special guard duties which add salary supplement; to the IPOs who link good service to 'dashes' and tips; to small-scale bribery, extortion, and collusion with suspects; all the way to grand corruption and embezzlement of police funds or case evidence. Sometimes multiple routes are linked, as in the senior female ASP in charge of traffic, who reinvested her extra earnings in becoming the proprietor of a popular supermarket in the town. Many officers are very open about their motives in doing so.

The SOJ (Staff Officer Junior, a senior officer in charge of the state's rank-and-file human resource issues and postings) comes in. A young, fit-looking man, he wears a big polished belt buckle, well-tailored trousers, shiny patent leather dress boots. I show him the map I am making and say 'It's a map of Dutsin Bature'. He peers at it and then says 'OK!? It's a map of Dutsin Bature? This man is seriously working –o! Me, I can't do all these things (frown, dismissive wave of hand) I just dey look for money'. (2nd March 2011).

²⁹² The saying means 'you have to eat, somehow'.

²⁹³ It may be used, for example, in trying to haggle a more favourable price for a service.

Of course, nowhere in the world does idealism survive long in a police officer. But it may be easily foreseen that in this Nigerian context, a range of factors further combine to reinforce a cynical and materialistic attitude to work. The combination of overwork and visibly low-status tasks which we outlined already in this chapter combine with wider national factors (such as the evident impunity enjoyed by the wealthy criminal element in the political class), to produce a structure which is predictably demotivating, especially for the subaltern policeman. A friend who is a DPO in Lagos related his headaches with having to continually micromanage and supervise demotivated rank-and-file officers whose attitude he summed up as ‘caring is for the DPO’.

In fact, in such an environment, those who do take their work too seriously can even be felt a threat to their colleagues. On 3rd March 2011, the day after witnessing SARS officers engage in a prolonged session of interrogation and torture, I am at the counter. The O/C SARS digresses from an open conversation he having, to address me directly in a way which hovers ambiguously between homily and warning.²⁹⁴

‘Be careful before you try to help someone – you might just try because you’re sympathetic, but if you don’t know someone is watching you, and then that report that you wrote, someone will take it and kick it from one to another and you will have to defend what you wrote. Like you, I use to see you here jotting one or two things and we black, we would be out enjoying; and if someone see you here working like that they will even say you are wicked.’

Whatever the primary intention of the O/C SARS’ speech, it is interesting in this context not only that he contrasts the perception of untrustworthiness on the part of those who try to do ‘good’ – which he both exhibits himself, and attributes to others – with the innocent activity of ‘enjoying’; but that he also attributes a racial angle to the difference, whereby the world of diligence, seriousness and stress is the preserve of ‘whites’ (here meaning people who are, or who think and act like, those from overseas). At the same time, he attributes to himself as to other Nigerians a more laid-back ethic, which devalues

²⁹⁴ I suspect this was meant to make me reflect on the potential consequences of my own work, with primary reference to what I had witnessed the previous day.

unnecessary extra effort. Indicative of wider attitudes such insights may be, they are however by no means universal. Other officers, even within the same workplace, display the opposite disposition, voicing their discontent with those who see police work primarily through the lens of material gain, and espousing much more of a formal public-service ethic.

The older constable Simon Peter, a constable from Bayelsa, a demobilised MOPOL and others are discussing their future plans. Simon Peter is fatalistic, refuses to make any categorical comment about the future, because it is the hands of god. He also comments on the Bayelsan's comment 'if I come across money I will leave police' with a public response, addressed to the assembled company – 'That means you did not come here to serve. You see? That's OK. That's very OK.' (Fieldnotes, 1st March 2011).

That it is 'very OK' is explicitly ironic; Simon Peter actually means to underline how offensive he finds the sentiment. But if police officers among themselves display a wide range of dispositions to duty and to accumulation, how then to make sense of this variety?

9.3.2: An incomplete opposition: 'appreciation' and 'returns'

In December 2009 while on a community policing training course, I am listening to a DPO explain how he used a political impasse in the town he polices to leverage money from both sides. It is early in my fieldwork, and I am trying and failing to hide my disapproval. Another senior officer spots my critical expression and interrupts, justifying his colleague's behaviour in explicitly relativistic terms which make a perfect prompt for anthropological enquiry:

'Our system of capital accumulation is not that which obtains in western countries';

As detailed above, the opportunities for material accumulation for police officers span the range from the innocent to the clearly criminal. Very many, however, fall into an area where their status is much less clear. Two such modes are the collection of 'appreciation'

and ‘returns’. Their explicability in different and relative registers of morality is intrinsically related to the cultural space for material expression of social relations we outlined above. To understand both phenomena it is necessary to document some other social circulations of wealth in the workplace.

During my fieldwork I was given money by police officers on three occasions. On each it came from officers who are older than me and senior in rank. The first time I am in Lagos, visiting a DPO I met on a course. We meet in his office, where a coursemate from his cadet days is also visiting as he passes through town. On leaving, our host hands us each an envelope (marked ‘DPO’). I attempt to protest with a fuzzy line about having research funding and not needing transport money; he shrugs ‘You drink beer don’t you?’ and tucks it into my pocket.²⁹⁵ The money the DPO has given me has no price or demand attached; it is intended as an instalment in a friendship. In a heavily hierarchical society, it at once recognises the inequality of our relationship; and helps me materially; *and* confirms the DPO-as-benefactor in the multiple roles of good host, senior, and patron. I note that I am given the same gift as his coursemate, who is likewise a friend and likewise not as fortunate as the DPO who has been posted to a prime and busy Lagos division. Interestingly too, the money has itself been received by the DPO, as the marking on the envelope indicates, and not repackaged since. While we are in his office, I get an idea as to how. Three men from a nearby large haulage firm come in to thank the DPO for his help in resolving an incident in which one of their drivers had used their vehicle to move contraband cargo. This visit is simply to show appreciation. This particular officer’s division includes a large number of such firms, as well as medium-scale industry, depots and warehouses of multinationals. Such appreciation, monetarily expressed, can therefore amount to substantial sums, and this perk of the division is widely known. Thus the DPO, as a good friend and host, is simply circulating his good fortune.

²⁹⁵ I counted it later; N8,000 (£31). The other two instances, although involving smaller amounts of money, were similar and so have been omitted here.

‘Appreciation’, as a category of income, is fuzzy since it is a post-facto donation, like a ‘dash’ or tip, and is clearly not extorted or demanded before service. Neither is it priced. But that of course does not mean it does not embed a message, which in the context of a police officer and those who desire their services, is very clearly one of what is often referred to in Nigeria as ‘encouragement’; of motivation to work based on reasonable expectation of reward. Appreciation, then, is a gift-as-*post*-station rather than *prestation*, and confirms a relationship, setting it up for reproduction. In that it embeds a police officer in certain primary relationships of implied obligation, it is potentially problematic and can cause exposure to risk, but it is not felt to be ‘wrong’ in the same way as demanding a bribe.

This is not quite the same as the other common category of ‘grey’ accumulation. ‘Returns’ are the name given to remittances given by juniors to seniors, sums of cash which flow up the system. They are named after the official returns of crime statistics and other information which must periodically be sent to headquarters. Information on returns is hard to come by because the issue is more obviously morally problematic than is appreciation. Nevertheless, it is commonplace to the extent that even when senior officers publicly distance themselves from the practice of collecting returns, some of their own juniors do not believe them:

Constable Egwu says ‘Don’t mind anyone who says don’t bring ‘X,Y,Z’ for me – after all, will they say ‘go and bring me money?’ Beats, bail, posting all bring money, because you have to lobby for posting. Then it goes up the chain. But it’s not on quota, and if you don’t do (it), you get moved. It’s not always ‘ask’ – but one slab of Star cans, Malta cans, or red oil, or bag of rice, by the time you multiply it by 21 local governments, it adds up to a lot.’ (Fieldnotes, 1st March 2011).

