

Voices of Harmony: Exploring Peace and National Unity in Nigerian Arabic Literature

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Abstract

Since the old age, Literature as a mirror of society and its development often explores themes of morality, compassion, unity and peaceful coexistence in human society. Through poems and proses, literature can convey ethical principles that promote and educate peaceful coexistence, respect for others, and harmonious social relationships. Using descriptive method, this paper attempt to explore the contributions of Arabic Literature of Nigerian Authorship in promoting national integration, harmony and peaceful co-existence among Nigerian citizen with diverse ethnics and constituencies; literary texts (Poetry) were selected in the works of three literary icons. This study examines how Nigerian-authored Arabic literature fosters unity, harmony, and peaceful coexistence in Nigeria's diverse socio-political landscape. It highlights the contributions of prominent Arabic literary figures, who are Muslims and products of rigorous Arabic and Islamic scholarship. Through their works, they promote ideals of social cohesion and mutual understanding. Their literary contributions serve as a bridge for fostering peace and unity in the nation.. The results of the study reveals that many literary scholars have contributed, through their literary productions, to the promotion of national integration, harmony and peaceful co-existence among the people who speak a multitude of languages and have array of cultural diversities and practices.

Keywords: Arabic, Literature, harmony, peaceful co-existence, Nigeria

الملخص

كان الأدب مرآةً تعكس المجتمع وتطوره من قديم زمان، حيث يستكشف موضوعات الأخلاق، والتعاطف، والوحدة، والتعايش السلمي في المجتمعات البشرية. فمن خلال الشعر والنثر، يستطيع الأدب أن ينقل المبادئ الأخلاقية التي تعزز ثقافة التعايش السلمي، واحترام

الآخرين، وبناء علاقات اجتماعية متناغمة. يعتمد هذا البحث على المنهج الوصفي لاستكشاف إسهامات الأدب العربي النيجيري في تعزيز الاندماج الوطني، والوئام، والتعايش السلمي بين المواطنين النيجيريين بمختلف أعراقهم وانتماءاتهم. وقد تم اختيار نصوص أدبية (شعرية) من أعمال ثلاثة رموز أدبية بارزة. وتتناول الدراسة كيف ساهم الأدب العربي النيجيري في ترسيخ قيم الوحدة والانسجام والتعايش السلمي في المشهد الاجتماعي والسياسي المتنوع لنيجيريا. كما أنها تسلط الضوء على إسهامات شخصيات أدبية بارزة، وهم مسلمون نحلوا من معين الدراسات العربية والإسلامية العريقة. فمن خلال مؤلفاتهم، يروجون لمثل التماسك الاجتماعي والتفاهم المتبادل، حيث تشكل إسهاماتهم الأدبية جسراً لتعزيز السلام والوحدة في الوطن. وتوصلت نتائج الدراسة أن العديد من الأدباء قد أسهموا، من خلال إنتاجهم الأدبية، في تعزيز التكامل الوطني والوئام والتعايش السلمي بين فئات المجتمع الناطقة بلغات متعددة والمتنوعة في ثقافتها وممارساتها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العربية، الأدب، الوئام، التعايش السلمي، نيجيريا.

Introduction

Conflicts and unrest in human society has displayed and presented Nigeria, a greatly divided country, as one of communities deprived of harmony and co-existence. Between 1967 and 1970, only a few years after gaining independence from Britain (in 1960), the country was engulfed in a bloody civil war; ethnic group conflicts among Northern, western and eastern regions of the country, terrorist and bandit unrests, Boko-haram phenomenon is unveiled to the world. Indeed, lack of harmony and integration in the society had results to grave consequences for the wellbeing, orderly growth, and development, stable democratic government, unity and survival of the nation.¹ The Nigerian government and people from different dimensions and perspectives have done and still doing all they can to prevent the tensions and 'civil disturbances' which frequently erupt, or have become endemic.

Since the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the world has experienced various forms of insecurity, unrest, violence, and terrorism, notably intensifying after the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States. These events have disrupted peace and harmony

¹ Enaruna Edosa, "National Integration, Citizenship, Political Participation and Democratic Stability in Nigeria," *International Journal of Arts and Humanities (IJAH)* 3, no. 3 (2014): 61-62.

globally, leading to a critical need for strategies that promote peaceful coexistence. Literature, as a reflection of human life and society, plays a vital role in fostering such harmony. Through its narratives, literature not only mirrors societal issues but also serves as a catalyst for positive change by encouraging empathy, understanding, and dialogue.

