

# Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion (JPCR)

**Islam and the Rise of Islamic States in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Dr. Ensa Touray



## Islam and the Rise of Islamic States in Sub-Saharan Africa



Dr. Ensa Touray

University of Gambia P.o Box 3530, Brikama  
Campus

Corresponding Author's Email: [etouray@utg.edu.gm](mailto:etouray@utg.edu.gm)

### Article History

*Received 10<sup>th</sup> April 2023*

*Received in Revised Form 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023*

*Accepted 6<sup>th</sup> May 2023*



### Abstract

**Purpose:** This paper highlights the contribution of trans-Saharan trade as a major medieval trading system which created vibrant commercial link between the people of West and North Africa. It further examines the mode of penetration of Islam into West Africa and the rise of Islamic movements. It demonstrates the significance and the consequence of change depicted by the rise of European capitalist expansion which incorporated the entire West Africa into the capitalist Atlantic maritime trading system in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. It finally reveals the role of medieval trans-Saharan and the Atlantic maritime trade in catalyzing Muslim uprising and the creation of the theocratic states of Bundu, Futa Toro in the Senegalese Middle valley, and Futa Imamate in Futa Jalon in Guinea Conakry.

**Methodology:** The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary data which comprised Oral interviews which were conducted with 18 selected elderly local historians in West Africa. The oral interviews were obtained with tape recorders, which contained traditional Mandinka and Fula versions of the history of Futa and wars in West Africa. Some interviews which were recorded in 2012 during the research conducted by the University of The Gambia's Socio-Historical Fact Finders in the Republic of Guinea were also used.

**Findings:** The study found out that West as a regional entity evolved in a broader historical context as a result of the influence from Medieval Western Sudanic Empires symbolized by the establishment of trans-Saharan Trade until the modern period that marked the rise of the influence from Atlantic system symbolized by the arrival European capitalist nations.

**Keywords:** *Atlantic Bundu, Futa Jallon, Futa Toro, Fulani, Islam, Medieval, Mandinka, Sahara*

©2023 by the Authors. This Article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

## INTRODUCTION

It is generally believed that the people of West Africa experienced the infiltration of Islam as far back as the 8th and 11<sup>th</sup> Centuries. These periods coincided with the rise of Arab dominance in the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the subject of Islamic penetration into West Africa should be conceptualized within the broader context of the growth of the medieval world system that marked the rise of Muslim dominance in the Middle East. During this period, the use of camels and horses to establish trade link with West Africa did not only bring commodities intended for exchange, but also led to the growth of Sijilmasa and other commercial centres on the northern fringes of Sahara.<sup>2</sup>

Confirming through the Arab sources of AD 1076, it is indicated that Ghana had “a city consisted of separate towns in a plain, one of which is inhabited by the Muslim and had twelve mosques”. This settlement emerged as a result of the trade and commercial activities.<sup>3</sup> Sanneh continues to reveal that in ancient Ghana, a pure form of Islam was practised by urban dwellers, while those in the rural areas were nominal in the practice of Islam.<sup>4</sup> Inferring from the available Arabic sources, Sulayman Nyang also indicates that in Mali, only the kings and chiefs embraced Islam and these denied their subjects access to Islam. This political patronization and adoption of Islam was initiated to manipulate the religion of Islam for diplomatic purposes.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the conversion of Manding kings to Islam enabled these kings and their governments to attain recognition from far away Muslim centres and establish diplomatic relations.<sup>6</sup> This was further elucidated by Sanneh, through the writing of Al-Idrisi in 1154.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the theoretical model of World system and dependency theory in its contextual analysis and examination of the trans-Saharan and Atlantic epoch. To regulate and maintain theoretical and conceptual consistency within the framework of the study of trans-Saharan and Atlantic relations, all other theoretical approaches have been integrated into the framework of World System Theory. This convergence offers adequate tools of inquiry in the contextualization of the discourse Islamic cultural in West Africa. Since this is socio-economic and political history of Medieval West Africa region, as well as global capitalist economic advancement, it is studied within the context of World system paradigm.<sup>7</sup>

The study further adopts centrist and multi-centrist perspective to clearly situate the context of dual global system dynamics( exogenous and endogenous) to enhance the understanding of global

---

<sup>1</sup> Philip D. Curtin, “Jihad in West Africa : early phases and Inter-relationship with Mauritania and Senegal.” *Journal of African History.*, Vol. 12 No. 1. (1971), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Donald R. Wright. *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa*, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Lamin Sanneh, The Origins of Clericalism in West African Islam. *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1976), pp.50-51.

