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BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PEACE FOR DEVELOPMENT AMONG MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS IN BIDA EMIRATE: AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY FOR NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

While many parts of the world have experienced conflicts and war, Bida Emirate remains a cauldron of stability and peace. Many research works have examined causes and impacts of conflicts in many parts of the world and socio-political and economic activities in Nupe with scant attention to the causes of peaceful operational environment in Bida Emirate. Therefore, this study examines the determinants of peace in the study area which is multi-religious and has different ethnic affiliations. The researchers used purposive sampling technique and conducted indepth interviews with the people at the helms of affairs in Bida Emirate such as Etsu Nupe, chief Imams, the leaders of Christian Association of Nigeria and ethnic groups, some individuals and law enforcement agents for their roles in achieving sustainable peace. The study revealed that Etsu Nupe used his position as the royal father to prevent, manage and settle conflicts and minor misunderstandings among his people before they degenerated into significant violence. Findings also showed that annual inter-sect gatherings in Etsu Nupe's palace, dialogue, justice, tolerance, understanding of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and guidelines of Jamat Nasrul Islam on issues such as siting of central mosques and *takfiir* (calling a person an unbeliever) facilitated sustainable peace there. Prevention is used to keep Bida Emirate safe from ethno-religious and political conflicts; and this saves human and natural resources. Muslim and Christian preachers should intensify their preaching towards godliness, tolerance, patience, love of others and respect for elders and to one another.

Keywords: Sustainable peace, Muslims and non-Muslims, Bida Emirate, development

Introduction

Many parts of the world have not experienced peace despite the efforts of non-governmental organisations, successive governments, international organisations and individuals to address the issue of conflict. The effects of their strategies and programmes have not made much impact on the people. There is a need to search for better ways or strategies of implementing peace programmes to make them

more effective and sustainable. Peace is the foundation and precondition for economic growth and development. Wealth of a nation can increase if there is sustainable peace and security in that nation. Theoretical causes of economic growth such as investment, education and technology cannot function without peaceful operational environment⁴⁶. In the same vein, religious activities cannot be done in conflict-ridden communities and in an environment devoid of peace and rife with fear. Violence has not only adversely affected the economic growth of Nigeria but it has also affected the social, political and religious activities in the country. In Nigeria, many investible funds and lives have been wasted due to lack of peace.

While many societies are using religions and ethnic affiliations to disintegrate their unity and cause havoc, Bida Emirate uses the same vehicles to cause peace. Religion and ethnic affiliations can be likened to very good vehicles that need good and experienced drivers and good passengers. In the absence of these requirements, the vehicles would be badly damaged and rendered not only useless, but they will also be used as the instruments of destruction instead of object of building egalitarian society. In a society that allows peace to reign or prevail, all sectors in that society- manufacturing, agricultural, health and educational- would bring about the positive, social, economic and political factors that would lead to sustainable economic development. New strategies need to be used to contain existing and emerging conflicts. The research questions are: 'What are the strategies used by Bida Muslims and non-Muslims to build a sustainable peaceful operational environment and contain their conflicts? Can other societies learn from them?

Literature Review

Many authors have examined Nupeland from historical, political and religious perspectives without investigating the causes of peace in the area. Makwa⁴⁷ discussed the formation of the Nupe kingdom by Tsoede (Edegi), the first Etsu Nupe, the religious beliefs of the Nupes before Islam, the advent of Islam and the arrival of Christianity in the land. He discussed how Nupes had many cults which Nadel⁴⁸ terms as religions which included Bukpe, Dakunu, Gani, Gunnu among others. Makwa also discussed the advent of Christian missionaries in the Nupeland in the 20th century, According to him, the earliest posts in the outskirts of Bida town were St. Peter, Ifengi, Zungeru road, St John Banmisu Gbogi and the Baptist, Ndazabo, Minna road, Makwa⁴⁹. He also stated how the Christian evangelists in Bida pasted posters of different captions such as 'Fire for Fire', 'Bida for Jesus', 'Bida 2000' etc. in public places inviting people to their crusades. He then called on the Christian evangelists to be cautious in the choice of their future captions⁵⁰.

The Religion of Islam was spread in the Nupeland through Muslim Wangarawa traders and Islamic scholars. Some of the scholars who really propagated Islam in the area were Shaykh Abdur-Rahman bn Muhammad bn Sharif

⁴⁶ B. D. Hassan, *The Imperative of Peace and Security for the Attainment of Inclusive Growth in Nigeria, 2015 Conference Proceedings of The Nigerian Economic Society* (Ibadan: The Nigerian Economic Society, 2015), p. 20-21

⁴⁷ I. A. M. Makwa, *Islam in Nupeland: The Task ahead of Du'at* (Bida: Almasna'at Printer, 2002), p. 1-16.

⁴⁸ S.F. Nadel, *Nupe Religion, Traditional Beliefs and the Influence of Islam in a West African Chiefdom* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1954), p. 68-70. 232-258

⁴⁹ I. A. M. Makwa, *Islam in Nupeland: The Task ahead of Du'at* (Bida: Almasna'at Printer, 2002), p. 32-34.

⁵⁰ Madaki, M. B. Madaki, *Fulani Dynasty in Nupe Kingdom* (Minna: Diamond Publishers, 2004), p.1-40.

of an Arab father, Mallam Dendo Manko and Alhaji 'Atiqu Bida. He gave an account of how the Fulani descendants entrenched themselves in the Nupe kingdom through Mallam Dendo Manko and have become the rulers in the Nupeland after the ruling power changed hand from Tsoede's dynasty into that of Mallam Dendo Manko's Fulani dynasty in the first part of the 19th century. This was after the defeat of Etsu Majiya II, who waged war against the Mallam and his followers⁵¹. However, the works are more of historical, religious and political ones which could not cover the causes of peace in the area.

Many studies have also been conducted on the peace and development on one hand while the causes of conflict and its impacts have also been addressed in many scholarly works on the other hand. In Nigeria, particularly in the North East, many lives and property have been lost due to religious crises, kidnappings, terrorist attacks⁵². Yahya⁵³ provided an insight into the historical origin of the Nupe people from the era of the Fulani rulers since 1804 till date and established the link between them and other tribes such as Hausa, Kanuri and Yoruba tribes in Nigeria. Hassan⁵⁴ in his study argued that there was a relative harmonious relationship among the people of Nigeria before colonialism. Despite the tenousity among the people due to the political class after the colonialism, some areas still enjoy peaceful operational environment. Thier studies could not cover such areas. This is the gap this paper aims at filling.

Edisiri et al⁵⁵ examined resource scarcity, violent conflict and inclusive growth in Nigeria and found that the struggle over agricultural resources, governance, land and political power have continued to pose challenges to minorities in many areas. This does not apply to Bida for the people there enjoyed harmonious relationship with both the majority and the minorities. The concern of Ojotaeri et al⁵⁶ was on the knowledge, attitude, practice, and factors affecting health care personnel in all the health facilities in Bida local government. Mahmud and Muhammad⁵⁷ explored the cultural landscapes of Nupe communities in central Nigeria and their findings showcased a plethora of cultural landscape values of Nupe communities with inherent tourism potentials that can be a source of revenue for the government. This is possible because of peaceful environment. However, their study did not give steps

⁵¹ S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium the Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p.72-83

Ibrahim, S. Ibrahim, *The Nupe and their Neighbours from the 14th Century* (Ibadan: Heineman Educational Books Plc., 1992), p.1-13.