The fact that literature is a reflection of the society has been widely acknowledged and endorsed. Literature reflects the society and its changes, its good values and its ills. In its corrective function, literature mirrors the ills of the society with a view and motive to making the society aware its unbearable situations and make necessary measures. It also projects the virtues or good values in the society for people to emulate. Literature, an imitation of human thoughts and actions, often presents a picture of what people think, say and value in the society.²

It is great delight that Literature, especially the products of Arabic literature of Nigerian authorship in the face of the increasingly monumental crisis of insecurity, sectarian violence, ethnic violence, political instability and threats of disintegration, have contributed massively and immeasurably to the peacebuilding and enlightenment of the people on the importance of harmony, unity and societal integration. Arabic literature, like other indigenous literary productions in Nigeria, with its essential features and characters, its informing ideologies and politics, and its production sociology. In Arabic literature of Nigerian authorship, many are stories designed to portray human life and action and reaction, the writers convey valuable messages for disseminating information and enlightenment. They address through their literary productions attitudes, morale and values of the society; writers of literature transport the real-life events in their society into fiction and present it to the society as a mirror the situations and the feelings of people. Their literature (poems and proses) is not only a reflection of the society but also serves as a corrective mirror in which members of the society adjust for positive change.

This study critically examines selected works of Nigerian Arabic literature to illustrate how the literary contributions of distinguished Arabic and Islamic scholars foster societal integration and harmony. Similar to renowned Arabic poets such as ʿĀfī Ibrāhīm of Egypt—whose works emphasize social reform, national unity, and

² Roshni Duhan, "The Relationship between Literature and Society," *Language in India* 15, no. 4 (2015): 192.

ethical values. Nigerian Arabic poets have played a significant role in promoting peace and coexistence.³ This study analyzes literary texts from contemporary Nigerian Arabic poets, including Isa Alabi, Barrister Adam Usman, and Musa Ali Baba, whose works reflect Islamic teachings on peace and social cohesion. Through a close reading of their poetry, the research highlights the enduring influence of Arabic literature in shaping harmonious societies within Nigeria's diverse socio-political landscape.

Literature Review

Since the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the world has experienced various forms of insecurity, unrest, violence, and terrorism, notably intensifying after the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States. These events have disrupted global peace and harmony, necessitating the search for strategies that promote peaceful coexistence. Literature, as a reflection of human life and society, plays a crucial role in fostering harmony. Through its narratives, literature not only mirrors societal issues but also serves as a catalyst for positive change by encouraging empathy, understanding, and dialogue.

Recent studies underscore literature's capacity to promote peace and social cohesion, highlights how literary works address social inequalities and advocate for peace through awareness and activism. Examining notable works such as Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Malala Yousafzai's *I Am Malala*, the study illustrates how literature influences public opinion and fosters greater awareness, ultimately contributing to social cohesion.⁴

Furthermore, Sekibo and Iroye explore the role of peace education in post-conflict societies, highlighting how educational initiatives empower individuals and foster a culture of non-violence. Their findings suggest that integrating peace education into curricula can address the root causes of conflict and promote reconciliation.⁵

A related study by, titled *Committed Literature as an Instrument for Youth Mobilization and Peacebuilding in Tioland, Nigeria*, discusses

³ M. M. Badawi, *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

⁴ A. Bhatti, "Literature as a Catalyst for Peace and Social Cohesion," *Spinetimes*.pk, 2024, accessed [Spinetimes.pk].

