

THE BOKO HARAM IDEOLOGY:  
REFUTATIONAL AND COUNTER NARRATIVE EFFORTS BY NIGERIAN  
SCHOLARS AND THE STRATEGY OF THE DA'WAH INSTITUTE OF NIGERIA

by

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(Under the Direction of Kenneth Honerkamp)

**ABSTRACT**

BOKO HARAM is a violent and extremist Nigerian Muslim sect that exploded onto the international scene in 2009 with spectacular attacks against government security establishments. The violent extremist, puritanical, and exclusivist narrative of the sect is a recurring phenomenon from previous movements from as early as the first century of Islam, with the *Kharijites*. In the face of such insurgencies, the Nigerian government's response tended to be military. However, such ideologies have tended to arise again in more deadly re-incarnations. Some are totally new movements, while others are offshoots or copycats of previous movements. The intellectual responses to such groups have thus far not been organic and comprehensive. It is thus the aim of this thesis to highlight some of the counter narrative efforts against the Boko Haram ideology and examine especially the Da'wah Institute of Nigeria's triangular intellectual model for counter narratives to violent extremism.

INDEX WORDS: Boko Haram, Nigeria, Shari'ah, Insurgency, Da'wah, Islam, West Africa, Borno, Jihad, Ahl al Sunnati li al Da'wati wa al Jihad, Da'wah Institute

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## DEDICATION

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

To my beloved parents, Dr. Mahmud Yusuf Mundi, and Mallama Khadijah Yusuf Mundi,  
both of whose love, compassion, sacrifices, vision, legacy, and prayers continue to  
inspire me even from across a transcendent realm of reality.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis comprises five chapters. The first chapter is an introductory narrative of the history of Islam in Nigeria. It traces the earliest recorded presence of Islam in the territory that is known as Nigeria, its spread through the centuries, its institutions, and its social, economic, cultural, and political legacies. The chapter also gives a synoptic account of the current status of Islam and Muslims in the country. In the second chapter, the concept of Jihad is discussed, with particular reference to the term's usage in the Muslim sacred scripture, the Qur'an, the Sunnah, or prophetic principles and practice. In this chapter, we will also examine how Muslim jurist used the term. Chapter three presents a history of the Boko Haram movement, its ideology, and its demands from the state. We will share a transcribed summary of a charged speech by the founder of the organization. The fourth chapter highlights the efforts of some Nigerian scholars in refuting the key concepts and methods of the Boko Haram movement. The fifth chapter is dedicated to the approach of the Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, Islamic Education Trust, of countering the kind of religious extremist narratives that Boko Haram espouses. This last chapter will provide a brief history and profile of the organization, then highlight the variety of methods and media employed in this ideological warfare, its impact, and how it is evaluated and monitored. The thesis will then conclude with some projections and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **ISLAM IN NIGERIA**

#### **A BRIEF HISTORY FROM THE 8<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TO THE PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD**

With an estimated population of over two hundred and three million<sup>1</sup> as of July 2018, the Federal Republic of Nigeria is today the most populous country in Africa. Also, the most densely populated country in Africa, Nigeria is none the less projected to exceed four hundred million by 2050. It accounts for about seventy percent of the population of West Africa and is home to the largest Muslim population on the continent, ahead of Egypt and Ethiopia. It is situated south of Niger Republic, shares the Lake Chad at its Northeastern corner with the Republic of Chad, lies west of the Republic of Cameroon, east of Benin Republic, and north of the Atlantic Ocean at the Gulf of Guinea.

#### **NARRATIVES ON FACTORS FOR THE GROWTH AND SPREAD OF ISLAM**

It is a common narrative in some academic, as well as popular, discourses that Islam was spread in Nigeria by military jihad. Many proponents of such arguments often cite the early nineteenth century jihad of Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo and the impact of the Sokoto Caliphate that he established in Northern Nigeria. These views tend to ignore or minimize the history of the spread of Islam in other parts of Nigeria, such as the Southwest, the Northwest, the Southeast, as well as parts of the Midwest and Central Nigeria.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019

In his survey of reasons that may have accounted for the lasting impression among Nigeria's press, Christian clergy, and now informal media, Salahudeen Yusuf argues that these attitudes are partly traceable to colonial era missionary polemics that were deployed for the purpose of proselytization. He argued that these polemics were informed by the instrument of orientalist placement of the Muslim world as barbaric and in need of being civilized.

“In Nigeria, too, this image of Islam was spread by the missionaries. They propagated a notion that Islam is inhuman, feudalistic, despotic, unjust, and tyrannical. They made it known to the Christian Nigerians that they came not only to civilize and educate them, but to liberate them from the conquering armies of Islam. In fact, one of the early missionary newspapers established in Nigeria, called *Iwe Irohin*, and owned and edited by Rev. Henry Townsend, perpetuated such polemics.”<sup>2</sup>

This chapter will survey the introduction and growth of Islam in Nigeria from its earliest recorded history to the post-colonial period. It will argue that, considering the wide and very culturally diverse Nigerian communities within which Muslims are found in the country, the view that it is military jihad that resulted in the large population of Muslims in Nigeria is rather simplistic and incomplete.

### **EARLIEST RECORDS OF ISLAM IN NIGERIA:**

We will examine the early records of the presence and growth of Islam in the territory known today as Nigeria, by summarizing accounts relating to the Kanem-Bornu, the Hausa

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<sup>2</sup> Y. Salahudeen, "The Portrayal of Islam in Some Early Nigerian Newspapers," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 6, no. 2 (1989): 326.

City-States, the jihad of Usman Danfodio and the Sokoto caliphate, the Borgu, and the Yoruba.

## **THE KANEM-BORNU**

Regarding the earliest presence of Islam in present day Nigeria, it has become widely believed that this dates to the middle of the eleventh century in the Kanem-Bornu region near Lake Chad, during the period of Sayfawa rule. The historian and highly regarded authority on the history of Kanem-Bornu, Professor Muhammad Nur Alkali, cites the Mahram of Mai Hume Jilmi as indicating that one Muhammad ibn Mani made visits to the Sayfawa court in efforts to persuade the Mai (King) to accept Islam.<sup>3</sup> Even though he cited the story of Muhammad ibn Mani at the Court of Mai Jilmi in the eleventh century, Alkali asserts that these visits were only a culmination of the gradual introduction of Islam to the Kanemi lands dating back to ca. 666/7 CE. It was during this period that Uqba ibn Nafi' led Muslim forces to the Kavar Oases in the neighboring present-day Niger. This dates to the reign of Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second of the Rashidun Caliphs following the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 CE. Idrissa also makes this point, along with references to early Muslim forays into Fezzan in Southern Libya.<sup>4</sup>

Alkali goes on to posit that there were interactions between the Ibadite of North Africa and the Kanem during the ninth century, facilitated by the trans-Saharan trade. The proximity

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<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Nur Alkali, *Kanem-Bornu under the Sayfawa* (Maiduguri: Borno Sahara and Sudan Series Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences VII (2013): 39

<sup>4</sup> Rahmane Idrissa, *The Politics of Islam in the Sahel: Between Persuasion and Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 63

of Kanem to the Nile valley and the Maghreb al-Aqsa<sup>5</sup> naturally positioned Kanem to be the first state in central Bilad al-Sudan<sup>6</sup> to encounter Islam.

Mai Hume Jilme soon sought to reform his kingdom in accordance with his new faith. Islam was declared the State religion, the King changed from being a divine ruler to a mortal whose stewardship had to respect the tenets of this new faith. He also consolidated his rule and initiated a number of military jihads into neighboring kingdoms in order to convert them to Islam. Mai Jilme reigned from c. 1096 to 1108 CE, and was succeeded by his son, Mai Dunoma Humemi. Mai Dunoma's reign from 1108 to 1163 was characterized by an extensive continuation of the military conquest that were started by his father. In addition, Mai Dunoma performed the pilgrimage to Mecca three times, thus becoming the first Kanem ruler to project a powerful Islamic State to the rest of the Muslim world at the time.<sup>7</sup>

An indication of the advanced institutionalization of Shariah (Islamic law) during the Kanem empire was demonstrated during the reign of Mai Biri ibn Dunoma (c. 1163 – 1190). By this time, the position of the Queen Mother, called Magira, had been established. When the Mai had ordered the execution of a thief, the Magira intervened to sanction the Mai for contravening the Shari'ah which did not require such a harsh punishment for theft. She ordered the Mai arrested and imprisoned for one year, even though he still retained his position as king and could conduct limited state business away from the public eye for the term of his sentence. This episode marked an early example of the manner in which the

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<sup>5</sup> Central Maghreb

<sup>6</sup> Bilad al-Sudan, or “countries of the Blacks”, referred to the sub-North African regions stretching from East Africa across central Africa up to Western Africa.

