



HUMAN SECURITY AND THE SURVIVAL OF ILORIN EMIRATE CULTURE



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CHAPTER 11

THE ULAMA COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND SUSTENANCE OF PEACE IN ILORIN: THE BABA ILE – ILA EXAMPLE

Rasaq Muhammed Adisa & Saudat Salah Abdulbaqi

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is as old as man; whether at intrapersonal, interpersonal or prevalent level. The incessant intra-religious skirmishes have hampered development as it has encouraged suspicion, reprisal attacks, disunity, acrimony and rancour among the adherents of these religions. However, at a certain time and place, there are mediators who ensure a stabilized societal relationship. One of such Ulama, who is the focus of this paper, touched the lives of many people spiritually, socially and economically in his da'awah activities that transcended the borders of Nigeria.

Conceptualization of Peace

Peace is often considered as the fundamental basis of stability, progress and development in human societies. Peace connotes tranquility, psychological consonance, physical and environmental stability and the sustenance of enabling circumstances that guarantee freedom from all sources of all individual and societal instability.

Peace is an ideal that individuals and societies continue to pursue with different degrees of attainment because of its interrelatedness with all facets of life. For instance, societies develop in peace, cultures promote peace, religions uphold and cherish peace and individuals prosper in peace. However, we know that there could hardly be a society where total and absolute individual and societal peace exist. Peace can be viewed from different perspectives. Scholars and activists have defined the concept and practice of peace with variations. For instance, the concept could be looked at from the philosophical, sociological, political, religious and even commonsense perspectives. But from whatever perspective, peace is an important element that receives attention from every sector of the society. Thus, in this paper, our concern is on the role of Muslim scholars in enthroning societal peace through their communication prowess.

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Prophet Muhammad as a Natural Peacemaker

Studying the concept of conflict resolution in Islam without studying the personality, character, story and way of Prophet Muhammad is pointless. For Muslims, in its degree of importance, after the Qur'an; the Revelation from God, comes the way of the Messenger of God, the *sunnah*. The Qur'an is viewed as the light of life, and the actions and sayings of Prophet Muhammad are the guidance of a Muslim's daily life since the Prophet himself has always been regarded as the embodiment of the Qur'an. As such, his importance in the study of this field is paramount. The Qur'an on this note says: "O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: that is best, and most suitable for final determination." (4:59).

Muslims from all corners of the world agree that "[t]here are many lessons that can be learned from the exemplary conduct of the Prophet... who was a politically righteous person with highest moral and ethical values" (Bouheraoua, 2008, p. 1). In other words, for most Muslims, he was everything that any Muslim wishes to be in this life, and "to accept Muhammad as the Prophet of God," which is part of the testimony of faith, "is to accept that the revelation he received is from God" (Sardar & Davies, 2002). Indeed, the Qur'an says: "certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah [Muhammad] the best example" (Q:33:21)

However, after Prophet Muhammad's death, arbitration did not lose its legitimacy and it was transferred to the entire community, *ummah*, which was to confer it to the new leader, the Caliph; a new political institution which made 'Tahkim' (arbitration) one of its characteristics (Moussali, 1997). In continuation of this, charge to arbitrate remains with scholars who are endowed with the required knowledge and wisdom across the globe. Therefore, given the importance of this role and the increasing dimension of intrareligious conflicts among groups and individuals in Ilorin and Kwara State, this study explored the life and character of Alhaji Abdulrahman Salah, popularly referred to as Baba Ile Ila, "Missioner" or Alhaji A. R. Salah at different fora, a renowned Islamic scholar who was well acknowledged for his erudition, wisdom and communication skills in handling conflict in Ilorin and its environs.

Dialogue in Conflict Resolution

War is permitted in Islam only when all other options of enthroneing peace have been explored without success. The essence of warring in Islam is to achieve peace and orderliness, if those can be achieved without resorting to war, there is no need for war, hence the advocacy for alternate dispute resolution. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said in a *hadith*: "O people! Do not encounter with the enemy. Pray to Allah to grant you security; but

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when you (have to) encounter them, exercise patience." (al-Bukhari, 1985). Impliedly, Islam advocates for the avoidance of war and minimizing its effects if it unavoidably occurs and ending it as soon as possible.

It should be noted that Islam sternly warns against oath breaking and or treachery even in war situation. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'No people would break a treaty except that Allah has made their enemy to prevail over them' (Imam Malik, n.d.).

