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"A Dead Child Is Better than a Missing One"

Religiosity, Technology, and Aspirations for Justice beyond Law

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While attending a conference in Mexico City during fieldwork in 2018, I heard a speech by a mother who had lost three of her sons to forced disappearances linked to drug cartels. We listened as she pledged to the audience that she would not rest until she knew the fate of her sons, that she was determined to locate their remains. After months of inaction by lawmakers, continuing her search required this mother to sidestep the prosecutor's office and other state institutions that had been her recourse for justice. She had turned instead to alternatives offered by science and technology. Partnering with community-based and nongovernmental organizations, she trained herself in the use of new technologies – geospatial technologies, ground sensing, crowdsourcing – that are increasingly used today to track the remains of loved ones.

In rejecting the traditional criminal justice and legal processes that had failed her, this mother affirmed that she was prioritizing not juridical resolutions but, rather, a pathway toward memorialization and closure. As she spoke, her voice cracked and her face wavered even through moments of great declarative agency; her search was threaded with pain. In responding to the mother's plight, a prosecutor in the audience offered a technocratic lament, citing the difficulties that families of the missing face in overcoming admissibility of evidence issues related to information they have unearthed about remains. For the prosecutor, the law's rules set the conditions for justice, and within this framework one mother's personal mission can be cast as futile at best, a costly diversion at worst.

In reflecting on both narratives – the mother's rejection of legal processes and the prosecutor's loyalty to them – as an ethnographer and theorist, I was struck by the productive tension between the two convictions: on the one hand, a vision of science and technology offering up tools to facilitate an elusive process of personal and collective

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mourning, and on the other, a confidence in the power of evidentiary procurements to enable judicial justice. Each narrative enabled a very different perspective on the missing and on human remains and their purposes. The contrast between these underlying interests and the mechanisms on which their subjects pinned their hope and faith continued to haunt me over subsequent years as I partnered with a team of researchers to interview family members who had lost loved ones in Mexico and in a field site I have worked for many years, Nigeria.

Amid broad recognition in both these countries of a collapse in the state's ability to provide security or justice, growing numbers of survivors appear to be turning away from the pursuit of legal justice mechanisms and toward a kind of grassroots quest for closure. In the process, some are building new alliances, not with judicial actors but rather with NGOs and research scientists who offer access to new technologies that might help locate the disappeared and even mitigate future violence via Early Warning Early Response (EWER) programs. Once the purview of the state and its legal systems, these functions of "search and secure" are being taken up in unlikely collaborations between ordinary local survivors and international technocratic networks capable of operating independently of nation-states. This trend points toward a large-scale recognition of the evacuation of the biopolitical state that appears increasingly inept, its politico-legal remedies accomplishing little in the wake of compounded violence and tragedy. As judicial solutions appear increasingly ineffective and meaningless for impacted communities, what does this foreshadow about more globalized futures as people engage reckon with justice "after law"?

The dynamics in Mexico and Nigeria highlight tensions between two crises: the crisis of extrajudicial killing through unmitigated vigilante violence and the seeming collapse of the postcolonial state experiment (Lomnitz 2024). Since 2006, when Mexico began a war on drugs, more than 40,000 people remain "disappeared" as violence between organized criminal groups and the Mexican government has escalated. At least 26,000 unidentified human bodies are stockpiled in regional morgues (Arteta 2019). State institutions have been largely unable to identify remains, investigate, or follow up on cases, and some of the most prominent cases have drawn accusations of cover-ups by state actors. One of the most haunting concerns a group of missing students from Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico. On September 26, 2014 forty-three male students went missing. Official Mexican government reports state that the students disappeared while en

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route to commemorate the anniversary of the 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre of student activists, and that they were later mistaken for a drug gang, taken into custody, and killed. In light of public questions about the plausibility of the government's findings, and with little progress being made by law enforcement, the Inter-American Court conducted a six-month investigation and determined that the government's explanation was not viable. Remains have never been found and no one has been arrested in conjunction with the disappearances. Nationwide protests and international condemnations have fueled the resolve of a coalition of family members, concerned citizens, lawyers, scientists, and technologists to carry on an independent search for bodily remains. Family members and advocates have formed more than seventy collectives; participants receive forensic training and scour morgues, jails, and potential burial sites in search of loved ones. Many are now working under the umbrella of a united national group, Movement for Our Disappeared in Mexico, a social mobilization that stretches across the country (Wilkinson 2019). Supported by the Truth & Justice Commission established in 2018 by President López Obrador and by allies such as the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF), these collectives are successfully finding evidence of clandestine graves and are exhuming bodies in several of Mexico's most violent states. Encouraged by their successes, they are demanding and innovating more access to technologies and to platforms to share their findings.

In Nigeria, the focus of this chapter, thousands of citizens have been victims of violence and disappearances related to the radical insurgency campaign Boko Haram. Based in northeastern Nigeria, Boko Haram is a jihadist terrorist organization founded by Mohammad Yusuf in 2002. Translated as "western education must be forbidden," Boko Haram was initially conceived in opposition to perceived western influences in Nigerian culture with the goal of forming an Islamic state in Northern Nigeria. Following a 2002 raid by the Nigerian government leading to the death of its leader, the organization accelerated its use of violence and has brought the northeastern region into turmoil through destruction of government buildings, churches, and civilian centers, as well as killings and disappearances of civilians of all ages. Moreover, as part of its counterinsurgency campaign, Nigerian police have engaged in unlawful killings, torture, and enforced disappearances throughout the country. Boko Haram became internationally known as a result of the abduction and disappearance of more than 250 schoolgirls from Chibok, Nigeria, in April 2016. The

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#BringBackOurGirls campaign mobilized a global social movement of activists, politicians, and celebrities. Locally, the intervention effort took the form of family members and civil society organizations collaborating with investigators, legal experts, and scientists to deploy scientific crisis-tracking technologies to identify the girls and attempt to prevent future violence. This mobilization created a precedent for efforts that are ongoing, and which are gradually changing the terrain of governance in Nigeria.

The violence in Northern Nigeria has become endemic and reflects a range of motives and actors far more complex than is generally acknowledged in analyses of Boko Haram. In Nigeria's Kaduna and Plateau States, our research team spoke with people who attributed the abduction and killing of their loved ones to a scourge of criminal activity waged by bandits intent on ransom, theft of occupied land, and forced displacement of villagers. This criminal activity unfolded largely with impunity in light of the marked absence of police or other security services. When we asked surviving loved ones about the search for forensic evidence that could allow for the pursuit of justice through the court system, they answered time and time again with expressions of futility, echoing a pervasive stance that such activity would be pointless.

As in Mexico, Nigerians we spoke with understood the institution of policing and its legal protocols to be sites of oblivion. Police stations were viewed as places where reports are sent to die and courts as empty theatres where legal professionals meet failure before even attempting success. A powerful Yoruba proverb reverberated throughout interviews: *Ọmọ ẹni kú sán jù ọmọ ẹni nú lọ* (a dead child is better than a missing one). While this sentiment – that it is better to know that one's child is dead than to agonize indefinitely – may be universal among families seeking closure when loved ones have disappeared for long periods, in places like Mexico and Nigeria the sheer scale of the crisis of vigilante and extrajudicial killing has made the proverb prophetic: Due to a dire combination of extreme, protracted violence and the failure of state responses, entire communities are organizing at a collective and even cultural level to seek evidence of the death of loved ones.

