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HISTORICISING THE CONFLICTS OF RELIGIOUS SUPERIORITY AND FUNDAMENTALISM IN GOEMAILAND, PLATEAU STATE, CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract
Religion is known to be one of the common factors of conflicts in contemporary world. The introduction of religious sects and denominations in many parts of Nigeria compounded the causes of conflicts that trickled down to Goemailand and become one of the major problems that is bedeviling the area. The paper studied religious superiority and fundamentalism in Goemailand and interrogated the views that a particular group holds that their belief is the only absolute truth and superior faith that must be accepted. It also investigated the rigid and inflexible ideologies that make it difficult for some group to shift ground or compromise. The aim is to understand the application of discrimination and violence to justify firm defense of faith and belief against others on the basis of divine opinion. Oral sources, colonial and archival materials in addition to other relevant sources form the basis for data and information presentation in this paper. Historical analysis and inference were used to identify key issues that were resolved.

Keywords: Religion, Conflict, Superiority, Fundamentalism and Goemailand Introduction

The Goemai people including Abakwariga who followed some of the Goemai group from Wukari to their various settlements in Goemai areas and are assimilated into the Goemai group and are found in Shendam, Dorok, Kwo, Japjan, Moeda of Plateau State, Lafia and Awe in Nasarawa State[23] have two major sources of traditions of origin and history of migration. Despite the humerous versions of the peoples‟ history, the people are classified into those who migrated from Garram to found and established Muduut (Shendam)[24] and some surrounding villages and those who migrated from Wukari after the disintegration of the defunct Kwararafa empire to found and establish the settlements of Dorok, Kwo and Japjan[25] also with their surrounding villages. However, the name Japjan was later re-named Namu by the Islamic Jihadist of Usman dan Fodio and has been in use since that time to date[26] and will also be used

[23] F. M Longban, S. S Musa, D. C Hassan, Who are the Goemai?, Dan-Sil Press, Jos, 2015
[24] L. D Walu, "The Evolution of Chieftaincy: A Case Study of Goemailand", A Paper Presented to the History Research Seminar, University of Jos, 20th May, 1981
[25] C. K Zaku, "The History of Western Education in Shendam Local Government Area", B. A (Hons) History, Unpublished Project, University os Jos, 1981
[26] Plateau State of Nigeria, Government White Paper on the Report of Judicial Commission of Inquiry Into the Conflict in Namu Town, Quaan-Pan Local Government Area, Plateau State, Plateau Printing Press, May, 2006

throughout this study. However, these groups have integrated and become one group with the same culture and have acknowledge Muduut (Shendam) as their headquarters. Ames noted,

> for want of convenient and secured habitations, the chief descendant had made frequent changes of headquarters settling at various times near Nshar, Mount Jalbang, Muduut, Poeship and even as far west, it is said as Kurgwi and Namu, thence returning to Mount Jalbang and finally settling at Muduut towards the end of the last century under Adamu the 18th Long[27]

However, there were also the second wave of migration of the people that emanated as a result of intermarriages between the first group, the conflict of interests between the people and disintegration while searching for farmland, hunting ground, fishing ponds and also from the chiefs‟ appointment of their brothers as title holders in their cabinets that were assigned the control of some territories. These sets included later migrants who moved from Garram and Wukari to join those who preceded them. Also included in these categories are those who also migrated from some earlier established settlements of the Goemailand to found settlements within the territories of the earlier migrants but with their permission. It noted,

> Lankaku was founded about the mid-eighteen century by Gizo, a hunter who led a pocket of his followers from Kwande to a settlement at the foot a tree called „Gung‟, which eventually became the original name of the place but later „Lankaku‟ which is a corruption of „Long Akaku‟ named after Akaku Moegurum the third chief of Namu from whom they obtained permission to settle on the land[28].

It was apparent however that after the Goemai founded and established their numerous settlements that have developed into villages, towns and cities which characterize the areas, they immediately instituted their culture in the settlements they founded and established. However, the particular culture of these people that form the basis of this study is the traditional religion and cultural worship of the people. Meanwhile, the understanding of the concept culture here will provide a clearer background for approaching and analysing better the traditional religion and cultural worship of the people. It is therefore apparent that culture, besides being described commonly as a peoples‟ way of life, has more meaning to its understanding beyond peoples‟ way of life to explaining more about the concept by different scholars.

While (Zakari, 2014) views culture as the totality of ideas, concepts, values and norms that characterized a society[29], Asiwaju in support of Zakari added that culture is what gives order and meaning to the linguistic, social, political, economic, aesthetic, religious and philosophical

[27] C. G Ames, Gazetteers of Northern Provinces of Nigeria Vol. IV: The Highland Chieftaincies, Plateau Provinces, Frank Cass, London, 1934
[28] F. M Longban, S. S Musa, D. C Hassan, who are the Goemai?... p. 90
[29] I. A Zakari, The Socio-Cultural Ceremonies Among the Gbagyi in Minna in the Nineteenth Century in T. Wuam, M. L Salahu (ed), Aspects of Niger State History, Essays in Honour of Professor Ibrahim Adamu Kolo, Ibrahim Babangida University, Lapai, 2014

modes and organization of a people, nation or ethnic group and it is the hallmark of distinction as well as the connection between one people and another[30]. In the same vein, Alubo categorized culture into material culture comprising of artifacts and tangible objects such as clothes, imolements and appliances and non-material culture which he referred to as non-tangible to include languages, values, norms, science and stock of knowledge and code of behaviours[31]. The understanding of culture as captured by Zakari, Asiwaju and Alubo has provided an insight and guide to some discussion on religion and worship as part of the Goemai religion that is relevant to upholding the values, norms, decorum and orderliness of the Goemai people. This discussion on religion in Goemailand shall be the paper"s focus in the next section.

