

LEVERAGING ON THE POLITICAL ROLES OF AFRICA AND AFRICANS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT TOWARDS ADDRESSING POLITICAL UNREST IN KOGI STATE

Soo, Valentine Vershima (Ph.D. Students)

Department of Religious Studies,
Prince Abubaka Audu University, Anyigba
valentinesoo@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper comparatively examines the relevance of the political roles of Africa and Africans in the Old Testament to the contemporary political unrest in Kogi State, Nigeria. It investigates how historical narratives, leadership paradigms, and political principles drawn from the Old Testament have influenced the sociopolitical landscape of Kogi State. This investigation uncovers the enduring impact of ancient political ideologies on modern African governance, exploring their specific relevance to the complex challenges faced by Kogi State. The study employs a multidisciplinary approach that integrates historical, theological, and political perspectives to illuminate the nexus between biblical narratives and the political turbulence in the region. Through an in-depth analysis of key Old Testament figures, such as Moses, David, and Solomon, the research highlights their relevance as archetypal leaders for the contemporary political landscape of Kogi State. Furthermore, it examines how the adoption of certain biblical principles, like justice, equity, and ethical leadership, can potentially address the prevailing political unrest in the State. The aim of the study is to provide valuable insights into the intricate relationship between ancient texts and modern governance, offering a unique perspective on the political challenges confronting Kogi State and, by extension, other regions facing similar dilemmas.

Keywords: Africa, Africans, Old Testament, Politics, Unrest, Kogi State.

Introduction

The African continent has a rich historical heritage, including significant political roles played by its leaders in the biblical era. The Old Testament provides glimpses of diplomatic efforts, conflict resolution, and contributions to stability by African figures. While the contexts and circumstances of ancient Africa differ from contemporary times, examining these historical roles offers valuable insights for addressing the political unrest faced by regions like Kogi State in Nigeria. (Boesak 64)

Kogi State, situated in the heart of Nigeria, has witnessed periods of political instability and unrest, posing challenges to its governance, social cohesion, and economic development. In such circumstances, drawing lessons from the past can be a source of inspiration and guidance for effective solutions. This study aims to explore the implications of the political roles of Africa and Africans in the Old

Testament, analyzing how these historical examples can inform strategies for promoting stability and peace in the context of Kogi State's political unrest. By examining the diplomatic efforts and mediation witnessed in the biblical era, this research seeks to highlight the importance of dialogue and understanding among conflicting parties as potential means to resolve contemporary political disputes in Kogi State. Additionally, lessons from cultural exchange and tolerance in ancient Africa can inform efforts to bridge divides among the diverse communities in the state, fostering unity and reducing tensions. (Ige 32)

The contributions to stability through trade and economic partnerships demonstrated by African nations can inspire inclusive economic activities in Kogi State, ultimately benefiting all communities and promoting harmony. Furthermore, examples of good leadership and governance from the Old Testament can serve as models for Kogi State's leaders, emphasizing the need to prioritize the welfare of the people and find innovative solutions to political challenges.

This study also delves into the implications of peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms and the role of security and peacekeeping efforts in mitigating political unrest. By exploring opportunities for civic engagement, education, and regional cooperation, the research seeks to underscore the significance of citizen empowerment and collaboration with neighboring states for achieving sustainable peace and development. (98)

While recognizing the vast differences in historical contexts, this investigation emphasizes the relevance of adapting these implications to suit Kogi State's unique dynamics. Policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders are encouraged to draw from the political roles of Africa and Africans in the Old Testament to design contextually appropriate strategies for fostering peace, inclusivity, and progress in the midst of political challenges. Through such endeavors, Kogi State may chart a path towards a more stable and harmonious political landscape.

Political Roles of Africa in the Old Testament Era

As a continent, Africa played a role in the political stability of the biblical era through various interactions, trade, and diplomatic relations with neighboring regions and empires. While the biblical texts primarily focus on events in the Middle East, some references suggest Africa's influence in maintaining stability during that time. Here is an outline of how Africa contributed to political stability in the biblical era: (Ajith 37)

1. Africa Provided Diplomatic Alliances between African Kingdoms and Neighboring Nations This helped maintain stability in the region and promoted political harmony. For instance, the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon (1 Kings 10:1-2, 1 Kings 10:6-9):

"Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to test him with hard

questions. She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones."

"And she said to the king, "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard. Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness."

The visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon can be seen as a diplomatic exchange between their kingdoms. Sheba, located in present-day Ethiopia, sought to learn from Solomon's wisdom and to establish friendly relations. This visit helped maintain stability and peaceful ties between their nations, leading to further economic and cultural exchanges.