⁵ G. T. Sekibo and S. Iroye, "Exploring Peace Education in a Post-Conflict Society: Challenges and Opportunities," *Kampala Journals*, 2024, accessed [Kampala Journals].

the role of literature in awakening social sensitivity toward societal issues and promoting peace. Published in the *African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research*, this study emphasizes that committed literature demystifies societal myths and enhances social consciousness, thereby mobilizing youth toward sustainable peacebuilding in regions like Tivland, Nigeria.⁶

In their submission, literature is the mirror to the society. The social problems such as, political, economic, socio-political, and socio-economic are depicted by literary works from time to time. Literature is inclusive in nature. The study claimed that nearly all human sciences find themselves reflected in Literature. Indeed apart from various social problems, Literature also reveals the intricate fabric and inner conflicts. Literature is an effective instrument of conflict resolution and peace instalment.⁷

Yunusa Muhammad Jamiu, in his study “Integration in Hamid Ibraheem al-Hijry’s Ma’satul- hub (The Tragedy of Love)” addressed the history of Arabic literature in the Northern Nigeria and its impacts in understanding among the heterogeneous ethnic groups in the region. Although Arabic suffered considerable neglect with the coming of colonialist who supplanted Arabic with their western education, Arabic regained its vibrancy in Nigeria after indolence. Writing literary expressions in Arabic therefore become a source of integration, unity and harmony among the indigenous people especially in the northern Nigeria.⁸

Collectively, these studies affirm that literature and educational initiatives are instrumental in fostering peace, harmony, and social cohesion. By addressing societal inequalities, advocating unity, and promoting peace education, literature serves as a transformative force in mitigating conflict and building more harmonious societies.

⁶ J. N. Allam, “Committed Literature as an Instrument for Youth Mobilization and Peacebuilding in Tivland, Nigeria,” *African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research*, 2023, accessed [Afropolitan Journals].

⁷ Aazra Nuh and Ms. Gennia Nuh, “The Pursuit of Peace through Literature,” *Asian Journal of Social Science and Management Technology* 5, no. 4 (July-August 2023): 180-185.

⁸ Yunusa Muhammad Jamiu, “Integration in Hamid Ibraheem al-Hijry’s Ma’satul-hub,” in *Literature, Integration and Harmony in Northern Nigeria*, ed. Hamzat I. AbdulRaheem and Saeedat B. Aliyu (Kwara State University Press, 2017).

Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive research method to examine the contributions of Arabic literature by Nigerian authors in fostering national integration, harmony, and peaceful coexistence. The analysis focuses on selected literary texts that reflect themes of unity and peace from the Northern and South-Western regions of Nigeria, authored by exceptional Arabic-Muslim scholars. Qualitative content analysis is utilized to interpret the messages conveyed in these works. Relevant scholarly sources and contextual historical perspectives provide a solid foundation for the discussion. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how Nigerian Arabic literature promotes social cohesion.

Analysis and Findings

Literature and Societal Cohesion

The power of literature to say everything has become obvious and cannot be underestimated in human society, literature having the potential to create or reveal alternative realities. Literature either poem or prose has the ability to offer to society a possibility of self-reflection; it possesses the ability to considerably contribute to the joy of life. It creates and forges harmonious and peaceful society.

Arabic language and literature over a millennium has addressed the importance of peaceful co-existence and harmony and contributed to the building and integration of human society among numerous different peoples of tribal diversity. **Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā** (born c. 520—died c. 609) was one of the greatest of the Arab poets of pre-Islamic times, best known for his long ode in the *Muṣallaqāt* collection. A man of wisdom, Zuhayr's poem in *Al-Muṣallaqāt* praises the men who brought peace between the clans of ʿAbs and Dhubyān. In the poem, war is compared to a millstone that grinds those who set it moving, and the poet speaks as one who from a long life has learned humankind's need for morality.. Zohayr ibn Abi Sulma) is known as a wise poet as well as a peacemaker. He produced a sort of poetry that is distinguished with superiority. A prolific poet who contributed to making peace within the warring tribes utilizing an expressive Arabic classical language. An integrative contribution that upholds the legacy

of the Arab people.⁹

وَمَا هُوَ عَنْهَا بِالْحَدِيثِ الْمَرْجَمِ	مَا الْحَرْبُ إِلَّا مَا عَلِمْتُمْ وَذُقْتُمْ
وَتَضْرِبُ إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمُوهَا فَتَضْرِبُ	مَتَى تَبْعَتْوَهَا تَبْعَتْوَهَا دَمِيمَةً
وَتَلْفَحُ كِشَافاً ثُمَّ تَنْشِجُ فَتَنْشِجُ	فَتَعْرُكُكُمْ عَرَكَ الرَّحَى بِنِفَالِهَا
كَأَحْمَرِ عَادٍ ثُمَّ تَرْضِعُ فَتَقْطِمْ	فَتَنْشِجُ لَكُمْ غِلْمَانَ أَشْأَمَ كُلُّهُمْ
فَرَى بِالْعِرَاقِ مِنْ فَيْفِيزٍ وَدِرْهَمِ	فَتُعْلِلُ لَكُمْ مَا لَا تُعْلِلُ لِأَهْلِهَا

