Toponyms in the Jos Plateau and the impact on intergroup relations: an ethno-historical perspective

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Abstract: The history of the Jos Plateau area in the past two decades has been characterized by irresolvable crises and conflicts. These conflicts have multifactorial reasons like politics, religion, and economy. To this list the toponymic factor can be added. Indeed, for the past fifteen years since September 2001, intergroup relationships especially between the Hausa and “indigens” or, what others erroneously see as Muslims versus Christians, have been marred by internecine crises. The result has been the destruction of lives and property, mutual suspicion, migrations, relocation of settlements, change in settlement patterns and re-naming of settlements. In light of this, the paper looks at one of the manifestations of this conflict, which is the counter-naming or renaming of some settlements in Jos Plateau area in order to claim historical ownership of settlements. This paper aims to prove that the current situation portends danger to national cohesion, development, free movements and association of people in the Jos Plateau.

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Introduction

The paper is an ethno-historical study of toponyms and their socio-political implications on the Jos Plateau. Toponym or place-name is a geographical reference system that has been adopted since antiquity and is still used among peoples of all cultures and climates. The paper examines the historical development of settlements and how the names they are now identified with evolved in Jos and it also studies the nexus between intergroup relations and place names in the Jos Plateau. The research also discovered that most of the names used for the settlements evolved during the colonial period, when settlements or camps sprang up from the activities of mining corporations in the plateau. The paper discusses how the “indigenous” plateau people, who claim to be the landowners, have been uncomfortable with the names given to their landscape by immigrants who are co-domiciled on the land for more than hundred years. This feeling became tense with the outbreak of the Jos Plateau civil unrest in 2001. Since then, efforts by individuals, groups, communities and even the government were made to rename these areas; this has been one of the issues marring intergroup relations and thus creating mutual mistrust among groups.
Location of Jos Plateau and its People

Jos is located in the middle belt of Nigeria. Geographically, the Jos Plateau lies between latitude 9 and 10 N and longitude 9 and 10 E and is in the central part of Nigeria. The geographers Buchanan and Pugh\textsuperscript{1} were one of the earliest to identify it with the topographical description “the Jos Plateau”. Because of its excess cold, the people were said to keep themselves warm at night by burning charcoal under their constructed mud beds. The Jos Plateau has different geographical and climatic features, which give it a different outlook from the immediate regions to the east, west, south and north of it. It is a high plateau bounded on all sides by sharp escarpments, 450 – 600 metres high above the surrounding plains of the Bauchi Plateau and former Gongola. It has an average height of 1,142 metre above sea level with the highest peak of 1,828 metres on the Shere hills. The lowest point varies from 600 - 900 metres above sea level. The topographical features made it difficult to climb the plateau, except for a few passes via the escarpments to the east, west and north. The geological formation consists basically of a Cambrian basement complex with granite rocks which have cassiterised mineral and tin. The plains of the plateau are dotted with laterised basalt flat-topped hills, which add scenic beauty to the plateau. Jos and its environs were important sites for tin mining.\textsuperscript{2}

Scholars like Magvwat have pointed out the autochthonous nature of the various indigenous communities on the Plateau. Jos Plateau falls under the influence of the ancient Nok culture. Since antiquity, it has been known for cultural diversity in which anthropologists and historians have identified over sixty (60) ethno-linguistic groups on the Plateau like the Berom, Angas, Anaguta, Ron, Afizere, Aten, and Irigwe amongst others.³

**Conceptual Clarifications: Onomastic and Toponomastics**

Scholars have identified the usefulness of toponymy / toponomastics (the study of place-names) to historical and cultural studies. It has historical, social and anthropological relevance within the African milieu. It “uses, enriches and tests the discoveries of archaeology and history and the rules of philologists”; this opines that there are inherent anthropological underpinnings in place-naming.

What is in a name? Brutus asks,

*What should be in that Caesar? Why should that name be sounded more than yours? Write them together: Yours is as fair a name. Sound them: it doth become the moth as well (Julius Caesar, Act I Scene II, pp. 141 -145)*

*What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by another name will smell as sweet (Romeo and Juliet, Act I, Scene V, pp. 43-44)*

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William Shakespeare, thus, demonstrates that there is more to a name than its sounds and its usage for identification.