<sup>4</sup> Lamin Sanneh, The Origins of Clericalism in West African Islam, p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> Sulayman Nyang, “Politics and Islam in West Africa,” *Journal of Opinion*. 13 (1984), pp. 20-22.

<sup>6</sup> Sulayman Nyang, “Politics and Islam In West Africa, p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. (New York: Academic Press,1974), p. 5.

sociological-cultural interconnections and expansion through trade relations, process of Islamisation and state building during the trans-Saharan and the Atlantic trade. Therefore, the Arab control over three major strategic centers in the middle and northern African zone enable the Muslim world to assume core position in the global system, owing to the availability of the means of mobility such as camel, horses, and donkey.<sup>8</sup> This interaction led to rapid cultural flow, which led to gradual Islamisation of the north and western Sudan.

The dependency theory is a set of complex relationship centering on the incorporation of non-industrial territories of West Africa and less homogeneous society into global division of labour.<sup>9</sup> The concept requires the conceptualization of the implication of external influence generated by the European capitalist expansion through the Atlantic in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Since it is adopted as a tool of enquiry in the examination of capitalist relation with West Africa during the Atlantic trade, the concept of core-periphery relation is used to demonstrate the position assumed by Africa. In analysis, we can infer that in the capitalist world relation, the region of West Africa did not have the capacity to manipulate the operative elements of the economic system. Assuming the position of periphery, West Africa became a place where raw materials were grown and mine and the core-capitalist nation or metropolis were the place where valued added manufacturing and other processing took place. Thus, the study has been able to situate the context of Islamic militancy in the nineteenth century according to the dictates of economic change centered on the European capitalist demand.<sup>10</sup>

Extant literature on Islam has corresponding and divergent approaches on the subject of Islamic spread. Some scholars identify the opportunity presented by free trade as the factor which engendered the nineteenth century economic change and permitted the spread of Islam as a religion. But some other Muslim clerical groups identified the pacifist tradition as the course. Charlotte Quinn also contends that prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century change, the Gambia was characterised by peaceful co-existence of non-Muslim majority with the minority Muslims. She further states that Islam spread to the Gambia through trade, internal and external migration and emigration of Muslim clerics and students who were allowed by the Mandingo kings to settle in their kingdoms.<sup>11</sup> However, she contends that the Mandingo kings did not allow them to hold any political office. Consequently, this led to the emergence of Muslim towns administered by sharia law separately from those governed by African traditional laws. She argues that the expansion of Muslim population led to the creation of other ideological groups such as the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya brotherhoods. Quinn's works mainly centered on the spread and the evolution of Islam generally. Even at that, the scope of her work is limited to the south bank polities of Kiang, Jarra and Foni.

---

<sup>8</sup> Donald R. Wright. *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa.: A History of Globalization in Nuimi, The Gambia.* (2ed.Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2004.)

<sup>9</sup> James A. Caporaso "Dependence, Dependency, and Power in the Global System: A Structural and Behavioral Analysis." *International Organization*, vol. 32, no. 1, 1978. pp. 13-43.

<sup>10</sup> Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Cambridge University Press, 1959), pp. 1-16.

<sup>11</sup> Charlotte Quinn. *A Mandingo Kingdoms of the Senegambia: Traditionalism, Islam, and European Expansion* (Evanston Northwestern University press, 1972), pp.53-70

Lamin Sanneh,<sup>12</sup> “The Origins of Clericalism in West African Islam” identifies pacifism and militancy as two methods utilised in the spread of Islam in the Senegambia during the nineteenth century. His work is thematically centered on the glorification of a specific Mandinka speaking Muslim clerical group called “Jahanke” for their continuous adherence to the pacifist tradition throughout the nineteenth century. His conceptualization of pacifism among the Jahanke Muslim clerical groups constitutes teaching and preaching as the only means utilised by Jahankes to institute effective socio-political change. In this situation, we can infer that Jahanke clerical groups were more oriented to the use of defensive mechanism as a pre- condition to facilitating religious practice in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Sanneh further argues that the choice of Jahanke Muslims to assume pacifist stance in the spread of Islam was meant purposely to secure political patronage of both Muslim and non-Muslim ruling dynasties. Accordingly, this form of inter-dependence facilitated political and economic security for the Jahanke Muslim minority inhabiting within the dominant non-Muslim political hegemony. For example, Musa Molloh benefited from Jahanke clerics in his wars against the Muslims and non-Muslims. They render prayer services in return for slaves. Around 1850, the Soninke kings in Jarra and Kiang benefited from the services rendered by Jahanke Marabouts in the form of prayers services and the provision of protective amulets worn by the kings against the penetration of alleged human and spiritual forces. However, Sanneh’s notion of pacifism should be aggressively challenged because his conceptual definition of pacifism is strictly centered on the absence of active participation in war against non-Muslims. He however, fails to understand that Jahanke’s prayer services and logistic support to war lords is synonymous to active participation.