In this context, we are seeing that when states fail to provide security or justice, people respond to crises by brokering their own solutions. Whereas legal institutions have traditionally shaped the process of recovering and interpreting human remains within the framework of the modern nation-state, contemporary recovery efforts in places like Nigeria and Mexico are challenging the state's perceived monopoly on this function,

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with important consequences for the relationship between state power and technology. In *Reframing Rights: Bioconstitutionalism in the Genetic Age*, Sheila Jasanoff (2011) argues that certain types of bodies (victims, perpetrators, pro-accountability interveners) are being reshaped in the contemporary period (Agathangelou, A. M. (forthcoming). Race, racism, and global power. Bristol University Press; Foucault 1977, 1988; Jan Rupp 1992). Arguing that there is a fundamental transformation underway in the relationships among biology, law, and biotechnology, she introduces the concept of "bioconstitutionalism," naming the ways in which "radical shifts in the biological representation of life necessarily entail far-reaching reorderings in our imagination of the state's life-preserving and life-enhancing functions – in effect, a repositioning of human bodies and selves in relation to the state's legal, political, and moral apparatus" (Jasanoff 2011: 4). Jasanoff helps us to rethink how the waning of the law's reach repositions bodies and reframes rights (Pottage 2017), yet as useful as this intervention is, Jasanoff is less interested in the ways in which quotidian applications of science intersect with religious frameworks, and how these synergize toward the construction of new processes for social repair beyond or outside of the mechanism of law. This chapter, focusing on the imbrication of religion, technology, and justice in Nigeria, begins to address that gap.

In pondering the future of social justice by considering new ways in which people are engaging with the postcolonial state experiment, this chapter asks who is equipped to uncover – and, in effect, to save – the biological body. What new and traditional resources are local communities bringing to bear as they forge post-juristocratic landscapes in the shadow of state absence, and what are the implications of their efforts beyond their geographic borders? Drawing on ethnographic cases, I suggest that the post-juristocratic is best seen as a *state of reckoning* in which law's aspirational possibilities are inundated with fissures that render transparent its challenges. As citizens sidestep the law's constraints, leaping beyond its inefficacy, they are gathering new forms of agency and alliance that point toward the possibility of broader, perhaps globalized, alternative futures for law and justice. Nigeria presents a particularly apt case study in this respect. The state of insecurity around life and death in Nigeria – the so-called Giant of Africa – illuminates how threats to both bodily security and economic infrastructure necessitate a collective reckoning around the very terms of life. Here, I explore the possibility that contemporary emergencies may not only signal the waning into oblivion of the postcolonial state but may also be ushering

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in a new post-juristocratic state form that relates to the biological and juridical subject in novel ways.

Of central importance to this emergence is what I call a *transformation of senses* around knowing and locating the body. Whereas the (post) colonial state had attempted to cede the authority to locate and interpret bodies to legal domains, contemporary movements using tools that exceed legality are privileging and reviving alternative domains: new technologies and (re)newed forms of religiosity. Together, these twin forces appear to be facilitating a reinterpretation of what it means to pursue justice – and, indeed, what it means to be human – that may gradually negate the authority of the nation-state's institutions, unmask its performances, and transgress its borders. To adequately theorize this turn toward new cosmologies of justice, I first provide a historical and contemporary account of the role of religion in the Nigerian case study.

Since 2009, even as extreme violence has proliferated, there has been a large-scale embrace of evangelical and fundamentalist sects of both Christianity and Islam in Nigeria. These sects, often linked to transnational networks, reject traditional hierarchies of religious authorities who have historically acted as faith mediators. Astonishing numbers in Nigeria are turning, in a kind of democratizing moment, toward direct experiences of spiritual fervor and the promises of prosperity and justice they are purported to bring. This shift provides a glimpse of a future in which evangelizing modalities of religious faith are expanding and thriving even as traditional religious canons are in decline. I suggest that the move toward new and innovative religious practices is concurrent with the move toward communities directly assuming agency over new technologies, and that each strategy is fundamentally linked to a desire to address persistent insecurity in the face of proliferating violence and the failure of state governance to act. Ultimately, this shift may have profound implications for the future of democracy, governance, the state, and justice. The Nigerian case offers insights into the emergence of new possibilities for mitigating harm and procuring restorative options through religious and technological tools that are perceived to empower ordinary people to unearth and cope with past, present, and future loss – with or without institutional sanction or support.

11.1 Nigerian Pentecostalism as a Social Technology of Power

The presence of Christianity in Nigeria can be traced back to the fifteenth century when early missionaries attempted to evangelize the west coast of

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Africa (Adewale & Abu 2013: 122). In the first wave, Portuguese missionaries worked to convert communities in Benin and Warri, where indigenous cosmologies mapped relatively well on to Christian frameworks. Later, Catholics attempted to Christianize people in the Borno and Hausaland regions of what is now Northern Nigeria, an effort that eventually fizzled out (Galadima & Turaki 2001: 92). These missionary activities unfolded alongside the evolution of the slave trade, and continued after abolition in 1807: The modern missionary movement began when British Anglican institution the Church Missionary Society (CMS) saw an opportunity in a population of Africans already exposed to Christianity through the experience of enslavement (Adewale & Abu 2013: 122). Former slaves turned theologians became trailblazers in propagating Christian missions throughout the region, particularly in Yorubaland (now southwestern Nigeria). Ultimately, the CMS's efforts helped build the cultural infrastructure that would facilitate further colonization of the region by Britain.

Anglicanism remained the dominant form of Christianity in Nigeria until the twentieth century when Pentecostalism launched "renewal" missions across Africa (Lindhardt 2014). In Nigeria, this development is traced to a 1910 local charismatic movement led by a deacon who separated from the Anglican Church to establish the Christ Army Church. Charismatic units grew rapidly and formed independent churches characterized by fervent prayer styles, with followers known by the Yoruba word *Aladura* (praying people). By the start of the 1950s, Pentecostalism was spreading even more widely in Nigeria. Martin Lindhardt (2014) argued that the growth of Pentecostalism was due to efforts to break away from western missionary control. To him, this inherent anticolonialism accounted for the popularity of many African-initiated churches focused on prophecy and healing. In the 1960s, after Nigeria's independence from the British government, and through the period of the Biafran civil war into the 1970s, a second wave of Pentecostal expansion emerged in Nigeria, this one characterized by student-organized revivals on college campuses (Lindhardt 2014). Today, Nigeria has the largest population of Pentecostals in Africa, with a 2006 study reporting that three out of ten Nigerians identify as either Pentecostal or charismatic (Unah 2017).

Given its scale, Pentecostalism has influenced popular culture even beyond the domain of the faithful, impacting a broader collective imagination with regard to a range of personal, political, socioeconomic, and moral issues (Obadre 2022). Thus, Nigerian Pentecostalism functions as

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a kind of emergent technology of knowledge during a time of endemic societal crisis. Through its charismatic and transcendent modes of worship, the religion continually reinforces an understanding that supernatural forces undergird the manifestation of all phenomena. In engaging with these forces, Pentecostal worshippers are in essence seeking a kind of power with which to access social, political, or economic capital and agency over their profoundly uncertain daily realities (Adelakun 2022). Against the background of a history of authoritarian and increasingly ineffective governance by the state, Nigerians are increasingly turning to this option, and it is an option that offers them a sense of power amid a context of disempowerment.

