

**States, Conflict and Islam:
A Reconsideration of *Jihād* in
the Gambia River Region, 1850–1900**

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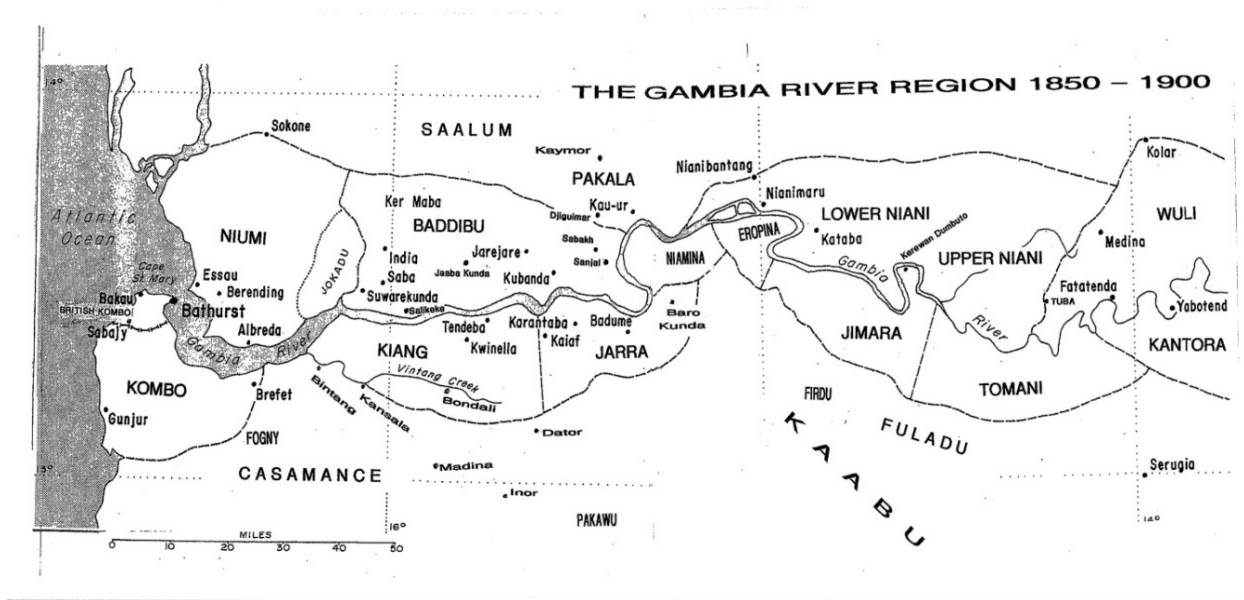
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Abstract

As the result of centuries of transregional commerce by Muslim merchants and the attendant networks developed by Muslim scholarly families, Islam was well established in the Sahel and Upper Guinea Coast by the seventeenth century. Commercial markets, Muslim states and Islamic institutions developed during a long, generally peaceful process of change; however, development of the Atlantic slave traffic, the intrusion of European imperialism, and, conflicts within Muslim communities and between Muslims and non-Muslims contributed to the creation of movements by Muslims who advocated martial *jihād* as a means to preserve proper Islamic practices. In the Gambia River region during the latter half of the nineteenth century a few Muslim scholars launched what they called *jihād*. Through the evaluation of local oral historical documents, colonial records, and analyses by scholars on the legitimate requirements for martial *jihād* this article reconsiders the nature of these movements in the region between 1850 and 1900. The question raised is whether the movements were based on Islamic principles or were motivated primarily by territorial, commercial, and political goals.



