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Religious Crisis in Ilorin Emirate: Causes and Solutions¹

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ABSTRACT

Ilorin, the capital of Kwara State in Nigeria, has been one of the most relatively peaceful cities in Nigeria, despite the difference in ethnic and religious affiliations of the people living there. But in the recent time, there have been crises between both Muslim and Christian communities. Therefore, this study investigated the remote and immediate causes of such religious crisis. The research instrument used for this study was researcher-designed questionnaires tagged “the religious crises in Ilorin: Factor and Solution”. The methodology employed for this study was both primary and secondary data. Selected number of students at the concerned schools were interviewed to gather data on causes of and solutions to religious crisis in their respective schools. Essentially, the research revealed that the crisis over the use of *Hijāb* by Muslim female students in the former missionary schools is the major factor responsible for religious crisis in the Ilorin Emirate. Muslim parents want their wards to use *Hijāb* to maintain their religious identity, but the authorities in the affected schools are objecting despite the court judgement allowing the use of *Hijāb*. This study was carried out in Ilorin Emirates of Kwara State in Nigeria. Ilorin is a Muslim majority city where Muslims are living together with the Christians who are the minorities. The city is open to all different religious communities from different major tribes in Nigeria, namely Hausa-Fulani, Nupe, and Yoruba. This study would sensitize Muslims and Christians on the need to live together peacefully. More so, the major stake holders among the two religious communities, the civil society organizations as well as the government will find the findings of this study handy and useful in their efforts at ensuring peace and stability in the city. To achieve peace, there is need for adequate information about religious sensibilities of people.

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INTRODUCTION

The state of Nigeria is, in reality, a multi-religious one, even though the constitution characterizes it as a secular state. (Nigerian constitution,1999). Both Muslim and Christian communities assert their presence in the country with gigantic places of worship in the Federal Capital and in various states. However, Christianity came to Nigeria many centuries after Islām had reached areas that later came to be known as Nigeria. Yet, the adherents of these two religions spread over the regions and states. It should be noted that the Muslim community is the majority group in the north, while their Christian counterpart constitutes the majority in the south, especially in the eastern part of the South. This neither suggests in any way that there are no Christians in the north nor that there are no Muslims in the south-east. Rather, the Christian community constitutes the minority in the north, while the Muslim community occupies the minority status in the south.

Nevertheless, the relation between both Muslims and Christians has been defined by mistrust which often leads to violence and crisis especially in states where a particular religious group is in the majority. There is no doubt that religious tolerance is the best alternative as against hostile relations. The necessity for this arises from the fact that both Muslims and Christians are conditioned to live together as neighbors in different locations, and colleagues in educational and business institutions. In addition to this, both Muslims and Christians are seemingly faithful to their religious beliefs, and no one is ready to make

any compromise that could affect the foundation of his faiths.

In Kwara State, the Muslim community is the majority group especially in Ilorin, the State capital. Yet, there is presence of the Christian community which constitutes the minority group. Until the recent time, the two religious groups had lived together in peace and harmony, a development which most likely informed the national description of Kwara as the State of Harmony. But, in the last few years, there has been religious crisis in the State especially in the Capital arising from the use of Hijāb by the Muslim female students in the schools formerly owned by Christian missionaries.

This research seeks to investigate into factors and solutions to religious crisis in the Ilorin Emirate of Kwara State. The Ilorin Emirate covers five local governments in Kwara, namely Ilorin East, Ilorin South, Ilorin West, Asa, and Moro. In these places, Muslims are the predominant inhabitants, while Christians constitute the minority group in those areas.

Therefore, this study would investigate the factors responsible for the religious crisis in the Ilorin Emirate covering Ilorin East, Ilorin South, Ilorin West, Asa, and Moro. Specifically, the study aimed at exploring practicable solutions to the religious crisis in the Ilorin Emirate.

The research has confirmed the lived experience that the *Hijāb* issue has been a major cause of religious crisis in the Ilorin Emirate. Therefore, solutions to it, include having enough information about religious sensibilities of other religious groups, mutual

respect, and religious tolerance. This will bring about peace and stability between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria.

Materials and Methods adopted

A descriptive research design was used in this study. The descriptive survey method allowed the researchers to get feedback from respondents in the selected missionary schools in the Ilorin Emirates. The design makes it easy to describe seriousness of religious crises in the Emirates. The participants in this study were both male and female students in the selected schools. The study's target groups also include teachers and parents.

