



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT



www.hrmars.com

ISSN: 2226-6348

In Search of the Origin of Boko Haram's Denunciation of Western Education

Abubakar Abubakar Usman

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v11-i3/14734>

DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v11-i3/14734

Received: 11 June 2022, **Revised:** 14 July 2022, **Accepted:** 30 July 2022

Published Online: 16 August 2022

In-Text Citation: (Usman, 2022)

To Cite this Article: Usman, A. A. (2022). In Search of the Origin of Boko Haram's Denunciation of Western Education. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 11(3), 753–766.

Copyright: © 2022 The Author(s)

Published by Human Resource Management Academic Research Society (www.hrmars.com)

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0/legalcode>

Vol. 11(3) 2022, Pg. 753 - 766

<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/IJARPED>

JOURNAL HOMEPAGE

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/publication-ethics>



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT



www.hrmars.com

ISSN: 2226-6348

In Search of the Origin of Boko Haram's Denunciation of Western Education

Abubakar Abubakar Usman

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Institute of Islamic Banking and Finance, International Islamic
University Malaysia

Abstract

Boko Haram's (BH) denunciation of Western education (WE) is an aspect of the movement that is widely known and which BH employed as a significant point of differentiation for advancing its cause and in attracting attention domestically and internationally. Despite its significance to BH's ideology, there is inadequate explanation of its origin and how BH adopted it. The aim of this paper is to explain the origin of BH's denunciation of WE and how BH finds it conveniently useful for advancing its cause. To achieve the objective of the paper, a reflexive thematic analysis approach was employed to analyze literatures on the history of WE in colonial days within the Muslim world and videos produced by BH. The paper argues that BH's denunciation of WE can be traced back to the Muslim world's colonial experience, its perception of WE and the responses WE's imposition elicited among the Muslims. Muslim's attitude is broadly classified into three: assimilation, adaptation, and rejection. Northern Nigerian Muslims initially rejected WE but eventually adapted it. This article shows that not only that BH exploited this earlier history of rejection but the rejection also evolved overtime from partial to total rejection. The rejection was precipitated by the personality of BH leaders, secular Nigerian system's systemic exclusion of those educated under Islamic system. Nigeria's government and relevant stakeholders should therefore focus on blending Western and Islamic education particularly in the North and create employment opportunities for the educated.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Western Education, *Salafi-jihadism*, Terrorism, Islamization of Knowledge

Introduction

The movement formally known as *Jamaat ahl al Sunnah lil da'awah wa al jihad* (people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and *jihad*) has been compared to various other *Salafi-jihadist* movements in the Islamic world and beyond in terms of ideology and activities (Kassim, 2015). One of the most outrageous beliefs of the movement known as BH (meaning Western education is forbidden) is its total rejection of WE which has been the most differentiating aspect of its ideology (Onapajo et al., 2012). Since 2009, BH has been targeting students and education structures (particularly in the northeast Nigeria) with some heinous and high-profile attacks.

BH converges ideologically with the likes of Al Qaeda, AQIM, and ISIS but also diverges in its belief that WE is forbidden. Such attitude toward education is hardly portrayed by other movements that have ideological link with BH. BH sees WE belonging to a larger evil system that consists of democracy, secular state, constitutionalism and human-made laws (Thurston, 2017). The origin of this belief came from Muhammad Yusuf's view (BH's first known leader) of WE as the continuation of the colonial legacy that Muslims must reject to maintain the purity of Islam. Peeples (2018) labeled this belief as BH's "complicated politics of education" and found it as part of its evolution that has undergirded the movement since its creation. While these studies have made commendable efforts at explaining BH's rejection of WE, they did not explain why BH is different from sister movements and the origin of the belief, and why BH finds it useful in advancing its cause?

The aim of this article is to explain BH's denunciation of WE, the rationale behind it and how it became part of the movement's discourse. Section 1 discusses *Salafi-jihadist* ideology particularly as they are held and professed by the likes of Al Qaeda, and ISIS. Section 2 focuses on the evolution of BH's attitude toward WE. Section 3 offers reasons for BH's use of its denunciation of WE to advance the movement's mission. The Section also discusses the systemic downgrading of Arabic and Islamic education, and the personality make up of BH's leaders as factors that contributed to BH adopting this attitude.

Situating BH within the Salafi-jihadism Ideology

BH is a movement that identifies with *Salafi-jihadism* making it similar to other transnational militant Islamist movements. Their similarities include the pursuance of greater objective of establishing Islamic caliphate locally and internationally. BH also holds similar beliefs to the other Islamic groups within Nigeria particularly the Salafi inclined. Its distinction from them lies in its non-compromising denunciation of the established nation-state political order, democracy and its stance on modern WE as forbidden (Agbiboa, 2013). These have been noted by some researchers as points of divergence between quietists Salafist and BH (Kassim, 2015; Onuoha, 2014; Brigaglia, 2015). It was on the basis of these differences that Yusuf split away from the *Izala/mainstream Salafi* after being a member for some years (Mohammed, 2014; Onuoha and George, 2015).

