

Hermeneutics of Religious Concepts as Means of Sustaining Peace

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ABSTRACT: *Hermeneutics of religious ideas, as well as the understanding promoted in a community, often determine a community's proneness to conflict or inclination towards harmony. As a result, some religious concepts and values have been useful in guiding Christians and Muslims to retain peace or return to the dialogue table to avoid violence in some African communities in Southwest Nigeria. Specific examples are Islamic teachings based on Muamalat, Ibadat, and Darar that support Muslims in their quest for peaceful relationships with their neighbours, and Christians utilising Jesus' teaching about love from the Shema in the Tanakh well illustrated in the Gospels. This principle of interpretation given religious concepts has stimulated the Yorùbá to interact and practise their religions in a way to remain relatively cordial over the past two centuries. This paper argues that leadership and the effective handling of religious hermeneutics can enhance the community's pursuit of peace.*

KEYWORDS: *-Anthropology, Christian-Muslim relations, Development Studies, Religion and Peace, Religious Pacifism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Many studies have been carried out on Islamic and Christian-Muslim relations from historical, textual, and theological perspectives using polemics, apologetics, dialogue, social action, stereotyping, and sometimes security or terrorism inquiry over the years [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]. While some Western scholars often feel guilty when reflecting on the Crusade, Middle Eastern Christian scholars wonder if such should be the case, as certain events precipitated the Crusade, such as territorial integrity and regional politics, rather than local Christian congregations demanding war [10, 11]. This paper seeks to go beyond all these to examine friendly Christian-Muslim relations that have gone beyond tolerance or tolerating neighbours to accommodate each other, and the role leadership and religious hermeneutics have played in achieving this end.

This study asserts that leadership, interpretations, and attention given to religions, cultural terms, and societally promoted values play a major role in the community's expression of tolerance, and vice versa. Evidence of this is found in people of the same religion, but residing in different countries or communities, acting differently under similar economic and social situations, meaning that poverty is not always to blame for proneness to violence. While some were intolerant, others were more accommodating. Thus, this study further argues that some of the causes of such differences in tolerance are rooted in learned behaviours originating from the emphasis and interpretations given the various religious terms at each location, the

promoted culture within each host community, and the leadership's pursuit of peacefulness or indifference within the communities under investigation.

Hermeneutics relates to the interpretation of concepts and values. Hermeneutics as well as hermeneutical is taken from the Greek word *hermeneutikos* which means '... a method or principle of interpretation', [12, 13]. Hermeneutics connects with the principles of interpretation of concepts and values that, by extension, influence people's behaviours and attitudes towards one another and society at large. Religious hermeneutics have a form of control over society, its values, and the behaviour of people in such a society under consideration. The meeting point of religious hermeneutics and sociocultural values is seen in the way society lives, either harmoniously or with incessant conflict, misunderstanding, and violence. Therefore, hermeneutics is used in this paper synonymously with the interpretation of religious concepts, while considering its influence on practitioners of such religions and the community where they are based.

2. METHOD

This is an inquiry into the role that interpretations of certain concepts and values play in the outlived experiences and social interactions of people within a larger society or nation. The research used the qualitative study of focus group discussions from three sites and towns : Ògbómòṣò, Sepeteri, and Ilorin. It also used participatory observation at a funeral service involving Yorùbá Muslim and Christian congregants , and interviews in six towns , all in southwest Nigeria namely : Ògbómòṣò, Ibadan, Sepeteri, Iwo, Ejigbo, and Ila-Orangun. These data are based on the findings of research conducted around 2015 and 2020 using a thick description method to elaborate on the findings.^{1*}

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Some of the mind maps developed after running the research data through NVivo pro 12 are presented in the figures and charts below in Section 4, showing social and cultural interaction, religions and value systems, and coping strategies for managing conflict situations. These themes are often utilised to sustain peace among the Yorùbá communities under investigation. The following discussion was developed based on the data from the primary sources in this study.

An average Yorùbá cherishes religious consciousness and the concept of eternal judgement they believe would take place after death. Hence, they socialise through celebrations such as weddings, baby naming, birthday parties, new house opening/dedication, funerals, and other areas considered an essential part of living that calls for rejoicing as an expression of love in line with their various religious teachings. They socialise through family connections and community meetings, which often unite them for religious and community interactions. Muslim neighbours, for instance, attend Christian extended family and neighbours' weddings and vice versa as in the case of Qpé's wedding reported in the focus group discussion (FGD). Qpé's Muslim neighbours and family friends joined in the wedding reception for feasting, dancing, and wishing the celebrants and family well. Furthermore, a university Christian student named Ronke (FGD) expressed that her Muslim private accommodation landlord often requested prayers whenever she was going to the church or her Christian student fellowship meeting. At meetings that bring Yorùbá Christians and Muslims together, such as the Schools' Parents and Teachers Association, each religion is often asked to lead the prayer to open and/or close the session. This is a common practice among the Yorùbá, requesting prayers from one another, either privately or publicly. Belief in God's sovereignty and the power of prayer are common and highly revered among Yorùbá Muslims and Christians, a meeting point they often display in their communities.

^{1*}A. S. Olayinka. "Peace Research in Non-violence Contexts: a Case Study among the Southwest Nigerian Yorùbá." PhD diss., Middlesex University/Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, 2020.

Muslims participated in cooking during Sàngó's graduation ceremony from the seminary as a trained Christian minister, and Wólé travelled from southwest to northern Nigeria for the wedding of his colleague's daughter, even though they practised different religions. Both Christians and Muslims were present at the funeral service of an 81-year-old Christian clergyman in Ògbómòṣó, a convert from Islam as a youth. While peaceful Christian-Muslim interactions are not limited to these examples, they provide social-religious occasions where members of the two religions meet for positive engagements in addition to their daily encounters at work and in their neighbourhood. The duo's understanding of love, kindness, eternal judgement after death, and loyalty to God solidifies their harmony.