For Nimi Wariboko (2014) and Obadre (2022), Pentecostals are split between the visible and the invisible worlds. To extract knowledge from the invisible realm is to explain, predict, and control the visible world. Power is thus an important identity marker for Nigerian Pentecostals. And some would argue that Pentecostals' fixation with supernatural power creates real-life consequences through actions undertaken to manipulate the material by channeling the invisible. The Pentecostal religion developed in Nigeria in the context of various crises of modernity, development, and identity, and that context is reflected in its tremendous popularity as a mechanism for gaining agency in the face of forces one cannot control (Vaughan 2016). Ruth Marshall (2019) similarly insists that Pentecostalism has transcended its status as a mere identity within Christianity by promising processes of conversion and transformation that have the power to reconstitute the lived social worlds of the faithful. Within this cosmology, believers are no longer passive subjects of large institutions but are transformed into holders of power. This transformation is embodied in moments of heightened spiritual prowess when, for example, Pentecostals vigorously summon powers from the Holy Spirit to violently attack enemies and obstacles blocking their progress or causing them suffering (Adelakun 2022). It is also woven into two of the bedrock principles of Nigerian Pentecostal culture: the preaching of prosperity and its corollary, the doctrine of giving.

There are two schools of thought regarding the emergence in Nigeria of the prosperity gospel: the proclamation that the will of God is for Christians to live in material prosperity. The first argues that prosperity gospel ideology was exclusively an American phenomenon aggressively exported to Nigeria, while the second argues that it is an inherently African ideology nurtured and propagated on African soil. Bridging these approaches, Omavuebe (2021) has argued that the Nigerian prosperity

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gospel is a hybrid theology that integrates elements of the American prosperity gospel ideology, originating in the American New Thought movement, and Nigerian revivalism. In referencing specific biblical scriptures, evangelists of this gospel assert that Christians can expect affluence through faith (Amadi 2013). For example, Deuteronomy 8:18 states, "But thou shall remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth," and Psalm 112:1–3 states, "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, wealth and riches shall be in his house." Pentecostal pastors employ these and other passages to emphasize the claim that God expects every Christian to be materially prosperous. As scholars have argued, people living in conditions of poverty whose options are severely limited by structural forces may be especially attracted to such a perspective (Amadi 2013). In a moment of widespread economic hardship and threats to basic security, the prosperity gospel has rendered Nigerian Pentecostalism enormously marketable (Eyo et al. 2020).

A twin doctrine to the prosperity gospel – also widespread in Nigerian Pentecostalism – is the doctrine of giving, which urges members to tithe to the church in order to sow seeds of future prosperity. While most wealth gathered through this doctrine is accumulated – and often spectacularly consumed – at the level of church leadership, Pentecostal churches also hold special giving ceremonies through which some wealth is redistributed to the poor and needy. This structure creates a compelling tether between tithing members and the church organization, and it has undoubtedly improved the financial status of many Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, enabling them to carry out several projects that have enhanced the socioeconomic well-being of many people. In the context of a society in which state institutions have failed to provide basic social welfare, massive churches have filled some of the void through projects like financial empowerment programs for members, grade schools and universities, media outlets, employment, clothing and food drives, micro-loans, and outreach to orphanages and hospitals (Asuquo 2020). This quasi-state function was especially prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Nigeria's major Pentecostal churches – including RCCG, Living Faith Church, Mountain of Fire, Deeper Life Church, and Foursquare – came out in force to assist the government in distributing relief to citizens. Such activity in turn increases the popularity of these churches, growing the base of members who tithe. Modest estimates hold that there is one Pentecostal church for every twenty households in urban areas of south, southeast, and southwest Nigeria (Eyoboka 2004). Particularly in these regions,

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Pentecostalism is in a strong position to continue its transformation of social consciousness writ large, and its increasing role fulfilling functions traditionally carried out by the state. In the northern region, a similar phenomenon is unfolding through the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

11.1.1 Stance of Resistance: The Rise and Resilience of Islamic Fundamentalism in Nigeria

Uthman Dan Fodio's Jihad of 1804–8 marked the beginning of Islamic fundamentalism in Northern Nigeria, and this region has experienced some level of religious conflict ever since (Agai 2014). The goal of the Jihad included the spread of Islamic compliance as inscribed in the Holy Quran (2:190–191): "Fight for the cause of God those that fight you but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors. And slay them wherever you catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out." Dan Fodio called on his followers to use force to take over lands occupied by *infidels* (Dar al-Harb), and transform them into lands of the faithful (Dar al-Islam) (Agai 2014). Islam succeeded in Northern Nigeria in part due to the region's relative defiance of British colonialism and in part due to the stark differentiation it offered from Christian influences in the south. Britain carried out its colonial project through indirect rule, which systematically empowered local leaders and, in the case of Nigeria, favored leaders in the Christian south. As a result, Christian values and jurisprudence were elevated while Islamic values and judicial principles were relegated to "figurehead" status within the colonial state, a reality that the retreat of British colonial rule only exacerbated (Žebrauskaitė n.d.).

Nigeria's independence in 1960 brought about a form of secularization that undermined political Islamism, the framework that asserts Muslims should be ruled by the laws of God rather than those of the state. Despite the pressure to conform to an idealized secularism, the long-lasting Islamic tradition uniting Northern Nigeria with the rest of North Africa and separating it culturally from southern Nigeria has prevailed. Yet it is important to acknowledge that the northern region is not monolithic. For example, Muslim communities in north-central Nigeria have long joined their southern neighbors in agitating against a perceived Islamization of public institutions (Žebrauskaitė n.d.). Today, many moderate Muslims and Christians believe that extremists in Northern Nigeria are intent on Islamizing the entire country. This perception has grown gradually and is based on events including the adoption of

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criminal Sharia law in 1999 by twelve northern states (Ostien 2011), the inclusion of Nigeria as a member of the organization of Islamic conference in 1986, and the country's new status as a beneficiary of the Islamic Development Bank in 2005.

The growth of Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria, as well as elsewhere in Africa, is rooted in a response to the conditions of colonization that continue to manifest in severe quality of life disparities (Žebrauskaitė n.d.). In Nigeria, specifically, differential policies by the British Empire translated into better access for southern communities to colonial infrastructure around education, medicine, bureaucracy, and science. Today, benefits from natural resource wealth and economic growth are distributed unequally, with the Muslim majority in the northern regions often left behind. According to data published in EduCeleb, the 2017 national literacy rate was 65.1 percent (Amoo 2018), with southern states ranked above the national average and all northern states falling below, with a far greater gender gap. The enduring legacy of this history has made the region vulnerable to extremist political leaders.

The Jama'atu Ahli's Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad sect, also known as Boko Haram, was established in 1995 with the aim of purifying Islam through a struggle against Christians, the Nigerian government, and certain Muslims deemed to not be living according to Islamic law. The militarization of Boko Haram can be traced to July 2009 when, over four days, members of the sect burned churches and killed Christians across the region. In subsequent years, Boko Haram has carried out many terrorist attacks and kidnappings targeting both Christians and moderate Islamic clerics and Muslim politicians (Agai 2014). Islamic fundamentalism continues to gain momentum as groups like Boko Haram call for socioeconomic justice for the ordinary people of Northern Nigeria who feel they have been systematically excluded from economic benefits enjoyed in the south. Boko Haram's propaganda portrays the Nigerian state as decadent, corrupt, and irrelevant, calling for its destruction and the establishment of a pure and just Islamic society (Anugwom 2018). Dire socioeconomic conditions, particularly in the northeast region where Boko Haram concentrates its recruitment efforts, have produced a generation of young men searching for a pathway toward greater economic security and for belonging and purpose (Anugwom 2018). The rise of Islamic fundamentalism has thus been linked to the extreme poverty that millions of Nigerians endure (Abumere 2016).