Madaki, M. B., *Fulani Dynasty in Nupe Kingdom* (Minna: Diamond Publishers, 2004), p.1-40.

⁵² R. N. Sule, *Ethno-Religious Conflicts, Mass Media and National Development: the northern Nigeria experience* (University of Jos, 2015), p. 86.

⁵³ Yahaya, M.K. Yahya, *The Nupe People of Nigeria. Stud. Tribes Tribals*, 1(2) 2003, p. 95-110

⁵⁴ B. D. Hassan, *The Imperative of Peace and Security for the Attainment of Inclusive Growth in Nigeria, 2015 Conference Proceedings of The Nigerian Economic Society* (Ibadan: The Nigerian Economic Society, 2015), p. 17-25

⁵⁵ A.S. Edisiri, M. Ahemen and O.A. Ijuo, *Resource Scarcity, Violent Conflict and Inclusive Growth: Empirical Evidence from Benue State, Nigeria. 2015 Conference Proceedings of The Nigerian Economic Society* (Ibadan: The Nigerian Economic Society, 2015), p.469-471

⁵⁶ K.A. Otojareri, Omosigho O. P., U.C.G. Otojareri & E.G. Emumwen, *Health Care Waste Management Practice*

amongst Health Care Workers in Health Facilities in Bida Local Government Area, Niger State - Nigeria (2017) *Texila International Journal of Public Health* Volume 5, Issue 3, p1-10

⁵⁷ I. Mahmud, & I. B. Muhammad, *Exploring the Tourism Potentials of Cultural Landscape of Nupe Communities in Central Nigeria. Contemporary Issues and Sustainable Practices in the Built Environment. School of Environmental Technology Conference, SETIC, 2018*

taken by the people in the area that make tourists visit the area without fear of terrorism, kidnappings and intra and inter-religious and ethnic unrests.

Hanatu, Mustapha, and Wushishi investigated the influence of western education on cultural practices of the people in Bida and they found that most of the beautiful and less expensive cultural practices in marriage have not only been forgotten, they have also been replaced with expensive and luxurious practices⁵⁸. The factors that make the environment peaceful for cultural practices were not touched in this paper. Sidi⁵⁹ examined how Islam was first introduced to the people in Nupeland through traders, scholars and travellers, and discussed Nupe as a tribe, a language and an ethnic group. But he failed to discuss how the religion of Islam facilitated peace among dwellers in the area. The claims of the Nupes of Bida that different medicinal plants such as euphorbia hirta, cassia occidentalis and eucalyptus were effective in treating typhoid fever was examined by Evans et al⁶⁰ and his conclusion was that only cassia eucalyptus contains the natural compound that can be used to treat typhoid fever. The study did not touch what steps were taken that make research possible in the area without fear of intra and inter-religious and ethnic crises. Client and captive force in the Bida emirate in the pre-colonial period was discussed by Mason⁶¹ and his findings revealed extensive population transfer. How the people of the area were able to foster peace among themselves was not captured in the work. Using historical methodology, Akubor⁶² examined the contribution of the River Niger in the development of trade at the bank of the Niger and found it to be the cause of the spread and development of the societies and civilization in the area. How the peaceful environment that facilitated the development came about was not discussed in the paper.

In his paper Nkurayija⁶³ (2011) linked governance economic growth and development with peace. Political crises, ethnic cleansing and religious crises have been identified by the author as the main factors that have systematically undermined both security and development. He then recommended the incorporation of disarmament and other peace promoting initiatives to attain economic growth and development. In spite of several reforms and policies by the African countries, the IMF and the World Bank to foster peace and development in Africa, religious unrests, socio-political and ethnic crises are still the orders of the day in many societies in Africa. For full development to take place in the area, there is need to sustain peace which in turn can increase the wealth of developing

⁵⁸ K.A. Hannatu, A. Mustapha & A.W. Aminu, An Investigation on the Forgotten Aspects of Cultures and Influence of Western Education among Communities in Niger State, Nigeria *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies* 2018, p.32-36

⁵⁹ T. Sidi Sheshi, The Beginnings of Islam in Nupeland In North Central Area Of Nigeria. 12-14 October 2015- Istanbul, Turkey *Proceedings of ADVED15 International Conference on Advances in Education and Social Sciences*

⁶⁰ C.E. Evans, A. Bansa, O.A. Samuel, Efficacy of some Nupe Medicinal Plants against Salmonellatyphi: An In Vitro Study, *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, 01 Apr 2002, 80 (1) p. 21-24

⁶¹ M. Mason. Captive and Client Labour and the Economy of the Bida Emirate: 1857-1901 *The Journal of African History* Vol. 14, No. 3 , 1973, p. 453-471 (19 page)

⁶² E.O. Akubor, Trade and Commerce along the Niger: The Igala and the Development of Egga (River Bank) *Trade/Commerce in Southwestern Bank of the River Niger Developing Country Studies* Vol.4, No.22, 2014

⁶³ Nkurayija, Jean de la Croix, Requirements for African Continent's Development: Linking Peace, Governance, Economic Growth and Global Interdependence. University of South Wales, 2011

nations⁶⁴. Lack of peace and security due to book haram issues, kidnappings, religious crises and oil pipelines vandalism has retarded economic growth in Nigeria⁶⁵. This has led to a disincentive for private and foreign direct investment. Edisiri, Ahemen and Ijuo⁶⁶ investigated the effects of resource security and ethnic violent conflict on inclusive growth and found that land contestations breed wanton losses. The authors recommended that the traditional councils in Benue should institute measures to curb the problem in order to facilitate peaceful operational environment.

Conceptual Issues

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, peace means a situation or a period of time in which there is no war or violence in a country or an area. It also means the state of being calm or quiet or the state of living in friendship with somebody without arguing⁶⁷. Conflict on the other hand, according to the Dictionary, is a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument. It also means a violent situation in which there are opposing ideas, opinions, feelings or wishes⁶⁸. Funk and Wagnall's New Standard Dictionary of the English Language, on its part, defines peace, among other meanings, as a state of quiet or tranquility or freedom from disturbance or agitation; or absence or cessation of war; or freedom from riot or violence; or a state of reconciliation after strife or war; or it means spiritual content⁶⁹. Conflict, on the other hand, according to the Dictionary, is a struggle to resist or overcome; or active antagonism, clash, collision etc⁷⁰. To Steward⁷¹, peace is when people were able to resolve their conflicts without violence and can work together to improve the quality of their lives. Peace is necessary for prosperity, effectiveness and advancement to take place in matters of economic wellbeing, political order, health care education and other sectors.

The concept of peace is broader in Islam than in any other religions or systems. In Islam, peace between people and their Creator, for instance, means people's obedience to Allah's injunctions and avoidance of His prohibitions (Q3:102). The resultant effects of this peace with the Creator will make people be at peace with their fellow human beings. They interact with themselves in matters of religions, politics, economic and social matters by being good, just, charitable and caring to

⁶⁴ M.G. Marshall, Conflict trends in Africa, 2005. Retrieved from www.aol.com/cspgcm/africa on 3 August, 2018

⁶⁵ R.N. Sule, Ethno-Religious Conflicts, Mass Media and National Development: The Northern Nigeria Experience, University of Jos, 86

⁶⁶ A.S. Edisiri, M. Ahemen and O.A. Ijuo, Resource Scarcity, Violent Conflict and Inclusive Growth: Empirical Evidence from Benue State, Nigeria. *2015 Conference Proceedings of The Nigerian Economic Society* (Ibadan: The Nigerian Economic Society, 2015), p.468-473

⁶⁷ A.S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 857-2000.

