



A Micro Analysis of the Activities of Boko-Haram in North-Eastern Nigeria: A Case Study of Adamawa State, 2009-2015

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Abstract. Since the emergence of *Jamā'atu Ahl al-Sunnah Li Adda'awat wal Jihad* alias, Boko Haram and its activities in 2009, scholars have tried to study it as a phenomenon by documenting its various aspects ranging from its history, ideology, radical approach, methods of recruitment, war strategies to suicide bombing. Though a commendable effort however, most of the pioneer studies on Boko Haram seem to be more generic than specific. It is on this basis therefore that this paper attempts a more in-depth study, using micro-analysis of Boko Haram and its activities in Adamawa State, as well as its influence socially and economically. The study is based on both primary and secondary sources. Data are obtained from field work in form of interviews and archival materials, which are corroborated with secondary sources. Perspectives of specialists in security studies were adopted by this research in arriving at its conclusions. The paper finds that though Adamawa State of North-Eastern Nigeria is not the most affected area, it seems to have also recorded significant losses from the Boko Haram insurgency in terms of lives and properties.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Adamawa State, insurgency, micro-analysis.

1. Introduction

The Boko Haram phenomenon has attracted the attention of writers from different fields. This couples with the large number works written on the subject. Most of these works however, focus mainly on the origin, message and ideology of Boko Haram even though the few that focus on case studies tend to use broader scope like, "Nigeria, Northern Nigeria, North

East" which, in most cases are not supported with sufficient empirical evidence, which made their analysis a bit generalised (Higazi, A. et al, 2008; Portia, 2009; Mantzikos, 2010; Jackson and Sinclair, 2012; Brinkel and Ait-Hida, 2012; Barkindo, 2013; Freedom, 2014; Kyari, 2014; Chukwura, et al, 2015; Zenn, 2017; Thurston, 2018). Most importantly, a lot of what is known about Boko Haram activities in Adamawa State for instance, are mainly in newspapers and reports. It is within this context that this paper is conceived, in order to bridge the gap in knowledge with regards to the micro analysis of the Boko Haram Phenomenon.

The aim of this paper therefore is to provide a narrative that reflects the peculiar experience of the people of Adamawa State about Boko Haram from 2009 to 2015. This is a significant period in the evolution of the group; it was the period of transformation for the group from guerrilla to a full scale war. The paper attempts to examine and quantify the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on the lives and properties of the people of Adamawa State. In this regards, currency is given to housing, water supply facilities, electricity installations, roads and schools.

2. The Origin of Boko Haram in Adamawa State

The narratives on the emergence of *Jamā'atu Ahl al-Sunnah Li Adda'awat wal Jihad*, popularly known as Boko Haram is shrouded with a lot of controversies (Aondoawase, 2015; Comolli, 2017). For instance, Hansen (2016) argues that the group has its root from the Maitatsine saga. Scholars like Gwadabe (2014)

assumes that the emergence of the group can be linked to the introduction of the Izala movement in Nigeria even though it has not been intellectually ascertained. Freedom on the other hand opines that the root of Boko Haram can be traced back to 1995, when Abubakar Lawan established the *Ahl al-Sunnah wal jamā'ah al-hijrah* or *al-Shabāb* (A Muslim Youth Organisation) in Maiduguri, Borno State (Freedom, 2014). In spite of the disagreement among scholars on the remote links to Boko Haram, there is a high level of consensus on its recent origin.

Kyari (2014) for instance, provides a plausible narrative on this closer link. According to him, the group was first noticed when it withdrew from Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, to a rural area called Kanama (Present day Yobe State) in 2003, where they lunched attacks on Police stations and government buildings while terrorizing in the surrounding towns of Borno and Yobe States. Kyari (2014) maintains that, there are three phases in the evolution of Boko Haram. The first phase according to him was the Kanama phase (2003-2005), when a militant jihadist group called the Nigerian Taliban waged war on the Nigerian state, but was repelled with serious casualties on government operatives. This group was led by one Muhammad Ali. The second phase began with the collapse of the Kanama group. This period, was called the *da'awah* (propagation) phase, which was devoted for intensive proselytization, recruitment, indoctrination, and radicalisation of its members. The phase involved extensive criticism of secular system, debates with opposing *Ulama* (Islamic scholars) on the legality or otherwise of Western education, Westernisation, democracy, secularism and criticism of the corruption and bad governance under Governor Ali Modu Sheriff (2003-2011) of Borno State, as well as the conspicuous opulence of the elite in the midst of poverty.