Like appreciation, returns then are ‘not by force’, but those who do not participate may likely be sidelined as a consequence, except perhaps in the case of exceptionally highly-performing officers who prove indispensable in their roles. Popular mythology in Nigeria holds that the entire logic of policing can be understood by reference to a highly-structured revenue-farming system of returns. Yet not just Constable Egwu, but other

more senior officers candidly assured me that semi-voluntaristic cashflows in the mould of ‘appreciation’ represent a much larger portion of most DPOs or similar executive managerial officers’ additional income. But Egwu’s testimony indicates something further: Just as the actual amount of the gift given in the DPO’s handing out ‘transport money’; or the businessman’s ‘appreciation’ is in some senses secondary to the relationship it forms, the actual cash value of the returns detailed above are small – what is important instead here is their tributary nature and the relationships they embed; they are the respect due to the Commissioner expressed in material form.

9.3.3: Of bad apples and bell curves

It is common to hear police spokespersons respond to accusations of gross corruption or abuse of human rights by blaming such behaviour on a few ‘bad apples’ who taint the image of the rest. The Nigerian public have long grown cynical and weary of such explanations; we as researchers, having already examined the systemic imperatives to cut corners, improvise, breach basic laws, accumulate money and deviate from stated aims, might also view such explanations with scepticism. But perhaps we should give due consideration to the patterning of malpractice to which it points; it is after all a truism in criminology that a majority of crimes are committed by a small minority of very busy criminals. It may be reasonable to expect that the same applies equally within the police institution; after all the public salience of those who abuse their position is inevitably higher than those who do not. Equally, there is no reason to suppose that a normal distribution of traits in a population would be any different if charting corruption or malpractice within the police. There are after all both notoriously bad and notoriously good officers, and they are known within the intimate confines of the police institution: The female DPO who is notoriously ‘hard’, the sadistic DSP in the East who shoots suspects in the leg as a prelude to interrogation, the Lagos DPO of legendary greed who ordinarily resides in an expensive hotel, the CP who throws the wad of money in the bin with a curt ‘that is not my money’ if the returns are insufficient. Their opposites are equally well-known; the CP so honest he is placed in charge of the force’s own savings at the police co-op, the DPO who will not allow torture, the religious fundamentalist who is

so straight she cannot function in any post except administration, the sergeant who gives away his wages to the orphanage for which he fundraises. Of course policing, with its unique powers and opportunities for exception, offers unique opportunities for abuse; on one of my first days in 'B' division, I express surprise at the numbers of police officers inside the cell, and an IPO replies, sarcastically,

'Ehn, police no dey *commit*'?

Trying to identify the particular distribution of dispositions and attitudes lies outside the scope of this study, although it was the subject of another experimental methodology I tried and abandoned early in my fieldwork. I wrote misdemeanours a police officer might commit on a series of cards and asked a number of officers to rank them in order of their seriousness. In January 2010 I tried the method with an experienced Chief Superintendent, who re-arranged not only my cards but also my *categories*, into institutional disciplinary offences. So my card marked 'taking sides in an election' became 'improper conduct'; incorrect uniform became 'improper dressing'. Collecting returns however was put low in the pile with the comment 'ah, it's the normal thing now'.

Without having been able to test any thesis about the distribution of certain types of behaviour, or to determine the exact contours of police officers' senses of acceptability and values, it is at least possible to see that they are contextual and relativistic, making room for certain types and modes of accumulation within the 'normal' bounds of police work. This itself provides grounds for further analysis.

9.3.4: Moral economies of policing

The existence of a range of grey areas in which accumulation and reward can be found, and the existence of a range of attitudes towards engaging in them, indicates that the formal rules of the organisation and its disciplinary codes do not completely capture the situational morality deployed by ordinary officers. Yet neither do they deviate from them in standardisable ways. But there is a common discourse mobilised to talk about such

things, which I attempt here to locate in the field of moral economy. Moral economy comes into anthropology through the work of Scott (1976), who derives the concept from E.P. Thompson's historical studies of the English working class. Scott does not attempt any exhaustive theoretical definition beyond stating that moral economy refers to the subject's 'notion of economic justice and their working definition of exploitation – their views on which claims [on their product] were tolerable and which intolerable.' (*ibid*; 3).

On a slow Sunday in March 2011, Constable Rebecca Pam, relaxing out of the way in the office of the female constable who sells cold drinks, gives me her own exegesis; in her interpretation, there is a nice moral code governing who can be asked for what, and when, in the course of counter work.

'As regards counter – they can give, it's not by force, in Lagos for Christmas a station can get whole ram – counter we can ask, we can't force – then (if) you see IPO you pay for file. But counter, our own it can't be more than N500, even 200-300, except last week a guy reported car missing since January, he gave 1k on way out. What of victim? Ah no, we don't ask from victim, cos we feel they have already been victimised.'

Pam's account clearly glosses the consequences of refusing to give; even if it is not 'by force', there are clear expectations of service which flow from giving and not giving. Police officers at the counter, like everywhere else, want to make their money, but even so, it is graded and codified. The demands are cognisant that the complainant will also be encountering other 'asks'; therefore demands must be reasonable, and for the sake of common humanity, there are some people it is manifestly unfair to ask. This, then, is the moral economy which defines what constitute tolerable claims on the users of policing.²⁹⁶

An equivalent system of relative moral economy operates within the police. One day, SARS officers leave N800 on the desk of every officer in 'B' Division. One officer refuses even to touch it; instead she calls her colleague to take it, and tells me she has refused the gift because the money 'has blood on it'. Most however accept it gratefully;

²⁹⁶ Although we must expect that in discussing such gifts, police may play down the element of leverage and coercion; while members of the public may conversely emphasise it.

this money, which has very likely been derived by force from those who have themselves gained it by force as the proceeds of crime, has been reincarnated as representing the sharing nature of colleagues who have encountered good fortune and not forgotten to include others in it.

The whole system becomes even more complicated when the drive to accumulate money itself becomes embedded not as a competing imperative, but as intrinsic to the law-enforcement process.

Blessing is telling me Egbon is a good IPO because he doesn't take money *anyhow*. For instance the DPO says so-and-so suspect (in a stabbing case) should bring money for bail; he doesn't take small-small to allow them out and drop case like (names another IPO) who bailed a stabbing case last week and he ran off and we had to go and raid hideout and caught him smoking hemp. (14th June 2010)

This passage relates a relativism in its extreme form. In Nigeria only the courts are permitted to set monetary bail conditions, and police bail is by law free. Charging for bail is however a lucrative practice so widespread as to be routine, despite the best efforts of those in authority who post '*BAIL IS FREE*' posters prominently in police stations. In Blessing's account, however, there is a different and more subtle moral economy of bail. Good bail practice here is when the price is set by the competent authority, at the correct level in the hierarchy, for an amount which constitutes an effective deterrent to further misbehaviour.²⁹⁷ Bad bail practice, in contrast, is to act in an autonomous manner which puts personal selfish gain before the needs of the organisation, messing up the case and further inconveniencing the colleagues who have to sort out the matter. Taking money 'anyhow' is here opposed to taking money in a structured way which underpins, not undermines, the aim of the organisation and makes police work easier, not more difficult. The appraisal of a colleague's professionalism too is predicate upon his according with

²⁹⁷ Since it is unlikely that the suspect will be refunded their bail, we should understand that the money works its function by reference to the social particularisms more widely employed as discussed in Chapter 6: As the money will likely be gathered by relatives, it is they, as in the case of Friday in Chapter 7 who will police his subsequent conduct.

this aim, all of which makes sense within the bounded morality of policing in Dutsin Bature.

9.3.5: Breaking eggs: the moral relativity of doing bad things to bad people.

Just like collecting money, violence, the other obviously controversial area of policing, has both its own clear formal bounds, and its own subjective morality. While torture and extra-judicial killings continue to be held as the unacceptable face of police violence in Nigeria, and missives and instructions from Headquarters continue to preach against them²⁹⁸, at the grassroots violence is seen much more functionally.

For the average executive police manager, such as a DPO, professionalism and professional competence in the end boils down to a single prime imperative: Keeping your patch clean. This is a central value I discover, like much else in anthropological fieldwork, by causing embarrassment when transgressing it. In a group of DPOs on a training course, I meet an officer from a well-known division on an international border, frequently used by car thieves as a getaway. When I recognise the name of the division, and say ‘oh, where the car thieves operate?’ there is a huge embarrassed silence which allows me ample time to realise my slip, and then the DPO politely forgives my blunder and says ‘well, we are trying’.