<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Nur Alkali, *Kanem-Bornu under the Sayfawa (Maiduguri: Borno Sahara and Sudan Series Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences VII* (2013): 48

Islamic legal system was established by Muslim kingdoms in the early history of Islam in this region.

In terms of Islamic scholarship, it is noteworthy that, by the late twelfth century, scholars, poets, and Sufi Gnostics of the empire had gained renown in the Maghreb and Egypt. Yaqut al-Rumi mentions a Kanem poet, most likely Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Yaqub al-Kanimi, who visited the court of Yacqub al-Mansur the Almohad ruler who reigned from 1184 to 1199. Other scholars and saints equally mentioned include Abu Muhammad Abdullahi al-Barnawi.<sup>8</sup>

Kanem-Bornu enjoyed a long and glorious history of expansion and the setting up of the State. During the reign of Mai Ali Gaji (1470 – 1503 CE), the state was reorganized internally, with effective systems of revenue collection and firm political control. In the example of Kanem-Bornu, we see that expansion was indeed through military conquest and state-building. We also see that the State established diplomatic ties with the Ottoman empire through the Bey of Tunis. They, likewise, protected the trade route linking Kanem-Bornu to Fezzan and Tripoli. These factors ensured economic activities and interactions that attracted interest from populations that saw social and economic security and prestige in becoming associated with the State.

## **HAUSA CITY-STATES**

There are several myths about the early history of the Hausa City-States on Northern Nigeria. Likewise, there are competing schools of thought regarding the earliest record of Islam in these states. What can be said about the early structure of the states is that there

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<sup>8</sup> Yaqut al-Rumi, *Muljam al-Buldan*, 1924, IV, p.20 cited in Alkali, Kanem-Bornu Under the Sayfawa.

was a core of seven Hausa States called the “Hausa Bakwai”, or Hausa Seven. They included Daura, Katsina, Kano, Rano, Gobir, Zazzau, and Zamfara. According to tradition , Yaji dan Tsamiya (1349-1385) was the King who introduced Islam to Kano. Hiskett notes that this period coincides with the arrival of the Wangarawa from Songhay.<sup>9</sup>

Modern day Northern Nigeria comprises much of Hausa land and Bornu in the east. By the 14th century all ruling elites of Hausa land were Muslim, although most of the population did not convert until the 18th century jihads. Much like the rulers of earlier Muslims states, the rulers of Hausa land blended local practices and Islam.

Islam came into Hausa land through interactions, trade, and even military engagements with neighboring powers – The Kanem under the Sayfawa, the Malian empire, and the Songhay empire. The Hausa city states, or Habe states, as the Fulani would label them during a future jihad campaign, had been practicing Islam for the fourteenth century as indicated above. However, their practice still featured some syncretism, as their historical traditional religion was indeed observed to varying degrees in the different kingdoms. The Hausa Zoroastrian religionists, *Maguzawa*<sup>10</sup>, who still held on to their beliefs, continued to be accommodated in their practice and festivals. The traditional Hausa religion of *Bori* was still being practiced, even if partially, by many who had adopted Islam. They still believed in their spirits who they now renamed Arabic names, such as Alhaji (title for one who has performed the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca) and Alkali, from al-Qadi, the Arabic word for Judge.

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<sup>9</sup> Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (New York: Longman Inc, 1984), 73.

<sup>10</sup> Maguzawa: Magians, from “Magus”

During the reign of Muhammadu Rumfa (904 – 999) in Kano, we witness some serious effort to upgrade the standard of Islamic practice in the city states. Rumfa engaged the services of the North African scholar al-Maghili as his advisor. As Hiskett notes,

“Muhammad Rumfa of Kano ... was host to al-Maghili and carefully observed the Islamic festivals. He was so given to following the ways of the Muslim Arabs resident in Kano that he was known as ‘the Arab Sarki, (chief)’. He is even regarded in Hausa tradition as a Muslim reformer and many Hausa believe that literacy in Arabic among their people first developed in his court”.<sup>11</sup>

Al-Maghili’s influence was long lasting in the region, as he had also visited Katsina, as well as Songhay, where he played a similar role of advisor to the court of Askiya Muhammad. It is to be noted, as well, that Al-Maghili was a Sufi of the Qadiri order, which was one of the Sufi orders that played important roles in propagating and establishing Islam in the whole of the West African region. In Nigeria, the Tijjaniyah played a major role, beginning with its introduction by Al-Hajj Umar Taal, of whom we will speak shortly.

## **THE JIHAD OF DANFODIO AND THE SOKOTO CALIPHATE**

The 19th century jihad movements best exemplify the third phase in the development Islam in West Africa. Specialists have highlighted the ways in which literate Muslims became increasingly aware of Islamic doctrine and began to demand reforms during this period. This period was significant in that it marks a shift in Muslim communities that practiced Islam mixed with “pagan” rituals and practices to societies that completely adopted Islamic values and established Shariah

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<sup>11</sup> Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (New York: Longman Inc, 1984), 78 - 79.

Scholars have debated the origins of the 19th century West African jihads. The first known jihad in West Africa was in Mauritania during the 17th century. At that time, Mauritanian society was divided along scholar and warrior lineages. The scholar Nasir al-Din led a failed jihad called Sharr Bubba. Unlike the failed jihad in Mauritania, the 19th century jihad movements in Senegambia and Hausa land (in what is now northern Nigeria) successfully overthrew the established order and transformed the ruling and land-owning class.

In 1804, Shehu Usmanu Dan Fodio (d. 1817), a Fulani scholar and Sufi, led a major jihad against the already Muslim Hausa states of Northern Nigeria. With the help of a large Fulani cavalry and Hausa peasants, Uthman Dan Fodio overthrew the region's Hausa rulers and replaced them with Fulani emirs. The movement led to centralization of power in the Muslim community, education reforms, and transformations of law. Uthman Dan Fodio also sparked a literary revival with a production of religious work that included Arabic texts and *Ajami* (non-Arabic) written in Arabic script. The collective literary output of the Fodio writers, including Shehu Usmanu Danfodio, Shehu Abdullahi Danfodio, Sultan Muhammad Bello, the Shehu's daughter Nana Asma'u bint Fodio, and her husband Gidado Junaidu ibn Buhari, has not been matched in Nigeria to this day. Together, their over one thousand books, pamphlets, and tracts covered a wide variety of themes, such as Islamic jurisprudence, history, Islamic mysticism, conduct of state, hijrah and jihad, eulogies, and Prophetic praise poetry.<sup>12</sup> This unprecedented literary explosion had a long-lasting impact in promoting ideas, according to the literate higher social status, and educating the masses

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<sup>12</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, *Jihad in West Africa During the Age of Revolutions* (Athens, Ohio University Press 2016), 100.

of the North. Often Islamic instructions regarding rituals or creed would be written in poetry to facilitate memorization by students and common people.

As almost all scholars that document the history of the Sokoto jihad have written, Shehu Usmanu Danfodio's jihad was waged as an Islamic revivalist movement. After two decades of demanding fair treatment of Muslims from the Sarki (King) of Gobir, Bawa Jan Gwarzo, issues became heated between the now very influential scholar, who had steadily grown many students and followers over the years, and the Hausa Sarki. Thus, his jihad, from the onset, was aimed at reforming the Muslim society to renew and purify its faith according to the understanding and teachings of the Shehu.<sup>13</sup>

Shehu Usmanu Dan Fodio's movement inspired a number of jihads in the region. A notable example was the jihad of al Hajj Umar Taal, a Tukolor from the Senegambia region. In the 1850s, Umar Taal returned from pilgrimage claiming to have received spiritual authority over the West African Tijani Sufi order. From the 1850s to 1860s, he conquered three Bambara kingdoms. After Tal's defeat by the French at Médine in 1857 and the subsequent defeat of his son in the 1880s, his followers fled westward spreading the influence of the Tijani order in Northern Nigeria. The role of the Sufi orders cannot be overstated in the spread of Islam in modern Nigeria. Shehu Usmanu Danfodio and his brother, Shehu Abdullahi Danfodio were Sufis of the Qadiriyyah Tariqah<sup>14</sup>. His son, Sultan Muhammad Bello, adopted the Tijjaniyah Tariqah like his close companion and in-law, al-Hajj Umar Taal. The Tijjaniyah order has a tremendous following in Nigeria, a phenomenon largely inspired by the visits of the Senegalese Tijjani sage and Sufi master, Sheikh Ibrahim Niass

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<sup>13</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, *Jihad in West Africa During the Age of Revolutions* (Athens, Ohio University Press 2016), 74.