Martin Klein<sup>13</sup> argues, however, that Muslims and peasants were members of an emerging Senegambian social group committed to intense capital accumulation to demonstrate their readiness to alter the balance of power. His contention outlines the significance of the nineteenth century economic change as a driving force for political revolution in the northern Senegambia region. He attributes the success of Muslim revolution to unrestricted participation in farming and trade. He explains that the Muslims and peasants used their new income to purchase guns from European traders to enable them to defend themselves from constant raiding. What we can infer from Klein’s analysis is that the period of nineteenth century economic change marked the beginning of the French conquest and Muslim uprising that led to the extermination of political authorities of traditional rulers. Klein’s work is relevant in our understanding of transition from African to European control. However, he only concentrates on major independent political units situated on the northern Senegambia area.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Primary, secondary and archival sources of data collection were used in this thesis. Primary sources consisted of oral interviews conducted with elderly historians in Southern Senegambia area. The oral interviews have been obtained with tape recorders which contain traditional Mandinka and Fula versions of history of religious uprising in West Africa. Some interviews were recorded in 2012 during the research conducted by University of The Gambia Socio-Historical

---

<sup>12</sup> Lamin Sanneh, “The Origins of Clericalism in West African Islam”, *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1976), pp. 49-72.

<sup>13</sup> Martin A. Klein. *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal: Sine-Saloum, 1847-1914*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), pp. 219-224.

Fact Finders in the Republic of Guinea. In an attempt to write a definitive study of the rise of Muslim militancy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the work made use of the tapes and documents obtained from the Archive of the National Council for Arts and Documentation Unit of the National Council of Arts and Culture (NCAC). This unit became significant to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Islamic militancy because it included transcribed materials and the audio tape cassettes. It is clearly confirmed that answers to the questions of Muslim militancy and religious uprising in the West Africa lie in the oral version rather than in a book. Through the collection and interpretation of oral traditions along with some interviews, evidence of the major Muslim-non-Muslim uprising were unfolded.

### **Trade and the Rise of Islam in West Africa**

The emerging commercial centers served as points of contact between Sanhaja Berbers and the Arab traders. To sustain their dominant control over the desert trade, the Berbers began to adopt the Islamic religion and eventually considered themselves as part of a larger brotherhood of Islam.<sup>14</sup> The early influence of Islam can be traced to the conversion of Sanhaja and Zwaya Berbers.<sup>15</sup> However, the form of Islam adopted by Sanhaja Berbers was the heretical version of Islam which centred on the combination of local and pre-Islamic rites. This syncretism stimulated the conversion of the masses in West Africa. The combination of Islamic and African traditional rites enhanced the practice of mysticism and miracle mobilization, for as Donald Wright observes: “People were involved in spiritual forces and the supernatural”.<sup>16</sup> By the eleventh century, the Senegambia region of Senegal middle valley witnessed the infiltration of Islam. In this area, one Muslim ruler called War Jabi is reported as early as A.D. 1040.<sup>17</sup> Later, in the eleventh century, militant Islam began when the Almoravid movement ransacked ancient Ghana and then established the Murabit or Almoravid dynasty in the Maghrib and Spain.