MAP: The Gambia River Region ca. 1850-1900

Introduction

Islamic reform movements (some identified as *jihād*)¹ have a long history in West Africa. Conditions and motivations for the movements vary, and the scholarly literature about them is large. Threats to Islamic communities emanated from non-Muslim leaders, from the enslavement of Muslims via the Atlantic or Sahara networks, from oppression by Muslim rulers, and from theological divisions within the Muslim communities. As is well known, Islam was introduced to and spread throughout West Africa by the collaborative activities of merchants and scholarly missionaries who traveled from West Asia or North Africa via the Sahara between the eighth and fifteenth centuries. Economic and political motivations led African rulers and merchants to seek

¹ *Jihād* is derived from the Arabic verb *jahada*, “to strive”; there are two ways in which it is used: The “greater” *jihād* indicates a devoted Muslim should strive to always follow the path of God (*Allāh*), while the “lesser” *jihād* requires Muslims to defend the faith against those who intend harm against the community of believers. Richard Bonner (2004) provides a comprehensive examination of the development of the concept and use of *jihād*. A recent analysis by El Sayed M. A. Amin (2014) about Qur’anic references to *jihād* and *qitāl* focuses on the misuse of the word *jihād* to mean “holy war” and to associate it with acts of terrorism.

alliances with the Muslim migrants, many of whom settled to take advantage of favorable conditions for expanded commerce and Islamic missionary initiatives, which resulted in close personal relationships and the establishment of centers of education and scholarship.

Over the centuries commercial, social, and religious networks were expanded by African Muslims, who continued to introduce and strengthen Islamic institutions, ideas, doctrines, and practices throughout the region. They developed important centers for scholarship, especially a system of primary education based on schools to study the Qurʾān and the teachings of the messenger Muḥammad, whose life provided guidelines for how to live as a proper Muslim. This process of introduction, expansion and integration is analyzed by many scholars (Curtin 1971; Levtzion 2000; Jeppie and Diagne 2008; Robinson 2000; Von Sivers 2000; and Wilks 2000), but I particularly recommend a recent study by Rudolph T. Ware III (2014), which provides an excellent review of the literature. The focus of my article is on the motivations and actions of those attempting to create new states along the Gambia River on the resulting conflicts, particularly on the importance of Islam in the process.

***Jihād* in Islamic law**

The pervasive use of the words *jihād* to indicate a "holy war" and *jihādī* for combatant (the correct word in Arabic is *mujāhid*.) to justify the "global war on terror" perpetuates a perverse misuse or misunderstanding by non-Muslims and even by some Muslims about the necessity for war and rules of warfare developed by Muḥammad and Muslim legal scholars. To counter this misinformation (and, in some cases, disinformation) several recent studies have been published that clarify the intention of *jihād* in Islamic doctrine (An-Nā'im 2009; Bonner 2004;

Lumbard 2004; Tahir-ul-Qadri 2010; Amin 2014).² Collectively these studies criticize the misapplication of the concept of martial *jihād* (the “lesser” *jihād*) by Muslim rulers or leaders of movements during different periods of Islamic history and especially during the present time. Tahir-ul-Qadri provides the most comprehensive examination of the justification for martial *jihād* and the use of violence by combatants in *Fatwa on Terrorism and Violence* (2010). Only when the Muslim community is being physically attacked or denied the opportunity to practice the faith is defensive *jihād* justified; even then the use of diplomacy is considered as more appropriate than violence. If violence is necessary to defend the community, it must proceed under very specific rules: There must be no killing of emissaries, of women and children, of noncombatants or prisoners; it is forbidden to destroy buildings, animals, crops, and especially mosques; there must be no pillaging, theft, or abduction of persons. Furthermore, there are strict prohibitions about killing or harming other Muslims:

There are some people who declare that the majority of the Muslims are disbelievers, polytheists and innovators on account of political, ideological or religious differences, and subsequently massacre them ruthlessly. They must know the sanctity and honour of a believer’s life in the sight of God and His Messenger. The Prophet declared the honour and dignity of a believer greater than that of the Ka’ba, the Sacred House of God (p.59).³

Moreover, Tahir-ul-Qadri states that it is also unlawful to kill or harm a person who has converted to Islam during the course of a war (pp.62–65). In chapters 3–6 he expands his analysis to include prohibitions against killing and torturing of nonbelievers, destruction of their property—including places of worship—and forcing them to convert to Islam.

