



Indigenous Knowledge as A Panacea to Youth Violence in Argungu Emirate: Revisiting Hausa Culture of Tolerance and Peace

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Abstract

Modern day Argungu Emirate of Kebbi State is the successor state of the ancient Kabi Kingdom of Hausa people whose culture was deeply rooted in Hausa traditions and Islamic teachings. The people of the Emirate had in the past, a tolerant and accommodative culture that sustained peaceful co-existence among its people. Today Argungu Emirate witnesses an alien culture of intolerance and violence among youths due to cultural disruption by foreign influences. The cultural gap between the youths and the larger society in the Emirate begot a number of intolerant and violent youths who are quite threat to the peace and security of the area. Thus, cultural renaissance is imperative in addressing the existing intolerance and violent tendencies among the youths in the Emirate. It is in line with this reality, the article explored Hausa norms and values communicated through proverbs to sustain tolerance and peace among the people of the ancient Kabi Kingdom. By so doing, the article presents a cultural framework for resuscitation and inculcation of Hausa norms and values for tolerance and accommodation in the minds of the youths in Argungu Emirate. This is quite imperative for the management of the existing violent tendencies and activities by the youths in the Emirate, and far beyond.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge, Proverbs, Intolerance, Violent Tendencies, Argungu Emirate.

Introduction

Generally, the phenomenon of the proliferation of youth violence in Africa is partly the result of the cultural disruption between African youths and their forefathers by alien influences. Violence and extremism as observed by Falola (1998), had for years engaged scholarly attention from a variety of approaches, and theoretical frameworks to find sustainable solutions. In Northern Nigeria, and especially the North-western States, many cultural changes were introduced by the European and United States cultural imperialism, political pluralism, divergence in religious interpretations, and modern communication channels (Dickoet'al, 2018). These phenomena, in addition to the combined socio-economic crisis and population growth, are potentially feeding the phenomenon of the emergence and re-emergence of violent youth and their activities in the region. Youth violence in North-western Nigeria is at a very alarming and threatening pace; and it has adopted such classic forms, as incivility, vandalism, organised cattle rustling, armed robbery, banditry, kidnapping, raping, as well as well-organised fights and mass protests among others (Dicko, 2018). Today, the attention of the authorities in North-western Nigeria is focused on the frequency of banditry, kidnappings, and political thuggery causing extensive damage to property and human lives in the region (Dicko, 2018). Worst is that, some members of armed groups operating in the region are suspected to have either been members of, or were brainwashed by the extremist ideology of the Boko Haram insurgency. Similarly, considering the current pace of violent activities in the region, the possibility that several youths are presently being recruited into some notorious gangs of cattle rustlers, bandits, and kidnappers is not far from a reality.

Historically, the people of Hausaland 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 (Kyari, 2017). Although the

population of the region was predominantly Hausa and Fulani Muslims, Hausaland was most especially after the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate a heterogeneous society under a mighty polity built on sound Islamic universalism rather than ethnic particularism (Kyari,2017). Kabi Kingdom was one of the ancient Hausa States made up of such groups and stocks as Hausa, Fulani, Zarma, Arawa, Dandawa and Kyangawa and also, although independent, became part of the larger Sokoto Caliphate after its establishment in the 19th century. So, in the past, the culture of the people of Kabi Kingdom now Argungu Emirate as in case of all the other Hausa States was deeply rooted in Hausa traditions and Islamic teachings; and advocated peace, tolerance and accommodation. It was only after the disruption of passages of these Hausa traditions (indigenous knowledge) to the youths that the culture of intolerance and violent activities became almost ordinary in not just Argungu Emirate but all over the lands of the ancient Hausa States. Thus, the current intolerance and violence among youths had no place in the culture of the Hausa people because both the ancient Kabi Kingdom and Sokoto Caliphate had no history of internal intolerance, youth violence, and militancy. Thus, exploring relevant historical knowledge to cushion the problem of intolerance and violent tendencies as well activities among the youths of Argungu Emirate becomes imperative.