Many studies on BH's relationship with fellow *Salafi-jihadist* movements showed that ideologically BH is similar to the likes of Al Qaeda, ISIS, and so on (Onuoha and George, 2015; Raineri and Martini, 2017; Ogbogu, 2015; Gourley, 2012; Chiluwa, 2015). These movements based their theology on takfir and *ḥukm bi-gyayri ma anzala Allah* (ruling with other than what Allah reveals) (Kassim, 2015). It is on this basis that BH denounces other Muslims, illegitimises Nigerian government and nation-state order, democracy and disowns Muslims who accept them (Kassim, 2015). However, Kassim further argued that while BH's ideology is anchored in the theological doctrines of *jihadi-Salafism*, it exploits the contemporary cultural framing of Islamic reform in northern Nigeria and the Islamic traditions and *jihadi* legacy that was established by Shehu Usman Dan Fodio.

BH's ideology therefore is not at all peculiar. It is rather an ideology that is shared by various other Muslim extremist movements throughout the world. There is some level of uniformity among the movements identified as *Salafi-jihadistst* in terms of their ideology. However, BH uses the cultural framing of Usman Dan Fodio's *jihad* in northern Nigeria as its own unique differentiation for the purpose of drawing sympathy and establishing legitimacy. In principle, the likes of Al Qaeda, AQIM, and ISIS all believe in and work toward the same goal (Kassim, 2015).

Denunciation of WE and Deviation from other Salafi-Jihadist Movement

BH's denunciation of WE is the most unique BH's feature that gives it the popularity its leaders craved for. As argued under the previous section, most components of BH's ideological beliefs are not entirely unique to BH (Ostebo, 2015; Kassim, 2015; Onuoha and George, 2015; Raineri and Martini, 2017; Ogbogu, 2015; Gourley, 2012). In fact, some sources reported that BH was formed by one Muhammed Ali, a Nigerian student in Khartoum, Sudan who was a disciple of Osama bin Laden. The latter gave the former a large sum of money to establish a *jihadist* movement in Nigeria (Kassim & Zenn, 2017). Muhammed Ali's attempt at establishing a movement allegedly failed but ended up finding the young Yusuf and gave him some money and a handful of followers in 2002. Whether this alleged link can be substantiated or not, BH and Al Qaeda have so many ideological commonalities as has been widely documented (Zenn, 2017, 2020). Abubakar Shekau, BH's most recent leader, voiced out his admiration and intention to emulate Osama Bin Laden in one of BH's videos transcribed and translated by the researcher (Shekau, 2011b).

Salafi-*jihadism* advocates for the use of violence for the establishment of caliphate. They all declare Muslim rulers following a secular system infidel and *taghut*, and deserving of death (Brinkel & Ait-Hida, 2012; Gourley, 2012; Kassim & Zenn, 2017; Shah, 2018). However, there seems to be one major point at which BH deviates from Al Qaeda and its affiliates which is the absolute rejection of WE. In fact, sixty-two percent of Al Qaeda members reportedly attained university education (Offman, 2007). Osama bin Laden, the former Al Qaeda leader, is also said to have attended King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah and earned a degree in economics and business administration and some claimed in civil engineering (Coll, 2005). His successor, Ayman Al Zawahiri was also reportedly a well-educated man coming from a wealthy and educated elite family (Aboul-Enein, 2004).

BH announced its affiliation with ISIS in March 2015, and like Al Qaeda, both movements identify with *Salafi-jihadism* (Kassim, 2015). ISIS, through Al Baghdadi's spokesperson, accepted BH's allegiance five days after BH's announcement (Zenn, 2019). The fact that BH affiliated itself to ISIS implies that the two movements share common ideological beliefs. Since then, there has been similarities in their activities, messages and methods of their delivery. However, like Al Qaeda and its leaders, ISIS movement also did not reject WE entirely. It does not attack or abduct people because of their involvement in WE. Contrary to that, Abubakar Al Baghdadi is reportedly a doctorate holder in Islamic law. Although ISIS is said to have developed a new curriculum for school-aged children that did not include subjects such as history, geography, literature, art and music, the new curriculum reportedly focused on Shariah and Islamic law but also included other subjects such as mathematics and the sciences in the form and format of WE (Arvisais & Guidere, 2020).

Furthermore, there are evidences suggesting that ISIS is using Western formal educational structure to indoctrinate and brainwash children. In addition, ISIS never publicly denounces WE education in the manner BH does. This makes ISIS completely different from BH in their attitude and belief about WE. Two questions therefore beg for answers. 1. Where did BH's denunciation of WE come from? 2. Why BH differs with its closest prototypes (Al Qaeda and ISIS) in its attitude toward WE? The next section examines BH's attitude toward WE using some evidences from its video messages.

To respond to these questions, one of the explanations offered on BH's denunciation of WE was the *Maitatsine* connection (a movement in the 70s and 80s) as argued by (Aghedo, 2014; Adesofi, 2011). Like BH, *Maitatsine* movement also rejected secularism, democracy and WE and also adopted violence as the means of achieving its objectives. While the two

movement indeed have the commonalities indicated by the authors, these similarities are superficial and the movements have little or no deep ideological connection beyond the surface. BH is a *Salafi-jihadist* movement that claims the total rejection of religious innovations and a return to the observance of Sunni orthodoxy (Nesser, 2013).