The third phase according to Kyari (2014) began with the 2009 suppression of the movement and the unjustifiable killing of its leader by the Nigerian police. This made Boko Haram to go underground, re-organised, and resurfaced in 2010 with a bloody vengeance. This time, they did not only target their perceived opponents, but indiscriminately attacked security officials, politicians associated with the ruling All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) government in Borno State. They also resorted to bombing high profile targets in Abuja such as the Nigerian Police Headquarters, as well as UN offices, in June and August, 2011, respectively (Kyari, 2014). It should be noted that it was in the third phase that the group first addressed itself as *Jamā'atu Ahl al-Sunnah Li*

Adda'awati wal Jihad after the Bauchi prison break in September, 2010.

The evidence of the Boko Haram's presence in Adamawa State can be traced to the *Da'awa* phase between 2007 and 2008. Informants from Mubi North, Mubi South and Madagali Local Government Areas agreed with this date. Though specific date could not be given, it coincided with Muhammed Yusuf's visits to Mubi, Shuwa and Duhu districts before they launched the Jihad, where he preached to his followers. According to the informants, Muhammed Yusuf preached at *Masallacin Bola* and *Masallacin Shagari* Low Cost. Between 2008 and 2009, he was also reported to have visited Mubi more than ten times. These visits must have paid off for him as he attracted a large number of followers to the extent that some of them had burnt their certificates and others left their trade to follow the group. It was said that the group had members in almost all the neighbourhoods in Mubi (Muhammad, 2020). It must be mentioned that one Sani Jangal and Alhaji Adamu America were allegedly regarded as the major Boko Haram known financiers in Mubi. The former was said to have donated his house to the group, which was used as Markaz (centre) (Yakamata, 2020). In Mubi for instance, it was revealed that most of those who joined the group were mostly tailors, mechanics, bakers, businessmen, among others.

Usman (2020), a former member of the group in Shuwa District, revealed that their members were drivers, tailors, and businessmen, and they were mostly youths of 25 to 28 years of age. He added revealed that Muhammed Yusuf usually preached in three areas of the town, around the neighbourhood of Mallam Idrisu, a former commissioner in the Second Republic and in Wuro Fulbe (Usman, 2020). It should be noted that Mubi North and Mubi South, as well as Madagali Local Government Areas were the main bases of the group from where they planned and mobilised their operations.

3. Ideology

There is no much dispute regarding the ideology of the group. Scholars have linked their ideology to either Ibn Taymiyya's philosophy on political authority or to Salafism more broadly though Boko Haram seems to have derailed completely from the former. For instance, Kyari had described Ibn Taymiyya as a puritan Salafi scholar (Kyari, 2014). According to Barkindo (2013), Taymiyya's political philosophy on political authority is only legitimate when it is in agreement with the law of Allah. The implication is that it runs contrary to the principles of

democracy. This is because the philosophy propagates theocracy while most modern states practice democracy. Most importantly, Davis (2007), Freedom (2014) and Fourman (2014), identify one important tenet of the Salafism, which is the purging of Islam of outside influence and to strive for a return to a puritan Islam as practiced by the pious ancestors of the Prophet (P.b.u.h) and the use of force when need be to achieve such change.

