

Religious Fanaticism and Fundamentalism in Nigeria Since 1980: A Historical Perspective

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Abstract

The paper deals with Religious Fanaticism and Fundamentalism in Nigeria since 1980. it adopts the historical approach as a method of achieving this objective. The work gives a working definition of the terms used and discussed the relevance of Religion in society as well as pointed out the causes of Religious fanaticism. A survey or an over-view of religious conflicts in some parts of Nigeria is discussed. The work further analyses the effects of Religious fanaticism and concludes with the way forward or solution to the problems identified.

1. Introduction

Nigeria is a conglomeration of Nation States. As a pluralistic society, “it is diverse in culture, language and ethnic background”¹. There are many religions in the country thus making Nigeria a pluralistic and multi-religious. State with most Nigerians being Muslims, Christians or adherents of traditional religions². Nigeria, as a modern nation, came into existence as a result of the “British amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914 by Sir Lord Lugard”³. The British colonial government under the leadership of Lord Lugard, according to Tamonu, T. N., did not seek the opinion of Nigerians in 1914⁴. Lugard therefore introduced the system of “indirect rule”⁵ in his administration of the whole country until 1960 when Nigeria got her independence from British rule. It is observed that Islam and Christianity co-existed in Nigeria before independence in 1960⁶. They both competed for conversion of people from traditional religion in a cut-throat competition. The competition between the two religions was slow and peaceful since both of them could tolerate each other believing that family solidarity (especially in the South) was much more important than religious solidarity⁷. Different methods were adopted for conversion to their religions without any friction before military rule in Nigeria. The Nigerian Army took over the administration of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on “January 15, 1966 after a’ bloody coup de t’at and ruled by decrees”⁸ until 1979. It is noted that tolerance existed in Islam and Christianity in the course of expanding their religion in Nigeria before 1980. It was not until the 1980s before Nigeria experienced fanaticism and fundamentalism as a new dimension in religious propaganda.

The main objective of this paper is to discuss Religious Fanaticism and Fundamentalism in Nigeria since 1980. A historical approach is used as a method of achieving this objective. The work gives a working definition of the term used and discusses the relevance of Religion in society and pointed out the causes of Religious Fanaticism. An over-view or survey of religious conflicts in some parts of Nigeria is discussed. The effects of Religious Fanaticism and Fundamentalism are pointed out. The work concludes with the way forward or solution to the problems identified.

2. Clarification of Terms

The key terms in this paper are Religious, Fanaticism, and Fundamentalism. Religion is defined in many ways, and the definitions usually vary in accordance with the level of education and experience of the definers, namely, how they were brought up, what they have seen, heard or read, where they have been and what they have gone through in life. To some people, religion may be seen in a narrow sense to refer to a particular group⁹, or it may be used in a broad sense for the belief systems, morals, norms and value held by members of the society¹⁰. Some scholars, on the other hand, hold the view that religion should be seen from a broader perspective and that we should regard it as an integral part of the culture of a people. In the opinion of such scholars, the influence of society on religion and the effects of religion on society should be examined. Hornby¹¹ defines religion as the existence of a supernatural ruling power, the creator and controller of the universe, who has given to man a spiritual nature which continues to exist after the death of the body. Emile Durkheim defines religion as:

*A unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community ... All those who adhere to them*¹².

From the foregoing, one may assume that religion like any comprehensive field is very difficult to define. The definition of Durkheim on religion serves our purpose in this paper. The world fanaticism going by Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English means “Extreme political or religious beliefs”¹³. K. A. Balogun defines Religious Fanaticism as “violent and unreasoning religious enthusiasm as well as the inability of religious adherents to harmonize between those theories and the practical aspect of religion”¹⁴ Fundamentalism is the practice of following religious laws very strictly. Fundamentalism, according to Hornby,¹⁵ is the maintenance of traditional beliefs of a religion in

opposition to more modern teachings (e.g. such as accuracy of everything in Christian Bible or Muslim Quran). Fanaticism and Fundamentalism is peculiar to both Islam and Christianity. For the purpose of this paper, we shall use Fanaticism and Fundamentalism interchangeably as a synonym to refer to religiosity in discussing Religious conflicts in Nigeria.