One of the said provisions is *amaan*, or protection, which is the suspension of the legality to kill an enemy, enslave him or take his property. The purpose of *amaan* is to make possible dialogue between warring nations and enhance communication by allowing a free flow of ideas and views (Labdo, 1998). This provision will offer warring sides an opportunity to interact in an atmosphere of mutual trust, talk to each other and hopefully, reach a peaceful settlement of their dispute.

Sulh, or peace treaty, is another avenue for peace created by Islam in order to give a chance for negotiation and dialogue for peaceful resolution of conflicts. It means an agreement reached between warring factions for peace either permanently or for a very long period.

Even after the start of a war, Islam provides channels for negotiation and eventual peace. The provision of *muhadanah*, or truce, is meant to serve this purpose. *Muhadanah* is an agreement reached between Muslims and their enemy to cease hostilities for a short period of time after the battle has already begun. This measure is designed to afford the two sides opportunity to take stock of the war and re-examine their options and priorities. It is also an open invitation to the warring parties to sit around the negotiating table and try to resolve their differences through dialogue and fair arguments (Labdo, 1998). Everybody under the above categories of agreements are guaranteed freedom of faith and protection of their lives, honour and property. However, it is necessary to have some mediators or gatekeepers to break truce between the warring parties for amicable settlement of rift and religion leaders are one of those vested with this responsibility in communal societies such as Ilorin; hence, this study.

Brief on Baba Ile Ila

Alhaji Abdulrahman bn. Salahud-deen (A.R. Salah), was born at Ifo, Ogun State in 1923/1924 to Alfa Salahudeen of Ile Ila, a student of Sheikh Tajul Adaab and Hajia Asmau, Sheikh Tajul Adaab's only full sister (Abdulsalam, 2017). He had his elementary education from his father and junior, senior and higher education from Sheikh Kamaludeen Al-Adaby. He taught at Ilesha, Abeokuta and served as Mufassir/preacher in Lagos, Ikenne among other places in Nigeria, and Accra before he finally came home (Ilorin) around 1961 when he became the head of the National Mission Board (National Missioner) of Ansarul Islam Society of

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Nigeria from 1961 until his death in 1987 (Adekilekun, 2017). He personified the motto of the Association; "ethics above knowledge" in all his actions. He played very prominent roles in the establishment of Arabic Training Center (Markaz), Abeokuta and co-managed the institution with its founder who happened to be his friend, Shaykh Adam Al-Ilory till 1955 when the center moved to its present location at Agege (Jimoh, 2018 & Agboola, 2018). He contributed immensely to the development of Markaz in the spirit of Islamic brotherhood and love for scholarship. He displayed great passion for imparting knowledge, this he did selflessly to the extent that, of all the contemporaries of Sheikh Adam, Sheikh Baba Ile Ila was the only person identified with him in a published biography for use in Primary Schools in Ilorin (NATAIS, 2010). He ran a home training Arabic and Islamic learning center for adults at Abeokuta, and continued at his No. 18, Kamal-Deen Street, Ilorin residence from 1962 where many personalities brought their children and ward to be taught Arabic and Islamic Studies (Jimoh, 2017). Young men and women were brought from towns in Nigeria such as Agege, Ibadan, Ijebuode, Ishagamu, Abeokuta, Oke-Ode, Edidi Ala, Ilorin and among the students he produced were: Late Alhaji Abiola, Late Alhaji Atanda Gaaru Late Alhaji Olusesi, Late Sulaiman Olowolayeman, Ambassador Abdulrahman Salahudeen of Oke Ode, Sheikh Ibrahim Oniye, first Makama of Ilorin, Alhaji Shehu, Alhaji Abduljeleel Gbadamasi, Rtd. Naval Officer Suleman Shekoni etc. He was widely travelled, affable and a go getter. Describing his impressive performance as a member of Nigerian delegates to USSR in 1972, Gambari noted: "...Alhaji Abdulrahman Salah, a very educated man in Islamic and Western education. He has been our Arabic translator, he was so fluent that the Arabic-speaking Russians admired him, he had been our link and he is never tired" (Gambari, 1972, p 16). He was instrumental to the recognition of certificates obtained from Arabic and Islamic Institutes by the Kwara Local School Board (Alaaya, 2017). He was appointed the 10th Imam Imale of Ilorin Emirate in 1985 by his Eminence, Alhaji Zulquarnaini Gambari, the 9th Emir of Ilorin. He was variously addressed as Alhaji A. R. Salah, Alhaji Missioner, Baba Ile-Ila and Imam Imale.