In West Africa, the earliest converts were itinerant traders known as Julas or Wangara. They were involved in long distance trade with Cairo from the towns of Jenne and Timbuktu, and were established in a region between Senegal and The Gambia River.<sup>18</sup> Here, the cities situated along the southern edge of the desert served as meeting points for the West African traders and the Berbers, and from where they distributed trade goods with donkeys and human caravans. This created complex trading network stretching from western Atlantic coast and linking eastward across the expanse of what the Arab called *Bilad al Sudan*, the land of the blacks.<sup>19</sup>

In the latter part of the fourteenth century, West African sub-Saharan Sahel and savannah areas witnessed the immigration of clerical groups such as Bani Ma'qil, Bani Hassan and Kunta clerical group from North Africa. They were the off-shoot of Arab traders who moved through North Africa and began the process of Arabisation of Maghreb populations. With the expansion of these clerical families, they were sub-divided and identified according to their eponymous ancestors. The Bani Ma'qil gave birth to a sub-clerical group known as Banu Hassan, and their members were identified as Hasaniyaa. The Hasaniyaa were able to form the branches of *Awlad Udaya* and *Awlad Magfar*. The *Awlad Magfar* was divided into *Trarza* and *Brakna Moors*. These

---

<sup>14</sup> Donald R. Wright. *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa*, p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> Philip D. Curtin, “Jihad in West Africa: early phases and Inter-relationship with Mauritania and Senegal.” p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Donald R. Wright. *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa*, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Philip D. Curtin, “Jihad in West Africa : early phases and Inter-relationship with Mauritania and Senegal.” P. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Beyond Jihad: the Pacificist Tradition in West African Islam*, p. 83.

<sup>19</sup> Donald R. Wright. *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa*, p. 31.

Moorish groups became dominant in the north of Senegal during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>20</sup> They were nomadic pastoralists by profession, and were also engaged in raiding and tribute collection. Religious scholarship was valued but not strongly pursued.

By the sixteenth century, the Mauritanian zone was inhabited by those of Berbers origin who formed a clerical movement called Zwaya, and the Arab origin who were warriors identified as the Hassan, *Ma'qil*, and *Magfar*. Both movements had military capability and adopted a non-egalitarian structures or what Curtin observes as: “inferior endogamous castes of minstrels and artisans as well as a class of slaves, ‘abid or haratin’. The two movements were however different in their ideological standpoints. Their division led to the establishment of two separate communities epitomizing the physical layout of the capital of ancient Ghana. In southern Mauritania, the Berbers clerical community was peaceful, commercial and religious,<sup>21</sup> while the Arab descendent of Hassan, Ma’qil, and Magfar were military, political, and secular.

In the latter part of seventeenth century, the founder of the movement was a cleric of the zwdya who took the name Nasir al-Din, the helper of the religion, and was a member of the Bani Dayman, which in turn was one of the five major zwdya tribes known collectively as the Tashumsha. Their attempt to institute a Muslim state in southern Mauritania and Futa Toro in Senegal was to channel the discontent of Berbers against the suzerainty of the Arab warriors.<sup>22</sup>

Nasir al-Din’s emergence was symbolic for Berbers who had been forced to pay the ghardma, a form of protection money.<sup>23</sup> He also stood firmly against the Arab slave raiders and plunderers. The Zwaya movement influenced the Muslim minorities on ground to acquire positions of religious leadership. Their influence extended to Western Sudan as far as the region of Senegambia. In those regions, there existed non-Muslim polities headed by traditional leaders.<sup>24</sup> The new emerging force of Islam had to compete with the existing leadership over the control of social, political and economic spheres of the region.<sup>25</sup> Muslims living in secular polities deemed it necessary and obligatory for them to rule over non-Muslims as “Political overlord and Caliph or successor of Holy Prophet”.<sup>26</sup> Significantly, this became the major pre-occupation of Zwaya, led by Nasir al-Din, in his struggle for the revival of the pure form of Islam through the establishment of institutions, more especially intellectual ones. The members of this movement established the Kajoor learning centres of Pir and Kokki situated in the lower part of Senegal. Curtin attributes the success of Nasir-al Din in overthrowing the traditional leaders to his organizational ability. The movement laid the foundation for later reforms in the entire Senegambia region. Nasir Al Din’s death left a vacuum momentarily, though it paved the way for native revolutionary leaders to take the mantle of Islamic revolution in Senegambia.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Philip D. Curtin, “Jihad in West Africa : early phases and Inter-relationship with Mauritania and Senegal.” pp. 12-13.

<sup>21</sup> Philip D. Curtin, “Jihad in West Africa : early phases and Inter-relationship with Mauritania and Senegal.” p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> David Robinson, Islamic Revolution of Futa Toro, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* Vol. 8. No. 2 (1973), p. 189.

<sup>23</sup> Philip D. Curtin, “Jihad in West Africa : early phases and Inter-relationship with Mauritania and Senegal.” P. 14.