It follows that if an area is quiet and stays that way, superiors will not necessarily need or want to know how exactly that has been done. In fact, sometimes superior officers more than turn a blind eye to abuses, especially in ‘hot’ places. I was told the anecdotal story of the DPO who refuses to execute the armed robbery suspect and insists on charging him to court even when the CP calls and shouts at him for turning his station into a ‘museum for armed robbers’. He goes home and returns on Monday to find the deed has been done over the weekend by his concerned subordinates. Yet in quieter places, the opposite may be true; I am told of the former CID head in Dutsin Bature who was quietly removed due

²⁹⁸ Although significantly there has been no move to re-examine Force Order 237 (see Chapter 2) which details the very wide range of circumstances under which the police may use lethal force.

to increasing public concern and complaints about his trigger-happy nature. The morality is situational, depending in part on its acceptability in the local context.²⁹⁹

Torture, too, treads the line between necessity and excess; on one occasion, I make it clear that I am unhappy with the way I have recently seen the SARS unit behave. The next day;

Inspector Bashiru from SARS tells me ‘you can’t tell me but you are avoiding me. I know you are running away from me because of interrogation of suspect’ – which I deny – ‘didn’t I come and greet yesterday?’ – but of course he’s right.

Therefore, the O/C SARS takes the time to justify his interrogation techniques to me functionally:

‘You follow one case to get another. People might not tell you such things unless you make them – you might think we are heartless, but we know that they will not tell you such a thing without making them.’ (3rd March 2011)

For some officers, criminal status itself negates any need for sympathetic considerations. Corporal Blessing, always ready to proffer her opinions, tells me, with real feeling, that the suspect being tortured is not worth the sympathy.

Here in Nigeria we don’t pity thief – if they fall into their hand they go kill am straight. Oh, you get sympathy for thief? He has rob people, kill people, *poor* people, steals their money’ (Fieldnotes, 1st March 2011).

As we may infer by the abundance and popularity of vigilance movements, that as much as there are outcries over police abuses, there is also a public demand for heavy-handed and summarily punitive law-enforcement practice. Procedural law-enforcement cannot

²⁹⁹ International human rights groups charting police malpractice often overlook this extreme geographical variation; clearly repeated controversies over extra-judicial capital punishment have had some effect, as by the time of my fieldwork a constable in Dutsin Bature was able to complain about their work being much harder now that everyone must be charged to court, and how it was easier in the days of ‘fire-for-fire’ (the shoot-to-kill policy of former IG Tafa Balogun).

always deliver this, and so in many places police officers' summary solutions fill the gap – what Jauregui (2012) calls 'police vigilantism'. Policing after all takes place in a plural and competitive environment where citizens are used to 'forum shopping' (Baker, 2012) and so must respond to such demand. Violence, then, is situationally and relatively moral – it depends on who it is being practiced, by whom, to what ends and in what context. Certainly it is not accepted enough to always be openly and unambiguously displayed, but it is both a core part of what the public seem to want from their police, and an essential functional component of the way they do their work, opening up space for a difference between legality, formally defined; and legitimacy, based on situational morality. Such violence, like collecting the correct and allowable kinds of appreciation, bail and returns, may not be legal, but is widely considered legitimate within the institutional world.³⁰⁰

9.4: To be police: managing contradictions

Thus far, a critical reader might find cause to take issue with the way in which I have attempted to reconstruct the subjective worldviews of police by synthesising partial and fragmented pieces of behaviour and commentary into my own understanding of what I consider to be their understandings. To redress the balance, I therefore present two pieces of a very different form of evidence, testimonies in which police officers themselves discuss openly, explicitly and in more depth their own understandings of what it means to be police and to know how to navigate life within the tricky terrain of the police institution.

³⁰⁰ Such situational morality also affects the very nature of what is defined as violence, even outside the world of police. A friend in Lagos described how in her childhood, the execution of armed robbers by military firing-squad was shown on national TV. I asked if she felt seeing such violence as a child had affected her; she replied 'what violence? That was *justice*'.

9.4.1: Fluency

On 11th November 2010, I am visiting 'B' Division's old and dusty satellite station at Dogonyaro suburb.

The Inspector calls me to come and take a break, and we walk to a shack close by which sells beer. I bring up the recent transfer of 'A' Division's DPO, and ask the Inspector how he himself, who has for a long time been in the comfortable position of sole charge of a satellite station, manages to stay 'weatherproof' and in position. He tells me: 'If there is a change in climate I just adjust myself and fit in. If you struggle to get something you are digging your grave; I don't raise my mind beyond what is my level; if you concern yourself with what you are not; not what you are, you are in trouble.'

He also tells me that most of the female officers at Dogonyaro station had left, because one ASP who was transferred there – a man 'from Akwa Ibom (near the Inspector's own natal home), he's my brother but he didn't act like a brother to me' – was trying 'all kinds of funny business' with them. "I think the wife was mentally ill" he tells me, and smirks, 'and he was just treating them anyhow. But this is the modern world – if you are an administrator you can't do anything in front of your junior you will have to apologise to them for.' It turns out this is the same aging ASP I had previously met, sleeping in his office in the traffic division – Inspector Daniel says 'One colonial officer like that – one 'kolo'!' I ask, is this the one who told me he wants to go home to his state? 'Yes! You know him. I influenced his transfer sef. I told him to dress up and go to IG, who will send him to DIG. They found the transfer paper under a pile of stuff. He didn't know how to do it – you have to go yourself.' I ask, didn't he drop anything for them? (i.e. pay for the transfer to be effected). Inspector Daniel tells me 'No, because it's normal from that transfer.' I ask how come he spent 30 years in the police and didn't know how that was done? The Inspector answers: 'We all dress like policemen but not all of us are policemen inside'.

Inspector Daniel here opens the frame outwards even more. For him, to be a policeman successfully also involves acting in a manner appropriate to status; to have juniors implies learning to deploy and embody authority in a convincing manner and without

embarrassing yourself, in this instance through sexual harassment of your staff.³⁰¹ And note too that this is embedded in his understanding of the modern world as a place in which even seniors in the gerontocratic/institutional hierarchy have to be accountable to their juniors for their actions.³⁰²

Beyond this, however, his ultimate judgement of what makes a policeman, by which his problematic colleague falls short, is not a question of police work, or of management, but of how to negotiate *the institutional terrain itself*. It is to understand how to expedite your own transfer, to exercise personal direct management of the universe of power which operates over your head, and to know what is routine and should be expected, as distinct from what is exceptional and might require payment. To be a ‘policeman inside’ requires primarily knowledge of the police institution.³⁰³ At the same time, it requires that this knowledge be deployed in a defensive manner; Inspector Daniel’s philosophy is one of conserving energy and thereby enhancing durability; a policeman through successive episodes of military rule, boom and bust, elections, changes of government, successive and very different DPOs and CPs, he is fluent enough to ‘adjust and fit in’ without exposing himself to undue risk or losing sight of his eventual goals.³⁰⁴

The distinction is between police in form and police in substance, the latter as a learned disposition which reforms a person’s being, and in which professional repertoire a person can be admired for acquiring sophistication and fluency. This is also reflected in the next text, which draws an implied distinction between knowing police work, and knowing it *well*. On 11th March 2011, in the middle of Dutsin Bature’s hottest month, I am sitting at the counter.

³⁰¹ Visiting Dogonyaro on another occasion, a slow day, I find the Inspector in his office reading an old educational pamphlet on industrial labour relations, which he dismisses as ‘just to keep my mind busy’.

³⁰² In this formulation, police subordinates have ‘become wise’ as a result of enlightenment in much the same way as have the Fulanis of Chapter 4.

³⁰³ This stands in contrast to Young (1991) in which police officers define genuine police officers in terms of role and efficacy; ‘thief takers’ against mere ‘uniform carriers’.

³⁰⁴ The disposition served him well. At the time of writing, Inspector Daniel has successfully passed a promotion course which raises him to ASP; now back in Gida State in the senior cadre, he has been given command of a division including an important industrial installation.