The instrument for this study is researcher-designed questionnaires tagged the religious crises in Ilorin: Factor and Solution. It was developed to address the purpose of this study and to facilitate the answers to the research questions.

The instruments have two sections: Section A contained items on personal data of the respondents, parents, students and teachers of affected schools, while section B focused on seriousness of causes of religious crises in Ilorin Emirate missionary schools, structured in a four points-response- Likert type, based on strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and strongly Disagree (SD). This section also contained ten (10) items for each of the rehabilitative training missionary schools used for this study making it a total of twenty (20) items for the section.

To answer the research questions, responses on RCIEFS section A and B were

summed and subjected to cumulative mean analysis. After receiving consent from the school principals for the questionnaires distribution and collection, the researchers allowed the respondents to know the aims of the study for ethical considerations. They were informed that their responses would be kept completely confidential and it's strictly for academic. However, the respondents among the staff and students were also offered the option of responding verbally to the questionnaire. This allowed the researchers to personally advise and check the answers to any questions that respondents in this study may have had.

Review of Related Literature

The religious crisis in the country is not indirectly related to the controversial status of Nigeria among researchers. Many of them regard the country as a secular state going by their interpretation of the constitutional provision. But some others consider the country rather as a multi-religious state in view of many factors and supporting circumstances. The secular description, according to Balogun, does not commensurate with the true status of the country. (Balogun A, 2013, 45). The relationship between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria has been a focus of study for many researchers. Their concern has been how to achieve peaceful co-existence between both religious communities away from crisis. For some researchers, the problems or tension between the two communities are due to a number of factors, namely evils of fanaticism and bigotry, intolerance, exclusivism, ignorance, etc.

At the initial state, the relationship between Muslims and Christians was cordial. Immediately after his Prophethood, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) dispatched some of his followers to Abyssinia as a reaction to the inhuman treatments they were subjected to by the idol worshippers of Makkah. In Abyssinia, the King Negus, who was the Christian King, gave the Muslim emigrants the expected protection despite the efforts of the idol worshippers to poison his mind. However, this peaceful relation was truncated with the death of the prophet (SAW) and the early popes and kings. (Ottuh, PO 2014,5). Going by shared common values in Islām and Christianity, one would expect that there should not be any tension between Muslims and Christians. A comparative study of the Ten Commandment and Q17: 22-39 shows some fundamental precepts that both religions teach and preach. No doubt, these precepts can be regarded as codes of conduct in Islām and Christianity.

Going down memory lane, there have been religious tensions between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, which have, unfortunately, led to loss of many lives, and destruction of properties. A typical example was Zango Kataf in the eighties. The popularity and population of the two religions is too huge to gloss over. As such, any tension between the communities is capable of annihilating the country. To forestall this existential threat, the stakeholders, such as, the government, religious leaders and groups, as well as individuals have been making serious efforts to ensure the cordial relationship between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. For

instance, in 2000, the former President, Olusegun Obasanjo established the Nigerian Interreligious Council (NIREC) with the sole purpose of promoting the ideals of peaceful coexistence especially among the various religions in Nigeria. (Ibrahim OU, 2023, 45)

Also, the efforts geared towards eradicating the religious crisis or tension in Nigeria are being undertaken by the PROCMURA, the Program for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa. This organization was created in 1950 with the mandate of reducing the religious tensions between Muslims and Christians in every part of Africa especially Nigeria. (June Smith, 2015, 89). Needless to say, the inter-religious dialogue is a key to achieving peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. (Bidmos, MA, 2006, 40). It is the only option on ground to forestall possible religious war in the country. The Nigerian states have been cautioned on the danger of the resurgence of autochthonous ethno-religious groups selling secessionist agendas on the future survival of the country as corporate political entity.

The experience has shown that are many causes of religious crisis among the religious groups in the country. These include: extremism in religion by declaring other Muslims as unbelievers, rejecting the prophetic tradition and relying on Qur'ān only, considering one particular group as the only *Ahl Sunnah*, Condemning the status of the companions of the Prophet, among other things.