In Africa, names serve what Erikson calls an “ingrouper”. 6 This paper defines names as markers, which distinguish persons and places. From a given name, it is possible to determine not only the ethnic groupings and linguistic affinity, but it also reveals a lot about the name bearer. African names also designate personality, status, occupation or destiny. For Africans, there is an ontological relevance of names because they portray the interconnectedness of persons to the family and community. Scholars like Ehusani (1991), 7 Idowu (1973), 8 Mbit (1990) 9 and Tubi (2015) 10 opine that names have both temporal and spiritual meanings in Africa.11

Among many African peoples, the identification of a person’s name with his or her status is perhaps more seriously affirmed at various rites of passage. Ehusani (1991) 12 and Tubi (2015) observe that an individual normally gets a new name at traditional naming rites, puberty initiation or initiation into chieftaincy, priestly function, secret societies and even, as in the case of the Babu-Kusu of Kenya, at marriage. Thus, change of names implies a change of personality or status. To Africans, to confer a name is to

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7 Ibidem p. 5.
10 Ibidem p. 31.
11 Ibidem p. 31.
12 George O. Ehusani, op. cit., p. 5.
confer a personality, an identity and a destiny. In Africa and among the Ebira, for instance, a child is not considered a member of the community until the naming ceremony, at which occasion he or she is formally brought out.\textsuperscript{13} The above reasons could explain why the issues of toponyms have become a protracted problem in Jos and its environs.

**Toponyms and their Implication**

Africans attach great importance to the names of settlements much as they do to human names. The topography of an area includes physical elements like hills, water bodies, vegetation and buildings. Archaeologists, geographers and historians have opined that landscape plays a significant role in human lives. Hood \textsuperscript{14} underlines the close nexus between social relations and cultural landscape, while Branton underscores the importance of landscape in historical archaeology. In the work of landscape is a way of ideology [meaning? Rephrase] and one of the main functions of landscape is summarily to control meaning and to guide its particular directions.\textsuperscript{15}

Toponyms, the naming of landscapes, are a universal phenomenon. The works of scholars like Berg, Voulteenaho and Cabilitz examine the

\textsuperscript{13} George O. Ehusani \textit{op. cit.}, p. 5.
cultural practice of naming and how people desire to control and complete the meaning process as they are involved in many economic, social and political struggles.\textsuperscript{16} Meanwhile, Ojo, in his study of African toponyms of the Yoruba posits that names are a constitutive part of the landscape rather than simply being entities in (and on) the landscape.\textsuperscript{17} Based on the foregoing, it can be asserted that the making of place names is done through the pronunciation of geographical names as well as their inscription into signs, documents and maps.\textsuperscript{18}

Whether written or spoken, it is now comprehended that place-naming are a means of claiming the landscape materially and symbolically and using it to achieve domination over what is named. As part of the landscape, toponyms are not simply evidences of history, as suggested by traditional place-names research, but part of the ideologically driven process of visibly grounding the past into the present and framing these historical meanings as legitimate. Place-naming can be conceptualized as a form of symbolic possession of a place, a means of associating places with a given people or an expression of an exclusive historicity of the past. Identification with these naming patterns serves as a source of social distinction for some people while bringing social marginalization to others. Thus, it has been


observed that symbolic names can take many forms, but the naming of built-up environment is a powerful device for creating social distinction.\textsuperscript{19}