METHODOLOGY

The primary goal of this study was to explore how certain attributes of religious leaders contribute to enthronement of peace in the society. In specific terms, this study examined how the communication skills (verbal and nonverbal), of late Sheikh Abdulrahman Salah (Alhaji A. R. Salah, a.k.a' Baba Ile Ila), one of the foremost scholars of Ilorin that lived between 1923/1924 and 1987, had enhanced sustenance of peace in Ilorin and other places. To accomplish this, the study used a qualitative research design that integrated features of a case study approach. According to Merriam (1998) a qualitative case study is an intensive,

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holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or a social unit. Justification of case study for this paper was established by Stake (1995) who said case study is a valuable tool for understanding human behavior in depth. In view of this, the study sought information from the students and associates of late Alhaji A. R. Salah in Ilorin, about his contributions to establishing and sustaining peace in human settlements. The interview data was analyzed thematically through NVivo software. In order to formulate a better understanding of the dynamics of the Quran, hadith and other documents of Islam, as they relate to peace and conflict resolution. The data collected for this study came from seven basic sources, selected purposely, comprising students, associates and a retired teacher at Ansaru-Islam Primary School, Okemale where Baba Ila served as the Chairman, Parent Teacher's Association for many years. Details of the informants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Informants' Background Information

Code	Name	Role/Experience	Age (in years)	Date of Interview
Inf. 1	Alhaji Abubakar Musa Imam, Babaita	Masaasi	69	4 th April, 2018 @ 4.12-11p.m
Inf. 2	Alhaji Abdullahi	Islamic scholar	Over 90	4 th April, 2018 @ 5.20 p.m
Inf. 3	Alhaji Abdulrazzaq Aduagba	Islamic Scholar	Over 50	5 th April, 2018 @ 11.30 a.m
Inf. 4	Alhaji Suleman Shekoni	Retired Naval Officer	Over 69	2 nd February, 2018
Inf. 5	Mrs Dupe Hamed Hameed	Prominent educationist	Over 69	4 th April, 2018, @ 6.10 p.m
Inf. 6	Dr. Yusuf Bamigboye	Retired Director, Kwara State Ministry of Education, Ilorin	68	30 th August, 2018 @ 2.00 p.m
Inf. 7	Alhaji Alii Shasili Muhammad Ghali Alaya	Retired teacher of Arabic	Adult	An unpublished manuscript

Results from the interviews led to the generation of coding frames with conceptualized elements that explained the perspectives and experiences of the informants in relation to the case being studied.

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FINDINGS

In a society like ours where boundaries between communal harmony and mutual understanding have collapsed, there is a profound need for cross-cultural and multi-religious studies of peace. Non-western approaches to peace and conflict resolution are important not only for the development and refinement of existing theories derived in the Western cultural context, but also for the promotion of cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. More so, to implement Western approaches, we must first remember that Islamic societies have beliefs, customs and history that form the bases of conflict resolution processes. In view of this therefore, the main objective of this study was to understand the conflict resolution strategies of Sheikh AbdulRahman Salah (Baba Ile Ila), who was acclaimed to have touched the lives of many people spiritually, socially and economically through his da'awah activities that transcended the borders of Nigeria. Hence, the perspectives of his students and associates are presented and discussed under the themes that emerged from clusters of sub-themes. The emerged conceptions are grouped into themes, sub-themes and sub sub-themes in line with the thematic analyses approach adopted for this study. Therefore, figure 1 visualizes all the main themes and sub-themes in tandem with the aims of this study.

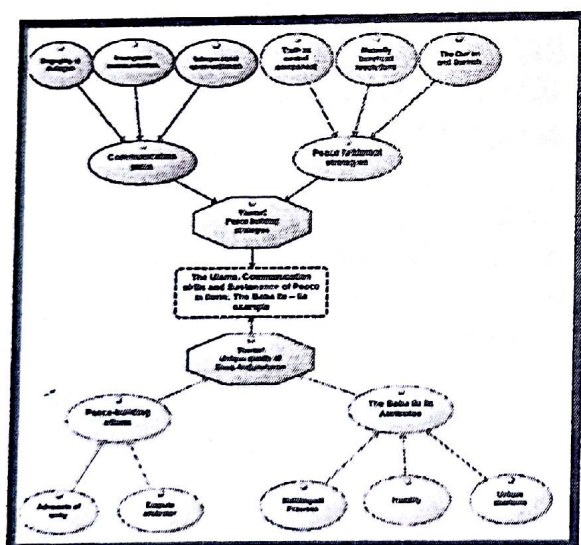


Figure 1. Main Themes and Sub-themes showing the strategies used by Sheikh Abdulrahman for peace building in Ilorin

Theme One: The Unique Qualities of Sheikh Abdulrahman Salah, (Baba Ile Ila)

The Baba Ile Ila Attributes

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The essence of da'awah is to bring about positive changes in the lives of man and his society as one of the instruments of development is a peaceful environment. Muslim clerics are revered for their peace efforts as they apply the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith to settle conflicts in their environment. Most importantly, they are expected to personify peaceful conducts wherever they are. A case in point was Sheikh AbdulRahman Salah (a.k.a' Baba Ile Ila). The analysis of the interviews with his students and associates using NVivo software established what he represented through exposure to some of his attributes.