⁶⁸ A.S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 2000,), p.239

⁶⁹ I.K. Funk, and Wagnall's *New Standard Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls' Company, 1965), p. 1815.

⁷⁰ I.K. Funk, and Wagnall's new standard dictionary of the English language (New York: Funk and Wagnalls' Company, 1965), p. 555

⁷¹ Steward, F., Development and Security. Center for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE), 2015

one another. They avoid doing evils to one another. They do not wage wars against other fellow human beings. In Islam, the hands of operational peaceful environment should be extended to non-human beings by taking good care of them particularly domestic animals like dogs, cats, goats, etc. Islam is a religion of peace and is founded on peace. This shows Islam and war are not synonymous to each other as wrongly believed by some non-Muslims and Western orientalis. The other concept of the word from which the word Islam is derived is peace. This means that, after being in peace with Allah, one's Creator, through total submission to Him and serious, pious and conscious worship of Him, the next thing is for people to be in peace with their fellow human beings and other creatures in all their interactions with them. So, Islam is peace and peace is Islam. To realise the peaceful message of Islam further, Muslims are commanded by Allah through the example of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to always greet one another with the greeting formula of 'As-salaam alaykum (عليكم السلام)' which means "Peace be onto you" ; while the other person responds with the formula 'Wa alaykumu s-salaam' (وعليكم السلام) meaning 'Peace be onto you too'. They are also commanded to enter one another's house with the same formula of peace. All this is a universal practice of all the Muslims (Q.24:27,61). The Qur'an gives a guideline on how conflicts can be settled in the following:

And if two parties or groups among the believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them both. But if one of them outrages against the other, then fight you (all) against the one who outrages, till it complies with the command of Allah. Then if it complies, then make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable. Verily, Allah loves those who are the equitable. The believers are nothing else than brothers (in Islamic religion). So, make reconciliation between your brothers, and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy. O you who believe! Let not a group scoff at another group, it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let (some) women scoff at other women, it may be that the latter is better than the former. Nor defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. How bad it is to insult one's brother after having faith! i.e. to call your Muslim brother (a faithful believer) as: "O sinner", or "O wicked". And whoever does not repent, then such are indeed *zalimun* (wrong-doers, etc.) (Q.49:9-11).

Causes and Effects of Lack of Peace

Many adherents of both religions are either ignorant of the teachings of their religion or are not ready to make use of the dictates of their religions that preach peace. For instance, the Qur'an and the Bible say:

وعباد الرحمن الذين يمشون على الأرض هونا وإذا خاطبهم الجاهلون قالوا سلاما
(الفرقان) 63

"And the (faithful) slaves of the Most Gracious (Allah) are those who walk on the earth in humility and sedateness, and when the foolish address them (with bad words) they reply them with mild words of gentleness " (Q.25:63).

Allah also says :

من أجل ذلك كتبنا على بنى اسراييل أنه من قتل نفسا بغير نفس أو فساد
فى الأرض فكأنما قتل الناس جميعا ومن أحياها فكأنما أحيا الناس
جميعا ولقد جاءتهم رسلنا بالبينات ثم ان كثير منهم بعد ذلك
(32 فى الأرض لمسرفون . (المائدة

Because of that, We ordained for the Children of Isreal that if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or to spread mischief in the land—it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind. And indeed, there came to them Our Messengers with clear proofs, evidences and signs even then after that many of them continued to exceed the limits (e.g. by doing oppression unjustly and exceeding beyond the limits set by Allah by committing the major sins) in the land. (Q.5:32)

The Bible says:

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own vengeance, beloved, but leave room for the wrath [of God], for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. (Romans 12: 17-19)

Again, the Bible says:

"[This] you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, [and] slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." (James 1:19-20).

The above-mentioned quotations from both the Qur'an and the Bible indicate both the religions preach peace.

Another cause of conflict which rubs the society its peace is hasty and indiscriminate declaration of some groups of Muslims and other adherents of other religions unbelievers. An attempt to defend their own stand, they at times utilize violent means; and this causes crises in the society. Islam frowns at this based on the sayings of Prophet Muhammad.

أَيُّمَا امْرَأَةٍ قَالَتْ لِأَخِيهِ يَا كَافِرٌ فَقَدْ بَاءَ بِهَا أَحَدُهُمَا، إِنْ كَانَ كَمَا قَالَ، وَالْآخَرُ رَجَعَتْ عَلَيْهِ. البخاري ومسلم

"Whoever says to his (Muslim) brother: 'O you unbeliever!.' Definitely, it will return to either of them" if he is as he has said. Othewise, the bad repercussion will come back against him (the speaker)" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

In Islam, individual Muslims or a group of Muslims should not be tagged as unbelievers without them committing a grave sin e.g shirk (polytheism) etc. In the Qur'an, Allah does not consider all the Jews and all the Christians as unbelievers. Rather His policy in the Qur'an is to say, "...those who disbelieve from among the people of the Scripture..." (Jews and Christians), (Q.98:1). The phrase 'from among' in that Ayah is very important in the sense that Allah does not consider all the Jews and the Christians as unbelievers except those of them that are guilty of shirk (associating partners with God) as contained in the Qur'an (Q.3: 110, 113-115, 199; Q.5: 82-85). Blasphemy against the prophets of Allah (Prophets Muhammad and Isa) and quoting the scriptures out of context also can rub the society of its peace.

A large number of people particularly in Nigeria professed one religion or the other. They claimed to recognise God. Even Nigerian Constitution and Nigerian National Pledge recognise Him. It is stated at the beginning of the former thus:

We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, having firmly and solemnly resolved: To live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and **indissoluble sovereign nation under God**, dedicated to the promotion of inter-African solidarity, world peace, international co-operation and

understanding⁷²

The Nigeria National Pledge is concluded with a prayer seeking the help of God about what has been pledged thus: 'I pledge to Nigeria my country. To be faithful, loyal and honest. To serve Nigeria with all my strength. To defend her unity and uphold her honour and glory. So help me God'⁷³. Many public holidays declared in Nigeria show that Nigeria is not a secular nation that has nothing to do with religions. Islamic religion has five days as public holidays in a year (two days for idul fitr, two days for idul adha and one day for Mawlid Nabiyy). Christian religion enjoys more than 52 days as public holidays in a year (Saturday is for Sabbath while Sunday is for Christians as defined in the Advance Dictionary). The celebration of Easter and Christmas for two days each making 4 days are also for Christians to recognise the practice of their Religion⁷⁴. What is expected of their belief should be peaceful co-existence among the people in Nigeria but their belief could not translate into peaceful operational environment because of lack of God-consciousness and His real fear. So, lack of God-consciousness and His real fear by many Nigerians could be said to have been one of the major causes of the intra or inter-religious and intra or inter-ethnic violent and destructive conflicts that have happened in Nigeria, which have claimed a lot of human lives and destroyed valuable properties.