It is a quiet period in the day, and the O/C SARS, the one they nickname ‘Obey!’, is sat in the front with the counter ladies. One of them is selling pure water – ‘water is life’ he says, and turning his attention to Constable Rebecca Pam, he starts, for no particularly apparent reason, making her the subject of discussion, telling her colleagues: ‘When I move here, I see this one where she stays around, just sitting, and asked around and found that this one is police. Ah, I said, this one knows police work very well. She will just sit looking (mimes head rested in hand, bored expression, watching what’s going on around), so I ask where did you learn? Lagos? That is where you really learn police work. And if there is no case, you will just on your cap and go and *create*... That one is ‘illegal duty’.’ Rebecca, who has been sat listening silent and straightfaced says ‘Thankyou sir’. The O/C SARS continues – ‘If you have worked in Lagos, Port Harcourt, you can work anywhere. And Onitsha, it’s the same as Delta, their own is even higher.’ Rebecca now pipes up with her own contribution: ‘What they told me is ‘when you are young, get involved early, and follow someone who know road’, and while the others smile sheepishly, the O/C SARS nods sagely and says ‘Hmmm, that is a good advice.’

For the O/C SARS, police work implies accumulation as a matter of course, and accumulation implies a heightened awareness of, and creative utilisation of, any activity which might provide an opportunity for police intervention and thus personal advantage. Active policing and illicit accumulation are here not opposed concepts, but rather part and parcel of the same activity. It is the same instinct and alertness to incident and opportunity which leads Egbon, when I am talking to him on a station guard shift, to note a squeal of brakes in the road outside which I have not even heard and say ‘excuse me, I have to see what is going on out there’. And for the O/C SARS, it is clear that these skills can best be learned in a particular kind of place – the big, chaotic, economically vibrant, insecure, conflict-riven city, which provides plenty of opportunities for intervention, and even the conditions under which opportunities for intervention can be blatantly manufactured. But even the conditions under which accumulation and profession are blended, to make ‘real’ police work, are specific and learned. Deviating from the formal rules implies risking the wrath of superiors and the displeasure of the public, so it is itself a long and learned process with its own dos and don’ts which is best learned from a good and experienced teacher who ‘knows the road’. Here too, real police work is taken as a

matter not just of procedure, but of disposition and personality-formation, which exceeds simply the job as done in duty hours, to blend *doing* and *being*.

So in both these texts, and throughout the ethnography I have recorded, there runs a rich discourse on what it is to 'be police' in contemporary Nigeria. Mostly, like much other police knowledge, it is evident in practice rather than explicitly articulated verbally, and we should thus consider the preceding chapters on work and risk as equally contributions to building the picture specifically explored in this section; but occasionally (as above), it rises to the surface in discourse wherein officers reflect on their own condition and values. Throughout there are potentially unstable tensions, even sometimes contradictions, which must be negotiated. To be a police officer in Nigeria involves balancing service with self-interest, advantage with risk, procedure with creativity, personal loyalties with preferences and formal rules, force with negotiation, money with personal morality. And all of this is done within a historical subjectivity which represents the police (and Nigeria) as being in delicate transition from the colonial to the fully modern; which process itself implies its own contradictions as 'development' brings insecurity. All of these conditions provide for an existence in which there are a few secured expectations, but many more unplanned and unforeseen changes in condition and circumstance which must be guarded against as well as possible.

9.4.2: Collusion and the arts of survival: just managing, and prospering

To borrow a phrase from Ferguson (op cit), police officers' 'expectations of modernity' are fraught with uncertainty. Yet although the path is beset with twists and turns, its ideal destination is clear. To get to the end of a police career, after 30 years' service, with life and health intact, having married successfully, raised and educated a family, accumulated some capital, built a house in your home town or village and set up a secondary business or income stream, are usual and normal aims. The police institution understands this, and quietly integrates it within its informalised operation of formal procedures; thus Inspectors are promoted to ASP for the final phase of a long career, and may be preferred for a DPO role in a quieter station to allow them their period of 'enjoyment'. Equally as

Inspector Daniel's testimony above indicates, it is usual to post a lower-ranking officer from the senior cadre back to their home state for the final period of service, to allow them to re-acquaint themselves with the environment and form social connections while still a person of influence. This is what is at stake in the ex-traffic ASP's desire for his transfer home.

Some officers may aim higher – for huge wealth, or professional eminence, or national fame; while few would aim lower. But these aims are to be achieved not only within the dangerous profession of policing in the unpredictable environment of Nigeria, but within an institution which, as we have seen in the last chapter, offers its own internal layerings of risks and opportunities within an encompassing hierarchical system which tightly constrains certain types of formal agency and sovereignty over self. At the same time, the idea not only of a physically dangerous world, but of a social world fraught with enemies in which it is hard to know who to trust, is only partially compensated by a lively religious and spiritual world which offers solutions to these problems of hope and control (see Marshall, 2009). So police officers must also cultivate dispositions which help them to understand, navigate, exist and even prosper within such a world. One central trait is the ability to manage risk as discussed in the previous chapter. This equates with what the SO of 'A' division calls 'agility'. When I ask him why there have been so many transfers, including of DPOs, in his division:

'Some don't like it – you have to be very agile to survive in this division, because it has this market, and poly, and the river bridge, and this village towards Ojodu where lots happen.' But, I ask, that young guy (the last DPO), he seemed agile? 'Ah well, we don't know. Maybe it's one thing like that. But that is what is between senior officers, we don't know'. (11th March 2011)³⁰⁵

The SO 'A' Division's understanding of agility speaks to Vigh's contention that "in situations of turmoil ... it becomes increasingly necessary, even critical, for the agent to reflect upon reflections; to scrutinise his way of anticipating and predicting what was,

³⁰⁵ Note that the SO's answer contains both an explanation based in the risk of police work and one based in the office politics of relationships in the hierarchical institution.

what is and what is about to happen.” (2008;19). Vigh uses Giddens’ concept of reflexivity, which ‘should be understood not merely as ‘self-consciousness’ but as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life” (Giddens 1984: 3). Policing Nigeria does not take place in a situation of complete crisis and anti-structure, like Vigh’s Guinea-Bissau: it has on the contrary very predictable and official structures, routines and expectations. Yet as we have seen, it is exceptional for these to work in an unexceptional manner. The recruitment, the promotion, and even the ordinary posting or salary supplement all happen as periodic benefactions which either arrive as acts of god or must be helped and marshalled along by personal direct management. Predictability has itself become unpredictable. In the popular Nigerian cliché, ‘no condition is permanent but only change is permanent.’ Vigh argues that in such contexts, “sedimentation and habituation — both connoting slow and subconscious processes of constitution — give way to a perspective that opens up a much more negotiable and plastic constitution of meaning attuned to the aspect of unforeseen events, rapid change and volatility.” (2008; 20). In the Nigeria Police Force, although slow processes of habituation are also at work in mastering the structured institutional environment, there is an equal requirement for the successful to be plastic, change-attuned and agile in their dispositions, knowledge and positioning.

The SO’s comment also hints at another factor, the behind-the-scenes machinations of ‘what is between senior officers’ – an unseen but powerful office politics. Despite his claims of ignorance, I had by this time been in the command long enough to know that an experienced and well-networked officer such as the SO (a middle-aged ASP recently promoted from Inspector) probably *does* have a good idea of any controversy or spat that has involved his own superior. After all, in the intimate sphere of this command, everyone seems to know everyone else’s business, and equally will be very unlikely to tell me about it. Instead, the SO’s comment indexes another fundamental aspect of the cultivated police disposition; the value of incuriosity and continence. Mosse (2001) reminds us that “organisations ... are among other things systems for the production and control of information” where “contrary to the tenets of academic research... information is rarely viewed as a ‘public good’”. If a professional habituation in police work, as seen

in Chapter 6, teaches that information is the lifeblood of policing, conveying an edge or marginal advantage to those who possess it, then (as we noted in the introduction) it is neither good to broadcast it 'anyhow' indiscriminately nor to be too obvious in seeking it. To be seen as a loudmouth, or overly inquisitive about things which do not directly concern you, is to immediately incur suspicion and risk. Instead it is better to cultivate continence and deliberate unconcern. As the SARS officers hint above, it is not desirable to be too forward or vocal even in defending a point of principle, lest it backfire; after all, those with integrity can be seen as a threat by those without. Silence, carefully maintained, can be as eloquent a way of demonstrating knowledge and mastery as can expositions of expertise.

