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TITLE:

**AN ANALYTICAL SURVEY ON THE INTRODUCTION AND IMPACT OF
ISLAM ON THE TERA PEOPLE 1900 TO DATE: A CASE STUDY OF
YAMALTU –DEBAL.G.A.
GOMBE STATE**

**BY
ABDULLAHI USMAN
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**Supervisor:
AMINULLAH A. EL-GAMBARI (Ph D)**

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APPROVAL PAGE

The dissertation has been read and approved by the under signed as partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of an M. A. Degree in Islamic Studies, in the Department of Islamic Studies and Shari'ah, Bayero University, Kano.

.....

Aminullah El-Gamabri (Ph.D)

Supervisor

.....

Date

.....

Faculty P.G Coordinator

.....

Date

.....

Professor Ahmad Murtala

Head of Department/ Chief Examiner

.....

Date

.....

Dr. Hilal Kabiru Galadanci

Internal examiner

.....

Date

.....

Prof. Isah Muhammad Maishanu

External Examiner

.....

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late father, Alhaji Abdullahi Muhammad Kwadon, who has seen the beginning of this programme but died during the course of my writing. May Allah (SWT) forgive him and have Mercy on his soul, Ameen.

ABSTRACT

Tera history like some of the African tribes, has had its share of legends. Amongst which in particular, is their claim of an early contact with Islam and, associating the idea as part of their origin. That has eventually produced accounts, often in contradiction with each other. However, amidst all these, the introduction of Islam amongst them has seen a lot of success; resulting in producing over eighty percent indigenous Muslim population across all the Tera settlements within Yamaltu-Deba Local Government Area. This work is an attempt at taking a close look on the introduction of Islam to the Tera people – by examining the how – by exploring both written and oral sources, as well as assessing the impact it has made on the their lives; religious, cultural, and social. Thus, presenting the level of the dominance of Islam amongst the Tera people today.

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GLOSSARY

Alaramma: Title for a man that commit the whole Qur'an to memory.

Batari: A very important title in a Tera traditional court, a judge in Tera council and one of the king makers.

Billiri: One of the three L.G.As in Gombe State where the Tangale tribe are found, the other two are; Kaltungo and Shongom.

Bolewa: Another tribe in Gombe State. They are also found in places like Kwami Local Government Area of Gombe State and other part of Yobe State.

Bole: Another way of referring to the Bolewa tribe. See Bolewa above.

Deba: A town in Yamaltu Deba L.G.A of Gombe State.

Kaltungo and Shongom: see Billiri above.

Konom: The term for Jukun *Tsafɪ* in Tera language.

Kuji: Tera word for a King or Chief.

Lubo: A Tera village with indigenous Christian majority population.

Ngazargamu: The capital of the old Borno Kingdom.

Nyimathli: Another name for Tera which they gave themselves in their language connoting that they came from Yeman.

Pindika: A corrupt spelling of Pindiga. The capital of the Jukun Empire, now one of the newly created Emirates in Gombe State that do not trace their origin to the Sokoto Caliphate.

Puma: Head of Islamic affairs in a Tera court, strictly reserved for people of Kanuri descent.

Tangale: A major tribe in Gombe State, see Billiri above.

Tera: The language or tribe of the people under study.

Waja: A tribe found in a neighbouring Local Government of Balanga L.G.A

Yamaltu- Deba: The Local Government Area that the Tera people are found in Gombe State.

Zambuk: One of the villages that Christianity has gained ground, a Bible school that was built from Missionary days still exists there.

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL.

May the blessings of Allah be upon His most beloved servant and messenger; Muhammad (S.A.W), his family, his companions and those who follow in their path with good deeds till the Day of Judgement.

This work is an attempt to produce a study – dedicated to understanding the impact of Islam on a tribe, the Tera people. Even though, on a close reflection to the society in which Islam was born, it may seem out of place that an essay work in the field of Islamic studies is being pitched along the line of a tribe. The pre-Islamic Arab society is famous for giving tribal affiliation a notion of centre stage to the alienation of other values. However, on the emergence of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, tribal difference was given a new meaning that call for the embracing of all on the basis of one's piety; as against the then conventional view of looking down on others for belonging to another tribe. Thus, it will be fair to say, Islam came and produced a society full of respect for all tribes and cultures. Allah (SWT) explains what He meant for tribes to be in the glorious Qur'an: -

قَالَ تَعَالَى: ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ١٣﴾

“O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another” Q: 49:13.

In an explanation of that verse, Ibn Kathir in his exegesis, quoted a Hadith as reported by Ibn Majah in which the Prophet (SAW) read the verse in a speech that he gave on the day of the conquest of Makka:

O people! Allah the Exalted has removed from you the slogans of Jahiliyya and its tradition of honoring forefathers. Men are of two types, a man who is righteous, fearful of Allah and honorable to Allah, or a man who is vicious, miserable and little to Allah the Exalted. Verily, Allah the Exalted and Most Honored said, {O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.}.¹

Essentially, the Prophet (SAW) introduced a new dawn to the Makkan community where tribal affiliation was no longer supreme. In a way, by that sermon, tribe is made to be understood as a vehicle to help us learn about one another as peoples and nations. Also finding a refuge in the light of this verse, Abdullahi Smith, in his discourse on the legend of the Seifawa, has this to say:

It was clearly the business of scholars to investigate the origins of the peoples and ruling dynasties of the world; and by the 13th century A.D. a great volume of the result of such investigation had already been incorporated in the works of leading Muslim historians.²

Thus, investigations on tribes and peoples can also be a source for the enrichment of the religious history, by way of getting a background that could help in developing a meaningful interpretation of event.

Again, after a close look at the works written on the subject, one gets drawn into more confusion as none of them seems to be in agreement with the conclusion of the other. For example, some tow the path suggesting that Tera people are having similar

¹Ibn Kathir, Al- Misbahul Munir fi Tahzib Tafsir Ibn Kathir, (Abridged Vol.9), First Edition, Darussalam, Rayadh (2000). p. 208

² Smith, Abdullahi. A Little New light: Selected Historical Writings of Professor Abdullahi Smith. Volume 1. The Abdullahi Smith Center for Historical Research, Zaria, Nigeria (1987).p. 26.

geographical origin with a number of tribes within and outside Yamaltu-Deba (the area of our study), such as Kanuri, Jukun, Bolewas, Tangale, Waja to mention but a few, essentially emphasizing that they all trace their roots to as far away as Yemen in the Arabian peninsula.³ But others rather make the assertion less appealing. They saw it as a common case of African tribes' attempting to keep an open window of attaching themselves to a foreign origin. The latter instead feels that an alternative can be found much closer without having to derail into the extreme that will leave the Tera people wondering in search of a home in Yemen. In this view, Tera people as migrants are more likely to be traced to the shores of Lake Chad.⁴

In any case, as things stand, the level of impact that Islam has made on the Tera as a people is so overwhelming that the history of how it all started should not be left for speculation. Besides the fact that today, in almost all the Tera settlements, there are a Muslim majority indigenous population, the changes noticed in the cultural transformation of these communities is unprecedented. All that had taken place despite the aggressive Christian missionary activities in the area from colonial days into the late nineties. Today, glory be to Allah (SWT), the many cultural activities that are not in agreement with the teachings of Islam have given way. In their place, Islamic values have taken over. In this work, we shall be assessing the degree of how Islam has impacted on the life of the Tera as a people in the area under study. And, to some extent effort is made to present the specific factors responsible for those positive changes.

³Devies, J.G, The Biu Book, A Collection Of Reference Book On Biu Division, Gaskiya Corporation. Zaria. (1956)

⁴Opcit, Umar, Muhammad Babayo. The Socio- Political And Economic History of Deba, pp. 9-14.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Tera people formed a part of the many western Sudan migrating tribes who claim ancestral origin to the pre-Islamic civilization of the Yameni-Himyarite nations. Such claim is very common among other tribes of the region. For example, Abdullahi Smith spoke of the Himyarite claim among the Saifawa dynasty.⁵ The Yameni narrative is a legend that has been with the Tera people for ages; one that they favoured most. To the Tera people, they consider themselves as migrants from Yemen, as such, called themselves '*Nyimatli*', which literally means: 'we are from Yemen'. However, this version of the Tera origin has faced the threat of being dismissed by attempts to re-write certain aspect of their history and other related issues bordering on them as a people.

But looking at the problem closely, the history of Islam among the Tera people is one of the least areas researched on and, far less so, is the detail of how Islam was first introduced to the Tera people. Today, there are a few sketches written on Tera people, however, only a vague idea of their Islamic history was noticed; thereby confirming that very little or no effort was made to give the history of the Tera a religious face-view, let alone undertaking a discourse particularly on their early connection with Islam. So, while there are ongoing quests to reconstruct other aspects of the Tera history, there scarcely was any concerted attention paid to determining how Islam was introduced amongst them, as early as it came.

However, what is far more elusive on the question of the introduction of Islam to the Tera people, is the case of how the myth of maintaining that they migrated to their current settlements from Yemen as Muslims came to develop. But looking at the large

⁵Smith.A., A Little New Light. pp. 23-25.

population of Muslims amongst them, the claim could be appealing to think that they might have had contact of unique sort with Islam before they first arrived in the areas they now occupy. Today in all their settlements, perhaps with the exception of Zambuk and Lubo, Islam has grown to be the majority religion in all those areas. The question then remains, when and how did Islam eventually find its way into the midst of the Tera to measure such a significant presence?

This work is aimed at investigating the various claims associated with how Islam was introduced to the Tera peoples of Yamaltu-Deba Local Government Area. And in the background, we are going to study the impact that Islam made on the Tera people in the present day Yamaltu-Deba Local Government Area.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is an attempt to bring to light, information on Islamic presence amongst the Tera people in the area under study. While the reconstruction of the tribal history of African communities at large and Nigerian Communities in particular is ongoing, there is a risk of a possibility that attention may not be paid to the desired details of the religious line, particularly Islam, when it comes to a discourse focused on a minority Nigerian tribe like Tera language. However, with this study, we may be able to reinvigorate the quest for more information on issues related to Islam among the Tera people. This study seeks to trigger a new race towards a rediscovery of not only the history of Tera as a people, but also the possibility to follow closely how Islam eventually found its way into their midst.

Very importantly, this study seeks to lay a foundation for more of its kind to follow. Even though the work is a modest effort, its significance is to spark a much larger

interest on the subject. And, by uncovering some of the myths surrounding the Tera religious history, the researcher shall be paving the way for future works on the subject.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The work is aimed at re-evaluating some of the information available concerning the introduction of Islam amongst the Tera people. Thus, it is a survey of what is obtainable about the Tera people in respect of their connection with Islam. The study also seeks to assess the level of impact of Islam on the Tera people; thereby bring comparison of what the past held, and the changes brought by Islam to the Tera communities.

In so doing, the work has the following objectives in mind;

- To review related and relevant works written on the Tera people in order to reassess the background of their history.
- To widen the horizon of the discourse on the Tera history, with particular focus on Islam as against the narrow focus of earlier works on the theme.
- To eradicate the myths that form the centre stage among the Tera as being their religious history, thus ascertaining when Islam first appeared amongst them.
- Finally, the study shall assess the impact of Islam on the Tera people; religiously, socio-culturally and politically, as it affects their lives today.

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1.4 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Part of the reason for conducting the research on this is to try and fill a void of an aspect of Islamic history that is left to live in the folklore, i.e. the history of Islam as it

affects the Tera people. Glorious Qur'an teaches us,⁶ people are getting to know each other better. Hence, an effort to embark on this study will furnish an avenue for learning about the Tera people. And more, with an attempt for an indepth research on their Islamic identity, an important contribution along that line can be made. Through the analytical review that shall be conducted on the literatures available, fresh opinions can be offered.

This research intends to also give a valuable contribution towards understanding the Tera people, especially as it affects their Islamic heritage. This is because, much of what was written so far seems to only touch the issue from a narrow angle; either by offering an opinion on a particular community or just paying a casual attention to the issue while covering their general history in order to give a background to a broader theme covering the Tera settlements. However, with a purposeful approach of this study, a more detailed discourse on Tera will be made available, particularly their religious history. Hence, this study is a valuable material of Islamic literature. It shall also serve as an inspiration for a future academic research.

1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATION FROM 1900 A.D TO DATE

This research is a survey on the introduction and impact of Islam on the Tera people within the period under study. The study limits itself to addressing the research within Yamaltu-Deba Local Government Area of Gombe State only. However, this does not mean that Tera are only found within the area under study alone. In Gombe State for example, Tera are found in other Local Governments Areas as such Akko, Kwami and Gombe itself. They are also living in other locations such as Wuyo, Fikayel, Kwaya

⁶ Qur'an: 49:13.

Kusa, Kurba-Gayi and Balbiya of Biu emirates in Borno State.⁷ Furthermore, there are also claims indicating that Tera community exist in the present day Niger Republic and that they still interact with their Nigerian counterparts.⁸ However, investigation by this researcher only found a city in the Tillaberi Region, situated 175km north-west of Niamey, capital of Niger republic, close to the border with Burkina Faso. It is mainly inhabited by Songhai, Fulani, Gourmantche and Buzu ethnic groups.⁹

While acknowledging the presence of Tera in some of the mentioned locations, this does not mean that they shall be a part of the main focus in this discourse. The researcher shall as much as possible, be guided by the perimeter set for the study. That is, restricting ourselves to Yamaltu-Deba area within time frame mentioned above. However, as a reflection, the work shall look back at the possibility of the presence of Islam amongst the Tera people before 1900 C.E.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this research is mainly field and library based research. Therefore, the sources used in collecting data in the course of this exercise consist of primary and secondary data both of which were collected from various sources. These include oral interviews, published books/chapters as well as journals articles. In addition, unpublished thesis, dissertations, seminar papers and e-materials both on and offline were also used. Oral interviews were conducted and recorded at the same time, notes were taken in the course of the discussions. Some of the major institutions visited

⁷ Abba, Sani. Shehu, Awwalu and Abba, Umar. Gombe State: A History of The And The People, Zaria, Ahmadu Bello University Press, 2000. p. 9.

⁸ Usman, Bukar. Language Disappearance And Cultural Diversity In Biu Emirate, Abuja, Kalamidas Communication Ltd, 2014. p. 20.

⁹https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/list_of_cities_in_Niger

for the collection of data includes: the library of the Department of Islamic Studies and Shari'ah; Bayero University, Kano; History Department Library, University of Maiduguri; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Post Graduate Studies Library, Gombe State University; Main Library, Gombe State University; and The Bukar Usman Foundation, Abuja. Finally, M.L.A style of referencing was adopted for acknowledging sources.

CHAPTER TWO:

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The search for facts in the rediscovery of human history can be said to be on a continued rise. Today, scholars are busy reconstructing the history of the inhabitants of different locations in their units and groups. Tribes, whose languages appeared to be on the verge of being overrun by dominant ones are busy making efforts to keep textual documentation of their language. This chapter, shall take a look at some of the literatures that cover issues related to the topic under study; The Introduction of Islam to The Tera People. And, by way of analysis, it shall indicate the difference between the present work and the ones under review in order to establish the need for the current research.

