Since 2009, Nigeria has faced a determined and deadly Islamist fundamentalist insurgency. The Islamist group known as Jama’atu Ahsu-Sunnah Lidda’Awati Wal Jibad, better known by its nickname “Boko Haram,” was founded in 1995 as a Sunni Salafist organization preaching Islam and providing services to the poor, to widows and to vagrant children (almajiris). The group, then known as the Sahaba, was led by a Muslim cleric, Malam Lawan Abubakar. In 2002, Malam Lawan relocated from Nigeria to Saudi Arabia for further studies at the University of Medina.¹

Subsequent to the departure of Malam Lawan, older clerics in the Sahaba group chose a charismatic, intelligent, diplomatic, gifted, young versatile preacher named Mohammed Yusuf to succeed him.² The choice of a younger and more energetic leader was aimed at injecting youthful energy and drive into the religious organization. It was hoped that with a younger leader the group would increase its appeal to the youth and thereby increase its membership. The strategy succeeded as the group experienced a significant increase in membership and it became very influential among religious organizations in Northern Nigeria.

The new leader of the Sahaba Group, Mohammed Yusuf, had high school education but was not able to gain admission into the University of Maiduguri to further his education. He served in the Yobe State civil service. An ethnic Kanuri from Girair Village in Yobe State, Yusuf was a fiery and gifted preacher. He received high-quality religious education under the Kano-based Izala cleric, Sheikh Ja’afar Mahmud Adam. Malam
Yusuf, a precocious and intelligent scholar, was praised by his revered teacher Sheikh Adam as “the leader of young people.”

According to a prominent Zaria-based Salafi imam, the new leader of the Sahaba had also been mentored by the leader of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), Sheikh Ibrahim el-Zakzaky. The IMN is the umbrella organization of the Shiites sect in Nigeria, which is different from the Sunni sect that Yusuf represented. Yusuf later became the Borno State amir (leader) of Jama’atu al-Tajdid al-Islami (JTI) which translates into Movement for the Revival of Islam. The group JTI was a Kano-based IMN breakaway group founded in 1994 that continued Sheikh Ibrahim el-Zakzaky’s confrontational stance toward the government but through Salafist doctrine. The members of JTI are suspected of having carried out the beheading of Mr. Gideon Akalu, a Christian Ibo trader in Kano accused of desecrating the Holy Koran. In 2002, Yusuf became the Borno State representative on the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria (Figure 1.1).

THE CONVERSION

The trajectory of the Sahaba group changed from service and preaching to extremism when in 2002 Malam Mohammed Yusuf met a radical, fanatical cleric named Mohammed Alli. Mohammed Alli indoctrinated
Yusuf into the Taliban extremist ideology of strict Wahabism. Coming under the doctrinal influence of Mohammed Alli became a turning point for Yusuf as a person and the organization that he led.

Alli was a devout fundamentalist who believed in jihad. The Taliban came into prominence in Afghanistan in 1994 led by Mullah Mohammed Omar, a puritanical cleric. He recruited members from Koranic schools hence the name “Taliban” which means “student.” The Talibans, whose fundamentalist doctrine did not favor anything Western, took over political control of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 and implemented strict Islamic Sharia code with stonings, amputations, public executions and harsh treatment of women.

The Muslim coalition that defeated the Soviets was united by their fundamentalism – Wahabism and Sunni Salafism. The Talibans began a process of converting Muslims to their extremist ideology in order to reduce the “pollutant” effects of Western civilization on pure Islam. Based upon the Taliban radical ideology, Yusuf regarded secular governance as morally bankrupt and Western education as antithetical to pure Islam.

Alli proselytized to Yusuf that Western education only led to Westernization and secularization. He posited that Western education brought greater dependence on income. He condemned the lifestyle, opulence, ego and vanity of Western-educated elites (Yan Boko). Alli argued that governance was ineffective in the hands of Yan Boko and that it merely led to growth in white collar crime, collapse of societal values, debauchery and other social vices. To the traditionalist Taliban mindset this was appalling and horrific. Alli urged Yusuf to change society beginning with his group by becoming a true jihadist.

The conversion of Yusuf changed the doctrine of the Sahaba group to a Taliban-style traditional orthodoxy that considered Westernization as aberrant, abhorrent and unIslamic. The teaching was that Western education pollutes and dilutes Islam. It maintained that Western institutions were infidel and must be avoided by Muslims.