Interestingly, it is this ideological factor that seems to motivate Boko Haram as they misperceived it, as well as the concept of political authority in Islam. This ideology has also encouraged political violence and extremism in the name of Islam. Mamdani (2004) has perhaps made this point clearer in his book *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* where he refers to contemporary terrorism as political Islam (extremist), which is distinct from the mainstream Islam (moderates). Muhammed (2001) also draws the distinction of the different Islamic trends in Northern Nigeria, which he describes in terms of traditionalism, modernism, and fundamentalism. He also argues that each trend can be associated with a different educational background and a different political orientation.

The above points clearly demystify the claim that Boko Haram is a continuation of the Usman Dan Fodio's Jihad of 1804 as claimed by writers such as Last (Ebiam, 2013; Ezombi and Nasidi, 2018). In fact, the historical contexts of the emergence of the two phenomena were different. While in the former Islam was adopted as a state religion by the Hausa rulers, in the latter, Nigeria is a secular state and not an Islamic state. It will be ahistorical to assume that Boko Haram is the continuation of the Sokoto Jihad. Besides, during the Sokoto Jihad, innocent civilians among which were children, women and elderly people were not attacked unlike the murderous approach of Boko Haram. In fact the two have different understanding of Islam. Perhaps the only similarity between Sokoto Jihad and Boko Haram is the term "Jihad", but its usage and intent are quite different.

This is how the Boko Haram fiasco is mostly uncritically and monolithically described out of context. Boko Haram ideologically opposed the Nigerian governments, conventional taxation, constitution and western education, which according to them amounted to religious derailment (Ladan, 2014; Kah, 2017). It was this idea that gave them the appellation 'Boko Haram', literally translated to mean western education is forbidden. Here, two points have to be made clear. First, the name 'Boko Haram' was given to the group based on their belief

that western education is forbidden. Second, they have stated clearly that they are against western education (Freedom, 2014). This second point is in line with Mamdani (2004), who claims that, al-Qā'idah rose to challenge the USA after the end of the Cold War as a protest against Western dominance (imperialism) as reflected in developing countries, especially in Muslim dominated countries forged out an environment of impunity created by state terror.

Similarly, the adherents of the group were convinced that the government of Ali Modu Sheriff (the then Governor of Borno State) was full of impunity and social vices, and that this could only be resolved through the establishment of an Islamic society devoid of political corruption and moral deprivation. From the foregoing, it can be construed that Salafism explains the rising wave of radical Islamism, perhaps with little modification to fit social circumstances and historical contexts in which such groups emerged.

4. Methods of Recruitment

According to James (2013), membership of Boko Haram is multinational in composition, as members are drawn not only from Nigeria, but also from Niger, Cameroon, Chad, Sudan, Mali and Libya, largely as a result of the long historical ties between them. Most importantly, too, is the protocol of the free movement of persons of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS). In the same way, membership is drawn from diverse socio-economic backgrounds ranging from the unemployed, illiterates, graduates, businessmen to artisans, among others (James, 2013).

Conversely, some scholars have associated the membership of the group solely to poor socio-economic background, especially the *almajirai* (pupils of traditional Islamic school) in the affected areas. For instance, Hoechner (2014) observes, that, "many have jumped to the conclusion that the Islamic sect find easy recruits in traditional Quranic Schools" citing a position in an article credited to Soyinka in the Newsweek Magazine where he states that Boko Haram:

(Have) been deliberately bred, nurtured, sheltered, and rendered pliant obedient to only one line of command, ready to be unleashed at the rest of the society. They were bred in Madrassas and are known as the almajiris. From knives and machetes, bows and poisoned arrows they have graduated to AK-47s, homemade bombs, and explosives-packed vehicles (Hoechner, 2014).