The details surrounding the history of the origin of the Tera as a people is still in early process of its discovery. Although fragments on what constitutes who they were, can be seen in a growing number of works written on the area they now occupy, but much of what has been written so far, are only a little more than attempts to throw lights on a few aspects of their history. For example, Umar Babayo has written on The Socio-Political and Economic History of Deba 1800 – 2000 and Isioma has also written on Tera language. These works, as we shall see, instead of closing the gaps between the early accounts – ranging from the notes of the colonial days and, perhaps the poorly reflected orals accounts that are still being discussed; they instead opens fresh frontiers for endless circles of a debate that are nothing more than a platitude. Today, the obtainable literatures that touched the subject of the origin of Tera people, tell us of yet more unknowns, especially on their religious history.

But the field was not only limited to enquiries with historical outlook. Studies dedicated for linguistic concern often put in a considerable contribution towards understanding the history of peoples and groups. On the Tera origin in this case, *Isioma, J.A. (2005)*, in her book, *Let's Develop Nyimalti Language: A Community Development (CD) Project, Devine Peace Concept Publication Ventures*, made an attempt to put into record the vocabularies of the Tera language to preserve it from being extinct. And, as a background, the writer tried to retrace the history of the origin of the Tera people. It can be said that an effort was made by the author to uncover certain level of evidence of the Tera history from local sources; most likely oral.

However, the bulk of the author's brief visit on Tera history as it seems, heavily concentrated on making a case for the Yemeni version of events on their origin as though it were the only available opinion out there. Or perhaps, as it seems, other ideas of the Tera origin may have eludes the writer's attention. Thus, she completely failed to recognize that other places such as the shores of Lake Chad and the Kanem region could have been where they came from. Furthermore, even as a reflection, no mentioned was made of the religious origin of Tera, let alone verify the legend that says they were Muslims on arrival from Yemen; which the author seems to be advocating.

Another linguistic work by Bukar Usman (2014) also seems to be making reference to issue of the Tera origin. In the book entitled: *Language Disappearance And Cultural Diversity In Biu Emirate, Abuja, Kalamidas Communication Ltd*, Dr. Usman gave a particular prominence to Tera, as a language and peoples. Even though the theme of book is aimed at assessing the fast fading fortunes of small tribal groups at risk of being overrun by major ones, he laid out a good impression of the possible places that

Tera people may have originated from; Ngazargamu, Lake Chad and of course Yemen. Coming down to the Tera habitation in the Biu Empire, a specific number of areas of their sojourn, before finally moving to Gombe were clearly pinned out.

The book presented quite an impressive level of detail on the Tera peopling of both the Biu region and later Gombe environs. It also paints out a rare migratory account suggesting that Tera people were in the present day Niger republic as they claim to have their kith and kins with which they still relate to this day.

However, even with that level of coverage, the book somehow managed to leave the issue of the Tera religious identity in the whole discourse to the imagination of the reader. Not only that it would have been of interest to our work if the religious origin had been discussed, but also because one would assume that for such a detailed coverage on the Tera people, a certain reflection on their religion should be given some attention. Thus validating the need to undertake a research that will address such gap.

In his book entitled; *The Socio-Political and Economic History of Deba c. 1800-2000*, Muhammad Babayo Umar (2005) presents a rare kind of detailed discussion on the history of Deba. In the opening part, he laid out the raw accounts of the various claims on the Tera origin and then gave a background of other Tera settlements, i.e. how they interrelate with each other. But the rest of the work simply concentrated on Deba: covering its traditional political structure, the social setting of the community and the commercial activities that form the basis of the Deba economy from as early as the sources can take him.

The problem with Babayo's conclusion, especially on the issue of origins is that, it was mainly focusing on challenging the Yemeni version of the Tera identity. Although the claim may be difficult to substantiate through recorded sources, but the overwhelming level of its oral representation will need more than the casual reputation, as was the case with Babayo's argument, before it could go away. Again, he discussed the traditional political structures of the Tera people as though they were unique features associated only with the Deba community alone. He then go on discussing many other aspects of the Deba history, but in the end, the attention of the work stop short of tracing the religious history of the Tera people, particularly on the contribution of Islam in the changes witnessed within the Tera society. Thus leaving a vacuum on the introduction of Islam amongst the Tera people and the eventual impact it made over the years.

However, Safiyanu Ishiaku (2009) in *The Role of Ulama in The Preservation and Spread of Islamic Education in Gombe State*, an M.A. Dissertation (unpublished), came out hard on the subject of religion particularly on the suggestion of having Islam very early amongst Tera. A good example of that was his heavy criticism of the idea that Tera people had ever been Muslims before arriving in Gombe. But the synthesis he built bordered largely around their life prior to their acceptance of Islam in the later years. But from a closer look, the bases on which Ishiaku's assertion of the earlier religious life of the Tera people was erected, appears unsubstantiated. In the work for examples, Ishiaku maintained that "... Tera people were ancestral worshippers, magicians and even sorcerers"¹⁰ at some point prior to their adaptation of the Jukun traditional religion. Based on this position, he seems to be indicating that this situation remained the trend up to the

¹⁰ Ishiaku, Sufyanu. *The Role Of Ulama In The Preservation And Spread of Islamic Education In Gombe State*, M. A. Thesis, Bayero University, Kano. (2009).. (Unpublished). p. 20.

time when the Teras converted to Islam. In this case however, there was no evidence of what embolden his arrival at such conclusion.

It is worth bearing in mind that, apart from the many unanswered questions, especially those raised by Sufyanu's struggle elsewhere in his work, to reconcile between the acknowledgement of the migratory trend from either Yemen, Lake Chad or Ngazargamu and the complete rejection of ever having Islam amongst the Tera at the time of arrival. In all, the compartmentalization of the issues lacks coherence. Perhaps more so, is his lack of identifying with sources which eventually took a toll on the conclusions that he reached. This suggests for the need to address the void that exists between the two comparatively extremes.

Writing on *The Establishment and Growth of Gombe Town from 1919 to 1996* an M.A. Dissertation in History, University of Maiduguri, (unpublished), Umar Abba (1999) attempted to present a brief account of the several versions on the migration of the Tera to their present locations. He also laid out beautifully how there might have been two contingents of the Tera migrants; one group settled in Balbiya - now in Borno State and the other moved on to reach Yamaltu-Deba area. However, he was effectively not in favour of a suggestion that Tera people had any association with Yemen in their origin. Abba as it seems, is more attracted to what he essentially referred to as 'reality of events'. To him that reality is with the view that Tera were the inhabitants of the Chad basin, but migrated in the 10th century due to the congestion of the basin as a result of the desiccation of the Sahara.

But even if we are to hypothetically accept Abba's outright dismissal of the Tera-Yemeni connection, we will still be left with a big opening requiring us to explain how

Islam was introduced to them. It's either at the Chad basin, which Abba favoured or when they finally arrived in the Yamaltu-Deba area. Not to mention the question of the impact that Islam made on them over the years after their conversion. Something that Abba's conclusion hasn't really address.

Abba maintained that Tera were simply indigenous to the Chad region along with other groups such as the Bolewa and Jukun throughout their existence. But drawing such a big line on an event of history, one needs to address some of the components that hold contrasting opinion. It is well known that the tradition of origin in the region among all the tribes mentioned, has always emphasised the idea of 'the east' further than the Chad region. But Abba's effort to suggest a contrary opinion on the issue only results in raising more questions. A good example of that is the religious identity of the Tera, either earlier before their arrival or after their relocation to the present settlements, were never addressed by the work. Thus leaving a void on the question of introducing Islam amongst Tera, unattended.

Equally sharing some of Abba's ideas, is a book of joint authorship entitled; *Gombe State: A History of The Land and The People* by Sani Abba, Awwal Shehu and Umar Abba (2000). In the book, different versions of how the Tera came to settle in their current location were mentioned; the first being the Yemeni version, apparently taking it to mean they migrated directly from there. Then followed by the version suggesting a sojourn at Kanem before moving on after the death of Dunama Dabalemi (C.E. 1221to1259) and the third being, they jointly left Kanem along with the Kanuri to establish Ngazargamu, before later on moving separate ways to their current locations. In

all, the book presents a general idea of where the Tera followed in their journey; through the land of the Babur and Bura.

Although the authors of the work in its preface, laid the impression that the book was meant to fill the missing gap in the history of Gombe State, thus touching the area under study in the present work religiously, particularly Islam amongst the Tera people, but a clear idea of how it all came about was scarcely presented. Except perhaps, as a brief note on the account of a B.A. project: *The Origin of The Tera People*, Al-Amin Abdulkadir (1989), (Unpublished), where Abdulkadir appeared to be reasserting the Tera claim of arriving in their current locations with a copy of the Qur'an. Thus, as this opinion suggests, they were Muslims where they were, before showing up in their current settlements.

Sadly, Abba *et al*, heavily relying on Abdulkadir, which's conclusion is probably influenced by oral accounts, stop at just citing certain corrupted recitation of some *Azkar* to indicate that Islam was practiced early by the Tera. This is clearly showing that no attempt was made on his part to establish exactly how Islam came to be introduced to them. But perhaps the authors were mainly concentrating on other aspects of the Gombe history, which as it seems, with virtually all the Gombe tribes mentioned and covered in the work, would be very wide. Thus necessitating being brief on Tera as was the case with the other tribes, to be able to touch all areas of Gombe history in such a small book. As such, the need for this research cannot be overemphasized.

In a paper by Isa Alkali Abba (2004); *The Establishment of Gombe Emirate 1804 1882 A.D: International Conference on The Sokoto Caliphate and Its Legacies 1804 to 2004. vol. 1*, a far different account of how Tera came to accept Islam was presented. In

this particular account, the writer appeared to suggest that the Teras were somehow compelled to convert by the Bubayero activities in the area. Being pagans at the time, they were then seen as a legitimate target for the latter's then ongoing jihad in the area. Hence, in Abba's view, the Tera people were still a group of non Muslims as at the period under review in his work i.e. between 1818 to 1824 C.E.

The problem with this assertion is that, apart from the speculative nature of Abba's representation of this view, his position on this issue seems to be standing in isolation. A large volume of works that cover the area as well as touch the subject and the overwhelming oral evidence in the area maintained that there was a much different engagement between Bubayero and the Tera people even at the time when they were not known to have accepted Islam in a number to worth notice. There might have been a few skirmishes as other sources point out, but they might have been for economic reasons, which make much sense given the nature of the kind of violent incidences being reported in the area around the period in question. What other sources were reporting in corroboration with each other indicated that those incidences do not merit to be termed as Jihad on the Tera people. Furthermore, another of Abba's position stand-alone against the different timing suggested for the Islamisation of the Tera people.

However, Abba, as his conclusions seems to appear, may have been hugely influenced by certain notes that failed to give any credit to the oral records of the indigenous population. Although it may not be out of bias, but perhaps more as a prejudice that shadows similar works, i.e. attempting to comment on people's history without making a good reflection of their records, written or otherwise.

Probably, the most in-depth contribution as regards the religious identity of the Tera can be seen in the writings of Muhammad B. Ahmad. An M.A. Dissertation: *The Galadimas of The Gombe Emirates: An Outline History of The Institution C 1825-1984, (Unpublished)*. In it, a much detailed attention was paid on the religious identity of the Tera people. Ahmad try to establish, among other issues that he covered; that the Tera people were Muslims from as far back as 16th to 17th century; and that they were never converted into Islam by the Fulbe inhabitants whom they met in the area that they came to settle. In his view, the conversion of Tera people was a gradual process of watching and learning from the Fulbe Muslims around them, individually they then began to covert.

The question of what was the religious identity of the Tera people before emerging in their current settlement remain unanswered. In the work, Ahmad only taught us that Tera had adopted the Jukun *tsafi* before they eventually convert by learning from their community but no further. Incidentally, he was relying on the Gwani and Deba traditions to protect this claim. Even though some accounts from the two quarters may be expressing the lack of certainty as we learned in Ahmad's conclusion, but other accounts from the same area offer different accounts. They suggests that it was the Jukun *tsafi* that later made them reduced their devotion in Islam, not the other way round. It is on record that the contact between Tera and the Jukun *tsafi*, including the ones being presented by Ahmad, agreed that it only took place in their present settlements. Certainly, explaining the history of introducing Islam to Tera will need much more than addressing what transpired in their current settlement. Thus, the need for a further research on the issue becomes justified.

J.H Elder, Capt J. F. Hopkinson and G.W. Webster appeared to also give a hint on the topic. Writing in the: Northern Nigerian Tribes and Emirates; the authors has this to say in reference to the Tera religion “They are pagan people ...” But in the same work, it was mentioned that a detachment of Tera from Shinga found pagans on the hill tops of Bage. Elders *et al* further maintain that: “This speech, *Nimalto*, was adopted by practically all the Tera, whom it is probable had previously spoken *Bolenshi*. The vernacular in Panda, is, however, known as Tera.”

This could well be a good example of an account from writers, strangers to the area, whose approach of generating information may have been a mere physical observation of activities, then putting down their notes from a distance away from the locals without further investigation. And, as it seems, these writers, certainly didn’t consider the need for the opinions of the autochthons population before drawing conclusions on their notes.

That may have been why it resulted in the confusion of the authors, that the Tera, which they maintained were pagans at that time, met another pagan group, apparently the Tangale and adopted their tongue; *Nimalto* (a corrupted pronunciation of *Nyimatli*). Had the writers consulted the Tera peoples on that point or at least followed events closely within the affected community, it would come to them that *Nyimatli*, which they erroneously referred to as *Nimalto*, is the Tera way of referring to their language in their own tongue. In the present work we are going to show that the analogy in Elders in that regard, is lacking in merit.

A review of Usain S. Gwani (1999): *Administrative System in The Tangale Kingdom Before and Since Colonial Rule in Nigeria, Vol.1* University of Maiduguri

Press, presents a good background to help understand the issue surrounding the Yemeni eastern claim associated with the Tera people. First the Tangale peoples, who are the central theme of the work, shared similar claim of migrating from the east – Yemen to be precise just like the Tera people. Thus further strengthening the belief, that an eastern migration to the Gombe area amongst the tribes, is an open possibility. Although writing squarely on Tangale, the author paid a particular attention to the neighbouring tribes, amongst which includes the Tera people. But the writer, probably in an effort to maintain focus on the course of the book, he did not mention anything on the religious practices of Tera people, let alone go to the length of specifying the time of the introduction of individual religion in Tera land. Thus leaving the subject before us, unaddressed.

What we were able to learn from S. Gwani is that, Tera and Tangale peoples had always been the best of neighbours. So much that, as Gwani claims, at the time of the coming of the Europeans, they shared efforts in welcoming them into their territory. But this claim by far contradicts what local sources among the Tera were saying on the coming of the Europeans. Traditions amongst Tera had not mention any joint effort to welcome the missionaries or to even welcome them at all. There might have been a misrepresentation, among the pool of tribes he was commenting on in Gombe State, of whom the Tangale were involved with in welcoming the Europeans, certainly not alongside the Tera, unless perhaps in an obscure event. The position of Tera on the visit of missionaries will be visited in detail in the subsequent chapters.