In all of this however the individual has a choice. Since, as Inspector Daniel points out above, you must know how to navigate the system in a fluent and sophisticated manner, even at the same time as being careful not to raise your mind beyond your level, there are choices continually to be made about how much to engage ambitiously with processes or events, and when to shun or ignore others. In such a fluid and unpredictable milieu, expectation can be a fatal flaw. A former O/C homicide in Gida State, who I met on his return visit to see family in June 2010, gave me advice pertaining to his experience peacekeeping in Darfur which serves as well as a homily on policing as a whole. He told me the best attitude was:

'Just zero your mind. An absolute zero. Because if you go with expectation, you may be disappointed.'

If waiting is the challenge, patience, alongside continence and cultivated incuriosity, is a virtue. Some officers do minimise their expectations, making the most of what they have; money, opportunity, time off being a gofamint property. For Constable Simon Peter, going off duty, it is enough that 'I don finish federal gofamint own for today. Now na my own til daybreak' (17th November 2010). After all, when leave may be cancelled or special duty assignments intrude on time off at any time, even self-possession is a small victory, a piece of sovereignty clawed back. Humour too is essential; and not just in the

strategic sense of simulacre and play we discussed in the previous chapter. The hours spent joking and flirting compensate for the stresses, inactivity and lack of agency. But for some, ambition is an irresistible draw. Even at the commanding heights, success is not assured, and the higher the rank, the higher the stakes and the rarer the opportunity. Therefore the desperation to get there may involve not only carefully-laid career plans and lobbying, such as the high-flier 'IG boys' who stick close to power in order to rise on its coat-tails, but also strategies of desperation which try to also circumvent the embedded unpredictability. As I began fieldwork, the President had just appointed a new IG, from the ranks of the six DIGs. Among the senior echelons it was common knowledge which other senior DIG had (unsuccessfully) performed a sacrifice of 30 cows in order to try and invoke spiritual help to get the job. Esoteric spirituality and becoming the secret object of your subordinates' amusement are however the least of the potential fallouts of trying to navigate the challenges of success.

9.4.3: Casualties

We have dealt with the strategies and dispositions developed by ordinary officers in the course of trying to navigate not just the practical exigencies, but the imaginative work, of living within the police institution as it functions as part of contemporary Nigeria. We have shown how they work to reconcile institutional imperatives, subaltern subjectivities, personal gain, and different registers of morality. They find partial answers to these challenges in making virtues of the necessities of caution, continence, and deliberately limited expectations. Until now we have detailed these in a way which might seem to presume that everyone manages to overcome challenges and reconcile contradictions equally well. This is however not so.

In Nigeria mental illness is widely considered a taboo subject. Nevertheless, during my fieldwork I encountered at least three incidents of mental health problems among officers. Some were relatively benign and manageable, such as the affable eccentric Inspector nicknamed 'Obama'; who was a butt of gentle jokes from his colleagues, permanently consigned to guard and other non-stressful duties, occasionally absent from the

workplace when he travelled to see a healer in his home village. Others were not so manageable nor pleasant. After one short break I returned to fieldwork to hear that an officer in 'B' division had gone mad and ran out of control, and had to be locked inside the cell in order to protect him, where he refused to wash or eat. His brother, a soldier, was sent for from his distant place of work to take care of him; when he arrived he burst into tears when he saw his condition. The decline of others is not caught by even those crude safety-nets. In March 2011, an officer from Dutsin Bature's MOPOL squadron stationed behind 'B' division killed himself shortly after arriving back from a course for promotion to Corporal, slashing his wrists and cutting off his penis with a razor blade.

It is a banality to note that mental health issues may point at dysfunctional social contexts as much as dysfunctional individuals. Indeed for Fanon (1961) situations of oppression and violent domination intrinsically produce psychiatric dysfunction as part of their systemic effects. If the Nigerian polity is in part a postcolonial encounter, in which structures and practices set up in the colonial encounter survive and are reified (see Chapter 1, and Mbembe 2001) then the contradictions, incoherences and mutual degradations which Fanon identified as typifying colonial power relations perhaps find their continuity here too.

Equally, writers after the tradition of Bayart (1993), most notably Chabal and Daloz (*op cit*) have concentrated on the instrumentality of disorder, and its functional manipulation by those who are in a position to influence public institutions and their workings. But much as they claim that 'Africa works' through such manipulations, the sad incidents above should remind us that it doesn't work for everyone. Even as some are able to enact their personal will upon and through disordered environments, environments are enacting their own disorders upon the personal wills of others.

9.5: Conclusion: The wider implications of relative living

Police self-imaginings and subjectivities in contemporary Nigeria prove to be complicated and bundled things. The first section of this chapter shows on one hand that

police officers feel themselves to be part of a mutually recognising caste of state paramilitaries, professional security men who are entitled to a status above ordinary citizenship, with its accompanying perks and exceptions. But on the other, even that exception is itself ranked, in a hierarchy of which they are not at the top. The police are aware of this, and of how this state of affairs deviates both from what occurs elsewhere and what would ideally occur in Nigeria. Even more problematically, the police are highly conscious that the public are aware of their low status. Therefore, the question of how it feels to be a police officer is already fraught with status anxiety and fragile self-consciousness.

As the second section shows, these self-understandings are indivisible from, and must be contextualised by, the way that police officers – like other Nigerians – understand the historical epoch and social environment in which they live and which they police. Contemporary Nigeria is a place where development is going both forwards and backwards at the same time. Thus police officers can hope both for the expectations of modernity, and for its coming in unpredictable forms, a situation which calls forth a similar set of subjectivities, aptitudes, and dispositions to others who live in other prolonged states of entrenched abnormality.

Abnormality and unpredictability make self-securing more imperative, and therefore reifies the importance of material concerns, which must anyway be understood in a way appropriate to the West African cultural context. The third section therefore shows us how police worldviews in contemporary Nigeria encompass the problem of how to operate successfully in the world of money, in various shades of grey, above and beyond official institutional rationales. Moralities around accumulation become relative in the extreme, much as police work also relativises the way people are treated. There is no complete consensus on this among police officers themselves. Neither is it as simple as corruption versus correct practice, as many informalised policing practices (as we first encountered in Chapter 6) mix both private accumulation and crime control in the same actions, with bail a prime example.

The fourth section showed us how this relativisation throws up its own workable definitions and assessments of what constitutes good or professional policing. Conduct, work, solutions to problems must all encompass both the goals of policing and of personal advantage. They must resolve these contradictions as well as practically possible, one way or the other; and to do so requires fluency in the internal procedures of the police institution. Even at this, it is not always advantageous to advertise such fluency and sophistication, and so for the wise it is to be packaged within a disposition which avoids displaying obvious ambition, embraces reserve, and in which continence is key. For some, the inbuilt contradictions and incoherences of such a system provide room to grow, manoeuvre and prosper. For others, it becomes self-defeating and they become casualties in the process.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

This thesis has told a story about how the Nigeria Police Force, an institution, a collection of persons, practices and systemic intentions, engages with, shapes, and is shaped by the nature of wider society. Centrally, we have identified the fully intertwined nature of dysfunction and function. Going inside this particularly salient organ of the state at a time of transformation, we have discovered the ways in which the police as an institution and as individuals navigate different priorities and pressures, bridging formal and informal, professional and personal, state and non-state, in improvised practices, negotiated modalities of enforcement, and a kind of power which bridges repression and negotiation. Here we will revisit our findings before underlining what brings them all together in general conclusions about the nature of policing, the public sphere, and the state in contemporary Nigeria.

The first chapter construed Nigeria's police force as an object of study, a large and significant assemblage of persons and powers in which resides some part of statehood itself. It outlined the deficiencies and gaps in the limited extant literature on formal state policing in Nigeria and in Africa generally, and highlighted the studies on which we can build. We also situated anthropological studies of African policing within ethnographies of the state more generally. In this thesis we aimed to advance beyond both normative or overly general theoretical frameworks, and existing anthropologies of the state which derive their findings from a vantage point remaining outside the bounds of the state, looking in. Police ethnographies from elsewhere gave us clues as to where nodes of revealing and legible meaning may usefully be sought in our investigation. We also recapped the methods which are available to an ethnographer to study such an institution, even in one small and localised instance, and the challenges which emerged in doing so.

