

Inculcating the culture of peace and tolerance among youth in the zinder/damagaram region of Niger republic: another alternative for West African counter insurgency efforts in the 21st century

Abstract

Modern-day Zinder region was originally a Sudanic Kingdom of Hausa and Kanuri people whose culture was deeply rooted in Islamic teachings. Zinder society had in the past, a tolerant and accommodative culture that sustained peaceful co-existence among its members and neighbors. Today, the region witnesses an alien culture of intolerance, extremism and youth violence due to cultural disruption by foreign influences. The youth represents higher percentage of Zinder population, and the demographic contours favor that class of people, who are vulnerable and prone to external influences or abandoning of established and cherished traditions in the society. The cultural gap between the youth and the society begot a number of *fadas* (violent groups) among the youth who destroy lives, public buildings and places of worship. Thus, cultural renaissance and refinement is imperative in addressing the current youth violence and extremism in Zinder Region. It is in line with this reality, that the paper submits that the norms and values of Hausa and Kanuri people that sustained peace and tolerance in Zinder in the past need to be resuscitated, and inculcated in the minds of the youth to address the current prevalence of violence and extremism in the West African sub-region instead of use of military options.

Keywords: cultural renaissance, extremism, counter insurgency, Niger/Nigeria, West Africa

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Introduction

Violence and extremism as observed by Falola,¹ has for years engaged scholarly attention from a variety of disciplines, approaches, and theoretical frameworks with a view to finding solutions. In Niger Republic, and especially in Zinder, many cultural changes were introduced by the European imperialism, modern political pluralism, divergence in religious interpretations and modern communication channels.² These phenomena, in addition to the combined socio-economic crisis and population growth, are potentially feeding the phenomenon of youth violence and extremism. Youth violence in Zinder adopts such classic forms, as incivility, delinquency, vandalism, organized fights and mass protests.³ Today, the attention of the authorities in Niger is focused on the frequency of protests causing extensive damage to property and human lives in Zinder. For example, violent demonstrations have led to the death of two people and the burning of a bank in December 2011, the destruction of several public and private buildings in September, 2012 and the destruction of a Christian school, the sacking of Christian homes and the death of three people in 2015.⁴ Worst is that, the possibility that youth in Zinder have either been recruited or brainwashed by the ideology of the *Boko Haram* insurgency.

¹T Falola. *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1998

²A Dicko. Youth Violence and the Challenges of Violent Extremism in Zinder', International Organization for Migration: The UN Agency, 2018, p. 14

³A Dicko. Youth Violence and the Challenges of Violent... p. 14.

⁴A Dicko. Youth Violence and the Challenges of Violent... p. 15

Historically, the Kanuri and Hausa people (dominant groups) of Damagaram, precursor of modern-day Zinder had a glorious past and culture with tolerant version of Islam that moderated and sustained its public as well as private affairs with minimal or no turmoil and turbulences.⁵ Damagaram was a heterogeneous Sultanate of Kanuri aristocracy built on sound Islamic universalism rather than ethnic particularism.⁶ Therefore, the current youth violence and extremism had no place in the culture of the Zinder Region because Damagaram had no history of intolerance, ethno-religious conflicts and militancy. Consequently, presenting available and relevant historical knowledge to cushion youth violence and extremism in Zinder becomes imperative. This paper therefore, offers a cultural framework for the management and resolution of youth restiveness, violence and insurgency in Zinder Region.

Conceptual framework

Culture is a concept that can be whatever a scholar decides it to be. Thus, many definitions of the concept are given by anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists. However, for the purpose of this argument, two broad perspectives, namely western and Islamic in which the subject of culture has been conceptualized, are provided.

⁵M Kyari. Historical Perspectives on the *Boko Haram* Insurgency. In: AM Ashafa, H Jibrin, editors. *The Nigeria Army in A Democracy since 1999: A Professional Demonstration of Military Subordination to Civil Authority*, Essays in Honour of Lieutenant General Tukur Yusufu Buratai. Pyla-Mak Services: Kaduna, 2017. p. 272

⁶M Kyari. Historical Perspectives on the *Boko Haram* Insurgency... p. 272

This is in order not to have theoretical explanations of culture but empirical operationalizations of the perspectives. Beginning with western perspective, culture is viewed by Hofstede as 'shared mental software (belief systems, values and interaction patterns), the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another'.⁷ The inference from the definition is that, culture is everything that people developed and cherish over the years, they think and do as members of the society; and distinguishes them from another society. Thus, if a society is intolerant in behavior and its members think they are not tolerant because they are members of that society, then intolerance is an element of their culture.