BOKO HARAM

With radicalization came new realities and changes. Sahaba group leader Mohammed Yusuf concluded that although Western education (Boko or Book) significantly improved material well-being, it did not lead to wholesale conversion to Islam. Ironically, “Boko” or sorcerers (the educated elite) were respected in the Muslim North. “Book school” taught Islam
more effectively than the local Islamiyya school which is also known as “Makaranta Alo.” It was known that Yan Boko had deeper knowledge of Islam than almajiri. However, the Boko version of Islam was impure. The Yusufiyyas (meaning the followers of Yusuf) then concluded that Western education (Boko) is sinful or forbidden (Haram).

**Basic Religious Beliefs**

The Boko Haram sect does not believe in banking, taxation or jurisprudence in the country. It considers those economic and legal practices to be haram. The zealots argue that Western education is unIslamic as it practices things that Allah and the Holy Prophet reject. Some of these practices include the mixing of boys and girls under the same shade, and the teaching of evolution theory and rotation of the earth.

Boko Haram members removed themselves from contact with other city dwellers in places like Maiduguri, Bauchi, Damaturu and Kano and built their own communities where they could interact with fellow sect members only. They strategically located their communes on the outskirts of town, apparently in order to escape Western vices.

The Taliban doctrine teacher Mohammed Alli convinced Yusuf to avoid democracy, civil service and Western education. Yusuf subsequently resigned from the Yobe State government as counseled by Alli.

With Mohammed Yusuf’s conversion, Ja’amatu Ablus-Sunna Lidda Awatil Wal Jihad became a radicalized Muslim sect at the Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri. The religious sect viewed Nigerian society as extremely corrupt. It also considered the Borno State Government led by Alh. Mala Kachalla an epitome of corrupt governance. Yusuf’s aversion to Gov. Kachalla’s alleged corruption informed his decision to work for the victory of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) in the 2003 gubernatorial election. Senator Ali Modu Sheriff was the ANPP candidate for governor in the 2003 election.

As a pre-condition for supporting Senator Sheriff, Mohammed Yusuf was promised the implementation of strict Sharia code in Borno State. The charismatic preacher, pleased with this pledge, urged his followers to support the candidacy and eventual election of the ANPP candidate.

Senator Ali Modu Sheriff’s political career included serving as the Senator representing Borno Central Senatorial Zone on the platform of the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP) during General Sani Abacha’s military regime. Senator Sheriff ran again for the senate in 1999 on the platform of the ANPP and won the election.
It was the gubernatorial candidature of Senator Ali Modu Sheriff that brought him into close contact with Mohammed Yusuf and the Yusufiyya movement. Instead of implementing the strict Sharia code which he had promised as a pre-condition for Yusuf’s electoral support, Senator Sheriff created a Ministry of Religious Affairs and appointed the national secretary of the Yusufiyya movement, Alhaji Buji Foi, as the Commissioner of Religious Affairs.

Mohammed Yusuf and his group were disappointed that the strict Sharia code which Governor Sheriff had promised them was not implemented. It was a betrayal of trust and further reinforced the radical Islamic ideology that his group should have nothing to do with government. Realizing that he had been cheated by the governor of Borno State, Yusuf resigned his appointment with the government as did Alhaji Buji Foi, the State Commissioner for Religious Affairs.

THE HIJRA

The fundamentalist cleric Mohammed Alli did a good job indoctrinating the charismatic Yusuf, who accepted almost all the tenets of radical Islam except one – hijra (migration from a bad place to a better place). Alli tried to persuade Yusuf to migrate with him from Maiduguri to Yobe State in a hijra, Yusuf declined. He saw his calling as service to the less privileged and preaching the true Islamic faith.

THE NIGERIAN TALIBAN

The terminology “Nigerian Taliban” was first used by US government officials to describe the small radical Islamic group that migrated in October 2003 from Maiduguri to Yobe State, camping at a small desert village named Zagi-Biriri in Tarmuwa Local Government Area. Zagi-Biriri Village is 70 km north of Damaturu, the Yobe State capital.

The sect, which styled itself “Talibans of Yobe,” comprised university undergraduates, ex-military personnel and professionals, among others. Consistent with their religious beliefs, they maintained a Spartan dress code and wore a long beard – similar to that of the Talibans in Afghanistan. The Yobe Taliban group named itself Ali Sunnah Wal Jamma (“Followers of Prophet Mohammed’s Teachings”).