<sup>14</sup> Tariqah: Sufi Path, referring to Sufi brotherhood or fraternity (pl. *Turuq*)

of Kaolack. Other orders include, the older Qadiriyyah, from which the Tijjaniyah branched out, and the Sammaniyyah.

Although European powers led to the decline of the Umarian state and the Sokoto Caliphate, colonial rule did little to stop the spread of Islam in West Africa. The British used anti-slavery rhetoric as they began their conquest of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1897. The Sokoto Caliphate ended in 1903, when British troops conquered the state. Colonial authorities attempted to maintain the established social order and ruled through Northern Nigerian emirs. Despite the efforts of colonial authorities, colonialism had far reaching effects on Northern Nigerian Muslim society. Modern communication and transportation infrastructure facilitated increased exchange between Muslim communities. As a result, Islam began to spread rapidly in new urban centers and regions such as Yoruba land. Similarly, in the French Sudan, Islam spread in rates far greater than the previous centuries. Although Muslims lost political power, Muslim communities made rapid inroads in the West Africa during the early 20th century.

## **BORGU**

The Dyula, also later known as the Wangarawa were an ethnic group of merchants, as well as adventurous travelers and Muslim missionaries that were identified from the Malian empire period. According to Akinwumi and Raji,

“We are not sure exactly when did the Wangarawa get established in Borg. But from the documentary evidence available, it was probably in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Borgu seemed to have attracted the attention of the Wangara because it lay along the trade routes. Principally, three major trade routes passed through Borgu. To the north, we have the trade

route from Salaga to Illo; another from Salaga to Nupe land; and third from Parakou through Perere and Godebere both to the north and the south. All the major cities along the routes – Djougou, Kouande, Kandi, Illo, Nikki, and Kaiama – boasted Muslim (Wangara) communities”.<sup>15</sup>

By this account Islam was introduced to the Borgu area in the fifteenth century. This was during the height of the Songhai empire, whose southeastern frontiers extended to the area of Borgu in the Northwestern part of today’s Nigeria.

This assertion was further made by Hiskett<sup>16</sup>, who linked their foray into Borgu with the decline of the Songhay empire around 1590. The Wangara acquired the group label Wangarawa apparently from the time of their itinerant activities in Hausa land. Prior to that they were known as the Dyula of the Malian, and later, Songhay empire. They became part of the populations of Borgu, Kebbi, Katsina, and Kano till this day.

## **OYO EMPIRE**

The Yoruba ethnic group of Southwestern Nigeria is the second largest group after the Hausa/Fulani. Their geographical location comprises six states of modern Nigeria, out of which four have majority of Muslims, even though the numerical margin between Muslims and Christians in this region is rather slim. Evidence of the introduction of Islam into this region has been richly preserved in the legacy of terminologies and expressions whose

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<sup>15</sup> Akinwumi, Olayemi, and Adesina Y. Raji. "The Wangarawa Factor in The History of Nigerian Islam: The Example of Kano And Borgu." *Islamic Studies* 29, no. 4 (1990): 380. [www.jstor.org/stable/20840012](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20840012).

<sup>16</sup> Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (New York: Longman Inc, 1984), 46.

origins are Arabic or Bambara. The term Yoruba, itself, was first used by a famous Muslim scholar. As Peel notes,

“... Christians who defined Yoruba language and history, such as Bishop S. A. Crowther and the Rev. Samuel Johnson, were ready to adopt and adapt Muslim materials, including the very name “Yoruba” itself, which passed from its distant Arabic origins through the Islamic polities of the savannah to designate the people of the Oyo Kingdom. The very first specific reference to them comes from Mali, by Ahmad Baba of Timbuktu (d. 1627), and only later from Hausa land. It is an irony that Muslim Yoruba later adopted a tradition of having migrated from the Islamic east, when their Islam actually first came from the west, along the trade corridor provided by the river Niger. A trace of that origin survived in the common Yoruba name for Muslims, Imale, even though the memory of what it had once signified was lost.”<sup>17</sup>

This nomenclature, “Yoruba”, would come to be used to refer to all cultural groups in the Southwestern part of Nigeria, who, hitherto had been identified by their primary groups of Egba, Ijebu, Akoko, Okun, Ile Ife, Eko, and so on.

### **DIVERSE FACTORS FOR THE GROWTH AND SPREAD OF ISLAM**

From the foregoing brief sampling, it appears evident that the historical factors that accounted for the introduction, spread, and growth of Islam in Nigeria are diverse. Contrary to the narrative that Islam was primarily spread by military jihad, we have argued here that this method accounts for only one reason for its spread. It is a matter of historical fact that

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<sup>17</sup> Peel, J. D. Y. *Christianity, Islam, and Orisa-Religion: Three Traditions in Comparison and Interaction*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016. 150.  
[www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ffjng5](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ffjng5)

jihad was indeed carried out to expand Islamic territories. This, after all, was standard policy for state preservation, regardless of creed or culture.

We have cited references that indicate that the most influential factors in Islam's spread in Nigeria, as with the West African region, were trade, the activities of Sufi brotherhoods, missionary activities, as well as literacy. We also suggest that the impact of jihad in the spread of Islam in Nigeria tends to be over-amplified in academic and formal discourses, while other, arguably more influential factors, are not as seriously acknowledged. While this exploration is only a brief inquiry, it is hoped that more research and historical analyses on this contention will continue to provoke greater debate and bring more clarity to this discourse. Reasoned discourse in this, and other national narratives relating to history, culture, economy, religion, diversity, resource control, regional role, security, poverty, education, and future directions remain relevant in influencing the nature of nation that Nigeria will be in the coming years of its second century since the amalgamation of its northern and southern protectorates.

## CHAPTER 2:

### JIHAD AND ISLAMIC SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS IN NIGERIA

The Arabic term Jihad comes from the trilateral root *jhd*, which means “to struggle” or “to strive”. In the Qur’an, the term is used broadly to refer to different aspects of struggle. In different parts of the Qur’an, the term means for one to struggle, or be dedicated to efforts in the cause of God. The Qur’an mentions “those who do jihad in Us (God)” referring to those who strive in the causes of God, or in the path of God.

But as for those who strive for Us, We shall surely guide them in Our ways. Truly God is with the virtuous. (Qur’an 29:69).

*And strive for God as He should be striven for. He has chosen you and has placed no hardship for you in the religion, the creed of your father Abraham. He named you Muslims aforetime, and herein, that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and that you may be a witnesses for mankind. So, perform the prayer and give alms, and hold fast to God. He is your Master. How excellent a Master, and how excellent a Helper!* (Qur’an 22:78)

These forms of jihad include any exertion of effort in extending compassion, charity, propagation of the message of Islam, standing up for justice, or speaking truth to power.

The Qur’an uses two other words to refer to warfare or military conflict. The term *Qitāl* (قتال) refers to military engagement, which involves at least two parties. It is in this sense that the term is used in the following verse:

*So, fight, for the sake of God, against those who fight against you. And do not aggress (against the other). Verily, God does not love the aggressors.* (Qur’an 2:192).

In another chapter of the Qur'an, we see the term *Qitāl* (قتال) being used in the context of intra-faith warfare between one Muslim group against another Muslim group that is deemed to be oppressive.

*If two parties among the believers fall to fighting, make peace between them. If one of them aggresses against the other, fight those who aggress until they return to God's command. And if they return, then make peace between them with justice and act equitably. Truly God loves the just.* (Qur'an 49:9).

Another term that the Qur'an uses is *Harb*, which literally means warfare.