Religions and Worships in Goemailand

There are three major religions in Goemailand. They are the Goemai traditional religion, Islam and Christianity. The Goemai traditional religion and cultural worship was the indigenous religion of the Goemai people that was established together with other Goemai pre-colonial cultural institutions and was incorporated into the socio-political organisation of the people to buttress the aspect of their divine administrative policies. The Goemai traditional religion together with those of other ethnic nationalities in Africa was later known as the African Indigenous Religion (AIR). Gbenda noted,

> they were thereafter given a lot of nomenclatures such as African Religion, African Traditional Religion and Traditional African Religion among others who have often been used either in singular or plural forms and have two school of thought on the use of the singular and plural in describing the African Indigenous Religion (AIR) as the religion that have common features, religious philosophy and thought forms as perceived by the former school of thought or having multiple cultures, different ethnic nationalities and varying practices as pinpoint by the latter school of thought[32]

In this paper, the study will depend on the context of African Indigenous Religion (AIR), African Traditional Religion or Traditional African Religion as noted by Gbenda who refers to them as those

> living institutionalised religious beliefs and practice which are rooted in the past religious cultures; a religion that was transmitted to the present generation or votaries by successive forebears mainly through oral traditions, sacred institutions and religion which is slowly but constantly updated by each

[30] A. I Asiwaju, The Evolution of Nigeria Culture in A. Osuntokun, A. Olukoju (ed), Nigerian Peoples and Cultures, Davidson Press, Ibadan, 1997
[31] O. Alubo, Sociology, A Concise Introduction, Ichejum Press, Jos, 2012
[32] J. S Gbenda, The Impact of Colonialism on Africa Indigenous Religion in J. Mangut, T. Wuam (ed), Colonialism and the Transition to Modernity, Sam-Adex Printers Sanyo, Ibadan, 2012

> generation in the light of new religious experiences through the dialectical process of continuities and discontinuities[33]

The Goemai traditional religion and worship is structured as described by Gbenda and has influenced the behaviours, identity and communication style of the people that are inherent in the factors that are inherited from their forebears, preserved in sacred places, narrated and passed down through generations and contemporary institutions and are deeply ingrained in the peoples‟ education, occupation, language, tradition, beliefs, norms and value systems among others. These factors also impact on the people‟s thoughts, feelings and behaviours and make them learn values in their culture. However, the Goemai traditional religion and cultural worship like that of most ethnic groups in Nigeria which formed the basis of their social and cultural lives were mostly not documented in the pre-colonial period. This assertion was supported by (Eluwa, Ukogwu, Nwachukwu, Nwaubani, who noted,

> however, it is not for every period of Nigeria History that we have information on every aspect of the people‟s culture. For example, for the period before A. D 1800, the amount of written materials on some parts of Nigeria is small. This is why we must rely on other sources of History to know more about the cultures that existed in Nigeria in the past[34].

This position was compounded by skewed, contradictory and distorted compilation of the peoples‟ traditional religion and cultural worship in the colonial period. It is for this reason that the information on this aspect of the study will rely mainly on oral evidences, unpublished long essays, dissertations and theses by Goemai students in Nigerian Universities and other higher institutions in addition to some colonial and contemporary sources.

The Goemai Traditional Beliefs and Practices

The Goemai people after developing from the family to establishing clans and villages in their various settlements instituted on their different social lives among which are traditional beliefs which they practiced and handed-over from generation to generation. The traditional beliefs and practices of the Goemai people is similar to that of the Jukun people. This is apparent because some of the Goemai clans have traditions of origin that is linked to the Jukun and it is possible that they have transferred this culture from there to their present settlements in Goemailand. It is therefore not surprising for the Goemai and Jukun to share cultural similarities. The men who apparently are the landlords of their homes carved a secluded area known as “luu-daas” where they eat and do many other private activities secretly. The luu-daas extend beyond mini worship and elders‟ meal eating places and custody of masquerades‟ costumes to an institution of teaching and learning where younger male adults are taught good manners like greeting (taal), discipline, right conduct and life survival strategies through physical training, story-telling, folklores and above all, learning their belief and worship

[33] J. S Gbenda, The Impact of Colonialism on Africa Indigenous… in J. Mangut, T. Wuam (ed), Colonialism and the Transition… p. 482
[34] G. I C Eluwa, M. O Ukagwu, J. U. N Nwachukwu, A. C. N Nwaubani, A History of Nigeria, Africana-first Publisher Limited, Onitsha, 1988

system. The people believe in the existence of God which they call „Naan". They belief and worship Naan as a divine, supernatural and supreme being who is author of life and everything that is on the universe. According to Kangtau,

> the Goemai believe in Naan for all sources of existence and as the creator of heaven and earth, man and woman, animals, living and non-living and all that are seen and unseen. The Goemai also belief in a spiritual world where other lesser deities are found and are gods in charge of some earthly activities such as protection, health, healing and medicines, rain, agriculture, fertility, initiation, justice and others[35].

These deities according to the people are lower to Naan and have significant roles in the life of a man. The deities whose worship varies in various Goemailand are done in the groves under specific trees, hills and water among other natural things. The deities are however in categories.

The most powerful among the deities are Kerem and his wife, Matkerem. These deities protect and direct the Goemai man who assumed in adulthood a sense of control and belonging in carrying out his daily activities. Tsenyen, an informant emphasized the power of the deities and noted,

> upon mentioning the name of any of Kerem or Matkerem deity in particular, a Goemai man is safe from any danger and added that even those who were killed elsewhere in pursuit of their legitimate means of survival be it business, civil service, Military and police services will return home alive but must appease the deities thereafter[36].