In Islamic perspective, 'culture is a set-up of life, noble concepts derived from Islamic creed in its broadest sense. It is the creed of Unity of Allah and the true system, just laws, noble values, message of guidance and uprightness. It is trust in Allah and his revealed injunctions for humanity and a complete system of success in this life and hereafter'.⁸ In other words, man as a social being and is gregarious in nature, has to live in a society with various sectors working harmoniously for the overall development of that territorial entity. Muslims are taught in practical terms how to live with others from various Islamic instructions on the maintenance of peace, tolerance and accommodation and the restraints on retaliation for any act of violence directed at them. Mutual agreement between two or more communities to live together in peace and harmony and jointly work for prosperity of their common home is the basic principle of interactions in Islam, which is an Islamic way of life (culture).⁹

Compliance with the above principles and concepts in worship, social interaction and entire life, implies Islamic way of life and leads society to greatness, immunity, success, morality, tolerance, strength, accommodation and dignity. Contrarily, deviating from the principles is un-Islamic way of life and leads to wickedness, intolerance, conflicts, violence and destruction. Unlike western perspective where humans developed cultures, culture in Islam is Divine and universal as against relativism, since Islam is a universal religion. Thus, instead of distinguishing societies from another as puts by Hofstede, culture in Islam characterizes Islamic society. Islamic society on the other hand, is a spiritually guided society that is controlled by the feelings of the consciousness to the Day of Judgment. It is a society in which the laws of Allah govern the behavioral culture of each member of a cultural group. It is a system in which Allah is the only authority and His commands are the directions of actuations. Based on this, selfishness, irresponsibility, violence, injustice are avoided. With that, public properties, dignity, lives and rights are safeguarded.¹⁰

From the two perspectives, culture is transmitted from one individual to another through different ways including family, schools, religious institutions, media, peer-groups and society at large. The mastery of Arabic language is a key pre-requisite to understanding Islamic culture. It is in the realization of that; the

French in the colonial Niger de-emphasized the inculcation of Islamic culture in the minds of the up-coming generation by relegating the teaching of Arabic language. Instead, emphasis was given to the teaching of French language, the key medium in the dissemination of western culture. Thus, the legacy of tolerant and accommodative culture left behind by the great Kanuri scholars and the scholars of the Sokoto Caliphate in form of treatises in Arabic language had not been adequately transmitted.¹¹ The products of colonial education as the trend continued to the contemporary period became vanguards of the spread of alien culture, thereby creating cultural interruption for the succeeding generations.

Methodology

In this paper, qualitative content analysis was utilized to analyze both primary and secondary sources on the history and culture of the Zinder Region (Niger Republic), as well as youth violence and extremism in the wider West African sub-region. The sources include a number of documents and publications by governmental and non-governmental agencies like UNICEF and IOM as well as Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Centre, Niger and National Institute of Statistics (NIS), Niger. Also, a number of textbooks, journal articles, seminar and conference papers, theses and dissertations that raise relevant issues on the subject matter of the paper were consulted. The data contained in these materials was read and analyzed. Similarly, the data was scrutinized, corroborated, evaluated and carefully interpreted in order to arrive at an informed and balanced judgement.

Background: history, people and culture of damagaram (zinder) region

The origin of Damagaram, predecessor state of Zinder Region can be traced back to 1736 when a small chiefdom of Kanuri was established at Gueza. During the first half of the 19th century, the chiefdom began to expand with the accession of Suleiman Babba as the chief of the community. Suleiman established a capital for the chiefdom at Zinder and laid the groundwork for its development to a kingdom. Shortly after his settlement in Zinder, Suleiman conquered a village called Damagaram and he assumed the title of *Sarkin* Damagaram.¹² Experienced with basic framework from the Kanuri past, he developed Damagaram into a Sultanate and establish a dynasty that expanded to include in its hierarchy the Hausa communities that were absorbed into the kingdom.¹³