On the contrary however, Hoechner maintains that other authors have also used the *almajirai's* deprived

living conditions as a basis for their claims, using the position of a former Minister of Education, Aishatu Jibrin Dukku when she said “most of those children, because of the harsh realities they found themselves in, end up becoming juvenile delinquents and, subsequently, adults’ criminals” Hoecher concludes that even though some *almajirai* may probably be amongst the followers of Boko Haram, there are still no systematic evidences to support these false and baseless assertions. According to her, available empirical evidence refutes ‘Simplistic application of Economic Deprivation Theory’. She maintains that, many conveniently accused the *almajirai* because they often do not have social superiors to speak for them, and ‘blaming them carries little risk of stepping on toes of powerful protector, which makes it convenient scapegoats’. Hoecher also submits that, it will be uncritical and problematic to offload the blame for violence and militancy, and the challenges facing Nigeria as a nation today on the shoulders of *almajirai* alone because of their background and conservatism. Such blame risks obscuring the widespread inequality, poverty and alienation of ‘modern’ Nigeria. In addition, membership of the group cuts across different socio-economic backgrounds as seen in several reports on how people abandoned their jobs, burnt their certificates, sold their assets to contribute or donate their assets to the group, which by no means suggests that the *almajirai* are the sole potential recruits to the group.

Some scholars have identified the reasons for the vulnerability of potential recruits of the sects (Fisseha, 2016). Most of them favoured poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, poor upbringing, social injustice, poor knowledge of religion to mention a few. Hansen et al (2016), for instance, have argued that the bulk of Boko Haram adherents came from the destitute, dispossessed, disinherited and semi-urban underclass. In the same way, a report by Nigeria Stabilization and Reconciliation Project (NSRP) titled “Life Histories of JAS members” (Boko Haram) provided empirical data with regards to the group’s class composition, gathered from relatives of the group members. According to the report, 76% of the respondents accepted that their relatives were very poor (Hansen, 2016). Again, another NSRP study by Hashin and Walker on Radicalization and De-radicalization of one-time *almajiri*, still identified poverty, illiteracy and unemployment as a source of recruitment. The study also observes that de-radicalization remain ‘locked in place’ when conditioned that caused poverty, illiteracy and unemployment are unchanged (Hansen, 2016). Thus, the study concludes that former *almajirai* are less likely than members of other male youth networks to

join radical, religious and ethnic insurrection and criminal gangs.

The reasons for the enrolment of people into Boko Haram in Adamwa State are not different, but akin to the foregoing. The disparity however, lays on the peculiar reasons that motivated individual recruit. While there are those who joined as a result of socio-economic reasons. For instance, Mallam Sanusi Bauchi Bulama, an ex-member of the sect, testified that, most of them joined not because of their economic status or for religious purpose (because they hardly pray five times a day and that many could not recite the Qur’an), but to be seen as brave, and to be freed from harassment by people in authority (Innocent, 2016). Adamu America, a popular member in Mubi, said that he joined because of the love he had for the sermons of Muhammed Yusuf (Innocent, 2016).

It can be observed that there is variance in terms of motivation in joining the group on one hand and he methods used in recruiting members in pre-2009 and post 2009 that is before and after the death of Muhammed Yusuf on the other. The pre-2009 recruits were considered to be “ideological”, while post 2009 are seen to be “opportunistic”. Those coming in before the murder of Yusuf in 2009 and the simultaneous military razing of the Boko Haram compound with nearly 1,000 deaths of family members were more driven by religious beliefs and principles. Post-2009 Boko Haram became factionalized, and received guidance from Abubakar Shekau’s leadership, which has been characterized by indiscriminate hyper-violence and criminality.

Scholars have identified a number of methods used in the recruitment of members. They include: radicalization (internet and sermons), financial inducement, conscription and prison breaks. The first two methods were mostly used before 2009, while the others were used in the post-2009 period. In Adamawa State for instance, there are testimonies and evidence, which shows how some people were recruited through these methods, especially in Mubi North and Mubi South, Madagali, and Michika Local Government Areas.