These prohibitions and restrictions on when martial *jihād* may be launched and on how it

² This theme has been taken up by the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, ‘Abdu’l-‘Azīz ibn ‘Abdu’llāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdu’l-Laṭīf Āl ash-Sheikh, who, referring to “the so-called Islamic State, Al-Qaeda and groups linked to them,” stated that “The ideas of extremism, radicalism and terrorism ... have nothing to do with Islam and (their proponents) are the No. 1 enemy of Islam.” Boko Haram is included in his critique (*Arab News*, August 20, 2014).

³ His full argument is delineated in chapter 2.

may proceed provide the background for an analysis of the conflicts that occurred north and south of the Gambia River during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Some Muslims who initiated the conflicts and many European observers in the region referred to them as *jihād* or “wars for God,” but the validity of these statements should not be accepted without close reexamination of the events. I argue that, while religious doctrine was often used sincerely as a justification for launching the wars, motivations for territorial aggrandizement, for control over production and commerce, for self-promotion, and occasionally for plunder or slave raiding were fundamentally more significant causes of the warfare.⁴ The operations executed during the process of these conflicts often directly contradicted the doctrines on *jihād* presented in the Qurʾān and the Hadīth (or *sunna* – traditions of Muḥammad) and later developed by legal scholars.

Muslim pioneers and Islam in the Gambia region

For several centuries Muslim traders and clerics traveled south and west from the Mandé heartland to the Gambia River region. Gradually they created many villages and towns that became centers for Islamic institutions within small states that were ruled by largely non-Muslim Manding royal families. The Muslim settlements and their trading activities attracted new migrants, and vibrant Muslim communities developed that had significant influence in the region by the beginning of the 18th century.⁵ Among the early Muslim settlers in the region were

⁴ Reconsideration of this issue relies on the many published sources and especially on a large collection of interviews and documents from the Oral History Division (OHD), Banjul, The Gambia, and on interviews with local scholars. The interviews were conducted by trained field staff who recorded them, after which they were transcribed and translated into English. The research could not have been done without the generous and very professional help by the director, Bakari K. Sidibé, and the staff of OHD.

⁵ This process has been analyzed by many authors (e.g., Babou 2007; Barry 1988; Galloway 1974; Klein 1968; Levtzion 1968; Monteil 1964; Quinn 1972; Robinson 1975; Saad 1983; Sanneh 1979; and Sidibe 1974). For the development of related commercial networks, see Brooks 1993; Curtin 1971, 1975; Howard 1976, 1999; Jalloh and Skinner 1997; Mark and da Silva Horta 2007; Skinner 1989, 1997; Wright 1997.

members of the Baro, Sisé, and Turé lineages. The Sisé and Turé are identified as among the earliest Muslim clerics in West Africa, whose origins spring from prominent Soninké and Sarahulé families during the period of ancient Ghana. Through their economic and religious activities they interacted with Mandinka, becoming their Muslim teachers.⁶ Various sources identify Sisé with the founding dynasty of ancient Ghana (Wagadu) and ultimately with Muhammad, the messenger of Allah. Al-Haji Saja Girasi states that the formidable Jakhanké cleric, al-Hajj Salim Suwaré, was a member of the Sisé lineage; and he is also identified with the Kuresi/Girasi (Arabic: *quraish* – the clan of Muḥammad) either through his mother or one of his wives. An oral text by Handalla Ceesay traces the Sisé lineage back to Muḥammad through his grandson Hasan. Oral histories also identify the Sisé *qabīla* in Baddibu-Saloum as Manding Moré (Levtzion 1972; Sanneh 1979: 14-26).⁷