Brief History of Ilorin

Islām reached most parts of the Hausa land in the early of the 15th Century, when rulers like Aliyu Yaji of Kano embraced the religion of Islām. Islām had been practiced in about 1553CE, according to Ibn Batuta. This however does not mean that Islām reached those places in the above date mentioned. Islām penetrated into some Northern parts of Nigeria including Ilorin through the Arab traders from North Africa. Islām reached Borno Empire as early as 9th Century; the first Muslim ruler of that Empire was Mai Umme Jilmi who ruled in the 11th Century AD. The coming of Islām to Yorubaland especially Ilorin was when it reached Oke-Sunnah, a place was founded around 1700 CE and the people in the place were all practical Muslims. (Adam AA 1978, 45). Subsequently, Shaykh Alfa Ālimi migrated to Ilorin and joined his Muslim brothers at the Oke-Sunna enclave under the leadership of a prominent scholar namely Olufadi. Shaykh Alfa Ālimi converted many idol worshippers into the fold of Islām in Ilorin as a result of his effective preaching activities. Shaykh Alfa Ālimi died around 1237 AH when Islam had gained widespread popularity in the Ilorin Emirate and its environs. During this period, Islām was spread across the Emirate and Arabic and Islamic Education was given utmost attention. This made the city to become the centre of learning and the seat of Muslim Scholars. (Jimoh LAK, 2004, 45)

Ilorin had been inhabited sometime before the 17th Century by a certain Baruba hermit about whom not much is known except

that his place of abode became known as Baruba. Ilorin transformed into a Yoruba settlement with incoming of a certain Ojo Isekuse from Gambe in Oyo-Ile and Emila in around 17th Century. They were known to be hunters who erected transit camps at the point of legendary rock on which they sharpened their iron and other hunting equipment and from where the town allegedly got its name Ilo-irin (Ilo means sharpening; Irin means iron) (Hassan et-al,2011, 23) Another tradition holds that Ilorin was derived from Ilu-Erin, meaning the town of Elephants.

However, it is important to also stress that the mere presence of the much -talked about rock at Bamidele compound in Ilorin on which the hunting implements were said to have been sharpened is not also sufficient as an evidence to hold tenaciously to the tradition that links the origin of Ilorin to the sharpening of Iron. Many things need clarification. For instance, there is no evidence to show how many hunters were within the area or the population in general that could have warranted the popular usage of the word Ilo-Irin. Apart from Ojo who is claimed to have sharpened his iron tools on the rocks, there is no record of any other hunters who came to that place for that purpose. It should be added that, Ilorin, up to the beginning of the 19th Century, was largely populated by adherent of African Traditional Religion. This could be substantiated by the assertion that Shaykh Ālimi could not remain in Ilorin on his first visit because it was a land full of idolaters. Some took to worshipping objects of nature

like Asa River, Sobi hill and other mountain and rocks. (Hassan et-al, 2011, 25)

Ilorin is a miniature of heterogeneous Nigeria as her people are of the Yoruba, Hausa, Kanuri, and Nupe origins. These people of diverse tribes are under the traditional leadership of the progeny of Shaykh Ālimi whose son AbdulSalam was the first Emir of the city. The present Emir Alhaji Ibrahim (Dr.) Zulu-Qarnain Gambari is the ninth Emir to assume the throne in 1995.

By default, the people of Ilorin are Muslims and Islām is the major factor in their culture and way of life. In the present time, the city is proud of many scholars who have made immense contributions towards the consolidation of Islām and knowledge in Ilorin and in the Yorubaland generally, thereby promoting the heritage bequeathed to them by their ancestral scholars. Some of these scholars include Shaykh Kamaldeen al-Adaby (d.2005), Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilory (d.1992), Shaykh Yusuf Agbaji, Shaykh Solahuddeen Agbarigidoma and others. (Adam AA, 1978, 56)

Though, Ilorin is predominantly a Muslim territory, the city also accommodates the adherents of Christianity. The past Emirs tried to maintain the pure Islāmic status of the city, but the colonial laws paved the way to the Christians to spread the gospel in the city. Hence, the influxes of Christians to Ilorin metropolis are from the southern part of the country. Some of these Christians were the Ijesha textile dealers known as Osomalo who were found in Igbominaland and Ilorin at the beginning of the 20th Century. Also, the

construction of railway lines from the Southern States to the Northern states contributed to the expansion of Christianity in Ilorin. The Christian community in Ilorin is essentially located in places known to be at the outskirts of Ilorin metropolis such as Sabo-Oke, Niger road, Asa Dam, Surulere, Taiwo, Tanke, among axis where non-indigenes are located. These places are concentrated with different denominational Churches where they worship without any hindrances. (Omotoye, 2013, 97)