3. Relevance of Religion in Society

Religion generally supports social norms, reassuring the people that their ways are right and their cause is just; for religion has become part and parcel of society and has been reported to be the focal point of cultures. In the Nigeria context, for instance, one cannot doubt the seriousness of the faith and the commitment of most Nigerians in their religious beliefs. One cannot equally doubt the richness, of the cultural... heritage which Nigerians find in religion and in its significant role in their historical experience. More importantly, one cannot doubt that Islam, Christianity, and African Traditional Religion contain fundamental moral principles on which aspects of our society and culture are built. For instance, religion preserves and transmits many norms of the larger society. Some of these are the moral and ethical values basic to social life itself. This include, honesty, respect for the rights of others, and the cultivation of brotherly love among one another. Closely associated with religion are buildings where people worship. No one needs to be an architect or even a believer to recognize a Church, Temple, or Mosque, even a Shrine. In all these buildings people worship and any religious body, as well as individuals worship together, engage in common rituals and share the same religious beliefs. We are all living witnesses to the traditional ways in which this is demonstrated by all religious bodies; Muslims pray in congregation five times daily. They also meet once in a week for another congregation prayer (Jumu-at service). As if this is not enough, they also travel to Mecca whenever they can afford to do so. On the other hand, Christians go to church every Sunday, congregate for daily prayer meetings and weekly Bible study, attend Convention meetings, hold revival services and crusades. No one can be left in doubt that common faith, a common set of values, common worship, common efforts to propagate the faith, common sentiments and common religious experience have bound believes together. As a matter of fact, religion as a system provide significant frame work for handling fundamental problems of social organization. It gives a moral code, it helps a better upbringing and, indeed, it is a proper guide and a help in life.

Fanaticism and Fundamentalism in a society where religion is relevant as discussed above would only lead to chaos, confusion and unrest. Social, political and economic activities of such society would be seriously affected. Such was the case in Nigeria since the 1980s to date.

4. The causes of Religious Fanaticism

Differences in religions have been responsible for deeper divisions within communities than any other source of conflict. This assertion occupies a sad, but remarkable position in the history of the world. A number of factors may be responsible for this. Religion may become a divisive force when a society is faced with conflicting and mutually intolerant religions. Christianity and Islam are at one stage or another, involved in this type of conflict. For example, the clash between Muslims and Christians in the days of the latter (Christians) penetration into the Mediterranean world. It was this confrontation that later culminated into the Christian crusades – an attempt by the Christians for regain the control of Jerusalem. This crusade represented the reaction of Christian Europe against Muslim Asia. It was on that record that the spread of Islam into Syria and Asia minor, as well as Spain and Sicily in Europe by jihad had infuriated the European Christian (i.e. Byzantine).

The Christians captured Jerusalem back from Muslims on July 15, 1099 after it had been in Muslims hands for 61 years. Muslims took back Jerusalem on October 2, 1187 some 88 years after the Christians gained it. This kind of cat and dog existence continued among the Christians and Muslims until the creation of the Independent State of Israel on 14th May, 1948. This was the crux of the crises in the Middle East. Another cause of religious fanaticism is diverse interpretation of doctrine within the same religion. The example that readily comes to mind is the Protestant

Reformation and the various religious wars that ensued in Europe. For example, French wars of religion 1562-1610; the Netherlands revolt 1578-1609, and the thirty years war between Catholic and Protestant States in Europe 1618-1648. Muslims also have this type of mutually intolerant interpretation of the same religion. Less than three decades following prophet Mohammed's death, there arose many Muslim sects, among which were the Kharijites, who held that the leadership of the Muslim community neither belonged to some branch of Mohammed's family, nor to a certain Arab tribe, but to the one best qualified for it.

Conversion campaigns are also among the main causes of religious fanaticism. Pressure for conversion has often accompanied political change. Instances are periods of conquests such as pre-colonial expansion of kingdoms and the establishment of colonial empires.

In Nigeria, two major issues have succeeded in causing religious intolerance. They are Secularism in the Nigerian State and Indoctrination of the Nigerian citizens. Secularism was the major debate during the Constituent Assembly in 1978 as regards Sharia Court of Appeal.

Section 10 of the 1979 and 1999 constitutions say that "the Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as state religion"

Section 35 of the same constitution declares that:

*Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion including freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom ... to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observation*¹⁶.

In the opinion of Balogun¹⁷, a critical examination of the Constitutional provision is improperly defined and loosely interpreted. To him, this has given way to inconsistencies. He questioned the rationale for funding Pilgrimage to Mecca and Jerusalem, and the establishment of a National Religious Council by a secular Nigerian State. Balogun also identified a fundamental difference in organic religious socialization to state secularism between Islam and Christianity. To him, State secularism is a concept which asserts the principle of separation of the Church and State. While Christians may support the concept, the Muslims, in accordance to the tenets of their faith, cannot be inclined to state secularism. To Balogun, this fundamental difference caused a series of time-bombs which nearly reached the point of explosion during the OIC issue in Nigeria. He therefore suggested Re-interpretation and reworking of the Constitution in such away that Nigeria would be recognized as a multi-religious state.