**The Evolution and the Naming of Settlements in the Jos Plateau 1900 - 1960**

Data from the white paper of the government’s Commission of Inquiry into the Jos crisis of 1994 reported that a British colonial administrator, Ames, asserted that the original settlers of the area called it Gwosh which was corrupted by the British and Hausa immigrants to Jos. It grew very rapidly due to mining from 1900 - 1960 when prospecting activities were at the peak. Mining brought in immigrants from across Nigeria, making Jos one of the most cosmopolitan centres in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{20} In the field work conducted in respect to this research, the naming of settlements and streets in Jos Plateau was identified as a means or way of identifying settlements. The period of the evolution of place names under consideration marked the peak of tin production in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{21} The naming and numbering of residential and commercial structures in the tin city and its environs has historical relevance which this paper seeks to underscore. Place naming in the Jos Plateau is premised on several factors: indigenous place-names, individual place names and commercial place-names.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibidem, pp. 195-199.
Apart from the above, there are also sundry reasons that can be adduced for place-naming in the Jos Plateau. One of the means of naming places on the plateau is to bestow recognition to the morphological features. This explains names like *Gangare*. Gangare is one of the settlements in the area of study. The word, Gangare, in Hausa means the lowest point of an area’s topography. The Gangare settlement is located at the downstream area of Jos town at the bank of the Dalimi River. *Labour camp* is another place-name. It was used to refer to settlement of labourers who were engaged in mining activities on the Dilimi River. The Gangare settlement in Jos town was not the only such settlement that evolved in the area, as there were Gangares in Barkin Ladi and Bukuru and all had a similar historical evolution.\(^\text{22}\)

**Ethno-Historical analysis**

It became necessary to employ an ethno-historical paradigm in this study so as to bring out the salient anthropological and historical underpinnings of place-naming in the Jos Plateau. Barkin Ladi is one of the major towns in the Jos Plateau. It is the headquarters of the Barkin Ladi Local Government area. The National Population Census (2006) put its total population at 175,267. Barkin Ladi is a Hausa word that literally means Ladi’s town.

Barkin Ladi was a name that came out of the exigencies of the owners of the tin mining companies and their strategy for forming labour camps. As

\(^{22}\) *Ibidem*, p. 102.
mining activities stabilised by 1914 more prospecting of tin fields flourished. The discovery of new fields of tin deposits inspired people and led to drawing and maintaining regular labour in these areas by the mining companies. The strategy they used was to employ beautiful women, mostly of Hausa origin. These women were known as magagiya. A magagiya was a lady who was saddled with the responsibility of gathering young beautiful girls, cooking food, and brewing local liquor amongst others. All these were to attract young able men to the new labour camps. This strategy worked for them. To enjoy all these, the young men were required to come into the tin field to work for money. Also, the relationship established with these women would hardly make them run away from the labour camps.²³

It was out of this historical development that the town Barkin Ladi (Ladi’s town) came to bear its name. The Ladi was a Magagiya (woman) in town who was so important to the labourers because she provided almost all the necessities of a grown-up man which includes women, drinks, and food with the exception of shelter and clothing. Her importance became so eminent that her name dominated the discourse of the labourers especially during idle talks. With this importance attached to her, labourers thus saw her as the “owner” of the town. Hence, they named the settlement “Barkin Ladi” (Hausa language) meaning “Ladi’s town”.²⁴

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²³ Field notes taken in Barkin Ladi town, the headquarters of the Barkin Ladi Local Government Area in Plateau state, 6 April 2016.
²⁴ Ibidem.
An alternative source indicates another reason for the town’s name. The mining companies had many fields and sites under their management. These sites were located in Bisichi, Sabon Gidan Foron, Dorowa Babuje and Gana Ropp. Whenever the finance department of the company began payment, they usually moved on horses from one mining camp to another. Before they could finish touring the mining camps, it was always late and Barkin Ladi, which was the last mining camp, was always the last to be paid. The workers would therefore be paid on Sundays. For sociological and economic reasons, pay days were usually the market days in all the mining camps. For Barkin Ladi, Sundays became its market days since it turned out to be the pay day. “Ladi” in Hausa means “Sundays”. Due to this fact, Sundays became the revelry days, and consequently the town now became Sunday’s town, which is translated as Barkin Ladi in the Hausa language.25