Having introduced the evolution and current broad appeal of evangelical Christianity and fundamentalist Islam in Nigeria, I turn now to a

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consideration of the core beliefs about death that each cosmology offers before returning to a consideration of how technology aligned with religiosity is transforming Nigerians' beliefs about loss, justice, and the state.

11.2 Death and Afterlife in Yoruba Cosmology, Christianity, and Islam

In historic Yoruba cosmologies of southern Nigeria, death is not seen as the end of life but rather as a transition from one form of existence to another. It marks the end of an existence that is known and the beginning of one that is unknown. Scholars of African religion have argued that immortality is the dream of many Africans, and it is understood that this state can only be achieved in the afterlife. But the Yoruba also believe that participation in the afterlife is dependent on the nature of one's death. The desirable goal of becoming an ancestor after death cannot be achieved if an individual did not live a meaningful life, or if his or her life was cut short through an accident or "unnatural" death (Ekore & Abass 2016). A person who is missing or disappeared is in an especially precarious position. It is regarded as great mental torture if one's loved one, relation, or friend is declared missing or lost. In fact, this tragedy is treated almost as a taboo, with a belief that death would actually be preferable to disappearance.

For many Yoruba, no "Ebo" (sacrifice) or "Ogun" (medicine) can stop a person from dying when their time has come. A disappearance frustrates this clarity and is often described as a state of limbo between the finality of death and the hope that one may sustain in the face of injury or illness. In Yoruba cosmology, death in old age is an occasion of celebration rather than mourning. The assumption is that the elderly await death eagerly knowing that burial rites will reunite them with their ancestors. When a person is disappeared, it is not possible to perform these rites. Hence, in popular Yoruba worldviews, a lost individual attracts shame and mental torture while death attracts fame and treasure, allowing for closure and even celebration for the living who remain. Within Yoruba cosmology, the failure to locate remains and provide a proper burial can lead to the individual becoming a wandering ghost, unable to live properly after death (Ekore & Abass 2016). A missing individual cannot be accepted into the ancestral realm, and in this tortured state may even become a force of danger for those who are still alive.

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In Northern Nigeria, traditional cosmologies are similar. The destiny of a person's soul is tied to both their sociopolitical status and the determination of whether those around them have carried out the proper funeral rites. Despite the emergence and dominance of Islam, "[t]he Hausa world view exhibits a strong belief in the existence of spirits and their interaction with human beings" (Danfulani 1999: 413) and considers the appearance of spirits to be a manifestation of God's power. Thus, everyone is "entitled to a ceremonial burial in order that his soul might finally be dismissed to join the company of his forefathers, and that his living relatives might be cleansed from the pollution of death" (Ogbuagu 1989: 88).

For Muslims following Islamic religious and Arabic cultural traditions, the deceased are to be buried as soon as possible after death, their bodies washed and dressed in cloth. This practice follows the Prophet Muhammad's guidance: "Hurry up with the dead body for if it was righteous, you are forwarding it to welfare; and if it was otherwise, then you are putting off an evil thing down your necks" (Sahih al-Bukhari 1315). Among many Hausa, engaging in the proper rites and homilies is key to death's journey, and maintaining the corporeal body is important for the long journey in which the deceased is made to account for their lifetime deeds (Pilaszewicz 1988: 53). Following such a journey, it is believed that two angelic figures appear to the deceased and interrogate them to determine whether they will face punishment or redemption (Hiskett 1982: 42). Various Hausa beliefs about death can found in homiletic songs and poetry, inspired by Arab and Islamic traditions, which provide religious guidance on how to live a life that allows passage into heaven and a reminder of the day of judgment. Homiletic verses depict the temporal world as the negative, transient opposite of the eternal afterlife, and reflect an understanding that death not only is inevitable but can come for anyone (Pilaszewicz 1988).

In the Christian tradition, death can be considered both a punishment for sin and a passage toward redemption. As with Yoruba and other indigenous African cosmologies, Christianity asserts the continuity of life after death. Death is the portal to a new existence in either heaven or hell, with souls routed to one or the other based on a final judgment of their sins and/or belief (Vogt 2004). In Christian rhetoric death is often described as a kind of sleep from which one can be resurrected (as in the case of Jesus) (Atari 2021). Christian sects, including Pentecostalism, hold that the faithful will be woken from death and granted eternal life. Many Christians describe death as an opportunity to access higher glory

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and eternal life. It is a state that has been conquered by Christ, and this same transcendence is accessible to Christians through belief in his status as savior. This belief is reflected in passages from scripture such as "O death where is your victory? Where, O death is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54–57; see also Ayodeji 2013) and "Everyone who believes in me will never die" (John 11:26) (see also Ayodeji 2013).[1] Christianity espouses a confidence in reunion after death with the Holy Trinity (Jesus, God, the Holy Spirit) as well as with faithful loved ones. Both traditional Yoruba and Pentecostal Christian frameworks therefore speak to the ways that religious worlds shape ways of coping with loss and the possibility of death without the guarantee of certainty.

Islam's concept of death shares similarities with those of Christianity and African traditional religions. In Islam, death is seen not as the termination of life, but rather as the continuation of life in another form, and this worldly life is understood as a test and preparation ground for the afterlife (Leaman 2006: 27). In Islam, death is predetermined by Allah, who knows each person's exact time of death. Death is accepted as wholly natural and merely marks a transition between the material realm and the unseen world (Turner 2011: 125). Islam further teaches that no one has the power to take a human life because all lives ultimately belong to Allah. Within this understanding, one can take another's life if their appointed time of death has come. Some hold that true believers and the righteous welcome death when it arrives, eschewing notions that death is painful or an experience to fear (Hughes 1995: 79). The Quran itself mentions that certain individuals, such as martyrs, are alive despite their apparent death (2:154).

Certain Muslim traditions argue that it is possible to contact the living dead by sleeping in graveyards (Diem & Scholler 2004), and visiting the graves of holy persons or prophets is a common practice among some Muslim sects. The Quran discusses death and its inevitability on several occasions, including the frequently quoted verse, "Every soul shall taste death and only on the Day of Judgment will you be paid your full recompense" (3:185). In general, death is not a taboo subject in a Muslim society and is by contrast a matter upon which one is encouraged to reflect frequently (Campo 2009: 185). In fact, aversion to death and

[1] Ayodeji 2013: 508–515.

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love for the world are seen as two aspects of ignorance. The faithful are encouraged to eschew worldly enjoyment in light of the larger reality of death and afterlife. And when spiritual leaders counsel Muslims regarding terminal illness or bereavement, this understanding of death – as inevitable and even to be welcomed – is emphasized.