HUMILITY

Humility gives a leader the capacity to lead from a position of strength.

This quality was identified as one of the outstanding virtues of Baba Ile Ila. It was reported to have earned him much loyalty and followership so that when he talked, people listened and obeyed. According to some of the informants interviewed, such humility stimulated trust for Baba Ile Ila on any conflict he arbitrated on. For instance, informant 2 summarizing this narrative and perception said:

Alhaji Missioner, Baba Ile-Ila was a great man by all standards. But despite his greatness, he was humble to a fault. What I find most amazing about him that I talk about all the times, I even told some people yesterday, was his sense of humility with the people on the lower rung of the social ladder. He is often heard calling younger people 'anti' and 'brother' (titles deployed to address female and male elders in Ilorin to connote respect. (Inf. 2).

Corroborating this perception, Informant 3 highlighted thus, "He ate with his guests from the same plate, no matter the differences in socio-economic status". Consistent with the description above, Informant 1 also disclosed that:

He never sat at home and summon the warring parties to his presence for reconciliation; rather, he used to pay them personal visits to calm their angers. This gesture humbled his hosts and made them feel favourably disposed to his messages of peace (Inf.1).

Succinctly put, Badmas (2018) noted: "He (Baba Ile Ila) was a team player who accommodated people of various status in his life, treating everyone with dignity and honour. In humility, he was a paragon, in endurance and tolerance, he was a reference point and in generosity, he was unbeatable"

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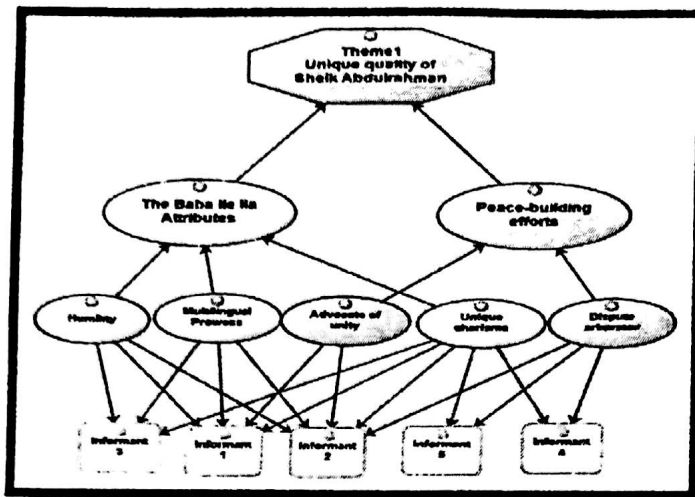


Figure 2. Theme One: The Unique Qualities of Sheikh Abdulrahman, Baba Ile Ila

MULTILINGUAL PROWESS

Multilingualism is a social phenomenon governed by the needs of globalization and cultural openness which has been identified as a leadership quality. No wonder that from the exploration about Baba Ile Ila, his multilingual skill was acknowledged as an extraordinary gift from the Almighty Allah. Actually, his oratory power and language acumen are well established in literature. However, not much has been documented about the correlation between his communication skills and sustenance of peace. The findings from this study revealed that this quality established Sheikh Abdulrahman as an international personality as well as a respected local arbitrator (Gambari, 1972). Reiterating the value of multilingual skills of the Sheikh, one of his intimate associate, informant 2 noted thus, "He spoke all languages he came in contact with". Similarly, informant 3 succinctly acknowledged him thus, "He was highly diplomatic with his well-endowed knowledge of languages". Looking at it from an additional perspective, informant 1 enthused: "A polyglot by Allah's 'karama', no matter how complex any language seems, he speaks the language of the world like a native. He spoke with finesse, quality experiences from travels, interactions with people from various backgrounds and networks".