With the exception of the violent approach, the *Salafi-jihadist* ideology is absolutely different from *Maitatsine's* which was known for its rejection of the *hadiths* of Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* using derogatory term known as *Kalo Kato* (literally translates to 'a mere man said it'). This was indicative of the movement's strict approval of Qur'an as the sole authentic sacred texts of Islam (Adesoji, 2011; Hiskett, 1987). *Maitatsine's* ideology is, therefore, antithesis to BH's which does not only legitimizes its cause and activities by using both Qur'an and the *hadith* of Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* but also claimed to rely on the interpretations of pious predecessors. Undoubtedly, both BH and *Maitatsine* denounced WE but unlike BH, *Maitatsine* went a step further to denounce modernity and during its heydays refused to use products of modernity including the technology that was available in those days.

The origin of BH's denunciation of WE goes beyond any ideological connection with *Maitatsine*. Perhaps the denunciation of both goes back to the same origin rather than BH adopting it from the *Maitatsine* movement as claimed by Aghedo (2014) and Adesoji (2011). This chapter contends that finding the common origin of both movements' denunciation of WE should start by going back to the Muslim world's initial contact with Western knowledge, the historical context of the contact and the reaction triggered among the Muslims.

Muslims Approaches toward WE Under Colonialism

In searching for the root of BH's attitude toward WE, there is need to revisit what is seen by many as a clash of civilizations and cultural incompatibility between Western and the Muslim worlds. Majority of the Muslim world spent over three centuries under the Western subjugation. During its colonization of the Muslim world, the West brought with them what they perceived as a superior educational system that was set to replace that in the Muslim world. Many within the Muslim world blamed Muslims lands' loss of direction and power on the Western world's imposition of its education system on Muslims (Maududi 2000). The introduction of the alien educational system triggered three distinct responses among the Muslims. These responses were assimilation, adaptation and rejection.

Following the rise of the Western world, WE was imposed on virtually all the Muslim lands that fell under the control of Western powers (Cook, 1999). As Muslim countries gradually started to emerge from their colonial experience, most of their political leaders who were educated under the WE sought to modernize their countries using Western development paradigms (Cook, 1999; Sobic-El-Rayess, 2020). However, the earlier education modernization advocates soon realized that secular WE was conflictual to "Islamic thought and traditional lifestyle" (Cook, 1999, p. 340). Liberals and the so-called progressive Muslims tend to fall within the category of assimilation as hinted by (Karasipahi, 2009).

Contrary to the assimilation approach, those who advocated for adaptation call for the careful look at WE and integrating aspects that were compatible with the Islamic thoughts and culture and rejecting the incompatible. This approach could be traced back to the likes of Muhammad Abduh, Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghanī, Rashid Ridah, Abul A'la Maududi, Ismail al-Faruqi and so many others. They called for the Islamization of Western knowledge (Maududi, 2000; Maududi, 1988; Kaloti, 1975; Al-Faruqi, 1988; Maududi, 1985; Al-Faruqi, 1982). Some of these intellectuals went as far as devising frameworks for the Islamization of knowledge project. In

fact, in 1977 Muslim countries' leaders and over 350 Muslim intellectuals organized an unprecedented conference in Mecca to devise a way forward on how the Muslim world should respond to WE, knowledge and modernity (Cook, 1999; Iqbal, 1978; Mabud, 2016; Meijer, 1999).

The last category was those who saw Western secular education as totally bad and Muslims must avoid it by all means. This was, at first, the dominant approach and could be traced back to the renaissance. For example, it was this approach that led the Ottoman Empire to outlaw the use of newly invented printing press for printing out religious texts for close to three centuries (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Sobic-El-Rayess, 2020). Although with the passing of time, this approach toward WE and its contents has been dying out. However, its remnants still persist to this day. According to Peters (2014), a Saudi Salafi scholar called Abubakar b. 'Abdallah Abu Zayd (d. 2008) wrote a book titled: "*Al-madaris al-'alamiyya alajnabiyya al-isti'mariyya: ta'rikhuha wa-makhatiruha* (The Secular, Foreign and Colonialist Schools: Their History and Dangers)" which has been the source of BH's attitude toward WE.

WE in Northern Nigeria

To understand BH's attitude toward WE, there is need for the contextualization of WE in northern Nigeria long before the emergence of BH in the region. Today's Nigeria was colonized by Britain from the latter part of the Nineteenth century to the 1914th North-South amalgamation attained independence in 1960 (Campbell, 2013). Even though since the amalgamation the country has been in existence under the unified name Nigeria, it was very much the tale of two distinct parts (the North versus the South) in various respects. In addition to their differences in history, culture and languages, the south became predominantly Christians following the arrival of the British Christian missionaries. Contrastingly, Islam was the prevalent religion in the North centuries before the arrival of the British (Falola and Heaton 2008).

Islam's dominance in the north means that the region already had a system of administration and education prior to colonisation. This system of education produced religious reformers, the judges, the clerics as well as the rulers (Gbadamosi, 1967). In addition, this same educational system produced administrators which was well appreciated by the first post-unification British governor, Lord Lugard (Lugard, 1920; Shaw, 1997). When the Christian missionaries first arrived on Nigeria's shores, they were eager and had a burning desire of mounting a crusade in the North for the firm presence of Islam in the region. However, the missionaries' early attempts to the North backfired (Gbadamosi, 1967).