The rituals of the deities are performed in a grove, Nmei and its temple is marked by an ant-hill, toehr, placed between three inverted pots. Its sacrifice is an offering with two fowls and a male goat, fuum. It can be less or more depending on the prayer request. The food prepared from these items that are meant to appease the gods is consumed all in the place of worship by the male worshippers and is not allowed to be taken home. The deities" cult is only carried out by a mature male person who receives the necessary training to perform its rituals after being initiated into the Kwamteng cult. Kerem and Matkerem are inherited from the father to a son, brother or any relation on who the owner wish to bestow on attending old age or in case of death after it is confirmed through divination, Paa, that any of them can succeed him in the worship of the deity but they must however be Kwamteng cult initiates.

There are also some tree deities which the Goemai also believe in and worship. The most prominent and common among the tree deities are Tiem, Beet and Loko. While Tiem and Beet are worshipped by almost all the Goemai clans, Loko are worshipped only in Namu and

[35] B, J Kangtau, "Historical Analysis of Contemporary Religious Conflicts in Goemailand: A Case Study of the 2004 Yelwa Crisis", B. A (Hon) History and International Studies, Unpublished Project, University of Jos, 2008

[36] Dantala Doornaan Tsenyen, Male, 43 Years Old, Interviewed at Kwande, 11th April, 2026

Kurgwi areas of the Goemailand and in some neighbouring Jukun towns of Akiri and Wuse in Awe Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. The worshippers from these different communities visit each other when the worship is about to be performed in any of the communities to buttressed the similarities in culture between the Goemai and Jukun. Hassan noted,

> Para said, their ancestors brought the Loko tree from Wukari during their migration to Namu. The worship is to celebrate barren couples who could not get a child since marriage or couples who after giving birth to children, need more but was not forthcoming therefore requested for more children from the tree deity and their request was granted[37]

According to Dongbi who said one of her children was a request from the Loko tree deity noted,

> when their request is granted, they appeased the deities with fuum, a male goat, two fowls, some three to five measures of beniseed and about fourty measures or a bag of millet, about ten measures of rice and two to five bottles of honey depending on what joy the couples derived from having a child. Food is cooked, rice cake, Gumba is made and local liquor, mwues is brewed from the cereals and provided for the multitudes that gathered to eat, drink, merry and celebrate with the couples under the tree in the case of Loko[38].

Like the Kerem and Matkerem, no remnant of the food is taken home by anybody including the chief priest. A white native piece of cloth was tied round the Loko tree to signify appreciation and the celebrants were escorted home with dance by traditional dancers. The children born from the request made to these tree deities are named Ntiem, Nbe‟et and Loko for male children and Mattiem, Matbe‟et and Matloko for female children depending on the tree deity the request was made. The ritual, like that of the Kerem and Matkerem, was also performed by a male adult who had undergone the Kwanteng cult initiation.

Another deity the Goemai believe and worship is hill (Pang). While the „pang‟ is found in isolation in some few Goemai villages and not in ranges as those mountainous areas of their immediate neighbours bordering them to the north, the isolated ones found in those Goemai villages are worshipped by the people. These areas where the worship of pang were practiced in Goemailand include Shendam and Namu where pangmatlong (Matan Fada) are worshipped, Duankwan and Dung-Goeshing where Pang-Nakoe is worshipped and Kurgwi where Pang-Nagan is worshipped among others. They called it Pangmatlong, “Hill of the Chief‟s Wife” and Pang- Nakoe, “Hill of the Grandmother” because they believed that there were goddesses who reside on the hills and were responsible for the safeguarding and protecting the palaces of chiefs, the graves of the previous chiefs who died and were buried under the hills and the community. The goddesses (Matlong) and (Nakoe) were said stay atop the hills to get clearer

[37] D. C Hassan, “A History of Colonial Policies and the Namu Crisis”, B. A (Hons) History and International Studies, Unpublished Project, University of Jos, 2009
[38] Dongbi Dalat, Female, 92 Years Old, Interviewed at Namu, 13th April, 2026

views of the chief‟s palace, graveyard of the demised chiefs and people of the villages the goddesses as were protecting and safeguarding.

However, the Pangmatlong in Shendam are located in Jalbang and Karbang. While the pangmatlong in Jalbang is worshipped in commemoration of Bigun, the only LongDuut who was buried under the hill and the respect and honour for his grave, the pangmatlong in Karbang is worshipped as a place where the graveyards of several pre-dynastic Longduuts are found. Meanwhile, the Pang-Jalbang is worshipped in veneration of Bigun as the ancestor of the Goemai Duut where a horse is killed and sacrificed to the gods and ancestors. The worship of Pang-Karbang on the other hand is to maintain respect and sanctity of the graveside of the pre-dynastic Longduuts and to also complete the process of installing the Longduut. The ritual is carried-out by Shinkwan and Kanglu Shinkwan not even the Nsen who is the owner of the Land[39].

Like the Pangmatlong in Shendam, the Pangmatlong in Namu was also worshipped by the Goemai of Japjan. Although the worship had some similarities, it equally had some differences. Like the Pangmatlong in Shendam, the worship of the Pangmatlong in Namu was also to preserved and maintained the graveside of the previous Longjans which Para noted, all the Longjans were buried under the hill except Suleiman Allahnana Magaji I and Umaru Kwande Allahnana II who were buried in the palace[40], the Matlong who stayed on top of the hill to get the clear view of Namu, the town she watched, guarded and protected the people from being attacked by enemies. She also guarded and protected the Pandam lake in the present Pandam Wild Life Park and Game Reserve for the Goemai people of Namu to use while she also took her bath in the lake.

The Pangmatlong in Namu was also worshipped to provide rain and protect the people from epidemic. When early rain did not fall on time as expected, Hassan noted,

> the Goemai of Namu and of course including invited Goemai from other Goemai villages led by the Longjan and Chief Priest went under the Pangmatlong and prayed to God requesting rain through Matlong, the goddess. They take along with them black cow or ram, prepared food from guinea corn flour, soup from beniseed or dry okro and local liquor, mwues for sacrifice to the gods. The black cow or ram was slaughtered and the blood and liver sacrificed to the gods while the remaining flesh, food and mwues were eaten and drunk by the worshippers. They believed that before they reached their homes, they would be soaked in rain signifying the gods had answered their prayers and the rain would continue till the end of the rainy season[41].