The impact of Colonization on Islām in Ilorin Metropolis

The victory of the reformers in establishing Islāmic governments throughout West Africa including Ilorin exposed all forms of evils from religious and temporal life. This was as result of the Jihad of Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio in the eighteenth century. However, the occupation of West African countries and Ilorin by the colonial masters brought serious consequences in which Islāmic injunctions were replaced with injustices and indecencies in the Muslim's social, political and religious lives. (Omotoye, 2013, 78)

In an attempt to convert the Muslims into Christians, western education was introduced into the Muslim Communities initially by the Christian missionaries. Later, the colonial master established their own schools and took over the financing of those established by missionaries in Ilorin Emirate. These schools are found in the selected Local Government Areas in Kwara State. The schools are St. Anthony Secondary School, Offa road, Cherubim and Seraphim, Sabo-Oke, in Ilorin

South Local Government Area of Kwara State; Mount Camel Secondary School, located in Ilorin West Local Government area of Kwara State; St. John situated in Ilorin East Local Government Area of Kwara State; and Methodist High School, located in Jebba, Moro local Government area of Kwara State. (Omotoye, 2013, 78)

To make Muslims accept this type of education in Ilorin Emirate, Islāmic instruction was made an essential part of the schools' syllabuses, ensuring that people attend and the European attitudes and behavior patterns were instilled in the innocent Muslim children. Eventually, the content and purpose of the syllabuses were to a large extent, modified. Emphasis was laid more on literacy in English replacing the Arabic and local languages of the Nigerians.

The western education was purposely designed to educate the African people about the European culture and tradition or about the history of their great men such as Mango Park, Clapperton and so on. Where it became necessary for them to teach about people like Shehu Uthman bn Fodio, Alfa Shaykh Soliu Ālimi and his likes, they deliberately distorted their history and discredited their works. By so doing, they succeeded in making many African people ignorant of their environment and their most cherished ancestors. If political system had to be practiced, it must be European political system. If culture had to be accepted and respected, it must be European. If a language had to be learnt, it must be English.

As a result, Muslims who had been giving attention to the teaching and learning of

Islāmic culture lost their identity. Unfortunately, the zeal for learning Arabic and Islāmic Studies was almost killed. The Qur'ānic schools gradually disappeared in many West African countries, because they have been unable to withstand the competition' of the Western schools.

The Adverse Effect of Western Education on the People of Ilorin Emirate

The adverse effect of the Western education is now very clear since its products became morally bankrupt, religiously backward etc. They have been trained to despise their own way of life to a more ungodly and an uncultured civilization of the west, such as smiting, dying, weaving etc. Sense of inferiority complex was instilled in them. It is only when you appear like European, you conduct your life as a European, and you learn European culture and practice it and you will not be regarded as educated. (Omotoye, 2013, 78)

The role of Muslim scholars was primarily to arrest the above mentioned situation through massive Islāmic preaching and teaching of both Muslims and non-Muslims. Islamiyyah schools were established in different communities by the efforts of Muslims for learning of the Qur'ān and other Islāmic related courses. This method was carried out throughout the Ilorin Emirate council and its environs.

It should be noted that schools established by the Christian's missionaries and Muslim communities were later adopted by the state governments across the country. In Kwara State, C&S secondary school and its

likes as well as Ansaruldeen secondary schools and its likes came under the authority and control of the state government which became the legal owner of all the schools established by the Christian and Muslim groups. Based on this, Muslim parents in the Emirate desired that their Muslim female wards should be covering their head *Hijāb* in the former missionaries' schools. This is in line with the religious teachings and culture. But the management of those former missionaries' schools objected to this which led to a lot of misunderstanding among the Muslim and Christian communities. To resolve this issue, the government has had to intervene on several occasions to arrest the potential religious crisis in the state.