It has been shown above how some members were radicalized through the sermons of Muhammed Yusuf. According to Mallam Mustapha Mohammed Sanusi, the District Head of Duhu in Madagali L. G. A., some were said to have joined because they were induced financially, as they were given loans, a method, which most informants agreed with. According to an Imam in Mubi, Imam Bello, when *Yan daba* (street thugs) are given as little as five-ten thousand naira, they got interested and joined the

group (Hansen, 2016). There was no specific amount given to the prospective recruits. Moreover, prison break is another way used by the group to recruit members. Reports abound on prison breaks credited to the groups. For instance, on 7th September, 2010, the group broke into the Bauchi prison where about 700 inmates were set free by the insurgents, including 100 of its members (Ori, 2013). In Adamawa State, the first prison break was in Yola on 22nd April, 2011 where 14 prisoners were freed (Bazza, 2014). Again, on 29th October, 2014 there was a prison break in Mubi, where all the prisoners escaped. According to one of the inmates, as revealed by an informant, members of the group asked inmates to either join them, or leave, and a lot of inmates joined them, especially criminals. There were similar incidences in Ganye and Maiha. It can be argued that, in all the cases of prison break, the group was able to free their members, and recruit inmates that had nowhere to go to, or something to do. There were also reports of how Boko Haram kidnaps people after attacking villages and towns. The Chibok and Dapchi Schools were classic examples. For example, Baba Bapson, a former member as narrated by Innocent (2016), has revealed that he could recall a time when in a raid, they whisked away 30 young men in Madagali L. G. A.

5. Methods of Operations

Evidence of Boko Haram operations abound. Its tactics and methods of operation perhaps are similar to other global terrorist groups (Maiangwa, 2012). Basically, their *modus operandi* is partly one of the distinctive elements used for the periodization of the phenomenon. Interestingly, there are scholars who see the whole process as a seamless event, without any change or phase. To them, the Boko Haram phenomenon is still unfolding (Umar, 2013). The point to make here is that, all the happenings were within the context of time and space. For example, according to Kyari, the group started as a fringe group under the leadership of Mallam Mohammed Yusuf, a fiery scholar resident in Maiduguri. The group was not committed to violence before 2009. But, through subtle and open harassment, the group was goaded into an open confrontation with the

Nigerian state, which was violently suppressed in July, 2009. Thereafter, it went underground, rebuilt, and resurfaced in October, 2010, and changed its tactics to targeted assassinations, drive-by shootings, suicide bombings, and massive deployment of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), kidnapping and hostage taking, occupying territories as from 2014, and losing of these territories between 2014 and 2015 (Kyari, 2014). It will not be out of place to say that, there are four distinctive periods that could be identified, from the foregoing: Pre-2009, 2010-2012 they became violent, 2012-2014 started kidnapping and hostage-taking and 2014-2015 occupying territories.

Evidence abounds on the operation of Boko Haram in Adamawa State, like in Borno and Yobe states where the operation of the group is higher. The four Local Government Areas in Northern Adamawa that were the worst hit are Madagali, Michika and Mubi North/Mubi South. These areas experienced prison breaks, assassinations, suicide bombings, and attacks (on towns and villages where banks, bridges, electric installations, schools, hospitals, churches and mosques were destroyed).

The first reported case of attack on a town in Adamawa State was on the 25th of August, 2011, when the group attacked two banks and two police stations leaving at least 16 persons dead in Gombi L.G.A (Reinert and Lou, 2014). After this, there were series of attacks, both reported and un-reported to the extent that a state of emergency was declared in Adamawa state in 2011. The climax of all the attacks was 23rd August to 15th November, 2014, when the whole of Northern Adamawa fell to Boko Haram, in the following succession: on 23rd, August Madagali fell, on 8th October, Michika followed and Mubi (north and south) on 29th October, the Capital of “Caliphate” named “Madinatul Islam” (The City of Islam). Then in the month of November, the following important and strategic towns also fell in rapid succession: Maiha on 10th and on the 15th both Hong and Gombi fell to Boko Haram (Abba, 2019). The table below gives a summary estimation of the total destruction on public infrastructure in Adamawa State between 2009 and 2015.

Table II: Table Showing Summary Estimation of Public Infrastructure Destroyed in Adamawa State by Boko Haram

| INFRASTRUCTURE | ESTIMATED AMOUNT(In Naira) |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| HOUSING | 16,594,125,000.00 |
| WATER SUPPLY FACILITIES | 68,779,000.00 |
| ELECTRICITY INSTALLATIONS | 273,157,477 |
| WORKS | 4,779,381,265.00 |
| SUB TOTAL | 21,711,848,000.00 |
| GRAND TOTAL | 23,883,032,872.00 |

Source: Field Work, by Douglas Barnabas, 2019.