On the problem of religious intolerance caused by indoctrination as a result of the utterances of the preachers, religious tolerance and dialogue is suggested as solution to the problem. Religious leaders should cultivate the spirit of live and let live.

5. Survey of Religious crises/conflicts in Nigeria

In this section, an overview or survey of religious crises in Kano, Katsina, Shaki, and Academic Community are discussed as case studies or random sampling for fanaticism and fundamentalism in Nigeria during our period of study.

5.1 Religious conflicts in Kano

There are two major kinds of religious conflicts in Kano. The first is that between the fundamentalist and orthodox Muslims (intra-religious conflict), while the second is between the Muslims and Christians (inter-religious conflicts). Each of these conflicts has had devastating effects on the peace and tranquility in the city and the factors responsible for the two are not the same.

(a) Intra-Religious Conflicts (Muslim-Muslim Conflicts)

(i) Maitatsine Riot of 1980: In the course of its historical development, Kano played host to different kinds of Islamic scholars, especially from North Africa and the neighbouring Cameroon and

Chad Republic. A few of these, especially in the Colonial and Post-Colonial periods introduced Kano to fundamentalist religious activities, which led to the development of several Islamic sects in the city. The Maitatsine riot of December 18 – 29, 1980 was the first in the series of popular denunciation of the activities of some of these fundamentalist's Islamic teachers in Kano.

In 1980 when the Matatshine riot occurred, there were several Koranic Mallams in Kano representing different sects. The most articulate among these were Mohammed Marwa, M. Salih; Salisu Kofar Wanba; M. Damna Kashi, Illyasu Gwammaja, Musa Gwammaja and Uba Yakassai. Each of these Islamic Scholars preached fundamentalist Islamic religion and often, denounced those in Kano who belonged to the 'Kadiriyya' and 'Kabutu' sects as pagans.

In their own words, "there is no place in the Koran where such nasty religious sects exist"¹⁸. As early as 1979 several reports were made to the police by the majority of Kanawa that belonged to these often attached sects. All efforts to make Mallams stop their illegal and conflict prone religious activities failed. It was in the effort to forcefully check the activities of these Mallams that Mohammed Marwa stuck his neck out as the most deviant of them all.

Marwa was believed to have emigrated from Marwa in Northern Cameroon to Kano as an Islamic Scholar in 1945¹⁹. Kano had the reputation at this time of receiving any Islamic Scholar with open arms. Marwa could therefore not have been turned back. But his true personality became known as he later declared himself a prophet of God and started engaging in several rituals and statements that the Orthodox Muslims in Kano considered heretic.

He challenged some contents of the Koran and preached against moderation of Prophet Mohammed²⁰. He preached against moderation and branded as infidels all Muslim using wrist watches, motor cars, bicycles etc. He asked God to punish whosoever refused to accept his teachings ("Wanda bai yarda ba Allah tat sine mishi"). This was why he was also referred to as "Maitatshine", meaning "He who curses". His followers who had numbered up to between six and ten thousand in 1980²¹ were popularly known as "Yan tatshine" (The children or followers of who curses).

On account of his fundamentalist religious activities, Marwa was deported in the early 1960s by Alhaji Mohammadu Sanusi, the late Emir of Kano but quickly returned to Kano to continue his religious activities in 1965 consequent upon the Marwa's disposition²¹. In 1963. In 1973, he was convicted for threatening the peace of Kano and quietly sneaked back to the city after completing his jail terms at Markurdi prison. By the late 1970s, he had become "a menace beyond the law of the land.

The first step to the 1980 crisis was probably taken by the government on 26th November, 1980 when Marwa was asked by Alhaji Abubakar Rimi, the then governor of Kano State, to demolish some illegal structures he had built for his homeless followers. He was given fourteen days within which to complete his evacuation from the public land on which the structures were constructed. Marwa was also accused of being in possession of some illegal weapons, which he was asked to submit to the government immediately.

Marwa reacted by asking his followers to attack the "infidels" that had declared war on him and the targets of the Yantatshine were the police and the Orthodox Muslims. Over 500 people including Marwa himself lost their lives in this crisis and goods worth several millions of naira were destroyed by the fundamentalists. Similar riots were organized by the Yantatshine in other parts of Nigeria (Bulunkutu, Jimeta, Yola, Gombe and Funtua) between 1982 and 1987.

(ii) The Shiite Attacks of 1996 and 1997

The Shiites formed another fundamentalist Islamic group that caused intra religious conflicts among the Muslims in Kano. The base of the sect in Nigeria was Zaria under the leadership of Mallam Ibrahim El Zak-zaky who was detained by the Federal government on account of activities considered to be inimical to public peace and order in the country. The Shiites ayouth movement, were generally believed to be supported from Sudan and Libya. The sect preached against political corruption and held anti-establishment view. They had a pathological hatred for the Nigerian Judiciary and Police all of whom were considered to be instruments of Satan. They particularly referred to the Police as “Babbuque”, meaning the “burnt ones”²⁴.