Religious Crisis in Ilorin

Ilorin is part of what constitutes Nigeria as a country. As such, it is apposite to have an overview on religious crisis in Nigeria after which there is a focus on Ilorin as a case study of this research. Generally, there is always religious tension between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. More often than not, the religious crisis happens in the northern part of the country where the Muslims are the majority. The southern part of the country has recorded a limited number of religious crises. There were major religious crises in Bauchi, Kaduna and Kano which left lives and property destroyed. Going down memory lane, the religious crisis in Nigeria started in 1977/78 following the controversy over the status of Shari'ah in the nation's constitution. The Muslims felt the need for a divine legal system that would regulate their affairs. They wanted

to regain the lost past glory of being governed by the Shari'ah as it used to be for a hundred years under the Islāmic Caliphate established by Shaykh 'Uthman Dan Fodio between 1804 and 1904 when the British forces supplanted it with the English legal system. (Omotoye, 2013, 78). This legitimate desire by the Nigerian Muslims was rejected by their Christian counterparts. Thus, mutual distrust was created between the two large religious communities in the country. In the subsequent years, Muslims and Christians had causes to brace up for religious crisis which led to wanton destruction of life and property (Omotosho, 2003, 89). Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, the country has witnessed overwhelming cases of religious violence. These cases of violence were instigated by many reasons such as unwillingness to accept or respect other person's view or right which then degenerated into destructive feuds. (Sulaiman, 1980, 67)

The religious crisis in Ilorin surfaced in the 1980s due to a variety of reasons such as provocative actions of many Christian residents as well as unregulated religious zealotry of some Muslim youths. For instance, there was a religious disturbance in Ilorin in 1986 arising from the Palm Sunday procession. The Muslim community of Ilorin felt provoked by the Christian community who took their procession through the traditional stronghold of Muslims in the city for the first time (Oladimeji, 2013). Another religious crisis took place in Ilorin/Offa in 1999 between Hausa/Fulani Muslims and Yoruba tribe and Christians. The similar crisis involving the same actors also took place in

2000 (Olademo, 2013). In the last few years, religious crises have taken place in most former missionaries' schools aid-granted schools due to the objection of the school authority to the use of *Hijāb* by Muslim female students in those schools. Needless to say, all these resulted in the wanton destruction of lives and property. (AGAS,2013, 144).

Causes of Religious Crisis

Generally, religious crises in Nigeria are caused by several factors. The following are some of the factors responsible for the religious crisis between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria.

1. Lack of Proper Understanding of one's Religion and other Religions
2. Lack of Religious Tolerance -
3. Unhealthy Rivalry
4. Fake News
5. Political propaganda

The factors mentioned above appear to be the germane causes of religious crisis in Nigeria including the Ilorin Emirate in Kwara which is our subject under study. Though, it should be reiterated that the occurrence of religious crisis in Ilorin Emirate is rather unusual in comparison with other places in the country. In other words, a few religious crises that have occurred in Ilorin so far could be regarded as minor and not major. Muslims and Christians in Ilorin Emirate have come to live together peacefully as neighbours and colleagues. As the host community, the Muslims in the area are accommodating and friendly by default. Largely, the Islāmic scholarship that the Emirate is known for has been responsible for the sense of

understanding the host community displays in their interaction with their Christian counterparts. This accounts for the presence of gigantic churches in various places of the Emirate with worshippers streaming in and out. In some areas in the Emirate, mosques and churches share the same street. A typical example is the Tanke area where the Ahmadiyya Jama'ah and the Rhema Chapel share the same street where the former religious group accommodated the latter group, and they have since been co-existing peacefully. (Olademo, 2013, 152)

Experiences have shown that the religious crisis in Ilorin is always triggered by the factor of intolerance at the instance of the Christian community. This naked truth is difficult to believe because, ordinarily, it is the host community that is naturally believed to display sense of intolerance against the guests. This show of intolerance is manifest in the use of *Hijāb* by the Muslim girls studying in the former missionary schools which have since come under the ownership of the government. In the last few years, there were cases of violence and crisis arising from the use of *Hijāb*. It is saddening that this has led to avoidable casualties and destruction of property in the affected schools. (Oladimeji, 70-71)

For the purpose of this research work, a questionnaire was administered among students, parents and teachers in the grant-aided schools where the *Hijāb* issue has led to religious crisis. Students of some of these schools were randomly selected with the sole purpose of knowing the causes and solutions to the religious crisis in Ilorin Emirate.

According to the feedbacks from the respondents, the religious crisis in Ilorin Emirate is an exception rather than being a rule. In other words, Muslims and Christians in Ilorin Emirate normally live together peacefully as neighbours and colleagues in the city. However, the religious crisis is occasionally experienced in some former missionary schools in Ilorin Emirate. Most of them believe that the religious crisis in the state is often orchestrated by the use of *Hijāb* by Muslim girls studying in those schools. They believe that Muslim female students should be allowed to use *Hijāb* if they so choose. In essence, they should neither be forced to use it nor denied its use. (Oladimeji LF, 2023,70-73).