Since its establishment, the Sultans of Damagaram recognized the hegemony of Borno. Thus, the Sultanate became a tribute-paying state of Borno. Damagaram continued to surface as a vassal state and with the fall of Seifuwa dynasty in the 19th century, its allegiance was quickly transferred to El-Kanemi, the new ruler of Borno.¹⁴ However, not quite long, Damagaram emerged as an independent state of Borno and became mighty power, absorbing many nearby territories.¹⁵ During European colonial scramble of Africa, Damagaram did not experience frequent European penetrations except a visit in 1851 by Richardson and another one by Cazemajou and his associates in 1898. In 1899, a French post was established in Zinder and by 1906 colonial

⁷G Hofstede. *Culture and Organization: Software of the Mind*, London: McGraw-Hill, 1991. p. 5

⁸SU Musa. Nigeria and Islamic Culture. In: AS Mikailu, MU Bunza and IS Maishanu, editors. *Islam and the Fundamentals of Peaceful Co-existence in Nigeria*, Sokoto State Government, 2014, p. 42

⁹IM Maishanu. Islamic Principle of Moderation and the Culture of Peaceful Co-existence. In: AS Mikailu, MU Bunza, IS Maishanu, editors. *Islam and the Fundamentals of Peaceful Co-existence in Nigeria*. Sokoto State Government, 2014, p. 149

¹⁰MG Maitafsir, SY Birmin Tudu. Psycho-social Orientation to the Verification of an Ideal Human Society: Islamic Approach. In: ML Bashar, GA Gusau, editors. *Nature and Methodology of Islamic Sociology*, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Press, 1999. pp. 18–19

¹¹SU Musa. Nigeria and Islamic Culture. p. 44

¹²DR Ann. 'Damagaram (Zinder Niger) 1812-1906: The History of Central Sudanic Kingdom', Ph.D. History, Michigan, 1970, pp. 17-18

¹³DR Ann Damagaram (Zinder Niger) 1812-1906: ... p. 230

¹⁴A Benisheikh. The 19th Century Galadima of Borno. In: YS Usman, Nur Alkali, editors. *Studies in the History of Pre-colonial Borno*, the Northern Nigerian Publishing Company, 1983. p. 146

¹⁵Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Centre, 'Country in Perspective: Niger, 2017. p. 25

rule was established in the area.¹⁶ Zinder city served as the capital of the Niger Military Territory upon its creation in 1911; and also the capital of the French Colony of Niger between 1922 and 1926, when the capital was transferred to Niamey.¹⁷

Although ruled by the Kanuri, Damagaram was a multi-ethnic state, with Hausa, Tuareg, Peuhl, Tubu, and Arab populations.¹⁸ Damagaram was at the very beginning made up of Hausa and Kanuri people alone. Attracted by its security, more Hausa people flowed into the kingdom. It is equally reported that, as soon as the Kanuri and Hausa settlement was established at Zinder, the Arabs and Tubu from Tripoli also arrived and settled in Zinder for commercial purpose. Their presence in Damagaram gave the Sultanate a unique history in Central Sudan and made it a pluralistic society. Not just that, but it indicated that Zinder was becoming an important regional commercial centre. Although alien in origins, the Arabs and Tubu got some family ties that made them integral part of the Damagaram society. The Sultans wooed the aliens to stay in Zinder because of their accommodative culture and abilities to manage multi-ethnic society with peace.¹⁹ Therefore, the expansion of the Sultanate was perhaps, made possible by the abilities of the Sultans to keep in peace and utilize the assets of all their multi-ethnic citizens and to create a unified whole.

Culturally, Damagaram was a Kanuri and Hausa Islamic state with few Muslim Arabs and Tubu. Both the society and the state were established on Islamic ideal. There was an increasing attention to Islamic religious celebrations, Islamic scholarship and to the extension of Islamic laws at the beginning of Damagaram Sultanate. Through readings and applications of the works of the Kanuri scholars of 13th century and those of the Sokoto Caliphate scholars, the people of Damagaram displayed an Islamic culture of tolerance, accommodation, respect and hard-working. Impatience and idleness were not the societal expectations of its members and thus, people with such behaviors were disrespected. Up-coming generations were socialized and integrated into the cultural traits right from the family level to Islamic schools and they had respect for elders and those in authorities.²⁰