Victor Laima Esq. (2008) in: *The Waja People of Gombe State in Nigeria*, Diamond Prints Nigeria Enterprise, gave a low profile account of the Tera migration in the preliminaries of his book. Like other groups in the area, Laima maintained that the

Tera people migrated to their current locations along with the Waja among other tribes from Yemen. He then went on to also indicate that Tera and Waja, came from the same languages class; the Afro-Asiatic.

However, belonging to the same language cluster doesn't explain our quest in the present work, which is the establishment of the religious identity of the Tera. Clearly, the way Islam has now become a big part of the Tera communities cannot be said to be the same with the Waja tribe. Of course there was no denying that Tera and Waja were migrants, even by modest account, they were at various length being identified with at least coming from the shores of Lake Chad. However, all these doesn't take away the need to identify when exactly Islam came to Tera communities.

Also asserting the Yemeni claim of origin, of a tribe presumably of common heritage with the Tera people; the Tula, is a book entitled: *Tula Traditional System and Political Activities in Gombe State Since 1960*, jointly authored by Yahaya W. Yahaya, Elisha Karu and Lazarus Budidi, (2011). The writers, even though dedicating a part of the work to discussing the connection of the Tula people with Tera tribe, but the overwhelming presence of Islam amongst the Tera was never discussed. Surely, for someone trying to establish similarities in the two groups' history, it is logical to expect that differences of a significant magnitude, and in this case on religion would have been more obvious, should have been made to appear well pronounced.

Ahmadu Yamusa (1986), in a Transcription work on the "*Gombe History Workshop: 10th September to 9th November 1986, Cassette no. 8 and 9*," gives more, and probably the most enriching light on the topic. The work is a collection of presentations in to the history department of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The speakers addressed

the workshop in Hausa, as such the transcription was equally in Hausa. For the sake of the present essay, a paraphrase representation of the areas required will be presented without having to quote the Hausa text verbatim.

In one of the keynote address of the conference, the then Sarkin Kudun Gombe and District head of Yamaltu, Alhaji Ibrahim Bello, who appeared to strongly believe that Tera people were from Yemen, spoke at length about that connection. He drew an analogy of the presence of some Arabic words that are being used in Tera language, to maintain the claim that Tera came from Yemen. However, even with such detail, Sarkin Kudun closed with a note conceding that he is not aware of what the Tera religion was before they adopt the Jukun *tsafi*. Certainly, the presenter was only trying to discuss that part of the history from one angle source; as throughout the presentation he kept referring back to the Gwani sources on all issues. Perhaps, if he had given other sources some consideration, particularly Deba who think differently on the subject, another perspective would have been available in the discourse. In the current work, we shall be looking at the opinions, not only from Gwani and Deba, but all the other Tera communities within the areas to be covered by our research. That would help our attempt to establish, not only where Tera came from, but also what their religion had been on arrival.

However, much lately, Bukar Usman (2015), in: *A History of Biu, Kalamidas books, Abuja*, came with fresh ideas on Tera history. In the first part of the book, he gave anecdote accounts of the settlements that formed the former Biu Kingdom: the theme of the book. Of course at that time, until 1937, when some Tera settlements were moved administratively to Gombe district in present Gombe State, the Tera groups were a large

part of the Biu Emirate. But the rest of the book concentrated on the primary theme - Biu Emirate and its progenitor: the Yamtarawala.

In the book, we get a semblance of when Tera people might have had their first contact with Islam. According to Dr. Usman, Islam was in the Chad area about 1487, but became more prominent around 1500 with the arrival of Muslim scholars into Ngazargamo. So the Tera, whom even by modest account were believed to be within the vicinity of the Chad basin with the Kanuri, would obviously be joined as part of the bustling Muslim community in question. Bukar further maintained that Tera people, as the inhabitants of the Lake Chad area, as against their claim of coming from Yemen, may have first met Islam around the shores of Lake Chad.

It is interesting to note that, Bukar shared the belief that there was an eastern migration of a sort. In his view, even if only it were to be limited to the scholars that came and brought prominence to Islam, the possibility should not be ruled out. But still, he seems to be drawing a line of caution on a further quest on the issue, further deep east.

However, as rich as Bukar's contribution to the topic was, a lot of unanswered questions still exist. The level of Tera people's involvements with Islam in Chad was not mentioned and certainly, what became of their religion was equally not addressed in the book. In this study, we shall be making the attempt to determine more on that.

In another book written much earlier: *Language Disappearance and Cultural Diversity in Biu Emirate, Abuja, Kalamidas Communication Ltd*, Bukar Usman (2014) raised a number of issues on the premise of the Tera migration. For example, he points to the existence of a Tera community in the present day Niger republic that enjoys existing

ties with their Nigerian counterparts, as a demonstration of their expanded presence in the region bordering Nigeria.

The book pay very little attention beyond its theme of discussing the plight of smaller languages under the threat of being overrun by major ones. What is of interest to us is that, it emphasized the claim that Tera were either in Ngazargamu or Lake Chad. Thus giving the present work something of a background framework to build on in determining the veracity of the Tera migration claim.

Question of whether Tera were in contact with Islam, as some legends within their communities seems to indicates, before they emerged in their present locations is something to draw interest. Writing on *The Legend of Seifawa: A Study in the Origins of a Traditional of Origin*, Professor Abdullahi Smith, though not specifically engaging the discourse on Tera, presents an approach that's slightly relevant to the debate on the Tera people's claim of Yemeni origin. Conscious of missing vital links due to inaccessibility to the much needed sources, Professor Smith expresses the feeling that a migration of people from Yemen to the lower Sudan, was a possibility. In the work, Abdullahi Smith was able to demonstrate, through careful analogy, the connection of the Kanem rulers to the Yemeni Tubbu origin.

Although the premise of Professor Smith's argument run astride to the context of the present work, the focus of his conclusion is far apart. While our effort is to ascertain the viability of the connection of the Tera community as a whole with Islam, within the legend of Yemeni origin, Professor Abdullahi was rather interested in the origin of the Kanem rulers, who were said to have migrated to Africa in the pre-Islamic times. But even with the meticulous diligence employed in the discourse, the conclusion he reached

in the write-up can only come close by suggesting a possible spiritual connection between Seifawa rulers and the Himyarites.

In a way, what we have seen so far gives us something to build on, but the vacuum left behind; between what Professor Smith was presenting on the Seifawa Dynasty's connection to the east on one hand and what the Tera legends were claiming on the other, is a subject of a continued debate. One that the researcher shall be making an attempt to fill with the present work. It is his belief that a much more light can be found on the religious identity of the Tera people building on that.

CHAPTER THREE:

3.1 INTRODUCTION OF ISLAM AMONGST THE TERA PEOPLE

The religious history of Tera people, perhaps much more than their general history is riddled with legends and obscurity. The little of what has been recorded, which are basically obtained through oral accounts typify the difficulties of documenting the history of groups, which main sources are relying on oral traditions. Being that the history of Tera people is heavily indented with myths, it offers only hints to work with in terms of sorting out what their religious story was. This chapter is an attempt to identify the period within which Tera people were first exposed to the religion of Islam. Thus presenting variety of accounts in that respect as well as reviewing the various surrounding factors that may have convinced advancing the conclusions amongst the Tera people that were Muslims migrants from the east. As such, the researcher shall be taking a closer look at what has been presented by the oral traditions as well as the written sources sharing that view. And possibly try to determine whether migration has played a role in the introduction of Islam to the Tera people; thus coming to their current settlements as Muslims. However, as a preview, the chapter shall give a brief idea of the geographical location of the area under study (Yamaltu-Deba) and the peoples making the population in the area.

3.2 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF YAMALTU – DEBA L.G.A.

Yamaltu – Deba L.G.A.; is located at the east of Gombe – the capital of Gombe State, along Biu road. It is located on latitude $10^{\circ} 16' 23.0''$ and longitude $11^{\circ} 17' 08.1''$. The name of the Local Government is derived from the two emirates that formed the

Local Government Area. The Yamaltu emirate; occupying the eastern part of the Local Government and bordering Bayo Local Government Area of Borno State and mostly covering the northern part of the Local Government Area stretching to the west. On the other hand the Deba emirate; which occupies the southern part of the local government.

Located in the savannah region, it is characterized by a low swampy plain; rugged hill of granite and sandstone, as well as other features associated with the savannah region. Its peak, the Bima hill is about 1,270 metres.

The soil in most of the areas consist of vertisols, ^(sic) dark, clayey. It forms a narrow belt in Nafada district, widening out in the south to cover the south-west of Akko district, the Kaltungo area and the whole of Yamaltu district. This higher clay content in the soil makes it sticky during raining season.¹¹

Yamaltu-Deba Local Government holds two major forest reserved in Gombe State. The Kanawa forest, just 10 kilometres from Gombe city along Biu road and Dadin-Kowa forest located in Dadin-Kowa town, the seat of Yamaltu Emirate also along Biu road.

The ethno-linguistic composition of Yamaltu-Deba includes amongst others, the Tera, the Fulani, the Kanuri, the Waja, the Jara, and more recent entrance, the Hausa, the Yoruba and Igbo. However, Tera remain the dominant ethnic group in Yamaltu-Deba Local Government Area.¹² Tera people are also found in other places outside Yamaltu-Deba Local Government Area (i.e. our area of study) such as Kalshingi in Akko Local Government Area, Doho in Kwami Local Government Area, as well as Kwaya and Boyo Local Government Areas both of which are in Borno State.

¹¹ Abba, Sani, *et al*, Gombe State: p. 1.

¹²Umar, Muhammad Baboyo. The Socio- Political And Economic History of Deba, pp. 5-6.

3.2 THE ORIGIN OF THE TERA PEOPLE.

The origin of the Tera people according to both written and oral sources, is heavily associated with the east; with place like Yemen, Ngazargamu and the shores of Lake Chad as the three main points of reference. The Tera people, according to a widely shared legend, holds it dear that they came from Yamen. According to Babayo; “The tradition maintain that when they arrived and were asked about their identity, they responded ‘*chem nyimatli*’ which means we are from Yemen._(sic)”¹³ Virtually all the works that touched the subject of Tera history seems to have at least in some respect acknowledged this version of eastern account of the Tera origin.¹⁴ This is perhaps due to the fact that most of their sources were oral. Thus, as it seems, resulting in the outcomes that may, though not an exception to only the Tera people, overwhelmingly be influenced with nationalistic prejudices of the story tellers. Hence, the Tera story kept pointing in the direction of the east, maintaining the course of what the legends holds from the distant past.¹⁵ So, because of that legend, the Tera people claimed that they migrated from Yemen, as such they were Muslims at the time of arrival to their current settlements.

Another account of the Tera origin simply linked them to the Kanuri kingdom of Ngazargamu. However, there are two narratives in support of this particular version. First, the oral sources claimed that they were part of a team of migrants who came from Yemen with the Kanuri, but later left the Kanuri at Ngazargamu for some reasons (such as the variously reported crisis that unsettled the Kingdom) and settled in the Gombe

¹³ Umar, Muhammad Baboyo. The Socio- Political And Economic History Of Deba, p. 5.

¹⁴ I have not come across one work on the subject that differs and all the oral sources reached also shared the same view.

¹⁵ Usman, Bukar. Language Disappearance, p. 20. (Here the author is drawing from his experience where interviews were conducted for the purpose of writing another of his work: A History of Biu)

area.¹⁶ In the other version, it added more twist to the claim saying that, not only were Tera in Ngazargamu, but have been in such a position as to contest for the stool of the old Borno Empire.¹⁷ Furthermore, other claims maintained that Tera people were settlers around the Lake Chad area. In this narrative, Tera people were suggested to have been at Kanem, but then moved to the Chad basin area during the civil war that led to the formation of Birnin Ngazargamu. From there, then moved to their current location away from the congestion of the Lake Chad as a result of desertification of the Sahara.¹⁸

A different perspective went even further to explain that the Tera were at some point crowned at Ngazargamu.¹⁹ However, much later the Tera people moved westwards and came to form a part of what was once known as Biu Kingdom (now Biu Emirates in Borno State). In the opinion of J. G. Devis, as presented by Bukar Usman, he added that, Tera moved to the west and eventually grew in the Biu Kingdom to assume the position of the two major clans that formed the Emirate.²⁰

In all these events of the many distinctive versions of Tera origin, determining what would be considered as the true representation of their actual root will be a fairly difficult task. This is because of the conflicting nature of the narratives. But some historians seem to be very much settled with a more flexible approach, concentrating on what is looking more recent and on record. Thus embracing the idea that Tera people may have been at Ngazargamu, but they somehow entered Gombe area through the Land of

¹⁶ Abdulhamid Kalla, Gwani, Coming of Islam to Tera Land, date,

¹⁷ Usman, Bukar. Language Disappearance, p. 20.

¹⁸ Abba, Umar. The Establishment And Growth Of Gombe Town From 1919 To 1996, M.A. Dissertation in History, University of Maiduguri, 1997; (Unpublished).

¹⁹ Usman, Bukar. A History Of Biu, Abuja, Kalamidas Communication Ltd, 2015. p. 94.

²⁰ Usman, Bukar, Language Disappearance..., p. 23.

Babur and Bura.²¹ They might at various times, sojourn at places like Shani and Walama after departing possibly from Ngazargamu, before finally reaching their present location around Gombe. This seems to be the acceptable version in those quarters and that appears to have somewhat settled with the Tera people. What can be taken out of these storylines is that, Tera people had indeed migrated from the land of the Kanuri through a certain route; the land of the Babur and Bura, before finally reaching Gombe area.

3.3 INTRODUCTION OF ISLAM AMONGST THE TERA PEOPLE

Majority of accounts on the Tera origin tend to suggest that they are strongly believed to be practicing Muslims at the time of their migration; most likely from Ngazargamu to the Yamaltu-Deba area. Some of these accounts, especially those maintaining the belief that Tera people came from Yemen, went even further to add that they (i.e. Tera people) migrated with a copy of the glorious Qur'an. In an effort to give a more detailed note on this claim, evidence were presented of a corrupt recitation of some expressions like: *"la'ila Ha illa lahu, Subhanallah and Astagfirullahi"* which the Tera people instead uttered as: *"laillara, Subana and Astangna"* respectively.²²

In another account which is very much in line with the suggestion of earlier contact with Islam, it's claimed that the Tera had been exposed to Islam through their interactions with the Kanuri before they migrated.²³ This seems to be very much in support of the idea that the Tera people were either in the Kanuri Kingdom of Kanem (c.a. 700 – 1376) or Borno (Ngazargamu) (c.a. 1380 – 1893) or even both at various

²¹ Abba, Sani. Shehu, Awwalu and Abba, Umar. Gombe State.p. 9.