While the Bible may not provide numerous specific instances of diplomatic alliances between African kingdoms and neighboring nations, it does offer glimpses of how such exchanges were valued and sought after in ancient times. These interactions contributed to stability, peaceful relations, and the flourishing of both regions involved (*BibleGate.com*)

2. Africa provided ancient civilization: Ancient Egypt, is prominent in African civilization, this had a profound influence on the political stability of the biblical era. Egypt's administrative expertise and organization contributed to regional stability and prosperity. Egypt's engagement with neighboring empires helped mitigate conflicts and maintain a balance of power.

Other African Countries' such as Nubia and Kush present day Sudan made valuable contributions to the advancement of knowledge, technology, and governance. The dissemination of knowledge from African centers of learning such as the Alexandria University in Egypt supported the political development of neighboring regions. (David 304)

Axum (Kingdom of Aksum): The Kingdom of Aksum, located in present-day Ethiopia and Eritrea, was a significant African civilization during the biblical era and beyond. It was a major trading power in the Red Sea region, linking Africa with the Mediterranean world and Asia. The Kingdom of Aksum is believed to have had contact with ancient Israel, and it is mentioned in some Jewish traditions as the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. (215)

Carthage: Carthage was an ancient Phoenician city-state located in present-day Tunisia, North Africa. Although not directly mentioned in the Bible, Carthage was a prominent maritime power and had trade connections with various Mediterranean civilizations, including those mentioned in biblical accounts. (65)

These ancient African civilizations were centers of trade, culture, and innovation. They influenced neighboring regions and played a vital role in connecting Africa with other parts of the ancient world. Additionally, these civilizations contributed to the development of writing, art, architecture, and religious beliefs, leaving a lasting impact on the history of the African continent and beyond during the biblical era.

3. Africa provided Trade and Economic Cooperation: African resources and commodities contributed to the economic stability of neighboring regions. The exchange of goods and services fostered economic interdependence and reduced tensions. African nations, such as Egypt, played a crucial role in international trade during the biblical era. Trade routes connecting Africa with the Middle East and other regions indeed fostered economic and political ties throughout history. While the Bible does not provide explicit details about specific trade routes, it does mention significant interactions and exchanges between these regions. Here are some relevant Bible verses that highlight these connections:

Egyptian Trade (Genesis 37:25-28):

"Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt."

In the story of Joseph, his brothers sold him to the Ishmaelite's, who were traders heading to Egypt. The goods they were carrying, such as aromatic gum, balm, and myrrh, again highlight the trade connections between these regions. (Dube 605)

Trade through Tyre (Ezekiel 27:12-17):

"Tarshish did business with you because of your great wealth of every kind; silver, iron, tin, and lead they exchanged for your wares. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech traded with you; they exchanged human beings and vessels of bronze for your merchandise."

In this passage, Ezekiel speaks of the city of Tyre, known for its prominent role in trade. It mentions trade with different regions, including Tarshish (possibly related to a distant location, perhaps in Africa), Javan (thought to be connected to Greece), Tubal, and Meshech. The trade involves various commodities, including metals and even human beings, emphasizing the economic and political ties fostered through these exchanges. (Parratt 249)

While these Bible verses do not provide an exhaustive account of trade routes, they do illustrate how interactions between Africa, the Middle East, and other regions were essential in shaping the economic and political landscapes of the time. These exchanges facilitated cultural, religious, and commercial connections that contributed to the development of ancient civilizations. (Folarin 98)

Political Roles of Africans in the Old Testament

In the biblical era, African leaders, particularly those from Egypt and Ethiopia (also known as Cush or Nubia), played roles in bringing peace and stability to the region. While the Bible does not provide an extensive record of their actions, some

passages hint at their interactions and diplomatic efforts. Here is an outline with relevant Bible passages showcasing how African leaders contributed to the peace and stability of political arena.

1 Africans Promoted Cultural Conversation and Political Tolerance:

Joseph and Pharaoh: Joseph's rise to power in Egypt led to a period of cultural, political tolerance and cooperation between Egyptians and Israelites.

(Genesis 41:37-46)

37 And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is? 39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all of this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou: 40 thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. 41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. 42 And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; 43 and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and heset him over all the land of Egypt. 44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt. 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-phaera priest of On. And Joseph went out over the land of Egypt. 46 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaohking of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

In the biblical narrative found in Genesis 41:38-46, the story of Joseph's rise to power in Egypt showcases how his position of influence and wisdom led to a period of tolerance and cooperation between Egyptians and Israelites. Joseph's rise to power, after interpreting Pharaoh's troubling dreams about seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine, Joseph was recognized for his wisdom and discernment (Scot 94). Pharaoh appointed him as the second-in-command, his associate over all of Egypt, giving him authority to implement measures to prepare for the upcoming famine.