The Christian missionary involvement in the introduction of WE could be interpreted as the initial cause of northern Muslims' resistance toward WE. In consideration of the northern skepticism and resistance toward the colonial rulers and their system of education, Governor Lugard made a pledge in 1903 when appointing a new Sultan of Sokoto (the then seat of the northern central power) that his government would not interfere with religion (Gbadamosi, 1967; Lugard, 1920).

Gbadamosi (1967) described British colonial government attitude toward the North at the time in five points one of which was the restriction of Christians' educational and evangelical works to pagan areas. Thus, in fear of the political implications the imposition of WE might have caused, the British rulers were careful not to antagonize the Muslim North before the North was ready to accept WE. This concern was laid bare by the British missionary and author Murray (2019) who visited Northern Nigeria in 1906. He stated that emirs were

sullen and suspicious and introducing WE on Christian line would have led to the eruption of jihad.

The northern Emirs were suspicious of the new knowledge which was well-coated in a religious mission. They believed the North had no need for WE with its already law, ethics and system of administration derived from Islam (Gbadamosi, 1967). The British government had to be cautious with the Muslim North after experiencing a couple of uprising at the beginning of the 20th century (Falola, 2009). When British government began establishing schools in some parts of the North, they were restricted to pagan areas. Also, all students were allowed to attend Qur'anic schools and mosques were built near the schools at the cost of the British government (Gbadamosi, 1967).

The aforementioned adjustments and the inclusion of Hausa language, Arabic language, and Islamic studies in the curriculum helped in reducing Muslims' suspicion toward WE. In fact, the move proved to be a master stroke in popularising the schools among locals (Tibenderana, 1983). By 1926, the total number of schools increased to sixty-nine throughout the North and there was a modest enrolment of 2,454 which certainly signalled the change of attitude among the Muslims (Lugard, 1920). This means that the North is behind the South in terms of WE and, within the North itself, northeast states continued to do worse than the rest. By 2006, seventy percent of residents aged six or more never attended schools in Borno and Yobe, the birthplace of BH (Thurston, 2017). Many of them also do not attend those schools that blended Islamic and WE likely because they cannot afford this type of schools.

Evolution of BH's View on WE

Since its emergence, BH has always been known for its denunciation of WE which is an aspect of BH's ideology it mostly tweeted about before 2014 (Chiluwa & Ajiboye, 2014). Its view that WE is forbidden is based on the group perception of Western domination undermining Islamic values, beliefs and traditions. Yusuf, the slain BH's leader, told BBC in an interview in 2009 that "WE is mixed with issues that run contrary to our beliefs in Islam" (Agbiboa, 2013, 52). Yusuf was also quoted stating that subjects of WE can be used if they do not clash with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad pbuh (Mohammed, 2014, p. 16).

BH's condition of accepting WE is to not contradict its interpretation of Islamic teachings. The statement did not appear to reject WE entirely as BH came to be known for in the latter years. This was explained more clearly in a debate between Yusuf and Isah Ali Pantami where the former made BH's belief on WE clearer. He explained that there are three perspectives on knowledge in Islam: the one consistent with what the Qur'an and the *Hadith* taught, the one that contradicts the Qur'an and *Hadith*, and the one that is neither consistent nor in contradiction with the Qur'an and *Hadith*. He justified his opinion by quoting a *Hadith* of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in reference to People of the Book – "If they bring to you anything agreeable to the Qur'an, accept it; but if they bring anything that contradicts Islam, reject it; and if they bring anything that neither contradicts nor supports the Qur'an, it is your choice to accept or reject it" (Mohammed, 2014, p. 17). Yusuf emphasised that his view about WE was neither total rejection nor total acceptance.

These views of Yusuf indicated clearly that BH did not yet entirely reject WE. Its view on WE under Yusuf was not much different from the *Izala*/the mainstream Salafis. Both believe that WE is full of polluted and ungodly ideas that do not align with Islamic teachings but necessary. They accept WE grudgingly in the absence of Muslim's power to purge their own curricula (Harnischfeger, 2014). This could be confirmed by an excerpt cited by Mohammed

(2014, p. 17) in which Yusuf claimed that it contains destruction in it that in seeking it one may end up becoming an idolator vis-à-vis educated.

The point expressed above by Yusuf puts BH's earlier attitude toward WE into perspective. Here, the claim was BH denounced Western civilization not the education. The education aspect came into the argument because of the condemned Western civilization. This view was made clearer in a statement quoted from another high ranking BH's member, Mallam Sanni Umaru, wherein he sought to clarify that they do not mean that "WE is a sin" blaming the media for that claim. He claimed that BH labelled forbidden is "Western civilisation" (Umaru, 2011).

It is therefore clear that BH under Yusuf's did not reject WE entirely. Leaders of the movement made several attempts at correcting what it perceived as misconception about its view and attitude toward WE. Also, with a zero recorded attack on education establishments, students and personnel, its activities in that era also corroborates this claim. However, as to be discussed under the next section, after the killing of Yusuf in 2009 a new man called Abubakar Shekau assumed the leadership of the movement. As BH's leadership changed so did its view on WE.

