

DOMESTIC RELIGIOUS CONFLICT AND THE ROLES OF TRADITIONAL RULERS IN NIGERIA

By

¹Bona Chizea & ²Oarhe Osumah PhD

*¹Department of Political Science, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma
²Department of Public Administration, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma*

Abstract

Nigeria is currently plagued in great intensity by domestic religious conflict with grave danger for the nation's existence. The momentum the domestic religious conflict indicates ineffectiveness of the measures adopted by the Nigerian government to address the phenomenon and the need to search for an alternative institution such as traditional rulers to play some roles. This article based on desk information examines the potential roles and status of the role of traditional rulers in addressing domestic religious conflict. The article reveals that traditional rulers have potential roles to play in mitigating domestic religious conflict in terms of provision of early warning signals, peacemaking and peacebuilding. Unlike state officials, the potentials of traditional rulers to play these roles derive from their durability, adaptability, proximity to the grassroots with a greater spatial familiarity of the local communities where domestic religious conflict often occurs. However, the status of the role of traditional rulers in the management domestic religious conflict has been marginal due to weak resource base and overbearing influence of the state. Thus, to be more effective in the management of domestic religious conflict, there is need for traditional rulers to demonstrate exemplary conducts in their respective domains, and to arouse awareness of traditional rulers to their potential, encourage them to form strategic alliance with themselves and agents of the state and act in concert.

Keywords: Traditional rulers, religious conflict, state, peacemaking, peacebuilding

Introduction

Since the closing decades of the 20th century when the wave of Maitatsine riots swept across most parts of the northern Nigeria, domestic religious conflict has spread to other parts of the country. The persistence and spread of domestic religious conflagrations have resulted in the loss of lives and property. As a consequence of the persistent eruption of domestic

religious conflict, Nigerians now invest huge energy in redefining their national identity (Philip 2012). For example, following multiple Boko Haram attacks in 2012, Tobias Michael Idika, the President of the Kano State Chapter of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, apex socio-cultural organization in a press statement called on state governors in south-east and South regions to come and aid their displaced citizens in Kano State. (Philips 2012:16). Also, following the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency, many young Nigerian graduates from the states in southern Nigeria now vow not to go to the states in the Northern part of the country to participate in the one year compulsory National Youth Service Corps programme intended by the establishing Decree of 1973 to promote national integration (Osumah, 2013). Still, those who have profited from the persistence of religious conflagration in the past have continued to proliferate and manipulate religious movement, bigotry and intolerance (Jega, 2007).

Although, Nigeria has been luckier than some countries such as Burundi, Iran, Indian, Ireland, Lebanon, Rwanda and Sudan in terms of severity of religious conflagration (Imobighe, 2012), there is the anxiety and palpable trepidation that the phenomenon if not effectively managed could spell doom for the country's current democratic experiment and continued existence as an ethnically and religiously diverse nation (Jega, 2007).

In the literature, the domestic religious conflict in Nigeria has generated academic interest. Most of the studies (Imobighe 2012, Jega 2007) have significantly focused on how to address the issue in general terms. In more specific terms, some studies (Aghedo and Osumah 2014) have focused on economic empowerment as a way to effectively tackle domestic religious conflict with Boko Haram insurgency as a case. These extant studies pay little attention to the role traditional rulers in addressing domestic religious conflict. Thus, this article is unique and significant in contributing to existing knowledge by its focus on potential roles traditional rulers have to play and the status of their roles in managing domestic religious conflict. To present a clear picture of the potential role traditional rulers can play and the roles they have played attempt is made to examine the genesis of and catalytic factors in domestic religious conflict in Nigeria. In addition, the responses to the domestic religious conflict and the inadequacies in the responses are outlined. Subsequently, the article concludes and makes some recommendations. Before proceeding with these central issues, this article which in terms of methodology utilizes data derived from secondary sources unpacked the two key concepts; domestic religious conflict, and traditional rulers.

Conceptual Notes

Domestic Religious Conflict

By way of conceptualization, domestic religious conflict can be described as risks, tension, mutual fear and suspicion, lack of cordiality, quarrelsomeness and tendency towards violent confrontation engendered by the way the religious adherents practice, observe, and propagate their respective doctrines in a multi-religious state like Nigeria. Although, Nigeria is a multi-religious state, there are two dominant ones; Islam and Christianity. In each of the dominant religion are various groups. Among the Christian religion, there are broadly two groups, the orthodox Christians and Pentecostal Christians. In the former groups are Christians who subscribe to the image of contrite, humble and simple Christians whose treasures are in Heaven. In the latter group are radical and liberation theologians who seek earthly paradise and hereafter heavenly treasure (Imobighe 2012). Even among the Pentecostal Christians have emerged different groups of fundamentalists with catchy-names for wooing desperate fortune-hunters and wretched young men and women in search for miraculous breakthrough which the orthodox churches seem incapable of providing. Similarly, among the Muslims there are two dominant groups, fundamentalists and orthodox. The Muslim fundamentalists oppose the orthodox Muslim group's drift into excessive materialism. Thus, the Muslim fundamentalists seek to restore Islam to its true form in tandem with Koranic injunction. Like the Pentecostal Christians in Nigeria, their Muslim fundamentalist counterparts propagate new doctrines. The most prominent among the Muslims fundamentalists were the Izala and the Maitatsine sect, which have been banned for being behind the religious riots in major cities in the North in the early 1980s.