The choice of the remote desert location was to insulate the Yobe Talibans from what they perceived as the corrupt Nigerian system and to
effectively dedicate themselves to a life of prayer and study of the Holy Koran. Their seclusion was also preparatory to a revolution that would overturn the corrupt administration at all levels of governance in Nigeria. The Yobe Talibans planned to replace the corrupt incumbent administration in Nigeria with a “holier” government founded purely on the teachings of the Holy Koran and the Hadith.6

Nigerian intelligence officials reported to the government that the Yobe Talibans were conducting military training in their commune. However, neither the Yobe State government led by Alhaji Abba Ibrahim nor the federal government presided over by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (a former military ruler, retired general and civil war hero) paid attention to the growing threat. Perhaps it was assumed that if the threat was ignored, it would fizzle out on its own. Initially, there was considerable confusion about the true identity, origin and purpose of the Yobe Talibans. While some thought they were a rump of the Maitatsine religious sect that perpetrated large-scale violence in Kano, Maiduguri and Yola in the early 1980s,7 others thought that they were members of the Al Qaeda network who were hiding in Nigeria attempting to escape the wrath of the United States government which was attacked in the US homeland on September 11th, 2001, claiming about 3,000 lives.

The Yobe Talibans were vocal in their criticism of the state governments in Northern Nigeria for their failure to implement “true Sharia” or strict Islamic code in the 12 Northern states that had passed the Sharia law. Although Nigeria is a secular state, 12 Northern states had passed and operated the Sharia code as of 2003 (Figure 1.2). The first state to legislate Sharia in Nigeria was Zamfara State.

The Fish Pond Incident

A middle-aged, married woman reportedly challenged the right of the Yobe Talibans to fish in the local pond in Zagi-Biriri Village. She told them that since they did not own any portion of the pond, they had no right whatsoever to fish in the stream.8 Using a creation argument, the sectarians said that the pond was created by Allah and the fish therein. They told the woman that no mortal could lay claim to any section of the pond, nor decide who should fish in it. In the ensuing argument over fishing rights, the woman was badly beaten for daring to challenge them.9

The villagers promptly notified the police of the presence of the sect members in Zagi-Biriri. In a swift reaction to police reports about criminal activities of the sect, the Yobe State government issued a three-day
ultimatum to the sect members to leave Zagi-Biriri. On Sunday December 21st, 2003, in obedience of the expulsion order, the group relocated east of Zagi-Biriri to Kananma Village in Yunusari Local Government Area (LGA) of Yobe State. In December 2003, Kananma was a homogeneous community of about 3,000 inhabitants situated only 7 km from the border of Nigeria and the Niger Republic. The remote location of Kananma conferred several advantages on the Yobe Talibans:

1. They escaped the attention of the Nigerian authorities.
2. They continued with their hermetic meditations on the teachings of Islam.
3. They continued their military training undisturbed.
4. They recruited other like-minded individuals from the border communities.
5. The porous borders provided a conduit for illegal arms and ammunitions.

On Wednesday December 24th, 2003, the Talibans attacked Kananma burning down the police station, the local government secretariat, the Palace of the District Head and the residences of the LGA Chairman and the Divisional Police Officer. The residence of the community leader was also razed because he was seen as the representative of the government in the village. In addition, a young police recruit was murdered by the holy warriors.

The attack on various targets in Kananma followed a warning issued by the jihadists one day earlier (December 23rd) that they wanted to see the District Head of Kananma. Upon being told by townsfolk that the government official was not immediately available, the Yobe Taliban members left a chilling message that they would be back the next day to kill him. The Divisional Police Officer (DPO) immediately sent a message to the Yobe State Police Command headquarters in Damaturu reporting the death threat.

The militants abducted 30 villagers from Kananma and forced them to dig trenches around their camp to maintain a defensive stance. The tactical knowledge of former military and law enforcement personnel in their fold became useful. The hostages were also forced to pray with the jihadists.

A contingent of Police Mobile Force personnel dispatched to dislodge and arrest the Yobe Talibans retreated from the camp when they encountered superior fire-power from the militants. The trenches dug by the abducted villagers also conferred tactical advantage on the Talibans. Armed soldiers were subsequently sent in by the government to quell the rebellion. The soldiers engaged in fierce gun battles for over seven days before defeating the jihadists in January 2004. The town of Kananma was under Yobe Taliban control for about one week.