The rise of Joseph to power also integrated him into Egyptian society demonstrating cultural tolerance. He was not only given an Egyptian name (Zaphenath-paneah) but also married Asenath, the daughter of an Egyptian priest named Poti-phaera, as a sign of his assimilation into the culture. (John 435)

The elevation of Joseph to the position of authority demonstrated the fact that Africans had the willingness of

- ✓ Accepting other nations (i.e Israelites): Despite being a foreigner, Joseph's position and influence helped foster acceptance of the Israelites in Egyptian society. When Joseph's brothers, who were Israelites, came to Egypt seeking food during the famine, they were initially unaware of Joseph's identity. However, when Joseph revealed himself to them, he ensured their safety and invited them to live in Egypt's fertile land of Goshen. This shows very strong diplomatic ties demonstrated by Africans to promote social-political stability.
- ✓ Sharing of Knowledge and Skills: Joseph's wisdom in managing resources during the years of abundance and famine was not only beneficial to the Egyptians but also to the Israelites. His expertise in managing food reserves helped Egypt survive the famine, and this knowledge likely spread to the Israelites in Goshen, enabling them to adapt and prosper in their new surroundings. (Smith 305)
- ✓ Respect for Religious and Cultural Differences: Pharaoh and the Egyptians respected the religious practices of the Israelites. There is no indication in the biblical account that the Israelites were forced to abandon their faith or traditions. This religious tolerance was likely influenced by Joseph's position and his reputation for being a man of integrity.
- ✓ Economic Collaboration: During the period of famine, there was likely an increase in trade and economic collaboration between Egyptians and Israelites. The Israelites, being settled in Goshen, could have supplied agricultural products, while the Egyptians, with their resources and expertise, provided goods and services. (Hackett 205)
- ✓ Social Cohesion and Harmony: Joseph's leadership and example of tolerance likely contributed to social cohesion and harmony between the Egyptians and Israelites. Interactions between individuals from both cultures in everyday life would have been essential in building understanding and respect. Joseph's story serves as a model for tolerance and cooperation. He showed empathy and compassion toward his family, particularly in the reconciliation with his brothers, which contributed to the healing of old wounds between the two groups. Moreover, Joseph's dedication to the well-being of Egypt and its people, as demonstrated by his efficient management during the famine, earned him the trust and respect of both Egyptians and Israelites. (324)

The period of tolerance and cooperation initiated by Joseph's rise to power in Egypt left a lasting impact on future relations between the Egyptians and Israelites. It set the groundwork for future generations to coexist and collaborate peacefully. Furthermore, the story of Joseph serves as a timeless lesson for contemporary societies such as Kogi State on the importance of fostering cultural exchange and tolerance. Leaders like Pharaoh played significant role in promoting harmony among diverse groups, and respecting cultural differences leading to a more prosperous and peaceful society. (Tyndala 432)

2 Africans were involved in Conflict Resolution/ Peacekeeping Efforts: African mediators and diplomats played a role in resolving disputes between tribes and nations. African peacekeeping efforts helped prevent escalation of conflicts and maintained stability in the region. For instance; Ebed-Melech, an Ethiopian eunuch, played a role in rescuing the prophet Jeremiah and mediating a conflict between Jeremiah and King Zedekiah (Jeremiah 38:7-13) In Jeremiah 38:7-13, we find the account of Ebed-Melech's role in rescuing the prophet Jeremiah from a life-threatening conflict. (Keck 421)

The context of this passage is during the time of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. Jeremiah had been proclaiming messages of warning and judgment from God against the people of Judah and their leaders, predicting the destruction of Jerusalem if they did not repent and turn back to God. These messages were not well-received by the ruling elite, and some officials sought to silence Jeremiah.

In this specific passage, Jeremiah is in a dire situation. The princes, who were likely advisors or officials in the king's court, became angered by Jeremiah's prophecies and convinced King Zedekiah to have him arrested and thrown into a cistern (a dry well or pit) in the courtyard of the guardhouse. Their intention was to let Jeremiah die of hunger and exposure in the pit. Now, enter Ebed-Melech. He was an Ethiopian eunuch who served in the king's palace. Ebed-Melech was sympathetic to Jeremiah and his situation, and he was also a God-fearing man. He heard about what the princes had done to Jeremiah, and it deeply troubled him. Recognizing the injustice and cruelty of the situation, Ebed-Melech was determined to do something to help the prophet. (234)