Aim

The proliferation of armed groups and their violent activities are today one of the major concerns of all African leaders. It is obvious that, the phenomena were the functions of the failure of African leaders to fill in the cultural gaps that left African youths of today indigenously uneducated; and thus, unaware of their traditions as well as tolerant and accommodative cultural values. Given the fact that, the Hausa people (including Argungu Emirate) of the most troubled North-western Nigeria had in the past a superbly tolerant and accommodative culture that sustained peaceful co-existence among its members, revisiting the extent to which the people of Argungu Emirate sustained peace and tolerance in the past is quite imperative. This is with a view to addressing the intolerance and violent tendencies among the youths in the area. As such, beyond Argungu Emirate, the overall aim of this article is to explore some insights of Hausa ardent passion for humbleness, tolerance, peace and peaceful co-existence with a view to opening doors for in-depth research of the traditions for inculcation into the minds of Hausa youths, in North-western Nigeria.

Research Area and Methodology

This research adopted a qualitative approach, combining primary and secondary data collection tools. The primary data was generated through the use of in-depth interviews and focused group discussions with some selected respondents across the four local government areas of Argungu, Augie, Arewa and Dandi that make up the area of study (Argungu Emirate). By the use of 80 Key Informant Interviews and 8 Focused Group Discussions, data was obtained on people's awareness of Hausa indigenous knowledge with particular reference to norms and values that advocate humbleness, tolerance and peace. For the secondary data, desk reviews were carried out, relying on documented evidences such as academic literature, reports, and other related documents, which capture the issues under study.

Literature Review

There is a number of existing texts on youth violence in Nigeria and North-western region in particular. Also, a number of scholarly works on what lessons could be drawn from the pre-colonial Hausaland; especially, during the period of the Sokoto Caliphate to address the challenge of youth intolerance and violence in Nigeria, exists. However, of all the existing texts within the reach of this research, none, is explicitly centred on Hausa norms and values that cherish humbleness, tolerance and peace; let alone putting them in a framework for addressing intolerance and violent tendencies among the youths. A review of all the related existing works cannot be contained within the limited scope of this article. Nevertheless, the following reviewed texts are the worthiest of mentioning here. They included Maitafsir and Tudu (1999); Musa (2014); while Maishanu (2014); Bunza (2016); Paden (2005); and Usman (1983).

The foregoing works and many others indicated that Hausa people had a blended traditional-cum-Islamic culture that cherishes modesty, tolerance and peace. Paden (2005), links Hausaland to the wealth of Islamic cultural heritage through trans-regional connections with North Africa. Through this, Hausa people had adapted to a sophisticated and all-encompassing Islamic culture. Falola and Heaton (2008), put it that Hausa people cherished a culture of tolerance and peace although; there are evidences of Hausa inter-state wars in the pre-jihad period, there were no records of youth violence. Usman (1983), maintains that, the relationships between the Hausa States and their neighbours was not as horrible as presented by some scholars. For example, the Hausa States' relations with Kanem-Borno were peaceful and friendly than the exaggerated views of such scholars. Although there were some evidences of tensions between Hausa States and Borno in the 16th century, the tensions were often exaggerated by Heinrich Barth (1890), Urvoy (1936 and 1949) and many others, without primary backing from the internal sources. On the other hand, it was established that Hausa States more often than not cooperated against external aggressions. For example, in the middle of 17th century, Kano and Katsina after a period of antagonism proclaimed peace to present a united front against the Kororofa attacks (Hunwick 1972). This was an indication of their cooperation and high sense of sameness and togetherness.

Moreover, the pre-colonial Hausa inter-states wars were brought to an end when the states were conflated together to form Sokoto Caliphate. The Caliphate was a state with an outstanding culture of humbleness and tolerance that revived,

refined and strengthened the already existing tolerant culture of Hausa people (Musa, 2014). Paden (2008), reveals that the existing blended Hausa-Islamic culture of tolerance, humbleness, and peace was fully refined, cemented, consolidated and metamorphosed in to a well-organised method of sustainable peacebuilding after the Sokoto Jihad. 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 youths. At schools, mosques and public places, teachers and preachers regarded themselves as extremely tolerant and humble so as to lead by example (Paden, 2008). At family level, the culture was transmitted by the parents and senior siblings whose humbleness, sense of respect for elders, tolerance and self-peace 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 (Bivins, Quoted in Falola and Heaton, 2008: 72-73).