Economically, Zinder rose from a small village to an important center of the Trans-Saharan trade. The economy of the Sultanate of Damagaram revolved around revenues generated by trade and taxes on trade caravans. Economic specialization was enhanced especially in the production of goods for the trade and preparation of skin for export. Trade throughout the area of Borno and Hausa in local manufactured goods was already established and carried out by all and sundry. Thus, Zinder became a regional power and served as a major entreport for the Tripoli-Kano trade route.²¹ The economy was also characterized by subsistence agriculture coupled with flourishing craft production that was carried on by all levels of the society (youths and elders).²²

Zinder is today the headquarters of Zinder Region in Niger Republic, and is the most populated region in the country. It has been facing demographic growth with increasing needs of a youth representing more than 70 percent of the population as at 2015.²³ The Region has one of the lowest schooling rates in the country, and

¹⁶DR Ann. Damagaram (Zinder Niger) 1812-1906. p. 230

¹⁷C Hugh, editor. 'Zinder' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Vol 28. 11th edn, Cambridge University Press; 1911. p. 985

¹⁸Defense Language Institute Foreign Language... p. 25

¹⁹DR Ann. Damagaram (Zinder Niger) 1812-1906... pp. 230-233

²⁰DR Ann. Damagaram (Zinder Niger) 1812-1906... pp. 230-232

²¹Defense Language Institute Foreign Language... p. 25

²²DR Ann. Damagaram (Zinder Niger) 1812-1906... pp. 231-232

²³National Institute of Statistics (NIS), Niger, 2015

this combined with its demography caused employment crisis for a significant number of young adults and teenagers. Thus, youths created informal groups called *fadas* or *palais* against the State; and the groups became the main actors responsible for urban violence. They sometimes act as gangs, and are often involved in crimes and violent protests.²⁴

Causes of violence in the zinder region

In many contemporary studies, the role of poverty and socio-economic inequalities has been forwarded as the underlying structural factors that possibly account for violent confrontations within society. In Zinder, unemployment, poverty, manipulation of youth for political purposes, financial inducements from extremist groups, injustice, illiteracy and misinterpretation of the holy Qur'an are often mentioned in order to explain the phenomena of violence.²⁵ Therefore, the causes of youth violence and extremism in Zinder require a multi-factorial analysis; and thus, they are encapsulated under the following sub-heads.

Land issue

Land has been very central in the economy of Zinder Region and thus, became a bone of contention from family unit to the larger society. Zinder is one of the poorest regions of Niger with limited arable land and its gross domestic product is made up mainly of the contributions from agriculture.²⁶ It is also recognized as having the fastest population growth rate, and this has left numerous families without any arable land especially in the areas of Kantché District.²⁷ Limited arable land leads to family breakdowns in some communities like Kafadan Tulu where it is said that conflict between fathers and sons over land (*gandu*) is responsible for the declining span of cooperation at household unit. The grievous shortage of land left many youths unable to have farms and created a volatile contradiction in relations within the families which escalated into inter-generational conflict.²⁸ In addition, unavailability of arable land left many youth jobless thereby worsening their poverty situation and vulnerability to engage in violent groups and further recruitment into insurgent groups.

Unemployment and poverty

As noted earlier, Zinder has a dense population with increasing needs of its teeming youth representing more than 70 percent of the population.²⁹ The unemployment and poverty situation especially among the youth has been getting worse by day. Most of the youth in Zinder live on less than a dollar per day. They perceived their situation as artificially created by the state. Frustrations arising from their conditions resulted in the phenomenon of youth violence. Youth created informal groups like *fadas* and *palais* to have opportunity to wield power and express themselves in a violent way.³⁰

²⁴A Dicko. Youth Violence and the Challenges of Violent... p. vii

²⁵A Dicko. Youth Violence and the Challenges of Violent. p. 18

²⁶AE John. Regional Market System Development and Changes in Relations of Production in Three Communities in Zinder Province, The Niger Republic', Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Arizona, 1982. p. 71

²⁷UNICEF. Annual Report. Niger, (the Republic of), 2016. p. 4

²⁸AE John. Regional Market System Development and Changes. p. 399

²⁹IOM-Nigeria. Irregular Migration between West Africa, North Africa and the Mediterranean. Abuja, November, 2015. p. 25

³⁰T Akpon. *The Role of Young People in Preventing Violent Extremism in Lake Chad Basin*, A Contribution to the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, 2015, Civil Society Platform for Peace-building and State-building, 2017. pp. 13.