It is pertinent to note that the manifestation of revisionist tendencies within various religious groups is not in itself at the root of religious conflict. Rather it is the attitude and tendencies of the adherents and leaders of the diverse religious groups that constitute source of conflict. In this paper, for the sake of analytical convenience, the discussion of domestic religious conflict in Nigeria centered on the disturbances involving the adherents of two dominant religious groups, Christianity and Islam.

Traditional Rulers

By way of definition, traditional ruler according to Ola and Tonwe (2013) is a traditional head of an ethnic group or clan who is the holder of the highest executive authority in an indigenous polity or who has been

appointed to the position in accordance with the custom and tradition of the area concerned by instrument or order of the state government and whose title is recognized as a traditional ruler by the government of the State. They are designated as Obas, Emirs, Obong and Obis. Some traditional rulers are high profile Nigerians who have made their marks in various walks of life. They include Sultan Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar III and Mohammed Sani Sami – Emir of Zuru who were former military generals and the Emir of Kano, Mallam Lamido Sanusi Lamido who was the immediate past Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria. Others include the Oni of Ife, Oba of Benin, Lamidi Adeyemi II – the Alafin of Oyo, Olateru Olagbegi III – the Olowo of Owo and Oba Rilwan Akiolu- Oba of Lagos. Some traditional rulers such as the Sultan of Sokoto command greater respect than many trustees of formal government institutions in Nigeria. This can be inferred from a statement credited to the late Sarduna of Sokoto, Ahmedu Bello, who was once an aspirant to the sultan's throne that if he was asked to choose between the Nigerian Presidency and sultanate, his choice would be the latter (Agbese 2004).

It is pertinent to note that in Nigeria, there is a wide variety in kinds and forms of traditional rulers. Some of them are several centuries old while some are emerged in the recent generation. Some traditional rulers exercise powers and influence over large domain while others are little kinglets in their remote villages. Also, some enjoy considerable level of recognition, acceptance, respect and allegiance from their subjects, while some others command little respect from rented proximate associates and bootlickers. Between these extremes presented above, most traditional rulers find themselves. This presupposes that there are various grades of traditional rulers, first class downward and some too difficult to determine their class status. Even among the first class graded traditional rulers, the George Orwell story about the animal farm is demonstrated, where some are more prominent than others. Also, although traditional rulers derive their legitimacy from traditions and customs in their respective concerned domains, in modern times, political authority of traditional rulers derives from concerned state government officials. They also operate within the legal framework and directives set by government.

However, traditional rulers have remained the only symbols of authorities in the rural areas or grassroots where the apparatuses of modern government are absent (Ibrahim 2003). Traditional rulers maintain peace and stability in their domains. They also mobilize local institutions for provision

of social services and resolution of conflicts. The power elites at the various levels (federal, state and local) of government in Nigeria have continued to depend on traditional rulers to reach the people at the rural areas. In fact, most representatives of the formal government institutions in Nigeria are largely inaccessible to the average person and insensitive to their welfare needs. Apparently, many ordinary citizens see those who run formal government in Nigeria as corrupt, uncaring and unjust (Blench, Longtau Hassan and Walsh 2006). In this way, the perception of formal government representatives as distant and alienated from the ordinary persons underscores the continued relevance of traditional rulers. Unlike most trustees of modern state, traditional rulers have been more open, accessible and receptive to the ordinary people and have stronger investment in broader interest of the community. In fact, in the minds and eyes of the ordinary people in the rural areas, traditional rulers seem to be the only government they know and can run to for help (Agbese 2004). Traditional rulers on account of their closeness to the grassroots are relied upon by representatives of the formal government institutions to communicate with and mobilize the average person about government position on certain matters. This is in recognition of the fact that their subjects look up to them as repositories of their respective culture, traditions and social values (Chizea and Osumah, 2015).

The importance of traditional rulers is further underscored by the social and political value many Nigerians especially aspirants or contestants for key positions in modern government attach to honorary chieftaincy titles. The title dignifies recipients and enhances their reputation over colleagues and co-competitors for political positions. Indeed, the representatives of modern government promote the status and relevance of traditional rulers through appointments into key positions. A number of the first class traditional rulers are pro-chancellors of government owned universities. Some have also been nominated or appointed to participate in political reform conferences. For example, in the 1994 Constitutional Conference under the General Sani Abacha regime and in the 2005 Political Reform Conference under President Olusegun Obasanjo, some traditional rulers were appointed to participate (Ibrahim 2003; Osumah, 2016).

Furthermore, in periods of political and economic quagmire, when trustees of modern government seemed overwhelmed and / or lacking ideas on what to do they call on traditional rulers to advise appropriately. For example, in the wake of the political impasse triggered by the cancellation of the June 12, 1993 presidential election won by M.K.O. Abiola, the Abacha

regime appointed prominent traditional rulers as members of the group dubbed Leaders of Thought constituted by the regime to advise it on the regime's transition programme (Jega, 2007). Also, the Sultan of Sokoto and some Emirs and Obas advised the General Ibrahim Babagida regime which annulled the June 12, 1993 presidential election to rescind its decision in order to avoid violence (Jega 2007). Also, in attempts to curtail hostilities, opposition, pressure and severe criticisms from radical elements and activists in the country, trustees of the state call on traditional rulers to caution them. For example, when the Babangida regime found it difficult to placate late Gani Fawehinmi's vociferous opposition against it even after subjecting him to illegal detention, the regime released him and handed him over to the Ooni of Ife who was expected to caution him on the need to exercise restraint (Agbese 2004). Also, the recognition of the relevance of traditional rulers in modern times is given credence during state visits by prominent political leaders who pay homage to them to fraternize and solicit their advice.