Another town with a symbolic name is Gindin-Akwati. Gindin-Akwati means “the button of a box”. Gindin-Akwati was the area where Ex-Lands Nigeria Ltd established its mining industry. It was a vast land where no one was domiciled and, during mining activities, the owner of the company was always seen with a stool which resembled a box. The box-stool served dual purposes; it was a sitting object and a save, a container where money was conveyed to pay salaries to workers. The labourers who always saw him coming to the mining site with stool-box and always sitting on it, thus, nicknamed him Mai Gindin-Akwati (a person whose buttocks sits on a stool box). Since he owned the mining field and the labour force in the area

was dependent on him, the labourers now considered the whole town as his camp, hence, the nomenclature.\textsuperscript{26}

Mai Idon Toro was also one of the settlements that emerged due to tin mining activities in the Jos Plateau. The colonial miner that established the mining site was said to have a shining or sparkling eye that normally shone like the colour of a penny (coin) so the town became known as “the town of the man whose eye ball resembles a penny (coin)”.\textsuperscript{27}

Toponomastics in Jos orature equally furnish data on another site. Kafi Abu in Hausa means “you are better than Abu”. At the peak of tin mining activities in Gana Ropp, a particular field in the western part of the Gana tin field was discovered to have a large deposit of tin. One Mallam Abu was appointed as a labour contractor and was taxed with the responsibility of seeking and helping the company employ labourers so that they can start mining on the new site. He did this and it subsequently led to the emergence of a new town known as Yelwan Gana which means “the wealth of Gana”. After some time, another tin field was discovered further west and another labour contractor was asked to help in the formation of a labour camp. The camp developed to a big town with more population and eventually supplied more tin tonnage than the labour camp formed by Abu. According to an informant, it was the decision of the labourers in the attempt to hail the great

\textsuperscript{26} Interview: Alhaji Baba Aliyu, age 85, 11 July 2006.
\textsuperscript{27} Interview: Alhaji Isa Haruna, 90, 9 June 2006.
work by the new contractor that made them say “Kafi Abu” (you are better than Abu). The place is now known as Kafi Abu.\textsuperscript{28}

Sabon Gidan Kanar in Hausa means “the new town of the Colonel”. Ethno historical informants have it that the colonial miner that opened the mining field was said to be an officer of the West African Frontier Force. Having seen the opportunity in the growing mining activities, he decided to get a prospecting license. He got a lease to start the Sabon Gidan Kanar mining field. Immigrant labourers were recruited to supply the new mining site with labour. The camp grew and employed many people as labourers, after which they named it after the Colonel who was the manager of the mining site. Consequently, the area was named Sabon Gidan Kanar, meaning “the new town of the Colonel” in Hausa.\textsuperscript{29}

Sabon Gidan Kanar was not the only one of its sort; there were many Sabon Gidajes that also came up in the area of study. They include Barki in Bukuru area, Sabon Gidan Foron, and Sabon Barki that emerged in the border area of Bokkos and Barkin Ladi LGAs. Adjacently, another mining camp sprang up and it was named Gero, which is the Hausa word for millet. The crop is grown by most farming communities of North-Western Nigeria. There is another type of millet grown by the indigenes in the Jos Plateau which is called angai but the Hausa call it dauro. This species has a white-ish colour, while gero is yellowish in colour.

With the economic recession after the WWI, there was a massive lay-off of labourers, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty. To stave off hunger,

\textsuperscript{28} Interview: Alhaji Mohammadu Kurra, 83, 9 September 2006.
\textsuperscript{29} Interview: Da Kandi Bitrus, 75, 30 March 2016.
some of the disengaged labourers resorted to petty trading and subsistence agriculture. The fertile lands around the tin fields were cultivated for the production of *gero* (millet). The area around the mining camp during the rains was always covered by this cereal. In time, the area came to be called Gero.  

Toponymic study in the Plateau is enriched by Dadin Kowa, a settlement that sprang up in an area between Bukuru and Jos. The formation of this settlement was also aligned with tin mining. A tin mining company contracted someone named Dadin Kowa, who hailed from Dadin Kowa in present day Gombe State, to source for labour and to form a labour camp. As the town grew, the early labourers named it Dadin Kowa town after the contractor’s village.  