<sup>24</sup> David Robinson, Islamic Revolution of Futa Toro, p. 190.

<sup>25</sup> Boubacar Barry, Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade, p. 94.

<sup>26</sup> Philip D. Curtin, “Jihad in West Africa : early phases and Inter-relationship with Mauritania and Senegal, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> David Robinson, Islamic Revolution of Futa Toro, p. 190.

## **Muslim Revolution and the Foundation of Bundu State**

The demise of Nasir al Din in battle in the 1670s reinforced the re-establishment of the stratification of southern Mauritanian society. The Brakna and Trarza who were of Arab origin regained their influence and became the political and military elite, while a religious and commercial elite was constituted by the zwaya Berbers. Robinson observes that, “the reform continued to exercise influence through the Muslim communities that it had formed or fostered”.<sup>28</sup>

The defeat of the Zwaya movement led to the establishment of military alliance between Trarza Moors and the non-Muslim Fulani groups known as Denyanke who were defeated by Nasir al Din in Futa Toro, situated in the Senegalese middle valley. The two groups embarked on reprisals against the Muslims in Futa Toro and Mauritania. This macabre condition forced the Torodbe Muslims to evacuate themselves from Futa Toro into Bundu.<sup>29</sup>

Geographically, Bundu is strategically located at the terminus of the Gambian trade route. It was a cosmopolitan area inhabited by the Bajaranke, Konyagi, Basari, Jahanke and Serahuleh populations. Andrew F. Clerk perceives that the “early Bundu Political and Religious History revolves around the establishment of a Muslim state in an area with dominant indigenous non-Muslim populations.”<sup>30</sup> The founder of the movement was called Malick Sey. He was educated at the Kajoor institutes of Pir and Kocki founded by members of the Zwaya movement. He served as itinerant cleric before settling down in the area of Gajaaga. His target was to invoke the militant tradition of Nasir al Din. The Tunka, being the custodian of the land, allocated a plot of land to Malick Sey.<sup>31</sup> His movement then served as a link between the Zwaya movement and the Islamic militant movement of Futa Jallon.<sup>32</sup> Gajaaga was a kingdom administered by Tunka, based in Ciaabu, the administrative capital.

In Bundu, the Jahanke Muslim Marabout traders were also subjected to the constant molestation and pillaging of the military aristocracies of Gajaaga. Malick Sey, studying the precarious situation of the Muslim communities, realised that the intervention of his movement in the control of the Faleme, whose strategic commercial and viable agricultural wealth could constitute the basis of his political consolidation, took control of the area and then established a theocracy under *Sisibe* dynasty. Like other successful Muslim militant leaders, Malick Sey took the title *Almamy*, a head of Muslim theocracy.<sup>33</sup>

## **Economic Change and the Rise of Futa Imamate in Futa Jallon**

The Futa Jallon Massif, with its southern adjacent highlands, covers some 50,000 sq kilometers. The foothill of the Futa Jallon plateau forms a watershed for all the major existing rivers such as River Gambia, River Senegal, Pongo, Cacheu and River Nunez.<sup>34</sup> The Futa Jallon plateau served

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 190.

<sup>29</sup> Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 94.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew F. Clark, The Fulbe of Bundu (Senegambia): From Theocracy to Secularization. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1996), p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 94.

<sup>32</sup> Michael A. Gomez, The Problem with Malik Sy and the Foundation of Bundu. *Cahiers d' Etudes Africaines*, Vol. 25, Cahiers 100 (1985), p. 548.

<sup>33</sup> Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 95.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Rodney, Jihad and Social Revolution in Futa Djallon in the Eighteenth Century, *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. IV. No. 2 (1968), p. 269.



as transitional zone for the migration of diverse populations from Senegal, Niger and the forest swamps of the upper Guinea coast.<sup>35</sup> The zone was initially occupied by both semi-Bantu linguistic entity and those of the Mande speaking group of Mande-Fou. The Susu Mande subgroup which inhabited Futa Jallon was called Mande-Fou.<sup>36</sup> The Futa Jallon plateau became a natural sanctuary for Jallonke population, Susu and Fullani following the defeat of Suamanguru Conteh by Sundiata Keita at the Battle of Karina in 1235. During the height of ancient Ghana, the Susu population were inhabiting around the Faleme. Through the subsequent wave of their penetration and pressure on the people of Futa, they eventually supplanted the autochthonous populations of limbas, Basaris, Landumas and Bagas. Some of their remaining people were later assimilated into Susu ethnicity.<sup>37</sup>