In recognition of the importance of traditional rulers, there have been increasing promotional campaigns on the imperative to grant traditional rulers constitutional responsibilities. President Olusegun Obasanjo in the last lap of his tenure advocated for the need to assign constitutional responsibilities to traditional rulers. The promotional campaign continued under President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua at the usual courtesy calls on traditional rulers. (Abdu ND). These promotional campaigns for assignment of constitutional functions to traditional rulers are in recognition of the importance of traditional rulers.

Despite the recognition of the trappings of traditional rulers, they are subordinated to top government officials. The subordination or subjection of traditional rulers to the dictates of government officials started under colonialism with the adoption of Indirect Rule System. The Indirect Rule System shattered structures of traditional rulership. With the Indirect Rule System, the British colonialists meddled in the dynastic politics, deposing, exiling and reinstating high ranking traditional rulers with great regularity (Iyoha, 1999; Osumah, 2016).

Following the collapse of the Indirect Rule System in the 1950s, the role of traditional rulers was further modified under Sir John Macpherson and Lyttleton Constitutions. Traditional rulers in conjunction with governors in the respective regions were involved in policy making until the attainment of independence. Under the 1960 Independence Constitution and 1963 Republican Constitution, traditional rulers were nominated as members of

House of Representatives with the mandate to make laws for the peace, order and good governance. Also, there were constitutional provisions which permitted traditional rulers to be nominated into the House of Chiefs in each region (Agbese 2004). With these roles, traditional rulers became victims of negative partisan politics, which prompted the initiation of various corrective measures. Under the military rule especially under the Generals J.T A. Ironsi and Olusegun Obasanjo regimes, corrective policy measures were initiated to remove traditional rulers from partisan politics. The Gobir panel set up by the Ironsi administration recommended the merger of the Native Authority and Prisons with the Federal Police and Prisons and abolished the Akali court. These institutions had been used by traditional rulers to intimidate and harass opposition politicians. The implementation of the report restricted traditional rulers to functions of guidance of tradition and royal fathers of the people (Abdu ND).

The removal of traditional rulers from politics was institutionalized, codified and legalized under the 1976 local government reform under the Obasanjo regime. Also, the 1979 Constitution by its abolition of House of Chiefs and provision in Section 7 (1) that members of the local government shall be democratically elected automatically stripped traditional rulers of their constitutional roles in the running of local government. Even the 1999 Constitution currently in operation made no provision for any meaningful political role for traditional rulers.

Genesis of Domestic Religious Conflict in Nigeria

Excluding the Jihad of 1804, the earliest outbreaks of religious conflict in Nigeria were the Maitatsine riots in the early 1980s in major cities in the northern part of the country, which resulted in destruction of property and huge carnage. The Maitatsine religious sect was founded by a Cameroonian insurgent, Muhammadu Marwa popularly known as Maitatsine. He came to Kano as a preacher. He preached derisively against the dominant Muslim groups such as the Tijanniyya and Qadiriyya sects. It also castigated the affluent people and those in government. He branded them as infidels – unbelievers who were hell-bound. He gained the followership of young, single and poor people. Most of his followers were recruited partly through the almajiri system, and partly from motor parks, railway stations and along the streets (Imobighe, 2012).

As the Maitatsine sect preached derisively of the existing Islamic orthodoxy, it had clashes with other Muslims and eventually with the police

in 1980. At the time the sect started to clash with the police, it had large followership. In Yan Awaki enclave in Kano it had about 5,000 followers. By October 1982, the sect had about 800 followers in Bullum-Kutu enclave in Maiduguri, and 1,000 followers in Jemita-Yola by January 1984 (Pogoson, 1983; Imobighe, 2012). Between December 1980 and March 1984, the Maitatsine sect was responsible for four of the major incidents of religious conflagrations in the northern part of Nigeria. These were in Kano from December 11-29, 1980; in Bullum-Kutu from October 26 – 29, 1982; in Rigassa, Kaduna State on October 29, 1982; and Jimeta Yola from February 27 – March 5, 1984. Maitatsine was killed during the Kano crisis but his followers continued his provocative preaching until they were smoked out from their Jemita enclave in March 1984 (Pogoson, 1983; Imobighe, 2012).