Ethnic chauvinism which is a way of thinking that a particular tribe or ethnic group is better than any other can lead to conflict⁷⁵. Ethnic or racial differences are only signs of the great wisdom of Allah in His creation (Q.30:22). The differences should not, therefore, be interpreted to mean that a race, tribe, colour or ethnic group is better than others. Even availability of natural resources of any kind in a particular area and scientific and technological advancements or achievements of any race, tribe or ethnic group do not make the tribe or ethnic group better than others before God. Rather, what makes a person or a group of persons better than others is the fear of Him which should show in their attitudes and utterances towards God, human and non-human beings. Allah says in the Qur'an:

يا أيها الناس انا خلقناكم من ذكر وأنثى وجعلناكم شعوبا وقبائل لتعارفوا
(13 ان أكرمكم عند الله أتقاكم ان الله عليم خبير (الحجرات

O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has at-Taqwa [i.e. he is one of the *Al-Muttaqun* (the pious. See Q2:2). Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, Well-acquainted [with all things.] (Q.49:13)

On this, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is reported to have said:

(ليس منا من دعا الى عصبية ومن قاتل من أجل عصبية ومن مات من أجل عصبية (ابو داؤد

"He is not part of us, who invites to racialism or tribalism and he who fights on the basis of racialism or tribalism and he who dies defending racialism or tribalism." (Abu Daud)

Again, he is reported to have said:

. لا فرق بين عربي ولا أعجمي ولا أبيض ولا أسود الا بالتقوى

"There is no difference between an Arab and a non-Arab nor between a white person and a black person except in matters of the fear of Allah."

Fighting on the basis of racialism or tribalism can lead to loss of lives and property

⁷² The 99 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution with 2011 Amendments

⁷³ [https://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/06/i-pledge-to-nigeria-my-country/...](https://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/06/i-pledge-to-nigeria-my-country/)

⁷⁴ M.K. Kareem, Islamic Banking and the Question of Secularism in Nigeria. *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, (IJOURELS), 2016, Vol.6. No.1: 77-99

⁷⁵ A. S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 238.

as it happened in Madakeke/ Ife, Kafahanchan crises, Hausa/Fulani in Shagamu to mention but a few evil effects of conflict and lack of peace⁷⁶.

The Bible also says:

“And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined (their) appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation” (Act17:26)

Again it says:

“Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?” (Malachi 2:10).

Therefore, ethnic affiliation, on its part, should not be used and allowed to destabilize and disunite mankind if religion is understood correctly and practised in a proper and required manner. This is because divine religious scriptures tell everyone that all the people from different ethnic backgrounds and countries in the world have the same origin (Adam and Hawa' (Eve).

Conflicts, especially the violent ones, cause psychological imbalance to the people affected and their relations due to loss of lives and property. Other evil effects are decimation of human population, reduction of progress and development, displacement of people to mention but a few. The resultant effects of lack of peace are loss of lives and property, increase rate of unemployment, disinvestment, reduction of foreign direct investment, surge in prices of agricultural products, destruction of health infrastructure, food insecurity, reduction of education workers, high prices and inflation, indebtedness, debt oversharing, decrease in effective electricity supply⁷⁷ (Hassan, 2015:24-27).

Statement of the Problem

Various authors have written various works on different topics concerning the Nupe and the Nupeland, the traditional headquarters of Bida Emirate. However, no work has been known to have been written on the causes of peaceful operational environment in Bida emirate. Therefore, this study examines the causes of peaceful operational environment in Bida Emirate.

Objectives of the Study

This study examines the determinants of sustainable peace in Bida Emirate with a view to serving a lesson for other areas in the country (Nigeria) which is a multi-religious society and has different ethnic affiliations.

Methodology

There are many religions and ethnic affiliations in Bida and people are living peacefully and cordially. To elicit information on the effective strategies used for achieving peaceful operational environments in Bida Emirate, the researcher used

⁷⁶R. A. Asiyanbola, *Ethnic conflicts in Nigeria: A Case of Ife-Modakeke in Historical Perspective*. University of Abeokuta (UNAAB), 2010, p. 63

O. O. Olubomehin, *Ethnic and Communal Clashes in Nigeria: The Case of the Sagamu 1999 Hausa-Yoruba Conflict*, Olabisi Onabanjo University, 2012, p.1-117

⁷⁷ B. D. Hassan, *The Imperative of Peace and Security for the Attainment of Inclusive Growth in Nigeria, 2015 Conference Proceedings of The Nigerian Economic Society* (Ibadan: The Nigerian Economic Society, 2015), p. 17-25

purposive sampling technique and conducted indepth interviews with the people at the helms of affairs in Bida Emirate such as Alhaji (Dr) Yahaya Abubakar (His Royal Highness, Etsu Nupe who is also Chairman, Niger State Council of Traditional Rulers and the Emir of Bida), Alhaji Adamu Yakatun (who is both the Chief Imam of Nupeland and Bida), chief Imams, the leaders of Christian Association of Nigeria, the leaders of ethnic groups such as Oba of Yoruba, Seriki Hausawa and Ndi Igbo, some individuals and law enforcement agents such as DPO, justice and magistrate for their roles in achieving the said peace.

Findings and Discussions

While many areas are using religions and ethnic affiliations to cause conflicts, to disrupt peace and to destroy lives and property, Bida Emirate is an exception. The same toolkits are used to facilitate peaceful operational environment. Several themes emerged from the study based on the research questions and information from the data⁷⁸. The themes are:

Fatherly Role among the Ethnic

The royal father said he has to play fatherly roles among his subjects without partiality. Royal Highness, the Etsu Nupe and Emir of Bida, Alhaji Yahaya Abu Bakar said:

As far as the existence of socio-religious and inter-ethnic peace and its maintenance is concerned among my people, irrespective of the differences of their religions or ethnicities, according to the Etsu, they make sure that peace reigns. As far as conflict is concerned, there was no major conflict in the emirate. But as far as the minor one is concerned, that could not be avoided completely in human life, but it has to be managed as early as possible to give peace a chance. If any serious misunderstanding or difference or quarrel, or conflict between some members of a certain ethnic group and another is perceived, I quickly call on their leaders to settle it for them on time before it escalates. And the one they could not manage themselves, I invited them to my palace to settle it for them on time⁷⁹.

Before conflict occurs, they find ways of resolving it. Conflict should be controlled so that it will not degenerate into significant violence or heavy coercion that leads to destruction. Sustainable peace therefore does not refer to a society without conflict, but of a society that has the capacities, at all levels, to manage conflict effectively and constructively. Concerted efforts should be made to tackle the root causes and drivers of conflicts and their legacies.

Fatherly Role among Islamic Organisations and Sects

Concerning the roles Etsu Nupe played as a royal father and a Muslim in maintaining peaceful co-existence among members of different Islamic organisations and sects such as Shia, Ahlu Sunnah, Ansar ud-deen society and Tariqah, Etsu Nupe stated:

Although Muslims may have different ways of practising their religious faith, they have the same doctrines. They face the same direction in

⁷⁸ Bukhari, K. O. (2019). The Role of Muslims in Achieving Socio-Religious and Inter-Ethnic Peace in Bida Emirate. University of Ibadan: 1-117.