²² Abba, Sani. Shehu, Awwalu and Abba, Umar. Gombe State. pp. 22-23.

²³ Abba, Umar. The Establishment And Growth Of Gombe Town, p. 17.

times. From there, according to this version, they then moved to the Chad basin before further moving southward, apparently on the way to their present location.²⁴

However, M. B. Ahmad on this seems to offer a more cautious view that thinks the exact religious identity of the Tera people prior to their emergence in their present location is difficult to tell. That especially, before their well-known adaptation of the *Jukun Tsafi*. According to Ahmad, records have shown that the *Jukun Tsafi* was the religion of the people they met in the area when they arrived.²⁵ He then went further to add that Gwani traditions as well as others, confirmed that account.²⁶ Interestingly, Temple, in a much earlier work also mentioned similar event:

A detachment of Tera went from Shinga to Bage where they found pagans (possibly Tangale), already established on the hill top. They took their abode amongst them, adopting their tongue ...”(and probably their pagan religion)²⁷ (bracket mine).

It could be seen that the two accounts were only making reference to events that took place on, or perhaps following the arrival of the Tera people into their respective locations in Yamaltu-Deba area. Essentially that, both Ahmad and Temple were maintaining that the *Jukun Tsafi* came to them through a secondary source, thus rejecting the possibility that Jukun had a direct dominance over Tera when they first arrived.

However, there are a few other suggestions that the Tera people were known to be ancestral worshippers even before they came into contact with the *Jukun Tsafi*. In a way, this position is dismissing the claim that Tera could have been practicing Muslims when

²⁴ Abba, Umar. The Establishment And Growth Of Gombe Town, p. 17.

²⁵ Ahmad, M.B., The Galadimas Of Gombe Emirates: An Outline History Of The Institution C 1825 – 1984, M. A Dissertation; (Unpublished). p. 18.

²⁶ Kalla, Abdulhamid Gwani, date.

²⁷ Temple, C. L. Notes On The Tribes, Provinces, Emirates And States Of The Northern Province Of Nigerian, Frank Cass and Co Ltd, (Second Edition), 1965. p. 352.

they came to Gombe area. This account went on to explain that Tera used to express their religion in certain rituals, festivals, witchcraft, myths and legends and spirits prior to their conversion to Islam.²⁸ Evidently this narrative concentrated much on what the Tera religious practices were in their current location, which by all accounts, they were believed to have practice paganism at one point. As such, it still leaves us with the big void to try and identify what the religion of the Tera was before coming to Yamaltu-Deba.

But in a much balanced representation of events, a different case was made for how Islam came to Tera people. In this version, it is maintained that Islam may not necessarily be the general religion of the Tera migrating party when they arrived in Gombe, but perhaps a pocket of a few devoted Muslims could have been in existence among them at the time. Thus arguing that, Islam is either being practiced well or perhaps is just loosely enjoying presence within the Tera community.²⁹ So, on coming into contact with the *Jukun Tsafi* through the earlier inhabitants of the area that eventually became their new home, the then few Muslims within the entourage, either abandon the religion they came with, which according to this account should be Islam, or perhaps became too insignificant to be noticed. Thus resulting in producing a similar scenario to the one in Fombina, as was observed in the account of Sa'adu Abubakar of the area at the beginning of 19th century.

²⁸ Ishiaku, Sufyanu. *The Role Of Ulama* p. 20.

²⁹ Abba, Sani. Shehu, Awwalu and Abba, Umar. *Gombe State*: p. 22.

3.4 IMMIGRATION FACTOR

A number of reasons were advanced as the factors responsible for the introduction of Islam to the Tera people. One of such reasons was the recurring claim of migration. It is a strong suggestion among the Tera people that they were from the east. The advocates of the immigration strongly maintain that, migration is the leading factor for the Islamisation of the Tera people. As such, they referred to a number of locations; Yemen, Ngazargamu³⁰ and Lake Chad region as the possible places of their origin.³¹ Hence, according to this view, Tera people probably came into first contact with Islam in one of these places.

There is no doubt that the idea of a Yemeni origin has a strong hold in the minds of the Tera people. Furthermore, the belief that they appeared in their present location with a copy of the glorious Qur'an is equally widespread, even though plausibly very difficult to be argued. But the one fact that is without a doubt is that, they indeed were immigrants into the areas that they now occupy around the Bima hill in the present day Gombe State through the land of Babur and Bura.³² And, to further prove their migration claim, they point to that effect, how widespread they are today; that they still have a sizeable community of their kith and kin in present Niger Republic with whom they still interact, apparently after the dispersal of Ngazargamu by the events of the Rabeh wars of the 1890s.³³ The question that remain to be answered here is, were Tera people Muslim immigrants when they arrived in their respective towns and villages that they now occupy?

³⁰ Opcit, Usman, Bukar. A History Of Biu, p. 94.

³¹ Opcit, Usman, Bukar. Language Disappearance, p. 22.

³² Ibid. p. 9.

³³ Opcit, Usman, Bukar. Language Disappearance, p. 20.

It is important to note that those who favoured the argument that Tera people came to the Gombe area as Muslims, were in some respect equally cautious on the idea. Thus in most cases, are quick to point out, as was mentioned earlier, that the Islam that Tera might have migrated with at that time with could just be a superficial one, or simply being practiced by a few devotees or just loosely practiced.³⁴ Essentially therefore, they may only have had a thin exposure of Islam during their much reported sojourn in Ngazargamu.

On the other hand however, those that opposed the idea of the eastern migration, though not necessarily of the Lake Chad and perhaps Ngazargamu, but more so Yemen; try to dismiss the whole claim as being influenced by what they referred to as “Hamitic hypotheses.”³⁵ Or, as Kperogi puts it, in his comment on the presence of Arabic words within Yoruba language, a British colonialist helped popularise nineteenth century fiction.³⁶ In support of this argument, J. Lavers added that, the people of Gombe (which Tera is a major part), should restrict their search of origin to the Lake Chad region.³⁷

However, in the face of the overwhelming evidence presented by virtually all the groups that formed the autochthon population in Gombe in favour of the Yemen and Ngazargamu claims, limiting a search of origin to Lake Chad region as Lavers was suggesting, would amount to restricting options as well as ignoring the opinions of those it involved. Furthermore, dismissing it on the bases of an allegation that it may have being induced by ‘Hermitic hypotheses’ or alleged British colonialist who popularise fabrication without presenting any evidence for taking such a strong stand, may not stand

³⁴ Abba, Sani, Awwalu Shehu and Abba, Umar, Gombe State, pp. 22-23.

³⁵ Umar, Muhammad Baboyo. The Socio- Political And Economic History Of Deba, p. 8.

³⁶ Usman, Bukar. A History Of Biu, p. 95.

³⁷ Abba, Sani, Awwalu Shehu and Abba, Umar, Gombe State, pp. 12-13.

either. This is because the claims of the peoples pointing in the eastern direction needs answers. Answers in the form of a plausible explanation to the flaws of their claims not just a vague or hypothetical dismissal. On the issue of the Yemeni claim, Bukar Usman maintains thus: “Although most of the evidence is oral tradition, there is clear evidence of human movement from the Arabian Peninsula to Africa through the horn of Africa.”³⁸

There are well established major upheavals that shaped the course of events in the region leading to groups of people migrating from the east; Kanem, Ngazargamu or perhaps Yemen, to places westward in search of safety from real and perceived danger. And, Tera people in this case could well be considered to fall within that bracket. So the point is yes, Tera people were involved in some movement along that route. They can be said to have had a push through migration which could have been what shaped their religious belief leading to the claim of being Muslims from where they came.

3.4.1 YEMEN AND NGAZARGAMU

As has been observed elsewhere in this work, Yemen and Ngazargamu are recurring themes when it comes to discussing the origin of the Tera people of Yamaltu-Deba Local Government Area,³⁹ especially their religious origin. For example, Tera people hold a particular sentiment that Yemen is their place of origin. As we have noted elsewhere, they even call themselves in their native tongue; ‘*Nyimatli*, which essentially

³⁸Usman, Bukar. A History Of Biu, p. 95.

³⁹ (That includes virtually all the groups that formed the autochthon population of Gombe State and some other places beyond. However, our concern in this work is the Tera tribe within Yamaltu-Deba L.G.A.)

means, “we are from Yemen”.⁴⁰ This claim is passionately maintained in their tradition throughout their various communities.

Probably, the most detailed explanation of the possible connection of Tera with Yemen was enthusiastically expressed in the presentation of Alhaji Ibrahim Bello⁴¹ at the event of ‘The Gombe history workshop, organized by Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.’ In his presentation, Bello maintained that Tera people came from Yemen and that that it can be explained in the light of the presence of some words used in the Tera vocabulary that are similar to Arabic in both sound and meaning. As an illustration, he points to the following words to buttress his case: that Tera called themselves “*Nyimatli*”, which sounds like Yemeni and means the same thing: ‘a man from Yemen. Muslim and Arabic names of both male and females; such as Madi in Tera for Mahadi, Nafi in Tera for Nafisatu, Aisa in Tera for A’ishatu, Amina for Amina and Zara for Zahara. And fursi is used in Tera for farsu to mean horse.’⁴²

But having common or borrowed words in a language from another doesn’t necessarily mean they share common origin. Those holding critical view of this idea vehemently reject such conclusion. Commenting on a similar claim among the Hausa people, Bukar Usman has this to say:

Interestingly, many early Arabic words in Hausa were also not borrowed directly from Arabic; they came to Hausa through Kanuri, the first major Nigerian language to borrow directly from Arabic. (The Kanuri have had contact with the Arab world from as early as the 9th century, that is, only

⁴⁰Umar, Muhammad Baboyo. The Socio- Political And Economic History Of Deba, p. 5.

⁴¹ (Alhaj Ibrahim Bello is the dethroned Sarkin Yamaltu, then Hakimin Yamaltu and Sarkin Kudun Gombe, Yamaltu is one of the two districts that formed the Local government area, the other being Deba District).

⁴² Yamusa, Ahmadu. Gombe History Wokshop, 10 September to 9th November 1986, Cassete no. 8 and 9. pp. 12-13.

two centuries after the emergence of Islam and at least three centuries before any part of Nigeria had any contact with Arabs or Islam.⁴³

Could it be that Tera were in the midst of the Kanuri in those early days of their contact with the Arabs? Or they simply might have met each other later on, possibly at Ngazargamu and had some involvements with them both linguistically and religiously, given that a contact is widely believed to have taken place between them.

That set for the other possible origin of migration; Ngazargamu. The connection that the Tera people were said to have had with the Kanuri kingdom, variously reported as between 10th and 15th centuries⁴⁴ would allow us to believe that the Arabic words believed to be found in the Tera language, as presented in the above claim, are a product of indirect borrowing from Kanuri. In that light, a plausible hypothesis can be drawn to suggest that, it might have been around that period that the Tera people had an exposure of the religion of Islam.

Each of these scenarios is backed by its protagonists. In the case of Yemen, it is seeded well in the oral sources. To them Ngazargamu is only a stop over to drop off a Kanuri relative and move on. But to the few written records that points to Ngazargamu, the emphasis is that of limiting the search there and no further. In each case however, Islam has always been at the centre of their major claim. What can be gleaned out of the two narratives, unless contrary can be conclusively proven, is that Tera people have had their first face to face with Islam while in the company of the Kanuri. The possibility of where that took place, whether as a place of origin or just a point of a brief sojourn, could be at Ngazargamu.

⁴³Usman Bukar, A History Of Biu, p. 95.

⁴⁴ Usman Bukar, AHistory Of Biu, pp. 94-95.

3.4.2. THE SHORES OF LAKE CHAD

Other accounts on the Tera origin and migration spoke of them as having a link with the Chad basin. That, coupled with the linguistic classification of the Tera language as a Chadic language,⁴⁵ may have convinced some of the conclusions suggesting that Lake Chad should be the point of focus in their search for origin. It was indeed on record that they had a sojourn at the shores of Lake Chad on the route of their movement to their current settlements from the east. But so were many other inhabitants of the area at that time such as the Bolewa, the Jukun and even the Kanuri themselves.

However, this version of the Tera history of origin is not without a voice, as number of accounts were advanced to support that claim. For example, in one of those adjoining accounts, it was reported that Tera people arrived in the area of Lake Chad alongside Jukun and Bolewa whom equally claim to have ancestral link with Yemen.⁴⁶ While in another version, Tera were said to have settled at the Lake Chad region alongside the Kanuri, apparently after the dispersal of the Birnin Ngazargamu; then moving westwards to their current settlements.⁴⁷ Equally worth mentioning here is a suggestion by J. Lavers, which was referred to earlier, that the people of Gombe area should look for their place of origin around Lake Chad.⁴⁸ Essentially, supporting the idea that Tera were simply the residents of the shores of Lake Chad before moving westward, but nowhere further. Further stressing this claim, as maintained by Bukar Usman in the course of his many works in the area are oral evidences that “pointed to Yemen and the

⁴⁵Umar, Muhammad Baboyo. *The Socio- Political And Economic History Of Deba*, pp. 6-11.

⁴⁶Ahmad, M. B. *The Galadimas Of Gombe*, p. 15.

⁴⁷ Umar, Muhammad Baboyo. *The Socio- Political And Economic History Of Deba*, p. 16.

⁴⁸ Abba, Sani, Awwalu Shehu and Abba, Umar, *Gombe State*, pp. 12-13.

Chad region as potential places of their origin”⁴⁹ (i.e. several communities in the area including Tera just as J. Levers indicated).

Essentially, two things could be drawn from all these; first, that Tera people might have come from Yemen, then inhabited the Lake Chad region together with the Kanuri. Thus reiterating the suggestion pointing to Borno Empire as their staging point, which probably tempted for the stimulation of the Tera Legend, claiming that they were at a point contestants to the stool of Ngazargamu. They then eventually moved to the shores of Lake Chad with the Kanuri, before finally travelling west to their present settlements. The other one, apparently in consideration of Tera falling under the Chadic group of languages, maintained that Lake Chad region should be considered as their place of origin.

In either case, Tera people were considered to have been once inhabitants of the Lake Chad region. This is not strange given that historically Lake Chad area was never a linguistic monolith. And the Kanuri, though a Nilo-Saharan language with an expanded presence in the region from as early as 7th century, had absorbed influence on the rest of the population in the area both Nilo-Saharan and the Chadic speakers like the Tera language.⁵⁰ As such, through centuries of influence which was said to have lasted into the 16th century, Kanuri had made the Chadic group such as the Tera, borrowed, not only from their language which was heavily enriched with Arabic, but also the Kanuri political titles and institutions.⁵¹ And given that the Kanuri have had contact with the Arabs and Islam from as early as the 9th century, so much that at one point enjoyed a thriving

⁴⁹ Usman, Bukar. *Language Disappearance*, p. 20.

⁵⁰ Usman Bukar, *A History Of Biu*, p. 64.

⁵¹ Usman Bukar, *A History Of Biu*, p. 50.

