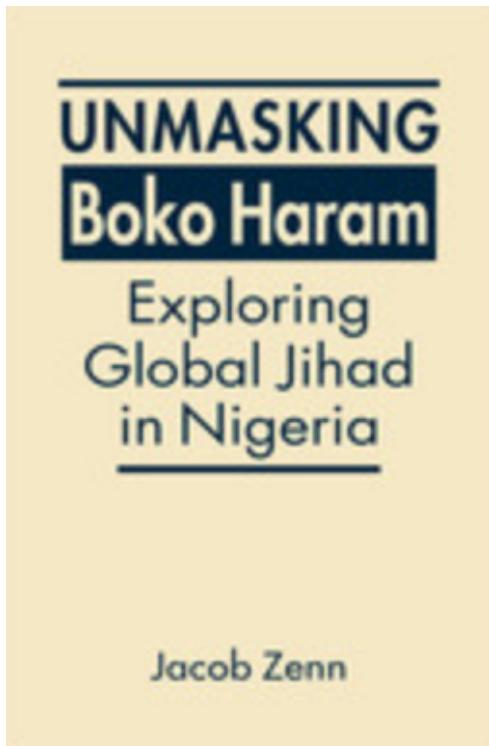


Jacob Zenn, Unmasking Boko Haram: Exploring Global Jihad in Nigeria



<https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2019/03/30/abu-aisha-interview-2018/>

(This is an unofficial translation of some excerpts of the interview at the above link; please cite to the book itself)

INTERVIEW WITH ABU AISHA

NIGERIA (By Phone)

July 2018

1. I am really interested in more details on **Muhammed Ali's life**. For example, what exactly did he do in Sudan. Where did he study in Sudan and where did he grow up? Did he exactly meet Bin Laden or just scholars around him. What things did Ali talk about at the Afghanistan/Kanama camp to his followers? Did he talk about his experiences in Sudan. And, *importantly*, did Muhammed Ali train in the country Afghanistan before 2002 and if so are there details? one more question to add (to perhaps #1 on the list I sent) is how did Muhammed Ali die exactly? For example, Abu Musab al-Barnawi just wrote in a book in fact that Shaykh Jafaar was responsible for killing him. Other sources also say the same. It would be interesting to additionally know the circumstances of Ali's death.

I spoke with him and those closest to him a lot and from all I know he was born and raised in Maiduguri. He started studying at the University of Maiduguri but dropped out and went to Sudan to study, not at the University, but with other Islamic scholars. From all I know, he didn't meet Bin Laden, but he may have studied with other scholars around him. At Kanama, his first teachings were about sowing hatred for anything western, then it moved to hating the governments and the institutions that typify them in Africa, then moved to fighting western education as the instrument that allow western influence. Didn't go to Afghanistan but did send some people there. Used the focus on Afghanistan to slip fighters across the borders into Algeria and Mali for training. Used same borders to ferry them back. EVEN : PEOPLE CLOSE TO HIM WERE NOT AWARE OF THE FIGHTERS HE SENT OUTSIDE FOR MILITARY TRAINING UNTIL AFTER THEIR RETURN.

****On Sheikh Jaafar, didn't want to talk much on the Phone. Confirmed that there were several scholars who blessed the starting of Jihadi struggle in Nigeria including Jaafar. All the scholars were members of the Jamaatu Izalatil Bidi'a Wa Iqamatis Sunnah (Izala or Ahlus Sunna). At the time, they tried to hook Ali and his supporters with Bin Laden. HE SAID HE WOULD BE FREE TO DISCUSS THESE FACE TO FACE BUT NOT ON THE PHONE.*

****On Ali's death: It may be true that the mentioned scholar has a hand in it, but what actually happened was Ali and some supporters escaped to Gashua, then moved to Damboa, from there to Gwoza. The they came back to the Damboa area and sought refuge with the chief of Hindiya (Not sure if I spell the name of the village or town right). The chief agreed to harbor them, but then sneaked and told vigilantes about them. The vigilantes came armed and attacked them at a forest by the town, killing 11 including Ali. Some escaped including Abdallah, who was shot and killed some years later.*

2. What **nationalities** were the people at the Kanama camp? Were there Sudanese, other Arabs, or all Nigerians? Did any of them fight with the Taliban in Afghanistan? Where does he estimate they got the name Nigerian Taliban from?

****There were people from Mali, Algeria, Niger, Cameroon, Chad but the vast majority were Nigerians. People gave them the name Taliban and they thought it was an honor for them. The name derived from the way the Taliban made Hijra from the towns to the hills, compared with how Ali's group moved to Kanama; then the way they dress was also similar to the Taliban.*

3. Is he aware of any **al-Qaeda/AQIM/GSPC or Algerian jihadists** in Nigeria in 2002 who helped the Kanama camp start up? Who provided funding for it? And who helped some members escape from the Kanama camp to Niger, Algeria or elsewhere after the crackdown?

****They got money mostly from the parents of the students, many of whom were from rich families. They are also business people and they contribute money willingly towards their cause. No outsider helped them to escape, they knew their way around the areas and some have built bases because of their commercial activities.*

4. The attachment with al-Qaeda's **al-Risalah magazine** from Jan 2017 (pg. 21) has an article from Ansaru's leader saying "members of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula" provided "help and funding" to the Kanama camp. Does Abu Aisha think that is true? And, importantly, the article says Muhammed Ali had a "shaykh and mentor", Abu al-Bara al-Dourawi. Does Abu Aisha have any idea who that is and why Abu al-Bara al-Dourawi stole money given to Boko Haram and fled to Saudi Arabia?

****Maybe true about the funding, but it was NOT during Ali. During Yusuf and after him, yes funding flowed in from the outside. Heard rumors about this al-Dourawi, but don't know who he was.*

5. Was there a Mulla Umar/Abu Umar at the Kanama camp and if so what was he like? What is his background? Was there an Aminu Tashen Ilmi? What also was his background?

****Yes, there was Abu Umar. He was a Nigerian, Kanuri by tribe. He was a student and a commander. He was one of those who were sent to receive military training outside Nigeria. He had been to Afghanistan.*

Aminu Tashen Ilmi? (laughs) He's from Kano, coz of security concerns can't talk much about him. I will say he was a fearless, intelligent and hardened person. You can't move him once he hold on to something. Compared him with a Turtle!!!

6. When Abu Aisha says Muhammed Yusuf was a "secret leader" what does that mean? Did Yusuf have a funding, logistics, and preaching role? Did al-Muntada al-Islami also help support the camp? And was Muhammed Ali mostly a military role? When did Yusuf and Ali first meet and how?

****There was a misunderstanding because Ali wanted a declaration of Jihad while Yusuf wanted us to continue preaching. There was a Shura council where Yusuf's position was*

affirmed and it was agreed that he should lead amongst us. On the outside, we'd continue to project Ali as our leader and we'd let him lead the Hijira to Kanama and lead the military training. But, he'd take orders from Yusuf, and the rest of us would take orders from him (Ali). Al Muntada gave money while the group was preaching, but cut it when the group took up arms. Al Muntada are students who support knowledge and learning only and said they won't fund anything if it involved armed struggle.

I didn't know where or how they met, I saw them together. I went to Ali when I heard his preaching and he was the one who introduced me to Yusuf.

Unmasking Boko Haram