Interventions for Peaceful Co-Existence of Muslims and Christians

The religious crisis between Muslims and Christians is an open threat to peace and stability in the State. This fact is well acknowledged by the government and well-meaning citizens of the State. This explains why there are interventions by the government and some individual and religious societies. To nip the religious crisis in the bud, the State government under Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki established a Committee on Religious Matters in 2004. The Committee was made up of committed members from the government officials, religious elders, royal fathers, and traditional title-holders. Inaugurated on 28th December, 2004, the terms of reference of the Committee are as follows:

1. To serve as advisory body for quick resolution of religious disputes in the state;
2. To foster mutual understanding and greater awareness on the teachings of various religious with a view to eliminating unnecessary bias and suspicions;
3. To encourage dialogue through seminars, workshops and meetings designed essentially to promote greater harmony and peaceful co-existence among different religious organizations in the State;
4. To evolve ways of discouraging incidence of fundamentalism in all its ramifications among leaders and followers of various religions; and,
5. To serve as an instrument for enhancing the capacity of different religions to contribute more positively to National Development.

To achieve the above objectives, the Committee has organized many seminars which were targeted at different categories of religious adherents, religious preachers, and youths. Especially, in the ones that took place in 2005, 2006 and 2008. Many invited scholars presented papers with the primary goal of exploring means and ways of realizing peaceful co-existence of Muslims and Christians in the State. (An interview with Abdulateef Mustafa Atolagbe, April,7 2023)

In addition, the Committee provided an avenue for Muslims and Christians to report issues that could give rise to public disturbances. After listening to the complainants, the Committee would invite the

parties involved and address the issue amicably before it could snowball into religious crisis. To a larger extent, this reduced the cases of religious crisis in the State especially from the inception of the Committee until the recent time when the Hijāb issue in former missionary schools led to crisis.

So far, the Committee has addressed matters that could lead to religious crisis in the State. The following are some few cases resolved by the Committee:

- a.** Alleged use of a portion of the Federal Government land as a basis and ground for a campaign for demolition of Deeper Life Ministry (DLM) building at Obanisuwa, Airport Area, Ilorin.
- b.** Alleged illegal removal and malicious damage of the signboard of Christ Apostolic Church, Oke-Alafia, Agbo-Oba Zonal Headquarters, Ilorin.
- c.** Objection to wearing of Hijāb in CAC, Oke-Igbala, Share LGUBEA School.
- d.** Objection to wearing of Hijāb in UMCA LGUBEA School, Share.
- e.** Request for intervention to prevent religious crisis at Irewolede Estate, Ilorin.
- f.** Lingering crisis over Odo-Eku Junior Secondary School.
- g.** Proximity of places of religious activities at Oke-Odo, Tanke, Ilorin.

Furthermore, the committee has been able to organize three seminars in 2005, 2006, and 2008. This and its various interventions highlighted above have been timely and fruitful in forestalling potential religious crisis in the State. (Oladimeji, 2013,56).

However, it has been observed that the activities of the committee have significantly recorded. For instance, since 2008 no sensitization seminar has been held (Oladimeji, 2013,76). The government support for the committee has declined about four years in to its inauguration. The committee does not enjoy budgetary allocation from the State government to execute its various programs. Needless to say, lack of the government adequate funding support has rendered the committee inactive. This has given way to recurrence of the religious crisis in the State especially on the use of *Hijāb* in the grant-aided schools in the recent time. (An interview with Abdulateef Mustafa Atolagbe, April,7 2023).

It should be noted that the need for peaceful coexistence of Muslims and Christians in Ilorin in particular and Kwara State in general is also a major concern of many peace-loving individuals and corporate organizations that have been complementing the government efforts at various levels. A good example is a weekly T.V program on the station of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) which was spearheaded by Razak Akanbi who was the Director of the Program in the Television station. Anchored by a veteran Yoruba broadcaster, Dayo Babarinde, the program was designed by the station, Ilorin chapter about three years ago with the sole objective of highlighting common moral values in Islām and Christianity. It is titled as *Oju Koju* which is a Yoruba language meaning "Face to Face". It is a recorded program which is aired every Friday at 3 pm. About fifty episodes of the program have been produced

so far. It hosts two guests, namely an Imam and a Pastor who discuss various issues falling within the ambit of areas of agreement in both religions. The two religious scholars therefore focus on moral values which are taught in the Bible and the Qur'ān such as Justice, equity, fairness, honesty, etc. In the same vein, they exposed immoral behaviours such as lying, backbiting, stealing, etc. which are condemned in the scriptures of the two religions. Essentially, the ultimate purpose of coming together on this platform is to foster mutual understanding and respect for the overall development of the nation.