11.2.1 Technologies of Prediction: How Twenty-First-Century Nigeria Harnesses Religiosity and Technology to Challenge the State's Monopoly on Managing Violence

The proliferation of evangelical and fundamentalist forms of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria, mapped against Yoruba cosmologies, troubles the secular ("western") political values that the British colonial state in the region attempted to impose and that the postcolonial state has failed to secure. It is critical to understand this broader context as the backdrop for the current uptick in grassroots and civil society movements that compete with and even bypass the state functions of security and justice in the face of extreme violence, mass disappearances, and enduring instability. Just as fundamentalist religion offers hope to the economically disenfranchised, new technologies offer a strategy around which to mobilize community-based efforts to locate loved ones' remains and even to prevent ongoing cycles of violence. More specifically, just as religion and the hope of future redemption enables people to cope with loss, certain technologies are likewise future-oriented and are, in fact, embedded within their own particular cosmology of death. Technology projects involve the assignment of interpretive meaning from past abhorrent events toward future possibilities. While doing so may not alleviate the suffering of loss, these projects presume that their anticipatory potential can help to alleviate future suffering. The power of technologies such mobile-phone-based apps, location searching with geospatial technology imagery and other forensic searchers allows for the assigning to future violence an interpretive code from past violence that transfers symbolic value from images of the past to material codes deemed capable of predicting the future. These material effects drawn from visual codes are used to justify action that is rationalized as life preserving. These technologies do not gain their value from observed destruction and harm. As an act of decoding that is anticipatory, their power lies in a decoding potential. They gain their strength from proleptic possibilities and at the core is the production of knowledge and a counter-production of new forms of expertise. Like religious tools, these technological tools

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produce knowledge that has the potential to usurp the role of the welfare state. However, the challenge is in what is called user-generated content (UGC) and the widespread forms of knowledge production that can emerge. The opening of new forms of expertise through the seeming inactivity of state institutions in various sites in the Global South provides a space for understanding not only the transformation underway but also the extent to which we are entering a post-juristocratic phase in the contemporary period.

I turn now to an analysis of efforts underway in the contemporary Nigerian context, where community-based technology projects are already numerous and far reaching. Two prominent examples – the "Eyes on Nigeria" project (backed by Amnesty International and the American Association for the Advancement of Science [AAAS]) and the 2001–3 Village Monitoring Project – have sought to go beyond judicial modalities, engaging partners including community-based organizations in an effort to provide training, establish warning indicators, and create and share knowledge networks capable of anticipating, verifying, and ultimately stopping violent action by insurgents.[2] These projects hinge on broadening access to hand-held tools that can be used to download information and disseminate the data derived from geospatial technologies.

"Geospatial technologies" refers to technologies that acquire, manipulate, and store geographic information. The term *geospatial* entered the lexicon during the late 1980s, but its roots can be traced to the early cold war. Today, geospatial technologies encompass a vast array of tools including geographic information systems (GIS), global positioning systems (GPS), geofencing, aerial photography, cartography, satellite imaging, photogrammetry for multidimensional cartographic modeling, multi- and hyperspectral imaging, and renderings from LiDAR survey data. In particular, remote sensing – a subset of geospatial technologies that collects images and data from space-based and airborne cameras and sensor platforms – is lauded for its supposed ability to overcome obstacles to detecting and reaching sites on the ground in a timely fashion

[2] In addition to Eyes on Nigeria, they include the Search for Common Ground (SFCG), the Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP) by Mercy Corps, Plateau Peace Practitioners Network and the Women Peace & Security Network in Plateau State, Women Empowerment Foundation and Gender Awareness Trust in Kaduna state, West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP) in Zamfara state, and Community Centre for Excellence in Taraba state.

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(LeBlanc et al. 2014; Abate et al. 2019;). Geospatial outputs from multiple sensors are seen as offering forensic advantages in that they can be interpreted in tandem to help analysts fill in data gaps (Blau et al. 2018). Furthermore, the speed at which remote sensing technologies retrieve data has been useful in shaping responses to rapidly developing humanitarian crises in cases where earth observation satellites are used to monitor conflict zones (Marx & Goward 2013). As a result, geospatial technologies employing remotely sensed imagery have been used to substantiate warnings around escalating conflict, to report human rights abuses, and to make predictions about future atrocities aimed at motivating state-based preemptive action. These technologies are used in human rights work to uncover and interpret gravesites, and to establish evidence and augment it through expert testimony in trials (Thompson 2008; Edelman & Aalders 2018). By tracking patterns captured by satellite images, rapid response networks empower themselves with intelligence that has the potential to prevent attacks.

Since 2011, there has been a particular expansion in scientifically driven technological possibilities aimed at finding bodies, discovering the nature of violence, and new domains of memorialization. And though digital tools (such as video capture through social media and geothermal satellite documentation) initially promised to provide evidence to courts, if ever the law was seen as the key site for addressing violence, this is increasingly no longer the case. Today these technologies are being deployed for the purposes of countering violence – sometimes state violence – outside of the courts. One such modality – "Early Warning and Early Response" (EWER) – is increasingly playing a role once occupied by the security state.

Yet even as the transnational alliances that make these new applications of technology possible appear to offer new hope for survivors, they also connect to broader histories and contemporary economies of power, in some ways resembling colonial dynamics. Recent analyses underscore the extent to which geospatial satellite experts are not on the sidelines offering counsel to political projects, but are in fact central to shaping the social and physical landscapes that legitimize institutions (Carroll 1996). In the US, for example, nominally neutral think tanks are leveraged for political purposes (Smith 1993; Medvetz 2014). Yet deploying expert knowledge in the Global South can have unintended outcomes as (post)colonial assumptions play out in particular cultural contexts (Mitchell 2002). Knowledge processes are often carried out by a small number of transnational experts, whose interpretation of data and

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knowledge-making processes speak to the particular techniques, practices, and assumptions (Graeter 2017) that undergird technologies used to *see* data. By reflecting on the roles of such agents and the practices involved, we see how seemingly objective practices, often carried out by regionally uninvested technocrats, reveal the circumscribed ways that scientists generate and validate knowledge (Latour & Woolgar 1986; Latour 1988), socialize new experts (Matoesian 1999; Mertz 2007), represent specialized knowledge in broader society (Lynch & Woolgar 1990; Collins & Evans 2007; Coopmans et al. 2014; Randalls 2017), and imbue knowledge within institutional structures (Good 2004, 2007; Carr 2009) and political movements and processes (Epstein 1996; Collier 2017; Newman 2017).

Today, commercial entities selling satellite data are able to profit from a narrative of technology's "mechanical objectivity" and transparency (Harris 2006; Daston & Galison 2007), and legal professionals seek to translate technical data into knowledge that can be mobilized as evidence to facilitate particular justice outcomes. These simplified narratives around the objectivity (and obviousness) of technical data are continually complicated by counter-narratives about which forms of truth (and whose suffering) are legible and "countable" within particular spheres (Joyce & Stover 1992; Rosenblatt 2015; Weizman 2017).

The historical antecedents of such technological expertise have been clearly theorized as tools and methodologies for exercising imperial conquest, exploitation, and control (Harley et al. 2001; Edney 2019). The US and Soviet governments monopolized the early development of satellite-based surveillance technology. Regular systematic satellite monitoring of the Earth's surface first entered the civilian sector with the 1972 launch of the US's *Landsat 1,* an Earth Resource Technology Satellite (ERTS) that was used to study and monitor changes in land use and land cover, a mission that continues to this day (Davis 2007). In the 1980s, the Reagan Administration rolled out a broad agenda of privatization and increased commercial access to satellite technology and its outputs (Lambright 1994). In the late 1990s, the US Global Positioning System entered civilian life, bringing applications for the investigation of crimes, enforcement of laws, and the offering of evidence in a wide range of civil matters (Elmes et al. 2014). And by 2001, Google Earth had become among the first platforms to give civilians free access to satellite archives.