Moreover, the unemployment and precariousness of the members of *palais* and *fadas* push them away from the traditional patterns of self-fulfillment and social recognition, making them vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups. Supporting strict religious groups also allows them to define themselves against the religious heritage of their parents and the rest of the society. Through financial inducements, Zinder youth have been over the years tried to be recruited by the *Boko Haram* insurgents. According to some members of *fadas* and *palais*, the insurgents had been approaching them with financial offers and other material gains since 2012.³¹

Illiteracy and exposure to extremism and radicalism

Illiteracy here does not merely mean lack of Islamic and western knowledge, but lack of ability to lead a life structured and fashioned based on knowledge. Most of the Zinder youth are not cultured in the societal norms and values of their forefathers. Internet technology and modern means of communication have exposed the youths to the alien and an unorthodox Islamic culture of intolerance, violence, radicalism and extremism. These facilities of modern technologies play a major role of cultural distortion in Zinder by bringing criminal activities of the Western world and general breakdown of Islamic values among the youth. Beginning with illiteracy, it is noted earlier that, Zinder has one of the lowest schooling rates with high number of schools drop-outs in Niger Republic. Parents have been unable to perform their duty to educate their children, neither were they able to communicate the societal norms and values to them. This situation created a wide cultural gap between the parents and their children and left quite a number of youth illiterate, uncultured and drug addicts in the society.³² Related to this, during an interview by Dikko et al³³, a well-known Sheikh in Zinder has this to say:

Parents are increasingly neglecting their responsibility. Choosing the right spouse, establishing communication with children and monitoring friends they spend time with, because bad company implies bad behavior (interview of 20 December 2016).

With regard to exposure to violent and extremist activities, uncultured youth in Zinder with little or no knowledge of Islam have access to radical messages through internet, videos and CDs sold in local markets and circulating through informal networks and small groups. The youth are equally exposed to the misinterpretation of the holy Qur'an by some preachers, religious figures, family members and other actors. Thus, perception of life and values come to them from extremist preaches and sermons and the messages became motivation and religious justification for them to join violent groups.³⁴

Cultural renaissance: A means of addressing youth violence in zinder

As hinted earlier in the background, the Kanuri and Hausa people of Damagaram had had in the past an Islamic culture of tolerance, accommodation, self-reliance and respect for elders and peaceful co-existence. The argument is that if their cultural heritage is to be explored, revived and inculcated in the minds of the youth of today, the current youth violence in Zinder will be addressed. The Hausa and Kanuri people of Damagaram and their culture were not in any way different from the people of Kanem-Borno and Hausaland where the former hailed from and settled in Zinder. Borno has one of the

longest traditions of Muslim affiliation in all of Africa dating to a thousand of years.³⁵ Hausaland was linked to the wealth of Islamic cultural heritage through trans-regional links with the North Africa. Through this, the Kanuri and Hausa people had had and adapted to a sophisticated and all-encompassing Islamic way of life.³⁶

The Kanuri and Hausa people cherished a culture of tolerance and peaceful co-existence although; there are evidences of Hausa inter-state wars in the pre-jihad period, but there were no records of youth violence and extremism.³⁷ It was also evidently established that the states always cooperated against external aggression. For example, in the mid 17th century, Kano and Katsina after a period of antagonism proclaimed peace to present a united front against the Kororofa attacks.³⁸ This was an indication of their cooperation and high sense of sameness and togetherness. Not just that, but the Hausa inter-states wars were ended when all the Hausa States were conflated together in an Islamic polity (Sokoto Caliphate). It was a state with an outstanding culture of tolerance and accommodation that revived, refined and strengthened the already existing tolerant culture among the Hausa and Kanuri. This period of cultural transformation was also witnessed in the neighboring areas of Niger (including Damagaram), Chad, Cameroon and Benin Republic.³⁹

With regard to Kanem-Borno Empire, it was equally a multi-ethnic state that pre-dated Hausa States without records of youth violence.⁴⁰ The relationships between the Hausa States and the Kanem-Borno were also more peaceful and friendlier than the exaggerated views. Although, there were some evidences of tensions between the Hausa States and Borno in the 16th century, the tensions were often exaggerated by Heinrich Barth, Urvoy and many others,⁴¹ without primary backing from the internal sources. Against those views, Usman's observations in a chapter⁴² can be summarized as follows:

The widespread view that Borno relations with the Hausa States was largely made up of warfare and imperial domination is not based on the evidence in the internal primary sources of the two areas. For more important than military encounters of which Usman can only identify for instance in a period of about three hundred years, were the immigrations and emigrations of people between Borno and Hausaland, commerce, cultural and educational exchanges.