The initial introduction of Islam in Futa Jallon could be traced to early Fulani migrant clerics from Mali. They studied in the well-established centre of Kankan.<sup>38</sup> The tradition from Futa reveals that the Muslim Fulani people in Futa Jallon migrated from Dandi Jali, in Macina.<sup>39</sup> However, it is believed that massive Fulani expedition led by a Fulani warrior king called Koli Tenguella was meant to liberate the established Fulani communities under the Malian suzerainty in the entire Senegambia region. The Fulanis settled in isolated and dispersed communities called Zango or Fulakundas.<sup>40</sup> They were pastoralist Fulani subgroups who maintained their pre-Islamic traditional Fulani religious practices. Their relation with Jallonke was based on commerce in commodities such as cattle, hides, milk and butter which were exchanged for cereals produced by Jallonke agriculturalists.<sup>41</sup>

The Jallonke Kafu chiefs became hegemonic and exploitative through the imposition of heavy taxation and tributes on Fulani, Mandinka traders and other migrants from Sudan. During this period, Fulani settlers were too small and too scattered to establish a unified political force to challenge the dominance of the Jallonke population. With the integration of Futa Jallon into the Atlantic trading system, Futa Jallon plateau went through a series of political, social and economic transformation. The new economic phenomenon witnessed the expansion in livestock and hide trade which made the cattle-owning Fulanis richer. Since the zone was culturally and geographically linked to the other well established Muslim states of Futa Toro and Bundu, Muslim proselytization on the account of Islamic militancy in their drive to create a new economic, political and social order was intensified.<sup>42</sup> When the Fulani population increased through the subsequent immigration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Jallonke hegemony over strategic economic and ecological resources was threatened. As a result, hostility arose between the cattle-owning Fulanis and the host Jallonke Kafu chiefs. The emergence of the cosmopolitan Fulani towns of Labe, Timbo, and Fagumba was the consequence of the growth of the Fulani population.

---

<sup>35</sup> Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 296.

<sup>36</sup> Walter Rodney, "Jihad and Social Revolution in Futa Djallon in the Eighteenth Century", p. 269.

<sup>37</sup> Lamin Sanneh, Futa Jallon and the Jakhanke Ckrical Tradition, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 12, Fasc. 1 (1981), pp. 40-41.

<sup>38</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Beyond Jihad: the Pacifist Tradition in West African Islam*, p. 119.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Alhagie Malado Jallow, 80, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2018, Traditional historian, Timbi Madina, Province of Labe, Republic of Guinea Conakry.

<sup>40</sup> Lamin Sanneh, FutaJallon and the Jakhanke Ckrical Tradition, p. 41.

<sup>41</sup> . Walter Rodney, Jihad and Social Revolution in Futa Djallon in the Eighteenth Century, p. 270.

<sup>42</sup> Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 98.

The towns established kinship ties and exercised their influence and power beyond their boundaries.<sup>43</sup>

When Futa was incorporated into the early Atlantic trading system, cloth and iron became key commodities of trade. This economic change became advantageous for skilled Mandinkas and Fulanis for the supply of cloths of African design. Since the European-imported clothes could not compete with the vitality of the cloths of African design, European traders in the coast engaged in the buying and distributing of African cloth in the interior.<sup>44</sup> In this Atlantic commercial transaction, the Fulani-manufactured bleached white cloth known as *cate*, and the Mandinka blue cloth called *Barafula* were highly demanded. This gave the Fulani and Mandinka African design cloth producers the opportunity to accumulate wealth that was strategic for any form of political mobilization.<sup>45</sup>

The demand for animal hides led to corresponding increase in the demand for more cattle and grazing land in Futa. However, the Jallonke Kafu chiefs imposed heavy taxation on each slain animal, and constrained the encroachment of Fulani pastoralists on lands which were part of Jallonke rotational cropping system. With the emergence of a new class among Fulakunda leaders, owing to their active involvement in the lucrative trade, they were determined to put an end to their dependent status.<sup>46</sup>