Ebed-Melech took action and courageously approached the king to plead for Jeremiah's life. In verses 8-9, he went to the king's house and spoke to King Zedekiah. He respectfully appealed to the king, emphasizing the injustice of Jeremiah's treatment, pointing out that the prophet was only speaking God's words. Ebed-Melech asked the king to reconsider and take action to save Jeremiah from the pit before he died. King Zedekiah, after listening to Ebed-Melech's plea, granted him permission to take thirty men with him and rescue Jeremiah from the cistern. Ebed-Melech followed the king's command, and together with the help of these men, they pulled Jeremiah out of the pit using ropes in verses 10-12. This rescue operation by Ebed-Melech was an act of compassion and bravery. He put his own life at risk and used his influence to intervene on Jeremiah's behalf. Ebed-Melech's actions exemplify how one person's empathy and intervention can make a significant difference in a conflict situation. The passage concludes in verse 13, with Jeremiah remaining in the courtyard of the guardhouse after his rescue. It's worth noting that the prophet Jeremiah faced many challenges throughout his ministry, and Ebed-Melech's intervention was just one episode that demonstrated God's protection and care for His servant.

In summary, Ebed-Melech and African, played a crucial role in rescuing Jeremiah from the cistern, mediating the conflict between the prophet and the ruling elite

who sought to silence him. His courage and compassion highlight the significance of standing up for justice and doing what is right, even in the face of opposition. (212)

3. Africans Provided Regional Supremacy

Kush (Nubia): The Kingdom of Kush, located in present-day Sudan, was a powerful empire that achieved regional supremacy and contributed to stability in the region. - Psalm 68:31. In biblical times, Kush, also known as Nubia and was an ancient kingdom located in what is now present-day Sudan. Kush played a significant role in the biblical era and is mentioned in various passages in the Old Testament. While the Bible does not provide a comprehensive account of Kush's political impact, there are a few factors that could have contributed to political stability in the region during that time.

- **Geographical Location:** Kush was strategically positioned along the Nile River, which provided fertile land for agriculture and facilitated trade and transportation. The kingdom's access to the Nile allowed for economic prosperity and helped maintain a stable food supply, which is essential for political stability.
- **Trade and Economy:** Kush was a center of trade, connecting the Mediterranean world to sub-Saharan Africa. It had valuable resources, such as gold, ivory, and exotic goods, which attracted traders and merchants from distant lands. Economic prosperity often correlates with political stability, as a strong economy can help support a stable government and society.
- **Strong Leadership:** Kush had a line of powerful kings who ruled the kingdom with authority and stability. One of the most notable rulers of Kush was King Piye, who expanded the kingdom's territory and established the 25th Dynasty of Egypt, effectively uniting Egypt and Kush. Strong and capable leadership is vital for maintaining political stability.
- **Military Strength:** Kush had a formidable military force, which served as a deterrent against external threats and internal rebellions. A well-organized and disciplined military can help protect the kingdom from invaders and maintain control over its territories, contributing to political stability.
- **Cultural and Religious Influence:** Kush had a distinct culture and religion that influenced its people and helped foster a sense of unity and identity within the kingdom. A shared culture and religion can strengthen social cohesion and contribute to political stability by promoting a sense of belonging and loyalty to the ruling authority. (Krong 92)

3. Africans Provided Treaty and Sustenance: King Hezekiah sought an alliance with King Taharqa of Egypt during the Assyrian invasion. - 2 Kings 19:9

In 2 Kings 19:9, we find a reference to King Taharqa of Egypt and his involvement in the events surrounding the Assyrian invasion during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah.

The context of this passage is during the time when the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, had invaded Judah and was threatening Jerusalem. Sennacherib had already captured many fortified cities of Judah, and his army had laid siege to Jerusalem, causing great distress among the people. When King Hezekiah received the threatening letter from Sennacherib, he took it to the temple, spread it out before the Lord, and prayed for deliverance. The prophet Isaiah brought a message of assurance and encouragement from the Lord, promising that God would defend Jerusalem and cause the Assyrian king to return to his own land. In 2 Kings 19:9, King Sennacherib sent messengers to Jerusalem with another threatening letter to Hezekiah. The letter challenged the trust and reliance of Hezekiah and his people on God, claiming that no other nation's gods had been able to save them from the Assyrian king's conquests. (Garland 631)

Now, here's the mention of King Taharqa of Egypt in this passage:

2 Kings 19:9 (NIV): "When he heard them say concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, 'He has come out to fight against you,'" he (Sennacherib) again sent messengers to Hezekiah with this word..."

In this verse, "Tirhakah king of Cush" refers to King Taharqa of Egypt. The term "Cush" is another name for the region of Nubia or Kush, which was part of ancient Egypt, and Taharqa was a notable ruler of Egypt during that time.

The mention of King Taharqa indicates that Hezekiah was seeking alliances and support from neighboring nations to counter the Assyrian threat. Hezekiah may have hoped for assistance from Egypt, particularly from a powerful ruler like Taharqa, to strengthen Judah's defenses against the invading Assyrian army.