Meaning

War is nothing but what you know and have tasted,
 And it is not a tale adorned with fantasy.
 Whenever you stir it up, you stir it up as something disgraceful,
 It harms you if you provoke it, and then it ignites.
 It grinds you like a millstone grinds grain with its weight,
 And it gives birth to offspring, then bears twins.
 It gives you sons, all of them cursed,
 Like the red-haired tribe of ʿĀd, and then it nurses them and weans them.
 It burdens you with what it does not burden its own people,
 With provisions in Iraq, measured by the bushel and the dirham.

This poem reflects the destructive nature of war, emphasizing its inevitability once it begins, the suffering it causes, and the cursed legacy it leaves behind. It portrays how war engulfs everything in its path, reducing vibrant communities to ruins and displacing countless individuals. The verses underscore the perpetual cycle of pain and loss that war perpetuates, warning of the enduring scars left on both the land and the hearts of those affected. Through its vivid imagery, the poem serves as a powerful reminder of the high cost of conflict and the urgent need for peace and reconciliation. In his golden poems, Al-mu'allaqat, Zuhayr does not only condemn war but he also plays the role of an arbitrator, showing his detachment from the problem but at the same time enforcing the lessons of conduct and morality, his poetry wherein he preaches forgiveness, peace between tribes and considers war as ignominy clearly reflects his great personality and

⁹ Yahya Saleh Hasan Dahami, "Zohayr ibn Abi Solma: The Man of Wisdom and Peacemaking," *International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research* 1, no. 1 (January-February 2019): 71-84.

piousness. Indeed, his poetry with its original theme is distant from the fiery bellicose of his colleagues in his era.¹⁰

Peace in Nigerian Arabic Literary Writings

Reading from literary writings of the Nigerian Arabic poetry shows that there are diverse thematic literary works produced and presented by Nigerian poets from different perspectives, differing in scope and context. Out of the poetic writings, criticising social unrests and violence have been one of the prominent and dominant trends in the genres of Arabic poetry. The development that can be traced to the fact that most Nigerian artists are more familiar with the Classical Arabic Literature with they normally studied as a subject in the Islamic Civilization. Since Arabic poetry of Nigeria Authorship is the artistic depiction of the real life of the society, it is therefore natural that it reflects all the various influential phenomena and occurrences in the environment. The political and social situations and complete instability in the country are among the most prominent factors that influence the growth and development and inject the Nigerian literary writers both the North and Yoruba land to express their feelings and thoughts on the unrest situations in the society. Indeed, Writers, especially Arabic writers in Nigeria have been able to demonstrate the events and occurrences in the society by casting them in narrative form. Some writers, in their literary texts, present human conflicts, conflict, resolution, and peacebuilding in their literary productions and expressions. They reveal the impacts of violence and violence on the people and the society. Their literary works also grant readers and researchers access to the ethical and moral dilemmas that people face in the society.

Isa Abubakar Alabi

Isa Abubakar Alabi is one of the finest Arabic-language poets in Arabic literary movement in Yoruba land especially and in Nigeria at large. An icon of modern Arabic poetry, he has produced distinctive poetry widely considered the most prominent in Nigeria through which, he was honoured as Prince (leader) of non-Arab poets in Saudi Arabia.

¹⁰ Marisa Farrugia, "War and Peace in Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry," *Humanities Journal of the Faculty of Arts (University of Malta)*, 2003, 143-153.

As a wonderful and talented poet, Isa Alabi has produced different verses of poems in different events and contents; he proved himself capable of composing long epic poems and short poems of dynamic joy and appearance. Isa's poetic endowment is evident in his poetry collections "Al-Subaaiyyaat" and "Al-Riyaadh" which include several deceptive and educative poems composed in different occasions and events. Indeed, Isa Alabi, a prolific poet with a fine command of rhyme is not only a Nigerian poet, his literary works has gained attentions of scholars and students in the higher institution both home and abroad even in the Arab world.