Islamic centre of learning and culture that came to develop through trade, it is to be expected that the Kanuri might have equally exerted some religious influence on the surrounding tribes. Tera, being among those suggested to be at the Lake Chad region as at that time, it is possible that they might have had their first contact with Islam there.

3.4.3. THE JIHAD FACTOR

The question of whether the Jihad, particularly led by Bubayero in Gombe had played a role in the introduction of Islam amongst Tera people of Yamaltu-Deba area, if at all has any such influence, can only be a much later affair. This is because, even from the time of the root beginning of Jihad campaign in Sokoto, Tera had already settled in their various settlements around Gombe. As such, they were no longer in the land of the Bubar and Bura that Bubayero's Jihad activities were reported to have taken effect in full force. Furthermore, the Bubayero campaign was also not reported to have any direct engagement with the Tera in their current location. Thus, it was not on record that Tera people were ever subdued militarily by the Bubayero Jihad party into submitting their territorial authority and they were never imposed with an extended payment of Jizya tributes to the succeeding governments in Gombe following the death of Bubayero.⁵²

In addition to that, other accounts are suggesting that Tera people were never converted by the Bubayero Jihad forces, rather they slowly adopted Islam gradually, by watching the *fulbe* Muslim settlers among them.⁵³ On that, M. B. Ahmad further added that in the 1790s, it was reported that a Gwani Prince, Meshelkona (also spelled as Mishirkuna in other works), visited Bubayero in Shani area. Even though the Tera Prince

⁵² Umar, Muhammad Baboyo. The Socio- Political And Economic History Of Deba, pp. 94-99.

⁵³ Ahmad, M. B. The Galadimas Of Gombe, p. 18.

from Gwani was yet to convert to Islam, it was believed that the visit laid the foundation of a relationship that matured and prospered during and after the Jihad between Bubayero and the Tera communities.⁵⁴ Interestingly, this event was reported in the Gombe History workshop with an additional detail suggesting that Prince Mishirkuna (as spelt in this work) went as far as requesting for a permission to visit Danfodio.⁵⁵

However, it is important to note that, some historians in what seems like an obvious attempt to dismiss the contributions of the Jihad to the development of Islam in Gombe area, alleged that Bubayero, the progenitor of the Jihad in Gombe was having a pre-conceived motive for the campaign apart from religious. Delaney claimed:

He was fighting for Islam, it is true; however, he was also building himself a Kingdom over which he and his successors would someday rule.⁵⁶

To buttress this claim, he went on to point at the event of sanctioning Sulaiman as his anointed successor in fear that upon his death, his ever strengthened brother Hamma Ruwa of Muri or his son Bose would take over.⁵⁷ Delaney further added that, Bubayero and his successors particularly Sulaiman and Kwairanga were accused of being notorious for slave raiding against the non-Muslim tribes in the area; such as the Bole, Tera, Tangale, Waja, Yungur, Song, Holma, Fali and Wurkun.⁵⁸

In the case of certain personalities such as Sulaiman, some of those unfortunate events were true. In fact a troubling belligerent behavior was widely reported of his reign. The case of siting on the corpse of a dead enemy to signal a warning against resistance to

⁵⁴ Ahmad, M. B. *THE Galadimas Of Gombe*, p. 18.

⁵⁵ Yamusa, Ahmadu. *Gombe History Wokshop*, p. 13.

⁵⁶ Delaney, Paul. *A History Of Gombe*, Lafontaine Ontario, Canada. 1975. p. 4.

⁵⁷ Delaney, Paul. p. 5.

⁵⁸ Delaney, Paul. pp. 4-7.

his authority raised a serious concern within Gombe Abba; the seat of the Emirate, that had to be reported to the Sultan.⁵⁹

However, Delaney's claim is far from being accurate. There is no doubt that the primary objective of the Jihad is well defined from the beginning and the activities that followed speaks volume of maintaining the original course of the Jihad. The continued military campaign of the Bubayero's successors or even the later days of Bubayero himself are a clear indication what the Jihad movement had always been. Thus explaining why the non-Muslim tribes that Delaney referred to as the 'victims' of those later engagements were offered the option of a Jizya payment or to convert to Islam, as against a preemptive engagement. Of course there may have been certain troubling incidents in the activities of the Jihadists which may have affected smaller tribes in Gombe including Tera, but the remark made by Delaney is a bit of an exaggeration, especially considering his questioning the sincerity of Bubayero himself who died without ever assuming the Lamido; (The Emir) but as Modibbo (Islamic Scholar).

But in the case of Tera people, whatever may be the impact of the Jihad on the introduction of Islam among them, was to come much later, long after they had settled and spread into various places that became their settlements in Gombe area. And most likely, after they have had some exposure to Islam within those new settlements. The Jihad of course, being in their immediate neighbourhood, must have a stimulating effect, which probably hastened the growth and spread of Islam among them. But certainly, it was not the source of their first contact with the religion and conversion.

⁵⁹Abba, Sani, Awwalu Shehu and Abba, Umar, Gombe State, pp. 49-50.

3.4.4. THE TRADE FACTOR

The trade as factor for the introduction of Islam among the Tera people may only feature lightly in the account of that part of their history in their current settlements. An example of that is the trade activities that was suggested to have thrived between Deba (one of the three primary settlements of Tera within Yamaltu-Deba Local Government Area) with the outside world. The account maintained that, commodities such as salt, textile materials and gunpowder were brought to Deba in exchange for slaves. It further stressed that, trade in slave had a boom such that at one point it had attracted the attention of merchants from as far away as Hausa land, Adar and Timbuktu.⁶⁰

But most of these economic activities, as Sani Abba rightly observed, took place in the period that followed the Bubayero Jihad in Gombe.⁶¹ Certainly this surge in trade may not be unconnected with the establishment of order within what later became Gombe emirate. As such, a recorded thrive in economic activities under a better security condition was a common feature in almost all the areas that falls within the territory of a central government of the emirates that emerged as a result of the Sokoto Jihad. Sa'adu Abubakar made a good observation of similar economic growth in Fombina, in terms of essential goods supply back and forth under the security umbrella of the emirate.

Prior to the conquest by the Fulbe, the hostility of the Fombina autochtons (sic) to the peoples in the north, who had been raiding them for slaving purposes greatly limited the development of trade. Undoubtedly, the establishment of an emirate with dependent sub-emirates over a very extensive country changed the situation.⁶²

⁶⁰ Umar, Muhammad Baboyo. *The Socio- Political And Economic History Of Deba*, p. 88.

⁶¹ Abba, Sani Shehu, Awwalu and Abba, Umar, *Gombe State*, pp. 15-17.

⁶² Usman, Y.B. and Alkali Nura, eds, *Studies In The History Of Pre-Colonian Borno*, Northern Nigeria Publishing Company, 1983, pp. 230-233.

However, establishing definite trade engagement between the various Tera groups with the outside world, in the period preceding the Jihad of Bubayero to warrant crediting its effect in introducing Islam to them is surely going to be difficult. This is partly due to paucity of sources to that effect, but more, so because there hardly were any such direct trade activities with the outside world. It is likely that there were consistent movements from the east, particularly the Chad region to the Tera area of Gombe as was the case with Fombina.⁶³ But in the case of Tera communities, such movements were likely to be the one way traffic migratory activities recorded in the area due to the persistent instability in the Ngazargamu-Lake Chad axis at that time. It may have also been around that period, that the Kitajen Fulbe moved to Gombe area and settled around Bima hill (located in Yamaltu-Deba L.G.A.), before eventually joining forces with Bubayero much later.⁶⁴ And, record has shown that, the Kitajen Fulbe had lightly introduced Islam to their Tera host while in each other's company.

So trade as a factor only came into play after the Tera have had a relative exposure with Islam. The role that trade played may have been of improvement in the standard of practicing the religion among the Tera converts, not of introduction. That may have happened alongside other factors, such as migration, which brought about the sizeable Kanuri immigrants – fleeing the hostile atmosphere that had destabilize the Kanem Empire in the 19th century.

⁶³ Usman, Y.B. and Alkali Nura, eds, pp. 217-221.

⁶⁴ Abba, Sani Shehu, Awwalu and Abba, Umar, Gombe State, pp. 4-8.

3.5. AN ANALYSIS ON THE INTRODUCTION OF ISLAM AMONGST THE TERA PEOPLE

Determining when the Tera people first came into contact with Islam and possibly embrace it, is heavily tied down to the question of immigration. And, regardless of what source of their history is in reference, the claim pointing to the eastern origin; Yemen, Ngazargamu and Lake Chad always come into consideration in certain respect to reemphasize that notion of a foreign origin. This is so engraved amongst them such that, even the non-Muslim among the Tera communities such as the Christians, are taking pride in making reference to Yemen and some even hold that legendary belief that they came with a copy of the glorious Qur'an.

It is worth pointing out here however, that extensive accounts beyond oral traditions are not always readily available on the Tera story of origin. Thus raising the question whether a meaningful interpretation of events can be made out of reports from oral sources. But on the other hand, as we have noted earlier, the overwhelming nature of the oral records, coupled with the evidence of human movement from Arabian Peninsula through the horn of Africa to the Chad region, requires treading with caution in dismissing such claims. But retracing the origin of Tera people back to Yemen, even amidst their unwavering claim to that effect, is going to be a difficult task, if not impossible. This is partly because of paucity of recorded information to fill the missing gaps that exist beyond the Lake Chad axis. And, trying to grasp where they have featured in the Yemeni equation – within the limits of the present essay, may derail our focus away from its main course. Rather we shall restrict our search to where more meaningful

contributions are readily available, i.e. focusing our attention around the Chad Basin and Ngazargamu.

Interestingly, a number of studies on the related claims gave us fresh idea on the trend of migrations involving the many tribes holding that eastern belief. In a contribution by Professor Sa'adu Abubakar, apparently conscious of the sketchy nature of information on the claims of the early period of migrations from the Chad region, considered such possibility as somewhat being in a remote past:

The sources at our disposal on the early period are virtually all on origins. In this connection, the vast majority of the ethnic groups in Fombina claim to have emigrated from Borno. ... The general impression one gets is that of the present inhabitants of the southern parts of Fombina were occupying the Chad basin in the remote past.⁶⁵

Abubakar went on to add:

It is worth pointing out that the Mbum today inhabit the central plateau area of the Cameroun Republic. Apart from them, other early inhabitants of the Chad basin and its adjoining territory are said to have been the Jukun.⁶⁶

He further maintained that the Jukun had adjoined the Ngalaha tribes of Kanem to their north around Gujba and Mbum to the south, who stretched from Dikwa to Margi in 1426 C.E.

Of interest to us here is the indication of Jukun activities in the areas that neighbours Kanem in the 13th century. It was the Jukun, who were said to have migrated to Gombe area earlier than Tera that exacted their influence in the areas that Tera people eventually came to settle. As such, it was through that influence that the Jukun leave traces of their *Tsafɪ* religion on the aboriginal population that the Tera met in the area of

⁶⁵Usman, Y.B. and Alkali Nura, eds., pp. 211-212.

⁶⁶ Usman, Y.B. and Alkali Nura, eds, p. 212.

Yamaltu-Deba. Then, counting on some of the records cited earlier, it will be safe to suggest that the migration of the Tera group, who were said to have witnessed the formation of Ngazargamu, took place much later. And going by this, the much reported influence of the Jukun on Tera, so much as adopting their *Tsafî* of ancestral worship, would seem to have equally taken place much later as well, i.e. within Yamaltu-Deba area. This is very much in agreement with what has been reported by M.B. Ahmad:

It is believed that in Gwani (one of the earlier Tera settlement) (bracket mine) before the arrival of the Tera, the indigenous population of the area had been subjects of the Jukun who had already accepted the Jukun religion, the *Tsafî* of ancestor worship.⁶⁷

This account went further as maintaining that there had been struggles between the Tera and the aboriginal tribes; the Tangale, apparently when Tera first appeared in the neighbourhood.⁶⁸ It will be fine to assume that the supposed struggles bordered on issues of territory, which the aborigines are naturally bound to defend against the invasion of the Tera arrivals. On that note, it will be logical to presume that other factors such as cultural and possibly religion could come into play in the ensued struggle. Obviously coming from a different background, before adopting the *Tsafî*, religious difference may well have been part of their conflict.

However, in a slightly different version of the narratives, but very much in support of the struggle claim goes thus:

Gwani was then harassed into submission. Later, when the Jukun formed the Kingdom of Pindika (sic) in that neighbourhood, Gwani became tributary to them and adopted their religion.⁶⁹

⁶⁷Ahmad, M.B. p. 15.

⁶⁸Ahmad, M.B. p. 15.

⁶⁹Temple, C. L. Notes On The Tribes, p. 351.

Even though this may seem to be explaining an incident affecting Gwani and its immediate surrounding area around the Bima hill, other sources present a complement to the Gwani account, telling us that Jukun influence covered virtually all Tera locations.

In nearly all the areas that turned out to be Tera settlements, the Jukun had established some kind of influence, even if loose. In Gwani and Deba areas for example the people living before the Tera arrived had been under the Jukun influence.⁷⁰

As wide spread as the Tera people were within Yamaltu-Deba Local Government Area, it is highly likely that each of their settlements was somehow subjected to the Jukun influence. Thus explaining how they collectively abandoned Islam as they widely claimed to have been what their religion was, and adopted the paganism of the Jukun *Tsafti*.

Probably, an explanation can be found in the observation made by Sa'adu Abubakar of a similar trend of events on the tribes in Fombina that shared similar claims of religion as the Tera:

One weak point about the Kanuri origin of the ruling groups among the Bura, Kilba and Muvya is how to explain the decline of Islam. For, by the beginning of the 19th century, all the ruling groups in the various chieftaincies in Fombina were actually not Muslims. One possible explanation is that it may have been that the Kanuri immigrants were too few in number and that they were eventually compelled by the circumstances of their environment to adopt the institutions of the people among whom they had settled.⁷¹

Just like the condition observed in Fombina, similar situation was mentioned on the Tera, explaining how they may have abandoned Islam:

The Tera migrated to the present location with a copy of the Holy Qur'an, an indication that they were practicing Muslims even before the migration

⁷⁰ Opcit, Ahmad, M.B. The Galadimas Of Gombe, p. 17.

⁷¹ Opcit, Usman, Y.B. and Alkali Nura, eds, Studies In The History Of Pre-Colonian Borno, p. 217.

and certainly before the Jihad of Bubayero. However, through contact with the Jukun, the Tera reduced their devotion and mixed their practice of Islam with syncretism like the Bolewa. Some sources maintained that the Islam which the Tera migrated to their present location with, was either practiced by a few devoted followers or loosely practiced.⁷²

In either case, what these accounts were indicating to us was that, Tera people had somewhat practiced Islam in the past, apparently in the company of the Kanuri while at Ngazargamu or in the Chad region. But there was a decline in their adherence to the religion at one point. The possible likelihood was that the decline started before they reached their present locations, probably on transit during their reported sojourn in the land of Babur and Bura.⁷³ This could well be in line with the decline being observed by Professor Sa'adu Abubakar in the land of Babur and Bura, which by that time the Tera were a part of the then Biu Kingdom.