The Shiites in Kano broke away from their organization in 1992. For some unknown reasons, they declared Mallam Zaky as their enemy and even had to physically assault him in 1994, while he was preaching at a Mosque at Bayero University, Kano. Members of this sects in Kano were popularly known for indoctrinating their coverts with “a mixture of anti-establishment rhetoric and threats against Muslims and non-Muslims that do not follow Shiite teachings. The major grievances of the people of Kano against the Shiites was not actually their anti-establishment activities, but the way they blasphemed some Caliphs and faithfuls of Allah. Some of the things they said while preaching were considered by the orthodox Muslims in Kano to be heretic and insolent, and the physical violence within this context.

Kano’s peace was threatened several times by the Shiites and two of these moments are quite outstanding in terms of their human causalities. The first was the clash between the Shiites and the Yan tuari in August 1996. The word Yan tuari in English means ‘the invulnerable’. They were so called because of the belief that these young men had native medicaments, which made it impossible for a knife to penetrate their bodies. The ‘Yan tuati’ were a special category of street boys/youths in Kano. They engaged in different kinds of on-the-street hooligalism²⁵ and were popularly known for “buying” street fights from weak parties, thus helping to fuel simple disagreement into large-scale civil disturbances.

The August 1996 disturbance was a result of the failed attempts that Orthodox Muslims around Adakawa quarters made to prevent the Shiites from operating in their area. In early August 1996, the Shiites had indicated their interests to mark the Id-El Maulud, the birth day of Prophet Mohammed, at Adakawa quarters. The people living around this area were worried that such a forum could be used by the Shiites to offend the religious sensibilities of other Muslims. They therefore asked the Shiites to keep away from the area. The fundamentalists, however, swore to carryout their programmes as scheduled, asking the members of the Community to do their worst. It was at this stage that the Yan tuari threatened that the Shiites either obeyed the simple warning earlier given to them or risk a violent attack. The Police also warned the Shiites to keep away from the area, but they remained adamant. As they were defiantly holding their Maulud meeting on the 11th August 1996, the Yan Tuari appeared on the scene asking that the gathering disperse immediately. This led to a free from all fight in which various kinds of dangerous weapons were used²⁶. Supported by members of the Adakawa Community, the Shiites were, however, overpowered and the crisis did not last more than a few hours. The Police also came to the scene so quickly that the civil disturbance could not spread round the city of Kano as experienced in the past.

The Shiites struck once again, in Kano, on the 7th February, 1997 on the occasion of the annual Id-el-Fitri prayers that was held at Kofan Mata, one of the popular quarters in Kano. The Shiites came before 7.30a.m. to the vicinity to “punish” the Orthodox Muslims in Kano for their “lukewarm” attitude to the practice of “true” Islam. The Orthodox Muslims who started arriving at Kofan Mata praying ground as early as 7.30a.m. noticed the presence of the Shiites fundamentalists around the praying ground. The Shiites felt that a true Muslim should not have been as complacent about the political developments around them as the orthodox Muslims seemed to have been. They expected all true Muslims to have violently revolted against the political injustice and corruption in Nigeria. For

failing to take arms against the government of the day, the Shiites saw the orthodox Muslims in Kano as accomplices of the Abacha regime. They therefore found it difficult to understand why Allah would not compensate whosoever waged war against such “infidels”. Taking the law into their hands, the Shiites vowed to violently prevent the Muslims from saying their Id el Fitri prayer and blocked all entrance to the prayer ground. They started to make provocative statements about the political and religious leaders who in their own estimation misled their followers from practicing true Islam in Kano.

The Police soon arrived at the scene and asked the Shiites to either join the prayer team or vacate the premises. The Shiites reacted by calling the Police sheepish agents of corrupt regime and when the verbal assault on the Police did not yield the desired result, the Shiites started hawling stones and bottles at them. In the shoot out that ensued, four of the fundamentalists were killed and several others were wounded [Weekend Times, 8th February, 1997].

(b) Inter-Religious Conflicts (Christian-Muslim conflicts)

The first Church in Kano was established in 1911. The Colonial Urban development policies restricted the continuation of Churches to the Sabon gari as a way of reducing conflicts between Muslims and Christians. Except Christ church which was an example of where the Christians had to acquire land for constituting church outside the Sabon gari, the Christians tried as much as possible to restrict their activities to Sabon gari. Those of them who wanted to build Churches were probably not able to acquire land for such purpose from their Kanawa host. This explains why there are more Churches at Sabon gari settlement today than one would find in any similar settlement in Nigeria.