Advances in satellite technology by commercial entities picked up speed over the following decade, bringing new opportunities for the

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public to influence law enforcement and the pursuit of justice in connection with environmental abuses, criminal investigations, and practices such as geofencing, or the triggering of specific actions on location-aware devices when they cross defined spatial boundaries. As the privatization of satellite technology continued, nongovernmental human rights groups were among those interested in working with commercial providers of satellite data (Wang et al. 2013). Among these providers' many customers are governments and investigators, leading to a dramatic increase in the use of satellite evidence.

In many of today's armed conflicts, such as in Syria, Libya, and Ukraine, repeated and ongoing violence occurs far from sites that are readily monitored. Investigators often lack access to locations where violence takes place, and they are increasingly turning to satellite images as well as photos, video, and text messages posted to social media using mobile phones, which in turn may be curated by witnesses (and sometimes also by perpetrators). Because the options for intervening in and procuring evidence of such violence are limited, international courts and tribunals are, with the help of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Operational Satellite Applications Programme (known as UNOSAT) as well as NGOs or governments, increasingly turning to satellite evidence to help make arrests and secure convictions. But far larger numbers are turning such possibilities in new directions.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, private companies based primarily in the US, Canada, and Europe began to make remotely sensed imagery much more accessible by launching satellites that can capture imagery at increasingly higher resolutions and launching constellations of satellites capable of more comprehensive coverage of the Earth with a shorter revisit cycle. Prominent human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International became customers of private data providers such as Digital Globe, with the aim of collecting and publicizing data about human rights abuses and pursuing the prosecution of crimes against humanity (Freeman 2018). Since then, there has been a growth in the use of digital evidence in domestic, regional, and international criminal courts such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and later at the International Criminal Court (ICC). Related NGO projects contracted out data analysis projects to identify war and conflict zones. Meanwhile, corporations launched endeavors to connect directly with users and collect "crowdsourced" data and analysis, such as Google's Crisis in Darfur project (Levinger 2009; Wang et al. 2013); these projects were celebrated in their time as

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innovative, groundbreaking, and demonstrating great promise for preventing future mass atrocities. A decade later, NGO projects more commonly focused on Early Warning Early Response notifications and procurement projects that allow those victimized to memorialize their loved ones. These technologies have enabled civil society activists and families of the disappeared to challenge technology's imperial relation to knowledge and to (re)imagine their own roles at the intersection of data science, legitimate action, and social justice.

While certain geospatial technology projects are increasingly seen as not only imperialist but also exclusive and of little use to the families of those victimized by violence, new uses of these technologies mark an emerging and consequential shift in the logic and practices of international justice, with members of civil society participating in journalism, fact-finding, archiving, documenting, and managing a range of projects. In this vein, the past twenty years have seen an unprecedented rise in the number of citizen documentarians of human rights atrocities (Belloni 2001; van Schaak 2019). Humanitarian and public interest law groups have also increased attempts to professionalize civilian documenting of crimes against humanity (Leyh 2017), and literature, guides, handbooks, training, software, and programming on best practices for documenting serious crimes against humanity have begun to shape the investigation and prosecution of these crimes, and the possibilities and promises of justice itself (Subotic 2012). However, it is difficult to assess whether or to what extent crowdsourced geospatial evidence-gathering projects have prevented atrocities, as monitoring agendas had hoped. Instead, we are seeing strategies being put in place to usurp state-based projects and to produce user-generated content (UGC) that can serve the needs of those most directly affected by the losses. An examination of two such projects illustrates this point.

11.2.2 The Nigerian Village Monitoring Project

Northern Nigeria has seen frequent clashes between Christian sedentary farmers (and the vigilante security networks acting on their behalf) and predominantly Muslim nomadic Fulani herders. The effects of climate change on the Lake Chad basin are significant underlying triggers of conflict: the Fulani herders are migrating to new areas in the region in search of fodder and water for cattle as resources become more scarce. The migration patterns of nomadic communities have begun to signal security concerns beyond the immediately impacted regions. Key

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Northern Nigerian states, including Kaduna and Plateau, are divided into northern and southern regions, exacerbating breaks in communal and familial lines, and fueling a climate of hate speech and religious misrepresentation that continues to justify and normalize violence. These crises continue to split communities along religious and geographic lines, a phenomenon that only foreshadows further intensification of the conflict. Zamfara State in Northwest Nigeria offers an example of the scale of the conflict: thirteen out of fourteen local government areas in the state have experienced armed group violence between 2014 and 2020. In late 2015, attacks by herder-allied armed groups, vigilantes, and criminally motivated groups spread from Zamfara to other states (primarily Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, and Niger) with varying intensity. Violence in these states has been concentrated in areas near their borders with Zamfara, or close to the forests where multiple armed groups have made camps.[3] Conflicts are occurring against a backdrop of stark and prolonged economic hardship. Zamfara State is one of the seven states that form the Northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria with a combined estimated population of 35,794,944 (PADEAP Nigeria n.d.). The region is dominated by Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups and about 80 percent of the population is comprised of small-scale entrepreneurs, farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists (International Crisis Group 2020). Across these sectors, communities share a common experience of high levels of poverty, illiteracy, and violence. Since the 1980s the region has experienced a fairly continual state of conflict, including instances of election violence, extremist and terrorists attacks, and sectarian clashes. Despite economic and population advantages relative to adjacent states, Zamfara has only a 29.7 percent literacy rate and the country's highest number of children not in school.

Complicating this situation in the north has been the rise of "opportunistic violence" as armed groups of young men across the north-central, northwest, and southern parts of the country engage in cattle rustling. In late 2017, state governments within the western and southern parts of Nigeria began to set up community policing strategies to address growing security challenges around their states, including those relating to the (perceived) threats associated with the movement of cattle herders.

[3] In Kaduna, the attacks have happened mostly in the Birnin-Gwari, Igabi, Giwa, Kajuru, and Chikun local government areas; in Taraba state, they have occurred mostly in Wukari and Donga; and in Plateau State in two Local Government Areas (LGAs): Riyom and Barkin Ladin.

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Local civil society initiatives have continued to emerge to address problems between these levels of governmental intervention and attempts to mitigate ever-growing inequality and insecurity concerns in the region. Participation by key stakeholders from affected communities has remained low, however, and interventions have therefore been limited in their effectiveness. Some responses to these conflicts have taken technological approaches focused on making violence more visible to governmental and nongovernmental entities. Yet government and civil society efforts at various levels, ranging from the creation of legal and policy frameworks to programs on the ground, have been inadequate to protect civilians. A recognition of the failure to contain violence once it erupts has led to an investment of resources in EWER approaches, which involve the application of various technologies to capture daily images which are then integrated into an algorithm that uses big data to detect property destruction. Data uploaded from mobile devices also feeds into these systems.