### **The Atlantic Slave Trade and the Rise of Futa Imamate**

The motivation for the Muslim revolution in Futa can be linked to the successful revolution in Bundu situated in the Eastern Senegalese region of the Southern Senegambia area. The subject of Muslim revolution in Futa can be initially conceptualized in the context of the quest for the creation of permanent security for the Muslim communities under the Jallonke political domination. It was organized through a multi-ethnic alliance constituted by twelve Fulani and ten Mandinka marabouts.<sup>47</sup> However, the Jallonke Kafu and sub-Fulani pagan group called *Pulli* living in the rural area with their livestock bitterly opposed the Muslim revolt. In this situation, Muslim Fulani groups preoccupied with the desire to abolish taxation on their livestock seized the opportunity to pursue a common course with their counterpart Mandinka Muslim traders known as Julas. However, the major reason for the combined Muslim mobilization through militancy was to create a vast political unit in the place of Jallonke Kafu chiefdoms so as to consolidate their dominant position strategically for the booming Atlantic slave trade, for as Rodney observes:

Slave trading was expanding even more rapidly. By the late seventeenth century, the majority of the slaves sold to the Europeans on the Upper Guinea Coast were coming from the hinterland, supplied by Mandingas, and Fulani - led of course by the Muslim trading faction, who played such a prominent role in the Jihād.<sup>48</sup>

There is the need to critically examine the doctrinal context for Muslim participation in slave trade. The Islamic canonical obligation of holy war (Jihad) against unbelievers was at once lawful and

---

<sup>43</sup> Walter Rodney, *Jihad and Social Revolution in Futa Djallon in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 273.

<sup>44</sup> Walter Rodney, *Jihad and Social Revolution in Futa Djallon in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 274-75.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Walter Rodney, *Jihad and Social Revolution in Futa Djallon in the Eighteenth Century*, p.76.

<sup>47</sup> Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 296.

<sup>48</sup> Walter Rodney, *Jihad and Social Revolution in Futa Djallon in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 276.

obligatory, more especially on oppressive pagan aristocracies that were at the helm of government in Senegambia. Militant Islam could also be perceived on the basis of its offensive approach as an instrument of social and political change. This discourse demonstrates the position of Militant Muslims in ensuring that embracing Islam is a precondition of safety for humankind. As a result, non-Muslims may have the state of war declared upon them by Muslims because they are judged to have refused the necessary conditions of freedom of the race of Adam. In this regard, militant Muslims saw non-Muslims as enemies (*hurub*) living in *dar al-harb*, i.e the abode of warfare.<sup>49</sup> In Futa, the Bari clerical dynasty initially instituted pacific method of Islamization through teaching and preaching. This helped the charismatic Muslim clerics of Timbo in Futa Jallon to attract more converts from pagan Fulani in Futa.<sup>50</sup>

The successful Muslim revolution in Futa Jallon facilitated the creation of Islamic theocracy led by Ibrahima Sambegu. This process followed the victory at the Battle of Tlassan in 1726.<sup>51</sup> He was accorded with prototype clerical title, Karamoko Alfa.<sup>52</sup> He came from a clerical lineage of Sedianke based in Timbo, the administrative capital of Futa Imamate. He was later conferred with the title *Imam*.<sup>53</sup> The Imamate was a confederation of nine provinces known locally as diwal. The chiefs of the provinces were given the title, *Alfa*.

## Conclusion

Global economic systems centred on Sahara and the Atlantic contributed immensely to political change symbolized by cultural change and state formations from the 16th to 18th centuries. West Africa's geographical opening to Sahelian and Sudanic region also facilitated the infiltration of Islam and the rise of Islamic movements through the successive immigration of Arabs. This also led to the emergence of Zwaya movement, and their influence accelerated the revolution in Bundu, Futa Jallon and Futa Toro in the middle valley of Senegal.

It is safe to conclude that in the latter part of the 18th century, Southern Senegambia region began to witness the rapid changing conditions marked by the shift of European demand from trade in commodities to the trade in slaves as a result of increasing demand of slave labour in the new world. This depicted the beginning of a significant structural transformation instituted by the new regime of Futa Imamate to optimize its participation through the justification and manipulation of Islamic militancy to extend the influence and control over strategic coastal markets during the development of Atlantic slave trade in the middle of the 18th century.

---

<sup>49</sup> John Donnelly Fage and William Tordoff, *History of Africa*, (Hutchinson & Co. Ltd 2002), pp. 255-300

<sup>50</sup> Walter Rodney, *Jihad and Social Revolution in Futa Djallon in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 276.

<sup>51</sup> Ensa Touray, *The Rise of Futa Imamate and the Battle of Kansala*, Video Documentary, University of The Gambia Socio-Historical Fact- Finder Society, 2016. Youtube.