Up to the early 1980s, there was no open hostility between Christians and Muslims in Kano beyond the often joking relationship of the Muslim’s referring to the Christians as Kafiri (infidels) and the latter too referring to the Kanama as ‘kule-kule’ (meaning those who lock up their wives). The situation changed in the early 1980s as Nigeria opened up to fundamentalist Christians. There was a rapid growth of Christian churches in Nigeria with many of their members professing “born again” theology. A survey research by Albert in 1997 in Kano indicated that there were (averagely) more Christian Churches in Sabon gari, than in many big Southern Nigerian cities. When the result of this survey was critically considered along the historical circumstance of Christians’ growth in Kano, the basis for the Muslim – Christian conflicts in the city becomes clearer. The fact is that Kano was then becoming more open to Christian influence.

The majority of Christians in Kano were not Kanawa, but rather indigenes of other places. The Kanawa were not therefore sure of not injuring the feelings of their own people when any hostile policy was pursued against Christians. How Christians propagated their faith was sometimes considered objectionable to the Muslims. For example, when preaching, the Christians usually presented Jesus as the only way to the Kingdom of God. All other ways including the Islamic way were considered to lead nowhere other than hell. In Buses and market places, the Muslims were therefore daily enjoined by the Christians to “accept Christ into their lives”. The Muslims considered this to be an act of provocation though the “born again” who championed this kind of course were usually not violent in the activities²⁷. This was regarded as a bad way of “avoiding conflicts”²⁸. What resulted from these were often “bottled up emotions”. From time to time, the Christians organized public Crusades some of which were advertised in manners that annoyed the Muslims. The most easily cited according to Otite and Albert was the tradition of Christian preachers citing from the Koran to defend whatever interests they sought to pursue. The Muslims felt that the Christians had no right to use the Koran as they did. They also believed that the Koran was cited out of context. The Muslims-Christians conflicts in Kano were attempts to check the ascendancy of the Christians activities in the city as we shall discuss below.

(i) The 1982 Fagge crisis

There was a violent inter-religious conflict in Kano in October 1982. It was the first major violent reaction of the Muslims against the ascendancy of Christianity in the city. The problem started at Fagge (near Sabon gari) where some Christians attempted to reconstruct a dilapidated "Christ Church". The Muslims living around the area felt that the old church was located too close to a mosque. Rather than reconstructing it, they felt the Christians should relocate the church elsewhere. They did everything within their power towards ensuring that the building plans for the new church were not approved by the government.

But under Police protection, the Christians soon started to reconstruct the Church. The Muslims consequently reacted violently and in the disorder that followed three churches were burnt by the Muslims and several churches were vandalized²⁹. The Federal Government resolved this issue by paying ₦75,000.00 as compensation to the Christian Association of Nigeria in Kano.

(ii) Reinhard Bonnke Riot of 1991

In 1991, the Charismatic movement in Kano tried to organize a religious crusade to be addressed by a German preacher, Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke, and some American preachers. This religious event was widely advertised by the Christians on the electronic media and newspapers. Several thousands of posters and handbills were distributed in Kano and the neighbouring Communities. The publicity given to the event attracted the attention of the Muslims who felt that the crusade must not be allowed to hold in Kano. First, the Muslims accused the government of double standards for failing to grant permission to one Sheikh Deedat from South Africa who had wanted to organize a religious revival for the Muslims in Kano. They asked why the same government should grant a license to Reinhard Bonnke to preach in Kano, an Islamic city.

The Muslims were also annoyed by the tone of the Christians' advertisement of the proposed crusades, especially the one carried by some posters saying "Jesus for All by the Year 2000"²⁹. The messages on some of the posters and handbills were even written in Ajami (Hausa language written in Arabic letters) which the Muslims saw as something very provocative. More detested by the Muslims were photographs and arts work on some of the posters and handbills. One side of the posters contained pictures of some blind men who, on the other side of the posters, were strolling away as they abandoned their walking sticks. This was supposed to be an open invitation to the blind men and women in Kano to accept Christ as a precondition to regaining their sight. The Kanawa saw this as something very provocative and resolved to stop Reinhard Bonnke's crusade from holding.