In the Hadith literature, which comprise the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, we find that jihad is applied to a variety of types of action. When the Prophet was asked about the best kind of jihad, he replied:

“A word of truth before an oppressive ruler”<sup>18</sup>

The Prophet was also reported to have said:

“... the one who engages in jihad (*mujāhid*) is he who stives against himself for the sake of God, and the one who emigrates (*muhājir*) is he who abandons evil deeds and sinfulness.”<sup>19</sup>

In another narration,

‘Aisha asked, “O Messenger of Allah, we see jihad as the best of deeds, so shouldn't we join it?” He replied, “Hajj is the most excellent of all jihad (for women).”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> An-Nasa'i, no. 4209

<sup>19</sup> Sahih Ibn Hibban, no.4862, Tirmidhi, Ahmad, cited in Jalal Abualrub, *Holy Wars, Crusades, and Jihad* (Madinah Publishers and Distributors, 2002), p.80, as referenced in Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, *Jihad and the Spread of Islam* (Islamic Education Trust, 2009), p.3

<sup>20</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Hajj, no.2784, cited in Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, *Jihad and the Spread of Islam* (Islamic Education Trust, 2009), p.3

Here we see that the term jihad is used to mean both warfare, as evident in ‘Aisha’s use of the term, as well as the Muslim sacred pilgrimage of *Hajj*, as used by the Prophet.

On another occasion, when a young man asked to join a Muslim army setting out for an expedition, the Prophet instructed him to go serve his parents, and that would be his *jihad*.

Muslim jurists, however, have used the term jihad to refer to *Qital*, or the military form of *jihad*. This is evident in the titles that they give to chapter dealing with warfare in classical books of Islamic jurisprudence. They also developed the concepts of *Dār al-Harb* and *Dār al-Islam*, meaning the Abode of War and the Abode of Islam. The Abode of Islam referred to territories controlled by Muslims, while the Abode of War referred to territories not controlled by Muslims. These concepts of Dar al-Harb and Dar al-Islam are not Qur’anic or Hadithic concepts. Rather, they were concepts developed by Islamic jurists to articulate paradigms for interaction between Muslim states and communities with non-Muslim states and communities of the world.

Indications that these formulations were not directly based on source text, but rather juristic classifications, is found in the fact that jurists differed regarding the idea. Others introduced alternative categories, such as *Dār al-Sulh* (the Abode of Treaty), *Dār al-Da’wah* (the Abode of Islamic propagation), and so on.

## **WEST AFRICAN JURISTIC PARADIGMS ON THE CONCEPT OF JIHAD**

Now, let us pay special attention to the juristic views of the Maliki madhhab, which is the dominant juristic school in West Africa and the Maghreb. West Africa has had a rich history of Islamic scholarship, and the region has produced many jurists of note over the centuries. These towering figures have influenced Islamic thought for centuries in this

region. However, some of the scholars whose influence loomed large over the region for a long time have non-West African backgrounds.

## **PRE-COLONIAL ERA**

### **Muhammad bin Abdulkarīm Al-Maghīlī**

Muhammad bin Abdulkarīm Al- Maghīlī (d. 1505) was an Algerian scholar of the Maliki madhhab. He was very influential in shaping the political philosophy of Muslim controlled kingdoms and empires in West Africa, particularly Kano and Songhay. Having traveled earlier to Fez, Morocco, Al- Maghīlī developed a very antagonistic view towards non-Muslim citizens of Muslim lands. This appears to have been as a result of the trauma felt by Muslims from the Spanish inquisitions just across the straits of Gibraltar, during the latter part of the fifteenth century. Such animosity led Al- Maghīlī to instigate an uprising against the Jews of Tamantit in South-central Algeria. As a result, their synagogue was destroyed, and they were driven out of Tamantit, where they had settled for many generations.

Al- Maghīlī's xenophobic views were opposed by other Muslim jurists, whose opposition resulted in Al-Maghili's flight from Algeria. He was forced to flee to Kano, which was an important city along the trade route of the Sahara. Kano, which was the most ancient city in Northern Nigeria, was ruled at the time by the Hausa king, Muhammadu Rumfa. Al-Maghīlī soon became a friend and close confidant of the king, who equally provided accommodation for the scholar in the Kano palace. As advisor to the Court, Al- Maghīlī would prove to become very influential in laying down principles of governance that would be adhered to for centuries. Some of his policy doctrines were documented in the form of

the book he authored, “*Taj al-dīn fī ma yajibu ‘ala al-muluk*” (The crown of the faith in what is the obligation upon kings). In addition to championing his very hardline views against non-Muslims, he also promoted the notion that he was the *mujaddid* (religious renovator) for Muslims in his epoch. This idea is in reference to a saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, that a reviver of the faith shall appear every century to revive the faith in Muslim lands. In addition, he also introduced the idea of Muslims waging war against other Muslims, which was a novel idea to West African Muslims at the time. Al- Maghīlī later left Kano and settled in Gao. There, just as he had done in Kano, he became the religious court advisor to Askiya Muhammad, the King of the Songhay empire. In Songhay, the jurist continued to propagate similar ideologies to those he had spread previously in Kano. Thus, Al- Maghīlī, though a North African, he left a lasting impact on the religious thought, identity, culture, and policies of West African Islamic institutions of state.

### **Elhadj Oumar El-Foutiyu Tal (d. 1864)**

Sheikh Omar Tal was from the Sene-Gambia region of West Africa, an accomplished scholar, and Sufi master of the Tijjaniyah order. He is credited with introducing the Tijjaniyah Sufi order to the region of present-day Nigeria. In the age before colonialist national boundaries within West Africa, interactions were more fluid between different regions. These facilitated trade, migration, learning, and cultural cross-fertilization. Though himself a jurist of the Maliki school of thought, Sheikh Omar Tal put less emphasis on a rigid adherence to a particular school of thought. He joined the jihad of Shehu Usmanu

Danfodio, and himself conquered lands. He established the Toucouleur empire that was short-lived. His empire fell to the French colonization project in 1890.

### **Shehu Usmanu Danfodio (d. )**

Shehu Usmanu Danfodio was a Fulani scholar belonging to a scholarly family. Danfodio's jihad was triggered by an attack initiated against his followers by the Hausa King. The Shehu's retaliation would soon snowball into an all-out uprising against the Hausa rulers of the city-states of what would become Northern Nigeria and parts of Niger. Interestingly, Danfodio's jihad was not against non-Muslims, in order to convert them. Rather, his jihad was primarily against fellow Muslim, albeit Hausa rulers, whom the Fulanis referred to as "*Habe*", in order to revive and reform Muslim societies. Danfodio's jihad project received critique and condemnation from a contemporary scholar and political leader, Sheikh Muhammad al-Ameen al-Kanemi, of the Kanem-Bornu empire in North-Eastern Nigeria.

### **Sheikh Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi**

Al-Kanemi led armies of fellow Borno people to repel the advances of the Sokoto jihadists, and reclaimed lands that had been conquered by the Sokoto armies. He also wrote polemical letters to Danfodio challenging him for waging jihad on fellow Muslims, such as those of the Kanem-Bornu, in whose lands the history of Islam was far more ancient than in Sokoto. He also sent letters critiquing some of Danfodio's policies. These letter correspondences remain an important legacy of the intra-Muslim debates of the time on the basis and conduct of the Sokoto jihad.

## **CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS**

### **Izalat al Bid'ah Movement**

One of the most influential Islamic movements in Nigeria today is the *Jama'atu Izalati Bid'ah wa Iqamatis Sunnah* (The community for the destruction of religious innovations and the establishment of the Prophetic model). The *Izala*, as they are popularly referred to, adhere to the theological school of the Salafi or Wahhabi tendency. The group arose to challenge cultural practices that were deemed contrary to Islamic tenets, as well as to oppose the Sufi brotherhoods, whose practices were deemed to be *bid'ah* (condemnable religious innovation).

### **Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN)**

Another group that formed around the same time as the *Izala* group is the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN). The IMN is a movement led by Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky. This movement was inspired by the Iranian revolution of 1979 and became the flag bearer of the Shiite community in Nigeria. The group aligned itself politically with the Iranian state, then subsequently adopted the Shiite sectarian ideology as creed. The group for long opposed state authority, declaring such as illegitimate and a *kufir* system.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **THE BOKO HARAM MOVEMENT: HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY**

#### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: 2002 - 2009**

This chapter explores the historical background, nature, and factors responsible for the emergence and growth of the Boko Haram Organization and Movement'

The Boko Haram movement, or Jama'atu ahl al-sunnati li al-da'wati wa al-jihad, was founded by Muhammad Yusuf in 2002 in the ancient Northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri. Muhammad Yusuf was born in the Yobe region of the old Borno State and grew up in Maiduguri. Although born to a father who was a member of the Tijjaniyah Sufi tariqah<sup>21</sup>, Yusuf would explore different Islamic ideological tendencies, including Shi'ism, before settling on Wahhabi Salafi tradition under the mentorship and tutelage of Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam<sup>22</sup>. Sheikh Ja'afar was an influential member of the Wahhabi movement, Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'ah wa Iqamatis Sunnah (the group for the removal of heretical novelties and the establishment of prophetic practice), known commonly as the "Izala".