The enclave set up by the Yobe Taliban was nicknamed “Afghanistan” in apparent reference to the birthplace of Talibanism. Due to the proximity of Kananma to the Niger Republic border, many nationals of neighboring West African countries joined the Taliban movement. The Salafist-jihadi message appealed to them.
After their defeat in Kananma, some of the jihadists continued the assault on the Nigerian state. In September 2004, about 60 Talibans attacked a police station in Gwoza, Borno State, killing two police personnel and torching cars in the police station. The jihadists then invaded the neighboring city of Bama in Borno State and killed an Assistant Commissioner of Police – the Area Commander for Bama. Seventeen people were injured in the attacks which Borno State Police Commissioner, Mr. Ade Ajakaiye, blamed on the Talibans.10 The choice of police targets was informed by two factors: (1) to seize arms and ammunitions and (2) to show contempt for law enforcement officers.

While the Talibans were engaging the security forces in violence in Yobe State and the southern part of Borno State, the charismatic Malam, Sheikh Mohammed Yusuf, continued to grow his Yusufiyya movement out of his Ungwar Doki Compound in Maiduguri. For purposes of historical accuracy, this author maintains that Yusuf who was more diplomatic than violent was not part of the Taliban violence that wrecked Yobe and Borno States under Mohammed Alli. When Alli was killed later in 2004, his adherents dispersed and some of them rejoined Boko Haram for spiritual and perhaps material sustenance.

This clarification is important as some writers have erroneously placed Mohammed Yusuf in Kananma as part of the hijra. His religious mentor migrated from Ungwar Doki to Kananma frustrated by the liberalism of Mohammed Yusuf. However, the leader of Boko Haram Mohammed Yusuf did not go. He concentrated on institution building and was vocal in the defense of his increasingly radical religious viewpoints.

In 2015, the governor of Yobe State, Alhaji Geidam, traced the origin of Boko Haram to Seyyid Qutb and Qutbism in Egypt.11 The politician traced the origin of Boko Haram from Egypt and the capital punishment meted out to Seyyid Qutb to a migration of Muslim brotherhood elements to Minna in Niger State, Yobe and Borno. This position merely obfuscates the history of the Boko Haram group. The militants that Governor Abba Ibrahim's government combated in Kananma Yobe in 2003/2004 are not the same as Boko Haram. Granted that Qutbism justified the violent overthrow of Muslim governments and largely influenced the establishment of the Al Qaeda network – which supported the Talibans in the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan – they are all separate groups. Aside from ideological fanaticism and purity, and perhaps sharing of resources as jihadist movements often do, there is no evidence linking Boko Haram to Seyyid Qutb.
BOKO HARAM

PRELUDE TO VIOLENCE

Boko Haram did not spontaneously go on the offensive in a campaign of bombings, maiming, abductions and killings. The organization between 2002 and 2009 was administered by Yusuf as a government subdivision in Nigeria. It was a government within a government.

In a 2006 press release signed by the Shura (Consultative Council), Boko Haram declared that Islam permits the sect to subsist under a secular government like Nigeria. The declaration stated that Boko Haram members could not join or support the government since their system structures and institutions contained unIslamic elements.

Yusuf was not allowed to preach in central mosques in an effort to restrict the propagation of his puritanical message. He was also denied television and radio appearances in Borno State.

However, despite the denial of airtime, Yusuf sold his preaching tapes which were very popular and in high demand. The income from tape sales was very high, so the sect had good cash inflows.

BOKO HARAM ADMINISTRATION

Ibn Tiammiya Masjid (mosque) was the headquarters of the religious sect. Sheikh Mohammed Yusuf and his hardline second-in-command, Abubakar Shekau, ran the organization from their mosque located at Anwar Doki, nicknamed Millionaires Quarters in Maiduguri.

The organization had three important organs including a cabinet which comprised the langinas (departments), the Shura (or Consultative Council) and the Hisbah (or Brigade of Guards and Militia). See Figure 1.3.

Cabinet: The cabinet comprised various service departments such as welfare, economic affairs, health, religious affairs, agriculture, etc. The langinas (departments) were headed by appointed officials to render services scheduled for the departments.

The Shura: This was the Consultative Assembly or parliament of Boko Haram. It made “laws” for the group. The laws were Sharia laws and not Nigeria’s penal code or metropolitan laws. This organ was critical to the group as the Sharia code formed the foundation of its social control.

A 2006 release signed by the Shura declared that Islam permits the sect to subsist under a modern government like Nigeria. The declaration, however, cautioned that the members of Boko Haram could not join or support the Nigerian government as long as the governmental systems, structures and institutions contained elements that were contradictory to core Islamic principles and beliefs.12
The Hisbah: This is the police force of Boko Haram. In the Muslim North, Hisbah agencies exist everywhere and their mandate is to enforce Sharia laws. The role of the Hisbah is to detect offenders, arrest them and charge them to the Sharia court system for adjudication and punishment if found guilty or culpable.