However, of all the existing texts within the reach of this research so far, none, is explicitly centred on Hausa norms and values that cherish modesty, tolerance, and peaceful co-existence; let alone putting them in a framework for addressing the current intolerance and violent tendencies among the youths in Argungu Emirate and the wider North-west.

Findings and Discussions

Indigenous knowledge: A Means of Addressing Intolerance and Youths' Violence in Kabi Kingdom (Argungu Emirate)

As hinted in the background, the Hausa people of Kabi Kingdom (modern Argungu Emirate) had had in the past, Islamic culture of humbleness, self-peace, respect for parents and accommodation. The culture was blended with the already existing Hausa tradition that cherished tolerance and respect for elders among youths as well as conflict resolution and general community peace. The blended culture was transmitted at family level and public places where norms and values were given to children and youths. At schools, mosques and other public places, parents and elders regarded themselves as extremely tolerant and humble so as to lead by example. 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. Most specifically, at both the levels of family and public places, children and youths were taught physically, the Kabi tradition that advocated tolerance, self-peace and respect for parents and elders through proverb (*Karin Magana*) and folktale (*Tatsuniyya*).

Findings revealed that Hausa and most specifically Kabi heritage has several proverbs and folktales on tolerance, respect for parents and elders as well as mutual understanding and respect among all members of a community. Also, there are proverbs and folktales on hospitality, truth and sincerity, role of women to ensure mutual respect among spouses for prevention of matrimonial fictions or domestic violence, control of social problems, the importance of education, conflict resolution, and finally, sustainable peacebuilding. It was through transmission of such proverbs and folktales at the levels of family and public places that Kabi (Argungu Emirate) people were able to sustain its peaceful co-existence until now that the intolerance and violent tendencies among youths are contesting the peace of the Emirate. Given that the related proverbs and folktales cannot be contained within the scope of this article, the following are some Kabi or Hausa proverbs and their advocates:

i. Promotion of Peace

Zaman lafiya yafi zama dan sarki (to be in peace is better than to be a prince or even the king (literal translation) and or peace is priceless (equivalent translation). This proverb expresses the value and importance of peace. The proverb promoted peace and encouraged peaceful co-existence among Kabi/Argungu Emirate people and beyond. The proverb was more often than not used among Kabi people to show the superiority of peace over all, including the son of the king of Kabi (prince) who was a future king of Kabi, or even the throne of *Sarkin Kabi* (king of Kabi) cannot be compared with the value of peace in the society. Also, the Kabi people's love for peace and the centrality of its preservation was clearly expressed in the proverb.

Maso faɗa wawa ne (a quarrel loving person is described as a fool). This proverb was commonly said among the people of Kabi to discourage troublemaking and violent attitudes. By the use of the proverb Kabi people thought that whoever disturbs peace and brings instability among people is socially imbalanced or unhealthy.

Tashin hankali yana kawo tsiya (conflict brings poverty). For Kabi/Argungu and the entire Hausa people, conflicts caused evils and regression. They believed that where there was conflict, there would be no development. To them, peace was directly related to economic prosperity. Only with a peaceful atmosphere, Kabi people could prosper and their economic growth was dependent on their peace. This proverb was communicated among Kabi people to ensure peace in Kabi society.

Allah ba mu lafiya da zama lafiya (May Allah give us health and peace). There is no doubt that Kabi people valued peace to greater extent and did their best to avoid conflicts. That was why they often time repeated this proverb as a prayer for Allah to give them health and peace. They believed that everything one possessed in this life whether wealth, children or any position peace was the *raison d'être* for its enjoyment.