The first step taken by the Muslims was to protest to the government that the Christians should not be allowed to use Kano Race Course for the religious revival. Pressure was also mounted on the government to withdraw the permit earlier issued to the expected German preacher. But it was too late to withdraw Rev. Bonnke's license. The Christians therefore changed the venue of their programme to the compound of St. Thomas/St. Louis School in Sabongari. The Muslims still resolved to use force in preventing the crusade from holding. As Rev. Bonnke arrived Kano on 13 October 1991, violence broke out. The Christians living around Sabongari, Rimi Kebe and Tundun Murtala suffered the greatest human and material losses. The Hausa-Fulani population that attacked the Sabongari this time were not discriminatory in their killing, but killed both Christians and Muslims as long as they were of southern Nigerian origin. The Southerners cooperated with one another by constituting themselves into hit-squads and militia groups around their settlements and attacked their aggressors using modern fire arms. Several hundreds of people were killed on the two sides and properties worth several millions of naira were destroyed. The Kanawa devoted more time during the Kano riots to destroying the properties of the Southerners. In the past, the Southern Nigerians used to stand by as the Kanawa destroyed their properties but in 1991, they launched counter-offensives against the Kanawa thus inflicting great human and material losses on them also³².

The Akaluka incident of 1994:

In 1994, another round of religious-cum-ethnic violence took place in Kano. It started on December 6, 1994 when an Igbo man, Gideon Akaluka, accused by the Hausa-Fulani of having desecrated a leaflet of the Koran was beheaded by some Shiites fundamentalists at the Bompai prison where he was awaiting trial. In board daylight, Gideon's head was stuck to a spear and taken round the city of Kano by the "victorious" Islamic faithful. This and circumstances surrounding how the rioters could have so easily broken into Federal prison annoyed the Southerners. The Government of Kano, however, came out with apologies that later calmed the charged atmosphere³³. But up to the present time, the head of Akaluka is yet to be found by his Kinsmen who claim it is an abomination in Igbo land to bury their dead headless. As long as the "search" for Akaluka's head continues in Kano, the relationship between the Igbo and Kanawa will continue to be conflictual. Several other ethnic conflicts that took place, most especially in 1995, resulted partly from this "bottled-up" emotion.

Factors Responsible for Religious Conflicts in Kano

(1) Problem of Cultural Integration:

The southern Nigerian settlers in Kano were in constant conflict with the Kanawa because of their unwillingness to assimilate into the Hausa-Fulani cultural system. The historical circumstances of their settlement in Kano did not make it easy for them to be assimilated into the systems of their host communities. Though the southerners have lived in Kano since the early 20th Century, most of them saw themselves as strangers. The Kanawa also saw them as such. They resisted cultural assimilation. The Hausa wanted them to be Hausanised by accepting Islam, and wear Hausa dresses and speak Hausa language. The limitation of the Southerners to Sabon-gari for settlement created permanent division or segregation in social settlement and contact.

2. Religious Intolerance and Fanaticism

There is a high degree of religious intolerance in Kano and this explains the incessant intra-religious and inter-religious conflicts in the city. Religious intolerance cut across all religious groups. Hence, the Muslims are opposed to the Christians and the orthodox Muslims would have nothing to do with the members of the fundamental sects. Muslims were intolerant of peoples of other religions.

3. The Influence of Non-Nigerian Muslim Migrants

The tolerance of the Muslim immigrants, especially from neighbouring African Countries by the Kanawa was dangerous. Kano played host to different kinds of migrants from North Africa, Cameroon and Chad Republic. Some of these foreigners exploited this open-door policy of the Kanawa to turn Kano into a breeding ground for many kinds of fundamentalist Islamic ideas. The majority of those that broke into Kano prison and later got Mr. Gideon Akaluka beheaded were believed by the Kanawa to be non-Nigerians. Most of them came from Niger Republic. Only one out of the many people who were arrested for the 1995 disturbances was found to be an indigene of Kano State. Most of them came from neighbouring African countries.

4. Urban Poverty

Poverty was important in explaining how religious fundamentalists and ethnic chauvinism in Kano recruited their members. Most of the people who fought on the side of the Maitatsine in 1980 and the bulk of the members of the Shiites, according to Otite and Albert, were the urban poor and destitutes. Some of them were farmers who had lost their farmlands in the process of Kano's expansion as an administrative and commercial nerve centre of northern Nigeria. Umar³⁴ considers the Maitatsine in particular to be a revolt of the marginalized urban peasants. Most of these people who were displaced from their lands had no official means of rehabilitation and so could only express themselves by joining any group that were given to violence.

5. Insurgents as Political Adventurists

A careful look at the 'Modus Operandi' of the Yantatsine and the Shiites suggests that they were a misunderstood social movement against the present level of social injustice in Nigeria; they were simply reformist organization expressing what were supposed to be popular grievances, but using unpopular strategies. When testifying before the Aniagolu Tribunal, the Emir of Kano, His Royal Highness, Ado Bayero, noted that though the desire to make money could explain some of the things Mohammed Marwa did during his life time, the over-riding agenda of his religious fundamentalism was political. According to the Emir, Marwa saw himself first and foremost as a reformer who needed political power to effect his reformation of the society³⁵.