In 2009 BH had, until then, the most violent clash with Nigeria's armed forces that led to the killing of Yusuf and about a thousand followers (Mohammed, 2014). BH then regrouped under Shekau's leadership and consequently became more radical than what it used to be under Yusuf (Onuoha, 2014). Its radicalisation at this phase was extended to its view on WE. In one of the earliest evidences of Shekau's statements on WE, he justified BH's belief of absolute rejection of WE by stating that it was part of the Western plot to crush Islam by distancing them from Qur'an as revealed by centuries ago by a Christian missionary man called Samuel Zwemer (Shekau, 2011a).

BH's view on WE changed tone from partial rejection to the denunciation of the entire system. Shekau showed distrust against everything that the system has to offer on the allegation of a statement made by so-called Samuel Zwemer. It therefore matters less the contents and the subjects taught under the WE system so long that a Christian missionary group decided to use the system to distract Muslims away from the Qur'an. This shows a significant change of attitude from the days of Yusuf, as earlier discussed. Shekau further justified total rejection of WE because "many Muslims lost their Islam while others claim to be Muslims but have lost the taste of Islam all in the name of being educated" (Shekau, 2011a). Again, Shekau gave further justification in another video released by BH in which he talked about the discipline of Geology. He claimed in it that geology in WE teaches that the universe was not created by Allah quoting a verse of the Qur'an to support his claim.

The use of the verse from the Qur'an is to legitimise the statement and win other Muslims to its views. Similar utterance of Shekau could also be found on his attack on the discipline of biology. He stated in the same video that in the discipline of biology, there is a claim that the mixed drops of the male and female sexual discharge (Arabic term used *Nutfah*) is already alive before Allah instills life in it in a womb. Shekau labeled this view outrageous not only for the claim that the *Nutfah* is alive before Allah instills life in it but also for calling it 'micro some' in English (Shekau, 2011a).

The use of verses from the Qur'an is a recurring approach in its quest to label WE forbidden. Like its interpretation and stance on various other matters, BH neither has any regard for other interpretations of the sacred Islamic texts nor any consideration to other possible competing theories on any particular phenomenon it deems unbelief. For example, BH justified its rejection of WE for claiming that water's source is not the heavens. He quoted

Qur'an's verse that says: "And Allah has sent down rain from the sky and given life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness. Indeed, in that is a sign for a people who listen." Al Quran 16: 65.

Similar examples abound in BH's discourse particularly in its video messages mostly featuring Shekau. One could see BH's shift of view and attitude from the more calculated argument of Yusuf to Shekau's absolute and generic. Yusuf argued that BH rejected in WE what contradicts Islam whereas Shekau's argument indicated the rejection of everything that WE offer from specific to general. The reason for this shift of attitude perhaps lies in the differences in personality of the two leaders. Yusuf appeared more Islamically educated and more exposed to intra faith dialogue than Shekau (Barkindo, 2017).

Reasons for BH's Use of WE to Advance its Cause

As previously discussed in this article, despite BH being similar to many other likeminded movements across the world, its rejection of WE is perhaps the one aspect of its ideology in which the movement is unique from sister movements. The question, therefore, that requires answer is why BH adopts this notion in advancing its cause. This paper identified two reasons that include the personality of BH's leaders, and the relegation of Islamic education following the introduction of WE in the Muslim northern part of Nigeria.

Personality of BH's Leaders

The personality and profile of BH's leaders is also critical in trying to make sense of BH's absolute rejection of WE. Yusuf had no prior experience of WE or even a formal Islamic education. This is likely the reason for his antagonistic attitude toward WE. However, even if Yusuf had no experience of WE himself, he was reportedly part of the Muslim Brothers movement in the 1980s and 1990s which later metamorphosed into the Shia Islamic movement headed by Ibrahim El Zakzaky. Zakzaky was a First-Class Economics student of Ahmadu Bello University when he began the movement in the late 1970s and most of his early followers were university students. After leaving the Muslim Brothers, Yusuf joined *Izala* movement which is a Salafi movement but known for its supports for blending Islamic and WE (Kane 2003; Umar 2012; 2001). Therefore, despite Yusuf's lack of background in WE he certainly had exposure in Islamic activism in Nigeria which were mainly headed by individuals with strong background in WE. This perhaps explains Yusuf's relatively moderate stance on WE compared to the man who succeeded him as BH's leader.

It is also noteworthy that Yusuf was described as a selfish man who saw nothing wrong in using the technological products of WE like mobile phones, cars, arms and so on (Salaam, 2013). Yusuf began his clerical career as a member in the *Salafi* circle giving sermons on Fridays and special occasions. However, the Salafi movement in Nigeria was endowed with many popular Islamic clerics that Yusuf must have realized the difficulty in taking the limelight off them. This could explain why he found the notion of declaring WE forbidden particularly attractive and has the prospect of giving him and BH a certain fame. His message resonated well with mainly those who had no WE background.

