

24th KUASS
(Kyoto University African Studies Seminar)

**The Dilemma in Being an Islamic Radical in Northern
Nigeria: Whether Non-violent or Violent**

Date: May 20, 2014 (Tue.), 15:00 – 17:00

Venue: Room #318, 3F Inamori Center, Kawabata Campus, Kyoto University

Lecturer: Prof. Murray Last (University of London, Professor emeritus)

ABSTRACT:

It is a real guerrilla war that's on in north-eastern Nigeria; though *Boko haram* do not have planes or helicopters, the guerrillas are otherwise as well armed as the Nigeria's 7th Infantry Division (8,000 men) that has been created to fight them because most of the weapons, including APCs and some tanks, have been captured from the army. And the guerrilla groups can be large – between 500 and 2,000 have been reported in a single attack.

Like so many radical religious groups, *Boko haram* seems to have moved from early idealism to military-style violence – not that the guerrillas do not also still voice religious enthusiasm. Detailed analysis of this shift in emphasis is not possible as no outsider (nor indeed Nigerian intelligence or journalists) have direct access to *Boko haram*'s latest internal politics. The new head of the Nigerian army, an Air Vice-Marshal, recently promised the nation that he'd terminate *Boko haram* by April this year; in response the guerrillas have launched even more aggressive raids.

So instead of listing the sequence of attacks and counter-attacks in this war, I will offer the hypothesis that Muslims in northern Nigeria have long had dual citizenship – one within Nigeria, the other within the wider Islamic *umma* – and that for many it's not self-evident which citizenship, in what circumstances, is to be given priority.

Thus *Boko haram* is the latest, and most violent, of a series of ultra-radical groups that have developed out of the Muslim *umma* in Nigeria over the last 200 years. Most have been non-violent and hidden deep in the countryside. In the last 30 years, with the huge immigration into cities, radicalism too has become urban, and thus has clashed with state authorities. *Boko haram* is now avenging those fatal clashes.

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