In 1999, Nigeria, returned to a democratic system of government after a decade and a half of military rule. After obtaining political independence from the colonizing British Empire in 1960, Nigeria experienced six years of parliamentary democracy which was interrupted by a military coup in 1966. This saw the country governed by the military until 1979, when

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<sup>21</sup> Tariqah: Sufi path (brotherhood). The Tijjaniyah tariqah is the largest Sufi sect in Nigeria.

<sup>22</sup> Hilary Matfess, 'Boko Haram: History and Context', Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History (October 2017)

a Muslim, Shehu Shagari was elected civilian president. This second republic was to be toppled again by the military at beginning of 1984. Democracy would not return to the country until 1999. The checkered history of Nigeria's political leadership, with an unstable democracy, lengthy and intermittent military interventions, underdeveloped economic potential, inter-religious tension and mutual suspicion, as well as the public's general disdain for a political class that was perceived as corrupt and self-serving, helped to enable an environment that was conducive for the conception of what would become the most lethal terrorist organization in the modern history of West Africa.

A number Muslim politicians exploited the failure of the Nigerian State to campaign for office on the promise to ensure full implementation of the Shari'ah law, which had been in operation in the northern states, albeit partially. This proved to be an effective slogan in the Muslim North, where a large portion of the masses held the sentiment that the full implementation of Shari'ah law would ensure the eradication of corruption, and the entrenchment of morality in society. Ahmad Sani Yarima, who would be elected governor of Zamfara State, became the most visible politician championing this cause.

Muhammad Yusuf, along with other leaders and activists from among the Izala movement, was one of the agitators for this cause. He traveled and met with politicians to pressure them to pursue the Shari'ah agenda in exchange for wooing supporters to the politicians. This campaign became the basis for the relationship between Yusuf and Ali Modu Sheriff, a Borno politician, who would become the governor of the state. Ali Modu Sheriff enjoyed Yusuf's support in exchange for assurances to implement Shari'ah. He even appointed a Boko Haram financier, Buji Foi, into his cabinet as Commissioner of Religious Affairs –

an influential position. Sheriff is also widely suspected as a key political actor and financier in the formation of the Boko Haram sect.

By the time the purported Shari’ah-supporting governors had been in power for two years with little more than lip-service and cosmetic Shari’ah credentials to show, Muhammad Yusuf started becoming disillusioned about the sincerity and commitment of governors like Ali Sheriff to the Shari’ah implementation project. It was around this time that Yusuf established a mosque, Masjid Ibn Taymiyyah in the railway quarters area of Maiduguri. The mosque served as a community center for the group, and a place for aid and refuge for needy members of the group.<sup>23</sup>

Around the same time, a group of youth who had patronized the Indimi mosque in Maiduguri, retreated out of the city, apparently out of dissatisfaction with what they perceived as the failure of the Borno State government to implement Shari’ah law fully. They formed an idealistic community based on puritanical Salafi interpretations of Islam. The Nigerian press soon labeled them as the “Nigerian Taliban”. The Nigerian police would lay a siege on the community on New Year’s Eve of 2004, killing most of its members, who numbered about seventy, as well as their leader, one Muhammad Ali.<sup>24</sup> Muhammad Ali was a supporter, and, according to some, a mentor, of Muhammad Yusuf’s. The few survivors of that siege would join Muhammad Yusuf at the Ibn Taymiyyah mosque, which had become his base for preaching, social welfare interventions, and recruitment. It is this same year, 2004, that marked the formal establishment of the Jama’atu ahl al-sunnati li al-da’wati wa al-jihad as a militant “offshoot of Ahlus Sunna”.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid p.4

<sup>24</sup> Andrea Brigaglia, ‘Ja’far Mahmoud Adam, Mohammed Yusuf and Al-Muntada Islamic Trust: Reflections on the Genesis of the Boko Haram phenomenon in Nigeria.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid p.38

Yusuf's rhetoric grew more aggressive with his establishment of his own base at the Ibn Taymiyyah mosque. In the words of a prominent Nigerian journalist and former presidential adviser,

[Yusuf's] daring and scathing attacks on the government portrayed Yusuf as a fiery and intrepid cleric and this obviously endeared him to the common people, who began to see him as a champion of the downtrodden. Members of the political elite in Maiduguri were, however, taking note, and Yusuf was considered no more than a nuisance ... His initial followership was largely from among secondary school students and primary school pupils who abandoned their studies ... As he got more followers, his power and influence also grew.<sup>26</sup>

Following the destruction of the "Nigerian Taliban" camp near the border of Niger<sup>27</sup> and Yobe State, the Nigerian government declared Yusuf wanted. His connection with the camp has been debated by commentators. Nevertheless, fearing arrest by the Nigerian authorities, Yusuf fled to Saudi Arabia, purportedly to perform 'Umrah, the Muslim "lesser" pilgrimage. He would remain in Saudi Arabia until after the Hajj season. During the season of the Hajj, Yusuf was met by Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam in Makkah, where the latter encouraged him yet to denounce his extremist preaching.

In earlier years, Yusuf had been known as a protégé of Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam, perhaps the most effective and influential Salafi scholar and preacher in Northern Nigeria from around the mid-1990s to 2007, when he was assassinated. His assassination would

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<sup>26</sup> Olusegun Adeniyi, 'Power, Politics and Death: A Front-Row Account of Nigeria under the Late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua (Lagos: Kachifo, 2011), 107; see also M. Smith, Boko Haram, 74-77. Quoted in Alexander Thurston, 'Boko Haram: The History of An African Jihadis Movement, Princeton University Press, 2018, p.88

<sup>27</sup> Niger, the country bordering Nigeria directly to the North.

later be attributed to the Boko Haram sect, as he had become perhaps the strongest Salafi critic of his former protégé, Muhammad Yusuf, and his movement.

Adam was a graduate of the Islamic University, Madinah, Saudi Arabia, which remains the premier institution producing scholars and ideologues of the Salafist or Wahhabi ideological tendency. In terms of theological orientation and doctrine, Yusuf was a Salafi and proponent of a strict, and, largely, literal interpretation of Islam.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2007, Sheikh Ja'afar gave a speech in a mosque in the city of Bauchi, which is in the Northeastern state of the same name. In the speech, which would be his last public lecture, he denounced Yusuf's views that Western education is haram. He demonstrated the contradictions of such an ideology with Yusuf's own behavior in his personal life, such as driving around in vehicles with government issued plate numbers – a government that he condemns as illegitimate and false. He mentioned how Yusuf would take his wives to government hospitals for delivery. He even narrated how he advised Yusuf, when they met at Hajj, to agree to writing statements before officials of the Borno State government, denouncing his views about the illegitimacy of the government and the prohibition of obtaining western education. He narrated how, based on his (Ja'afar's) advice, Yusuf got a Muslim lawyer to help him draft the statements. Ja'afar pointed out the contradiction between Yusuf's condemnation of Western education and his engaging a Western educated lawyer to draft his statements. Ja'afar also repeatedly hinted at his intention to reveal more strange information about Muhammad Yusuf subsequently. The following morning, Ja'afar was assassinated while leading the *fajr* (dawn) prayers in the Al-Muntada' al Islami Mosque in Kano.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid p. 40-41

After the brokered Hajj truce, Yusuf returned to Nigeria without hassle or harassment from the government. He continued his activities, without denouncing his earlier views. A couple of years after Ja'afar's assassination, a showdown would ensue between the Boko Haram and the government, that would shoot the group into international recognition. In July of 2009, some Boko Haram followers were in motorcycle convoy heading to a burial of one of their members when they were stopped by the police for not wearing helmets as required by a statute. This stop triggered some unfavorable response from the Boko Haram, and the situation ended in the shooting death of some of the members of the sect.