Instructively, the Maitatsine sect was not responsible for all the religious disturbances in the Northern Nigeria during this period. According to Police statistics between 1978 and 1980, a total of 32 disturbances took place all over Northern Nigeria between different Islamic sects (Pogoson, 1983). Other Islamic sects like the Izala, which was formed in Jos by a Muslim preacher, Ismalia were responsible for some of the disturbances. The Izala and the Tijanniya often had clashes during Friday prayer (Imobighe, 2012)

Between the 1980s when the Maitatsine riots took place and 2004, there were 50 cases of religious rumpuses in various parts of Nigeria (see table 1 on appendix for graphic details). It is important to note that up to 1984, most of the religious conflagrations that took place in Northern Nigeria were between Muslim groups although there were signs of gradual build-up of tension between the Muslim and Christian groups. The earliest clash between Muslim and Christians was in March 1986 in Ilorin, Kwara State. Also, there has been gradual expansion of the frontiers of domestic religious conflagrations. While the phenomenon was essentially restricted to the North, events in recent times have indicated that the South is not totally immune from it. Also, out of the 50 cases, about 33 incidents of religious conflict were recorded in the country since the return to civil rule in 1999 after long stretch of military. This statistics suggests that there has been heightened domestic religious conflict in the wake of civil rule. Also, although there is no precise statistical record on the quantum of losses associated with domestic religious conflict in the country, it is controvertible that losses have been huge. Between 1999 and 2003, in about 50 cases of religious violence over 10,000 persons died and over 300,000 were internally displaced

(Salawu, 2010). The ongoing Boko Haram insurgency in the North East of Nigeria according to a Coalition of Civil Society Groups has affected over 194,664 students and 800 school buildings (Ayansina 2014). According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2015 Report nine million people have been affected by Boko Haram insurgency in the north-eastern Nigeria, with three million acutely needing humanitarian assistance. An estimated 35,000 refugees are in northern Cameroun, 10,000 in Chad and 90,000 displaced persons (refugees, returnees and third-country nationals) have been in Diffa region in Niger (UNHCR, 2015 cited in Osumah and Azelama, 2016).

Catalytic Factors for Domestic Religious Conflict in Nigeria

Several causes can be ascribed to the eruption of domestic religious conflict in Nigeria. One of the catalytic factors can be discern from the North-South divide of religion distribution. As noted earlier, Nigeria is dominated by two major religious groups, Christianity and Islam. The two dominant religions separate the major ethnic groups, Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba. The population of the Hausa-Fulani is dominated by Muslims, the Yoruba population is religiously an even mixture of Muslims and Christians, while the Igbo population is predominantly Christians. It is this unique religious divide that prompted Onaiyeka (2008) to describe Nigeria as the greatest Islamo-Christian nation in the world. By this, he implied that Nigeria is the biggest country in the world with evenly split population of Muslims and Christians. This imperfect distribution of religious adherents along ethnic lines creates a fertile ground for the recurrence of violent conflict. A common feature of the domestic religious conflict is that they emerge as religion and dovetail into ethnic cocoon.

Another catalytic factor for domestic religious conflict is the radicalization of rival or factional religious groups. Notably differences in religion are not abnormal in a society, but such differences have the tendency of reinforcing divisions within a community. In essence, there is the tendency for religious leaders and their followers to tolerate those who share the same religious belief with them. Similarly, such attitude can make religious leaders and their followers to feel that their own religious belief is superior and truer while all others are inferior and false, which they owe their religion the duty to eliminate. In Northern Nigeria, there is a distinction between militant and non-militant Muslims (Peil 1976). The former carries out a series of jihads in order to spread and purify their religion. Also, in Northern Nigeria, Christians

and Muslims are becoming more radical and violent in their approach to rival faiths. A number of Christians in the North have begun to justify the deployment of violence in defence of their faith while the Muslims sacralized it as legitimate by aestheticization of death in the struggle against rival faiths (Oloso 2010).

Also, a catalytic factor in domestic religious conflict in Nigeria is the introduction and application of Sharia Penal Code in 12 northern states in the return to civil rule in 1999 in spite of Nigeria's secularity generated interreligious disharmony. The Christians opposed the introduction and application of the Islamic laws while the Muslims especially the fundamentalists were in support of the law. These dispositions snowballed into violent clashes between adherents of both religious groups in places such as Kaduna and Jos (Abah 2011).

The application of Sharia penal code in spite of Nigeria's secularity remains a specter that would continue to thwart efforts at ensuring peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians. The Federal Government's complacency in the face of the grievous infringement of Nigeria's secularity not only emboldened some Muslims to demonstrate defiance for constituted authorities elsewhere but encouraged them to nurse particularistic religious sentiments for the Sharia even in areas where they constituted a minority population of settlers such as Plateau State (Abah 2011). The introduction of Sharia laws partly provided the basis for the phenomenon of Jama'atu ahlu sunnah lid da'awati wal jihad popularly called Boko Haram. Boko Haram Islamic militant sect repudiates any government that is not rooted in Sharia penal code irrespective of its democratic nature. Boko Haram sect believes that its violent activities represent a war between Muslims and infidels (Osumah 2013).

Also, the progressive economic decline with the attendant extreme hardship, mass unemployment and poverty is identified as catalytic factor in the eruption of domestic religious conflict in Nigeria. Studies have revealed that the pool of poor and unemployed persons, constitute the source for recruits into the ranks of most of the fanatical religious sect. Although Nigeria is blessed with resource abundance, its resource has been squandered due to the unbridled corruption and gross mismanagement by the country's ruling-elite (Osumah, 2017). This has engendered mass poverty and unemployment especially among the youth. The neglected and wretched young people largely constitute the reservoir of human potential to be preyed, exploited and recruited by religious swindlers and warlords (Jega 2007). This

category of people is often ready and willing to be mobilized to partake in violence because of the opportunity it offers them to loot public and private property (Imobighe, 2003).