However, it's worth noting that the passage does not provide further details on the outcome of Hezekiah's appeal to Egypt for support. Instead, the narrative shifts to God's response through Isaiah, reassuring Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem that God Himself would defend the city and defeat the Assyrians, which eventually happened when the angel of the Lord struck down the Assyrian army, leading to their withdrawal and the deliverance of Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:35-37).

In summary, 2 Kings 19:9 briefly mentions King Hezekiah's attempt to seek an alliance with King Taharqa of Egypt, also known as Tirhakah, during the Assyrian invasion. However, the passage primarily emphasizes God's intervention and deliverance as the ultimate source of protection for Judah against the Assyrian threat. (324)

4. Africans Mentored Leaders in the Old Testament Era:

Jethro: Africans played a significant role in the leadership of Moses, particularly during the time of the Exodus and the wilderness journey. One prominent figure was Jethro, Moses' father-in-law who was influential in Moses' leadership ability. After the Exodus, when Moses led the Israelites through the wilderness, Jethro visited him and gave him valuable advice on governing the people. He recommended that Moses delegate the responsibilities of leadership by appointing capable individuals to assist in judging the people's disputes (Exodus 18:13-27). This wise counsel helped Moses manage the Israelite community more effectively.

Zipporah: Secondly we have Zipporah, the wife of Moses. Zipporah was a Midianite woman, and her African heritage is generally associated with the region of present-day northwest Saudi Arabia or southern Jordan, which was part of the broader African continent during ancient times. After Moses fled from Egypt and settled in Midian, he rescued Zipporah and her sisters from a group of shepherds while they were trying to water their flocks. In gratitude, Zipporah's father, Jethro (also known as Reuel), invited Moses to his home and eventually gave Zipporah to Moses in marriage.

Zipporah played a pivotal role in the life of Moses, and her African identity highlights the multicultural aspects of Moses' leadership. She even saved Moses' life in a crucial incident recorded in Exodus 4:24-26. When Moses was on his way to Egypt to lead the Israelites out of slavery, God met him and sought to kill him. The reason for this is not entirely clear in the biblical text, but it is believed to be related to Moses' neglect of circumcision for his son Gershom. Zipporah quickly intervened and circumcised their son, and then she touched Moses' feet with the foreskin, declaring, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me." Her action averted the threat from God and preserved Moses' life.

The involvement of Zipporah and Jethro in Moses' life demonstrates the inclusiveness and importance of Africans in the biblical narrative. It also emphasizes the multiethnic nature of the people involved in the Exodus and the foundation of the Israelite nation. Their contributions to Moses' leadership were vital and are integral parts of the biblical account of the Exodus and the formation of the Israelite community. (Mathew 342)

Potiphar - Potiphar was an Egyptian official and captain of the guard during the time of Joseph's enslavement in Egypt. Potiphar purchased Joseph as a slave and eventually entrusted him with significant responsibilities in his household. Despite facing false accusations, Potiphar recognized Joseph's integrity and leadership qualities. Through his mentorship, Potiphar inadvertently prepared Joseph for a more prominent role in Egypt's leadership, ultimately leading to Joseph becoming the second-in-command under Pharaoh (Genesis 39:1-6).

These examples show that Africans in the Old Testament era played pivotal roles as mentors and influencers in the lives of biblical figures, offering guidance, wisdom, and support. Their contributions highlight the diversity and inclusiveness of the biblical narrative, showcasing the interactions between different cultures and the impact of mentoring relationships on shaping key biblical events and characters. (Michael 432)

Brief History of Kogi State

Kogi State was carved out of Kwara and Benue States on August 27, 1991 by the then regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. Its capital is Lokoja. Located in north central Nigeria, Kogi State occupies 29,833 square kilometres. Kogi, one of the most endowed in terms of natural resources is debatably a catalyst as well as instrumental to the growth and development of modern Nigeria.

The Confluence State as popularly called, is one of the 36 States of Nigeria, located in the Northern part of the country. Kogi State is most centrally located state in Nigeria and shares boundaries with nine states. To the North, it shares boundaries with Plateau, Niger and the Federal Capital Territory. Benue and Anambra States to the East and to the West, it is bordered by Ondo, Kwara, Edo and Enugu states. (Okpe 30-31) The state is heterogeneous in nature with the Ebira, Igala and Okun (Yoruba) forming the major group. The smaller ethnic groupings include Bassa, Kwomu, Bassa, Nge, Oworo, Nupe, Ogori/Magongo, Egbura Koto, and Kakanda. Kogi is the gateway state with very rich cultural values, great natural endowments and infinite stretches of arable land.