The Hisbah serve as an important organ for internal security and crime control. Since the BH communes were outside the purview of public security agencies (such as the Nigeria Police Force), the Hisbah provided law enforcement according to the Sharia code.

The Hisbah could arrest for drunkenness, indecent dressing, blasphemy and other conducts forbidden by the code. The Sharia code also abhorred stealing, corruption, white collar crimes, moral decadence, murder, assault, etc.

Aside from “laws,” the Hisbah also enforced order in the communes. It ensured that boys and girls were not mixed under the same shade. Hisbah enforced the religious laws against blasphemy. Boko Haram beliefs, which included the consideration of banking, taxation and jurisprudence as infidel, were enforced by the Hisbah. The religious police ensured that “Western vices” did not overtake fundamentalist ethos.
**Brigade of guards:** The guardsmen had the role of protecting the spiritual leader Sheikh Mohammed Yusuf and his deputy, Imam Abubakar Shekau. This brigade constituted a close protection team for the spiritual leader, escorting him on several trips and providing security for venues where he chose to preach.

**Military wing:** This was an armed militia. Its role was the protection of the various communes where BH members lived and to protect BH against attacks by real or perceived enemies. The sect knew that it was unorthodox in many respects and the experience of the Yobe Talibans indicated that violence was in the offing in the not too distant future.

Muhammed Yusuf, as spiritual leader, was answerable only to Allah and might not have engaged in budgeting. This is pertinent as a BH budget analysis would have allowed a peep into the thinking of the leadership as it related to acquiring weapons for its military wing. Its expenditure priorities might have revealed the mindset of the leadership.

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**MILITANT ACTIVITIES**

In April 2007, a group of Islamic militants later identified as Boko Haram members attacked a police station in the Pan-Shekara District of Kano. Armed with assault weapons, the militants killed 13 policemen and set the police station ablaze. This incident resulted in a call out of the military, which engaged the militants in a 24-hour gun battle supported by ground attack airplanes before the Boko Haram fighters could be defeated in what we may call the Battle of Pan-Shekara.\(^\text{13}\)

Sheikh Mohammed Yusuf was a disciple of the Kano-based cleric, Sheikh Ja’afar Mahmud Adam. Yusuf used to visit Sheikh Adam in Kano to seek knowledge. However, when Sheikh Adam deplored Yusuf’s extremism, the teacher and student relationship fell apart. Sheikh Adam often debated Yusuf on his extremist views, attempting to deradicalize his favorite student. Unfortunately, Yusuf was enamored with Salafi radicalism and was not willing to explore competing epistemologies.

The falling out with Mohammed Yusuf had fatal consequences for Sheikh Adam who was brutally murdered by Yusuf’s loyalists inside the Dorayi Central Mosque in Kano on 13th April, 2007. Sheikh Ja’afar Adam was killed while he was leading the *subhi* (morning prayers).\(^\text{14}\)

Prior to the assassination of Sheikh Adam by suspected Boko Haram hitmen, the two clerics were engaged in a caustic verbal diatribe. They exchanged hot religious arguments through the medium of audio cassettes sold to their loyalists in Kano and throughout the
Muslim North. Aside from the war of words, Boko Haram members on several occasions invaded Sheikh Adam’s mosques to rudely interrupt his homilies.\(^{15}\) Their quarrel was described succinctly: “While Yusuf opposed western education and contended that it bred corruption, Jafaru, who was trained in Saudi Arabia saw nothing wrong with western education.”\(^{16}\)

After the death of Sheikh Ja’afar Adam, the former mentor and later rival Mohammed Yusuf proselytized his brand of radical Islam across the entire Muslim North. He encouraged converts to leave their homes and “move east” to Maiduguri. With the immigration of fresh converts and adherents to the Boko Haram headquarters in Maiduguri, its capabilities grew in terms of committed followers. With an armed, trained, motivated militia commanded by Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram was set to become a grave threat to Nigeria’s secular government.