Unique charisma

Charisma is the unique property of someone who possesses a personal charm and is irresistibly attractive to others. Such an individual has highly developed communication and persuasive skills that he or she uses to influence and excite other people. In the same manner, respondents affirmed that charisma was one of the factors that increased Baba Ile Ila's attractiveness to others and that made him acceptable to parties in dispute as an arbitrator. As

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indicated from the findings, Sheikh Abdulrahman was described as always very charismatic and highly attuned to the emotions of others in the community. Establishing this fact, informant 2 disclosed that, "He had a unique charisma that made it extremely easy for him to influence people like a spell. He made friends with both old and young, and across social status. He was *Ore omode ati oreagba*". In the same way, informant 3 expressed his perception thus, "He corrects with high sense of humility and charisma to the pleasure of the corrected person. Through the way he related with Baba, we were able to appreciate how tolerant Alhaji Agba was". Informant 5 reported that, "As a member of the then Local School Board, his door was always opened, anyone can go straight to his office. He was very generous and highly charismatic".

MENTORING

Often times, some speakers become nervous when they are to speak before celebrities who are adjudged good speakers themselves, but this was not the case with Baba Ile Ila. Badmas (2018) narrated that: "...as Imam Salah used to be celebrated in any event or programme in which he was featured, so also would he not hide his admiration and encouragement for other upcoming Islamic activists." Sharing his personal experience, Badmas reported: "I presented a speech in Arabic language on the occasion marking the birthday ceremony of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). He (Baba Ile Ila), poured encomiums on me and others for brilliant presentation...at that time...Imam Salah did not know that many of us in the field of Da'awah have adopted him as our model"

Peace Building Efforts

Islam advocates living in peace with God - the Creator and Lord of all that exists, as well as, seeking peace within our own selves, living in peace with other human beings, our surroundings and the environment in its entirety. Conflict is antithetical to building a peaceful relationship. Based on this background, this study explored the character and paradigms of handling communal and/or religious conflicts among groups, clans and individual by the first National Missioner of Ansarul Islam society of Nigeria and the 10th Imam Imale of Ilorin, Sheikh Abdulrahman Salah who was popularly referred to as Baba Ile Ila. When asked about how Baba Ile Ila reacted to the controversy that greeted his appointment as the 10th Imam Imale of Ilorin; a chieftaincy title belonging to his maternal side (Jawondo, 2006, p.66), informant 2 recounted thus, "his efforts in peace building cannot be overstated neither can it be ever forgotten. Particularly, he promoted peace by using his deep understanding of Islam endearing nature, humour, kindness and selflessness to restore calmness following his installation as the 10th Imam Imale in August, 1985", a position he held till March 22nd, 1987. To justify this appointment, HRH Emir Sulu Gambari

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was reported to have: "admonished the new Imam...to continue with his meritorious Islamic activities that fetched him his new position. The Emir said he had been thinking of rewarding Sheikh Salah ever before he became an Emir because of his Islamic propagation" (Nigerian Herald, 1985 culled from Agboola, 2018)

Advocate of Unity

Based on the findings of this study, Baba Ile Ila was able to normalize relations between parties on both sides of a conflict through his unique unifying and arbitration efforts. According to informant 2, "Sheik Abdulrahman was always preaching the virtue of Islamic brotherhood to mosque congregations that were bent on disintegrating; and today, all the mosques relate well with adequate recognition of their root". Looking at it from another but similar perspective, informant 1, described unity advocacy of Baba Ile Ila thus:

Alhaji Salah did not only stand by my father after winning the case (dispute over installation as Imam of Babaita mosque), he was very sincere with all parties and was never frugal with the truth, even while pleading for unity among the Ummah. His sincerity earned him wide acceptance by all. The seed of accord that was sown by Baba Ile-ila has germinated into unity in diversity today (Inf. 1).

Dispute Arbitrator

The communities in Ilorin and its environs have passed through incessant intra-religious conflicts in varied dimensions and its attendant consequences of loss of unity and communal relation. However, the efforts of some people such as Sheik Abdulrahman Salah, in the years past, have resulted in the peace being enjoyed today. Most of the informants interacted with acknowledged the arbitration astuteness of Baba Ile Ila. As noted by informant 2:

He was always in the forefront of dispute settlement even before he became the Imam Imale. His intervention was always sought because of his verse knowledge and impartial nature. I recall the quarrel between the conflicting congregation of Itamerin mosque. Baba Ile Ila took up the issue with passion and although the congregation got split for developmental purposes, it was without acrimony and members still relate with one another till today. (Inf. 2).

One participant who offered a statement that was representative of the comments of others was informant 5. He explained thus:

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I could recall that, when people quarrel at Ansaru-I-Islam Primary School, Okemale in the 70s and 80s, he was always called to intervene because of his impartial nature. What I find most striking about him is the fact that everybody, whether Muslim or Christian, was always ready to accept Missioner's judgment and make amends as pointed out by him.