According to Usman as stated above and more details in the chapter, there were only five military encounters involving one or another Hausa State with Borno throughout the period of three

³⁵JN Paden. *Muslim Civic Cultures and Conflict Resolution: The Challenge of Democratic Federalism in Nigeria*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press; 2005:63

³⁶KY Gazali. *The Kanuri in Diaspora: The Contributions of Kanem-Borno Ulama to Islamic Education in Nupe and Yorubaland*, Lagos: CSS Bookshops, 2005, p 13 and T Falola, MM Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*, Cambridge University Press, 2008. pp.12–17

³⁷T Falola, MM Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. p. 47

³⁸JO Hunwick. Songhay Borno and Hausaland in the Sixteenth Century. In: JFA Ajayi, M Crowder, editors. *History of West Africa*. Vol 1, New York: Columbia University Press; 1972. p. 208

³⁹SU Musa. *Nigeria and Islamic Culture*. p. 44

⁴⁰B Usman. *Language Disappearance and Cultural Diversity in Biu Emirate*. Khamidas Communications. 2014. p. 24

⁴¹H Barth. *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*. 1890; Vols. I and II; Y. Urvoy, *Histoire des Populations du Soudan Centrale*, 1936 and Y. Urvoy, *Histoire de L'Empire du Bornou*, 1949.

⁴²YB Usman. Reconsideration of the History of Relations between Borno and Hausaland before 1804. In: YB Usman, N Alkali, editors. *Studies in the History of Pre-colonial Borno*. The Northern Nigerian Publishing, 1983. pp. 175–204

³¹A Dicko. *Youth Violence and the Challenges of Violent*. p. viii

³²T Akpon. *The Role of Young People in Preventing*. p. 13

³³A Dicko. *Youth Violence and the Challenges of Violent*. p. 28

³⁴T Akpon. *The Role of Young People in Preventing*. pp. 12–13

hundred years. This means that the people of Hausaland and Kanuri enjoyed more peace than inter-states conflict and not just that; but none of them had records of youth conflict and extremism. The few inter-states wars among Hausa States and between the States and their neighbors were for political supremacy.

It is pertinent at this juncture to stress that, historically Hausa and Kanuri people are peace loving people right from pre-Islamic period. For example, Hausa people had an excellent tradition of mutual relations and peaceful co-existence as well as conflict prevention. In the pre-Islamic Hausaland, the primary means of maintaining peace was the culture of mutuality and respect for elders. Hausa people: elders, youth and younger ones were mutually bonded through cooperative practices. According to Gobir, Cooperative practices amongst the Hausas include; eating together, teamwork and settling scores between individuals among host of others. An interesting phenomenon lies on the way younger ones are brought up with the orientation of mutuality. The younger ones eat, play as well as listen to folklores together. More so, any adult corrects whichever wrong they might do during these affairs. This had made the orientation of younger ones an easy task for the Hausas belief that, 'the child belongs to everybody.'⁴³

Regarding preventing conflicts, various methods that were deeply rooted in the customs and traditions of the people were employed. Hausa people had astonishing conflict prevention strategies and according to Adamu, in all the strategies in Hausa traditional setting, the method of managing potential conflict is the most effective.⁴⁴ The major role players in the utilization of the strategies were: chiefs, elders and family heads. In the prevention of disputes they made use of proverbs, wise sayings, and even songs to warn, encourage and discourage certain practices. For instance, a proverb saying *Zama lafiya Yafi Zama Dan Sarki*, meaning: it is better to live in peace than to be a prince was often used to intercept disputes.⁴⁵ The proverb underscores the place of peace in human existence and that peace is priceless. The sayings and proverbs were often said during their interaction with youth and even the younger ones in the society. Other means of conflict prevention in Hausaland included courtesy visits among traditional rulers and intermarriages among the royal families.⁴⁶