One of the aspects of tragedy in Nigerian Arabic poetry is the expression of regret over the lack of security and stability. Insecurity is one of the worst epidemics that the Nigeria suffers from. Indeed, many countries all over the world are not exempted from the epidemic. Literature, especially Arabic poetry is the mirror of human society; the Nigerian poets have addressed and expressed the unrests and violence that engulf the society. Indeed, issue of Boko-haram terrorism has been explicit major focus of some Arabic poets in Nigeria; they harshly criticise the social situation, which results to Nigerian people suffering.

Verses of poem, titled "The Terrorists," is one of exceptional poems written by the poet Isa Alabi Abubakar in his diwan "Assubaa'iyyaat," it one of the collections and literary works produced by Isa Abubakar and one of the masterpieces of contemporary poetry in Nigerian Arabic literature. Distinguished by its integration, harmony, and special poetic aesthetics, the poet's idea and position against the process of violence, terrorism, and brutal abuse of humanity has clearly expressed., e says:¹¹

كيف تحقيق ما يرومون بالإر	هاب أو هدم سور أمن البلاد
إن ما لا ينال بالسلم قد	يصعب إحاراه بغارات عاد
أي شيء يا قوم أغلى من	النفس التي يزهقونها بفساد؟
أي دين دعا إلى العنف	والتمثيل بالأبرياء لنيل المراد؟
قاتل الله من يشجع	في كل مكان تشدد الأوغاد
إن إرهابهم يفيد عد	و الله من قبل ضيره للعباد

¹¹ Isa Alabi Abubakar, Assubaa'iyyaat (Osun-Nigeria: Nigerian Centre for Arabic Research [al-Markaz al-Nijiri lil-Bu'uth al-Arabiyyah], 2008), 5.

Meaning

How can they achieve what they desire through terror
 Or by demolishing the walls of the nation's security?
 What cannot be gained through peace
 Becomes even harder to seize with the raids of destruction.
 What is more precious, O people, than the soul
 They destroy with corruption?
 What religion calls for violence and
 The mutilation of innocents to achieve one's goals?
 May God fight those who encourage
 The extremism of wicked people everywhere.
 Their terrorism benefits the enemy of God
 Before it harms His servants.

These verses denounce terrorism and extremism, questioning the logic and morality behind using violence to achieve objectives and highlighting the greater harm it causes, both to people and in serving the enemies of peace and humanity. They also challenge the misguided beliefs that justify such acts, calling for a reassessment of values that lead to such destructive behaviors. The poet's condemnation emphasizes the need for a return to principles of justice and compassion as a means to truly resolve conflicts and build a peaceful society.

In the abovementioned verses, the poet expresses his feelings against the unfortunate events and painful calamities whose scourges took over the world, the tragedy that led to the shedding of innocent blood and the displacement of people from their homelands. The verses of the poems present to the readers the reality of terrorists and their heinous acts, which include the threat to use violence and intimidation to achieve goals and objectives which eventually resulting to bloodshed and destruction of societal systems. The poet affirms that the teachings of all divine religions completely reject violence and terrorism. He then calls on individuals to adhere to that may lead to security and peace. What is not achievable through peace is difficult to achieve through violence and terrorism. He also called for peaceful coexistence. In many occasions, terrorism as the use extraordinary violence to achieve political, religious, or social goals, according to some analysts, is been used by many politicians to realise their goals and ideologies and as symbol of gaining the sympathy of the people to remain supportive to their government or to eliminate those who oppose their interests. Our literary icon, Isa Alabi takes a different and peaceful position; he sees terrorism in all forms as destruction that only brings misery and

loss of lives and properties to society.¹²

Apart from addressing the conflict and its effects on the society, verses are also found in Alabi's literary produces presenting policy, encouragement and recommendations to the peacebuilding agents, in terms of what needs to be done to arrest the cycle of violence that has taken root in the state. What can be as symbol of sincerity of the sentiment of in Isa Alabi's love for conflict resolution in his literary works and literary collections "al-Riyadh", the poet says:¹³

كن شجاعا وحازما مقداما	أيهذا الذي يحب السلاما
ل تجد جهدنا علينا لزاما	فإذا ما قرأت سيرة أبطا
هو في الحرب قد أقام نظاما	أين (نابليون) قائد جيش
اسمه ضيغما يخيف أعلاما	ثم ذاك القوي (هتلر) أضحي

Meaning

O you who loves peace,
Be courageous, determined, and bold.
When you read the biographies of heroes,
You will find that their efforts are an obligation upon us.
Where is Napoleon, the commander of an army,
Who established order in war?
And then the powerful Hitler,
Whose name became a lion that terrifies nations.