3.1 *The Meeting Point of Religion and Socio-Cultural Values*

Concerning the 81-year-old's funeral in Ògbómòṣó previously mentioned, the deceased Christian minister from a Muslim background had cousins from Islam and Christianity by name Bolanle and Taibatu interviewed in this study. Taibatu had her hijab (Muslim women's head and neck scarf covering) while Bolanle, a Christian, dressed in the Yorùbá women's attire with a neck and headscarf (*geleatiiborun*) at the church during the funeral. The congregation was mixed, and Christians and Muslims were present at the funeral. Muslim men who were not willing to remove their caps as the Yorùbá Christian men do at worship sat in the company of other worshippers and sympathisers under the canopy outside the big church building, as the inside auditorium was full. Muslim women wore the hijab and sat well throughout the service period, accommodating the interior and exterior of the church building.

Are similar good relationships documented elsewhere outside Southwest Nigeria? In the Senegalese context, Ugucioni reported how some Muslim leaders requested prayers from Christian priests.

Relations between Christian and Muslim religious authorities are also friendly. Father Flavio cites, among many, two episodes that he considers key: 'Some time ago a boy came to tell me that the imam of the neighborhood wanted to see me. When I came to him I discovered that he had been ill for a week: he had called me because he wanted us to pray together. Another imam, two years ago, when his third son was born, asked me for the courtesy of reaching him because he wanted me to bless the newborn, [14].

People demonstrate a high level of trust in situations in which they openly socialise and depend on one another's prayers in times of need. This serves as a point of reference in times of conflict to resolve it as soon as possible, especially when reconciliation fits into their religions' beliefs, strengthened by their leadership and local host culture, as illustrated in the mind maps in the figures and charts in Section 4 below.

Many Yorùbá in ideal situations seem to see beyond their religious differences in a social context but celebrate with one another, doing so without necessarily compromising their faith in many cases. They describe their coming together for social celebrations as *aár ẹ́mísé*, a social concept rooted in their culture, loosely translated as 'may we all be alive to witness my day of joyous celebration as we celebrate with you today.' Social interactions, thus, have become a binding force among many Christian and Muslim Yorùbá, the practice that is supported by their Yorùbá host culture where they see one another as family, often described as *Ẹbí*, [15].

3.1.1 *Yorùbá Christians bases of Loving the Neighbours.*

Hermeneutics of love in Christianity is buttressed by Christians' interpretation of Deuteronomy chapter 6 as found in the Tanakh described as *Shema* or Hear (listen). Verse four reads: '*Shema Yisrael Yahweh Elohenu Yahweh Ehad*' translated as 'Hear Israel the LORD (YAHWEH) our God, the LORD (YAHWEH) is one!' [16]. This is like the oneness of God in other monotheistic religions like the Quran 112 *Surat ul Ikhlas* verse 1 in Islam that reads: '*Qulhuwa Allahu ahadun*' [17, 18, 19, 20], meaning 'Say: He is Allah, the (only) One!' While

there are claims of the One God that are **often not** similar in monotheistic religions, some are similar. The Yorùbá often buttress the similarities or claims of God within their religions to strengthen their harmony. Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 5 reads, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.' Similarly, Leviticus 19:18 reads 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.' [21]

Jesus Christ of the Christian religion (or faith) puts these two Scriptural references in Deuteronomy and Leviticus together to buttress His teaching in the Gospel (St. Matthew) for His followers to love God as well as their neighbours.

37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets, (Matthew 22:37-40), [22].

Furthermore, Jesus questioned those who claimed to be righteous but loved only those who loved them, while He taught His followers to love and show kindness to those who did not belong to their group.

46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect, (Matthew 5:46-48), [22]

Thus, in an ideal situation, Yorùbá Christian communities often seek to express love as they relate to their Muslim neighbours. To further illustrate this idea of love with action as interpreted in context, Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 that many Christians describe as *Alaanuara Samaria*, the story also fondly retold by non-Christian Yorùbá. This Christian teaching of love and kindness, which is often well-interpreted, finds good soil among the Yorùbá as acceptable public ethics of peacefulness.

Yorùbá Christianity is, thus, proactive in teaching and showing kindness to their neighbours irrespective of such neighbours' religions. They strengthened this through their regular Sunday School teachings in both English and Yorùbá languages in their churches. This love motivates them to speak to their neighbours to join them in Christianity without forcing the prospects to convert. Love is seen in Christian establishments, such as schools and hospitals, to meet the education and healthcare needs of their communities, irrespective of their religious differences, rendering support to all, including Muslims, kings, and chiefs. Some examples are the Baptist Hospitals Ògbóm ọ̀ṣọ̀ and Shaki in Oyo State, and Ejigbo in Osun State of Nigeria which have continued to meet the healthcare needs of the people. The Baptist Hospital Ògbóm ọ̀ṣọ̀ has a long history of meeting people's healthcare needs with its facilities improved to now serve as the Bowen University Teaching Hospital, Ògbóm ọ̀ṣọ̀.

This author recognises the isolated cases reported in Lagos, where Christians restricted the number of Muslims in their Christian-established schools, as reported by Lateef in the interview. However, stipulating quotas for the admittance of non-Christian candidates in such instances can be further examined to determine whether it was to create space for their young people or because of intolerance. Conversely, the observed restriction in Lagos led to the establishment of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN) in 1954. It was reported:

The idea of setting up an organization for Muslim students was born out of Muslims' desires to safeguard their religious fundamentals, culture and identity from the twin effects of forceful evangelization and alluring Christian activities, [23].

However, "forceful evangelization" does not mean forceful conversion to Christianity. Many notable current and past Muslim leaders attended Christian schools, such as Baptist primary and high schools, and continued to

practise Islam, such as Chief M. K. O. Abiola. Nevertheless, the MSSN reported that some Muslims changed their religions, which meant conversion to Christianity, while others changed their names (to sound Western or Christian). The conversion of Muslims to Christianity in Yoruba is undeniable, but violent and forceful conversions are doubtful.

Strain relationships have been reported in some northern Nigerian communities, where non-Muslims, mainly Christians, have had to change their names to sound Islamic to access schools. The author witnessed this while residing in Northern Nigeria. However, the situation in southwest Yoruba was managed as Yoruba Muslims founded the MSSN for their youth to retain their beliefs as Muslims in Lagos. Other Muslims in Yorubaland emulated this step, as the group gained more membership. The approach to handling this strained relationship in Lagos was civil with no physical violence. Yet, in other parts of the Yorubaland like Ògbómòṣó and Shaki, whilst Muslims have founded their schools, Muslims continue to access Christian schools and hospitals with no strain of forceful conversion to Christianity. Yoruba Muslims' hermeneutics of Islamic concepts also show bases for their kindness and tolerance of their non-Muslim neighbours, as discussed below.