Basically, there are two traditional methods of resolving conflict. Firstly, there was internal conflict resolution in which trivial issues are handled at the family level. Such conflicts include misunderstanding between husband and wife, step wives, children and parents, among

siblings, among home and farm neighbors, as well as between teacher and his disciples. Secondly there was external conflict resolution that involved resolving conflicts between communities, tribes, empires, kingdoms, chiefdoms and villages with varying opinion, and interests.⁴⁷

Having had the Islamic culture of tolerance, humbleness and accommodation, the culture was blended with the already existing traditional methods of conflict resolution among both the Kanuri and Hausa people. The new blended culture was transmitted at family level and largely in elementary and advanced Islamic schools where Islamic instructions and values were given to pupils and youth. At schools, mosques and public places, teachers and preachers regarded themselves as extremely tolerant and humble so as to lead by example.⁴⁸ At family level, the culture was transmitted by the parents and senior siblings whose humbleness, sense of respect for elders, tolerance and accommodation were displayed to guide children by examples. Children were also taught physically the norms and values of the societies through folktales (*Tatsuniyoyi*) as puts by Bivins:

The assimilation of normative Islam and, ultimately, *Shari'ah* into the habits and thoughts of Hausa people enjoyed popularity as a topic of discussion in the *Tatsuniyoyi*...⁴⁹

Using the above mechanisms of transmission, people became more absorbed in Islamic culture and through diffusion of ideas while interacting with the larger Islamic society, Kanuri and Hausa youth became integrated into the Islamic culture of tolerance, respect for elders, accommodation, and passion for mediation among disputants; all for the peaceful co-existence of their larger societies. The traditional method of conflict resolution among the Kanuri and Hausa is properly captured by Paden as follows:

Conflict resolution was usually the jobs of the elders. People welcome mediation from the elders and did not know the idea of arms. In formal mediation was often the route taken without even referring to the judicial authority. The elders both official and unofficial including learned people, general leaders or simply any older than the disputants were respected. It was believed that one follow resolution from God, his messengers, and from that in-charge of one's affairs. Unofficially, even a person in the street, if elderly, could mediate. The elder (or elders) simply made decision. He did not have to hear both sides or argue the situation. Before mediating a dispute he might question members of the crowd to get a sense of the issues...⁵⁰

From the above, it is clear that Kanuri and Hausa culture value respect for elders and their decisions were highly respected. Disputants in Kanuri and Hausa society hardly disregarded resolutions by their elders and those in author (traditional rulers and *Alkali* courts). The method was applicable to conflict resolutions involving community tension revolving around disputes over farm and house borders, trimming of someone else' tree and other civil cases. Criminal cases like rape and adultery that can evoke community tensions were always handled by the authority concerned with justice and fairness.⁵¹

⁴³YA Gobir, 'Da Abinmu Aka Gan Mu, Darussan Hadin Kai Daga Al'adun Hausawa' in (eds.) M.U. Bunza, I.M. Maishanu and I.A. Sarkin Sudan *Nigeria in Search of Stability: the Relevance of History, Language and Religion*, Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto: Nigeria, Forth-coming, p. 580

⁴⁴AU Adamu. Chieftaincy and Security in Nigeria, Past, Present and Future: Proceedings of the National Conference on Chieftaincy and Security in Nigeria. Organized the Kano State Emirate Council to Commemorate the 40th Anniversary of His Royal Highness the Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero, 2003. p. 26

⁴⁵AJ Ademowo, AA Nuhu. Indigenous Knowledge and Conflict Management in Africa: A Study of Proverb Use in Conflict Management among Hausas of Northern Nigeria. *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies*. 2017;3(4):40

⁴⁶I Dalha. 'Barkwanci A Matsayin Kafar Samar Da Zaman Lafiya A Tsakanin Al'umma: Nazari Daga Wasannin Barkwancin Katsinawa Da Gobirawa', in (eds.) M.U. Bunza, I.M. Maishanu and I.A. Sarkin Sudan *Nigeria in Search of Stability: the Relevance of History, Language and Religion*, Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto: Nigeria, Forth-coming, p. 516