The Jukun influence on the land of Bura was thus explained:

... from 1650 – 1680 when Jukun controlled Tera and Fika (the land of the Bolewa), it was possible for the Jukun influence to have been felt in Biu area.⁷⁴

Around that period, Biu area covered most of the places inhabited by the Tera people and that condition lasted into the late 20th century when Bauchi State was created and some of these areas were moved to Gombe province in Bauchi State.

This give us a picture of why the influence of the *Tsafi* was felt all across the Tera settlements. Having been subjects under the Jukun Kingdom, the religion of ancestral worship of the Jukun found it easy to pierce through the religion they came with, which by the accounts of their Kanuri-Ngazargamu connection could well be Islam. And, given

⁷²Abba, Sani Shehu, Awwalu and Abba, Umar, Gombe State, p. 22.

⁷³ Abba, Sani Shehu, Awwalu and Abba, Umar, p. 9.

⁷⁴ Usman, Bukar. A History Of Biu, p.53.

that they were, just like the tribes of the Fombina who are claiming to be immigrants from the land of the Kanuri where Islam had firmly been in place, surely they have had a taste of Islam while in the company of the Kanuri at Ngazargamu or at least in the Chad region.

The evidence of the Tera being with the Kanuri also weigh heavily in a number of ways. A strong indication that supported the connection or at least influence can be seen in the structure of the traditional institutions of Tera people. Almost all the titles of officials in the Tera courts originated from Kanuri, with only a slight changes in few cases; Kelduma (Galadima in Kanuri), Gundi (Bundi in Kanuri, used in addressing a king, to mean lion), Birma (Barma in Kanuri), Maina, Zarma and Yarima.⁷⁵

Evidently, that had been the trend with all the tribes that claimed a Kanuri affinity as Sa'adu Abubakar also observed in Fombina:

The strongest point suggesting Kanuri origin, or at least influence, is that fact that not only was the structure of the governments in Biyu (sic) Hong and Muvya similar but that the titles of the officials, were derived from Kanuri. The leading Pabur titles were either borrowed direct or modified from Kanuri usage, viz: Birma (Barma in Kanuri), Thledima (Galadima in Kanuri), Kokuma (Kwaguna), Bundi (which is lion in Kanuri). The ones taken directly include Maina (Prince), Magira (Queen mother) and Kacalla (military title "captain"). Among the Kilba, the Kanuri titles borrowed or modified include Zarma (Dzarma in Kilba), Barma (Birma in Kilba), Chima (Chama in Kilba) and Maidala (Midala in Kilba). Others are Yarima, Magira, Blamah "Mongari". Some of such titles are also found among the Gude of Muvya. Undoubtedly, the political institutions of the peoples immediately due south of Borno bear striking resemblance to that of the Kanuri.⁷⁶

Furthermore, there are some physical features that strengthened the insistence of the Tera claim of Kanuri connection:

⁷⁵ Only those modified or having differences were shown in brackets.

⁷⁶ Usman, Y.B. and Alkali Nura, eds, p. 217.

The facial marks of the Tera consist of a number close perpendicular lines from the temples to the level of the mouth. They are identical to those of the Bole and are an exaggerated form of the Kanuri markings.⁷⁷

What could be taken from all these is that, Tera people have had ties with the Kanuri, possibly in Ngazargamu or perhaps at the shores of Lake Chad. The likelihood of that could date back to 17th century so much that they may have somewhat practiced Islam while in their midst. But the transformation wave that affected the religion of all the groups that migrated from Borno to other places equally had its toll on the Tera people as well. Thus adopting the religion of the Jukun, under whose Kingdom they later resided. But yet, the imprint of Islam on them remained so strong such that it became a legend in their folklores. For that reason, it continued to be transmitted to the successive generations a claim that they were once Muslims even at the time when paganism was what they practiced.

⁷⁷Temple, C. L. NOTES ON THE TRIBES, p. 352.

CHAPTER FOUR:

4.0 THE IMPACT OF ISLAM ON TERA PEOPLE FROM 1900s TO 2000

The impact of Islam on the Tera people has a varied representation. On one hand, it would be assumed that, given the long claim of having Islam among them, a clear imprint of Islam will be visible from that distant past in their history showing how much of Muslims they were, but that sadly, was not the case. But on the other hand, when Islam finally found its way into the Tera community, it spread rapidly with ease. Today, over eighty percent of the people in the Tera communities are Muslims. In each of the many Tera towns and villages, Muslims have been the ones holding position of traditional leaders – an example of how highly held Islam has become among the Tera nobility. This is a clear demonstration of how strong the presence of Islam has grown among the Tera over time. In this chapter, we shall be examining how the introduction of Islam to the Tera people impacted on their religious, cultural and social lives. Thus assessing the pace as well as the nature of the transformation that had taken place at various stages of the changes brought by Islam to the Tera people, coming into the 21st century.

4.1. THE IMPACT OF ISLAM ON THE TERA PEOPLE RELIGIOUSLY

From the time Islam was introduced to the Tera people, it has had tremendous impact in every aspects of their life. Thus changing them from a predominantly pagan society, to a now overwhelmingly indigenous Muslim populated community. Their social lives has since adjusted to the demand of the new religion, so also their culture.

As has been observed, Muslims enjoy the majority in the Tera communities, including holding positions of importance literally right after Islam was introduced to

them. However, that did not translate into immediate changes to reflect their new religion. The influence of Islam in the lives of Tera came at a slow pace.

A number of antecedents associated with the introduction of Islam that should have facilitated a smooth transition of the religious lives of Tera, still defy explanation as to why Islam was faced with such a challenge of transforming the Tera society. For example, interview accounts as received by this researcher correlating earlier accounts on the subject suggested that, Islam came to the Tera people through peaceful means.⁷⁸ A clear indication that, even at the peak of their pagan practices, Tera people did not resist Islam. In addition to that, there are claims of the existence of pockets of practicing Muslims when they were still fully involved with their pagan practices. Again, there are sources suggesting that Tera people had their first contact with Islam much earlier in their current settlements in the 16th or early 17th century.⁷⁹ Furthermore, there are reports of friendly gesture that was shown to the Bubayero campaign and his immediate successor by a Gwani Prince within the days of the Jihad.⁸⁰ With these, one would think that Islam should enjoy accelerated pace of growth on its introduction by the Tera people. However, on a closer look, that appeared not to have been the case.

Record has shown that *Konom* (the Jukun *Tsafî* in Tera language), had taken such a strong root among the Tera community such that long after Islam was introduced to them, it continued to be practiced among them in the form of syncretism. In some

⁷⁸Interview with Kalla, Abd Hamid. 56yeras, Chief Imam Gwani (East) Central Mosques, 16th February, 2018. & Opcit, Ahmad, M.B. The Galadimas Of Gombe, p. 18.

⁷⁹ Ahmad, M.B.

⁸⁰ Yamusa, Ahmadu. Gombe History Wokshop, p. 13.

communities, specific *Konom* practices existed and were maintained deep into the late 1900s and probably beyond.⁸¹

It is difficult to explain why Islam had not made an immediate impact on the Tera people to abandon the *Konom* practices that they adopted from the Jukun even when they had accepted Islam in record numbers. It is especially more confusing given that Tera had expressed friendly attitude towards the Muslim migrants that came and settled in their areas. According many accounts, the Kanuri and Bolewa Muslim scholars that visited the area were warmly welcomed by their Tera host. Gwani and Shinga traditions also confirmed that there was no record of Tera people being involved in any hostility towards Muslim migrants.⁸² Then why has Islam found it difficult in shifting the course of their belief system given all these ideal conditions that should have made it easier to do just that?

Some could argued that, it may have been due to the fact that the Bubayero Jihad was never waged against the Tera people. If there were an act of Jihad, the obvious outcome would be the immediate cleansing of all the un-Islamic practices that were to be found among the Tera people, of which the *Tsafī* will surely be at the forefront. Another suggestion is that, perhaps it was a perception that the Tera held on the *Tsafī* as never a ritual act of worship; as the concept of *Konom* was never built on the belief of reward and punishment in a life beyond this world. That it was simply a set of rites attached to certain events and ceremonies, often observed annually. For example, in situations of low rainfall, certain *Konom* rites would be performed; on occasions of crowning a new King

⁸¹Interview with Maina, Adamu 83 years, Santurakin Kwadon,. Kwadon, 4th November 2017. 4:00pm – 5:20pm

⁸²Interview with Abd hamid and Pero, Madi.Shinga, 108years, Shinga, 16th February, 2018, 4:00pm – 5:10pm.

(Chief) or a key member of his cabinet, such as the Kedluma (Galadima), where a certain *Konom* protocol (which still exist in some Tera communities to this day) would be observed. While on the other hand, the Muslims, which include those involved in the *Konom* practices, continued to profess Islam without noticing the contradiction. That probably made the continued syncretism of Islam and the *Konom* pagan practices tolerable within the Muslim indented Tera communities. Coupled with their ignorance, it perhaps made them saw Islam as only a process of worship, while maintaining their paganism as a way to seek special powers.

Islam can then be said to have enjoyed dual contrasting presence within the Tera communities after its introduction. First, it swept through and gained acceptance in each of their settlements without resistance. As such, it successfully spread among them very fast. The assessment of this researcher has shown that Islam took hold across all the Tera communities spontaneously. Within a relatively short period on establishing a relationship with Bubayero and simultaneously with his immediate successor; Sulaiman,⁸³ Islam had gained ground there. Even though as was observed earlier, already there were converts among them, but that period marked the breakthrough point for the rapid spread of Islam.

On the other hand however, that expanded conversion of the Tera people into Islam did not push them away from their pagan practices. According to numerous accounts, that trend continued until well into the late 90s of the 20th century. That was the period when swift changes were witnessed in the religious life of the Tera people. Mosques were being built and indigenous Muslim scholars began to emerge and be

⁸³Ahmad, M.B. The Galadimas Of Gombe, p. 18

involved in the religious affairs of their communities. Before that period, it was the non-indigenous scholars of Kanuri and Bolewa origin that were involved in the Islamic affairs. Gwani sources informed us that in the first two quarters of the 1990s, Tera students were sent to Borno and Kondiga to learn the Qur'an.⁸⁴ Those who returned, established Tsangaya schools and taught within their respective communities. The sources also added that students came from neighbouring communities, such as Balbiya, Barnakigi and Gulani all outside Tera land to learn the Qur'an in those Tsangaya schools.⁸⁵

It is important to note that, the act of sending students to learn the Qur'an at that time was not just a random event.⁸⁶ The traditional institution of the Tera communities were not only credited for not resisting Islam, but also for sending students to learn about the religion itself, particularly the study of the Qur'an. In Gwani for example, during the reign of Ali (c.a. 1890 – 1931), he was credited for being the first to send his children to Kano to learn the Qur'an. Again, according to Kwadon, Gwani and Shinga sources, their leaders welcomed Muslim scholars of Kanuri and Kalam origin into their communities. They even put them in charge of Islamic rites, such as leading the prayers, teaching of the religion and the execution of other religious rites. But later, on the return of the indigenous youths from Qur'anic schools, certain responsibilities were passed onto them. For example in Gwani, Malam Adamu assumed the role of chief Imam on his returned during the reign of Kuji Ali.⁸⁷

⁸⁴Interview with Kalla, Abd Hamid. Chief Imam, Gwani (East), 16th February, 2018.

⁸⁵Interview with Kalla, Abd Hamid. Gwani (East),

⁸⁶Interview with Santurakin Kwadon, Maina, Adamu. Kwadon, 4th November 2017.

⁸⁷Interview with Kalla, Abd Hamid. Gwani (East), 16th February, 2018.

In the case of the Kanuri, that connection remain in place till this day. A permanent title of Puma was reserved for them in the Tera courts. The title pf Puma is associated with people of Kanuri descent and the person holding the office is considered to be an Islamic scholar, of which at that time, it was the Kanuri that made prominence in that regards in the religious life of the Tera people. As such, even today, the title is being inherited only by people of Kanuri descent.⁸⁸

If only one thing, in those early days, Islam can be said to have received a strong recognition of the Tera leadership all across their settlements even if not making a meaningful impact. Thus, welcoming as well as accommodating Muslim scholars of the Kanuri and Bolewa origin. However, similar trend cannot be said of the Christian missionaries that first came: for they staunchly resisted Christianity. Interview sources from all the Tera settlements, including Zambuk and Lubo (the two Tera communities with a significant number of Christian population), revealed that their chiefs refused to welcome the Christian missionaries when they first came.⁸⁹ Kida Jauro maintained that:

Christian missionaries were repelled on their first coming as they were in the other Tera settlements. But on their second attempt, they met the community rippled with epidemic amongst which victims was the Kuji (literally means king) himself. They then used that background and promised to provide a cure for the ailing king who then allowed them to stay. That was how they penetrated the community and made the people later accept the Christian religion.⁹⁰

With that incident, the missionaries settled in Zambuk and build a bible school there. Through that school they were able to annex the nearby villages such as Lubo and made many of their people converted to Christianity.

⁸⁸Interview with Kalla, Abd Hamid. Gwani (East),

⁸⁹Interview with Kida Jauro, Haruna. 107years, Zambuk, 5th November, 2017, 2:30pm – 3:30pm.

⁹⁰Interview with Kida Jauro, Haruna. Zambuk,

The resistance to Christianity was reported to have been widespread across the Tera settlements. Today in some of these places, on average about ninety percent of their indigenous population are Muslims. This includes places like Kwadon, Shinga, Gwani, Deba, Liji, Hinna and Wade. But in the case of Wade, there is no single indigenous Christian in the whole of their village or even one in diaspora, our sources revealed.⁹¹

But the question of whether the resistance to the Christian missionary's advances was due the growth of piety among the Tera rulers, who then made it a duty to repel the incursion of the unbelievers – as our Gwani source tried to put it, remain to be answered. But it may have been just a case of community heads refusing to host an alien race in their backyard. In either case this is beyond the limit of the present study. However, the fact that the Christian missionaries were resisted all across the Tera settlements after Islam has gain some presence there, even though they were not under a central leadership to coordinate such an action, speaks volume of the possibility of both.

Overall, it is beyond doubt that Islam has made a strong impact on the Tera people, regardless of when it exactly came to them. It is a fact that Islam has eventually changed the religious landscape of the Tera people. From what was once a pagan community, to a predominately Muslim society.

4.1 1. ROLE OF THE MUSLIM SUFI ORDERS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN MAKING THE IMPACT OF ISLAM ON TERA PEOPLE

In the area of religious changes, Muslim organisations have made significant contributions in the transition of the Tera people from paganism to the practice of pure

⁹¹Interview with MishelKala, Adamu Usman. 56years, Wade, 16th February, 2018.