3.1.2 Yorùbá Muslims' Kòìdà Foundation

There are some levels of success in how Yorùbá Christians and Muslims handled conflicts that would have degenerated into violence. A closer look at the possible reasons why they experience peaceful Christian-Muslim relations is necessary because it is difficult to maintain harmony between the two religions in other locations within Nigeria. For instance, in Kaduna, some Christian and Muslim communities have to live apart because of the frequency of violence and religiously motivated conflicts [24, 25, 26]. A thick description qualitative approach is appropriate to explore how religious-based peace and love have been achieved in context among the Yorùbá people.

Oladejo in the interview suggested the idea of *Kòìdà* in Islam when he explained the tolerance displayed in the practice of Islamic Law (*Shariah*) by Yorùbá Muslims, who remain committed friends of non-Muslim Yorùbá, especially the Christians. *Kòìdà* is pronounced differently as *Kòìdà* or *Kòyídà* according to Lateju in another interview, while Oladejo suggests *Kòìdà* is known among the Yorùbá Muslims who study Arabic. *Kòìdà* needs a thicker description with illustrations to bring this study about harmonious Christian-Muslim relations among the Yorùbá into perspective. In this context, what is *Kòìdà*? A practising Muslim, Lateef, was interviewed to bring the idea of *Kòìdà* into perspective. What are the reasons why Muslims emphasise *Shariah* and *halal* as being unique to Islam when there are equivalent concepts such as 'an eye for an eye' (Deuteronomy 19:21; Leviticus 24:20), and the dietary rules (Deuteronomy 12:16; Leviticus 19:26; Acts 15:20) in Judaism and the Bible? Lateef argued that the use of Islamic *Shariah* is necessary to establish it as Allah's order, which attracts rewards. According to Lateef:

You cannot see all of the things that *Shariah* contains in other books, but you can see similarities. For instance, *Shariah* allows as many as four Muslim wives. Can you find this in the Bible? This is why Muslims say, 'Let us use *Shariah*'.

Lateef's response sounds assertive; however, while there are polygynists in the Bible, the practice is not authorised among contemporary Christians based on their biblical interpretation. There are polygynists out of circumstance, as in the cases of Abraham, Elkanah, David, and Solomon.² Zachariah in the Gospel (St. Luke 1) remained a *monogynist*, despite not having a child until his old age.

The Yorùbá are known to practise polygyny before the arrival of Islam and Christianity and many still practice the union, hence polygyny is not a unique Islamic practice, the point Lateef could not satisfactorily unravel. However, Lateef insisted that Muslims must be kind-hearted to their neighbours despite the use of

² The Holy Bible: - Genesis 25, 1 Samuel 1; 2 Samuel 3: 1-5; 1 Samuel 25; 1 King 11, Luke 1.

Shariah. Further elaboration is needed to untangle the peaceful relationship between Christians and Muslims in the context of ethics, family unions, and neighbourliness and how unique such is to the individual religion vis-à-vis their shared common identity. Lateef's response to Islamic identity for peace prompted further questions concerning the variety of *Shariah* practices in various parts of Nigeria.

- Question: What *Shariah* do you mean, as there is a broad spectrum of materials, teachings, and practices about *Shariah*? To this end, Lateef replied,
Shariah is extracted from the Qur'an and the Hadith. In other words, the saying and actions of the prophet. From this, we derive *Shariah*. Muslims believe that, if they follow this, they are practising their religion and will be rewarded. This aspect of rewards cannot be underestimated in *Shariah*.

This response led to the following question.

- Can Islam highlight the sections found in other religions or traditions, thereby socialising with the people and mentioning *Shariah* only when their practice is uniquely Islamic and not found in other religions?

For instance, there is no convincing evidence that polygyny and dietary rules (*halal*) are unique to Islam in social, religious, or African contexts and that the practice of *Shariah* varies across Nigeria. While some Muslim women ride on motorcycles with men who are not their immediate family members, or as a form of commercial transport, it is forbidden in some *Shariah*-promoting states in northern Nigeria, such as Zamfara. Lateef's reply was:

We may see different places approaching *Shariah* based on their level of knowledge and permissibility of practising that law. If we want to practise all aspects of *Shariah*, women will not use commercial motorcycles for transportation because there should not be body contact, such as sitting on a motorcycle with a male nonfamily member.

According to Lateef, gender separation in school is based on morality. To address this claim, Feyisetan and Pebley [27] have suggested virginity at marriage as part of the valued Yorùbá culture as the prevention of premarital sex is cherished among the three religions: Christians, Muslims, and the indigenous *Isele* Yorùbá (African Traditional Religion). This prompts another question on why Lateef would not use the term 'morals' to describe the reasoning taught in the Yorùbá indigenous religion, culture, and Christianity, rather than calling it Islamic *Shariah*. Lateef's reply was the reward, saying that the issue of the reward was the main thing. Allah promises to reward those who practice *Shariah*.

Another tradition relevant to uniting communities is the Muslim *hijab*, Christian women's headgear, and the Yorùbá host *gélé* and *iborún*; but it has been interpreted to cause division as in the case of the school *hijab* and beret cap disputes in some communities, [28]. Women's headgear and neck scarf are indigenous and accepted by the Yorùbá while the three religions had lived harmoniously for centuries without complaints until some political elites opened this conversation to be enforced with political power. Political influence has led the headscarf to become more symbolic and problematic for people to observe and reason differently, [28]. The interpretations of religious practices and concepts such as *hijab*, pilgrimage, polygyny, fasting, marriage, apostasy, conversion, and prayers influence recipients' disposition to tolerance and violence.