Zabi makwabci tun ba ka sayi gida ba (Choose your neighbour before you buy a house). According Hausa traditions and Islamic religion as well, neighbourhood is very crucial in Kabi and the larger Hausa society. It is the provision of the two that your neighbour is like a blood relation. Any conflict with him can make living together almost impossible. If you want buy a house, you should study and understand the people you are going to live with. This will help in preventing the possible occurrence of conflict. This proverb was widely communicated among the people of Kabi to ensure peace.

ii. Conflict Resolution (*Sulhu*) and Peacebuilding

Certain Hausa proverbs are employed to smoothing social frictions and dissatisfactions, thereby easing the task of the individual in his struggles to adjust himself in his new situation. The most important to Hausa is to take all precautions to avoid the friction or conflict. After taking all precautions and yet one has some frictions with his friends, relations or neighbours he is quickly reminded of several informative and inspiring proverbs. Such proverbs were widely and maximally communicated among the people Kabi/Argungu for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. They include the following:

Akan saba ko tsakanin harshe da hakora (friction does happen even between the tongue and the teeth). This proverb draws the attention of the friends, relations and neighbours that friction happens among even friends and relations. What is not normal is to allow the friction to escalate into a major conflict. In Kabi, the proverb was used to show how close the individuals in reference are to each other just as tongue is to teeth. Just as tongue and teeth have to live together despite occasional frictions, so also friends, relations and even neighbours should learn from tongue and teeth. They should desist from escalating simple misunderstandings into major conflicts.

Kada a mayar da kurji gyambo (do not turn a boil into an ulcer). This was transmitted among Kabi people to warn them against pushing minor misunderstanding to major dispute. Misunderstanding should be seen as normal situations in complex societies. When they happened, they should be seen as intricacies of human existence. This is very important for, the major conflicts and disputes happened in the history of mankind have had their origin from simple dispute that transformed into heinous conflict.

A rufe tutu a ci tuwo (let's cover human excrement and eat food). This proverb was circulated among Kabi people to show the need that minor misunderstanding and past misdeeds whichever away should not be waged into disputes. The individuals involved in the misunderstanding to let it go by arriving at positive peace through dialogue. The images of human excrement and food are brought together to draw the attention of the reader the difficulty involved. Yet, there is a way to make headway, if one has to eat food. How does he do it? He should cover the excrement to be able to eat his food. Similarly, for the sake of peace the individuals involved in minor dispute need to forget their differences and concentrate on things that unite them together.

Hakuri maganin zaman duniya (patience is a universal remedy). This was a proverb transmitted among the people of Kabi/Argungu for the preservation of peace and sustainable peacebuilding. The proverb advocated patience as means of conflict prevention among Kabi people, also served as a panacea for conflict resolution between and or among disputants. Kabi people more often than not used this proverb to encourage peaceful coexistence in society. Another related proverb here is that *mahakurci, mawadaci* (patient is successful). Kabi people transmitted this proverb to emphasize that need for, and importance of patience in one's life by showing that a patient person is always successful in life. And the best success is that of peaceful coexistence in society. Also, there was transmission of a proverb saying: *mai hakuri ke dafa dutsi har yasha roman sa* (only patient can cook a stone and drink even its juice). This proverb as many others was used by Kabi people to show the centrality of patient in peacebuilding and peaceful con-existence. It connotes that only patience results in success, but it requires endurance and tolerance.

Ba a rama gayya da fushi (do not avenge a malicious conduct when angry). This is another Hausa proverb that advocates conflict resolution. It was widely communicated among Kabi people in the past. The proverb connotes that angry reaction causes contrition and remorseful action. Unclever people act hastily and therefore add insult to an existing injury. At extended family level, the proverb was extensively used to nip in the bud disputes that were likely escalate because of awkward action by one of the parties in the dispute.