These verses encourage bravery and determination, urging individuals to emulate the courage and resolve demonstrated by historical figures like Napoleon and Hitler, who, despite their complex legacies, are recognized for their military prowess and the fear they commanded on the battlefield. The invocation of these figures serves to inspire a sense of boldness and strategic thinking in the face of challenges, suggesting that greatness often requires the willingness to confront adversity head-on. However, the mention of such leaders

¹² Muhammad Assammak, *Al-Irhaab wa al-'Unuf Assiyaasiy* (Beirut: Daar Annafaais, 1992), 3-5.

¹³ Isa Alabi Abubakar, *Diwan "Al-Riyadh"* (Ilorin: Alabi Publishing Centre, 2005), 102-103.

also carries a controversial connotation, reminding us that the pursuit of power and influence must be tempered by moral considerations and the impact of one's actions on humanity. This duality highlights the delicate balance between ambition and ethical responsibility in the quest for leadership and greatness.

The poet points out that courage and persistence is the best weapon that man can use in the present and future eras, in order to rise to the highest level. He called on the Nigerian troops who serve in peacekeeping missions by citing some past heroes who have successfully contributed to the global efforts to secure peace and progress across the world. Isa Alabi then begins to narrate the history of the past heroes who rose to the highest position of army commander among the people of the West, such as (Napoleon) and (Hitler).

By doing so, he wants to encourage the audience to be a passionate hero that history will record with golden ink, for the sake of diligence, patience, and integrity for the sake of knowledge. Alabi, with his unique and unparalleled poetic genius, confronts acts of violence by politicians and rulers. He feels with sincere emotion the instability that people are experiencing result to their plotting and planning to achieve their political aspirations. Although it is truth that as long as there has been life, war has been a part of it; however for human society to be conducive for life, there is need to wage war even though the consequences often breed nothing but misery. Isa Abubakar believes that, when a person is called to defend his community, or protect other hopeless, oppressed and defenseless people, it is the responsibility of people to fight to uphold justice.

Adam Usman (Barrister)

Among Nigerian contemporary Arabic poets who extend their genres to touch present-day issues is Barrister Adam Usman. The prolific literary icon, through his variety of literary works has addressed many societal issues, problems and developments. Born in 1957 in the Northern part of Nigeria, Barrister Adam Usman, the poet has been found to address both local and International issues and occurrences in his Arabic poetry and literary writings. Since 2001, ethno-religious violence and conflict in Plateau State has increased in frequency and intensity; the community violence that led the destructions and killings. Although, the first significant outbreak of violence occurred in 1994 which eventually led to military intervention

and concession to local demands. Other major incidences of sectional violence erupted in various parts of the state in 2001, 2004, 2008 and 2010 with other minor skirmishes reported".¹⁴

During the brutal violence, especially some Arabic poets of Nigeria origin produced many literary texts where they expressed feelings towards the destructive violence that claimed thousands of lives. Adam Othman's Arabic poem, "Remembrance of the Genocide in Plateau State", can be cited as example of Arabic literary expression on political situation, lack of security and stability rooted from the violent campaign carried out by Christians against Muslims in the year 2024. In the literary text, the writer describes the violence as religious- political crisis that causes of insecurity and stability among the citizens, violence that erupted because of the injustice of the ruling party at the time, which led to bitter genocide against innocent people; the minority Muslims were forced to seek refuge and migrate to neighboring countries. He began the poem by showing sorrow and regret towards the Muslims that experienced that terrible disaster, which led some of the population to migrate to the horizons to escape their lives from that catastrophic calamity. The poet describes his deep sadness and gravity.¹⁵

إن جل حطب فما للعين إنكار	شدوا الرجال لظعن لا مرد له
حيث المباني للفح النار تنهار	تغادر القافلات الحي مسرعة
تشاخصت طور الخوف أبصار	والحرب تطحن والأرواح سائلة
على نزوحهم ليل وأنهمار	وهل لعودتهم يوم وقد ولجت
حياتنا أنما صوم وإفطار	لا بأس والدهر آت بعد مذهبه
خلوا الديار على أنقاضها النار	قاسوا الشدائد دبا عن مواطنهم

Meaning

Prepare to depart for a journey with no return,
When the wood is ablaze, what tears can the eyes deny?