[39] Fidelis Longban, Male, 63 Years Old, Interviewed Jos, 3rd October, 2025
[40] D. C Hassan, “Historical Perspectives on the Issues and Interests in the Namu Crises of 2005 and 2006”, M. A Dissertation, Department of History and International Studies, University of Jos, 2013
[41] D. C Hassan, “A History of Colonial Policies and the Namu Crisis”,… p. 47

The Pangmatlong in Namu is also worshipped to prevent natural calamities arising from the outbreak of Ndwuang, chicken pox, Nassuk, small pox, Tapkiak, meningitis, Lo‟om, leprosy or earthquake or tremor and drought among other natural calamities and disasters. The worship procedure and requirements for the sacrifice are the same as in the case of the drought. However, the worship of Pangmatlong is presided over by a chief priest and the last known chief priest who presided over both Pangmatlong and Loko in Namu was Ngulung Doga. Since his death, nobody has succeeded him because most of the people have converted to either Islam or Christianity.

Other Goemai areas that believe and worship Pang are Duankwan and DungGoeshing. They are one and the same people who together, worshipped PangNakoe, "Hill of the Grandmother". Like the Pangmatlong in Shendam and Namu, the PangNakoe is worshipped by the people of Duankwan and DungGoeshing at the graveside of their previous Chief who died since the pre-dynastic period and is being maintained through the sacrifice they offer during the worship. They also believed that Nakoe, the grandmother who has been residing atop the Pang was responsible for protecting and guarding not only their ancestors buried under the hill but including the people of the villages from all calamities. In the same manner, „PangNagan‟, a hill found in Kurgwi „Nagan‟ named after Nna Ngan the wife of Talmoep the ancestor of the Goemai people of Kurgwi was worshipped to commemorate the military significance and religious, spiritual and protection of the deities in the sacred shrine, Nmei under the hill. The hill also served as a natural fortress and a strategic point of defense for the people of Kurgwi where, from its elevation, they could sight their enemies from a distance and planned their defense strategies against their invaders[42]. It was also said that from the hill top, the former capital of the people and people themselves were watched over. This is common with most Goemai settlements whose former capitals were established under the hills.

There are also gods related to water that the Goemai worship and believe in. They are gods of rain and rivers who provided good yield and harvest for farmers in the case of rain and children to barren couples, sea food and for domestic use in the case of rivers. They are worshipped for the purpose that they have been in most Goemailand and its sacrifice is offered in the manner as do the others.

Free spirits, Mukwarkum, were other things the Goemai people believed in. they are found in rivers, forests, abandoned buildings and quiet places. Kangtau noted, although they were not worshipped because they could not be seen, but they could either be good or bad, generous or dangerous/wicket and could cause illnesses, death or other misfortunes in the community[43]. Similar to Mukwarkum which the Goemai people belief existed were Paa and Mwalak. They belong to individuals who have powers beyond human comprehension and explanation. However, they provide solutions and meanings to different aspects of human life and the people depended on them for peace and harmony in the society. Their powers were also

[42] Sule Yilkwap Kela, Male, 66 Years Old, Interviewed at Kurgwi, 7th April, 2026
[43] B, J Kangtau, "Historical Analysis of Contemporary Religious Conflicts in Goemailand: A Case Study of the 2004 Yelwa Crisis",… p. 26

manifested in various agencies of life like marriage, fertility, healing, sacrifice and other human related problems and predicaments[44].

However, the Goemai and their indigenous religion and worship have a rich spiritual heritage with a strong bone to nature and ancestral spirits that is not easy to totally recreate their vision and perception. While some elements of the people‟s cultural heritage have changed due to modernisation and westernisation, other elements particularly their belief systems and practices have remained largely pristine, native and unchanged even though the advent of Christianity, Islam and modernization has reduced significantly the number of adherents of these beliefs to the detriment of the people yet, they are still being practiced in some villages to date.

Islam and Christianity in Goemailand

The Goemai witness the infiltration of Islam and Christianity two religions that added up to their traditional worship to make three the religions of the people. Islam was the first foreign religion to be introduced in Goemailand and was followed by Christianity. Since the emergence of Islam in Nigeria in the 11th century and its slow but steady spread among the diverse people form Kanem-Borno, Hausaland before the introduction of Sokoto Jihad added more prominence to Islam and further increased its spread to Nupeland and Yorubaland where Islamic had control of places in the areas and penetration to various strata of the society and interaction with the indigenous cultures of the country, Islam has become a recognised and indelible way of life for many Nigerians and are features of the Nigerian cultural scene where Gbadamosi and Junaid noted,

> it is a measure of the cultural interaction that had taken place between the indigenous cultures and the Islamic cultures that many aspects of the cultural life of Nigerians have come to depict and reflect Islamic origin[45].

This earliest Islamic presence in Nigeria that started in Borno of Kanem-Borno Empire which was at the terminus of the Trans-Saharan trade route with Tripoli and enjoyed trade relations with merchants from North Africa. While the spread of Islam was going on steadily in Northern Nigeria through traders and merchants from North Africa in the Kanuri area of Borno, the same was also going on in Hausaland, Northern Nigeria through the activities of the Wangara merchants from Mali. Meanwhile, the Sokoto Jihad of 1804, a superior and significant stage in the evolution of Islamic culture in Hausaland emerged. The Jihad, launched by Uthman dan Fodio, a Fulani immigrant against the Gobir leadership led to the establishment of Sokoto Caliphate in 1812 and radical, aggressive, expansion and spread of Islam that covered the whole of Hausaland and spread as far as the Middle-Belt of Nigeria, South and Mid Western areas of Yorubaland and Auchi where emirates, sub-emirates and districts were constituted as Islamic administrative institutions.