Theme two: Peace Building Strategies of Sheikh Abdulrahman

Peace is an ideal that individuals and societies continue to pursue with different degrees of attainment. Societies develop in peace, cultures promote peace, religions uphold and cherish peace and individuals prosper in peace. That notwithstanding, we know that there could hardly be a society where total and absolute peace exist. However, peace is intimately tied with justice and one cannot be achieved without the other. Legitimate grievances of the aggrieved party must be addressed, if real and essential peace is to be achieved. But Islamic conflict resolution practices as well as the efforts of personalities are rarely acknowledged. It is in view of this that this study explored the strategies and extent to which Baba Ile-Ila's personality motivated the people in Ilorin Emirate to embrace peace. The evidence from this study's interviews showed varied perceptions on the peace building strategies of Sheikh Abdulrahman Salah. The responses highlighted two specific sub-themes as the strategies while six sub-themes emerged as shown in the NVivo output figure 3.

Peace Fulfilment Strategies

Peace is often considered as the fundamental basis of stability, progress and development in human societies. Peace connotes tranquility, psychological consonance, physical and environmental stability and the sustenance of enabling circumstances that guarantee freedom from all forms of instability. In line with these views, this study discovered, as indicated in figure 3, that truth as the central component of Baba Ile-Ila's leadership style has inspired the people in Ilorin Emirate. Similarly, it was discovered that the applications of Quran and Hadith to his actions and sayings as well as the mutually beneficial resolution strategies of Baba Ile Ila aided the peace fulfilment efforts.

Truth as central component

Truth has been identified as the central component needed by an arbitrator to reach peaceful solutions in any conflict. The principal strategy of peace building displayed by Baba Ile Ila was a goal to do what was right for everyone. Reiterating the value attached to truth by Sheikh Abdulrahman Salah, informant 2 hinted that: "he always spoke the truth and politely". Corroborating this perception, informant 6 disclosed Baba Ile Ila's appreciation for truth:

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myself and my friend, Prof. Hashir Abdulsalam, got to school late one day in 1967 while Baba (Missioner) was already in class. On sighting him, we ran away out of fear of being punished. But he sent another student to come after us. He asked while we ran away and we disclosed our fears. Rather than be crossed with us, he commented that we had already demonstrated admittance of guilt from our action and warned us not to be late to class again. He allowed us into the class and went over all that he had taught the class before our arrival. That singular gesture eschewed lateness and truancy from our school routines and learning attitudes.

From another account, Informant 7 alluded to Baba Ile Ila's forbearance as one of his strength in broking peace. He narrated his experience while on da'awah mission with Baba Ile Ila thus:

we got to a town populated by non-Muslims and we were entertained with palm wine. We were told: 'Alfa from Ilorin, drink from it and perform ablution with the rest'. We, his students became very furious but he told us not to lose our temper at such. He said they, (the host), acted out of ignorance, that if they knew, they would not have said and done such.

Democratic Resolution of Conflict

Baba Ile-Ila's personality, which motivated peaceful solutions in Ilorin Emirate, was based on the fact that peaceful solution is never one-sided. The findings from this study discovered that the adopted strategy practiced by the revered Sheikh rested on the fact that peace is achieved when all sides involved are well represented in the process of finding solution democratically. A peaceful solution may mean all parties make concessions for the good of everyone involved. Agboola (2017) reported that the first step taken by Baba Ile-Ila on assumption of office as the 10th Imam Imale of Ilorin was to compile a list of all the mosques under his jurisdiction for efficient management and to create an atmosphere of peaceful-coexistence among the two hundred and thirty-one (231) mosques under his coverage. This was unprecedented in the history of management of mosques in Ilorin. From the perception of informant 5, Baba Ile Ila was able to achieve that much in peaceful conflict resolution due to his spirit of fairness.

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I knew him when I was a teacher at Ansaru-l-Islam Primary School Okemale. I am a Christian, but I am proud to say he never discriminated, he loved everyone. To my observation, he helped Christians, who constituted the minority in that school and never allowed them to be cheated. He was always fair in his judgment and preached to all parties to embrace peace(Inf. 5).

Corroborating this fact, informant 2 reiterated how Baba Ile Ila was able to achieve mutually beneficial resolution in the community thus; "He hated anybody being cheated, no matter how lowly placed and he tried as much as humanly possible not to be a cheat".

Arising from this lesson therefore, it is imperative for anyone who occupies a position of authority such as a household head, a parent, a religious leader or government official, to deal justly with people who are under their authority to ensure a peaceful environment as a buildup to mutually beneficial process of conflict resolution.