In response to this incident, Muhammad Yusuf released a series of videos as an open letter to key leaders of the government, whom he named, starting from the President, Umaru Musa Yar'adua, and including the service chiefs of the army, navy, and air force, the inspector general of police, the governor of Borno State, and others. In the videos, Yusuf lamented the unwarranted killing of their followers, declaring them as martyrs whose lives were of more value than that of all the government officials, and declaring that they shall not forgive the killings. He repeated severally that they shall seek revenge for the deaths. This marked a turning point in the confrontations between the group and the state. Hitherto, their opposition had been ideological and political. With this declaration, Yusuf boldly threatened the Nigerian state with violent retaliation for the killing of his followers.

Thereafter, starting from 27<sup>th</sup> July 2009, the group launched attacks on police stations and personnel, starting in Bauchi, then subsequently Gombe, and Maiduguri. The Nigerian government responded with a brutal five-day crack down, besieging the Boko Haram residential areas, and killing as many about one thousand people.

One researcher noted that:

in Maiduguri the army and especially the police rounded up and executed suspects, without any due process, and at times inflicted what looked like collective punishment on the local population ... The “mopping up” operation also claimed many lives and generated resentment. This was mainly performed by the police, who relied on informants – usually the ward head (mai anguwa) within each neighborhood – whom the Borno State governor and security forces ordered to point out the houses where Yusufiyya members were residing.<sup>29</sup>

Many innocent people were killed in this process, and this ensured a deep-seated resentment against the Nigerian military, and inspired sympathy for the group. Muhammad Yusuf was captured by the Nigerian army during the attacks, then handed over to the police. The Nigerian police interrogated Yusuf. This was recorded in a short video that soon started being circulated in the social media. After the interrogation, the police executed Yusuf without trial. One of Boko Haram’s high-profile member and financier, Buji Foi, was also executed. Buji Foi was at the time the Commissioner for Religious Affairs in the Borno State cabinet.

With this summary execution of Muhammad Yusuf by the police, his legend grew, his remaining followers and sympathizers elevated his status with martyrdom, and the seeds for more vicious and spectacular attacks by the insurgents were sewn.

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<sup>29</sup> A. Higazi, ‘The Origins and Transformation of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Northern Nigeria’, *Politique Africaine*, 130 (2013): 137-164, cited in Matfess, ‘Boko Haram: History and Context’

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **REFUTATION OF THE BOKO HARAM BY NIGERIAN SCHOLARS**

#### **Sheikh Ja'far Mahmud Adam (d. 2007)**

Sheikh Ja'far Mahmud Adam was a Saudi trained scholar, and perhaps the most influential Salafi scholar in Nigeria during the decade of the 2000s. He was at some time a teacher to the founder of the Boko Haram movement, Muhammad Yusuf. However, he came to be one of Yusuf's most ardent critics. He argued against Yusuf's views that western education was forbidden, as well as many controversial and exclusivist ideas spread by Yusuf. Sheikh Ja'far was assassinated in 2007 while leading dawn prayers in his mosque in Kano by assailants who would years later be confirmed to be Boko Haram elements.

#### **Sheikh Muhammad Auwal Adam Albani of Zaria (d. 2014)**

Sheikh Awwal took on the nickname "Albani" due to his deep admiration for the famous contemporary Hadith scholar and Salafi juggernaut, Sheikh Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani. Sheikh Albani of Zaria was equally prolific in countering the violent extremist tendencies and preaching of Muhammad Yusuf. Sheikh Albani Zaria was thoroughly educated in western institutions, having qualified as an engineer. His education and dexterity in both western and Islamic paradigms made him an especially effective polemicist. Sadly, he also met his death in a spectacular assassination when he and his wife were ambushed on the road by gunmen who sprayed them with bullets. Boko Haram would later be identified as being responsible for the assassinations.

**Dr. Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami**

Sheikh Isa Pantami is a leading scholar, Qur'anic exegete, and Nigeria's current Minister of Communications and the Digital Economy. Trained in the traditional Islamic madrasah system, Sheikh Pantami acquired western education culminating in a doctoral degree in computer science from a British university. He had a number of debates with the founder of the Boko Haram movement and was successful in converting many of Yusuf's followers from their violent extremist ideology.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **THE DA’WAH INSTITUTE OF NIGERIA STRATEGY**

The Da’wah Institute is one of the leading Islamic research and training establishments in the country. In this chapter, we shall discuss the approach of the Da’wah Institute of Nigeria to countering violent extremist ideologies, with special reference to the Boko Haram movement, which is the subject of inquiry of this research. We shall examine the Institute’s philosophy of pedagogy, methodology and training programs, success stories, and challenges.

#### **PROFILE OF THE DA’WAH INSITUTE OF NIGERIA (DIN)**

The Da’wah<sup>30</sup> Institute of Nigeria (DIN) is the research and Islamic propagation department of the Islamic Education Trust, based in Minna, North-central Nigeria. The Islamic Education Trust was founded in 1969 by the trio of British-Nigerian educator and author, Hajjiya Bridget Aisha Lemu, her husband Justice Sheikh Ahmed Lemu, and their colleague and educator, Alhaji Sani Ashafa Suleiman. The organization was originally founded as a resource and support base for Islamic studies educators in the Nigerian public education system, and for the propagation of the Islamic faith. The operations of the organization progressively expanded to establishing Islamic educational institutions, publication, training, and organizing conferences and seminars.

One of the five divisions of the Islamic Education Trust is the Da’wah Institute of Nigeria (DIN). The Da’wah Institute comprises the Da’wah Research Unit and the Grassroots

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<sup>30</sup> *Da’wah*: Arabic term meaning “invitation”, preaching, calling to the Islamic faith. It is similar to the Christian concept of proselytization.

Da'wah Unit. The Grassroots Da'wah Unit conducts preaching activities in Nigerian villages and rural suburbs of metropolitan areas. The other unit, the Research unit, is the subject of the interest of this research. Its target audience includes the Western educated Muslims in all spheres of life. Its programs and trainings have been developed over the years for Muslims in various levels of educational institutions, the media, the military, court systems, and civil society. The DIN research unit has carved out a niche as a capacity building resource and think tank for several other Muslim organizations including the country's highest umbrella Muslim body, the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA). The Supreme Council is headed by the Sultan of Sokoto, who is considered the leader of Nigerian Muslims. The Sultanate is always led by a descendant of the 7<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century reformer and jihadist, Shehu Usmanu Danfodio, who established the Sokoto Caliphate in 1704 CE. Over the last three decades, the Da'wah Institute has established itself as a unique and effective resource for intellectual direction and intervention for Nigerian Muslim organizations, as well as organizations in the West African region and beyond. They have conducted countless trainings in several countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Australia.

The Da'wah Institute has also distributed hundreds of thousands of publications addressing critical topics on the themes of jihad and violence, relationship of Muslims with non-Muslims, gender, Islamic law, history, terrorism, and best practices for Islamic propagation.

## **RATIONALE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE DIN TRAINING MODEL**

One of the significant curiosities of observers of the recruitment trends in extremist organizations is the manner in which average citizens who seem to be living stable lives of means are attracted to terrorist organizations, such as the Boko Haram. Likewise, it is not uncommon to witness cases of Muslims who hold moderate and balanced views on so many aspects of their faith ironically supporting certain extremist views of terrorist rhetoric, or at least having sympathies for same. To help explain this anomaly, it is pertinent to consider that extremist ideologues, such as the Muhammad Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram, string together several grievances in their preaching. Such grievances include disillusionment with failed government, poverty, glaring corruption and embezzlement of public funds by government officials, illiteracy, and a myriad of injustices and impunity. These groups then lace their extremist religious rhetoric with these genuine critiques about the social and economic injustices perpetuated by the ruling elite. This way, their extremist messaging receives audience from an already justifiably disgruntled populace. When the factors of youthful exuberance and idealism are added to this dangerous cocktail of grievances, what results is the kind of explosive civil strife and dangerous insurgency that the Boko Haram has been able to sustain against the Nigerian State.

Furthermore, the ideology of the Boko Haram is not at all a novel phenomenon in the history of Islamic discourses. Their rather intolerant positions on a variety of issues, such as war, the treatment of women, slavery, hostile relations with non-Muslims, or opposition to political systems that are not “Islamic” are not novel. Some of these issues have been debated by Muslim jurists and theologians since the era of the earliest scholars and philosophers of Islam. In fact, some the ultra puritanical views espoused by the Boko

Haram are reminiscent of the views of the rebellious *Khawarij*<sup>31</sup> sect that emerged in the very first century of Islam.