[44] D. C Hassan, “A History of Inter-Ethnic Relations Between the Goemai and Their Neighbours in North Central Nigeria, 1900-2015”, Ph.D Thesis, Department of History, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, 2021

[45] T. G. O Gbadamosi, M. O Junaid, Islamic Culture and the Development of Nigeria in A Osuntokun, A Olukoja (ed), Nigerian Peoples and Cultures… Pp. 112-119

It was obvious that the pre Jihad era romance of Islam and its association with rulers and the growth of political entities expanded Islamic state formation just as it created new settlements and developed the growth of urban cities. Gbadamosi noted that

> under the stimulation of the Sokoto Jihad in the 19th C, villages were converted to towns and new towns were founded as centres of commerce, industries and mundane activities. Largely through the efforts of some emirs and their officials, towns founded outside Hausaland such as Yola, Bauchi, Bida and Kontagora[46]

However, Islam spread to Goemailand and was noticed in major cities of the area. Most of the first Islamic Scholars to Goemailand were also close to the Goemai traditional rulers. It was noted that Mallam Ali the first Islamic Scholar in Namu was close to the Longjan of Namu just as Mallam Lawal was close to the Long-Kwo of Kwande. The Islamic Scholars converted willing Goemai people to Islam, introduced literacy in Arabic and the quranic system of education that had political, social and cultural effects in Goemailand. Islam gradually expanded to have more sects than it started. While Islam was getting more prominence in Goemailand, another foreign religion, Christianity emerged.

Although Christianity was eventually introduced in Nigeria after some abortive attempts in the past, it was only successful in 1842 when the first batch of Christian Missionaries landed in Badagry on their way to Abeokuta. They came in the wake of the liberated slaves returning home to Nigeria. (Gbadamosi and Ajayi noted,

> the mission efforts of Townsend, Crowther and Gollmer at Abeokuta who established Schools, Churches and the baptism of the first convert in addition to the Methodists active evangelism and the emigrants introduction of Christianity into the various areas of Yorualand entrenched Christianity in the area[47].

Christianity extended thereafter from Yorubaland in South-Western Nigeria to the south-Eastern Nigeria where the Scottish Missionaries, Hope Waddell who preferred a policy of concentrated evangelism arrived Calabar in 1846 and settled at Duke Town and Creek Town where he made some potential Christians in the area. After the first baptism, the group of Christian converts increased when emigrants where moving into the Mission land in Duke Town. Despite being Methodists and Anglicans, they had no choice but to attend the only Presbyterian Church available in the area. The Anglican gradually dominated evangelism in the area.

In Northern Nigeria on the other hand, Christianity and the Missionaries activities arrived the area in the mid 19th century. Pioneered by Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowder, his interest in the missionary work among the Hausa Muslims during the Niger expedition of 1841 and 1854 and

[46] T. G. O Gbadamosi M. O Junaid, Islamic Culture and the Development of Nigeria in A Osuntokun, A Olukoja (ed), Nigerian Peoples and Cultures… P. 118
[47] G. T. O Gbadamosi, J. F Ade Ajayi, Islam and Christianity in Nigeria in O Ikimi (ed), Groundwork of Nigerian History, Heinemann Educational Books (Nigerian) Plc, Ibadan, P,349

his evangelistic visions shared by Dr William Balfour Baikie who led the expedition of 1857 employed a large number of intelligent young men from the area to serve as interpreters and guides to the expedition in its relationship with the rulers and people of Northern Nigeria areas[48]. The navigation of local politics by Ajayi Crowder led to the opening of early mission stations along the Niger and Benue rivers and thereafter many other missionaries followed in the operations of evangelical centres and the establishment of Churches in Northern Nigeria including Goemailand.

In Goemailand, the Christian missionary activities started in Shendam the headquarters of the Goemai people with the Catholic missionaries in 1907. The assistance requested by Captain Ruxton Residence of the then Muri Province from the LongGoemai to provide land for the missionaries was not only obliged but the LongGoemai further instructed his subjects to assist in building residence for the missionaries. Despite the threat by malaria parasites that led to the death of some of the missionaries, it could not stop them from carrying out the religious activities they intended in Goemailand. They missionaries gradually expanded their activities to other Goemai areas[49]. By 1908, they had gone round Demshin, Goesa, Kalong and Ngwa-dadi and had come back to Shendam after marking the plot of land provided for them to build Churches. They enjoyed how they were welcomed and believed that mission activities would be successful in those areas. The Catholic Mission was finally opened in Demshin in 1910[50], transferred to Kwande in 1929 where the Catholic Missionaries continued their exploration of Goemailand and later extended to Kwa in Mernyang area by 1945[51].

Just like the Catholic Missionaries, other Missionaries of the Protestant categories were not left behind in the evangelisation of Goemailand. The Sudan United Mission who arrived Kwalla in 1945 on evangelism to the area after establishing bases in the Taroh areas from Yola and Ibi also moved to Goemailand and partially impacted on the area where they built small Churches in places like Kwande, Namu and Bakin-Ciyawa. The activities of the missionaries in the area have also gone beyond the building of Churches to the Provison of social services such as the establishment of schools and dispensaries. The Catholic Missionaries in particular established Catholic Primary Schools in Shendam in 1907, Kwande in 1920, Demshin in 1930 and Njak in Namu in 1936. They also established dispensaries in Lifidi and Shendam in 1931 and rounded up their activities with the opening of a Christian Religious Training Centre at Shendam in 1938 where Teachers and other categories of staff were trained for the purpose of missionary activities in either schools or dispensaries of the various places of the area[52].