After the killing of Yusuf in 2009, Shekau succeeded him as BH's new leader. Although there is little verifiable background information about Shekau, like Yusuf, Shekau had no prior background in WE. Worse even, he lacks the sort of exposure to Islamic activism his predecessor had. Nonetheless, Shekau's manipulative and strategic ability enabled him to use rejection of WE as part of the BH's strategies to advance its cause (Barkindo, 2017; Barkindo & Zenn, 2018). He succeeded in changing BH's attitude toward WE from partial and non-

violent to total and violent. The denunciation of WE continued to be part of the agenda of the movement using it to mainly target the rural, the uneducated and the marginalised people. With large number of rural and marginalised Nigerians in BH's geographical location, Shekau could continue his hollow and illogical arguments using examples from various disciplines of knowledge to attract more foot soldiers.

Relegation of Islamic Education

Prior to the introduction of WE, religious scholars enjoyed some considerable amount of influence, social prestige and status (Umar 2001). The introduction of WE undermined Islamic religious scholars' monopoly and influence. They used to be appointed judges, prime ministers (*waziri*) and legal advisers to Emirs. In fact, the British authorities also continued to use them in "establishing colonial administrative infrastructures" in the judicial and education domains, and also as "local historians, translators and native anthropologists" (Umar 2001, 129). All these gradually changed with the introduction of WE that substituted the Islamic religious scholars with those trained and educated under WE (Gbadamosi 1967; Umar 2001). While many Islamic religious scholars strived for inclusion to pursue WE, many did not and consequently ended up becoming marginalised. BH's leaders obviously did not undergo this process of Islamic and WE blending which perhaps partly explains their frustration of the Nigerian secular system and the way Islamic education and those who receive it have been relegated.

Islamic education has also been undergoing transformation since introduction to the North in 1920s (Gbadamosi, 1967; Lugard, 1920). Many Islamic schools have modernised, evolved and have been producing students that find roles to play under the Nigerian secular system. In addition, the vast majority of northern Muslims currently participate in WE and compete with the Christian South in virtually all disciplines of knowledge. This again partly explains BH's frustration and campaign against WE and why it has been so ardent in using Sacred texts from the Qur'an and *hadith* of Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* in its denunciation of WE. In other words, declaring WE forbidden is intended to convince the Muslims in the North and remind them that Islamic education used to be the established education system in the region. It also agitates against WE in a similar way that invokes the memory of the Muslim North when the Western system was first introduced by Christian missionaries.

Relegation of Islamic education and the prioritization of WE helped in setting in inferiority complex among the Muslims who obtained only Islamic education. In fact, many of those receiving modern Islamic education started to have inferiority complex relative to those who either combine Islamic and WE or just WE in northern Nigeria. Those with only Islamic education have been made to feel less worthy and less capable relative to those who obtained WE (Marta et al., 2018).

The issue of inferiority complex among both teachers and learners of Islamic and Arabic education has been scantily documented by some researchers both in Nigerian context and other parts of the Muslim world (Ajape, 2015; Kazeem & Balogun, 2013; Marta et al., 2018). In the Northeast, and to some extent the North in general, there are millions of Muslims who pursue only Islamic education in the traditional format and BH leaders must have seen their lack of social inclusion as an opportunity and a strong point to use in mobilizing these millions of marginalised people.

Another significant factor that encouraged BH's beliefs against WE is the deteriorating economy of the country, unemployment and the lack of opportunities for graduates. A northern Muslim intellectual was quoted saying "it is useless, it is polluted, it is immoral! (...)

what do you need it for? You need it to work in the government service, and there are no longer government jobs” (Harnischfeger, 2014, p. 53). The lucky ones who secure a job have to be contented with a bad salary and often going for months without a pay. This echoed the sentiment of many Muslims in the North and could explain why BH’s total rejection of WE resonates with many and even led some graduates to destroy their certificates and quit their jobs (Umar, 2013).

Conclusion

This paper discussed the origin of BH’s rejection of WE. It demonstrated that BH identifies with Salafi-jihadist movements but differs markedly in its total rejection of WE. This paper established that BH’s attitude toward WE had its historical roots in Muslims’ initial attitude toward WE during colonial times. It was argued herein that BH rejects WE to exploit the appeal rejection of WE had in the colonial days among the Muslims of northern Nigeria when they rejected it because of Christian missionaries’ involvement in its promotion. As a result, Northern Muslims were contemptuous and suspicious of WE system. It took the Muslims part of northern Nigeria decades before they started to gradually show approval of WE after some clever policies of British colonial authorities that integrated some aspects of Islamic education into the modern Western system.

This article demonstrated that a few factors contributed to BH’s journey to total rejection of WE. Firstly, Nigerian secular system gradual marginalisation of Islamic education and its products. Secondly, the personality and profile of BH’s leaders, both Yusuf and Shekau. Thirdly, Nigeria’s dwindling economic condition and the lack of employment opportunities for the educated. These factors provided the impetus of BH’s use of its rejection of WE to appeal and advance its cause. However, the notion of rejecting WE also evolved from what it used to be in Yusuf’s days and what it became under Shaka’s leadership. This is contrary to Harnischfeger (2014) claim that BH maintained the same view under both Yusuf and Shekau’s leaderships.