The use of the term Islamic *Shariah* with a political undertone and head and neck scarves, notably as a political election campaign promise to be fulfilled, has segregated Nigerian citizens who have similar headgear and neck scarf practices and have lived together for centuries without conflict because of various types of head covering. The citizens did not mind the *hijab* on their Muslim women's neighbours in the marketplace, house, community, and within their family, until the politicians began to promise change, such as its enforcement in private premises such as Christian-established schools [28]. This was interpreted as an Islamisation process in some quarters [29]. A comparison of *hijab* cases among the Yorùbá can help in the future settlement of related conflict.

These three religions engage in fasting. Each religion teaches about sexual purity and discourages extramarital and premarital sex. There are specifications for acceptable food and cleansing among the Yorùbá and the Judeo-Christian people, Kosher in Judaism, and *halal* in Islam. All three religions officially practise heterosexuality. In what ways must these unite them rather than cause division? Bringing the study closer, Lateef suggests and defines *Kòidà* as ‘the rule for practising the *Shariah* at some levels and developing as the people have better opportunities to involve more aspects of the Law. Therefore, not many communities practise full *shariah*.’ Lateef contemplates a stricter practice that must be peaceful and not offensive to non-Muslims, and more of inner purity for self-assessment. Lateef’s description of the practice of a full *Shariah* implies that more could be in the pipeline as Yorùbá Muslims currently practise *Shariah* under *Kòidà*, the rule or the *Shariah* practice that is possible at a given time and situation. In short, **Islamic *Shariah* practice among the Yorùbá Muslims is *Kòidà*, that is the rule of the practice of *Shariah* as far as possible until there is an opportunity to practise it in a fuller form.**

3.2 The Yorùbá Islamic *Kòidà* Hermunetics

Kòidà needs a thicker description in the context of the Yorùbá practice of Islam. *Qai’dah* or *Kaida* pronounced *Kòidà* locally is derived from the Arabic word *qai’dah*, which means a basis, base, regulation, rule, or norm [30]. It is the same root word used as a proper noun to describe the Al-Qaeda terrorist group [31], discussed by scholars and the media over the last two decades. Oladejo points out that *Qai’dah* is used as part of the title of an elementary book in the Arabic language: “Book of Principle (of Arabic Reading) written in Bagdaad”, called *Qaa’idatu Bagdaadiyyah*. The context of *Qai’dah*’s use among the Yoruba is worth exploring **regarding the basis for harmony and reasonable behaviour towards others**. The Yorùbá alphabet does not contain the letter q; hence, the letter k is used for the transliteration of q in *qai’dah*. In this discourse, Yoruba *Kòidà* has its basis in *al-qai’dah muamalat* which refers to the rule of social life. *Muamalat* is described as follows.

Dealings. Refers to commercial and civil acts or dealings under Islamic law. Islamic law divides all legal acts into either *ibadat* or *muamalat*. *Ibadat* are acts of ritual worship such as prayer or fasting, and *muamalat* are acts involving interaction and exchange among people such as sales and sureties. The distinction is important because the principle in all matters involving *ibadat* is that they are not susceptible to innovations or change (*ittiba*). In *muamalat*, however, there is considerably more room to develop and change the law to facilitate human interaction and promote justice. There is disagreement among Muslim jurists on whether certain legal acts, such as marriage or divorce, fall under the category of *muamalat* or *ibadat*, [32].

The rule of *muamalat* [33] can be further explored through *darar*, meaning **out of necessity**, a situation that makes certain actions permissible, mostly on social grounds. *The darar* within Islamic jurisprudence can be described as follows:

[L]egal term [. . .] as an example, during illness, fasting could cause harm, so some schools of law allow an exemption from prescribed fasting during illness. In marriage, *darar* may be grounds for divorce. For instance, traditional Maliki jurisprudence granted a wife the right to divorce if her husband did not treat her and her co-wives equally or if the husband married a second wife [34].

Some necessities – *darar*, locally called ‘doruuri’ (or wrongly pronounced *laluri*) among the Yorùbá warranted some rules of social life (*qai’dahmuamalat*) to be applied in their day-to-day activities, which they must use to express humane behaviour in their society. **Kòfídà in the Yorùbá context became grounds for tolerance such as the social obligation to render help to people in need** or be considerate while relating with non-Muslims as they practice their religions. This rule has been applied to other areas of Muslims’ interaction with neighbours, apart from their women sometimes riding on motorcycles to being kind and not seeking anyone’s harm in the event of what others may consider as a provocation.

Another example where *Qaidah-Muamalat-Darar* (Q-M-D) is relevant is *Qi’bla*, the direction to face during the Muslim daily prayer (*salat*) ‘(toward the Kaaba in Mecca), or a prayer wall in the mosque into which the *mihrab* (niche) is set, indicating the direction of prayer, [35, 36]. The direction of the prayer while travelling in an airplane or at the North Pole is not very certain (except when the airplane travels in the direction of Mecca). Muslims can freely make decisions on these occasions. Similarly, there are reports of Muslims facing difficulties in finding acceptable food (*halal*) in Muslim minority communities. In such a situation, they must make informed decisions regarding the available alternatives.

Many Yorùbá Muslims seem to have adopted the rule, *qai’dah-muamalat-darar* (Q-M-D) on a social basis to render help and show love to their neighbours, Muslims, and non-Muslims alike. In his work on ‘The case for secularity in Islam’, Mavani, writes:

... there was an explicit separation between ritual acts of worship (*‘ibadat*) and creed (*‘aqidah*), on the one hand, and human interrelations (*mu’amalat*), on the other. The former are constant, immutable, essential, and trans-historical, whereas the latter consist of rules of conduct and behaviour that are open to public negotiation in a space that accommodates civic pluralism [37].

Mavani further adds ‘thereby suggesting that non-ritual acts are subject to continual elaboration and evolution, (Mavani). In his words, Mavani suggests:

A distinction ... between religion’s moral authority... and the state’s coercive power. Given that religious faith and conviction are matters of individual choice, as specified by an unconditional Qur’anic verse on the freedom of religion and conscience, [his footnote 4, Quran 2:256] both domains must be separated so that each person can choose his/her own religion and with the right intention (*niyyah*). This separation is necessary because every act in Islam is morally evaluated on the basis of its underlying intention, which suggests the primacy of moral intent, [37].