The state capital, Lokoja, is an ancient historical town which once served as the colonial administrative headquarters of Nigeria. The town is situated on the slope of a range of hills, Mount Patti. It is located at the confluence of the rivers Niger and Benue. Kogi consists of three senatorial districts namely Western Senatorial District, Central Senatorial District and Eastern Senatorial District. It also consists of nine federal constituencies which include Okene/, Ogori-Magongo, Ajaokuta, Okehi/Adavi, Kabba-Bunu/ Ijumu, Yagba, Lokoja/ Koton-karfi, Idah/ Igalamela/Ofu, Dekina /Bassa and Ankpa /Omala/Olamaboro. Kogi has 21 Council Areas: Adavi, Ajaokuta, Ankpa, Bassa, Dekina, Ibaji, Idah, Igalamela/Odolu, Ijumu, Kabba-Bunu, Kogi, Lokoja, Mopamuro, Ofu, Ogori-Magongo, Okene, Okehi, Olamaboro, Omala, Yagba-East, and Yagba-West. (32)

Among the prominent sons of Kogi State was a former Governor of Old Kwara State in the Second Republic, Alhaji Adamu Attah, former governor Late Prince Abubakar Audu is said to be the father of modern Kogi due to the many infrastructure he was able to establish in the state such as the state university, hotel and roads. Others are former Minister of Health, Prof. Eyitayo Lambo, as well as pioneer Director General of National Broadcasting Commission, Prof. Tom Adaba. Among the institutions of higher learning in the state are the Kogi State University at Ayingba, Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja and Federal College of Education, Okene. There are several private universities in the state as well. (*Kogite Wikipedia.com 2023*)

BRIFE POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF KOGI STATE

Since the creation of Kogi State in 1991 by the Ibrahim Babangida military administration, the *struggle for relevance has been a major characteristic of the politics of the state.*

The marriage of inconvenience between the major ethnic groups that formed the state such as the Igala, Ebira, Okun, Bassa and Nupe has been the political stamp on the confluence state. While the Igalas in the present day Kogi East came from the old Benue State, the Ebira and Okun formed the bureaucratic locomotive of the old Kwara State.

ORIGIN OF POLITICAL UNREST IN KOGI STATE

Power Perspectives: Unlike the Ebira and the Okun, who were relevant in the politics and bureaucracy of their former state, the Igala were crammed in between the battles of supremacy that featured between the Tiv and the Idoma of the old Benue State. Thus, the Igala came into Kogi fully armed with the knowledge of the practical meaning of marginalization and the political willpower to occupy as the major tribe.

A juxtaposition of this position, along with the comfort enjoyed by the Okun and Ebira in the old Kwara, will reveal why the duo were ill-prepared for the battle of wits which soon set in among the three major ethnic groups in the state. The Igala ensured they took advantage of the early delineation to claim more Local Government Areas than either of the two other major ethnic groups. While Kogi East, which is predominantly Igala has nine Local Government Areas, the Okun-dominated Kogi West has seven Local Government Areas while Ebira-dominated Kogi Central has five Local Government Areas. The Igala struck hard from the beginning to break the gourd containing the political future and fortune of the state.

Rotational Pasperspective: In 1999, Prince Audu was re-elected into office on the platform of the erstwhile All Peoples Party, APP. His ambition to secure re-election in 2003 hit the rocks as Alhaji Ibrahim Idris, the furniture merchant from Abejukolo emerged as governor and went ahead to rule till 2012. He handed over to Capt. Idris Wada. So, every elected governor that has ruled the state since inception has always been an Igalaman.

In 2003, a few elements from the Central and West began the agitation for power rotation. It became clear that the East had an agenda to retain the governorship of the state. Leaders such as Prince Olusola Akanmode and the late Sen. A.T. Ahmed started what they called the Power Shift Agenda. All their attempts were frustrated at the primary election level, with the structural superiority of Kogi East. It became clear that the political parties were helpless as far as power rotation was concerned. The only time PDP lost the governorship of the state was the time the party gave its ticket to a non-Igala, late Arc. Stephen Olorunfemi who was the party's candidate in the 1999 contest.

Never in the political history of Kogi has the issue of power rotation been so topical in a governorship campaign than now. The two major political parties have been made to give commitments on power rotation in 2019. While the PDP has setup machinery for the actualization of power shift to either Kogi West or Central in 2019, there is doubt on the possibility of the APC achieving power rotation.

Intra-Ethnic Pandemonium: Beyond the agitation for rotation among the senatorial zones, pundits say the Igalas are already rotating the governorship among its triangular zones of Ankpa, Idah and Dekina. While Audu, who had been

sworn-in as governor twice hails from Ogonicha in Ankpa Zone, Idris, from Abejukolo in Idah Zone also governed the state for two terms. The incumbent is from Odu in Dekina. Kogi East, analysts reckon, has been able to devise a means of retaining power, the potent of which is divide and rule. Political historians are of the opinion that the Okun Yoruba people have continued to be undone by the Nupe war strategy which shattered the Okun political supremacy.