Toponomastic comparative studies can also be expanded by examining the emergence of towns in the Jos Plateau area and comparing the concept of Tudun Wada and Sabon Gari. The concept, Tudun Wada, in the Jos Plateau can be juxtaposed with the general development of Sabon Gari in the colonial urbanization period in Northern Nigeria, which was marked by the emergence of modern trade centres, mining towns and railway terminals. The Sabon Garis in northern Nigeria during the colonial period were aimed at housing immigrants mostly from southern part of Nigeria, while the Tudun Wada was meant to house people from the northern part of Nigeria that were not indigenous to the local area. This was in tune with the general

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30 Interview: Da Gwom Rwei, the paramount chief of Jos South Local Government Area, age 82, 6 April 2016.
31 *Ibidem.*
development in the emerging urban centres in Northern Nigeria, especially in major cities like Kaduna, Kano and Zaria. Linguistically speaking, the phrase Tudun Wada means “the hill of a dwarf” or “dwarf hill”.32

The Politicization of Toponyms in Jos and Its Environs

The counter-naming or renaming of these settlements and the objections to their renaming were means of social, political and economic projections. The independence of Nigeria in 1960 brought many buried primordial sentiments to the fore, which eventually led to major socio-religious and political upheavals. Among the Jos people, these sentiments became manifest quite early. This development resulted in the intense opposition against the place-names of streets and settlements in Jos and its environs. The year 1967 saw the emergence of General Yakubu Gowon, an indigene of Plateau, as the Head of State after the coup that led to the death of General Aguyi Ironsi. The coming of Gowon into power led to the creation of twelve (12) states out of the four regions. This single development meant that the Plateau people were now politically and administratively independent of Kaduna politics. Jos now took the place of Kaduna as the centre of political and administrative decisions. By this development, the Plateau people were now brought closer to the government and political activities. A major effect of this was the overhaul of the hitherto Hausa-driven traditional political system in Jos and its environs. The office of Magaji Garin Jos, a traditional, political office which was created by the government for

32 Ibidem.
the Hausa in 1969, was abrogated in 1976 when the Berom agitated against the office of the Magaji Garin Jos. This brought an abrupt end to the existence of the office and it marked the formal abolition of any form of Hausa traditional leadership in Jos metropolis.\textsuperscript{33}

Toponymic maneuverings continued in the Plateau in the Second Republic. During the political campaigns that brought in the Second Republic, Chief Solomon Lar, one of the gubernatorial candidates tagged his campaign as “The Liberation”. This was a bold attempt to de-hausalize the Plateau. However, the lingering political simmering exploded in 1994 when the Military Administrator of Plateau State, Colonel Aliyu Kama, appointed a Hausa man, Alhaji Inusa Mato, as the Care Taker Chairman of Jos LGA. This development ignited serious agitation from the indigenes.\textsuperscript{34}

There have been series of violent episodes in Jos, the notable ones occurring in 2001, 2004, 2008, 2011 and 2014. These crises altered the entire political, social, economic and geographical configurations of the entire Jos Plateau and its environs. Consequently, the indigenous people of Jos decided to overhaul all the toponyms of the area. It started with changing the traditional titles and traditional kingship regalia from turban to red caps and animal skins, mostly leopard skin.\textsuperscript{35}


\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Ibidem}, p. 117.

\textsuperscript{35} Field notes taken in Gyel, one of the Berom ethnic group districts in the south of Jos, 3 - 5 April 2016.
The Hausa names given to settlements in the Jos Plateau became a source of discomfort to the indigenous people of Jos and its environs. The new generations began to ask why most of the settlements in Jos and its surroundings have Hausa names. Several groups in forms of cultural organizations, youth organizations and Christian organizations mounted intense pressure on traditional chiefs, constituency representatives and the government to restore the original names or to give indigenous nomenclature to communities with Hausa names.