6. The Phenomenon of "Street Culture"

Most of the riots in Kano according to Albert would not have been seen as fatal as they were if there had not been the problem of 'street culture' in the city. By street culture, Albert and Otite mean "an abnormal situation in which an individual who has no home or workplace spends a disproportionately large part of his or her time on the street and consequently becomes liable to involvement in illegal or anti social activities"³⁶. The streets of Kano are, at every hour of the day over crowded by many idle hands such as the Almajirai begging for alms, different categories of hawkers, street hooligans like the Yan Tauri etc. This had great implications for the character of ethnic and religious conflicts in Kano. Because of the ever presence of these people on the streets, those who wanted to start civil disorder were always assured of a large crowd at the slightest signal of a riot. The Almajirai were successfully used by chauvinists and religious fundamentalists to champion their courses. These children from Islamic schools were constantly present on the streets begins for alms. As soon as there was any civil disorder they simply join the rioters, looting, maiming and making difficult any preventive action of the people. As long as the street of Kano was over populated by too many idle hands, slight religious and ethnic disagreement would always be transformed into large-scale civil disturbance. The 'Yan tauri' were believed to be the most handy instrument used by anybody seeking to start any civil disturbance in Kano. For a small honorarium, they, like the "area boys" of Lagos, were willing to throw the first stone or take the first step in ethnic or religious riot.

5.2 Religious Crisis/Conflicts in Kafanchan

The religious riots which occurred in parts of Kaduna State according to Kukah³⁷ demonstrate a turning point in inter-communal relations. On 6th March, 1987, what started as a minor internal misunderstanding among the Muslims and Christian Students of College of Education in Kafanchan, Kaduna State finally sent sparks of fire whose destruction went beyond Kafanchan to other parts of the State and threatened the stability of the entire country. It took nearly two weeks to bring the situation under control³⁸. The immediate cause of the riots according to Kukah relates to the plan by the Federation of Christian Students (FCS) at the College of Education, Kafanchan to hold a weekend of religious activities marking the end of its annual week of Christian activities. As part of its initial preparations for the occasion, the FCS pasted a banner in the front of the College which read "Welcome to Jesus campus"³⁹. Some Muslim members of the Muslim Students Society (MSS) took offence on this and protested to the School authorities. The FCS leaders were told to remove the banner and they acted accordingly. The fellowship of Christian Students (FCS) had invited a certain Rev. Abubakar Bako, a Muslim convert to Christianity, as the guest speaker for the occasion. It was in the course of this lecture at the gathering that the said Rev. Bako was alleged to have made certain references to the Koran to illustrate certain points in his sermon. This sparked off reactions among the members of the Muslim Students Society (MSS), and the fracas that followed set in motion other events that soon went beyond the campus and the Students themselves. The attempt by the College to manage the crisis according to Kukah⁴⁰ were frustrated by the intransigence of some of the Muslim Students who erected a barricade around the School and terrorized many passers-by. The end result of

the crisis despite the immediate closure of the College was that violence broke out in Kafanchan town, which extended to other areas of Kaduna State with many lives lost.

5.3 Religious Conflicts in Shaki

Shaki religious riot according to Morohunfoye⁴¹, occurred in November 22, 1995 and April 25, 2000 respectively. The Tabliq Muslim sect was reported to have led the crisis. On November 22, 1995 according to Rev. S. A. Bamikole, a group of Muslims invaded the church and damaged the gate and vandalised Late Rev. Togun's tomb in the church premises. The reason given by the Tabliq Muslim sect for their action was baptism of new Christian members, among whom were some Muslim converters. Another reason was that first Baptist Church gate was preventing Muslims living at the back of the church access to pass through the church to their homes. The matter was taken to the court, and the Muslim groups were found guilty and were asked to pay the sum of three hundred thousand naira compensation for the damages done. They were further made to sign an undertaking that they would not disturb the peace of the town. The Christians did not get the money because of the persuasion from some eminent church members. In 1999, the Tabliq Muslim threatened to burn some churches because a member of 'Gidemon International'⁴², distributed Bible to Muslim Students in AUD Muslim Grammar School, Shaki and some interested Muslim Students demanded to have copies. The cause of the April 25th, 2000 crisis was an open air preaching organised by Tabliq sect of Muslim in Shaki in front of First Baptist Church, Shaki gate. They blocked the entrance gate to the church. Their preaching was provocative. The church Pastor reported the case to the police and the King (Okere of Shaki). Efforts to maintain peace by the Police and the Oba failed. The Muslim-youths, according to Rev. Bamikole, broke the fences of first Baptist church Shaki to gain entrance, having failed to open the Iron Gate locked by the gateman. The Church and Pastorium was set ablaze. The violent destruction was extended to other Baptist Churches in the town and the house of some prominent Christian members. The government of Oyo State later set up a "judicial commission of inquiry to investigate the crisis"⁴³.