In 2008, Katsina Governor Alhaji Ibrahim Shema received an intelligence report that a large number of men and women from Dutsinma, Katsina State, who had been converted to Boko Haram ideology were leaving the state to migrate to Maiduguri. These migrants were later given training in weapons and tactics by foreigners from Chad and Somalia. The Boko Haram fighters were trained in guerilla tactics, the making of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and marksmanship.\(^{17}\)

**Figure 1.4** Timeline of BH insurgency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Sahaba Group Founded by Mohammed Lawan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Lawan Resigns and Mohammed Yusuf heads Sahaba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Mohammed Ali founds Yobe Taliban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Yusufiyyas help elect Ali Modu Sheriff as Governor Borno State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Mohammed Ali killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Yobe Talibans commence Jihad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Pan-Shekara Police attack in Kano by B.H. 21 policemen killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>April 13 2007 Sheikh Adam killed in Doryai Mosque Kano by B.H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Gov Shema of Katsina State gets intel of BH recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>April 19th Shekau assumes leadership of BH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>September 2010 Bauchi Prison Break</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**15** Their quarrel was described succinctly: “While Yusuf opposed western education and contended that it bred corruption, Jafaru, who was trained in Saudi Arabia saw nothing wrong with western education.”

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CONCLUSION

The radical Islamic sect, Boko Haram, grew from modest beginnings in 2002 when the mantle of leadership fell upon Muhammed Yusuf, a young charismatic cleric. Yusuf’s destiny changed when he encountered Mohammed Alli, who converted him to Taliban-style fundamentalism. Alli put pressure on Yusuf to embark on a hijra to Yobe State, but Yusuf rejected the notion of hijra and jihad.

The growth of the Yusufiyya movement (better known as Boko Haram) into a major religious movement resulted in the deepening of its administration and development of coercive instruments such as a police force (Hisbah), Brigade of Guards for executive protection and a militia. The militia’s known attack is that on the Pan-Shekara Kano Police Station in April 2007 where 13 policemen laid down their lives. The Nigerian military had to employ ground and air assets in order to neutralize the fundamentalists who had taken over the police facility (we shall examine attacks on law enforcement officers and facilities in Chapter 7). In another April 2007 terrorist attack, BH fighters killed Sheikh Ja’afar Adam while he was leading Subhi prayers at the Dorayi Mosque in Kano. The elimination of Sheikh Adam ensured that Sheikh Muhammed Yusuf’s radical rhetoric was virtually unchallenged for some time in the North. The callous murder of Sheikh Adam also sent shivers down the spines of other clerics who might have spoken up against Yusuf.

With increasing wealth and influence, Yusuf was set to convert the entire Muslim North to his brand of radical Islam. Government security agents became aware of him and security reports were written here and there. Yusuf himself was arrested and harassed by the authorities several times without conviction.

Yusuf was banned from preaching in several mosques. He was denied television and radio appearances in Borno State. However, despite these feeble attempts by the Borno State government to curtail the activities of Boko Haram, the group’s anti-corruption message resonated with poverty-ridden youths to whom the fundamentalist logic was refreshing and who were assured that in Boko Haram communes they would live under Sharia code and would not have to endure the horrors of secular life in Nigeria. Youths quit universities and schools to join the sect. Some workers quit their jobs to join Boko Haram. Many converts sold their belongings in order to contribute to the sect. Their goal was to fight the cause of Allah and save Islam from Western domination. The traditional and strict narrative had such a strong appeal to some Northern youths that they were ready to do “anything” for the movement. And many of them did.
NOTES

2. Ibid.
3. Hijra is a journey from the “bad world” to go and be closer to God. The Holy Prophet Mohammed undertook a hijra from Mecca to Medina.
4. Ahmad Salkida. “Boko Haram from the Beginning” Sunday Sun (May 18th, 2014): Pages 13–14. Mr. Salkida, a journalist with the Daily Trust newspaper, was a confidant of Sheikh Mohammed Yusuf, the leader of Boko Haram.
6. Ibid.
7. The Al Masifu sect is also known as the Maitatsine sect so named after its founder Alh. Mohammed Marwa Maitatsine, a Cameroonian-born fanatical Muslim cleric whose uprising in Kano, Nigeria, in 1980 paralleled that of Boko Haram. Seeking to purify the practice of Islam, Al Masifu had over 5,000 fighters. They attacked orthodox Muslims at the Kano Central Mosque on December 18th, 1980 killing many. This attack was a reaction to the expulsion order given to the sect by Kano State Governor Alhaji Abubakar Rimi who acted on their growing violent tendencies. In the ensuing violence, Al Masifu was defeated after the call out of the military and 4,177 deaths were recorded along with 8,712 casualties and massive property loss.
9. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.