The Hausa also intensely resisted the change of place names that was imposed on settlements allegedly founded by their forebears over a century ago in the Jos Plateau. In 2013, the Hausa population of Jos published a one hundred page paper claiming to be indigenes and explained how they helped in nurturing Jos. In one of their claims, they said,

...the Hausa therefore named both the place and it is common sense that you cannot name places where you are not the owner and the first settler. These Hausa names survived colonial period as all their records refer to such important Jos landmarks like the river in their Hausa names: Dilimi and Rafin Jaki.\textsuperscript{36}

The above contentious issues and counter-accusations between the Indigenous Berom and Hausas triggered the need for total counter-naming or renaming of settlements bearing Hausa names in the Jos Plateau area.

\textsuperscript{36} JASSAWA, \textit{The Truth About Jos}, 2013, p. 34.
The Counter-naming or Renaming of Settlements

With constant crises in Jos and its environs, citizenship, ownership and leadership became issues that dominated the discourse of the area. Because of that, the indigenes embarked on counter-naming of the settlements that evolved with Hausa names. The resultant effect is that what originally was called Layin Suma is now called Sarkin Mangu Street and Ali Kazaure Street is now called Dalyop Street. In the case of Angwan Rogo, another community in the Jos Plateau, the indigenes refer to it as Gura Lo Manjei which means “the hill of the house of Manjei” in the Berom language. For Barkin Ladi, the indigenes wanted the name to be changed to Gwol.37

Recent political events have exacerbated tension in the area, one of the most prominent being the creation and naming of the new Local Government Area. The Barkin Ladi Local Government was one of the most contentious, polarising the citizens of Plateau State. It was first created as Barkin Ladi, but the indigenes wanted the name to be re-gazetted as Gwol Local Government. The present member of the House of Representatives representing the Barkin Ladi / Riyom Federal Constituency has sponsored a bill asking for the change of nomenclature from Barkin Ladi to Gwol. Several extremists even dismissed the name Barkin Ladi as that of a prostitute,

37 Field notes taken in Barkin Ladi, town the centre of the Barkin Ladi Local Government Area in Plateau state, 6 April, 2016
therefore, making it morally wrong for their Local Government to bear a prostitute’s name, they contended.\textsuperscript{38}

The crisis has also drawn the ire of religious circles. Religious institutions in the area do not always link their institutions with Barkin Ladi; instead they prefer using other names like Ropp and Gwol. For instance, the COCIN Regional Church Council Headquarters situated in Barkin Ladi has jettisoned the place-name and instead chose Ropp, while the Local Church Council (L.C.C) in Barkin Ladi now bears the name LCC Gwol. The historical implication of this is that the gazetted names of these communities do not enjoy the patronage of the indigenes and that they always dissociate themselves from the Hausa names.\textsuperscript{39}

The counter-naming of settlements in the Plateau is on-going. Gindin Akwati was renamed Nekan while Mai Idon Toro, which is one of the oldest mining settlements, has now been given the name Rot Nafok. This settlement is close to Dogo Nahawa, where a human massacre took place in 2010, but the indigenes have renamed it Rot Nafok. In the case of Kafi Abu, the indigenes have changed the name to Rakok. Rakok in Berom refers to the southern part of Kwok, while the northern part of it is called Takwok. Following this decision, all Churches in the area have altered their names to reflect the new realities.\textsuperscript{40}

Another community which has experienced name-change is Sabon Gidan Kanar which is now referred to as Kwul by the Berom Gyel villages.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibidem.  
\textsuperscript{39} Ibidem.  
\textsuperscript{40} Ibidem.
It was a landscape that was used as a farm land before the establishment of the mines. The Gero town that was located adjacent Sabon Gidan Kanar is now referred to as Hei Vum which means “a dusty farm land” in the native language. Also, the Dadin Kowa settlement is now called Diye Ji in the native tongue. Diye Ji means mashy area.\(^{41}\)