It is noted that religious atmosphere in Nigeria was very tense and charged as fanaticism and fundamentalism developed and were practiced among the Christian and Muslim adherents. Each religion at this period was making frantic attempt at creating some reforms concerning the restoration of orthodoxy of their religion. Both Muslims and Christians were very aggressive in their preachings.

6. Solution or Way-out and Conclusion

Attempts have been made thus far to discuss Religious Fanaticism in Nigeria since 1980. The work gives a working definition of the term used, discussed the relevance of religion in society and pointed out the causes of Religious Fanaticism. Religious conflicts in Kano, Kafanchan, and Shaki have been discussed. Historical method of approach is used for the findings. It is noted that while Kano's conflict was both intra and inter conflict, that of Kafanchan and Shaki was inter Religious Conflict. It is established here that diverse reasons were adduced for the causes of the conflicts.

The causes of Religious Fanaticism identified include intolerance, indoctrination, conversion campaign using provocative words and abusive or insulting languages. The effects of fanaticism on the society include lost of lives, destruction of properties, burning of houses, Mosque, and Churches, destabilising homes and general unrest, which adversely affected the economic and socio-political life of the community.

Nigeria is undoubtedly a "multi-religious society". This in the opinion of Babs Mala⁴⁴, has several implications. First, Nigerians do not live in a religiously monolithic society, that is, Nigeria cannot claim to be a purely Islamic; Christian, or traditional country. Secondly, "Nigerians live as peoples with different cultural backgrounds and coupled with a multiplicity of patterns of behaviour and life styles, which are often diametrically opposed to one another". Thirdly, as a people who share a lot in common viz. Common humanity, common hope for a just society. The presence of different

religions with their diverse interpretations is a potential source of inter and intra-religious rivalry in Nigeria. The way some Muslims and Christians preach, teach, and practice their religions betray the intolerance of the various religious views, their false “devotion to religious founders and their seemingly zealous, but fanatically uncompromising practices are contrary to the fundamental claims of their religions and religious founders.

An extreme example of religious fanaticism and fundamentalism is the upsurge of the Maitatsine sect in December 1980 and October 1982 as also witnessed in Nigerian higher institutions of learning like ABU Zaria, Kafanchan, University of Ibadan and others. The deep rooted religious differences, prejudices, and rivalries which followed these fanaticism often resulted into open confrontation and abuse of inter-religious freedom. Babs Mala has suggested inter-religious dialogue as the best option for a religiously pluralistic society; as he believes that this can assist the adherents of different faiths in Nigeria to have a healthy relationship themselves.

Since the colonial times, Muslim and Christian communities dominated the various spheres of life in the Country. While the Muslims had always called attention to their numerical strength, which some Christians have always challenged, the Christians on their part, point to the all-pervading influence of Christianity in Nigeria, and their claims that Jesus, as Lord and Saviour of the world should rule the Country. The Muslims believe that Nigeria’s problems will be solved if the classical concept of Islamic State and its principles are rightly adhered to, pointing out that there are adequate provisions for non-Muslims in that concept.

In conclusion, having discussed Religious fanaticism and fundamentalism in Nigeria since 1980, it is the opinion of this paper that Nigeria needs tolerance, religious understanding, dialogue, practicing the tenets of religious beliefs, that is, orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy in our religious encounter. There is a need to respect and uphold the secular status of Nigeria Constitution and the provision for fundamental human rights and religious freedom in the spirit of true Federalism in each State of the Federation.

The government should not favour any religion at the expense of the other. Government should be fair to all religions in dealing with religious affairs. Example is non-partisanship in the declaration of public holidays for religious festivals. Government should establish a Council or a ministry of religious affairs to dialogue on or deal with religious matters. Government should allow each religion to deal with pilgrimage affairs. The role of the government on religious affairs should be advisory.

There is a need for a new socio-religious, political orientation and philosophy that will bring the people of Nigeria much closer together as one individual member of a unified, peaceful and strong nation under God. The concept of live and let live among the religions should be encouraged. It is possible for people with different religions to co-exist in the society; just as it is possible for people with different names to co-exist in a family. There must be mutual trust, understanding, tolerance and love among relations of the people of living faith in Nigeria.

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