⁷⁹ Interview with Alhaji (Dr) Yahaya Abubakar (His Royal Highness, Etsu Nupe), on 4 & 5 August, 2018, at the Etsu Nupe's Palace, Bida

prayers. They worship the same Allah. They believe in the same Prophets (ASW) especially, Prophet Muhammad (SAW). They have the same Qur'an. They fast in the same month of Ramadan and during the same time of the day. Periodically, as the royal father to all of them, I gather them by invitation in my palace to discuss with them and advise them on how they should go about propagating their faith without causing unnecessary troubles between them and others. For peace to reign among them, I advise different Islamic organisations not to operate outside the two primary sources of Islam: the Qur'an and the Hadith in order to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings and conflicts⁸⁰.

Moonsighting and Ramadan

Etsu Nupe said, for further maintenance of socio-religious peace and harmony among Muslims in the emirate, annually, whenever it is time to start Ramadan fasts or to end it, they take instructions from the royal highness, the Sultan of Sokoto. This act prevents a lot of crises that may arise if the timing is to be decided by individuals.

Strict Adherence to the Books of Religions

On the existence of peace between the Muslims and the Christians, Etsu Nupe said that there had not been any conflict between the two religious groups. According to him, the Christians pay homage to them at the palace on important occasions. They always advise both the Muslims and the Christians on different occasions to ensure that they always adhere strictly to their religious scriptures i.e, the Qur'an and the Hadith on the part of the Muslims and the Bible on the part of the Christians; and that they are not expected to practise their religions outside them so as to avoid conflicts and maintain peace. This advice of the EtsuNupe prevents conflicts and facilitate peace among adherents of all the religions in the area.

Inter-marriage

Some people are averse marrying from other tribes while some people do not mind marrying from any tribe if they find their likings. The Nupe people do not allow their daughters to marry non-Nupes. However, Nupe men marry daughters of non-Nupes. Etsu Nupe said:

That was due to lack of exposure of some fathers of the Nupe girls in the past and their fear of losing the love of their daughters if they lived far away from them through marrying men of other tribes. However, that had changed drastically due to the impact of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which makes it easy for any parents to easily communicate through the phone with their daughters who are far away from them in any part of the world through marriage.

Etsu Nupe and Alleged Forced Marriage

The account of Etsu BNupe throws light on the issue of a Christian girl who was widely reported by the Nigeria News Media as having been forced by Etsu Nupe to marry a Muslim. Etsu Nupe narrated his own side of the story thus:

⁸⁰ Interview with Alhaji (Dr) Yahaya Abubakar (His Royal Highness, Etsu Nupe), on 4 & 5 August, 2018, at the Etsu Nupe's Palace, Bida

The truth of the matter was not as it was widely reported by the news media. It was just a propaganda to tarnish my image. The truth of the matter is that it was the girl who came to my palace on her own with two problems. The first was her educational problem as a student at the Federal Polytechnic, Bida and I assisted her financially and also called the Rector of the Polytechnic to help her. The second problem was her intention to marry a Muslim to which her parents objected. On this, I played a fatherly role by inviting her parents to my palace. If I had decided to force the girl to marry a Muslim, I would not have invited her parents to my palace about the matter. But I did. When the parents came, the father requested me to force the girl to follow them home which I refused to do because the girl herself was old enough to decide on her own either to follow her parents home or not as she was then about 24 years old. Her age then was above the voting age in Nigeria. So, I, Etsu could not force the girl either to marry or not to marry a Muslim. She had all rights to decide on her own. If I forced her, I have gone against the dictates of my religion, Islam (Q.2:256) which says there should not be compulsion in matter of religion; I have also contravened section 38 of the Nigerian constitution. The girl whose name was Charity eventually decided and chose to marry a Muslim. I had left the matter with Allah Who is All-Knowing⁸¹.

Etsu Nupe General Words of Advice

His advice shows that no group can stand alone and therefore advise all the groups to tolerate one another socially, politically and religiously so that peace can continue to reign in Bida Emirate. Etsu Nupe advised that since it is a fact that all the Muslims, Christians and Traditionalists live together in the same city, buy and sell together in the same markets, their children attend the same schools together and all of them attend the same hospitals together, they board the same public transports together, they have no other option except to live with one another and tolerate one another in peace.

Cordial Relationship among the Founders of Arabic and Islamic Schools in Bida Emirate

Another interesting finding is that the founders of Arabic and Islamic schools in Bida Emirate maintain peaceful co-existence among themselves as narrated below.

The Chief Imam of Nupeland and Bida Emirate, Shaykh Adamu Yakatun who wrote through Mallam Adamu Usman Ma'ali, the Proprietor of Salman El-Farisy Islamic Education Foundation, Bansakun Area, Bida, gave pieces of information on how peace and mutual understanding reign among the various founders of various Arabic and Islamic schools in the emirate. He said:

Frankly speaking, first, the founders of Arabic and Islamic schools in Bida Emirate, maintain and sustain cordial relationship among themselves by virtue of similarity of their academic operations and purposes. Second, Qur'anic competitions among their students have

⁸¹ Interview with Alhaji (Dr) Yahaya Abubakar (His Royal Highness, Etsu Nupe), on 4 & 5 August, 2018, at the Etsu Nupe's Palace, Bida

brought them closer as participants are drawn from their students. There has never been any violent conflict among them. However, the noticeable signs of conflict which were minor between the Izalah and the Tariqah are: (a) observance of Salat in separate mosques (b) refusal to attend each other's religious gatherings and (c) reluctant greetings of each other. All these were later settled by the chief Imam.

On the ways of resolving minor differences that occur among the Islamic organizations as a result of differences in *Aqidah* (belief), the strategies used to prevent major conflicts are:

- (a) The Emirate Council, led by the Etsu Nupe, Alhaji (Dr) Yahaya Abubakar (CFR), instituted Annual Inter-sect gatherings in His palace for reconciliation which has been successful till date
- (b) Qur'anic Competitions bring them together.
- (c) The Chief Imam of Nupe is always involved by the Etsu Nupe to settle disputes among the sects in the past and the present.
- (d) The Etsu Nupe organizes workshops involving all sects at the same venue.
- (e) Hijrah and Mawlad-Nabiyy celebrations do bring them together annually most especially between the Tariqah and the Shiah groups⁸²

Jamaat Nasril Islam (JNI) in Bida Emirate and Prevention of Conflicts

The secretary of Jamaat Nasril Islam (JNI) in Bida Emirate, Alhaji Muhammadu Nmama Maishera, stated the strategies used by the said umbrella body of Muslims organisations in the study area to foster peace and to prevent conflicts as follows:

In fact, in Bida Emirate JNI is trying its best to see that all the other Islamic religious organizations operate under the JNI's rules and regulations which are contained in the Qur'an and the Hadith. Why we maintain that is that it is from these two that people will understand one another regardless of their differences in ideas. And immediately, we perceive any misunderstanding, we try to resolve it so as to have peace in the society. JNI is always at alert and immediately we hear of any differences between the Islamic organisations, because we can't completely do without having them, we call the people involved to this office and ask them of their differences? And God is so kind that we normally have the cooperation of the people involved in any disputes or conflicts. Sometimes, the report will go to his royal highness first and he will immediately call my attention to it in order to go and find out what happens and get it settled or reported the case to him. Different Islamic organizations comprised different ethnic groups. JNI calls the meetings of all the Islamic organizations to share ideas together and advise one another. Through this meeting, we maintain peaceful

⁸² Written information Received on 10 September, 2018, at the Residence of Alhaji Adamu Yakatun (the Chief Imam of the Nupeland), Bangbara, Bida Emirate, Niger State. 5-8.

relations. So, in Bida Emirate, there is no religious or ethnic conflict. On the relationship between the Muslims and the Christians, when JNI has a report of a conversion either from Islam to Christianity or from Christianity to Islam, it intervenes by using all her possible network to see that everyone is safe⁸³.