<sup>52</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Beyond Jihad: the Pacificist Tradition in West African Islam*, p. 123.

<sup>53</sup> Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 97.

## REFERENCES

- Braudel, Fernand. Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems and Civilizations.
- Bredwa-Mensah,(1999) Yaw. Archaeology of Slavery in West Africa. *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*.
- Brooks, George E. (1975) Peanuts and Colonialism: Consequences of the Commercialization of Peanuts in West Africa, 1830-1870, *The Journal of African History*.
- Buhnen, Stephan. (1992) "Place Names as an Historical Source: An Introduction with Examples from Southern Senegambia and Germany." *History in Africa, A Journal of Method*.
- Caporaso, James A.(1978) "Dependence, Dependency, and Power in the Global System: A Structural and Behavioral Analysis". *International Organization*.
- Caulker, Patrick S. (1981) Legitimate Commerce and Statecraft: A Study of the Hinterland Adjacent to Nineteenth Century Sierra Leone, *Journal of Black Studies*.
- Chamberlin, Christopher. (1979) Bulk Exports, Trade Tiers, Regulation, and Development: An Economic Approach to the Study of West Africa's "Legitimate Trade", *The Journal of Economic History*.
- Clark, Andrew F. (1996) The Fulbe of Bundu (Senegambia): From Theocracy to Secularization. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*.
- Clayton, Thomas.(1996) "Conceptions of Globalisation' Revisited: Relocating the Tension Between World-System Analysis and Globalisation Analysis. *University of Chicago Press*.
- Curtin, Philip D. (1971) "Jihad in West Africa: early phases and Inter-relationship with Mauritania and Senegal," *Journal of African History*.
- Goldfrank," Goldfrank, Walter L. (2000) "Paradigm Regained? The Rules of Wallerstein's WorldSystem Method." *Journal of World-Systems Research*.
- Gomez, Michael A. (1985) The Problem with Malik Sy and the Foundation of Bundu. *Cahiers d' Etudes Africaines*, 25, Cahiers.
- Hanson, John H. (2000) Islam and Imperialism: Martin Klein's Contributions to an Understanding of the History of the Senegambian Muslim Communities, *Canadian Journal of African Studies.illiam and Mary Quarterly*.
- Hargreaves, J D. (1960).Towards a History of the Partition of Africa, *the Journal of African History*.
- Hawthorne, Walter. (2013). States and Stateless: The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History, Edited by John Parker and Richard Reid.*London Oxford University Press*.
- Ijagbemi, E. A.(1970) The Freetown Colony and the Development of "Legitimate" Commerce in Adjoining Territories: *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*.
- Johnson, Turner James. (2015) The Tradition on Jihad of the Sword, Counter-Narratives, and Policy: Soundings: *An Interdisciplinary Journal*.
- Klein, Martin A.(1972) "Social and Economic Factors in the Muslim Revolution in the Senegambia," *Journal of Africa*.

- Klein, Martin A. Slaves, “Gum, and Peanuts: Adaptation to the End of the Slave Trade in Senegal, 1817-48”, *The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series*, 66, (October, 2009)
- Lovejoy, Paul E. Islam, Slavery, and Political Transformation in West Africa: constraints on the trans-Atlantic Slave trade: *Outre-mers, tome 89* 2002.
- Mark, Peter. Reviewed works: The World and a Very Small place in Africa by Donald,R. Wright. *African Studies Review*, 2 September, 1998.
- McGowan, Winston. The Establishment of Long-Distance Trade between Sierra Leone and Its Hinterland, 1787-1821, *The Journal of African History*, 31, 1990.
- Mouser, Bruce L. Continuing British Interest in Coastal Guinea-Conakry and Fuuta Jalloo Highlands (1750 to 1850) *Cahiers D'Études Africaines* 172, 2003.
- Mouser, Bruce L. Guinea-Conakry During the Sierra Leone Phase, 1800-1821 Washington: Washington University Press of America, January, 2009.
- Quinn, Charlotte A. “A Nineteen Century Fulbe State.” *Journal of African History*, 12, 1971
- Robinson, David. “Abdul Qadir and Shaykh Umar: A Continuing Tradition of Islamic Leadership in Futa Toro”, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 2. 1973
- Robinson, David. Islamic Revolution of Futa Toro, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 8. 1973