The Yorùbá in this study utilise the idea of *muamalat* to explore human interaction at the social level to accommodate their non-Muslim neighbours. Taking this into consideration in other cultures, Mavani suggests the following:

The Shari’ah must be acknowledged as the normative, immutable, and the ideal, whereas *fiqh* is no more than a fallible, human approximation of the Shari’ah that needs to be interrogated critically on an ongoing basis so that it can be corrected and revised in accord with changing times, contexts, circumstances, and customs. Moreover, this approach would probably enable one to create a space for secularity within the Islamic tradition, [37].

In another study, Hills traced the tolerance of the Senegalese Sufis to pluralism rather than liberal Sufi Islam, describing Shariah ‘—as God’s prescriptions derived from the Qur’an and Prophet Muhammad’s example—to guide acts of worship or *‘ibâdât* and social behaviour or *mu’âmalât*’ [38]. Thus, the religious texts were intended

to guide both the act of worship that is unchangeable as well as the social life that can be interpreted to suit the situation to be tolerant and maintain peace. This is not just a rigid exercise of law, without being in touch or having no human feelings. This can be compared with how Jesus said the Sabbath was made for mankind and not the other way round, (Mark 2:27-28).

On the other hand, Maher [39] provided an elaborate discourse on Salafi. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the major voices of al-Azhar graduates, adopts a liberal (*wasati*) approach to religious law, trying to address the challenges Muslim minorities face in the West, although strongly challenged by Saudi Arabian *salafi* conservatives, [40]. Shavit writes:

The *wasati* approach ... presents two objectives: making the lives of Muslim minorities easier in order to preserve their Islamic identity, and endorsing efforts to Islamize the West. To promote these objectives *wasatis* emphasize a systematic search in all four religio-legal schools and beyond them and the liberal application of *maslaha* (public or individual interest). Some of the results achieved by this methodology demonstrate the potential of *maslahato* revise any religious law relating to *mucāmalāt* (social transactions).[40].

Shavit cites Yusuf Al-Qaradawi defining *fiqh al-aqalliyyat al-muslima* as the *fiqh* on Muslims in majority non-Muslim societies like the West. This position gives Muslims the opportunity to adapt to and assimilate into other cultures. Shavit further traces the idea of this kind of *fiqh* to the 9th-century CE debates on whether it was ideal to reside in non-Muslim countries or areas. However, Shavit suggests the 10th and 11th centuries debates were on how Muslim resident minorities of a country possibly had their faith and practices weakened thereby giving the non-Muslims the upper hand against the Muslims. Migrating to non-Muslim areas will be legitimate for Muslims; they suggested only if they have no other alternatives and if they can practice Islam in their new location [40]. Further studies show how Muslims' residences became legitimised in the following centuries, as they had the freedom to practice their religion [40]. Thus, the rule of social life (*muamalat*) paid off for Muslims, not to be rigid, as they interacted with other people in a general social context:

The *wasati* approach encourages Muslims to create a presence in the West and modifies some religious laws in response to the special condition of living as a minority; the *salafi* approach permits residence in the West on more restrictive terms, and rejects the permissibility of adjusting religious laws to accommodate the minority condition. While the two approaches are grounded in revivalist and triumphalist justifications, the *wasati* approach allows for a large measure of interaction with and integration into Western societies, whereas the *salafi* approach promotes segregation from non-Muslim majorities, [40].

The *wasati* approach here is like the Yorùbá Muslim's way of life among their non-Muslim neighbours and extended families, not because they are in the minority, but because it has become a way of life to reciprocate their community's peace gesture, not being irrational or violent at others, religious pacifism.

Could more studies be carried out on *Kòìdà[qai'dah-muamalat-darar]* (Q-M-D) in religious and social contexts? This is important for a thick description of peace in the Islamic social context, as it is hoped that harmony among Christians and Muslims in the developing world will be sustained. The harmony enjoyed by Christians and Muslims where *wasati* were used is expected to last, as they continue to practise tolerance in the context of Q-M-D. Similarly, it has been suggested that there has been harmony among the Yorùbá Christians and Muslims since the 1800s during the Samuel Ajayi Crowther era [41, 42]. It is attention-grabbing, therefore, that over two centuries, the Yorùbá have been identified to be tolerant as far as Christian-Muslim relations are concerned and are accommodated among their indigenous religion and culture. The Yorùbá have avoided most external aggressions, intolerance, and violent religious ideologies until recently as seen over the use of the hijab in a few places. Many Yorùbá have decided not to quarrel with their cousins because of religious differences, as gathered in the focus group (FGD). There is a likelihood that such harmony will continue, as revealed in this

paper when *Kòidà* (Q-M-D) is the basis of their religious hermeneutics. Muslims restrain the use of a full *Shariah* whenever it would make life unnecessarily difficult and must not hurt non-Muslim neighbours or fight their cousins because of religious differences.

Committed Yorùbá Christians reciprocate mutual kindheartedness by seeking to work in peace with everyone and showing love for Muslims, other neighbours, and extended family members as a duty and obedience to God (Hebrews 12:14). The duos seek to avoid provocative sermons (or *waasi*) but desire understanding when their members convert to another religion - either way as suggested in the interview with Maku and Lódún. In the same light, Wólé at the focus group argued that the occasional conflict among the Yorùbá is mostly politically motivated, as 'no religion as understood and practised by the Yorùbá Christians and Muslims allows you to kill in its name.' This claim suggests that the cultural weight given to the interpretations of religion and religious texts is significant to mutual peace culture, as they seek to sustain peace in their community. Lódún in the S èpètèrì interview cites the harmony between the Yorùbá Christians and Muslims as seen in their communal lifestyle. Wólé and Ifá regard most violent conflicts as originating from manipulation and, where politics is involved, may have economic undertones. This supports the Peaceful Societies (PS) idea of avoiding greed and their use of a simple local leadership style in their communities [54, 55, 56] rather than the modern political strategies they consider complicated.