However, the introduction of both Islam and Christianity in Goemailand despite the establishment of social institutions such as schools and dispensaries that educated the Goemai

[48] G. T. O Gbadamosi, J. F Ade Ajayi, Islam and Christianity in Nigeria,… in O Ikimi (ed),… Groundwork of Nigerian History … p.350
[49] J. Mouren, (SMA), The Catholic Mission in Northern Nigeria, Foundation and First, Diocese of Jos, 1906-1910
[50] J. Mouren, (SMA), The Catholic Mission in Northern Nigeria, … P. 30
[51] National Population Census,"Important Historical and Local Events, Benue- Plateau State, Shendam Division, 1973"
[52] National Population Census,"Important Historical and Local Events,… p.6.

people and provided them with healthcare in addition to employment, some of their preaching and evangelism was created conflicts of religious superiority and fundamentalism in Goemailand which it faced particularly with the introduction of more sects and denominations. Some of the adherent of these foreign religions, to worsen the situation, undermined the worship of the Goemai traditional religion by referring to them as idol worshippers. This conflict has however gone beyond the conflict of religious superiority and fundamentalism to such conflict as was witnessed in Yelwa which will be discussed in the next section.

Interaction and Conflict of Religious Superiority and Fundamentalism in Goemailand

Religious superiority and fundamentalism is a politico-religious ideology that has existed in different forms in many countries of the world. The solidarity in some places with this phenomenon by some Muslim, particularly in Yelwa-Nshar, aggravated the conflict situation in *Goemailand* and has implications for peace and security in the area. Moreso that religious superiority and fundamentalism has the capacity to effect changes in norms, conduct or behaviour of the *Goemai* society and influence even the reformation of laws which will re-define the nature of the *Goemai* institutions if left unchecked.

The *Goemai* people from the beginning were adherents of traditional religious worship which essentially involved communal participation. They could therefore not understand nor appreciate any difference in some other form of worship to the extent that superiority from the new form of worship would evolve into fundamentalism. The introduction of Islam following Jihad by Usman Danfodio in 1804 and the migration of Hausa Muslim, ex slaves, criminals and merchants for economic purpose to the area brought Islamic religious worship to the *Goemai* people and introduced them to an alternative to the traditional worship. Christianity was thereafter introduced in 1907[53] following the coming of the European colonialists and Christian Missionaries Goemailand. As Mangvwat noted

> "with colonialism, Christianity also arrived in Northern Nigeria, colonial officials encouraged European Christian missionaries to seek converts mainly from among the non-Muslim communities found largely in the lower parts of the region and the Jos Plateau"[54]

This however brought yet another alternative religion, the Christian religious worship for the people and made it three major religions in *Goemailand* viz: The *Goemai* traditional worship of *Matkerem*, the *Darika* sect of Islam and the Catholic denomination of Christianity and this began religious animosity or tension in the area.

Long after the Catholic Church was introduced in *Goemailand*, a Protestant Christian denomination, Sudan United Misssion was established in 1945[55] in *Kwalla*, a nearby

[53] F.R Hickey, DSA, The Growth of the Catholic Church in Northern Nigeria, Second Edition, Augustinian Publications, Jos, 2010, p.24.
[54] F.R Hickey, DSA, The Growth of the Catholic Church in Northern Nigeria, Second Edition, Augustinian Publications, Jos, 2010, p.24.
[55] National Population Census,"Important Historical and Local Events,… p.6.

neighbouring village on the border of Goemailand. The Sudan United Mission later spread to *Goemailand* though accepted only by non-*Goemai* migrant settlers from *Mangu, Pankshin, Langtang* and *Kwalla* areas. The followers of the Sudan United Mission Christian denomination in *Goemailand* were therefore mostly the *Mwaghavul, Mupun, Ngas, Taroh* and *Kwalla* among other ethnic groups that migrated from the North and Central Plateau to *Goemailand*. It was apparent then that the Sudan United Mission was accepted in *Goemailand* but the indigenous *Goemai* people were definitely not the followers of that Church.

In any case, Sudan United Mission only added to the denominations of the Christian religion in the area and has co-exited peacefully with the *Goemai* traditional worshippers, Islam and the Catholics. They also have not constituted any religious or political threat to *Goemailand*, neither were they into any activities that would portray them as fundamentalist. All these religions demonstrated the evidence of peaceful co-existence by gathering on festive occassions of *Sallah* and Christmas to pay homage to the traditional rulers in *Goemailand* and to pray for them and their land. They did this by staging visits at the royal palaces of the traditional rulers in *Goemailand* where they sang choruses, dances and chanted religious songs after they might have come out from the Eid ground and Church Masses and Services. At that time too, only one Mosque and two denominational churches of the Catholic and Sudan United Mission that were noticeable in most of the *Goemai* areas signifying that these were the churches and mosques that were first established and had existed as the early Western and Eastern religions of the area.

However, in the 1970s, some Christian denominations such as Baptist and Evangelical Church of West African now known as Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) churches were also introduced in *Goemailand*. These then raised the number of Christian denominational churches. Despite the addition to these denominations, religious worship in *Goemailand* remained peaceful without any animosity or tensions that signified any disagreement, superiority and fundamentalism. Around that time too, the *Izalatu Bidia wa Iqamatul Sunnah* popularly known as *„Yan Izala"* was founded by Mallam Ismaila Idris and was mentored by Sheikh Abubakar Gummi[56]. The separation of *Izala* from *Darika* at that time raised a lot of tension all over Nigeria and as Mangvwat noted

> "because the emergence of a religion (a new idea) pre supposes a contest with an existing one (the old idea). The two contest for influence and supremacy because belief in either of them carries with it acceptable or prohibitive forms of personal and societal conduct, compulsion of others to follow suit using state apparatuses if need be and the false belief that once we belong to the same religion, there would be social and societal harmony"[57].