⁴⁷AS Gulbi 'Sulhu A Gargajiyance: Darasi Daga Daular Sakkwato Da Kabi' in (eds.) M.U. Bunza, I.M. Maishanu and I.A. Sarkin Sudan *Nigeria in Search of Stability: the Relevance of History, Language and Religion*, Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto: Nigeria, Forth-coming, pp. 472-473

⁴⁸JN Paden. Muslim Civic Culture and Conflict Resolution. 2005. p. 64 and T Falola, MM Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. p.30

⁴⁹MW Bivins. Quoted in T Falola and MM Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. p. 72-73

⁵⁰JN Paden. Muslim Civic Culture and Conflict Resolution. 2005. pp. 93-94

⁵¹N Paden. Muslim Civic Culture and Conflict Resolution. 2005. p. 95

Islam: A Factor for Conflict Resolution (The Example of Sheikh EL-Amin El-Kanemi and Sheikh Usmanu bn Fodiyo)

The Sheikhs El-Kanemi-Muhammadu Bello correspondence, as the debate has come to be known, clearly showed the Kanuri version and understanding of Islam to be more tolerant and accommodative to minor transgressions as against extremism.⁵² Over nine correspondences were recorded to transpire between El-Kanemi on behalf of Borno and Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo/Sultan Muhammad Bello on behalf of the Sokoto Caliphate. In spite of the disputations that occurred between them the way and manner they were able to resolve the issues amicably call for the emulation of the individual scholars, shaikhs, and followers with different interpretations and perception about Islam and its valued tenets. In the vein, the lessons derivable from the engagements promote diplomacy and understanding and international and inter-state scale.⁵³

El-Kanemi and Bello finally, after exchange of letters discouraged conflict that started between their followers and all sued for peace and reconciliation, each party tried to tame its faction to the path of peace and was finally achieved and violence was avoided. The *Boko Haram*, the Izala and Tariqa as well other conflicts in the regions today could learn from the episode and allow peace to reign. It was further affirmed that:

Al-Kanemi proposed for peace immediately, Shehu (Danfodiyo) regardless of any other thing accepted the proposal and says: 'now when you say let us make peace and that there is every advantage in making peace that is a good proposal. It is right that we and you should make this peace. We indeed seek nothing but what is right. May God help us and you to make this peace'. The refined and civilized approach in settling dispute between these two Muslim African states still eludes the world we live in today. The dialogue further strongly shows that Muslims in particular and Africans in general had evolved means of conflict resolutions and crisis management before

the coming of the European invaders who portrayed Africa before their 'Civilizing Mission' as war mongers and knew nothing like reconciliation and concord.⁵⁴

Even at the zenith tension between the two, they all agreed that, no traveler, trader, pilgrim or any other person not in war be harmed or attacked, which was fully respected and upheld. That was further strengthened when El-Kanemi threatened that: 'If indeed the people of Borno refuse my command in what is lawfully, if they harass the traveler, or trader, or pilgrim, then I remove my hand from their affairs and return to my place whence I came, and leave alone both them and their neighbors'.⁵⁵

Conclusion

The paper submits that the current youth restiveness, banditry, religious conflict and violence and most other social vices and crimes that are not only common to the Zinder/Damagaram region, in Africa and world at large could be addressed and sufficiently reduced by adopting good manners and cultures that are convention in societies. In the Damagaram/Zinder region in particular the Hausa/Fulani and Kanuri dominant cultures, and not the alien, but fashionable French or European money and currency-oriented culture, quite a lot could be achieved in restoring and maintaining peace in the society. The Islamic culture of tolerance, (and not the fake jihad aggressive criminal internet and video adopted culture), as demonstrated by Shaikh Al-Amin El-Kanemi and Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo, the true toleration that was the cultural milieu of Islam could also be adopted for addressing and settling inter-and intra-religious debates and queries.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

⁵²M Kyari. Historical Perspectives on the *Boko Haram* Insurgency... p. 272

⁵³Bunza MU. Intellectual factor in African diplomatic history: Sokoto and Borno Sultanates, 1786-1817. *Sociol Int Journal*. 2018;2(3):215–223.

⁵⁴Bunza MU. Intellectual Factor... p.221

⁵⁵Cited in Bunza MU. Intellectual Factor..., p. 221