The thinking in Igala land is that the Dekina Zone should be allowed to complete its two terms before power will return to the Ankpa Zone. But that was not part Audu political agenda. Thus the center could not hold.

The analyses of the power rotation was as follows:

1999 to 2003 Prince AuduIgala (Ankpa)

2003 to 2011 Alhaji Ibrahim IdrisIgala (Idah)

2011 to 2015 Capt. Idris Wada Igala (Dekina)

The inability of the Igalas to sustain an intra-political aliment and the death of the governor elect Prince AuduAbubaka brought a total collapse of their political aspiration and a power shift from the grate Igala strong hold to Governor Yahaya Bello of Ebira, Agassa, Okene LGA of Kogi State in 2015. Following the emergence of the Governor Yahaya Bello-led administration in 2015, the aspirations and desires of many Kogites was to enjoy the dividends of a better governance as well as livelihood devoid of agony and pains. Prior to his assumption of office as governor, the state was confronted with several security challenges bordering on kidnapping, cultism, among other internal security hitches. According to Yahaya Bello in his inaugural speech he started my administration shall prove beyond reasonable doubts its capacity in tackling the aforementioned security issues in the state by enhancing citizens' involvement in the fight against insecurity. Other measures that shall be taken by the government to tackle insecurity include clearing of highway bushes, equipping security agencies, engagement of youths in vigilance groups and incorporation of hunters into anti-kidnapping squad.

The coming of Governor Yahaya Bello, the youngest governor in the resent political history marked the beginning of a new dawn in the political antiquity of Kogi State, however eight (8) years down his administration, the yearnings of the people is yet to be achieved. This aspiration has adulterated the political space and set the stage for another political scuffle come November 2023. (Kogite Wikipedia2023)

Negative Effects of Political Unrest in Kogi State

Kogi State has been a major center of political unrest in Nigeria. This unrest has been caused by a number of factors, including poverty, corruption, and ethnic conflict.

1. **Economic Disruptions:** The political unrest of Kogi State has led to economic disruptions, affecting businesses, trade, and external investment. The instability has dissuaded potential investors, leading to the reduction of economic growth and development.
2. **Security Challenges:** Political unrest has exacerbated security challenges, including clashes between political factions, civil disturbances, and even criminal activities. These security issues have created an unwarranted environment of fear and uncertainty among the populace.
3. **Social Tensions:** Political unrest has deepened existing social tensions within the state and divisions along political, ethnic and religious lines leading to conflicts and unrest.
4. **Infrastructure and Service Delivery:** Prolonged political unrest has negatively impacted the state's infrastructure development and service delivery. Government projects and essential services have witnessed disruption and instability.
5. **Political Polarization:** Continued political unrest has resulted in an increased polarization among the population, making it difficult for different groups to find common ground and work together for the progress of the State.
6. **Displacement and Humanitarian Crisis:** In extreme cases if not arrested further unrest may lead to displacement of communities, creating a humanitarian crisis with people being forced to flee their homes for safety.
7. **Election Violence:** Elections in Kogi State, like in many parts of Nigeria, have been marred by violence and irregularities during times of political unrest. This led to the loss of lives and undermined the democratic process.
8. **Impact on Education and Health:** Political unrest has disrupted educational and healthcare services, affecting students' access to quality education and citizens' access to adequate medical care.

Perception and Investment: Prolonged political unrest can negatively affect the perception of Kogi State among outsiders, leading to reduced tourism, investment, and development opportunities. (Kogite Wikipedia 2023)

It's important to mention that Kogi State, like many regions, has also seen periods of relative stability and progress. Political leadership and concerted efforts to address the root causes of unrest have contributed to restoring peace and development in the state. Additionally, political unrest is a complex issue often influenced by various factors, and the solutions may require multifaceted approaches involving government, civil society, and citizens working together.

Juxtaposing the Potential Roles of Africa and Africans in the Old Testament in Addressing Political Unrest in Kogi State.

The Old Testament can be used to promote peace and reconciliation in Kogi State. The Old Testament indeed contains references to Africa and Africans, which has potential relevance in addressing political unrest in Kogi State or any other region with African heritage. Acknowledging and embracing this aspect of the biblical narrative has contributed a sense of cultural identity, historical continuity, and inclusivity, fostering unity and common purpose among diverse communities in the state.