In the light of all that has been discussed in this paper, the more BH convinces people of its belief on WE the more likely it is to affect their chances of getting educated which is one of the most effective means of halting BH’s recruitment activities. This could be mitigated by continuous blending of both Islamic and WE as doing so will equip BH’s potential recruits with both Islamic and WE. These were the policies implemented by the British colonial authorities which succeeded in convincing northern Muslims to accept WE. In addition, Nigerian authorities and other relevant stakeholders should also create employment opportunities that will provide employment for the educated and continue to attract people to pursue education. Failure to do so will continue to make BH increasingly appealing to many.

References

- Aboul-Enein, Y. H. (2004). *Ayman Al-Zawahiri: The Ideologue of Modern Islamic Militancy* (Issue 21). USAF Counterproliferation Center, Air University.
- Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2012). *Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity, and poverty*. Currency.
- Adesoji, A. O. (2011). Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic fundamentalism and the response of the Nigerian state. *Africa Today*, 57(4), 99–119.
- Agbiboa, D. (2013). The ongoing campaign of terror in Nigeria: Boko Haram versus the state. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2(3).
- Agbiboa, D. E. (2013). (Sp) oiling Domestic Terrorism? Boko Haram and State Response. *Peace*

- Review*, 25(3), 431–438.
- Aghedo, I. (2014). Old wine in a new bottle: ideological and operational linkages between Maitatsine and Boko Haram revolts in Nigeria. *African Security*, 7(4), 229–250.
- Ajape, K. O. (2015). Arabic as a foreign language in the Nigerian higher education curriculum: problems, solutions and prospects. *International Conference on Language Learning and Teaching*, 8(1).
- Al-Faruqi, I. R. (1982). Islamization of knowledge. *Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought*.
- Al-Faruqi, I. R. (1988). Islamization of knowledge: problems, principles, and prospective. *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge*, 5–63.
- Arvisais, O., & Guidère, M. (2020). Education in conflict: how Islamic State established its curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 52(4), 498–515.
- Barkindo, A. (2017). *An introduction to Boko Haram's ideologues: from Yusuf to Shekau - Africa Research Institute*. <https://www.africaresearchinstitute.org/newsite/blog/introduction-boko-harams-ideologues-yusuf-shekau/>
- Barkindo, A., & Zenn, J. (2018). *Abubakr Shekau: Boko Haram's Underestimated Corporatist Strategic Leader*. JSTOR.
- Brigaglia, A. (2015). The volatility of Salafi political theology, the war on terror and the genesis of Boko Haram. *Diritto & Questioni Pubbliche*, 15, 175.
- Brinkel, T., & Ait-Hida, S. (2012). Boko Haram and jihad in Nigeria. *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies*, 40(2), 1–21.
- Campbell, J. (2013). *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. https://books.google.com.my/books?id=ho52_MLrT-IC
- Chiluwa, I. (2015). Radicalist discourse: a study of the stances of Nigeria's Boko Haram and Somalia's Al Shabaab on Twitter. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 10(2), 214–235.
- Chiluwa, I., & Ajiboye, E. (2014). "We are after ideals": a critical analysis of ideology in the tweets by Boko Haram. *Global Media Journal-African Edition*, 8(2), 318–346.
- Coll, S. (2005). *YOUNG OSAMA | The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/12/12/young-osama>
- Cook, B. J. (1999). Islamic versus Western conceptions of education: Reflections on Egypt. *International Review of Education*, 45(3–4), 339–358.
- Falola, T. (2009). *Colonialism and violence in Nigeria*. Indiana University Press.
- Falola, T., & Heaton, M. M. (2008). *A history of Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gbadamosi, G. O. (1967). The Establishment of Western Education Among Muslims in Nigeria 1896-1926. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 89–115.
- Gourley, S. M. (2012). Linkages between Boko Haram and al Qaeda: A potential deadly synergy. *Global Security Studies*, 3(3).
- Harnischfeger, J. (2014). Boko Haram and its Muslim critics: observations from Yobe state. *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*, 33–62.
- Hiskett, M. (1987). The Maitatsine riots in Kano, 1980: an assessment. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 17(3), 209–223.
- Iqbal, M. (1978). First world conference on Muslim education and its possible implications for British Muslims. *Learning for Living*, 17(3), 123–125.
- Kaloti, S. A. (1975). *The reformation of Islam and the impact of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh on Islamic education*.
- Kane, O. (2003). *Muslim modernity in postcolonial Nigeria: A study of the Society for the Removal of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition*. Brill.