In addition, the availability of sophisticated weapons for unleashing terror and mass destruction in unauthorized hands in the country is a catalytic factor in the eruption of domestic religious conflict in Nigeria. The proliferation of weapons in unauthorized hands is aided by individual returnee soldiers from Nigerian peace keeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone who allegedly brought back large quantities of weapons bought at very little token from rebels and resold at very high prices in Nigeria. Also, the problem of weapons pilfering from state armories and thriving business of local fabrication of illicit arms by indigenous black smiths in several cities have partly led to ready availability of weapons for self-defense vigilante groups and criminals alike. An attestation to the ready availability of weapons is the report that at US\$100 black market price AK 47 rifle can be purchased in Nigeria (Reno, 2004). A demonstration of the proliferation of arms in aiding religious conflagration was in the October 1991, when Muslim extremists and Christian traders clashed in Sabon Gari, Kano over the latter group's invitation of Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke to Kano. The Christian group which comprised largely Ibo traders organized themselves into popular defence units armed with shotguns and pump action rifles and exacted such a heavy toll in lives of the rampaging almajirai (koranic school students) and Yandaba (neighbourhood urchins). The privately held arms alarmed the then Federal Military Government of General Babangida, and compelled it to decree that firearms licences be withdrawn nationwide (Abah 2011).

Responses to Domestic Religious Conflict in Nigeria

The Nigerian government has adopted various measures to grapple with domestic religious conflict in the country. One of the commonest measures for the management of the conflict has been deployment of security agencies to restore peace, law and order in the scenes of religious violence. Once religious violence starts, the Nigerian state first invites the regular police to handle the situation. When the regular police is unable to quell the violence, the national government mobilizes the anti-riot mobile police unit to intervene. Also, when dynamics of the violence goes beyond what the anti-riot control unit of the police can handle, military personnel are deployed to handle the situation with an order to use brutal force to stem the tide of hostilities (Akinwale 2010). This strategy is fast losing credibility and

efficacy. The process of military deployment during religious violence is rigorous. Thus, quite often the security agencies have been blamed for their slow rate and ineffectiveness of response to violence until when several killings have been recorded. Even when the security agencies were quick to respond, their mode of operation is largely the routine duty of mounting roadblocks, patrolling of main roads and arrest and interrogation of suspected leaders. These modes of operation have been generally inadequate and ineffective because they have been riddled with corruption (Osumah and Aghedo 2010). Besides, the patrols and roadblocks have never acted as effective check on the movement of rioters and dangerous weapons. Also, because of the proliferation of light and sophisticated arms, warring factions resist the military strategy. Furthermore, the use of extreme force by the military culminates in huge carnage, human rights violations, and escalation of violence. For instance, the excessive use of force by the security in the Muslim-Christian clash in Jos city on November 28th – 29th, 2008, led to the deaths of more than 700 people (Human Rights Watch Report 2009).

The Nigerian government in response to domestic religious conflict also impose prolonged emergency rule. This strategy has not been quite effective as indicated by the subscription of a considerable number of people in the hotbeds of religious conflagration in the country to unconventional strategies such as vigilantes, militias, communal solidarity, charms and prayers (Akinwale 2010). The prolonged emergency rule in Yobe, Adamawa and Borno States due to the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency yielded only marginal impact. In spite of emergency rule, Boko Haram attacks continued to sack many communities with heavy internal displacement and casualties including security personnel. Boko Haram militants between July 2014 and February 2015 had sacked several communities in not less than 15 local government areas in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states. Some of the communities included Madagali, Mubi in Adamawa State, Abadam, Ashigashiya, Baga, Bama, Dikwa, Gamboru-Ngala, Martes in Borno State and Buni Yadi in Yobe State (Osumah and Azelama, 2016).

An additional strategy adopted by the Nigerian state in response to domestic religious threat has been the setting up of administrative panels or judicial commissions with a mandate to investigate the immediate and remote cause(s) of a particular violent occurrence, the perpetrators and recommend ways for the punishment of culprits within the scope and limits of extant laws. For example, the John Shagaya Commission on Nigeria's membership of the Organization of Islamic Community (OIC), was set up on February 3,

1986 by the Babangida administration following the OIC crisis in early 1986. Notably, this strategy has hardly been effective in dealing with recurring religious conflict because of non-implementation of recommendations of many reports (Fwa 2003).

Potential Roles of Traditional Rulers in Domestic Religious Conflict Management

Traditional rulers have potential often vital in maintaining socio-political process in Nigeria. Their durability, resilience, regenerative and adaptability to changing context as well as being custodians of cherished traditional norms, customs and values are more vital elements in the socio-political process of addressing issues that portend grave danger to national stability. While traditional rulers have and still do address state reform and democratic projects, there is the need for their potentials to be directed to critical areas of domestic religious conflict management.

Traditional rulers are strategically positioned to perform such role. First as grassroots leaders, traditional rulers are closest and more accessible to the citizens. Deriving authority essentially from traditions, traditional rulers possess certain degree of autonomy and provide platform for harnessing the energies of the citizens to achieve common good. More importantly, traditional rulers provide context for interaction of diversity of interests. In addition, traditional rulers provide veritable platform of communication, molding of rules and generation of social action. These are vital to management of domestic religious conflict.