While giving general words of advice on how peaceful coexistence can continue to reign and be increased in Bida Emirate and in other places, JNI's secretary said:

The first thing that people should consider in order to make peace reign in any society is patience. When anything happens, instead of hasty reaction, people should find out the truth first before they react. If that one is maintained, surely, peace will reign. So, I advise all the Muslims and the Christians to cultivate and maintain this act.

Chief Imam of the Federal Polytechnic Jumaat Mosque, Bida, Alhaji Abdur-Rahman Aboki who is also the Amir of the Muslim Ummah Bida; he is also the Secretary (Qur'anic Schools Associations, Bida) and Head Teacher of Aliu Yerima Integrated Qur'anic Education (IQE) Bida, stated the reasons for peaceful operational environment in Bida as follows:

Such conflicts are not common here in Bida Emirate because every Year, a day or two before the start of the month of Ramadan, in which Islamic scholars would want to give *Tafsir* (explanations of the Qur'an) using their whims and caprices in order to impress their audience and to rubbish other Islamic scholars, His Royal Highness, Alhaji Yahaya Abubakar, together with the Chief Imam of the Nupeland, does warn them against the acts that can cause crises. He has several fora which he has used to have dialogue with all the Islamic organizations in Bida to discuss with them issues of Islam especially to guard against whatever will bring about violence and crisis; and he talks to them on how there is going to be peaceful coexistence among the different religious organisations in the emirate. The leaders of Islamic organizations also talk to the members of their organizations on peace. Between the Muslims and non-Muslims, there has been no problem or conflict. Nupe Muslims are very tolerant. They are not confrontational to the non-Muslims and do not force anyone to accept Islam. And we have very many ethnic groups in Bida who go about their normal businesses without any harassment⁸⁴.

Siting of Central Mosque

On the establishment of new Jumaat Mosques in the town which may cause socio-religious disharmony if not handled properly, Alhaji Aboki said:

There is a procedure to follow here in Bida Emirate. Jumaat mosque must not be sited anyhow. The umbrella Islamic organization, the Jama'at Nasr Islam (JNI), which is under the umbrella body of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs under the chairmanship of the Sultan of Sokoto, with other emirs including the Etsu Nupe as members, has a guideline and rules for the establishment of new Juma'at mosque. It must not be close to another existing Juma'at

⁸³interview with Alhaji Muhammadu Nmama Maishera (Secretary, Jama'at Nasril Islam (JNI) on 5 January, 2019, at the JNI's Office, Near Etsu Nupe's Palace, Bida Emirate, Niger State.

⁸⁴ Interview with the Chief Imam of the Federal Polythecnic Bida, Date:10 July, 2018, at The School's Premises, Aliyu Yerima Integrated Qur'anic Education (IQE), Bida Emirate, Niger State.

mosque. There must be enough population to observe the Juma'at prayers in that mosque before it is established. In fact, there are officers from the emirate council who would do the feasibility study of a proposed mosque before it is approved. Sometimes, when a new mosque is to be started, his royal highness will attend and observe the first Juma'at prayer in that mosque. If he could not go, he would delegate people to represent him in such a mosque. And on the the issue of who is to be the Imam, tests are conducted so as to choose the most suitable person for the post. All these are done to prevent intra-religious conflicts. So there is no problem at all here in Bida Emirate⁸⁵.

On how existing peaceful environment can be sustained in the area, Chief Imam, Ansarud-Deen Society of Nigeria Juma'at Mosque, Bida, Alhaji Najmudeen Abdus-Salaam advised people in general and Muslims in particular to follow the examples of Prophet Muhammad (peace be unto him) (Q.33.21), the two primary sources of Islam (the Qur'an and the Sunnah), and to love their brothers as they love themselves. Muslims should show non-Muslims the beauty of Islam through their good behaviours. They should not repay evil with evil. Instead, they should repay good for evil done to them like Prophet Muhammad (peace be unto him) did in Makkah and Madinah. These acts may impress non-Muslims to accept Islam⁸⁶.

Impressive Behaviours of Nupes

On the issue of coexistence of different ethnic groups and the behaviours of the people of Bida towards other tribes, Alhaji Najmudeen said that the people of the town are very accommodating to the settlers in their town; and that they do not cause trouble for the settlers. Only what is not good enough about their behaviours is that Nupe people do not like to give their daughters in marriage to men of other tribes while they marry daughters of other tribes. However, this has started to change. Nupe girls have started marrying men of other tribes. He said that there was no tribalism in Islam and according to the Qu'ran and the Sunnah, no Arab man or woman is better than any non-Arab man or woman except in matters of the fear of God (Q.49:13).

Oba (King) of Yoruba, Alhaji Abdul Ghaniyyi Adeyemo from Ogbomosho in Bida Emirate also testified to good behaviours of Nupes when he said:

Since the year 2000 CE, when I became Oba with the permission of the former Etsu Nupe, Alhaji Umaru Ndayako, the peaceful coexistence between the Nupe people of Bida and other tribes with different religions has been sustained till today. Yoruba people and the Nupes have been living together peacefully without quarrels. Yoruba Muslims, Nupe Muslims and Muslims of other tribes have been practising the Religion together in the emirate without any problem.

He also said that as there are Qur'anic schools founded by the Nupe in Bida Emirate, there are also those founded by the Yoruba. As the Yoruba children learn from the Qur'anic schools established by the Nupe, so also, there are Nupe Children that learn

⁸⁵ Interview with Alhaji Abdur-Rahman Aboki (the Chief Imam of the Federal Polytechnic, Bida), on 21 July, 2018, Place: School Premises, Aliyu Yerima Integrated Qur'anic Education (IQE), Bida Emirate, Niger State.

⁸⁶ Interview with Alhaji Najmudeen Abdus-Salaam (Chief Imam of Ansarud-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria) on 6 January, 2019, at Ansarud-Ud-Deen Juma'at Mosque, Bida Emirate.

from the Qur'anic schools founded by the Yoruba. He said: 'Many Islamic organizations in Bida and their Muslim scholars (among Nupe, Yoruba and other tribes) also do things together'. He said:

As a Muslim oba, to show that Muslims of all tribes are one, I rotate my attendance at central Juma'at Mosques for Juma'at prayers in Bida though I pray in the Ansarud-Deen Mosque more often than in any other mosques. Also, as the Yoruba Muslims attend the mosques built by the Nupe Muslims, the Nupe Muslims also attend the mosques built by the Yoruba Muslims because Islam is only one anywhere. That is the beauty of the Religion. Therefore, there is socio-religious peaceful coexistence in the town and there is no conflict. Also, between all the Christians in this town and us (Muslims), there is no problem. As the Oba of Yoruba, whenever there is an important occasion, people of different religions gather there in my house and they pray together. So, there is peace and I prayed that it continues like that.' I thank God that it is in our time that lands are sold to the Yoruba by the Nupes which was not so before. The present Etsu Nupe, Alhaji Yahya Abubakar, has made it possible for everybody to see him any time of the day and night if there is any important reason; and he is always attentive. Now, Nupe men marry daughters of the Yoruba and Yoruba people too have started marrying Nupe daughters, through the effort and understanding of the present Etsu Nupe⁸⁷.