Islam. These movements includes the sufi orders, amongst which are; the Qadiriyya movement which gain prominence during the period of Jihad. But much later, it was replaced by the Tijjaniyya movement. But more recently, the Izalatul Bid'a wa Iqamatus Sunnah (JIBWIS), has gain prominence in the area. We shall be looking at how these three organisations, who came to dominate the affairs of Islam in Nigeria from the days of the Sokoto Jihad till today, might have contributed to the development of Islam among the Tera people.

4.1.1.1 THE QADIRIYYA SUFI ORDER

First the Qadiriyya, which is very much associated with the Sokoto Jihad as well as Bubayero the progenitor of the Gombe Emirate. Being first religious movement in the area, the Qadiriyya Sufi order has helped in the transition of the Tera people to Islam. But perhaps due to the paucity of recorded information, specific detailed activities and events of those early days were not always readily available. But that could well be associated with the fast fading fortunes of the Qadiriyya group in the religious landscape of Yamaltu-Deba area and probably in the whole of Nigeria today.

But other accounts even try to deny that Bubayero or any of the Gombe Emirs were members of the Qadiriyya. But then, even if the Emirs of Gombe didn't join the Qadiriyya order, which is unlikely, the overwhelming belief among the general populace is that they were. Eventually, Qadiriyya had its breakthrough during the reign of Emir Abubakar (1936 -1984):

The greatest boost to the Qadiriyya was the visit of Sheykh Nasiru Kabara, the leader of the Qadiriyya in West Africa to Gombe. Sheikh Nasiru Kabara met Emir Abubakar in Kaduna and the two came to Gombe together. The Sheikh was hosted at Imam Abare's house and thousands of

people went to see him, to join the sect, to request for prayers or *Baraka* from the Sheikh, and even to touch the Sheikh and get *Baraka* from that touch. At that period, the Qadiriyya had thousands of new followers who came from within Gombe, neighbouring states and countries.⁹²

This is a clear indication that Abubakar was a member of the Qadiriyya order. The invitation of Nasiru Kabara itself was not just a coincidence. Eventually it was Imam Nuruddeen, the Chief Imam of Gombe central Mosque that became the leader of the Qadiriyya in Gombe. Upon his death, his son Imam Abare succeeded him as both the Chief Imam and the leader of the Qadiriyya in Gombe.⁹³

However, given that records has shown that Bubayero's appearance marked the period that Islam began to thrive amongst the Tera people, and the fact that the Jihadists including Bubayero himself were associated with practicing Qadiriyya, this seems to suggest that Qadiriyya had a hand in the introduction of Islam amongst the Tera people. This may explain why, even with the obvious continued decline of the movement's activities this days, it still managed to keep a pockets of circles within the Tera community. This circle, even though mostly Fulani based, still enjoyed the recognition and courtesies of the Tera traditional leadership at the possible highest level. A good example of that is in Kwadon District of the Yamaltu emirate.⁹⁴ A strong suggestion that the connection of Tera to the Qadiriyya order dated way back historically.

The investigation of this researcher is limited in identifying details on the Qadiriyya as a Sufi movement in an active involvement against the pagan practices of Tera people. That perhaps was due to lack of written records on such notes. But certainly,

⁹² Abba, Sani Shehu, Awwalu and Abba, Umar, p. 121.

⁹³ Abba, Sani Shehu, Awwalu and Abba, Umar, p. 121.

⁹⁴ Our investigation has shown that a Qadiriyya Sufi Circle that enjoys occasional visit by the Sheikh Qaribullah – the leader of the movement in African continent exists in a small village called 'Woro Bodeyel' just off - Kwadon Town along Biu road in Yamaltu-Deba L.G.A.

the Qadiriyya witnessed the period for the most growth of Islam within the Tera communities. This may be the reason why the Tera indigenous communities still maintain ties with the Qadiriyya, such they continued to be the group sanction with running the Juma'ah mosques in most of the Tera towns and villages to date.

4.1.1.2. THE TIJJANIYYA SUFI ORDER

Tijjaniyya on the other hand, was never associated with the introduction of Islam to the Tera people. This is because at the time of its appearance in Gombe area, the *Tsafi* that the Tera were known with had very much lost favour and Tera were said to have already accepted Islam. More so, Qadiriyya was firmly on ground in the area. What was left, was perhaps only a pocket of syncretism.

Tijjaniyya first reached Gombe itself during the reign of Tukur (1895 -1898). It was believed he and his successor Umar Kwairanga (1898 – 1922) had both joined the brotherhood during the reign of the former. However, Tijjaniyya failed to gain any prominence in Gombe. Again, it was during the reign of Emir Abubakar, who was credited with inviting Sheikh Nasiru Kabara to Gombe that Alkali Bello and Ahmadu Tijjani after him, became the known leaders of the brotherhood in Gombe. But unlike in the case of the Qadiriyya, Alkali Ahmadu Tijjani was not the Imam of the central mosque of Gombe. So the activities of the Tijjaniyya were reduced to only the mosque he built beside his house.⁹⁵

Having replaced Qadiriyya later as the dominant Sufi group in Gombe area in recent years, it has expanded beyond just maintaining a few units of circles as is now the

⁹⁵ Abba, Sani Shehu, Awwalu and Abba, Umar, p. 121..

case with Qadiriyya today. All over Yamaltu-Deba Local Government Area, Tijjaniyya maintain a significant presence and had gain a meaningful participation from the Tera indigenous community. Although most of the people that form the bulk of its followers are the non-indigenous population, such as the Hausa and Fulani (part of the demography that formed the Yamaltu-Deba L.G.A. today), Tera and other smaller tribal groups had also joined the Tijjaniyya Sufi movement. They, for some reason became fascinated with the Tijjaniyya Sufi order to make them join it enmass against the traditional favourite; the Qadiriyya.

An explanation was offered as to why the Tera failed to gain strong presence within Sufi movement of both Qadiriyya and Tijjaniyya. One observer suggests that it was perhaps due to the remnant of some social and cultural practices that were maintained by the Tera, which are contrary to the teachings of Islam, even after embracing the religion. As such, the Tera Muslims absorption into the mainstream Sufi brotherhood remain deferred.⁹⁶

However, it could largely be argued that Tijjaniyya has made some impact on the Tera people. Through their withdrawal from the immoral cultures of their Tera host communities, they were able to draw the Tera people into somewhat abandonment of those practices.

Although it should be pointed out that, not all the Islamic activities took place within the context of the Qadiriyya or Tijjaniyya. There are is much progress made in the spread and teaching of Islam under the auspices of the pan-Muslim and Islamiyya school

⁹⁶Interview with Aliyu, Alhasan Kwadon.48years, Kwadon, 10th April, 2018, 8:00 – 10:00pm.

system.⁹⁷ But perhaps due to the prominence of the two brotherhood, people often credit the work in their names.

4.1.1.3. THE IZALA

The *Jama'atul Izalatul Bid'a wa Iqamatus Sunnah*, i.e. the Izala is credited with making strong impacts in the religious transformation of the Tera people. Although a much more recent development in Yamaltu-Deba area than Qadiriyya and Tijjaniyya, but its found a formula that gave it an opening into the Tera communities. From 1978 when the Izala was first introduced in Gombe, many Tera people were in active membership. Within a relatively short period of time, Izala managed to gain presence within the Tera Muslim communities. Thus recording a number of remarkable achievements.

In the work of Izala, Tera people became involved in religious activities within and outside their communities. Some of the indigenous Tera people who joined the Izala group and became involved in their religious campaign, witnessed themselves rising through the ranks, up into positions of meaning as well as holding responsibilities. Within the Tera settlements, they were engaged in using their own language in preaching to their own people.⁹⁸

The emergence of Izala in the Tera land was a very important period for Islam in terms of making positive impact. Through their somewhat integrational approach, a significant number of the Tera indigenous scholars were trained. Hence, breeding manpower that made it possible to preach to the locals in their own language. According to one source, most of the Izala campaign within the Tera communities were done in

⁹⁷Abba, Sani et al, Gombe State, p. 125.

⁹⁸Interview with Aliyu, Alhasan Kwadon. Kwadon, 10th April, 2018.

coordination with the Tera indigenes, and in some cases, they were involved in leading the process; a feat that was completely absent in the Sufi movement's activities in the area.

At the National level, the Tera people saw in the structure of the Izala group one of their own in the person of Alhaji Isah Waziri Muhammad, holding the position of National Commander of the Izala First Aid Group since from the days of the founding leader of the group: Sheikh Isma'ila Idris. Today, Tera people also have a national graded preacher and in Gombe State, a number of Tera men are ranked as State graded preachers. According to Malam Aliyu, that gave the Tera people a sense of belonging which probably, would have been virtually unachievable were it to be within the Sufi group's structure.⁹⁹

It may have been the accumulation of these factors that made the Tera people comfortable with the Izala group. That perhaps made them feel not looked down onto – as probably would have been the case with the Sufi organization before it. That eventually resulted in the wider acceptance of the Izala among the Tera people. But more importantly, it has helped in curving away some of the menace imbedded in the Tera socio-cultural lives, such as drinking of alcohol and mixed gathering and merrymaking that refused to go away despite their acceptance of Islam. Given that the Izala appeal is high among the youth, it paved way for a new dawn in the outlook of Islam in Tera land going forward.

⁹⁹Interview with Aliyu, Alhasan Kwadon. Kwadon, 10th April, 2018.

Today, Izala has built schools within Yamaltu-Deba, not just Islamiyya schools, but also primary and secondary schools involved in teaching western education with a touch of Islamic background.

4.1.2. IMPACT OF ISLAM ON RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP AMONG THE TERA PEOPLE

This is one area that the acceptance of Islam by the Tera people has not done much. Apart from what sources from Gwani, Shinga and Kwadon informed us, of the efforts of sending students to learn the Qur'an and the resultant development of *Tsangaya* schools from that effort, not much was reported of Islamic scholarship amongst the settlements of the Tera people. Gwani and Shinga traditions were full of praises for their *Tsangaya* schools which they claimed had grown to be so rich that a number of the students trained there eventually developed to write the Holy Qur'an offhand.¹⁰⁰

In addition to that, in those early days there are accounts of Tera providing good atmosphere for visiting scholars. For instance, Bolewa scholars were welcomed in Gwani. Again, Kanuri scholars had equally found acceptance in all of Tera land, so much that their presence was institutionalised. Kanuri scholars were integrated into the royal courts and conferred with the title of Puma;¹⁰¹ which literally stand for 'head of Islamic affairs' and can only be given to a person of Kanuri origin to this day. However, it all stop at that as none of the *Tsangaya* schools grew to become a bustling Islamic centre or claim a credit for raising prominent Islamic scholars and the relationship with the visitors did not stimulate expanded learning and Islamic scholarship among the locals.

¹⁰⁰Interview with Pero, Madi, Shinga and Kalla, Abd Hamid. Gwani, 6th February, 2018.

¹⁰¹ As we have mentioned elsewhere in this work, Puma is one of seven king makers in the Tera royal setting

It is only more recently that the youth of the Tera communities are beginning to show signs of interest in Islamic learning. Some young men, particularly those of the Izala background are now taking part in preaching across the state and beyond. A few of them are starting to demonstrate a promising sign enjoying credit for Islamic literary works.¹⁰² Malam Alhassan Aliyu, one of the source consulted in producing this work has written a few treatises: *‘Wajibcin Aiki Da Fiqhu A Musulunci,’ ‘Qamus ul Adfal’*; A children Hausa – Arabic Dictionary. He is currently working on A Tera Language exegesis (Tafsir), at the time of the interview for the present work. He has so far written from *SuratunNas* to *Suratul Mulk*.

Today, within Yamaltu-Deba Local Government Area, there are about 178 Islamaiyya schools engaged in teaching the Islamic rites and knowledge.¹⁰³ There are also over a hundred Tsangaya schools with an average of 50 pupils each. And, these Tsangayas are being runned by at least an *Alaramma* teacher.¹⁰⁴

4.1.3. THE RESISTANCE TO CHRISTIANITY

Tera people took a lot pride for being predominantly Muslim in all their settlements today. According to the sources available to this researcher, this feat was achieved as a result of their leaders’ acceptance of Islam very early. Gwani, Shinga and Wade traditions had always maintain this view. They claimed that after converting to Islam, their leaders became staunch believers, such that their conversion not only helped stimulate conversion among their subjects, but also repelled the advances of western

¹⁰²Interview with Aliyu, Alhasan Kwadon. Kwadon, 10th April, 2018

¹⁰³Interview with Maikudi, Muhammad umar. (Chairman Union of Islamiyya Teachers of Yamaltu-Deba Local Government), 18th July, 2018. 9:00am – 11:00am.

¹⁰⁴ Alaramma, Malam Iliya. (Chaiman Union of Alaramma of Yamaltu-Deba Local Government), 18th July, 2018. 8:30pm – 9:40pm.

Christian missionaries.¹⁰⁵ Other sources added that, even the success that Christian missionaries recorded in places like Zambuk, as was explained earlier, was due to the Europeans rallying around a pandemic that was suffered in that area at that time.

But the argument of Tera having leaders with strong faith in Islam to make them repel Christian missionaries is heavily flawed, as the level of Islam being practiced in those early days was not strong. It could be true that they resisted the missionaries, but it might have been for other reasons not their staunch belief in Islam. Both oral and written sources informed us that late in the 1980s, syncretism was very much tolerated within the Tera communities. Praying to deities for rain and super natural powers, crowning new king or the kingmakers, were all done within the confines of their traditional pagan practices. A society deeply imbedded with such level of paganism at that time cannot be credited for repelling another un-Islamic belief much earlier, i.e. in the 1920¹⁰⁶ on the ground of being good believers.

Of course there are evidences to suggest that Christianity was not welcome when it came. The disparity in the level of western education between the few places that the Europeans stayed; Zambuk and Lubo for example, and where they didn't, presents a huge wagging gap. In Kwadon for instance, primary school had to be introduced twice after the first attempt proved futile because the host community rejected it at first attempt in the 19th century, presumably in the early 1890s. It was about twenty years later in the 20th century, probably in the 40s, that the school made a successful re-entry.¹⁰⁷ This is another reason indicating that western education and with its twin brother; Christianity were

¹⁰⁵ Interview with MishelKala, Adamu Usman. Wade, 6th February, 2018.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Ibrahim, Ali.Kwadon, 5th November, 2017, 9:00am – 10:30am.

¹⁰⁷ Garkuwan Kwadon, Muhammad.Sani.Muhammad. Kwadon, 8th November, 2017, 11:00am 1:00pm.

rejected on their first coming by Tera, but certainly not because of their faith in Islam. And, if at all there were any such resistance base on faith, it may have been in the form of individual efforts, but not the case of collective community struggle, as some the local sources were trying to suggest.¹⁰⁸

However, a plausible explanation for the Tera action against the Europeans advances could have been, perhaps after accepting Islam and have found solace of being left alone by the Bubayero kingdom, they decided to stay away from engaging in what might evoke the trouble of their stronger neighbour, such as having involvement with white aliens. Coupled with the prevailing uncertainties in the area; the Fadarallah experience that ravaged their people, the Jibrillah activities that almost bring Gombe to its knees and the appearance Caliph Attahiru I in Gwani.¹⁰⁹

In any case, the religious landscape of Tera land today, suggests that for some reason, Tera people were receptive to Islam, despite the fact that no Jihad campaign was ever waged against any of their settlements. In fact, it could be said that there were no concerted group efforts in that regard. But on the other hand, they rejected Christianity even with the aggressive missionary campaign in the area; with incentives of offering gifts by the Europeans, as well as maintaining physical presence among the locals into the late nineties in the 20th century.