The point of this prelude to the Da'wah Institute's philosophical approach to countering extremist narrative is to aid the appreciation that, if the extremist ideology of such groups are countered without relating same to the other ideas, the result of such counter narrative efforts appear to be not so effective. For this reason, the Da'wah Institute developed a pedagogy based on triangulation in order to address the intellectual challenge of groups such as Boko Haram from a more holistic, coherent, and multi-perspectival methodology.

### **TRIANGULATION: APPLICATION IN THE DIN TRAINING MODEL**

The idea of triangulation in research is a system of strengthening the outcome of research or inquiry by employing different methodologies to arrive at a conclusion. If the same conclusion is arrived at through the different methods, then the conclusion is greatly strengthened by the multi-methodological instrumentality deployed. At the same time, different means or methods can serve as quality control for each other, thereby improving the accuracy of the conclusions from the subject matter of inquiry.<sup>32</sup> The Da'wah Institute utilizes a triangulation approach as its critical tool in addressing the numerous topics of inquiry in its research, training, and publications. The DIN methodology triangle comprises Usul al-Fiqh, Qawā'id al-Fiqhiyyah, and Māqasid al-Shari'ah. These three tools of inquiry serve as the filters through which rulings on religious matters are to pass to attain greater

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<sup>31</sup> Khawarij (sing. Kharij) literally "those that exited", refers to the group considered to be the first ideological splinter faction in the early history of Islam. Their interpretations of the Qur'an were very rigid and literalistic, and they went to murderous violent extents to enforce their beliefs.

<sup>32</sup> Noble H, Heale R, Triangulation in research, with examples Evidence-Based Nursing 2019;22:67-68.

compliance or congruence with principles that have come to be universally agreed upon by Muslim jurists over the course of centuries of intellectual contributions.

### **A. Usul al-Fiqh:**

Usul al-Fiqh refers to the source principles of Islamic law. Usul al-Fiqh is in essence Islamic legal theory, and it defines the primary sources of Islamic law, the secondary sources, and the principles for deriving laws from these sources.

The primary sources of Islamic law are universally agreed upon by all juristic schools (*madhhab*) to be:

1. The Qur'an, and
2. The *Sunnah* (Prophetic traditions) as recorded in books of Hadith.

Secondary sources of Islamic law include:

1. *Ijma'* – consensus of jurists
2. *Qiyās* – deductive analogy from primary sources
3. *'Amalu ahl al-Madinah* – the received practice of the Madinan Muslim community
4. *Maslaha* – public good or interest
5. *Fatwa* or *Ra'y* of Sahaba – legal ruling or juristic verdict of a Companion of the Prophet
6. *Istis'hāb* – presumption of continuity in legal ruling
7. *Istih'sān* – juristic preference in the interest of keeping with the spirit of the law
8. *Sadd al-Dharā'i* – blocking the pretext or facility to that which is forbidden by law
9. *'Urf* – Cultural norm, which is taken into consideration in legislation
10. *Shar' man qablana* – the legal precedent established by faith communities preceding Muslims, namely the laws of the Ahl al-Kitab (people of the Book,

namely, Jews and Christians). Employed in the absence of clear and contrary legislation from the Islamic era.

As a whole, *usul al-fiqh* guides the process by which rulings are derived. They provide a hierarchy of sources of law by order of priority or precedence. They take into account the text, the context, the exegesis, and hermeneutics of sacred scripture. Obviously, for a qualified *Faqih* (jurist) will have requisite knowledge of the sciences of the Qur'an, the Hadith, expertise in the Arabic language, and a host of other competencies befitting his or her scholarly role.

### **B. Qawā'id al-Fiqhiyyah:**

The second filter of the triangulation, *Qawā'id al-Fiqhiyyah*, refers to the code and legal maxims of Islamic jurisprudence. They are expressed in general statements that serve as guiding principles for the jurist to keep in mind while formulating legal positions or interpreting the faith, and in particular, aspects that are of a legal nature. These legal maxims are all drawn from the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. There are five universal maxims that serve as the Jurist's code, viz:

1. *Al umuru bi maqāsidihā* – Matters are judged according to their intents or purposes.

This is based on, among other texts, the Prophetic statement that:

*“Actions are judged by intention ...”* (Sahih al-Bukhari)

The implication of this maxim is that intent or motive shall be taken into account when interpreting the law, or making judgments.

2. *Al yaqinu lā yazulu bi al shaqq* – Certainty is not overruled by doubt. This maxim establishes that judgements or rulings are to defer to conclusions based on certainty rather than contrarian conclusions that may be based on less certain premises.

3. *Al dhararu yuzāl* – Harm is to be eliminated. This maxim iterates the fundamental Islamic legal imperative of preventing harm. The converse implication of this principle is the promotion or establishment of the good.
4. *Al-mashaqqatu tujlab al-taysir* – Hardship begets facility. This maxim establishes the principle that extenuating circumstances, especially of the life-threatening nature, facilitates exceptions to the norm in the interest of preserving life or one of the objectives of Islamic law. Based on this principle, for instance, a person faced with a life threatening emergency may have recourse to consuming food that is considered *haram* (prohibited) under otherwise normal circumstances. This exception is granted in law in order to save a person’s life.
5. *Al ‘urf muhakkam* or *Al ‘ādatu muhakkamah* – Customary norm is a basis for legal rulings. This implies that the cultural conventions in a society are to be taken into account when a judge rules, or a jurist proffers responsa to juridical inquiries.

### **C. *Maqāsid al-Sharī‘ah*:**

The C. *Maqāsid al-Sharī‘ah* are the higher aims or objectives of Islamic law. While *usul al fiqh* addresses the “how” of deriving Islamic law, the *Maqāsid* constitute a listing of the “why” of Islamic law. Thus the subject of inquiry of *Maqāsid* seeks to articulate the intent of the divine law giver, God. The first five of these aims or objectives are universally considered as the grand *Maqasid*. However, jurists have expanded the list to address other broad and relevant *dharuriyyāt* (necessities), *hājiyyāt* (needs), and *tahsiniyyāt* (embellishments) of a Muslim’s life. Below is a

listing of the Maqāsid which aim to protect and enhance the following aspects of Muslim:

1. Faith
2. Life, health, and safety
3. Mind, intellect, education
4. Family, children, dignity, identity
5. Property, material prosperity
6. Social cohesion, unity, brotherhood
7. Animal rights, environment, and ecosystems
8. Justice
9. Freedoms
10. Dignity
11. Compassion, security, wisdom, peace, truth, knowledge, etc.

The methodology of triangulation requires that a ruling is tested or filtered through all three filters of *usul al-fiqh*, *qawā'id al-fiqhiyyah*, and *Maqāsid al-shari'ah* in order establish judgements with greater degrees of certainty as to the purpose and utility of such laws. Whereas a ruling that has gone through the filter of *usul al-fiqh* may be sound and serve the purpose, it being put through the second filter of *qawā'id al-fiqhiyya* serves to strengthen further such rulings. Adding the third filter of Maqāsid al-shari'ah ensures that rulings or fatwas have been rigorously and thoroughly tested, and their degree of certainty is extremely high. This is the method of triangulation as applied to deriving Islamic rulings.

## **Preventing Violent Extremism through Alternative Narrative (PVE-TAN)**

With support from other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Da’wah Institute has developed a strategy hinged on a rather robust pedagogy for training and enlightenment in counter narratives to violent extremism. The pedagogy is in two schema targeted at stakeholders and the recruitment field respectively. The stakeholders are the influencers and opinion leaders in the society. These include scholars, Imams, preachers, teachers of Islamic studies in the universities, community leaders, and mavens with access to critical social and political networks. The recruitment field refers to the members of the population, who are often influenced by the stakeholders.

### **PEDAGOGY OF TRAINING OF STAKEHOLDERS**

The training of stakeholders utilizes four pedagogical paradigms:

1. Critical Thinking Tools

This content is a prerequisite for any other training in the repertoire of the Da’wah Institute’s curriculum. It is an important foundational module that deals with the fundamentals and principles of deriving Islamic rulings based on triangulation as already articulated. The primary text or manual for this paradigm is the Institute’s publication titled:

*“Shari’ah Intelligence – The Basic Principles and Objectives of Islamic Jurisprudence”.*

In this module, participants are trained in the necessary intellectual tools and methodologies for analysing and deconstructing extremist arguments. Going

through the critical thinking tools content makes the reception of the rest of the modules easier for participants.