Kòidà (Q-M-D) or the rule of practising the *sharia* as far as the circumstances allow whilst being tolerant of those who do not hold the same belief, religion or traditions is outstanding. *Kòidà* - moderated Islam, that is *Qaida-Muamalat-Darar* (Q-M-D) can be identified and emulated as grounded among the Yorùbá over the past two centuries. A similar idea was reported among Senegalese Sufi Muslims and their local Christian community, although the term *Kòidà*(Q-M-D) was not used by scholars involved in Senegal research. A Senegalese Muslim mayor presented the painting of Jesus's crucifixion as a gift to a Catholic priest, to the amazement of the priest [14] as most Muslims place greater focus on Mary rather than **the cross or crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus**. This gesture is fascinating, more so to a Christian missionary, reflecting an incredible understanding of Christian-Muslim relations, **a step above and beyond tolerance to accommodating others**.

The root of this **theory**(*Kòidà/Q-M-D*) is the interpretation (hermeneutics) of religion against the background of love and hospitality, situated in the culture of the host or local community. People in this category knowingly or unknowingly adopted the concept of 'good' in the local culture to moderate the interpretations of their religions. However, this does not mean that there are no possible threats to the peace of the community where *Kòidà* (Q-M-D) is in operation, but that the continuing ability to reject violence and maintain harmony remains the strength of the communities where *Kòidà* (Q-M-D) is identified and practised. A quote from Mahmoud and Makoond is as follows:

Sustaining peace constitutes a paradigm shift in how we think about peace and how we address conflict. As a process and a goal, building sustainable peace is not the burden of outsiders. Even under the direst of circumstances, external interventions should endeavor to **build on what people know and what they have. Societies that have developed national infrastructures for peace offer valuable lessons for this eminently internal enterprise**. More needs to be done to demystify the concept at the national and global levels.' [43].

One of the points from the above quote is significant to mention – '**build on what people know and what they have**'. The Yorùbá's way of accommodating others is seen in their search for and utilising concepts that appeal to peacefulness while leaning on the social interpretation of their religion and culture as seen in the use of *Kòidà-Muamalat-Doruuri* (Q-M-D) regardless of intolerance in other distant cultures. Similarly, Christians' and Jesus' teachings about love complement the sustainability of peace in a larger society.

3.3 Religious Leadership

Leadership plays a major role in the development of a group as much as it does in the moulding of the community for tolerance. Just as Christians have the order in their appointment of ministers to their churches, so also many Yorùbá community mosques appoint their leaders or *Imams*. This complements Adé and Lódún's idea that religious leaders should undergo training before embarking on their leadership role. Such years of training may have a positive influence on leaders' hermeneutical predispositions to or against peacefulness. Islamic *Kòidà* (Q-M-D) and Christian agape – unconditional love for neighbours – are seen in how leaders and parents handle sensitive religious matters.

Adé discussed a scenario in which some Muslim fathers warned their youth to stay out of trouble when another Muslim, but a militant youth group, wanted to take over the mosque. Peaceful boys obeyed their fathers by boycotting militant meetings. This is an example of informal intra-faith conflict prevention. According to Adé, the rebellion leader fell while climbing the stage. The Yorùbá Muslim leaders called the fall of the rebellion nemesis, meaning *èsanké*; likewise, some Christians and Gideon at the focus group considered the evil that befell the perpetrators of violence on some Christians to be God's judgment. These both point to Wólé's claim that the Yorùbá believe in the enacting of God's vengeance on earth and the final judgment after death (or heaven). To corroborate Wólé's suggestion, Oluṣona, (1993) suggests that the Yorùbá religion (*Isese*) punishes offenders fast, [44]. Nemesis is observed in all three religions of Yorùbá. All three religions look forward to God's intervention or support in times of crisis and want to be blameless during God's judgment. Adé further suggests that Islam, as practiced among the Yorùbá, is not a single strand as there are many denominations among Christians. There are patterns accepted in Islam relevant to the Yorùbá culture and others considered more aggressive and thus rejected by the mainstream Yorùbá Muslim community. **The culture or teaching that dominates a community determines the flow of peace or violence. The crucial things are the leadership and content of religious leaders' teachings.**

One of the strengths the Yorùbá displays is in its leadership and the ability to detect conflict or division and nip it in the bud. Adé, Odù, Diran, Ayo, and Akan suggested the same in the interviews. The harmonious relationships in Yorùbáland between the different religious groups were sustained by the community and religious leaders. Changes in leaders' beliefs and interests can have serious implications for a community's peaceful engagement. Thus, responsible Islamic, Christian and indigenous religious leaders are sometimes privileged to know when potential conflicts are approaching and warn their wards to be careful of violent groups and ideologies.

As seen among the Yorùbá, the Senegalese Christian minority, and Muslim (Sufi) majority have peacefully co-existed for many years, [14, 45]. Senegal is a country, while Yorùbá is a region within the country, although it has a large population. Senegal has many languages, while Yorùbá has only one with many dialects. The Senegalese population is 5% Christian and 95% Sufi Muslim, while the Yorùbá religions' makeup is thought to constitute approximately equal numbers of Christians (evangelical in larger proportion) and Muslims. The percentage of indigenous worshippers is uncertain.

Crises and conflicts are managed by religious and ethnic undertones for religious and ethical purposes. The Yorùbá do resort to the *omólúàbí* attributes and family values to restrain themselves in times of dispute and conflict. To this, Lódún suggests that loving one another and instructing the youth to avoid bad company associated with gangsterism are necessities for a harmonious community. Therefore, being religiously conscious people willing to please God, Olórún or Allah, the Yorùbá often restrain from violence, especially when they are not under the influence of alcohol (or intoxication) as Lateef reiterated, or an outside dangerous influence. Clerics' teachings embedded in their ethical values help to keep society safe and peaceful, although this is not always the case. Yet, the ethics of peace are what Wólé describes as 'providing domestic answers to the Yorùbá domestic problems by using the Yorùbá value (yardstick) to understand the Yorùbá way of life.' Lateef

underscored the use of internal settlements to resolve conflicts. This is seen in the Yorùbá's promptness in resolving disputes, delaying, or avoiding pressing charges in court for non-criminal cases, with the saying, *akìtíkòdùdésòré* meaning it is difficult to retain a close friendship after embarking on court cases against one another. **Leadership and teaching predominantly influence the lives and thoughts of society simultaneously, thereby determining their peacefulness.**

Two examples from Oyo and Ibadan in Nigeria are relevant. In Oyo, some Christian leaders managed an impending conflict when a Muslim gentleman disrupted Christian worship in a primary school hall, causing provocation. The reason he gave was that Christians met at school, not inside the church. He was arrested by the police for provocation, but when other Muslim groups pleaded with Christians, the Christian leadership agreed to his release from police custody with the promise of not interfering with Christian gatherings anymore, and the case settled out of court, [46]. Such provocation without the active role of leaders from both religions could have resulted in violence and community disturbances.