Rigakafi yafi magani (prevention is better than cure). This proverb was transmitted among Kabi people to show the importance of being cautious and vigilant in life. The proverb connotes that it is always better to do one's best to preserve

peace than to start a conflict. Or in other words, it is always better to avoid a conflict than allow it to start. In the formulation of the proverb, the Kabi/Hausa people consider that prevention is incomparable with with cure; because of three main reasons: (1) when a conflict starts no one can predict its end; (2) when it starts no one can imagine its consequences; and (3) peace recovery is difficult after a conflict. Therefore, the philosophy of communicating the proverb among all Kabi people was that, they must play great role in peace promotion and conflict prevention in the society. The proverb was regularly used among Kabi adults and children to achieve this aim. Also, the philosophy relies on a collective awareness to encourage peaceful co-existence by preventing conflicts in society.

Kalangu guda ba ya amo (one drum does not make noise - this means it takes two or more to make quarrel). The proverb signifies that one party (disputant) cannot quarrel with itself; it needs another party (disputant) get involved. And if a disputant is convinced to forgive the other, then resolution will be achieved easily.

Sai bango ya tsage kadangare ke samun wurin shiga (only when a wall cracks, the lizard gains entry). This proverb was widely used in Kabi to call for solidarity and cooperation among Kabi people to boost community strength against any dispute or conflict to divide them. The proverb revealed to the Kabi people that discord breaks up families. It always reminded them that unity was their strength, and they should do their best to maintain unity.

iii. Hospitality

There are several Kabi/Hausa proverbs that advocate the need for hospitality. Such proverbs include:

Shimfidar fuska tafi ta tabarma (a smiling face is a better welcome than the offer of a mat). This proverb was widely and maximally communicated among Kabi people to boost for, and understanding among all. The proverb connotes that a welcoming face is better than the entire offer that will be given. While the proverb is part of the Hausa traditions, its essence is deeply rooted in Islamic religion. Another related proverb is:

Ba bakonka ruwa ka sha labara (give a stranger water and he will tell you the news). The proverb was commonly communicated among the people of Kabi in the past and it advocated that guests and visitors should be prioritised. It connotes that if a guest or visitor is welcomed, he will narrate all the needed information to his host.

Bako rahama ne (a guest is a blessing). This proverb was similarly transmitted among Kabi people and it was linked to the provision of Islamic religion that prescribes how guests and visitors should be treated. The proverb tries to draw the attention of Kabi people to the benefit of welcoming a guest or visitor and describes it as a blessing.

iv. Truth and Sincerity

Among the virtues most cherished by the Kabi and Hausa people in general which also was believed to be a quality of peace loving and humble youths is truth and sincerity. Therefore, Kabi people of past employed a number of proverbs to encouraged honesty, truth and sincerity among their youths. Such proverbs include:

Gaskiya dokin karfe, makaryaci ba zai hau ba (truth is an iron horse, a liar will not climb). This proverb presents an insight into the importance and power of being truthful.

Tsare gaskiya ko da wuta aka saka ka (keep to the truth even if they put you in the fire). This is another proverb widely said among Kabi people of the past and it connotes insistence, consistence and persistence on telling the truth without minding the consequences.

Gaskiya daci gareta (the truth is always bitter). This proverb was equally communicated among Kabi people to show the importance of telling the truth no matter the situation.

v. Women

In Hausaland and Kabi in particular, it was recognised that women had vital roles to play to prevent family frictions and domestic violence. Thus, there were many Kabi/Hausa proverbs that discussed the role of women especially married ones in Kabi, and how they were perceived by the society and their husbands in particular; as well as how they (the women) perceived the men of Kabi, especially their husbands. Such proverbs include:

Matar na tuba bata rasa mijin aure (a woman who says I am sorry would always have a husband to marry). This proverb was widely said in Kabi and it was in relation to the fact that some women were strong headed while many others were not. The proverb revealed that women, especially wives who used to ask for forgiveness from their husbands when they make any mistake would not get separated or lack husbands.