The toponym of Tudun Wada has rich historical relevance. Tudun Wada is one of the early colonial settlements in the Jos suburb. Its founding as a human settlement was linked with the Hausa migrants that came after the formation of the Native Town Authority. The name has been changed to Jishe by the immediate past State Government which was headed by a Berom. “Jishe” means “bamboo plants”. The area was known for the abundance of jishe (bamboo plants) in the past, which the indigenes used for the roofing of their hut houses. The Gangare settlement is located on the river bank of the Dilimi River where early mining took place. All the settlements around the area were called either Dilimi or Gangare but when the Church of Christ in Nations established a Church in the area, they changed the place-name to Chulnyelp, which means “a thick forest infested with wild animals”. The intriguing part of the whole process of place-naming might be psychological fulfilment without epistemological reasons behind it. For example, both the Hausa word Dilimi and the Berom word, Chulnyelp, mean the same thing.\(^{42}\)

\(^{41}\) Interview: Da Gwom Rwei age 82, the paramount ruler of Jos South Local Government Area, April 2016.

\(^{42}\) Ibidem.
For a succinct overview of the present toponymic controversy in Jos and its environs, a tabulation of some settlements is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hausa/English</th>
<th>Native</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zaria Road</td>
<td>Behwol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rukuba Road</td>
<td>Kabong</td>
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<td>Kasuwan Katakoy</td>
<td>Laranto</td>
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<td>Dogon Dutse</td>
<td>Fwa-Gachik</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tudun Naira</td>
<td>Ji-Giring</td>
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<td>Dogon Karfe</td>
<td>Giring</td>
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<td>Mai-Idiko</td>
<td>Topp</td>
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<td>Wild Life Park</td>
<td>Mado</td>
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<td>Gold and Base</td>
<td>Yinggi</td>
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<td>Anglo Jos</td>
<td>Dashonong</td>
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<td>Dorowa Karama</td>
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<td>Danggwong</td>
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<td>Tim Tim</td>
<td>Rantya</td>
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<td>State Low Cost</td>
<td>Kang’abe</td>
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<td>Dorowa Gindin Dutse</td>
<td>Gakok</td>
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<td>Kuru Jenta III</td>
<td>Bado</td>
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<td>Kuru Baba</td>
<td>Werreng</td>
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<td>Kuru Station</td>
<td>Dahwak</td>
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<td>Sabon Pegi (Trade Center)</td>
<td>Zank Kwom;</td>
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<td>Kaduna Vom</td>
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<td>Dagwol</td>
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Impacts of Toponyms on Intergroup Relations in the Jos Plateau

The arguments surrounding the naming and counter naming of settlements in Jos and its environs have marred intergroup relations in the area. The exercise has caused internecine wars and caused political and religious conflagrations in the Plateau. As the indigenes strive to reassert their

43 Field notes taken in Jos and its environs Jan - April 2016.
indigenous names, the migrant Hausa see it a deft move by the indigenes to alienate them from the Commonwealth of the Plateau. Meanwhile, the indigenes insisted on renaming these settlements to portray them as the original owners of the landscape. This particular development has caused mistrust among the people of Jos.

The government’s position on the issue has not solved the problem completely. There are still primordial sentiments across the different strata of the population. The report of the Commission of Inquiry on the 1985 Jos crisis states,

...an “indigene” of Jos is one whose ancestors were natives of Jos, beyond living memory. This does not include any person who may remember from where his father or grandfather left his native home for Jos as a fixed home, domiciled there as of choice; or who is ignorant about from where his family moved to Jos permanently in quest of better living or in the process of his business. But to a “citizen” of Jos may be ascribed the status of an inhabitant of Jos who is entitled to qualified enjoyment of rights enjoyed by an “individual” of Jos. In the light of the above consideration or careful thought, we concede to the claim of the Berom, Afiżere and Anaguta tribes, and to declare that they are ‘indigenes’ of Jos. But as to the Hausa-Fulani people’s assumption, we make bold on the evidence at our disposal to advise them that they can qualify only as “citizens” of Jos.\textsuperscript{44}

This government’s position seems to have split the population of Jos into two irreconcilable groups of indigenes and citizens. With the renaming of places by the indigenes, the Hausa felt that they were stripped of a homeland, and that they were also at the verge of political extinction; therefore, they resolved to resist the trend.