4.2. IMPACT OF ISLAM ON TERA PEOPLE SOCIALLY

Without doubt, Islam has made tremendous impact in the life of Tera people, including their social lives. However, just like the case of their religious life, its

¹⁰⁸Interview with Kida Jauro, Haruna. Zambuk, 5th November, 2017.

¹⁰⁹Yamusa, Ahmadu. Gombe History Wokshop, p. 18.

penetration was very slow. Tera people began to live as Muslims after converting, but still wallow in the social activities of their pagan days. A good example of that is the drinking of alcohol. Alcohol drinking in the Tera communities was such a common place and a big part of Tera social family life. Each household would designate a cooking spot for the routine preparation of a local beer for one's own consumption or the entertainment of guest. This life style transcend gender and could start from early age. it was considered to be a norm to the Tera communities. Children simply grow into it through a regular family life.¹¹⁰

Another norm in the pre-Islamic Tera social life, was the mixing of women and men during ceremonies and in social gatherings; such as festivals and performance of marriage rites. In those events, men and women converged in one place and engaged in dancing shoulder to shoulder to the amusement of dignitaries and common men. These behaviours endured their pagan days and was passed on through social associations in events and festivities which were common scenes in Tera towns and villages.¹¹¹

In the case of alcohol, the practice lasted well into the late 1970s and relatively into the early 80s of the 20th century. Those that desist from engaging in alcohol drinking before then on the account of religion, i.e. being Muslims, may have done that on their individual accord. However, within the period mentioned, a community based concerted effort were launched to bring down the habit, and eventually stopped it. The Gwani and Kwadon traditions informed this researcher that; as the size of the Muslim population began to grow bigger with expanded engagement with nobilities from Gombe at the

¹¹⁰Interview with Aliyu, Alhasan Kwadon. Kwadon, 10th April, 2018.

¹¹¹Interview with Santurakin Kwadon, Maina, Adamu. Kwadon, 4th November 2017.

leadership level,¹¹² the habit of alcohol drinking became frowned at. This approach made the habit died naturally in most of the settlements. But the mixing of men and women in gatherings and ceremonies – dancing together, very much remain active far longer despite the efforts of the Tera communities. What they were able to achieve was to bring it to a low level.

Here, it will be safe to assume that it was Islam that brought these changes to the Tera social life. First, because of the growing size of the Muslim population which made the continued tolerance of those un-Islamic vices impossible to be maintained. And second, the return of the Tera men that travelled to other places to learn the Qur'an, who were then involved in the running of affairs in their respective communities. That too might have influenced the decision of the rulers to fight the habit. For it is to be expected that they had an experience of Islam elsewhere, which reflects better religious values than that which they returned to.

4.3. IMPACT OF ISLAM ON THE TERA PEOPLE CULTURALLY

This is one area that Islam has influenced the Tera people significantly. Majority of the interview accounts received by this researcher maintained that Tera people borrowed quite a significant number of cultural values from the Kanuri. Whereas on a close review, what they indeed borrowed were Islamic values, or at least Arabic culture received through Islam, as there were no solid report of Tera having engagements with

¹¹²Interview with Santurakin Kwadon, Maina, Adamu.Kwadon.&Yamusa, Ahmadu. GOMBE HISTORY WOKSHOP, p. 22. (The Sarkin kudu of Gombe was conferred on the Gwani Chief Alhaji Ibrahim Bello on 23rd December, 1973. A symbol of a strong recognition and engagement with Gombe Emirate council. The village chief of Kwadon that ruled through that period and was credited with controlling the menace of alcohol and Konom cultural practices; Kuji Abubakar (c.a. 1962 – 1992), also received his letter of appointment from the Emir of Gombe).

the Arabs through trade or other similar means to suggest borrowing those values in any other way. An instance of that are the Arabic words claimed to be deeply woven within Tera language. A good example of that is the name A'isha, which the Tera people pronounced as Aisa;¹¹³ perhaps just like the Kanuris. Even though A'isha is Arabic, but to the Muslims, it is very much an Islamic name, because we all come to know A'isha as the wife of the Prophet (SAW). The Kanuri being involved in the process may just be a vessel for the transfer of those Arabic words that came through Islam. There are many Arabic words used in the Tera language which may well have been secondarily borrowed through the Kanuri, as has been explained elsewhere in this work with examples, as was the case with other tribes in Nigeria.¹¹⁴

In the other areas of their culture, Tera people were known to make women work in the farms prior to the introduction of Islam. A detailed of how women took part in farm work is reported thus:

Men and women (among the Tera) have separate farms, but a man has the right to demand three days' work in every seven from his wife. During the time that she works on his farm, she receives her food from her husband's store, but at other times each supplies the corn for their own needs, though the woman cooks for both.¹¹⁵ (Bracket mine)

Again, Temple also added on other Tera cultures:

They are a pagan people, and during the principal religious feast of the year the large towns are closed to all outsiders.

Temple also mentioned a number of other Tera cultures that run contrary to Islam. Such as sharing the estate of a deceased equally between sons and daughters, sharing of estate between the children of brothers equally and claiming of widows by the chief as a right.

¹¹³ Yamusa, Ahmadu. Gombe History Workshop, p. 11.

¹¹⁴ Usman, Bukar. A History Of Biu, p. 95.

¹¹⁵ Temple, C. L. Notes On The Tribes, p. 351.

Evidently, this account was referring to their pre-Islamic days, as it indicates among others that women had feeding responsibilities. But with the coming of Islam all these has changed. Women were no longer made to work in the farms as a marriage responsibility. And from late 1970s to the early 80s of the last century, the practice completely stopped among Muslims. The annual feast mentioned in Temple's account also disappeared, probably much earlier. The introduction of Islam brought so many positive changes to the Tera people, particularly in the way women are viewed in the society.

CHARTER FIVE:

5.1 CONCLUSION

In the course of the present work, we have seen at least three accounts of origins of the Tera people – each of which bears a mark on the question of the introduction of Islam among them. First, it is without a doubt that the popular opinion among the Tera people is that they came from Yemen. The enormity of that claim had begun to attract the attention of some literatures that touched on some aspects of the subject; either when discussing on the area or the peoples that share ancestral claim with the Tera or the neighbourhood that they all now call home.

The other version linked the Tera to the Lake Chad region. This is mostly adopted by the early literary works on the area as well as those pushing for a linguistic explanation of the Tera identity that favoured this version. They furnish that debate by pointing to the classification of the Tera as a Chadic branch of Afro-Asiatic group of languages. So, among some of the early writing particularly the colonial notes, indications were made that Tera, along with other claimants' of the eastern origin within the territory of Gombe environ, all originated from the Chad region. The third is Ngazargamu. Ngazargamu is very much associated with the Chad when discussing the origin of Tera. The dispersal of Kanem Empire was said to have been what pushed the Tera into the habitation of the Chad region.

But in all our references, including the ones expressing certain reservations on one point of origin or the other, there appears no doubt that the Tera people were indeed immigrants. That fact is well established. Where the contention lies could perhaps be on the question of where exactly they might have come from. Even though the various

arguments in the written sources appear to lean more towards the Chad region, with a significant percentage considering the dispersal of Ngazargamu as the main factor for the massive convergence around Lake Chad shores, there was no identified resistance to the suggestion that Tera people were indeed there even among those suggesting some other places. However, there are of course, some questions that remained unanswered. One in particular that hasn't been dealt with, which is a key of the present exercise is the question of the Introduction of Islam to the Tera people.

The conclusions that we seem to be getting from the literatures that covered the subject, as well as others that touched a number of issues on the area are mostly vague on the matter. On one hand those critical of early presence of Islam among the Tera that suggest a timeframe beyond 19th century, simply thrust a submission that Tera people were pagans until that period. Of course there was no denying that they had practiced paganism. But that was not the question we are trying to address. Rather, we are trying to assess the fact of the claim within the Tera society which suggest an early contact with Islam; which with this exercise, we are burdened with the need to determine exactly when that first contact took place.

Of course some of the stories among the Tera people on the subject are too spurious for a plausible consideration. An example of that is the claim that Tera people migrated from Yemen with a copy of the “glorious Qur'an”.¹¹⁶ This may not sound as an ideal hint for a serious history. But as we have seen earlier in the detailed analysis of Professor Abdullahi Smith on a possible Yemeni connection with Kanem, the hypothesis being built is on their rulers, not the general populace, as the Tera community would

¹¹⁶Abba, Sani. *et al*, Gombe State, p. 22.

want to suggest on themselves.¹¹⁷ But astride to the Yemeni claim is the account maintaining that Tera people were in Kanem or most likely in Ngazargamu.

But there are some elements in the Tera folklore which could be relevant in helping to find a place for their story of origin. First the size and consistency of the claim within their community. It is without a doubt that the traditions in all their settlements – including amongst the non-Muslims – bears a mark of the belief that they migrated to their settlements as Muslims with a copy of the Qur'an. Now, considering the size of this consistency, in the face of how widespread the many Tera communities have been from their time under Biu territory up to the period of their arrival to the area around Gombe, with some of the groups degenerating into subdivision of the original groups, there is a relative sense of authenticity as to what may have been the motivation for the claim. If religious pride was to be considered for that tendency among the Muslims, given that they have embrace Islam now in large numbers, the Christian community cannot be considered to share that motive.

Again, what is worth noting here is that, there is somewhat corroboration of that line in some writings. Literatures available to us on the subject kept reminding us that Tera people at some stage had adopted the Jukun *Tsafî*. We were equally made to understand that the Jukun Kingdom had established its influence to cover the territory within which the settlements of the Tera people came to be set, i.e. the Bima hill axis. And, even among the few exceptions that did not mention Jukun *Tsafî* as a particular pagan practice adopted by the Tera, there was no denial that the *Tsafî* religion was something that they met in their currents settlements. Thus impliedly suggesting that Tera

¹¹⁷ Smith, Abdullahi. A Little New Light.p.38.

were practicing something else other than paganism before their contact with the Jukun; most likely, because of their Kanuri affinity, Islam.

We may not know for certain how the body of the Tera immigrants who dispersed into various groups and spread across settlements; from Biu region down to Gombe area, came to maintain constantly the claim of arriving from the east as Muslims. However, we may see a faint echo of their early contact with Islam in the light of their Kanuri connection. The Kanuri Kanem Kingdom, which the Tera were associated with, was known to be a centre for Islamic learning and culture. And, both in Ngazargamu and subsequently in the Chad area, which the Tera were heavily linked with, Islam was reported to have been well established there around 1500 C.E.¹¹⁸ In either case, whether Tera were in Ngazargamu or perhaps their most least likeliest distance in the journey of origin stopped at the shores of Lake Chad, the possibility of having a first contact with Islam as well as adopting the idea of bearing pride of having Islamic identity may have emanated from there.

Incidentally, the Jukun Empire (ca 1250 – 1800), whose influence they met on reaching Gombe area and adopted their religion, was established in the mid-13th century; some two centuries before Ngazargamu was even built (ca 1487 C.E.). And, by a more acceptable estimates, the Jukun hegemony on Tera people most likely began around 1650 – 1680 C.E.¹¹⁹ Going by the account of the bracketed period within which the Jukun dominance took effect on the religious lives of the Tera people and the reported time which Ngazargamu was first built – stretching to the period it enjoyed the peak of Islam;

¹¹⁸ Usman, Bukar. A History of Biu, p. 49.

¹¹⁹ Usman, Bukar. A History of Biu, p. 53.

given that the Tera people without a doubt believe to have been there, it would become clear that, Tera people's contact with Islam far preceeded their adaptation of Jukun *Tsafɪ*.

However, even if we are to go by the opinion of those suggesting limiting the search for the Tera origin to the Chad region, we still have to open the possibility that they have had a taste of Islam there. This is because, their presence in the Chad is suggested to have taken place at a period much earlier before they moved to Gombe region and fell under the dominance of the Jukun, or perhaps while within each other's reach on transit. Furthermore, Chad was part of the Kanem-Borno Empire that thrived in Islamic learning and culture during that period.¹²⁰ In either case, as we have seen earlier, the evidence of the Kanuri influence is so glaring in the Tera culture to serve as a proof.

But the problem that's inevitable in this work is how to explain the level of the decline of Islam amongst the Tera at the beginning of the 19th century - in the face of their supposed presence in Ngazargamu and Chad region within the golden period of Islam in those areas. For at the birth of the Bubayero Jihad, all the Tera settlements within Gombe environs, were not Muslims. Even the reported contact that took place between Bubayeros and Gwani, happened while they were still pagans. Part of the reason why Gwani couldn't come down from the hill at that time was that, Mishirkuna was warned by Kwairanga that the Jihad will be obliged to engage them once they come down.

Perhaps within the limit of the present essay, the most likely explanation of all these could be obtained by accepting that the possible scale of the Muslims among them at the time of the migration was very low. And, even among the remaining Muslims, their

¹²⁰ Usman, Bukar. A History of Biu, p. 49.

devotion had suffered a serious decline and began to fade. On reaching the Biu region, where the Jukun influence was equally felt, the effect of the *Tsqfi* may have taken its toll in their religious lives there and finished it off. So, by the time they reached Gombe territory, there were virtually no Muslims among them. As such, they were only left with the tale of the legend of once being Muslims in the past. Hence the perpetuation of a folklore among all the Tera communities that they were Muslims migrants from the east.

In any case, even with the paucity of recorded details on the subject, we have had a significant glimpse of an event on the Tera connection with Islam. And, whether they were Muslims from as early as they want to claim or not, Islam is the most widely accepted religion amongst them today.

Certainly, from the relatively recent period to the present days, Tera communities have seen so many changes in the growth of Islam. The Sufi orders of Qadiriyya and Tijjaniyya had brought about growth in the development of Islam within the many Tera communities and the Izala group eventually came and added on that giant stride. The result is, Islam became the dominant religion among them. Together, they began to lay the foundation for Islamic scholarship among the Tera, which is still growing.

5.2 RECOMMENDATION

In the course of this research, it is discovered that there are untapped areas on the history of Tera people in general and, on their Islamic history in particular, whicheludes and to some extent, transcend the scope of the present work. A study in the origin of Islam among the Tera people was left opened for so long that much is still to be learn, while on the other hand, the sources are fast fading unattended. It is only hoped that effort will be dedicated toward carrying further research on the subject so as to keep track of what could be saved. This researcher, having seen what is to be seen, is of the strong belief that, bydoing so, fascinating information couldbe learn and saved for future generation and more research.

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