Application of Quran and Hadith in conflict resolution

The tradition of conflict resolution, contrary to modern belief, is not foreign to Islam. In fact, as pointed out earlier, it goes back to the period when Allah was preparing Muhammad (SAW) for the mission of prophethood when he was called upon by the Quraysh to arbitrate in the lifting of the black stone to its place. This task was reserved for him because he was considered Al-Amin; the Trustworthy (Al Qahtani, 2007). Today, however, those conflict resolution skills introduced by the Muslim tradition are rarely mentioned in modern academia. As Abu-Nimer (2001) points out, Muslim practitioners in the field of peace-building and conflict resolution (CR) have applied various CR methods to Muslim communities showing that Islam has a lot to offer to this field, but their progress "has been hampered by a well-publicized Western assumption that Islamic religion and culture contradict the principles of peace-building, conflict resolution, nonviolence, and even democracy".

According to Toure (2012), Conflict Resolution in the Qur'an is referred to by the word *islah*, a word that means: to mend, to restore something that is broken, to make something right, to make peace, to set something in order. As Sadek (2009) points out, the term: appears several times in the Qur'an and which conveys the idea of improving, purifying, reconciling, repairing and reforming. The Qur'an is viewed as the light of life, and the actions and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) are the guidance for a Muslim's daily life since the Prophet himself has always been regarded as the Qur'an personified (Al Qahtani, 2007) . As such, his importance in the study of this field is paramount. Most importantly, the findings of this study add an important perspective to this, especially, from

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the practices and actions of Sheikh Abdulrahman Salah, Baba Ile Ila. Consistent with the description above, informant 2 copiously recounted how the Sheikh applied Quran and Hadith in his dealings thus:

He was more committed to attending the events of the poor than he was to the events of the rich. I would ask: "and what is your business with the mechanic that lost his mother?" And most often than not, our presence always throw the poor host off balance as he struggles to please his august visitors. But Missioner will just request for 'eko' (pap) drink it, present his gift, then we would leave. His point of happiness lies in the fact that the host could boast to others that he has prominent friends who are proud to identify with him thus, boosting his socio-economic ranking within his locality. He would often quote verse seven of Suratul Kahf: "Surely We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them (as to) which of them is best in works" He will often go further "...that he may try some of you by means of other" (part of Q47:4). Like a good speaker that he was, he would illustrate this verse with so many metaphors that no one can afford to disagree with him. He would always say: 'Allah created the rich for the interest of the poor; He created the famous ones for the sake of the unsung; He created the ugly ones to check the excesses of the beautiful ones; He created the sick to test the gratitude of the healthy', etc. (Inf. 2).

Corroborating this narration, informant 1, disclosed how Baba Ile-ila's leadership style has inspired the people in Ilorin Emirate through the teaching in Quran and Hadith thus:

He would quote copiously from the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (SAW) to convince my father to toe the line of peace. Alhaji Salah ensured that any break up never resorted to crises through his words of admonition, humble intervention and deep knowledge of the Qur'an and the Hadith (Inf. 1).

One participant, who offered a statement that was representative of the comments of others was informant 5, who summed it up that, "Missioner's words were always soothing and you find them useful in running your personal life regardless of your faith. Despite being a Christian, I loved listening to him

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because he will back whatever he says with quotations from the Qur'an, sayings of the Prophet and songs".