Furthermore, traditional rulers can perform vital role in the mitigation of domestic religious conflict. By their overlapping relations, they can weaken differences. And as custodians of revered traditions and customs, traditional rulers can promote values of tolerance, non-violence, compromise and accommodation among different interests. They can mobilize people to embrace peace. Traditional rulers can identify, monitor and bring early warning signals to the notice of relevant government agencies. They can advocate against policy actions that tend to undermine security.

Also, traditional rulers can identify, highlight and draw attention of the state to early warning signs of domestic religious conflict or simmering domestic religious conflict. They can intervene or seek the intervention of the state before conflict eruption. They can play the role of a mediator. In this way they can assist in arranging and negotiating peace deal. They can be the solid bridges of understanding, trust and confidence between parties in

conflict. By their distinct advantage of greater familiarity and knowledge of their respective domains and also as the custodians of culture, traditional rulers have stronger capacity to interpret early warning information. According to Blench, Longtau, Hassan and Walsh (2006) traditional rulers by their grassroots based and a greater familiarity of traditional institutions with various sections of the communities are capable of taking pre-emptive action, where the security and intelligence agencies have been observed to be reactive.

In addition, traditional rulers can synergize with inter-faith based groups and peacemakers by volunteering information necessary to avoid outbreak of violence. Such information should be disseminated by them to relevant security agencies and vulnerable groups. For example, on the proliferation of arms, border traditional rulers can collaborate with relevant security agencies such as the Nigeria Police, Nigeria Immigration Service and Nigerian Army to check gun runners by monitoring and volunteering information about their activities. Through public awareness and education, traditional rulers can alert residents and prepare them to respond timely and effectively to simmering domestic religious conflict.

During conflict situation, traditional rulers as grassroots leaders can directly intervene or seek intervention of the state in outbreak of domestic religious conflict. As grassroots leaders, traditional rulers can monitor the conduct of parties in the religious conflict and furnish relevant agencies of the state with correct information. They can monitor the activities of state security apparatuses deployed to manage conflict.

In the post domestic religious conflict phase, traditional rulers can provide succor to victims of the conflict. They can draw attention of government to the issue of reconstruction, rehabilitation and resettlement of victims of the conflict. Traditional institutions can assist victims and displaced persons with relief packages. They can also assist in securing hostages and ameliorating hostilities. This can be achieved by joining force with National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and non-governmental organizations such as Red Cross in the resettlement and rehabilitation of affected persons. Also, they can monitor implementation of peace pact. In addition, traditional rulers can embark on de-radicalization of persons which have been indoctrinated by religious fanatics and extremists through counter-campaign and sensitization programme. Traditional rulers or institutions as noted earlier vary from community to community. Thus, they can better promote the values of communication, discourse, non-violence and

tolerance. They can rally the support of various interests for dialogue, negotiate settlements and play down coercive instrument of conducting domestic religious acts.

Status of the Roles of Traditional Rulers in Domestic Religious Conflict Management

Traditional rulers have started to play various roles in the management of domestic religious conflict in terms of peacemaking. By definition, peacemaking is action taken to bring hostile parties to agreement through peaceful means. It focuses on amelioration of situations of conflicts through assistance from a third party (Omoankhanlen, 2007). The Emir of Mubi in Adamawa State demonstrated peacemaking efforts when he directly intervened in a near conflict between Muslims and Christians after Muslims had set fire on EYN church following the Miss World riots in Kaduna on November 2, 2002. The Emir swiftly on foot went to the Church and was personally involved in putting out the fire. He also pleaded with the Christians not to react. Furthermore, in April 2004, the same Emir of Mubi intervened in a near riot situation between Hausa traders and local people. He ensured that those who were behind the situation were arrested by the police (Blench, Selbut Longtau, Hassan and Walsh 2006).

Furthermore, as part of efforts aimed at mediating conflict some traditional rulers organize meetings to discuss issues relating to conflict prevention and management. For example, in Katsina State traditional rulers and community elders meet regularly to discuss issues relating to conflict prevention and mediation. In addition, Alhaji Muhammadu Kabir Na-Goggo, the Emir of Katsina established an umbrella peace committee at the Emirate level and enjoined all districts heads to follow suit. The peace committees are at various levels of formation in virtually all the districts (Blench, Longtau, Hassan and Walsh 2006).

Also, traditional rulers have started to play peacebuilding role in responses to domestic religious conflict. Peace-building refers to strategies aimed at ensuring that disputes and conflict do not arise or reoccur. It involves a range of measures targeted to reduce risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening capacities of conflict management and to lay foundations for sustainable peace and development (OECD 2010 cited in Osumah, 2013). Some traditional rulers have sought the resettlement and rehabilitation of victims of domestic religious conflict. For example, the Emir of Mubi in Adamawa State following restoration of relative peace by security

agencies after Boko Haram attacks called on residents who had fled the community to return to their respective houses without fear. The Emir who had also fled the community into exile for two months over the Boko Haram attack was the first to return to the community. Also, to aid the quick resettlement and rehabilitation of the residents he asked that more doctors and other health workers be deployed to the community to cater for the health needs of the returning residents to Mubi (Njadvara 2014).