While a Muslim gentleman caused provocation in Oyo, a female Christian student caused provocation in Ibadan at the University of Ibadan Mosque by preaching strongly provocative words in the mosque [47]. Wole also reported this incident in the focus group. That situation was brought under control first by the Muslim leadership of the Mosque on the ground and supported by the University authority that has Christian representation put the situation under control known as *won buomieroju* meaning 'they restored the peace.' The student was expelled from her studies and the disturbance that could have ended in community violence and destruction, as often seen in other parts of Nigeria, was avoided. The Yorùbá Muslim leaders who were the first point of call at the provocation who presided over the Mosque demonstrated exemplary peaceful leadership abilities to have managed the situation before the arrival of other authorities of the institution. **The basis of Ibadan Muslims' calmness during the provocation could be multidimensional, but not far from their interpretation of Islam, which seeks peace in the face of provocation, and the host Yorùbá culture where they grow. These are examples of situations where Yorùbá leadership largely managed volatile incidences.**

Before that Ibadan incidence, though unconnected, M. K. O Abiola (a Muslim businessman and later a Nigerian president-elect) caused provocation by demanding that the University Catholic Chapel Christian cross' statue erected in 1954 in the vicinity of the University Mosque that was built later be demolished in 1985. He argued that the cross statute was visible from the newly built mosque at the university. Peel (2016) reported that this led to conflict with no violence, and a compromise was reached to build a concrete screen to block the view of the cross from the mosque premises. Peel adds:

When the dispute was eventually settled, there was a great sense of relief at having pulled back from the brink of something very nasty and un-Yorùbá – the more because of the intermittent outbreaks of serious religious violence that occurred widely in Northern Nigeria, [48].

Abiola was well known as a responsible philanthropist and related well to people of all religions, including Christianity, at home, and abroad, but his proposal about the Cross statute almost marred his reputation. Thus, Yorùbá leaders have been given credit for how they have managed disputes, the contemporary politically related crises that have brought untold hardship on their people in association with the rest of Nigeria as a country notwithstanding. **Future research can examine debates on crises with attention to structural violence and ethical decline in Nigeria.** Nonetheless, the **influence of local leadership and moderate religious practitioners**, such as Christians and Muslims, on society cannot be overemphasised, as they have demonstrated the ability to control aggression in their community to regulate the prevailing disposition of society towards peace.

Furthermore, Yorùbá Muslim men wear hats/caps, while the Yorùbá Christians removed their hats

during worship as part of their understanding they had both displayed without friction over the years. The interpretation of concepts and values with an individual's understanding and respect has helped their togetherness, as they participate in one another's social and religious functions, and each maintains its own identity without intimidation or feelings of inferiority. During the interviews, Lateef, Wólé, and Maku cited the Qur'an 2:256 in three different towns to justify the freedom of religion and conscience to support their claims of using non-violent means in relating to people of other faiths: "There is no compulsion in religion". **The religious hermeneutical style adopted, often involuntarily to teach religious principles and values, plays a significant role in the understanding of followers and their attitudes towards others. This, in turn, affects the content of sermons/homilies and teaching and contributes to the community's tolerance.**

The content of leaders' teachings and how religious concepts are interpreted are relevant to community unity, which requires a thick description to elucidate [49, 50, 51]. Ugucconi suggested that open-mindedness and proper teaching of cherished values are deemed important for maintaining a harmonious community:

It is important that there are people in the community who are open-minded, capable of educating others with concrete gestures. Our mayor, for example, participates in Muslim activities, but is also present in Christian activities [14].

Thus, leaders' knowledge of their beliefs and the need to navigate those of others without causing offence helped them maintain reasonable boundaries to maintain peace. This mirrors Senegal's situation [52, 53], in which mutual knowledge and respect are identified as crucial to the continued unity and peaceful relations between the majority of Sufi Muslims and minority Roman Catholic Christians in their country. These values indicate suitable soil within the host communities.

4. FIGURES AND CHARTS

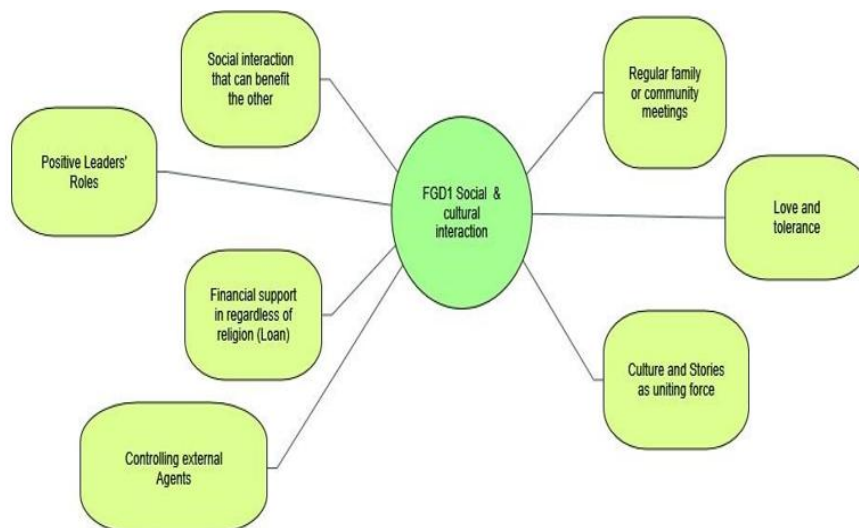


Figure 1 FGD1 mind map on social and cultural interaction religions and value system