Ethnic prejudices, segregation and religious extremism have flourished on the plateau due to multifactorial reasons. These have been heightened with toponymic changes, which are now going on in Jos and its environs. An important issue which needs to be taken into consideration is the point that most of these towns emerged or evolved on the farm lands of the local plateau people. These lands had indigenous owners. However, due to the jihadists’ activities of the 1800s, manifested by the means of security challenges and slave raiding, they were forced to move up to the rocky hills of the plateau. However, they still came down to the plains to cultivate the land for crop production. All the plains that were under or not under cultivation had names and these names were largely influenced by the geographical features, location and historical experiences of the people. These lands that later became Hausa settlements due to the colonial establishment of camps now came to be Hausa-ized due to the influence of their historical experiences in the evolutions of these settlements. Moreover, part of the problems came from the colonial administrations. The colonial governments gazette them with the Hausa names and subsequently the state used the new names that evolved during the colonial formation of the settlements.

More so, the presence of multiple ethnic groups and languages on the plateau made the colonial Government adopt the Hausa language as the *lingua franca* for the area. In fact, understanding the Hausa language became a prerequisite for all job seekers in the colonial establishments in the Plateau Province, both for the indigenes and the non-Hausa immigrant population.
According to informants, one would have to pass the Hausa colloquial test before being considered for employment.

The missionaries and their activities in the Jos Plateau were another factor. The missionaries also adopted the Hausa language in their preaching and publications. Hausa was even taught in the mission training institutes. As early as 1932, the first Hausa Bible was printed by J. F. Schon of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). The publication of the Littafi Mai Tsarki [Holy Bible] implied the hausalization of Christianity in the North, irrespective of linguistic differences. It also has anthropological and sociological implications, thus, the historical evolutions of streets, settlements, mining camps, amongst others, were captured, described, suggested, interpreted and documented in Hausa. This did not however mean that the Hausa were entitled to the ownership of the land, but it gave the Hausa a psychological advantage over others despite the fact that the names emerged out of the natural unfolding of human activities in the colonial formation of urban and mining settlements in the area. Today, most of these Hausa names are recognized by statutes, scholars and researchers.

Psychologically, the Hausa were at an advantage over others since the names are in Hausa. As Franz Fanon says, “Mastery of language affords remarkable power. A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language.” Also, William Shakespeare opines thus, “what should be in that name “Caesar”? Why should that

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45 A. M. Borok, op. cit., p. 120.
name sound more than yours?” For the ‘indigenes’ of Jos Plateau and its environs, they are experiencing cultural, psychological and symbolic detachment from their lands and communities because they have Hausa place names. Comparative studies show that similar issues are found elsewhere across the globe. For example, the Red Indians in the Americas and the Canadian regions are now challenging the adoption of the English names given to the landscape as a result of British colonization of the area.

Conclusion

Who owns Jos? This is an ethnic ideological question that is playing out in the Nigerian urban politics. Landscape toponyms are not simply evidence of history as suggested by traditional name-placing; this research establishes that it is part of the ideologically driven process of visibly grounding the past into the present and framing these historical meanings as legitimate. This paper surmises that the counter-naming and the desperate agitation for the changing of the Hausa names that evolved in the course of the colonial urbanization and creation of mining settlements in the area are reflections of the yearnings of the indigenes of Jos Plateau. Also, the Hausa and other ethnic communities had a place in the historical evolution of settlements in the Jos Plateau and this should be acknowledged. The Hausa settlements in the Plateau are over 100 years old. This historical reality

cannot be annulled. The annals of Jos and its environs have the stamp of Hausa influence. As pointed out by Borok, now that the activities of commercial tin mining on the plateau have waned, it is necessary for the government to engineer a re-awakening of moribund industries that will provide jobs for youths who are highly pliable as agents of crises.\textsuperscript{49} It is envisaged by this paper that good employment will keep the people away from inconsequential factors that readily ignite crises in the plateau. If the necessity of the indigenization of place-names is to be held as sacrosanct, then many African countries might be in need of a serious task ahead. If Upper Volta became Burkina Faso, then, one would imagine what the Nigeria of Flora Shaw would be.

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\footnote{A. M. Borok, *op. cit.*, p. 180.}
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