[56] D.J Gwamna, P.B Dayil, Religious Fundamentalism in Northern Nigeria: Towards and Interpretation in S.G Best (ed), Religion and Post Conflict Peace Building in Northern Nigeria, John Archers (Publishers) Ltd, Ibadan, 2011 p.75

[57] M.Y Mangvwat, Historicism and the Political Economy of Religious Crises in Northern Nigeria Since 1900A.D in S.G Best (ed), Religion and Post Conflict Peace Building in Northern Nigeria, John Archers (Publishers) Ltd, Ibadan, 2011.

The contest for influence and supremacy between the *Izala* and *Darika* spread among the Muslim in *Goemailand*. In fact, it pitched families who were separated along the sects against each other to the extent that assets belonging to the family such as farmland and houses were shared. It was around that time too that loud speakers were mounted on mosques roofs and car-roofs by the *Izala* sect at their preaching venues. This was the beginning of the use of loud speakers for preaching in mosques and churches all over *Goemailand*. The consequences were that animosities and tensions ensued, preaching misunderstood and misconstrued from the sound echoed on the loud speakers.

The situation also made some early Muslim migrants to *Goemailand* before the emergence of the sects who were of the *Darika* background initially but converted to *Izala* had their farms and business premises seized by the native Muslim who were of the *Darika* sect and vice-versa. Some of these migrants who converted to the *Izala* sect were asked to leave *Goemai* villages while others personally decided to leave for fear of persecution. The violent conflicts that were heard of in far away Kaduna, Kano and Bauchi among other states of Northern Nigeria on account of the separation of the *Izala* from *Darika* had however not reached *Goemailand* but rather, tension kept mounting and animosities ensued. It was therefore apparent that the emergence of the *Izala* sect created the differences between the two Islamic sects where superiority and fundamentalism led to the animosity that was associated with religious conflict in *Goemailand* between them and in some cases with the Christians particularly on the use of derogatory words such as *„Arne"* or *„Kafir"*.

While members of the *Izala* sect were seen as being aggressive in their preaching which could cause conflicts in *Goemailand* and efforts were made to contain them, another aggressive preaching Christian denomination, the Deeper Life Bible Church also emerged in the area. This denomination of the Christian religion was comparable to the *Izala* in terms of insultive and derogatory preaching capable of provoking fisticuffs with other Christian denomination if they were not checked. The manner in which the *Izala* members who were viewed as stubborn and disrespectful were handled by their *Goemai* brothers and the same treatment was also meted to *Goemai* Christians who joined the Deeper Life Church. Plots of land were rarely allocated nor sold to them to build their churches just as it was done to the *Izala* who were denied plots of land to build their Mosques. But the few *Goemai Izala* followers however provided them with plots. They were in course of time allocated plots to built churches after tension eventually eased off and they were no longer perceived as aggressive Christians that they were assumed to be even though they were perceived to be fanatical in their preaching just as the *Izala* were before them.

The mode of preaching by the *Izala* and Deeper Life therefore brought about religious animosities that raised religious tension in *Goemailand* and subsequently religious superiority and fundamentalism among the sects and denominations in *Goemailand*. Population explosion resulting from further migration to the area brought more Islamic sects and Christian denominations thereby compounding the matter. More so that many Muslims and Christians migrants from Northern and Southern Nigeria that came into the area belong to these Islamic sects and Christian denominations. Even though most of them migrated to the area for commercial purpose while other came with the sole aim of establishing their types of belief and church bearing in mind the population in the area. It was however apparent that significant

Islamic sects and Christian denominations populated *Goemailand* and built many Mosques and Churches in the area but their preaching methods and doctrines were no doubt sources of animosities between both the Muslim and Christians in the area. It has indirectly or manifestly started the claim of religious superiority and fundamentalism among religious adherents in the area.

However, this religious superiority and fundamentalism which began mostly in Northern Nigeria and has sometimes resulted to conflicts of course moved into *Goemailand* where most of these religions are also found. As viewed by Lengmang, fundamentalism in particular which he looked at from a secular or rather rational point,

> examines the salient factors which offer insightful explanations regarding the emergence and operational activities of religious fundamentalists group in Northern Nigeria. Religious fundamentalism in Nigeria is often employed as a varitable instrument of creating deep-seated divisions among and between people of the same faith as well as across people of different faiths. The activities of religious fundamentalist movements perpetuate violence, blood-shed and instability particularly in Northern Nigerian and beyond[58].

Thereafter, Lengmang defined fundamentalism as a term which has a historical association with the Christian but is today more closely associated with radical Islam than any other human experience and has been derived from the word fundamental which in some ways constitutes the interior or crux of a phenomenon predicated on certain principles, patterns and behaviours and conduct[59].

The position of Lengmang to the understanding of fundamentalism is quite important. Moreso, that it offers explanations for the emergence of fundamentalism and its operational activities that led to the creation of deep-seated divisions among and between people of different faiths leading to violence, blood-shed and instability in many places as well as in *Goemailand*. Moreover, *Goemailand* is today home to many religions and their principles, patterns of behaviour and conduct of their adherents are in fact liable to causing religious related conflicts such as the *Yelwa-Nshar* conflicts of 2002 and 2004 that was attributed to religious differences and intolerence. In this case the features of fundamentalism, its act and origin before arrival to Northern Nigeria and subsequently into *Goemailand* need to be known and discussed. However, the term Religious fundamentalism started from the era of the Maccabees through modern times and can be traced to the 19th and 20th centuries as noted by Gwamna and Dayil who posited that the term itself

[58] J. Lengmang, The Upsurge of Religious Fundamentalism: A Critical Reflection in the Light of the Boko Haram Phenomenon in Northern Nigeria in S.G Best (ed), Religion and Post Conflict Peace Building in Northern Nigeria, John Arechers (publishers) Ltd, Ibadan, 2011 p.87.