¹⁴ Oluwafunmilayo J. Para-Mallam, Finding Durable Peace in Plateau (National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, Nigeria, 2011).

¹⁵ Muhammad Salisu Ya'qub, "Qasidah Dhikra al-Ibaadat al-Jamaa'iyah fi Wilayat Plato," *Majalah al-Mi'yaar International Journal of Arabic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2015): 88-97.

The caravans leave the camp in haste,
As the buildings collapse under the scorching fire.
War grinds on, and souls are spilled,
Eyes fixed in terror, transfixed by fear.
Is there a day of return when night and day
have enveloped their exodus?
No matter, for time will pass after its course,
Our lives are but fasting and breaking the fast.
They endured hardships, crawling away from their homes
Leaving behind their abodes in ruins, consumed by fire.

These verses vividly depict the profound despair and destruction brought about by war, capturing the sense of irreversible loss as families are forced to flee their homes, leaving behind everything they once knew. The imagery of collapsing buildings and fleeing caravans underscores the devastation and the inevitability of departure, where survival becomes the only choice amidst the chaos. Yet, amid this overwhelming despair, there remains a glimmer of hope—the belief that life, despite its hardships, endures and that time will eventually bring some form of renewal. This hope reflects the resilience of the human spirit, which, even in the darkest times, clings to the possibility of a better future. The verses remind us that while war may tear apart lives and communities, it cannot entirely extinguish the enduring hope that sustains those who suffer through its horrors.

The above verses are examples of the contributions from literary scholars and writers of diverse background, which provides their insights and feelings on the conflict in Plateau state of Nigeria in the 2004 violent conflicts among diverse ethno-religious communities which led to the wanton destruction of lives, livelihoods and property. In his own poetic contributions, Adam Othman criticises the practice of terrorists and their violence to achieve their goals. The verses of the poem express the “impunity with which such criminal acts are committed with no recourse to the due process of the law and subsequent justice for victims and survivors of violence”.¹⁶ The violence, which was as waste and a flagrant violation of basic human rights, dismantling the cohesion of societal systems. The destructive conflict, which was a serious threat to the relations of cooperation between members of society and peoples, coexistence between people,

¹⁶ Oluwafunmilayo J. Para-Mallam, *Finding Durable Peace in Plateau* (National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, Nigeria, 2011).

and peace and security at the national and global levels.

Musa Ali Baba, a young Nigerian Arabic poet also addresses some societal phenomena. Born in 1981 in Lagos State, Musa in his own poetic presentations and writings criticises Bok-haram terrorists group that have widely contributed to instability, violence and unrests in the Northern Nigeria. The incessant conflicts that have proved very difficult to manage; the conflicts have continued to bedevil the society with no recognition for the dignity and value of human beings. Many innocents and civilians were have been killed

يزدادُ شرِّكم فيه بلا عددا!	”بَوَكُو حَرَامٌ“ لِمُ الْإِرْهَابُ فِي بِلْدِي؟
تَحَرَّرُونَ بِهِ السُّكَّانَ مِنْ كَبْدٍ؟	يَسْعَى بِخَوْفٍ شَدِيدٍ كُلُّنَا، فَمَتَى
إِهْلَاكَ قَوْمٍ، لِمَاذَا يَا ذَوِي الْعَتْدِ؟	تَرْمُونَ قَنْبَلَةً فِي كُلِّ عَاصِمَةٍ
تَرْدِي الْمَصَابَ بِبَلَا شَكٍّ وَلَا عَضْدٍ	وَبِنَدَقِيَّةٍ مِنْ غَيْرِ الْمَرَا مَرَجًّا
مَنْكُمُ بِفَتْنَتِكُمْ مِنْ سُوءٍ مَعْتَقِدٍ!	كَمْ مِنْ بِيوتِ أَتَاهَا الْحُزْنُ وَالصَّبْرُ

Meaning

“Boko Haram,” why does terrorism in my country
 Increase your evil without measure?
 We all live in great fear, so when
 will you free the people from their suffering?
 You throw bombs in every capital,
 destroying people— why, O people of force?
 And with a rifle, without hesitation or mercy,
 You strike the afflicted with certainty and without support.
 How many homes have been filled with sorrow and harm
 by your sedition and your misguided beliefs?