- Karasipahi, S. (2009). *Muslims in modern Turkey*. IB Tauris & Co Ltd.
- Kassim, A. (2015). Defining and understanding the religious philosophy of jihādī-Salafism and the ideology of Boko Haram. *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 16(2–3), 173–200.
- Kassim, A., & Zenn, J. (2017). Justifying War: The Salafi-Jihadi Appropriation of Sufi Jihad in the Sahel-Sahara. *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, 21, 86–114.
- Kazeem, S. A., & Balogun, K. Y. (2013). Problems facing Islamic education: evidence from Nigeria. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 19, 108–119.
- Lugard, S. F. D. (1920). *Report by Sir FD Lugard on the Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, and Administration 1912-1919*. HM Stationery Office.
- Mabud, S. A. (2016). World Conferences on Muslim Education: Shaping the Agenda of Muslim Education in the Future. In *Philosophies of Islamic Education* (pp. 141–155). Routledge.
- Maier, K. (2002). *This house has fallen: Nigeria in crisis*. Westview Press.
- Marta, A. R., Daharnis, D., & Syahniar, S. (2018). The feelings inferiority of student in Islamic junior high school. *Journal of Counseling and Educational Technology*, 1(1), 18–21.
- Maududi, A. (1985). *New Islamic Method for Education and Teaching*. Beirut: Al-Maktab Al-Islami.
- Maududi, A. A. (1988). *Maududi on Education*. Karachi: Islamic Research Academy.
- Maududi, S. A. A. (2000). *The education*. Rauf SMA Edited & Trans) New Delhi: MarkaziMaktabaIslami Publishers.
- Meijer, W. (1999). Islam versus western modernity: A contrast in educational thought. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 21(3), 158–166.
- Mohammed, K. (2014). The message and methods of Boko Haram. *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*, 9–32.
- Murray, A. V. (2019). *The school in the bush*. Routledge.
- Nesser, P. (2013). Abū Qatada and Palestine. *Die Welt Des Islams*, 53(3–4), 416–448.
- Offman, C. (2007). *Today's jihadists: educated, wealthy and bent on killing?* <https://web.archive.org/web/20070929120758/http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/news/story.html?id=c841b52c-b2e7-4e41-b27e-33d10245b935&k=0>
- Ogbogu, J. (2015). Analysing the Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria. *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 7(8), 16–21.
- Onapajo, H., Uzodike, U. O., & Whetho, A. (2012). Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria: The international dimension. *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 19(3), 337–357.
- Onuoha, F. (2014). Boko Haram and the evolving Salafi Jihadist threat in Nigeria. *Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*, 158.
- Onuoha, F. C., & George, T. A. (2015). Boko Haram's use of female suicide bombing in Nigeria. *Al Jazeera Center for Studies*, 17(March), 1–9.
- Ostebo, T. (2015). African Salafism: Religious purity and the politicization of purity. *Islamic Africa*, 6(1–2), 1–29.
- Peeples, A. (2018). Terrorizing Schooling: The Evolving Education Politics of Boko Haram. *Towson University Journal of International Affairs*, 52(1), 71–84.
- Peters, M. A. (2014). *'Western education is sinful': Boko Haram and the abduction of Chibok schoolgirls*. SAGE Publications.
- Raineri, L., & Martini, A. (2017). ISIS and Al-Qaeda as Strategies and Political Imaginaries in Africa: A Comparison between Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. *Civil Wars*, 19(4), 425–447.
- Sabic-El-Rayess, A. (2020). Epistemological shifts in knowledge and education in Islam: A new perspective on the emergence of radicalization amongst Muslims. *International Journal*

- of Educational Development*, 73, 102148.
- Salaam, A. (2013). The psychological make-up of Mohammed Yusuf. *E-International Relations*, 30, 46–52.
- Shah, R. (2018). Al-Qaeda versus Boko Haram: Ideologies, Goals, and Outcomes. *International Journal of Security Studies*, 1(1), 5.
- Shaw, F. L. (1997). *A tropical dependency: An outline of the ancient history of the western Sudan with an account of the modern settlement of northern Nigeria*. Black Classic Press.
- Shekau, A. (2011a). *Message to President Jonathan*.
- Shekau, A. (2011b). *Shekau on the UN Headquarter Bombing*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14964554>
- Thurston, A. (2017). *Boko Haram: the history of an African jihadist movement* (Vol. 65). Princeton University Press.
- Tibenderana, P. K. (1983). The Emirs and the spread of Western education in Northern Nigeria, 1910-1946. *Journal of African History*, 517–534.
- Umar, A. M. (2013). *Nigeria and the Boko Haram sect: adopting a better strategy for resolving the crisis* [Naval Postgraduate School Monterey CA]. <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/34755>
- Umar, M. S. (2001). Education and Islamic trends in northern Nigeria: 1970s-1990s. *Africa Today*, 127–150.
- Umar, M. S. (2012). The popular discourses of Salafi radicalism and Salafi counter-radicalism in Nigeria: a case study of Boko Haram. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 42(2), 118–144.
- Umaru, S. (2011). *Boko Haram Resurrects, Declares Total Jihad*. Vanguard News. <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2009/08/bokoharamressurects-declares-total-jihad/#>.
- Zenn, J. (2017). Demystifying al-Qaida in Nigeria: Cases from Boko Haram’s founding, launch of Jihad and suicide bombings. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 11(6), 173–189.
- Zenn, J. (2019). The Islamic State’s Provinces on the Peripheries: Juxtaposing the Pledges from Boko Haram in Nigeria and Abu Sayyaf and Maute Group in the Philippines. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 13(1).
- Zenn, J. (2020). Boko Haram’s conquest for the Caliphate: how Al Qaeda helped Islamic State acquire territory. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 43(2), 89–122.