In the second chapter, the historical trajectory of formal policing in Nigeria revealed that, far from being able to suppose a normative Weberian monopoly of legitimacy and force

in the service of governmental power, Nigeria's police force has struggled since its inception to establish both legitimacy and capacity. The distribution of policing power and of state presence has been uneven, thickest at nodes of the colonial and postcolonial state, and more thinly-spread in areas geographically and socially distant; such as rural areas or older-established towns where indigenous institutions were reinforced by policies of direct rule. The legitimacy of the police, and of the laws they enforce, has been similarly uneven. This is partly because while some regions and parts of social life were more fully encompassed by the state, many areas, sectors of society, and types of behaviour have continually remained subject to competing jural norms, and to dispute-resolution and enforcement institutions (of traditional, neo-traditional and communitarian origins) which privilege reintegrative, restorative and/or summary approaches. Partly too, the legitimacy of the NPF has been problematised because from first origins until the present, it has had to accommodate two roles; representing and enforcing the writ of a state which has limited formal accountability to those who live in it, and at the same time trying to perform an effective role in policing (for) those citizens. Often, the balance has been skewed towards the 'upward' accountability to the detriment of public accountability. At precisely the post-independence expansion when the NPF might have grown in both capacity and legitimacy, it was displaced and sidelined by the military; and by competing security institutions, first other state bodies and then also a growing informal vigilance sector. So our historical moment is one in which the police are trying to reclaim their role and reoccupy their normative space, and are facing the problems of rebuilding both functional capacity and legitimacy in the eyes of the public, while at once remaining part of a centralised and problematically democratic political system.

In chapter 3, we located this centralised control and limited accountability, in legal and constitutional frameworks which govern the police and their actions. We also placed the police within the multiplicity of competing security and law-enforcement institutions which typify the Nigerian state and populate its public sphere. We situated policing within the local economic, cultural and political contexts of the fieldwork location Dutsin Bature, and outlined the nature of the town and state in the context of the wider nation. We surveyed the nature and organisation of a state command, and introduced the division

as the basic unit of territorial policing. Both an organisational unit of persons and a space, the division is based around a station whose interior houses perhaps a greater array of policing activities than we may have at first supposed, and whose functional variations also embed types of character and behaviour.

The fourth chapter uncovered an interesting and central dissonance. Whereas Nigerian publics espouse a strong and consistent dislike, distrust, and dissatisfaction with the NPF, which is reflected in public discourse and popular culture, a different picture emerges when we look at behaviour rather than attitudes. In Dutsin Bature (a location where public trust of the police, as captured in surveys, was avowedly low) ordinary people continually and frequently initiate interactions with the police in very instrumental ways, and in spheres (including the family) in which we might expect the public to be very averse to involving the police, or the state at all. Far from being a poor choice in the basket of policing options, the NPF seems here to retain a clear utility in the eyes of citizens. The interesting question of *which* people in particular opt to use the police does not lie within the scope of this study. But we can at least see that particularist connections to the institution are often important. Particularism is even more significant when it comes to getting accountability for police performance – powerful networks of informal accountability can bypass the limited formal accountability of police governance structures, giving even some apparently disempowered rural dwellers more power over the police than observers may imagine.

The chapter on recruitment looked at the human composition of the institution through the lens of ‘prebendalism’. We found that in membership of a state institution, personal economic security and opportunity may be at stake. But communal constituencies, whether familial, wider identity-based or political groups, equally have wider goals of a stake in, and therefore access to, the state which enables them to influence its workings in times of crisis. This social security in the deepest sense often makes joining the police not just a matter for individuals but whole communities. Thus do communal, particularist, instrumental logics pervade the composition of state institutions as strongly as Joseph (1987) portrayed them dictating the structures of party politics. But such tendencies are

also mediated by state policies which recognise those logics and attempt to balance them, both in ensuring ethnoregional equity by quotas, and in introducing checks and balances which attempt to re-centre merit. The combination of both logics differentially colours the personal experiences and fortunes of aspiring officers, providing both the blockages they must navigate, and sometimes also the means by which they may navigate them.

The sixth chapter showed how police institutionality is formed by considering how it forms its new officers. In training institutions functional task-based training is limited and the work of character formation seems more salient. As training engages in a totalising project over the cadet, it inculcates a deeply hierarchical sense of professional personhood which defines status and entitlement. It creates internal subalterns uniquely constrained as their institution more fully possesses them by means of discipline, which reaches far outside strictly workplace matters, even purporting to define gender and social reproduction. It also works to erase, or at least to complement, other communal identities and loyalties with a sense of institutional belonging, a formal ideology which is often reinforced by affinities, friendships and marriages. Yet by doing so it creates room for these new identities and networks to be ‘played back’ against the institution’s formal logic: New officers turn to posting as an alternative register of opportunities with which they can escape the constraints of rank, and use the networks of coursemates they developed in the training institutions as a means of accessing these opportunities. We also saw the emergence of informal accretions to the formal police institution, as senior officers take on pseudo-familial roles to their juniors, and choose whether or not to turn a permissive eye to their personal lives.

The seventh chapter’s broad examination of police work underlined how, in a milieu of severely limited material resources, policing comes to rely on craft knowledge, acquired, learned and deployed primarily in practice; the developed informal norms of a formal institution. Craft is polysemic and multidimensional, encompassing judgement of character and situation, categories of persons and crimes, desired and likely outcomes, the use of violence and the scope for the officer’s own personal agency and opportunity. Its techniques, including interrogation and ritualised impressing of status, mobilise wider

idioms of social sanction. And even the decision whether or not to trigger the formal, documented processes of state intervention, the formal logics of policing, is itself a kind of learned craft which must be exercised judiciously. In the process of more closely examining the cases, and the practices and procedures which officers deploy to manage them, we came to some interesting realisations about the ways in which the public are choosing to relate with the police, and vice versa. One is that, by resorting to proxy arrests and other tactics, the police often use leverage particularistic networks and social capital in order to achieve their ends just as the public often use particularistic routes to approach the police. Further, in the course of investigating cases, police work often becomes a matter of negotiated solutions, which are often the preferred outcome both for the police officer and the parties to the case, underlining the nature of cases as social processes. Another, which flows from that, is that the public are often strategically engaging the police as an additional resource in a situation of dispute. In this not only the police's powers to enforce, but also to document, are important, as the state thus recognises and legitimates the relative statuses of victims and victimisers. Police punishment, too, embeds a relationship between formal and informal process. Participatory forums, summary punishments, educative homilies and formalised settlements and reconciliations imbue the exercise of formal state power with dynamics strongly reminiscent of non-state, traditional, or communitarian justice.

We then examined the salience of risk to body, life and career in the everyday lives and mentalities of police officers. Risk can be directly or vicariously incurred, and is hard to predict or guard against. Engaging with the public, often on a fragile balance of power, is fraught with this unpredictability, and the consequences are amplified by the particular methods the police institution uses to deflect blame, prevent 'embarrassment' and devolve accountability, backed up by disciplinary power. So for subaltern police officers especially, much energy and strategising goes into developing ways to mitigate risks and maximise opportunities, some of which reinforce informal linkages at the expense of the formal logic of the institution. Yet for their superior officers, the inherent limits to the supervisability of police work adds another layer to the unpredictability of the risk their subordinates' behaviour might incur. So both the techniques of disciplinary management,

and the processes used to evade them, combine together to produce a tendency to pretence, dissimulation, and mutual disempowerment, creating an inertia on the institutional level.

The final chapter tried to recover police officers' own perspectives on their position, work, identities, aims and values. Police are part of a self-recognising state security class, who are partially excepted from normal constraints and jurisdictions, and who enjoy particular role-based opportunities on the basis of that exception. Nonetheless, they are subordinate within that class, as is revealed at moments of tension when fraught relationships between rival security institutions can even spill over into violence. Their subalterity, and a status anxiety predicated on consciousness of their inferior or negative status in the eyes of the public, are only partially redressed by reference to international peers who provide sources of professional validation. But police senses of self cannot be separated from their sense of the contemporary Nigerian condition, which is itself seen in dual registers of development and decline. Police likewise respond in a dualistic way, both trying to fulfil their professional roles to the extent they consider possible, and to prioritise looking after themselves as individuals. This leads to relativistic moral economies in which certain types of illicit accumulation are seen as reasonably compatible with discharge of duties, in contrast to others which are seen as more problematically opposed. Violence too is seen through such relativistic frames, depending on whether it enhances or undermines the overall aim of the institution in its immediate context. Together these, and the practical mastery of the procedures of the police institution itself, form an idea of what it means to have fully internalised and inhabited the professional ideal; embedded in discretion and reservation and producing overall an institution which, considering its purported domain over wider society, is notably cautious and inward-turned.