[59] J. Lengmang, The Upsurge of Religious Fundamentalism: A Critical Reflection in the Light of… in S.G Best (ed), Religion and Post Conflict Peace Building… p.87

> "is borrowed from the fundamentalist-modernist controversy which appeared in states and continued in earnest through the 1920s"[60].

This is just as Muslim brotherhood in Egypt also seems to provide a background on the emergence of religious fundamentalism that has caught the attention of the world and particularly in Africa around that time. Yousef in this case noted that

> in March 1928, Hassan al-Bana founded the society of the Muslim Brothers, popularly known as the Muslim Brotherhood. The goal of the new organization was to build society according to Islamic principles but many of the people in the West who don"t know about the side of Islam that reflects love and mercy stereotyped all Muslims as terrorists"[61].

Fundamentalism thereafter spread to Nigeria, in particular Northern Nigeria, where it was tutored and sustained and the effects witnessed in *Goemailand* where most of the Islamic sects such as the *Darika* who are divided into *Tijaniya* and *Kadiriya, Izala* and *Shiite* are found in their numbers in places like Yelwa, Kwande, Namu and Kurgwi among other areas of *Goemailand*. These growing cases of religious fundamentalism, its international network and connections through knowledge transfer, shared learning and funding became immense and great security threat not only in *Goemailand* but Nigeria and the world as a whole. Afterall, the activities of these fundamentalists such as the *Kalakato* incident were responsible for the Bauchi riots of 2008 just as other sects of Islam inspired by *Maitatsine*, the dreaded Boko Haram inspired by Mohammed Yusuf and the recent *Shiite* sect inspired by Al-Zakzaky did. They however extended and pose a threat to security in *Goemailand* where some of their adherents are found[62].

Like the Muslims, some Christian were fundamentalists activities such as inspired by the Charismatic Rev. Jim Jones that caused the Guyana Tragedy of 1978 in which his followers were hypnotised and lured to take Cyanide, a poisonous substance in a communion-like meal which ended in a mass suicide. In Nigeria, Rev. King led several followers to death after being similarly influenced by religious fundamentalist belief[63]. These extreme beliefs of the fundamentalists most often lead to radicalism resulting in brain washing of their followers. These posers rather introduced fundamentalist to conflicts of intra and inter sects and denominations. In this case, Mangvwat is of the view that the Muslims versus Muslim conflicts began from the Jihad period and had pitched the *Habe* rulers against the Fulani intellectual immigrants while the Muslim versus the Christians conflict on the other hand was mainly fused to ethnicity.

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[60] D.J Gwamna, P.B Dayil, Religious Fundamentalism in Northern Nigeria: Towards… in S.G Best (ed), Religion and Post Conflict Peace Building… p.75

[61] M.H Yousef, Son of Harmas, A Gripping Account of Terror, Betrayal, Political Intrique and Unkintable Choices, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. USA, 2010, P.9.

[62] Zakari Adamu Ibrahim, male, 59 years old, interviewed at Kurgwi, 7th April, 2026.

[63] D.J Gwamna, P.B Dayil, Religious Fundamentalism in Northern Nigeria: Towards… in S.G Best (ed), Religion and Post Conflict Peace Building… p.67-68

The situation started during the colonial period down to the present as a result of political arrangements which favoured the people of the far Northern Nigeria against those of the Middle Belt people. It has reflected in the economic management of the people and have at the end created deep ethnic/community, political and economic clashes that were witnessed in Kaduna, Bauchi and Plateau States where substantial "Hausa" Muslim settler populations amidst indigenous communities of these states clashed as exemplified by the Jos metropolis and environs riots of 1991, 1994, 2001-2002, 2004, 2008, 2009, 2010. These clashes of course, also included the *Yelwa-Nshar* conflict in *Goemailand* where the settler phenomenon is a critical factor[64]. However, the Christian versus Christian conflict on the other hand has not been witnessed in *Goemailand* just as Mangvwat noted that it has never been witnessed in Northern Nigeria. He said,

> to the best of my knowledge, I am not aware of any recorded violent Christian sect fighting against another Christian sect to the point requiring the intervention of government and security agencies"[65].

However, fundamentalism and indeed the activities of the fundamentalists really introduced radicalism into *Goemailand* and has led to brainwashing of religious adherents in the area. There are two major implications of this. The first implication was that they established schools, hospitals and empowered some of their adherents financially and socially. On the second aspect, they frequently creates animosities between its adherents and other religious adherents which always resulted in religious related conflicts even though no major violent conflict of the religious type was witnessed in the area apart from the *Yelwa-Nshar* conflict for which religion was largely part of the causes.

Conclusion

It can be seen from this study that religion which had long been perceived as an instrument of peace and brotherhood has of recent become the tool of conflicts and violence via the claws of the feeling of superiority and fundamentalism arising from religious fanatical sects and denominational radicalism. In attempting to x-ray the twin disrupture of religion and society, we have gone through the Goemailand and Goemai people from origin, migration to settlement from prehistory, colonial, post colonial to contemporary using their traditional beliefs system to contact, conversion to modern major beliefs with violent conflicts impact on the people in their land to date. It is observable that Goemailand tended to fare more peacefully in the period of its traditional religious practices was dominant compare to when Islam and Christianity overwhelmed the land. Religious sects and denominational groups among the Islam and Christians has caused or brought about intra and inter faith tensions. This has fractured and dented the positive impact of education, development, health services provided by Mosques and Churches but replaced by tensions and conflicts leading to violent conflagration such as in Yelwa-Nshar in 2002-2004 that left behind continuous religious tension and animosity.

[64] M.Y Mangvwat, Historicism and the Political Economy of Religious Crises… in S.G Best (ed), Religion and Post Conflict Peace Building… p.55-56
[65] M.Y Mangvwat, Historicism and the Political Economy of Religious Crises… in S.G Best (ed), Religion and Post Conflict Peace Building… p.56

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