In this module, counter narratives to over two hundred Boko Haram arguments are taught. The primary resource text for this part of the module is the DIN publication titled:

*“Is Boko Haram? – Responses to 35 Commonly Raised Religious Arguments Against Conventional ‘Western Education’”*

## 2. Seerah (History of Prophet Muhammad)

In this part of the module, examples are brought from the life of Prophet Muhammad to support a more balanced, tolerant, and humane understanding of Islam. The primary text used for this tuition is the DIN publication titled:

*“Al-Ameen – 40+ Lessons for Building Bridges and Breaking Barriers to Peace from the Life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)”*.

The Da’wah Institute has found the Seerah to be a powerful tool in its training. This is because stories from the life of the Prophet are easy to understand, recall, and share. They require no steep knowledge of jurisprudence, and they are usually easy to remember. They are also powerful in that they demonstrate how the Prophet implemented Islamic teachings practically in his own life.

## 3. Realistic Alternatives to Violence:

The fact remains that there are a plethora of genuine grievances that drive young people to join violent extremist organizations such as the Boko Haram. DIN realizes that, while training stakeholders in counter narratives is crucial, it is not enough if

the real grievance drove them to Boko Haram in the first place is not addressed. Such grievances include marginalization, impact of corrupt government, poverty, illiteracy, insecurity, unemployment, and the lack of access to business opportunities.

To this end, participants are engaged in collective idea sharing. In these sessions, participants from various states of the country share their ideas of strategies that have worked in their localities.

#### 4. Leadership Management Skills and Concepts:

DIN realizes that the gatekeepers are tremendous assets in their communities. As leaders, they have valuable resources, such as access to critical networks, large followership, political influence, and even links with the business community. Thus this aspect of the module trains them in effective leadership and management skills, which in turn amplifies their impact on their communities. They become more proactive at problem solving even without the intervention of government. At the same time, they become more competent at engaging governmental institutions.

### **PEDAGOGY FOR THE RECRUITMENT FIELD:**

The recruitment field refers to the general populace who are primarily the passive recipients of knowledge. They include members of the general society who listen to sermons of gatekeepers, students, viewer and listeners of television, radio, and social media users. For this category of targets, DIN has found that the Seerah material has been the most effective resource. Its simple but effective quality is appreciable in that it serves as a reality check against extremist rhetoric. The Prophet's life is full of so many examples of kindness,

compassion, humanity, humility, justice, forgiveness, interfaith good relations and peaceful coexistence with the other. It is also important to note that the Seerah is a credible source that cannot be dismissed as modernist, as extremists are wont to label interpretations of Islam that hint at promoting good relations with non-Muslims. Obviously, the key resource for this aspect is the Seerah book cited above.

It is to be noted that no training is conducted for the recruitment field. Rather, they are the target audience for the gatekeepers or stakeholders who have received training. Thus, the outreach to the recruitment field is done through television, radio, and social media.

#### **IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

The DIN model of training is based on a long-term strategy of re-educating, re-orientating, and re-enforcing the participants to appreciate and think like jurists by becoming more critical thinkers. Measuring enduring impact truly takes a long time, possibly even spanning generations. However, there are tools that DIN utilizes to assess its progress and impact on communities that have undergone its trainings or received its content. Impact is assessed primarily through two strategies:

1. **Joint Community Action Plans (JCAP)**

The Joint Community Action Plan (JCAP) is a modification of the Community Score Card (CSC), which was developed by CARE Malawi in 2002. The JCAP is a tool for identifying, analysing, and solving community problems. Community members list various grievances, score them for priority, then share ideas on how to solve the problems based on the consensual priority list. DIN utilizes this tool,

firstly for intra-faith groups of Muslims, then secondly with a wider inter-faith group of Muslims and Christians.

A. Intra-faith: Representatives of different Muslim sects among training participants, primarily from the Izala (Salafi) and Tariqah (Sufi) sects are brought to a round table to brainstorm and list their grievances, score them, then agree on how to solve them. What has been noticed by trainers and facilitators is that experience of going through this process serves as a bonding opportunity for these gatekeepers. Many come out this process with their violent or extremist tendencies tempered, and with greater mutual respect among the traditionally rival groups.

B. Inter-faith: DIN collaborates with Christian NGOs, such as the Kukah Centre, based in Abuja. While Muslim Imams, activists, academics, are going through the training modules, the partner Christian NGO simultaneously trains Christian gatekeepers. Then, the two groups converge for a joint module where they get to interact in an interfaith safe space. When the interfaith JCAP is conducted involving the two groups, they tend to discover that the grievances of both communities are almost identical. The impact of the appreciation of a shared humanity have always been noticed in these sessions.

## 2. Key Informant Interviews (KII):

The other tool that DIN uses for assessment are the Key informant interviews. These are carried out in two ways. The first is through co-opted individuals that periodically send discreet feedback to DIN about the content of the preaching,

lectures, and presentations of the trained gatekeeper in her/his locale. The report on the content of the subject's presentations provides information to indicate if the training is having the desired impact on the quality of religious knowledge that the gatekeeper is disseminating.

The second KII strategy is random field visits to interview members of the recruitment fields about the content of the gatekeeper's presentations.

#### Success Stories:

There are various success stories to note, even as many are difficult to capture in a standard monitoring and evaluation exercise, which tends to be quantitative in nature. However, some success stories include:

- a. Participants from Gombe State formed an organization for improving relations between Muslims and Christians in the state.
- b. Kano participants began an initiative to extend charity to non-Muslims in their locale.
- c. In Yobe state, a proposal was approved by the State government to establish an Intra-faith Council, then an Interfaith Council.
- d. A gatekeeper who had previously written his PhD dissertation in support of suicide bombing changed his views by the time he had attended the third training. He went to the extent of seeking to withdraw his dissertation so as to correct his previous position.
- e. The Broadcasting Corporation of Yobe State aired the entire audio content of DIN courses.

- f. Very positive comments are being received from feedback forms filled at each training.
- g. A lawyer who used to recruit members into Boko Haram before the group turned violent attended the DIN trainings. Thereafter he has stepped down the course to over seven hundred youth.

**CHALLENGES:**

DIN identifies several challenges related to the implementation of its training workshops. These include funding constraints for step-down trainings, and challenges related to the selection process of gatekeepers. Sometimes, the quality of gatekeepers is not very high, necessitating a repeat workshop after a more effective selection process. Language barriers have also been identified as a challenge. Some participants are not very fluent in English, so the training gets delivered in a mix of English with Hausa or Arabic. DIN is making efforts to translate its content into local Nigerian languages in order to improve access. Due to cultural and, sometimes, logistical constraints, female participation still falls below the desirable rate. That notwithstanding, training programs have been conducted exclusively for female gatekeepers in collaboration with organizations such as the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigerian (FOMWAN).

## CONCLUSION

In this research, we have surveyed the history of Islam in Nigeria to appreciate the historical context and bases of some of the religious tension in the most populous country in Africa. We have also discussed the origins of the Boko Haram militant insurgency that seeks to establish its violent extremist brand of Islam on a multi religious country. We have briefly highlighted some of the key attempts by Nigerian Muslim scholars to counter the violent rhetoric and extremist ideology of this sect. And we examined more in depth the strategy of the Da'wah Institute of Nigeria in proffering alternative narratives as a tool for countering violent extremism. The agenda of the Da'wah Institute has the advantage of being coherent, strategic, bold, and institutionalized. Its strategy is designed for long-time enduring impact, which will take generations to become well rooted. Even though, this process can be potentially fast-tracked by technology, the fact that it relies heavily on rapport building makes it akin to growing an oak tree as compared to growing melon. It is a strategy, however, that should attract other NGOs as well as governmental players to borrow from and support. The Nigerian government's strategy of de-radicalization is seemingly ineffective despite tremendous funding supporting such interventions. It will be contended that governmental bodies should be more open to cross fertilization of ideas with effective NGOs in seeking more effective solutions to the crisis of insurgency driven by extremist religious ideologies. Lastly, it will also be contended that more research will bring to greater light efforts by several non-governmental agencies and alliances that,

hopefully, inspires more of such interventions. This, it is hoped, will help engineer a critical mass of deliberate proactive waging of peace even in this world adrift.

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