1. **Lessons from African Characters:** The Old Testament includes important African figures like Moses' wife, Zipporah, who was a Cushite (Numbers 12:1), and the Queen of Sheba, who visited Solomon seeking wisdom (1 Kings 10:1-13). These narratives have offered lessons on leadership, wisdom, and the importance of cooperation and diplomacy in addressing political challenges, which can be used as a panacea for the political unrest of Kogi State. (Mbiti 42)
2. **Values of Hospitality and Inclusion:** The Bible often highlights the value of hospitality and welcoming strangers, exemplified in the story of the Ethiopian eunuch's encounter with King Hezekiah. Embracing these values can promote inclusivity and understanding, fostering a climate of cooperation and reconciliation among diverse communities in Kogi State. (Oduyoye 105)
3. **Emphasis on Social Justice:** The Old Testament repeatedly stresses the importance of justice, especially concerning the treatment of the vulnerable, including foreigners and immigrants (Exodus 22:21, Leviticus 19:33-34, Deuteronomy 10:19). Applying these principles can encourage fair and equitable policies and address issues of marginalization and social unrest in the state. (Olupona 236)
4. **Symbolism of Unity:** The Old Testament's portrayal of Africa as part of the biblical narrative can serve as a symbol of unity among different cultural and ethnic groups in Kogi State. Recognizing shared historical connections can help bridge divides and build a sense of solidarity and common purpose among the population of (Igala, Epira and Okun).
5. **Religious Tolerance and Understanding:** The presence and significance of Africans in the Old Testament who promoted religious tolerance and understanding to ensure political stability, can be applied to calm the political unrest existing in Kogi State.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the recognition of the political roles of Africa and Africans in the Old Testament holds significant implications for addressing the political unrest in Kogi State. By embracing this historical connection, the state can draw on the lessons of leadership, social justice, and religious tolerance from the biblical narrative. This understanding can foster a sense of unity, cultural identity, and

inclusivity among the diverse communities in the state. By incorporating the wisdom of the past with contemporary knowledge and practices, political leaders can work towards resolving underlying issues and promoting a more stable and peaceful political environment. Embracing the values of justice, compassion, and cooperation can pave the way for a more harmonious and prosperous future for Kogi State, where all citizens can thrive and contribute to the common good.

Work Cited

- Ajith, B.C Ed. *The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament*. Michigan: Zondervan: Publisher, 2005.
- Boesak, A. A. *Old Testament Prophetic Authority in African Christianity: A Critical Appraisal*." HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies, vol. 62, no. 4.Lagos: 2006.sss
- Bible Gateway. www.biblegateway.com/. 2023 edition.
- Buttrick, G.A., ed. *The Interpreter's Bible*. Michigan: Zondervan Publisher, 2018.
- David, E. ed. *The Cambridge Bible Commentary*. London: Fernando Publishers, 2008.
- Dube, M.W. *African Women, Religion, and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba EwudziOduyoye*. Ibadan. Cluster Publications, 2006.
- Folarin, O. E., and Tokunbo A. A, editors. "*Religion and Politics in Africa: The Power of Symbols and Emblems in Lived Experiences*. Ibadan: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
- Hackett, R.I. J. "Art and Religion in Africa. Lagos: Cassel Books, 1996.
- Isike, Christopher. "Religion, Politics, and Ethnicity in Nigeria." Ibadan:Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
- Ige, S.A "*Christianity and Culture: It's Implication on National Development*" Ate Journal of African Religion and Culture, Vol.1. 2010
- John, M. A. *Word Biblical Commentary*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 2005.
- Keck, L. E., ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 2008 Edition.
- Krog, Antjie. *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*. South Africa: Broadway Books, 1999.
- Longman, III, Tremper, and David E. Garland, eds. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. New York: Eerdmans Publishers, 2010
- Mathew, A.D *The NIV Application Commentary*. Michigan: Zondervan Publisher, 2009.
- Michael, W.D *The International Critical Commentary*. London: Book Mark Publishers, 2012.
- Mbiti, J.S. *African Religions and Philosophy*. Ibadan: Heinemann Publishing, 1990.
- Oduyoye, M. A. *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*. Ibadan: Orbis Books, 1992.
- Okpe, N.O. *Social and Culture Identity of an African Society- The Igala People of Nigeria Frankfurt am Main*. London, 2006.
- Olupona, J.K., and Sulayman S. Nyang, editors. *Religious Plurality in Africa: Essays in Honour of John S. Mbiti*." Mouton de Gruyter, Ibadan: Orbis Books,1993.
- Parratt, John. *Healing in the African Church: African Theology and Method*. Darton, Longman & Todd Lagos: Orbis Publishing, 2003.
- Scot, P. ed. *The Anchor Bible Commentary*. Williams B Publishers, 2005 Edition

- Smith, John. *Africans in the Old Testament: Their Role and Significance*. ABC Publishers, 2023.
- Tyndale, D.D. *The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*. Lagos: Burge Publishers, 2015.