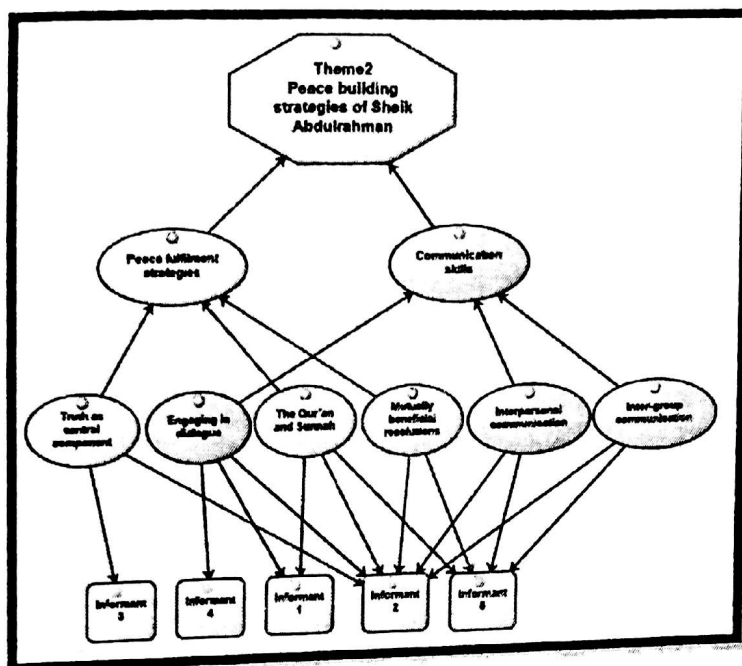


Figure 3. Theme two: Peace Building Strategies of Sheik Abdulrahman

Communication Skills and Peace Building

Communication has a big role to play in conflict management. It has been observed that poor communication always results in misunderstandings and eventual conflicts (Grunig, 1992). Examining whether the communication skills of Baba Ile-Ila promotes peace among the people in Ilorin Emirate or not, the findings in this study revealed that communication can be used as a medium of peace building. Since communication in all its forms can be used to create and exchange meaning, it can be used to achieve peace through peace talks and negotiations. In the arena of conflict transformation and peace building, communications have historically played a role in shaping the views of policy-makers and influencing popular opinion on conflicts through symbolic interactions. Within the peace building research, the role of communications has been relatively unexamined until recently. Alaaya (2017) noted: "he had a lot of wisdom and knowledge so that, if he talks to non-believers about Islam, he convinces them so much that they won't have a choice other than to accept Islam" willingly, based on conviction and not coercion.

Interpersonal communication towards peaceful coexistence

Interpersonal skills are the skills we use when we communicate face-to-face with one or more people. It is not only about what is said, but also how it is said. Interpersonal communication encompasses non-verbal messages such as

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Association, to Ansarul Islam Primary School Okemale, subtly monitor the teaching-learning process and crack jokes if the situation permitted. His words were always soothing and you find them useful in running your personal life no matter your faith.

Equally, Alaaya (2017) reported the non-violent but bold style of Baba Ile Ila in attracting people to the fold of Islam in his unpublished work. He recalled that: "we got to a town around 11.00 a.m on a Friday. The 'adhan' (call to prayer) has never been heard in the town. He asked me to call the prayer for Solatul Jum'ah. After the prayer, up to six people reverted to Islam". To illustrate the unique leadership style of Baba Ile Ila, Alaaya continued:

there were nine of us there. Baba Ile Ila understand that if he led the Jum'ah prayer, it was likely that the prayer should not continue after we leave. So, he made one of the inhabitants of the town, who had once lived in Lagos and knows little Arabic and Qur'an, the Imam. The region of the mosque was demarcated and he, (the new Imam), observed Jum'ah for the people. Later when we got to Ilorin, he sent one of his learned students to the town to teach them more about Islam.

Engaging Dialogues

Baba Ile Ila was the indisputable Master of Ceremony at Islamic and community events during his time. "He served as public interpreter and director of programmes when Sheikh Kaolack of Senegal and head of Faidat Tijaniyyah paid visits to Ansarul-Islam Headquarters and Ilorin old Central Mosque in 1961" (Adekilekun, 2017). Buttressing this claim, informant 2 stressed the quality of Baba Ile Ila in this regard saying "His ability to steer up and sustain conversations was legendary. These qualities were heightened by his eloquence and language acumen." Corroborating this perspective, Informant 4 explained that, "He was a man of so many virtues that I loved to be glued to. He had quality experiences from travels, interactions with people from various backgrounds and networks". Alaaya (2017) mused: "He (Baba Ile Ila) quotes a lot of books no one knew when he was reading them"

CONCLUSION

Summarizing these narratives and perceptions, it can be understood that in line with successive generations of Muslim leaders who followed the Prophets' example that have become established norms and were incorporated into the

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Shari'ah, Baba Ile Ila applied his Islamic scholarship, Allah endowed communication skills, humility, kindness, uprightness and selfless services to create and sustain peace all around him and beyond. This goes to confirm that, throughout Islamic history, through the middle ages and down to the modern era, Muslims consistently champion the cause of peace and oppose conflict eruption.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The preceding narratives as obtained from associates, students and acquaintances of Baba Ile Ila confirm the assumption that the quality of religious leaders in a community determines the quality of peace obtainable in such community. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are advanced:

- Religious leaders should continuously seek and obtain functional knowledge, both spiritual and mundane, to attain relevance in global affairs as agents of peace.
- Religious leaders must place the interest of Islam above their personal interest to be worthy of the title.
- Religious leaders must live what they preach to serve as role models to their aware and unaware followers
- Religious leaders must display high level humility to command respect and believability of their subjects
- Religious leaders must be just and impartial in arbitrating between people, no matter how close or distance the parties are
- Religious leaders should sharpen their communication skills and be mindful of their choice of words while preaching in order not to stir crises that they are expected to prevent
- Religious leaders should endeavor to travel beyond their coasts to widen the scope of their experiences

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