Conclusion

Since the 1980s when the wave of the Maitatsine uprisings swept across the parts of Northern Nigeria, domestic religious conflict has become a perennial problem. The persistence and intensity of the conflict indicates the weakness of the state to address it. The weakness of the state in adequately addressing the conflict stems from its poor capacity, lack of credibility and insensitivity. These weaknesses informed the need for and recognition of traditional rulers as alternative platform. Although, traditional rulers possess the potentials to play vital role, the status of their role has been marginal due to inadequate awareness of their potentials or capacity and the nature of the state relations towards them. Thus, traditional rulers can only play subsidiary and complementary role and they cannot replace the role of officials of the state in managing domestic religious conflict in Nigeria. The character of the state influences the nature of the complementary and subsidiary role of traditional rulers in the management of domestic religious conflict in Nigeria. Thus, to be more effective in addressing domestic religious conflict in Nigeria, this article recommends that the need to arouse their awareness to their potentials. In addition, traditional rulers need to demonstrate exemplary conducts in their respective domains, and to arouse awareness of traditional rulers to their potential, encourage them to form strategic alliance with themselves and agents of the state and act in concert.

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Selected Cases of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Northern Nigeria

S/N	Date	Location	Main Actors
1.	May 1, 1980	Zaria (Kaduna State)	Disturbances in Zaria during which property belonging to mainly Christians were destroyed.
2.	December 18-29, 1980	Yan-Awaki Ward in Kano (Kano State)	Riots by Maitatsine Sect. 4,177 people died. Extensive destruction of property.
3.	October 29-30, 1982	Bullumkutu, Maiduguri (Borno State)	Kala-kalo and Maitatsine sects. 18 people died. Extensive damage to property.
4.	October 29-30, 1982	Kano (Kano State)	Muslim demonstrators burnt down churches
5.	February 27-March 5, 1984	Dobeli Ward	Maitatsine Sect. 568 died. Wanton destruction of property.
6.	April 26 – 28, 1985	Pantami Ward, Gombe (Bauchi State)	Maitatsine Sect. 105 died. Extensive destruction of property.
7.	March, 1986	Ilorin (Kwara State)	Muslims and Christians clashed during a Christian procession at Easter.
8.	March, 1987	Kafanchan (Kaduna State)	Clash between Muslims and Christians at the College of Education, Kafanchan. Loss of some lives and the burning of some mosques by Christian and native Kajes.
9.	March, 1987	Katsina, Funtua, Zaria, Gusau and Kaduna (Kaduna State)	Wave of religious riots in which Muslims burnt down numerous churches building and damaged properties belonging to Christians. Many lives were lost.
10.	February, 1988	Kaduna, Kaduna Polytechnic (Kaduna State)	Religious riots, ostensibly among students, destroyed the foundation walls of the Christian chapel.
11.	April, 1991	Katsina (Katsina State)	Religious violence spearheaded by MallamYahayaYakubu, leader of the Fundamental Shite sect in Katsina. It was protest over a blasphemous publication fun times. Several lives were lost and property destroyed.
12.	April, 1991	Tafawa Balewa (Bauchi State)	Started as a quarrel between a Fulani man and a Sayawa meat seller in Tafawa Balewa Escalated into full blown violence and later took the

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			coloring of a religious war in Bauchi. Several lives lost and property valued over hundreds of millions naira destroyed.
13.	October, 1991	Kano (Kano State)	A peaceful procession initiated by the Izala sect to halt Rev. Reinhard Bonnke from having a crusade in Kano later degenerated into a very violent and bloody religious confrontation. Thousands of lives were lost and properties valued in millions of naira were destroyed.
14.	May, 1992	Zango Kataf, (Kaduna State)	A communal feud between the Katafs and the Hausas later took the dimension of inter-religious war between Muslims and Christians in other major cities of Kaduna State. Several lives were lost and properties were destroyed.
15.	January, 1993	Funtua, (Kastina State)	The Kalakato religious sect assaulted the village head and burnt down the police vehicle. Lives and property were also lost.
16.	December, 1994	Kano (Kano State)	Communal violence triggered off by the beheading of a Christian who had allegedly desecrated the Quran.
17.	May, 1995	Kano (Kano State)	Communal violence triggered off by quarrel between Hausa and Ibo led to the burning of houses, churches and shops and killing of innocent people.
18	July 22, 1999	Kano Reprisal Killing	Hausa/Fulani youth took vengeance on the killing of their Kith and Kin in Sagamu. Their target was the Yoruba Community.
19.	February 28, 2009	Kaduna Mayhem (Kaduna State)	Kaduna city exploded as Muslim and Christian extremists and other hoodlums clashed over the proposal to introduce Sharia.
20.	April 14, 2000	Agyragu Crisis (Nasarawa State)	Communal clash that started with a protest against the location of Local Government Headquarters. The militant youth group started the riot and later took to the streets, killing and destroying.