Spirituality

Alhaji Abdur-Raheem Idris Kegbegbe, the first personal secretary to Alhaji Muhammadu Bello (The Imam and Leader of the Muslim scholars of the Ummatun-Nabiyyi Muhammadu Rasulullahi Association of Nigeria who do not use medication except reliance on and trust in Allah and faith in Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to cure any ailments⁸⁸), Alfa Muhammadu Mutahiru Salahudeen (the general secretary), Alhaji Uthman Tihamiyu Akanbi and the eldest son of Alhaji Muhammadu Bello, Mahmud Bello Abu-Bakri echoed the following:

For peaceful coexistence to reign among Muslims, and between them and non-Muslims, here in Bida and elsewhere, and for all our problems to be solved, all Muslims should know and believe that it is only Allah Who has the power to do all things in life. What Allah wills will come to reality; and what He does not will, no one can do it anywhere. Muslims should agree with Allah in whatever He wills and does. They should also love others as they love themselves. Since our religion is Islam, the religion of peace, Muslims should practise the religion accordingly. They should speak the words of peace, do the acts of peace and love everything that will bring peace. If they do this they will have rests of mind and enjoy their lives. Muslims should also obey and love Allah, Prophet Muhammad (peace be unto him) and their leaders; and they should not disobey them as long as they do not disobey Allah and His Prophet (peace be unto him) openly, (Q.4: 59, 33: 77). Muslims should

⁸⁷ Interview with Alhaji Abdul Ghaniyyi Adeyemo (Oba Yoruba of Bida on 22 July, 2018, at his house Bida Emirate, Niger State.

⁸⁸ Bukhari, K. O. (2014) .An Appraisal of Healing Method of Alhaji Muhammadu Bello Abu-Bakri Masaba of Bida. University of Ibadan: 56-58 and 68-71

not be selfish in their thoughts, desires, actions and utterances⁸⁹.

Ramadan *Tafsir* (Explanations of the Qur'an)

Alhaji Ya'aqub Eyagi who returned home from the United States of America in 1979 and a former civil servant said before the formation of the organization of the Muslim Ummah in Bida, there used to be conflict but after its formation, it has been drastically reduced. On peace, he said before the start of the month of Ramadan, Etsu Nupe usually gathered the Muslim scholars of the emirate together in his palace and talked to them to maintain peace and not abuse one another. On Inter-marriage, he said that once a person is a Muslim, he should be given a daughter to marry. For example, in his own case, he said, he married a Hausa daughter from Sokoto whereas he is a Nupe man. So, Muslims are Muslims wherever they come from. On a Muslim fighting a non-Muslim, he said that a Muslim should not fight a pagan unjustly, let alone a Christian or a Jew. He said to preach Islam to others, Muslims should show the beauty of Islam to non-Muslims through their good conduct and not through fighting; this may make them become Muslims⁹⁰.

Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Bida and the Issue of Sustainable Peace

As parts of the contributions of CAN to the achievement of socio-religious and inter-ethnic peaceful coexistence among the different religious and ethnic groups in Bida Emirate as stated in a written document given to the researchers, the churches:

- a. Teach love to neighbours in line with the Biblical injunctions, (Matthew 5: 43-48).
- b. Teach against social, ethnic and religious discriminations, as

it is

in line with the Bible, (Romans 10:12, Galatians 3:28).

- c. Strongly demand from worshippers obedience to the above teachings.
- d. Cooperate with other peace-loving persons or groups, law-enforcement agents in the country to use every means

possible

to keep peace in the country.

The coordinator stated that:

Churches in Bida do not have conflict among themselves but minor misunderstandings or denominational differences. They have never had any major conflict with the Muslims in Bida except occasional disturbances by some improperly brought-up children that might throw stones at worshippers in a place of worship or disturb an ongoing church building work. There are reports of abduction of Christian girls for marriage without the consent of their parents and discriminations at work place on the grounds of their faith as Christians. Etsu Nupe and

⁸⁹ Interviews conducted with the Chief Imam of the Ummatun-Nabiyyi Muhammadu Rasulullah Association of Nigeria, Alhaji Sulayman Alubarika Alawiye Akindede, as Represented by his First Deputy, Alhaji Abdur-Raheem Idris Kegbegbe, the Personal Secretary, Alfa Muhammadu Mutahiru Salahudeen and Alhaji Muhammadu Bello's Eldest Son, Brother Mahmud Bello Abu Bakri Masaba of Bida. Date: 23 September, 2018, Place: Alhaji Bello Masaba's House, Kotaworo, Bida Emirate, Niger State.

⁹⁰ Interview with Alhaji Ya'aqub Eyagi on 21 September, 2018, at his house, Banyagi Bida Emirate, Niger State.

many other respondents have clarified the last point saying that she was never abducted. She willingly accepted to marry a Muslim.

To prevent future conflicts, CAN urges the following:

- Let all religious leaders (Christians and Muslims) sincerely preach peace and encourage their followers to practise what they preach.
- Let parents properly bring up their children to fear God and to love their neighbours.
- Let us all have respect for the family institutions and not improperly grab anybody's child for marriage in disregard and disrespect to parental authority and consent.
- Let us stop discriminating against each other in work places, in job recruitment exercises, in promotional opportunities and in appointments to positions of responsibilities on the platform of religion and ethnicity⁹¹.

Seriki Hausawa of Bida, Alhaji Muhammad Kudu who was installed by the Etsu Nupe, Alhaji (Dr) Yahya Abubakar, also testified to sustainable peace in Bida when he said:

Since I was borne in Bida in 1946, I have been witnessing socio-religious peace in the emirate. Bida is number one town in the northern part of Nigeria in terms of peace. It is free from things like Boko-Haram and the likes. However, that is my personal opinion. Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani and other tribes along with the Nupe in Bida live in peace with one another. Also, there has been no religious crisis in the emirate⁹².

72 year old Papa Godwin Uzoma, former President of the Non-Indigenes in Bida Emirate, an association of all the different tribes living in Bida Emirate (Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Igala, Uhrobo etc) shared his experience as regards sustainable peace in Bida:

In Bida, we have Muslims and Christians. Right from 1962 since I have been here, I have not experienced any misunderstanding between the two religious groups. Everybody has been worshipping his God the way he feels. We have been interacting and mixing with one another. All my life- time is with the Nupe and Muslims and there is no any misunderstanding between them and myself. I have done my business all my life with the Muslims. They have assisted me to be what I am today. I don't think I have problem with any of them.

On how peace can continue to exist between the Muslims and the Christians in Bida and any other places, he said:

I believe everybody should respect one another. Christians should respect Muslims; and Muslims should respect Christians. That is the

⁹¹ Information received from coordinator, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), on 16 July, 2018, at his Office, Pichi, Bida Emirate.1

⁹² Interview with Alhaji Muhammadu Kudu (Seriki Hausawa of Bida) on 11 September, 2018 at his Residence Bida Emirate, Niger State.

only way that can bring us together and live as brothers and sisters. If you go back to the Qu'ran and the Bible, you find that God created man and woman; and today people multiply in the world. Are we not brothers and sisters again? We are. So, there is no need we kill ourselves or worry ourselves. It is only these politicians that are causing problems for us. We advise the leaders of the Muslims and the Christians that they should continue to preach peace to their people. They should let them understand that we human beings that God created are only one and should not kill ourselves. The way we preach our religion should be by peace and not by war. The Muslims we meet in Bida have very good behaviours that can endear a person to their religion. And so, we cooperate with them. I bought my land from a Muslim. He sold it to me. I built my house and nobody has come to interrupt me and my family. The problem we are having in this country is not a religious problem because Boko Haram kill Muslims and Christians. So, the killing is not limited to the Christians alone. They have their ideology which all of us believe is bad. If you count the number of the people they have killed, Muslims have a great number of the people they have killed. So, it means they are not fighting on behalf of Islam and they call themselves Muslims. I pray that God should make our relationship with the Muslims continue like that⁹³.