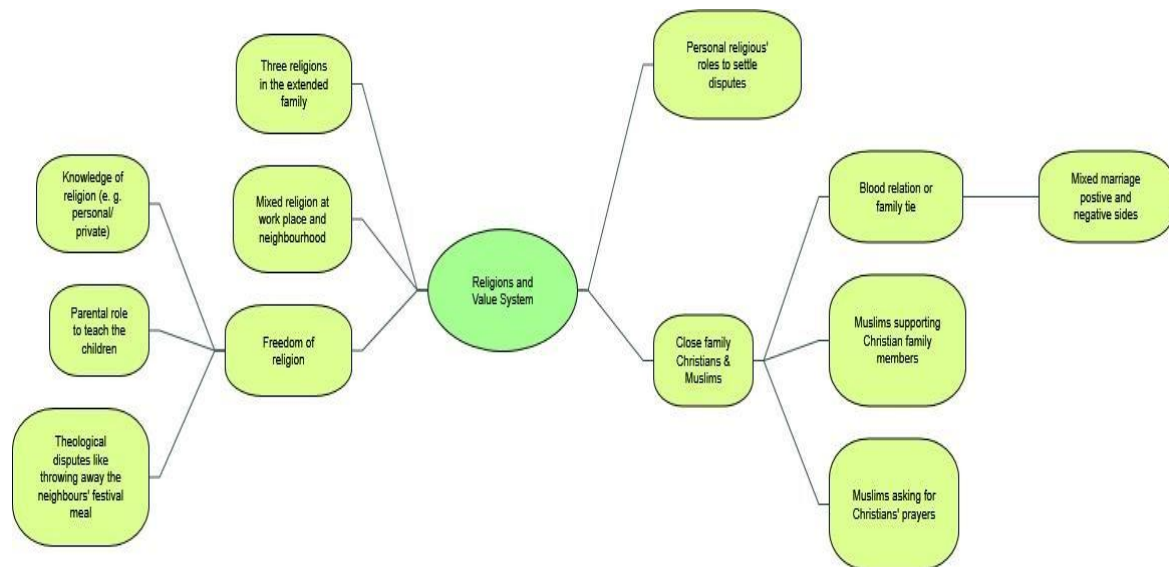


Figure 2FGD1 mind map on religions and value systems

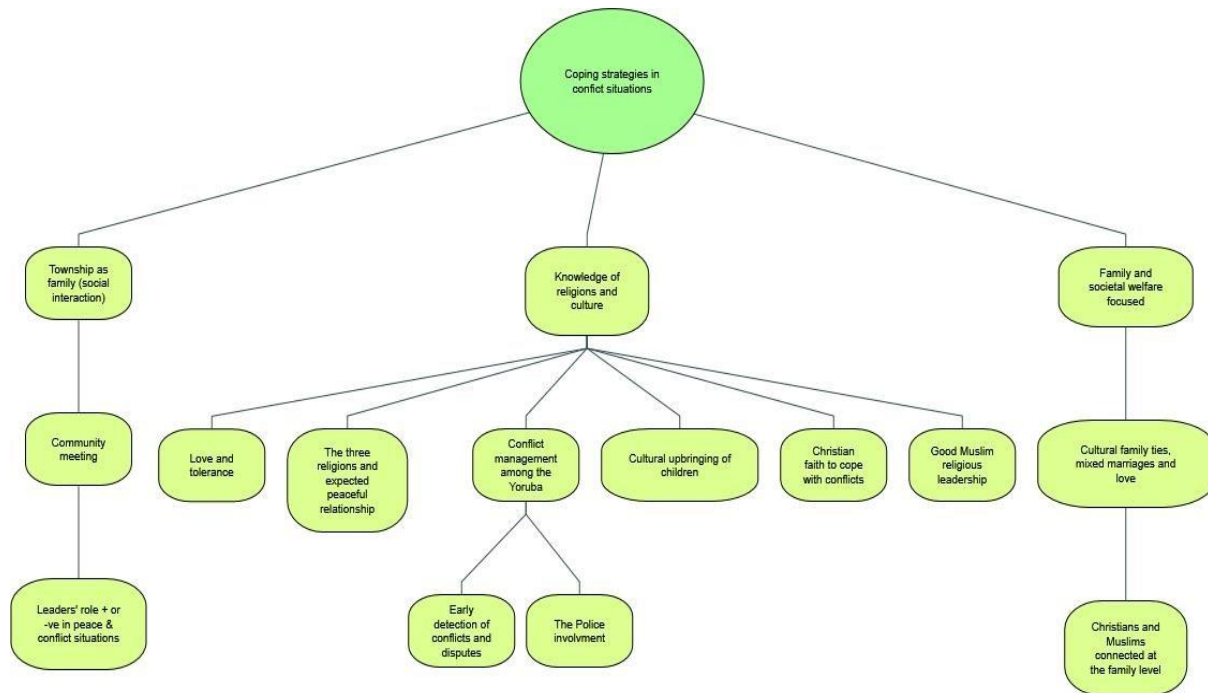


Figure 3FGD2 NVivo mind map coping strategies in conflict situations

5. CONCLUSION

This paper presented religious leaders and the contents of their teaching as crucial to the harmony obtainable among the people they lead. Just as Christians use the acts of kindness from their Scripture and Jesus' teaching to further the social interaction that has the potential to unite the community; likewise, Muslims' interpretations of certain concepts have contributed to harmony to diffuse tension in their community. Similarly, the ability of a religious community to sustain a harmonious society lies in the values, teachings, and interpretations that leaders give of various scriptural texts and concepts vis-à-vis their influence on the community. This invariably determines the level of tolerance the followers exhibit towards one another and those of other faiths.

Interpretations and the understanding of religions spearheaded by leaders could, therefore, be a way of maintaining community peace, an example being *Kòidà*(Q-M-D), the act of practising Islam in a social setting, and the correspondent expression of care or love by Christians. With religious ethics and social life in place, peaceful culture can be maintained in human society. The pursuit of certain virtues, especially kindness, can strengthen harmony in ideal situations. Hence, this paper has shown that the Yorùbá preserve their peace through certain established common ethics within Islam and Christianity, which do not violate the host Yorùbá culture. Thus, peace is possible when nurtured by the parties involved through the interpretation of religious concepts suitable for peacefulness within a relevant cultural context and coordinated by exemplary leaders. Whenever these features crumble, violence and rancour occur.

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