Zaman ka kai kadai yafi zama da muguwar mace. (living on your own is better than living with a wicked woman). This proverb was widely communicated to discourage Kabi people from getting married to troublesome women. The essence of the proverb was to reveal to Kabi women that one of the qualities for them to get married was to be peaceful. The proverb connotes that the Kabi men preferred living alone to marrying a wicked woman.

vi. Control of Social Problems

Kabi people transmitted a number of Hausa proverbs to exercise social control. The widely communicated proverbs among Kabi people were used to maintain conformity to the accepted patterns of social pressure as well as exercise social control. Such proverbs are:

Duk abinda mutum ya shuka shi zai girba (what one sow it is what he will reap). This proverb was transmitted among Kabi youths to counsel some of them that were behaving contrary to the expectation of Kabi society. The proverb was revealing to such youths that whatever they did in life they must accept the consequences of their actions either good or bad. In other words, the proverb meant to draw their attention to the fact that whatever they did surely come back to them sooner or later.

In za ka gina ramin mugunta gina shi gajere (If you are going to dig a hole of wickedness, dig a shallow one). This was another proverb widely communicated against wickedness among Kabi people. According to the proverb, if a person was to lay a trap for others, he was advised not to overdo it because he might be the one to fall into the trap.

Komai yayi farko zai yi karshe (everything that has a beginning has an end). This proverb was equally transmitted among Kabi people and it is self-explanatory. The proverb signifies that whatever the situation might be one will not dwell forever. It definitely has an end. The Kabi people used the proverb to encourage endurance and perseverance on what was expected of them by their society no matter the difficulty of the situation they were in.

Conclusion

According to the findings of the research, it is clear that Hausa indigenous knowledge was imparted among youths through proverbs and folktales. Using the same means, the knowledge was widely transmitted among Kabi people to address intolerance, indiscipline, conflicts, and ultimately, to achieve sustainable peacebuilding. Specifically, it became clear that Kabi people used several proverbs to push for, and or against actions which conformed to, or contested Kabi societal values. Also, the proverbs were widely used as major vehicles for conflict prevention and resolution. Thus, this article submits that the current intolerance and violent tendencies among Argungu youths and beyond could be addressed and sufficiently reduced by adopting good manners embodied in Hausa. The culture could be communicated through proverbs and folktales in our nursery, primary and junior secondary schools with intent of addressing the existing menace of intolerance and violent tendencies among the youths.

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4. Musa Jabbi, male, 64 years, Argungu Local Government Area
5. Muhammad Garba, male, 61 years, Argungu Local Government Area
6. Shehu Mani, male, 54 years, Argungu Local Government Area
7. Tuni Garba, female, female, 25 years, Argungu Local Government Area
8. Dan Mani Musa, male, 52 years, Argungu Local Government Area
9. Gandi Muhammad, male, 64 years, Arewa Local Government Area
10. Ibrahim Umar, male, 66 years, Arewa Local Government Area
11. Ashiru Ibrahim Gandi, male, 28 years, Arewa Local Government Area
12. Shehu Sama'ila, male, 55 years, Arewa Local Government Area
13. Sanusi Ladan, male, 46 years, Arewa Local Government Area
14. Tsahara Nahantsi, female, 61 years, Arewa Local Government Area
15. Bello Tani, female, 29 years, Arewa Local Government Area
16. Nuhu Sarki, male, 32 years, Arewa Local Government Area
17. Aliyu Abubakar, male, 55 years, Augie Local Government Area
18. A'in Hashimu, female, 58, Augie Local Government Area
19. Bashiru Aliyu, male, 58 years, Augie Local Government Area
20. Abdullahi S. Noma, male, 55 years, Augie Local Government Area
21. Mu'azu Aliyu, male, 49, years, Augie Local Government Area
22. Shitu Musa, male, 28 years, Augie Local Government Area

23. Aminu Danbuga, male, 47 years, Augie Local Government Area
24. Hassana Bello, female, 23 years, Augie Local Government Area
25. Tsahara Abubakar, female, 55 years, Dandi Local Government Area
26. Abubakar Umar, male, 50 years, Dandi Local Government Area
27. Shehu Mani, male, 57 years, Dandi Local Government Area
28. Garba Bello, male, 43 years, Dandi Local Government Area
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