Police Report and Court Record

The views of the Nigeria Army and the Nigeria Police are very relevant to know how secure Bida Emirate is. This is because they are in charge of the security, prevention, detection and prosecution of crime in the country. The Unit Imam of the Nigeria Army Barrack, Bida Emirate, Lieutenant Colonel Muhammadu Sulayman commented on the situation in the area: 'Bida is the home of peace. The problem of socio-religious and inter-ethnic conflict in the emirate is non-existent. In fact, there is absolute peace in the land'. The Divisional Police Officer (DPO), Division (B) Bida Emirate, Ojae Ibrahim also commented on the peaceful situation in the area. He said: 'As far as I know, the relationship among the different ethnic groups in this place has been very peaceful and cordial because if it has not been cordial, at least we would have recorded one or two cases of quarrel between the different ethnic groups here. This is because I know I have spent more than a year now and nothing like that between the different religious groups. Bida has been very wonderful and very peaceful. There is no single case of violence recorded'. He, therefore, advised:

Let us continue listening to the elders. Here in Bida, I find that this is one of the towns or cities in the country that respect of the elders by the youths still remains. If you know the respect the youths give to the elders here, let alone, the one they all give to his royal highness, you will be surprised....So, let us continue listening to the elders because that is the source of peace beside Allah so that peace continues to reign here⁹⁴.

⁹³ Interview with Papa Godwin Uzooma (Former Chairman non-Indigenes Association), on 25 September, 2018, at his Residence, Near Etsu Nupe's Palace, Bida Emirate, Niger State.

⁹⁴ Interview with the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) Division (A) Bida, Buhari Muhammad, Date: 11 January, 2019, Place: His office, Division (A) Police Station, Bida Emirate, Niger State. Interview conducted with the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), Division (B) Bida, Ojae Ibrahim, Date: 11 January, 2019, Place: His office, Division (B) Police Station, Bida Emirate, Niger State.

After police station, when there is violent conflict, courts of justice are the next places to try such cases. Therefore, to find out whether there have been recorded cases of inter-religious and inter-ethnic violent conflicts, the registrars or assistant registrars of the following courts of justice in Bida Emirate were interviewed. These are their responses.

Assistant Chief Registrar 11, Niger State Judiciary, Sharia Court 1, Bida, Hajiya Talatu Ramatu: 'In this court, there is no record of Inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflict here in Bida. In fact, most cases are settled by His Royal Highness, Etsu-Nupe, in his palace'⁹⁵. Assistant Registrar (High Court of Justice, Bida, Niger State), Mr Ibrahim N. Muhammad: 'There is no record of inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflict here in Bida Emirate in this court'⁹⁶. Registrar, Chief Magistrate Court, Bida, Niger State: 'Inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflict is not common here in Bida. We should all learn to tolerate and respect others' belief. We should also learn to live in peace with one another'⁹⁷. Some other people in the helms of affairs in Bida Emirate interviewed echoed the above-documented responses.

Conclusion

Bida Emirate is one of the towns in the northern part of Nigeria that is free from ethno-religious conflicts among the Muslims on one hand, and between them and the Christians on the other hand. There is socio-religious and inter-ethnic peaceful coexistence in the emirate. This is due to the roles being promptly played by the people who are at the helms of the affairs in the emirate. Although there have not been major intra or inter-religious conflicts among the Muslims, and between them and the Christians, the quick intervention of the people at the helms of affairs prevent minor intra-religious conflicts and inter-religious disputes and ethnic crises from getting out of hands. The culture of respect of the elders especially the aged ones by the youths facilitate peaceful operational environment in Bida. This attitude is very necessary for the existence of peace in a multi-religious society that comprises different ethnics. The society can reasonably be said to be at peace if the youths are respectful and easily controllable by the elders in a society. Otherwise, the society is easily prone to chaos, violence or conflicts. The peaceful environment is achieved through the tolerance of Muslims who are not hostile to those who have become Christians among them on one hand, and on the other hand, they are very accommodative to the settlers such as Fulani, Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, etc despite that Nupe Muslims are in majority.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the data, the following recommendations are made for a further prevention of socio-religious and inter-ethnic conflicts, sustaining the status quo of the peaceful relations and improving the level of the peaceful coexistence among the Muslims, the Nupe, non-Muslims and non-indigenes in Bida Emirate. Muslims in the emirate should adhere strictly to the sources of Islamic beliefs and practices (the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad PBUH) so

⁹⁵ Interview with the Assistant Chief Registrar (11), Niger State Judiciary, Sharia Court (1), Hajiya Talatu Ramatu, Date: 8 January, 2019, Place: Her office, Sharia Court (1), Bida Emirate, Niger State.

⁹⁶ Interview conducted with the Assistant Registrar, High Court of Justice, Bida, Niger State, Mr. Ibrahim N. Muhammad, Date: 9 January, 2019, at his office, High Court of Justice, GRA, Bida Emirate, Niger State.

⁹⁷ Interview with the Registrar, Chief Magistrate Court, Bida, Niger State, Date: 10 January, 2019, at her office, Chief Magistrate Court, GRA, Bida Emirate.

as not to go astray. The Christians in the emirate are also advised to be moderate in their beliefs and practices; and they should not act outside the teachings of the Bible; and that they should always avoid captions like "Fire for Fire, Bida For Jesus" in their evangelistic posters for inter-religious peace to reign.

The Muslims of the emirate should also show moderation in their beliefs and practices among themselves on one hand, and on the other hand in their dealings with the non-Muslims, especially, the Christians. Both Muslims and Christians in Bida Emirate should not give journalists and other people the opportunity of creating discord between them. The Nupe Muslims should continue their tolerance to other Muslims and Christians and avoid declaring anyone or a group of Muslims unbelievers irrespective of their beliefs in as much as they believe in Allah and His Prophet for peace to continue to reign in the emirate. They should also try as much as possible to find out facts about any matter before taking serious decision on it so as to avoid committing sins and error. The Muslims should maintain their universal unity and avoid disunity among themselves at all times (Q.21:92; Q.3:102-105). Muslim and Christian preachers should intensify their preaching towards godliness, tolerance, patience, love of others like oneself and respect for all the Prophets of Allah, especially the last two Prophets, Prophet Isa (Jesus) and Prophet Muhammad (May the peace of Allah be on all of them). The Federal Government of Nigeria should direct all institutions of learning in the country, especially universities to make both Islamic and Christian studies compulsory in their General Studies Programmes like English and Science so as to instil fear of God in the minds of all Nigerians and residents in the country under whom the constitution in its preamble puts them. This will make them fear Him in their political, economic and social matters. This may prevent corruptions and wrong doings for they say, "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." This implies that the fear of God will dictate the directions of their affairs even when security agents are not there.