The verses express profound anguish and condemnation of the violence and terror inflicted by Boko Haram, portraying the devastating impact their actions have on society. The poet captures the escalating sense of dread and helplessness felt by the people as the group’s brutal activities continue unchecked, leaving a trail of fear, destruction, and deep sorrow. The imagery used in the verses highlights the indiscriminate nature of Boko Haram’s violence, where bombs are thrown in every capital, and rifles are fired without mercy or hesitation. This reflects the chaos and instability brought about by

the group, disrupting the peace and security that once characterized these communities. The mention of homes, filled with sorrow and harm, underscores the personal and communal tragedies caused by the group's misguided beliefs. Families are torn apart, and entire communities are plunged into despair. The reference to home also implies children and mothers, which further intensifies the emotional weight of the verses, showing how the future of the next generation is being stolen, and the hope of the present generation is fading. The destruction of peaceful villages and the death of dreams illustrate the long-term consequences of Boko Haram's terror, where not only lives are lost, but the very fabric of society is being unraveled.

Discussion

It is apparent majority of Nigerian Arabic poets such Isa Abubakar Alabi, Usman, Musa Ali Baba and others, in their literary works, have dealt explicitly societal issues in the areas of social and poetical norms of the time. The form and content of their literary writings were not just presented in order to please their audience but to address political and social and ethno-religious unrests, conflicts, violence that have become the order of the day. Like Arab poets, many Nigerian Arabic poets expressed their ideas of peace symbolically. In other words, they conveyed the message of peace through another medium without infringing upon the fashionable principles of the era. Many of their poetic writings address and criticise social unrests and violence that have been one of the prominent and dominant trends in the genres of Arabic poetry. The contents of their works are overwhelmed with call for national integration, harmony and peaceful co-existence. This has to their works been considered for academic studies and research throughout Nigerian Universities and abroad. Study of Arabic poetry of Nigeria shows that there been produced and presented by Nigerian poets from different perspectives, differing in scope and context. Out of the poetic writings, criticising social unrests and violence have been one of the prominent and dominant trends in the genres of Arabic poetry

Conclusion

This study has examined the themes of integration, harmony, peace, and the rejection of conflict, violence, and terrorism in the poetry of selected Nigerian Arabic writers. These poets, recognized as literary

icons, have significantly contributed to Arabic literature in Nigeria, providing valuable resources for students and scholars. The findings reveal that the majority of these poets are highly skilled in poetic composition, demonstrating a profound mastery of rhyme, rhythm, and linguistic expression. Through their works, they effectively articulate their perspectives on societal transformations and contemporary challenges. Their poetry serves not only as a medium for artistic expression but also as a tool for promoting peace, unity, and social cohesion. By addressing critical issues such as ethno-religious violence, conflicts, and terrorism, Nigerian Arabic poets have actively engaged in fostering dialogue and advocating for a more harmonious society.

Recommendations

1. Academic institutions should encourage further research on Nigerian Arabic poetry, particularly in relation to its role in conflict resolution and societal development.
2. Efforts should be made to translate these works into English and other local languages to enhance their accessibility and impact beyond Arabic-speaking circles.
3. Nigerian Arabic poetry should be integrated into educational curricula to expose students to its literary, historical, and socio-political significance.
4. Governments and literary organizations should provide platforms, grants, and publications that promote and support Nigerian Arabic poets in their literary endeavors.
5. Arabic poetry should be utilized as a tool for interfaith and cultural dialogue to strengthen national unity and promote peace.

By implementing these recommendations, Nigerian Arabic poetry can further contribute to societal integration, intellectual development, and the promotion of peaceful coexistence.

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