The above table shows the estimated destruction of public infrastructure in Adamawa State as a result of Boko Haram operations. The estimate covers schools, hospitals, primary health care centres, banks, market, government offices, bridges, culverts, prisons, police stations, churches, mosques among others. This excludes the destructions of private properties. From the table, the destructions on housing alone is more than 90% of the total destructions in the state, followed by works, which were less than 5%, such as water supply facilities and electricity installations. These figures reflect the situation on ground. For instance, in Madagali Local Government Area alone, 19 secondary schools, 32 primary schools, 45 hospitals (including clinics and primary health care centers) and six markets were destroyed in Gulak, Shuwa, Hyabula, Kirchinga and Madagali district of the area (Sukur, 2017; Madugu, 2017). Evidence from filed work however, showed that the total of 1, 452 private buildings, 20 churches and 3 mosques were destroyed in Sukur, Madagali, Kirchinga, Duhu and Gulak districts (ADSEMA, 2015).

Similarly, in Michika L.G.A. 1,803 houses, 23 churches, one mosque, one hospital, 34 vehicle, 69 motorcycles and 78 bicycles, 58 business premises were destroyed or burnt/looted. In the same way, 684 bags of maize, 436 bags of rice, 864 bags of beans, 431 bags of guinea corn, 2 bags of bambaranut, 485 goats, 47 cattle and 282 birds were either looted or burnt. It should be added that in Bazza district alone, it was reported that 70 persons lost their lives (ADSEMA, 2019).

In addition to that, there are displaced persons from Borno and Yobe of Michika origin whose businesses were vandalised and destroyed, which include; over 300 bakeries, more than 700 shops, over 500 people were said to have lost their lives with 196 persons missing (ADSEMA, 2019). In the case of Mubi North, 560 houses were burnt, while 446 were burgled, 14 shops were burnt while 110 were burgled. Also, 189 herd of cattle and 41 vehicles were missing. Besides, 40 churches and one mosque were burnt while, 310 bags of maize, 1, 184 birds were stolen, and 43 people were killed (ADSEMA, 2019). Furthermore, 290 houses and 72 churches were looted and burnt, while 7 banks, 3 shops, one hotel, 2 secondary schools and 11 farms were looted and destroyed. Likewise, 6 vehicles, 110 herds of cattle were looted and 45 people lost their lives in Mubi South Local Government Area.

It should be known that the estimation covers the period between June, 2014 and February, 2015, and does not represent a comprehensive estimate of the total damages between 2007 and 2015. This is

because many a victim could not be reached and a lot of household items were not captured. Also, these are estimations for four of the 7 Local Government Areas that were affected. They are used just to provide evidence of Boko Haram operations in the state and not to show that they were the most affected ones.

6. Conclusion

From the foregoing, the paper has attempted to move away from the conventional themes and ways the Boko Haram phenomenon have been studied by providing a concrete micro study rather than the dominant macro study of the phenomenon that may be shrouded in generalizations and conjectures. Using evidence of the sect operations in Adamawa State, the paper presented a narrative that is peculiar, and best explained the people's experiences. The paper discussed some salient events that have shaped the history of the sect's activities in the state, like Mohammed Yusuf's visits, recruitments, operations and the resultant outcomes.

The paper equally traced the historical evolution of Boko Haram and its transformational stages, ranging from proselytization, radicalisation to terrorism with advertent effects on Northern Nigeria though with particular reference to Adamawa State. It also examined the message, ideology and methods of Boko Haram recruitment of fighters, as well as the planning and execution of various deadly attacks in some Local Government Areas of Adamawa. Other important issues discussed include the consequences of Boko Haram insurgency in Adamawa State such as the destruction of lives and properties.

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