What broader implications do these perspectives and self-imaginings have for the wider concerns of this thesis? Certainly they can be read as logical outcomes of the practices of recruitment, institutional subjectification, informalisation of working procedures, and risk aversion described in the preceding chapters. It is logical too, that if a system is produced

whereby everyone feels disempowered, and mutually produces disempowerment, as we concluded at the close of Chapter 7, then those operating it will turn to their own narrow interests for fulfilment in their private spheres of value, and negotiate the disjunctures between the two as best they can.

The same findings inform what the study of the Nigerian Police Force can tell us about the Nigerian state. Police officers feel both exceptional as part of the state, and subordinate within it. They feel both recognised as embodying the state and state power; and institutionally disaggregated and divided, sometimes even to the level of inter-institutional conflict, within the state. Therefore clearly our understanding of ‘the state’ has to be nuanced enough to encompass both its unitary mutual recognition and its plural internal distinctions and friction. Beyond that, as servants of the state experiencing a particular contemporary subjectivity, one which embraces enlightenment and development simultaneously with decline and crisis, police officers live on an unstable watershed between the deferred potential for fulfilment in their formal roles on one hand, and more tangible self-preservation and material fulfilment in the realm of the informal on the other: The duality is inherent, and it cannot be resolved, only negotiated.

If, returning to the explanatory rationale intended at the start of this thesis, we can best understand the behaviour of institutions not by reference to their formal statements of purpose, but by their internal logics, incentives and intentions (after Singer 2003), then what a focus on police perspectives adds to the previous discussions is that in the presence of limits to their formal purposes, ambitions and aspirations, police officers often become cautious, survivalist and inward-turned if they are to endure. Therefore inevitably the overall external effect is for the police institution to minimally function in its stated formal role, while being maximally attuned to deriving private surplus value from the public sphere.

Beyond this, what can this study tell us about policing and about the state in Nigeria? This thesis was intended as a prompt to remind us of the importance of looking at institutions. Africanist scholarship takes too much cognisance of ethnicities and

communal identities and not enough of the formal institutions of state. Within anthropology, we need to refocus away from ‘Africa, where the tribes live’ towards Africa, where the polices, armies, political parties, universities and civil services live. Institutional belonging and identity, as we have seen, can be as powerful and prescriptive as the communal or religious identities which are more often and more vocally articulated. And a focus on specific institutions is all the more necessary for those who wish to understand or address questions about the nature of the state: States are networks of people, assemblages of rules, accreted iterations of procedures and practices, grouped into functional institutions. Each of them, like all bureaucratic institutions into which lives, careers and aspirations are bound, aims to sustain and perpetuate itself. Likewise each of them is a miniature totality, a bounded sphere of logic and intention dedicated to a particular task and shaping lives in accordance with those tasks. Their practices structure the public sphere, and the public sphere shapes their practices. And, since what they *do* construes what they *are*, if we wish to better understand African states, we need to understand more about state institutions from the level of practice.

In contrast to ethnographies of the state which concentrate entirely on the meanings generated when interacting with it from the outside (after Gupta, *op cit*), this thesis has taken us a little way inside one of its institutions. Seen from inside, the state is not the all-powerful monolith it purports to be. It is in fact notably uneven, in its capacities and its geographical, social and temporal reach, and in the legitimacy it is able to amass, which only goes as deep as the public acceptability of its actions. Not only that, but its omnipotence too is in reality an uneven set of powers, differentially exercisable in different circumstances. The police and the state cannot always do that much, and despite its huge constitutional powers, much of its apparently authoritarian disposition is in fact carefully negotiated, a delicate supremacy spread thin over strong social forces, whose informalised powers and social capital strongly qualify the police’s ability to wield state power.

This study only makes that observation; the more revealing questions, about the exact contours and extents of police powers in specific situations, remain for further research.

We can see from this study that Nigerian police power is not an absolute power. In some situations the police may arrest, may exercise summary punishment, may even kill, while in others their leeway for action is severely curtailed – there are clearly no-go areas for police, including some of lengthy standing, where local youths, authority structures, or both, have forced a limitation to effective police jurisdiction which are recognised by both sides. And there are many more situations where the choices of powers the police may exercise are constrained by the limits of tolerance allowed by the particular set of persons and circumstances. Perhaps that deficit of absolute capacity is why most often police power – and craft - operates most effectively in the grey areas – the mastery of inconvenience and procedure, where and when finality is not possible. Equally, the balance of power is revealed starkly in time of communal crises, when police are quickly swept away and the army becomes the power of ultimate recourse for domestic peacekeeping. Clearly for such insurgent citizens, the police are an ultimately dismissable arm of state power. But even in those places, outside those times of heightened tension, people often still seem to accept and use a police presence.³⁰⁶ The central question, which this thesis cannot purport answer, is *why*.

This ethnography has been very specifically situated. We have remained mostly within the police station, and sought to understand how wider society appears from that vantage point. But that viewpoint is inevitably selective, allowing us a good view of only those who choose to engage with the police. It has not allowed us any visibility into how those people select themselves, who they are socially and individually, and in relation to others in social, geographical and economic terms within the town. Are they mostly of a particular class? Do they predominantly have personal relations with the police? Is it a matter mainly of need or of choice? Mapping their variety and their usage of the police would be important missing links in understanding how policing works in such a milieu.

³⁰⁶ The extent to which police presence and acceptance regrows after conflict is also uneven. In some areas the police presence can be more permanently curtailed, for example by the extended campaign of militancy in the Niger Delta, and especially in areas vulnerable to the Boko Haram insurgency where the police are an explicit target. It would be very interesting (although also very challenging) to investigate who does now perform everyday policing and dispute resolution in areas where insurgency has curtailed the presence of police.

As would locating the other section absent from this study, those who do not use the police; who (and where) are *they*, and what keeps them away?

I was not unaware of these important ‘absent presences’ during my fieldwork, and I attempted at least some enquiry into them. But it was limited by two practical factors. One was the impossibility of achieving it to any meaningful extent in addition to the other pressing demands on the limited window of fieldwork. The other was the practical impossibility of asking; in such an intimate setting, the ‘taint’ of my institutional affiliation with the police appeared to be a deterrent to some other constituencies’ willingness to interact with and speak to me on such issues. So this important aspect remains for further investigation. Still, even within the evidence I have presented here, there are certain obvious bounds to police powers, or areas where they are exercised on different terms, whether they be the old town, the army cantonment, inside homes of the rich, or the many domains of religions; all of these indicate a richer seam of more subtle delineations to be made and logics uncovered. The question of who exactly engages with the police and on what terms remains outside the scope of this ethnography, and therefore there are limits to the generalisability of the claims I can make. Although I complemented my work in ‘B’ Division with short visits to both big-city stations and remote rural posts, my conclusions may well have looked different if I had spent the majority of my time in either of these locations. Policing may look very different to both police and public in a farming hamlet where the police are an occasional, off-stage and remote presence, associated more often with the punitive raid. Or equally, very different again in a turbulent city of millions where crime is higher and both law-breaking and law-enforcement more violent.

There are also intriguing indicators of the contours of police power to be found in such locations. Remember our visit to Inspector Fidelis, exiled to Gada Biu village police post in Chapter 7. There, he and his sole constable are not permitted by the DPO to have arms ‘although we try not to let anyone know that’, but we can be sure that their failure to carry guns has not gone un-noticed by inhabitants. And yet here, the police still have a small but steady stream of cases over crop trespass and weekend fights brought to them to

broker and resolve. So clearly, their utility is not based on force alone. Here perhaps is where we might re-admit wider theories of policing. Bittner's central concept of demand for policing (Bittner 1970, Bittner & Brodeur 2007) has potential application as one avenue for further enquiry, to determine more clearly why and under what circumstances people allow or demand the intervention of formal police power, or opt to use the police as against other options for redress of their grievances. Nigeria's variety, which limits the generalisability of what we can conclude from Dutsin Bature, also offers huge scope for further work comparing these dynamics in different contexts.