The Nigerian Village Monitoring Project is one EWER intervention currently in play. Through a collaboration with a number of universities, government, and Nigerian civil society organizations, this program aims to prevent and mitigate violence against civilians in at-risk areas in Northern Nigeria through continuous monitoring and analysis of geospatial data and through an alert notification system that can provide near real-time notice of village burning incidents. The project is in the process of establishing baseline data that it will use to train an algorithm to detect the presence of burnings in geospatial satellite imagery. This optical structure shapes how anomalies are detected: the choice to capture daily imagery of the landscape further solidifies that which is concretized within the system's optic. The project works via processes of visual zooming and circumscription of land, property, and place: as such, it engages in a form of space-making along longitudinal and latitudinal coordinates that renders structures legible, thereby enabling observational optics to take shape. Given the limitations of existing EWER structures and the slow responses of state security actors, the project focuses on mobilizing individual and collective civilian engagement as a more effective strategy for turning the tide of violent conflict in Northern Nigeria. By training civil society early responders, establishing community-derived warning indicators, and sharing knowledge across EWER networks, the program seeks to anticipate, verify, and intervene in violent action. As such, it aims to engage civil society (especially women-led networks) to serve as peacebuilders and conflict mitigators trained in

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early detection, warning, and response to violence. This project and others like it all share an assumption that violence against civilians can be reduced through the successful build-out of accurate EWER technology and well-trained community response networks capable of detecting and mobilizing around potential and current attacks. Though the project receives some government support, then, it nevertheless shifts the responsibility for actually responding to ongoing and potential violence onto nonstate actors.

11.2.3 The Eyes on Nigeria Project

Between February 2008 and February 2010, approximately 375 structures were destroyed in the Njemanze neighborhood of Port Harcourt, in Nigeria's southern Niger Delta region, resulting in the displacement of an estimated 13,800 people.[4] Satellite images captured in February 2008 showed intact structures in the neighborhood; these images were compared to images taken in February 2010 showing the destruction. Eyes on Nigeria was launched on March 18, 2011, and focused on a range of communities such as Okerenko and the Njemanze neighborhood of Port Harcourt as well as the northern city of Jos. The project was tasked with documenting human rights violations including forced evictions, policing and justice issues, conflict in the Niger Delta, communal conflict, and industrial gas flaring.

The project was a collaboration between Amnesty International and the Geospatial Technologies and the Human Rights Project of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).[5] It employed satellite and geospatial technologies, eyewitness accounts, cartographic techniques, and geolocated photography and video (created by Amnesty International researchers) to collect data for analysis, planning, and presentation, using an interactive platform housed on the Eyes on Nigeria website. The project used high- and moderate-resolution satellite images to corroborate witness accounts and provide a picture of human rights issues in Nigeria. Its goal was to mobilize three million global activists to hold the Nigerian government accountable.[6] To accomplish this goal, the project made a number of choices in terms

[4] www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AFR44/017/2010/en/. Satellite images: www.aaas.org/resources/eyes-nigeria-technical-report/forced-evictions.
[5] www.aaas.org/news/geospatial-technology-allows-observers-keep-eyes-nigeria.
[6] www.aaas.org/resources/eyes-nigeria-technical-report/overview.

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of how to frame the data it collected – selecting, categorizing, and recontextualizing information in ways that reflected the project's structural, optical, and discursive frameworks.

Satellite imagery used in the city of Jos documented the extent of damage after four days of violence between Muslims and Christians in January 2010. An initial baseline satellite image from June 2007 was compared to a second image taken five days after the end of the conflict on January 27, 2010, for damage assessment. Based on the image analysis, it was determined that the damage covered an area of approximately one square kilometer, involving multiple city blocks. Structures that appeared intact in the images from June 2007 appeared to have no roofs in the images used for damage assessment in January 2010. The cause of the damage could not be assessed using the images, but witness media reports indicate that fires may have been involved in the roof collapses.[7]

The project also gathered fire-based evidence concerning industrial gas flaring. Although gas flaring (in which the natural gas from petroleum extraction is burned off in the atmosphere) it is generally performed for economic reasons, it has high potential for adverse environmental impacts (such as localized acid rain as well as increased greenhouse gas emissions). Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) instruments housed on NASA's Terra and Aqua Earth-Observing Satellites (orbital satellites capable of detecting thermal infrared wavelengths) were used to monitor gas flares in the Niger Delta. MODIS data's infrared hotspot detection combined with on-the-ground research provided insight into the increased temperatures in areas surrounding gas flares. Despite the Nigerian government's attempts to reduce the practice of gas flaring since 2008, the images and analysis indicate that the practice has only slightly decreased.[8] By establishing a widespread community of practice in which geospatial technology was put in the service of detecting potential attacks, those engaged in Eyes on Nigeria and other similar projects sought and continue to seek to analyze and provide alerts for on-the-ground early response teams in relevant communities in order to mitigate attacks on civilians and enhance protection of target communities.

As these two cases illustrate, Nigerian officials, civil society actors, ordinary citizens, and transnational human rights partners are increasingly turning to technology in their efforts to develop solutions to

[7] Satellite images: www.aaas.org/resources/eyes-nigeria-technical-report/communal-conflict.
[8] Satellite images: www.aaas.org/resources/eyes-nigeria-technical-report/gas-flaring.

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persistent forms of violence that the state has both failed to contain and, in some cases, has fueled or itself perpetrated. This trend is unfolding at the same time as Nigerian communities are gravitating in large numbers toward new forms of religious practice, which are themselves tools for making sense of profound daily and future insecurity. Both trends – the turn to technological solutions and the turn to spiritual solutions, in both cases outside of state institutions – evidence how people are coping in the absence of faith in the security of the state or the effectiveness of its justice apparatus. Local communities are claiming agency to innovate and construct alliances both among themselves and with national and transnational partners – whether human rights and technology organizations or transnational faith movements. By theorizing these activities, we begin to glimpse a new kind of democracy emerging, one that no longer builds power to petition the state for reform, but rather returns us to earlier centuries through which to strategically mitigate or even bypass the framework of the state in pursuit of its aims.

11.2.3.1 Beyond Security, Beyond Law: Making Sense of a Post-juristocratic Transition

In this chapter I have brought into conversation analyses of two interlinked trends in Nigerian society, both of which are calling into question the legitimacy and future viability of the postcolonial state form: fervent religiosity that privileges redemption in the afterlife, and geospatial technologies that empower ordinary survivors with a means to make both meaning and prophecy out of death and disappearance. I close by grappling with how these challenges may be signaling a post-juristocratic transition away from the authority of (western) law as the arbiter of justice and the source of solutions to extreme violence.

Such a transition would mark a significant shift away from the ideal of the welfare state that underlies postcolonial state institutions, despite these forms having lacked the conditions for success. Emerging out of the nineteenth century's rapid social transformation and growing political mobilization of workers and demands for democratization, the welfare state is characterized by generous social programmes and public spending aimed at reducing income insecurity and providing minimum standards of income and services (Amenta 2003, 92). Prior to its emergence, societies globally attended to the provision of social and economic support through a variety of institutions, such as the family, the church, and the local community, but with the welfare state, this responsibility fell on the state. A central part of this involved the role of the judiciary.

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The term "welfare state" was first used to describe Britain under the Labour party after the World War II, when pre-war systems of social insurance were transformed. Beyond the UK, social security emphasized employment-based social insurance and involved healthcare coverage for the employed population and their dependents, while public health services covered care for the uninsured (Huber & Bogliaccini 2021). After independence, states throughout Global South introduced broader and more generous social programmes and expanded public social spending in order to reduce income insecurity and to provide minimum standards of income and services (Amenta 2003: 92). The 1940s saw a significant expansion of welfare in Latin American countries, and Colombia, Guatemala, and Mexico had achieved social security health coverage for over 60 percent of the population by 1980. But the trajectory of the welfare state was different on the African continent.