21.	July, 2000	Tsagari Crisis (Kwara State)	Clash between Tsagari and Share communities of Kwara State which claimed several lives.
22.	September 8, 2000	Kaltungo religious (Gombe State)	A religious that was sparked off by the presence of the states Sharia implementation committee.
23.	October 17, 2000	OPC-Hausa/Fulani(Kwara State)	A faceoff between the militant members of OPC and Hausa/Fulani community over supremacy of Emirate system in the state.
24.	October 21, 2001	Minna reprisal (Niger State)	Violent ethnic crisis erupted after the OPC assaults in Kwara and Lagos States.
25.	December 2, 2000	Hadeja crisis (Jigawa State)	A sectarian disturbance that was caused by a debate between Muslims and Christians in Hadeja (Jigawa). There was wanton destruction of worship places.
26.	June 28, 2001	Azara crisis (Nasarawa State)	An ethnic conflict between the Tiv and the Azara indigenes. It started with gruesome killing of an Azara traditional leader, and later spread to the Tiv village, with the Tiv community on the defense.
27.	September 7, 2001	Jos Crisis	A violent ethnic/religious crisis between the Muslim/Hausa Fulani and Christian/Indigenes. The subject of discord between the Jasawa Development Association and Plateau Youth council was over political appointment in Jos-North.
28.	October 12, 2001	Kano Riot	A peaceful anti-American protest over the bombing of Afghanistan turned violent, taking ethnic and religious dimension, it degenerated into uncontrollable violence which claimed lives and damaged properties and place of worship.
29.	October, 29, 2001	Tiv-Jukun/Fulani Conflict	An ethnic clash between Tivs and Jukun/Fulani which was an extension of the May 2001 clash and could be linked to the protracted dispute between both sides. Newswatch reported that 16 soldiers were killed which later led to the gruesome

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			revenge on the Tivs, by the Nigerian Army.
30.	November 1, 2001	Gwantu Crisis	A clash that started on a political ground (over the relocation of LG Headquarters) later took an ethno-religious dimension in which places of worship were destroyed.
31.	December 30, 2001	Vwag Crisis	A violent communal conflict in Vwag district between the indigenes and non-indigenes exploded in the backdrop of the September 7 Jos crises. It started when an illegal group of 40 men attacked the District Head of Vwag. It also had religious colouring.
32.	January 18, 2002	Awe Crisis	A renewed communal clash between two indigenes communities in Awe Local Government of Nasarawa State. The cause was not certain but two people were killed and several other injured.
33.	May 2, 2000	Jos Mayhem	Another mayhem that followed People's Democratic Party (PDP) congress but later took an ethno-religious color.
34.	May 27, 2002	Fulani-Irigwe crisis	An ethnic clash between the Hausa/Fulani and the Irigwe indigenes in Basa, Plateau which was said to be a reprisal attack.
35.	June 1, 2002	Yelwa-Shendam Mayhem (Plateau)	A religious-cum ethnic fracas between the native people (predominantly Christians) and Hausa settlers (predominantly Muslims). This violence extended to about four Local Government Councils in Southern Plateau.
36.	July 1, 2002	Wasa (Plateau)	The Yelwa-Shendam riots spilled over to Wase
37.	July 1, 2003	Edo/Kogi	Communal clashes between border communities in Edo and Kogi States Ekpedo and Ogori over land ownership.
38.	January 1, 2004	Ganye, Adamawa	Clash between Fulani herdsman and farmers over grazing lands.

39.	January 1, 2004	Yobe	Militant Islamic group operating under the name of Muhajiran launched a Taliban-like attack on police. Men of the Nigerian Army killed five and arrested several others.
40	February 1, 2004	Wase/Kanam (Plateau)	Violent clash between Mavo and Taroh communities, which claimed 11 lives.suspectedTaroh youth were alleged to have raided Mavo villages.
41.	February 1, 2004	Wase/Kanam (Plateau)	Communal clash over land ownership between Minda and Kparev groups. Several lives were lost.
42.	April 3, 2004	Makarfi, Kaduna	Religious protest in Makarfi town over the desecration of the Quran by a Christian teenager.
43.	April 11, 2004	Langtang South, Plateau	Continued clashes that led to the sacking of Taroh villages in Langtang South LGC by suspected Hausa-Fulani insurgents.
44.	April 26, 2004	Bakin Chiyawa Plateau	Renewed hostilities launched by suspected displaced Fulani herdsmen. The conflict was believed to be spill over the ethno-religious crisis that has been bedeviling Southern Plateau Local Governments of Langtang South and North, Wase, Kanam and Shendam.
45.	May 1, 2004	Yelwa Shendam, Plateau State	A fresh ethno-religious mayhem that claimed over 650 lives and over 250 women abducted by suspected Tarohmilitant.
46.	May 12, 2004	Kano	Kano mayhem following the YelwaShendam ethno-religious crisis in Plateau. Non-Muslims were attacked in reprisal of the Plateau crisis. Over 200 lives were lost and the traditional ruler of the area deposed.
47.	June 8, 2004	Konshisha / Gwer, Benue	Boundary disputes between neighboring Konshisha and Gwer communities. Thirteen lives were lost.

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48.	June 8, 2004	Numan, Adamawa	Ethno-religious crisis in Numan over the construction of a mosque minaret over the HummaBachamas palace. Over 50 people were feared killed and the traditional ruler of the area disposed.
49.	August 3, 2004	Quanpan, Plateau	Fresh outbreak of violence in Lankaka village. Suspected armed militant from neighboring state allegedly stormed the village community killing two and razing twenty houses.
50.	September 27, 2004	Limankara, Borno	A self-styled Taliban group hiding on the Goza hills and Madara mountains on the north-eastern boarder with Cameroon raid police station killing officers and stealing ammunition.

Source: *Aghedo (2018)*