The above program is a much needed initiative as it plays a crucial role in sensitizing the adherents of Islām and Christianity on the need to live together peacefully. Our findings reveal some positive impacts of the program. On one hand, it affords the two hosts the opportunity of addressing salient and fundamental moral values in the two religions with the direction of the anchor. Beyond this, the societal impact of the program cannot be overemphasized. It should however be observed that the production of episodes has been put on hold due to many challenges such as the lack of sponsorship by well-meaning individuals and organizations. (An interview with Abdulateef Mustafa Atolagbe, April,7 2023)

Towards Peaceful Co-Existence of Christians and Muslims in Ilorin Emirates

Muslim as well as Christians in Ilorin Emirate had been living in the atmosphere of harmony, mutual respect and honor for several decades, traced back to the year of national

independence. A personal observation reveals that numerous Christians had settled in the area constantly without any thought of relocation. The healthy social relation which they experience from the Muslims gives them much comfort and self-satisfaction.

However, one could assert that several factors promote peaceful existence in the Emirate. Notably, there is a feeling and awareness of interdependence. Many of the Christian settlers according to a source are known for western education. This enables the Muslim counterparts to acquire the western education from them. Some of the Christian schools including missionary schools were attended by many Muslim children. This makes the Muslim populace to relate with the Christian community for their commitment to education.

On the other hand, the Christians, most especially the merchants among them have much reliance on the Muslim, for smooth business transactions. Their sales are much patronized by the Muslims who constitute majority of the population. Experiences have also shown that Christians are comfortable in transacting with the Muslims. This is because Muslims in the Emirates are conscious of Islamic principles relating to commercial transactions with respect to lawful acts and prohibitions in business dealings.

More importantly, there is a demonstration of mutual understanding on the freedom of practice of faith. Since the settlement of the Christians in the area, there has been no record of religious persecution, crises coercion or intimidation. As long the Christians do not overstep their boundary or

limit on the practice of their religion, Muslims live by the Quranic precepts which forbid compulsion of a person into accepting Islam.

On the social aspect, despite the fact that there is hardly an inter-faith marriage, the social relationship remains cordial and congenial. These people of different faiths could give mutual support to one another on matters relating to community development. For instance, the Christians are not exempt from community development association which is aimed at promoting the social welfare of Ilorin Emirates.

Similarly, the members of the society stand by one another in any occasion, such as naming ceremony, house worming, funeral rites among others. This tends to show the level of mutual understanding which exists between the Muslims and Christians in the area. Difference in religious practices do not inhibit them from positive social interaction on several occasions that affect their ways of life. There are numerous occasions where Christians would ask Muslim clerics to slaughter their rams or fowls with the understanding that Muslims would not consume any meat upon which the name of Allah is not invoked in the process of slaughter.

On this note, inter-relationship between the Muslims and Christians in Ilorin Emirates supports the heterogeneous society of multiple faith. It only requires a matter of not even tolerance, but understanding, mutual respect and love of common good.

Conclusion

In the foregoing paragraphs, there has been a discussion of religious crisis in Ilorin. An attempt has been made to examine causes of religious crisis in Ilorin with a view to finding lasting solutions to it in the Ilorin emirate and Nigeria at large. It has been explained that Ilorin is a predominantly Muslim territory, yet there are Christians living together with Muslims enjoying freedom of worship in the emirate. No doubt, there is no better alternative to peaceful coexistence of Christians and Muslims in Nigeria generally and in Ilorin particularly than mutual understanding among religious adherents. In addition to some solutions suggested by various stakeholders, it is equally necessary that mutual respect and emphasis on common ground is key to achieving peace and harmony among Muslims and Christians in Ilorin. The following are key to achieving peaceful coexistence among Christians and Muslims in the emirate and Nigeria:

- 1. Understanding the religion of one's neighbour**
- 2. Mutual Respect**
- 3. Emphasizing the areas of agreement**

Numerous societies and communities in Nigeria are plagued with ethno-religious rivalries, unhealthy relation and religious bigotry. Such anomalies could not make society to progress or realize targeted aims and objectives unless the above key conditions are met.

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