The development of the state as a provider of economic and political security for its citizens was irrevocably shaped in Africa by colonialism. In economic terms, this has made it hard for countries like Nigeria to escape what has been called the "circle of poverty" (Cookey 1980: 26). Britain exercised sovereign power over Nigeria from the middle of the 1800s to the middle of the 1900s. British colonial-era economic policy was based on *vent-for-surplus* theory, which asserts that when a country produces more than it can consume it produces a surplus. In other words, British colonial-era economic policy was not intended for promoting the economic development of British colonies. Instead, surplus agricultural production in Nigeria was exported to British consumers in return for British manufactured goods. Contemporary African political leaders and economic development planners still adopt economic development policies reminiscent of the colonial era (Mustapha 2003), policies that are often at variance with local practical realities. The colonial framework emphasized extraction without benefit to local producers of economic value (Mustapha 2003). Moreover, in the postcolonial era, Nigerian firms have remained largely controlled by transnational companies headquartered in Europe or, increasingly, in China.

Just as postcolonial economic policy has failed to provide for broad social welfare, so postcolonial criminal justice systems have failed to deter, prevent, and adjudicate violence. The police forces established in Nigeria since British colonial rule have been consistently repressive, corrupt, and inefficient (Alemika 1993: 187). This alienation of the police from the people and the perennial crisis of performance suffered by the police in Nigeria are partly explained by the inherited and sustained

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colonial legacy of repressive policing in the society to sustain governability in the face of widespread opposition and legitimation deficits (Das 1983: 54; Alemika 1993: 187). Repressive police work becomes more visible wherever and whenever there is a preponderance of deviance, disenchantment, and dissension among citizens. Contemporary police forces in Nigeria have been variously criticized for eroding the liberty, security, human rights, and welfare of the citizens, and accused of brutality, corruption, political repression and partisanship, bribery, and political payoffs.

As such, since the transition from military dictatorship to democracy in 1999 and the subsequent emergence of new categories of crime (including kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, illegal oil bunkering, oil pipeline vandalization, and Islamic terrorism), Nigerians have had little recourse to the kinds of protections and remedies that a welfare state might be able to provide. This has fueled a proliferation of informal and vigilante security actors. As vigilantes assume the role that the state had reserved for policing, communities are organizing to assume the roles disavowed by postcolonial law.

As this chapter has discussed, violence in Africa has propelled citizen engagements driven by both local knowledge about the political landscape in which people suffer harm and new innovations through which to validate the claims of civil society engagement (James 2010; Smith 2016; Clarke 2019). Members of civil society have participated in journalism, fact-finding, archiving, and documenting human rights atrocities (Belloni 2001; van Schaak 2019), and with the participation of witnesses and those victimized by violence, personal narratives have been brought in to complement geospatial data to make the stories this evidence tells stronger and more holistic (Madden & Ross 2009; Forensic Architecture & SITU Research, 2014). In a range of sites around the world, everyday citizens have become involved in collecting social media documentation of violence: citizen scientists have taken active roles in the processes of locating and excavating clandestine graves, and identifying exhumed bodily remains of the disappeared (Bishr & Kuhn 2007; Rubin 2014).

These developments reflect a significant change in how citizens across the globe relate to the state in the sphere of justice. Recently, sociolegal scholarship concerned with legal consciousness and the promise of the law has tracked the experiences of civilians (witnesses and victims), including their perceptions of the process of justice and subsequent disappointments over outcomes (Stover 2005; McEvoy 2007; Leebaw 2008). Scholars of transitional justice have situated these experiences

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within the larger politics of engagements with international legal institutions, exposing the impacts of failures to hold offenders accountable, with respect to both legal mechanisms (Haslam 2011; Cronin-Furman 2013) and public morality (Hansen & Sriram 2015). Ethnographies focused on truth commissions and civil engagement in transitional justice explore both the embodied emotions and practices around the drive to achieve "justice" and the ways in which institutions fall short of this achievement (Lundy & McGovern 2008; Hayner 2011).

Technological developments are fueling this shift, with new platforms and media expanding beyond traditional notions of space and situated movements (Auge 1995; Juris 2005, 2012) and bringing in new stakeholders to preexisting politics (Flyverbom 2011). Ethnographers have documented this phenomenon in a wide range of movements, including anti-globalization politics (Smith & Smythe 1999; Juris 2012), environmental movements (Washbourne 2001), transnational solidarity for political autonomy and anti-imperial resistance (Olesen 2004), consumer and food activism (Schneider et al. 2018), and women's and children's rights (Berridge & Portwood-Stacer 2015). As the skills needed to operate digital communication technologies become more widely attainable, digital activism has moved into the mainstream (Karatzogianni 2015). Scholars have described the ways that new communication technologies have shaped social movements as a new form of bio-constitutionalism (Jasanoff 2004, 2011; Agathangelou 2017) and with the recent emergence of "discursive activism," or "hashtag activism," we are seeing new globalized forms of social organizing (Ristovska 2016; Brown et al. 2017; Clarke 2017; Ray et al. 2017). These new forms of organizing involve new kinds of actors: anthropologists of social movements have recently directed attention to the expanding role of NGOs in the actions of social movements (Fisher 1997; Bornstein 2009; Bornstein & Sharma 2016), as well as to the frustrations, failures, and the reproduction of former colonial relations arising from such collaborations. Exposing these conflicts has led to a rise in engaged anthropology of social movements as a movement itself, in which anthropologists participate in the projects of their subjects depending on their various needs (Goldstein 2014; de Leon 2015).

Tracking how technology provides a new platform for the pursuit of social justice illuminates a range of benefits and methodological challenges. While such technologies are opening new possibilities around which new domains of knowledge and expertise are taking shape, they

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also present new risks: questions about misinterpretation, misrepresentation, and malfeasance remain at the heart of the knowledge-producing enterprise. In considering whether and how new technologies and platforms are democratizing access to the means of producing judicial knowledge and evidence, it becomes all the more important to understand more comprehensively the interactions and interrelations that are produced through using these new tools, and how and to what effect new constituencies are gaining access to them.

These developments speak to a change in the fiction of the welfare state amidst the reality that, while countries in the Global South are seeing some of the highest numbers of violent deaths since the World War II, reliance on legal institutions for contemporary solutions is on the decline (Albiston 2010; Aiyede 2016). The juridical power of local, state, regional, and international law to intervene and address the enabling conditions of violence is elusive at best. I, therefore, close by suggesting that while the entrenchment of modernity's legal formations always and already structures the conditions in which contemporary juristocratic formations take shape, the failure of state institutions in Nigeria to secure lives and livelihoods, including via its legal mechanisms, is leading to a post-juristocratic reality.

Under these conditions, new competitors to the state – nongovernmental organizations, scientists, democratizing evangelicals – are inserting themselves in Nigerian locales and struggling to gain authority over the management of violence. In response to the perception of state complicity or incapacity, people are becoming involved in the management of violence through the use of video capture technologies, crowdsourcing, and early warning projects, as well as forms of religiosity that are producing new possibilities for the good life. As such, a rethinking of Ran Hirschl's analysis of "juristocracy" (Hirschl 2004) must involve a reckoning not only with the "post-juristocratic transition" taking shape in the contemporary period but also with how this turn away from the juridification and judicialization of social, economic, and political life involves much more than uncertainty concerning the future. Though legality is always already central, these developments require that we consider the new formations that are increasingly supplanting the roles that juristocratic forces once played. New digital technologies and contemporary forms of religious fervor have come together to provide new quotidian tools for managing insecurity and reckoning with contemporary crises in and beyond the law.

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