Equally, the occasional clashes and occasional contiguities between what the police want to do, and what wider publics want them to do, points us to the need to further examine which values are shared between both, and which not. We have seen the police negotiate solutions for complainants and suspects, but not enquired any more deeply of *why* they might do so, rather than take other action, or no action. Perhaps it is because, as the Inspector SARS says to departing parties to a dispute, 'Nigeria wants peace' - and that ultimately falls to the frontline agent of the state to deliver; perhaps it is because it is good for the policeman's prospects to keep his patch clean; perhaps it is lucrative to get involved; perhaps also because publics predominantly demand and recognise such solutions? We can posit all of these explanations and more, but determining the question requires further research. Similar tantalising glimpses of unspoken but shared values emerge when police undertake tasks beyond the call of duty, such as disciplining serious errant children, as in Chapter 4. That polices are in general a force for conservatism, and for the conservation of established order and values, is not a new nor a particularly revelatory observation. But circumstances where the maintenance of such shared social values trump both what must be done as law-enforcement, strictly defined, *and* the income-generating imperative of other off-the-books activity, indicate something important about what people look to the police, and the state, to do. The delineation of contours of legitimacy, ideas of power, authority, law, right, social order and natural justice which have emerged from a history of both communitarian ideals and autocratic polity, guide the actions of a police which seem to need to meet both demands. The work

of reconstructing that mindset of shared public codes and values through its manifestations in policing also remains to be done.

Yet this thesis is also a rejoinder and an amendment to analyses which say that policing in Africa has been thoroughly multilateralised, pluralised and deflected away from state police forces into the realm of vigilance or other private or non-state provision. This study shows that even in a condition of pluralism, where other nodes of security provision, law enforcement, and dispute-resolution exist, and where the public is vocal about the problems and limitations of the police, they still make frequent and instrumental use of the same police. The NPF and the state are, if not fully monopolistic, still very central as solutions to everyday concerns of crime, security and order. The police in Dutsin Bature are a fully integrated resource in social life, both at the individual and community level. On a wider scale, the police institution, and security itself, is a public good which is accessed and instrumentally re-directed both from ‘above’ and ‘below’.

Reminding ourselves of Foucault’s dictum that power only really exists at the point of its exercise, it is clear that there is a balanced consensus on which police authority rests and which dictates how it can be exercised. The risk to the public embedded in interactions with the police is sometimes exacerbated, and sometimes mitigated, by the networks of particularist status and identity-based considerations which contextualise and inflect the particular interaction. At the same time, police must weigh up the risk involved in their engagements with the public, both in direct terms of danger to themselves, and moreover in the hidden career risks with which police work – the exercise of coercive power – is fraught. They must also re-evaluate these risks in each interaction, based on the specific persons and dynamics involved, so policing becomes inward-turned, a matter of cautious and reactive interventions rather than a totalising broadcast of state power.

This is far from unique to Nigeria. Policeman-turned-anthropologist Malcolm Young (1991) working in metropolitan Newcastle, England, identifies the centrality of the fear of “the wheels coming off” and the importance of avoiding action which increases risk of controversy and opprobrium from superiors. In transitional democratising societies, these

risks seem to be heightened proportionally with the strength of particularist considerations which operate in parallel to formal legal logics: Martin finds that a Taiwanese public, in which individuals retain strong ties of ‘intimate transparency’ to political bosses, frequently invokes a balance between cultural values of sentiment, reason and law in negotiated interactions with police. Therefore “Taiwanese street patrolmen carefully modulate their interventions so as to avoid aggravating social forces that exceed their powers of control, and they must do this because their actions are embedded within the reproduction of a social “order” that is constituted in a balance between contradictory foundations of power and authority” (2007; 676). Thus, he says, is “the rule of law within state institutions is kept within the boundaries of a social sensibility that does not take law as the last word” (*ibid*, 665). In Nigeria, I argue, such risks are heightened and underlined by the strong and continually-reinforced salience of the particularist ties which cross-cut formal logics; and which at the same time both underpin and are underpinned by, a particular type of statist political economy. In fact I would argue that the particular challenge of the Nigeria Police Force, and of the Nigerian state, is trying to enforce a set of generalised rules on a heavily particularistic society. Ibhawoh (2009; 446) observes that in colonial legal systems “the paradox of accommodating native difference and universal standards was not easily resolved”. The paradox holds equally true for policing today. Exceptional cases and exceptional status, conferred by particular relationships between actors or particular sets of contingent events, are so usual as not to be exceptional at all. In fact procedural application of the rules according to the precepts of blind justice itself only becomes possible under certain particular circumstances, and therefore justice itself is not blind. Policing solutions must take these particularities into account, and in fact sometimes make creative use of them. In this context, policing practice takes on a great many characteristics of non-state principles of morality, punishment and dispute resolution; at the level of everyday practice, a formal organ of state is made useful by improvising and redirecting its logics to non-formal ends.

Throughout our story we have documented cases of police officers instrumentally abusing their powers and position to personal ends; and at the same time, although it may

redirect their primary energies, we have seen that this does not prevent, but is instead incorporated in, their functional pursuit of the aims of their job. Certainly policing, with its powers of force and law, is uniquely open to abuse, and such opportunities are creatively taken, to an extent which virtually everyone deems problematic. At the same time this coexists with continued public use of the police, despite the existence of alternatives. So we must recognise that the issue is neither function nor dysfunction but of both intertwined and interreliant, one depending on the other. The opportunities for personal instrumentality, enrichment and abuse are *embedded within* doing the job, and are not separated from it. In fact, the distinction which is made by police is often not between doing a professional job or taking advantage of its benefits, but between the kind of personal instrumentality which can be aligned satisfactorily with the wider aims of policing, and that which directly contradicts and undermines it.

Rather than separate spheres of state and society, construed as idealised objects of analysis, we must recognise not only that the state can be disaggregated into institutions, but that state and society thoroughly interpenetrate each other. This is not to adopt the perspective of those who seek to see the two as a unitary field – as with Migdal's (2001) concept of 'state in society' which broadens the definition of 'state' to include all influential actors upon the public sphere. The state must mean something, even if that is minimally to recognise it as those institutions which derive their authority from constitutional laws. But the entities 'state' and 'society', which are in fact as much roles, networks and modes of action as abstract organs, do work within each other. From positions 'outside' the state, social groups advance in their insertion into the powerful networks of the state, for example in being recruited into the police, while others already within it consolidate and reproduce their place. Meanwhile the state itself is generative of social groups, classes, constituencies and identities, mobilising huge numbers of people in its institutions which thus themselves constitute huge parts of society. So while certain demarcated boundaries and differentiating rules are occasionally visible, neither the state nor society are truly separable objects with fixed, clear and distinct edges. Together, state and society produce a public sphere and lived experience which most tangibly exists in the realm of practice.

Afterword

In September 2012, as I was completing this thesis in Oxford, Dutsin Bature was severely affected by seasonal flooding of the river which runs through the town. The waters rose higher than usual and swamped many low-lying areas, including most of the poorer high-density residential areas. The State Government and Nigeria's Emergency Management Authority (NEMA) set up three camps for the displaced in school buildings and supplied them with tents, drinking water and grains. Clearly, even Gida State's creaking, kleptocratic and patronage-based political system can function to purpose when it sees fit. This is the Nigeria which is missing from most analyses; the functional state whose image fails to make it past the dysfunctionalist filter applied to Nigeria by those who focus exclusively on collapse, conflict, injustice and abjection. This miscarriage is not only the function of an orientalising gaze: Nigerians too love to lament the everyday horrors, failures and injustices produced by the system. But to allow ourselves to be carried away by that is to misunderstand the nature of what we are looking at. This thesis should have shown that when we reach a little way inside the state, we can find both oppression and working understandings, corruption and professionalism, domination and interpenetration, rational institutionality and copious informalisation, authority and negotiation. Even the opportunities for abusing such a system are embedded in its performance of its role; dysfunction and function are fully intertwined.

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