Whatever their origins, renowned Mandé families such as Sisé, Turé, Drammeh, Saho, Baro, Dumbuya, Kassama, and others who were closely linked through intermarriage and by scholarly activities played formidable roles in Muslim affairs in the Gambia River region prior to the 18th century. Schools for the study of the Qurʾān and Islam were established in towns and villages throughout the territory, and networks of scholars collaborated to build institutions for the advanced study of the Islamic sciences. Graduates of these academies became the teachers, scholars, and leaders of Muslim communities and also served as advisors to non-Muslim rulers in the region. Small Muslim states, such as Pakawu, developed south of the Gambia River (see map). Although tension between non-Muslim rulers and Muslim communities existed, Islamic

⁶ Refer especially to OHD: Galloway, SC046; Levtzion 1972; Saad 1983; Sanneh 1979.

⁷ Bakari Sidibe reported that Sisé is a Muslim clerical house in Pakala which ruled N'Djou for nine generations prior to European colonialism; Biram Sisé was a highly educated scholar (*marabuṭ*, in West Africa, derived from *rabat*: to tie or bind); OHD interview, 1987. *Qabīla* usually means “tribe” but is used in West Africa often to refer to a clan/lineage; its plural is *qabāʾil*. See Galloway SC 046; Girasi 381A; and Ceesay and Jagne 597, OHD, Banjul.

institutions, doctrines, and practices were embedded and gaining more influence throughout the nineteenth century.

Militant Islam in the Gambia River region

For more than a century prior to 1850, West Africa from Futa Toro to northern Sierra Leone was in a state of heightened spiritual consciousness, led by many Muslim kin groups among the Mandinka Moré, Jakhanké, Serahulé, and Fula (Fulbé). Most worked quietly to spread Islamic doctrines and to develop devotional institutions, while some took a more militant path. The idea of martial *jihād* was put into practice in a few instances, and these certainly had an impact on many younger Muslim scholars and *jūla* throughout the hinterland.⁸ Scholars have commented on the mobility of people and ideas and on the close relations between Muslim notable families in the centuries prior to 1800. The concept of military *jihād*⁹ was well-known by Muslim leaders and their followers in the Senegambia region. In 1853 Governor Luke Smythe O'Connor commented on Islamic militancy in the region:

The disturbances now harassing Combo are not confined to that Kingdom alone—a religious and fanatical war extends through many other nations and tribes three hundred miles along the banks of the river Gambia, and in the adjacent territories a fierce and furious contest inflamed by religious enthusiasm rages between the Marabouts (Mahometans) and the Sinunkees drinkers (Pagans). The creed of Mahomet has for some time past been flowing with a steady full current from the East and interior towards and through central Africa. Converts have flocked in numbers to the doctrine of the false Prophet, and before many years have glided away Mahometanism will hold the prominent position in western Africa.¹⁰

It is in this context that I consider the actions of Muslim notable families in the Gambia River region, particularly their roles in the “Baddibu wars” and the wars initiated by of Fodé Bakari

⁸ *Jūla* are long-distance merchants of the trans-Saharan and West Africa trade networks. The word was likely introduced by Arabic speakers and is derived from *jawal* (travel) and *jaulah*, (roundtrip or circuit).

⁹ Babou (2007: 20–32) has an excellent summary of military *jihād*; also see Skinner 2012: 95–108.

¹⁰ Dispatch 31, February 5, 1853, CO 87/55, The National Archives (TNA), Kew, United Kingdom.

Dumbuya and his son, Fodé Kaba Dumbuya, south of the river. These notables were interested in promoting the spread of Islam, but the thesis of this paper is that the primary motives were to enhance their political and economic interests through military alliances and conquests. Their attempts to construct Muslim states were met with opposition by other equally devout Muslims. Ultimately, these states were destroyed by the establishment of British and French colonial administrations.

Until the early decades of the 19th century Muslims and non-Muslims generally had mutually beneficial and relatively peaceful relations in the Gambia River region. Muslim merchants, agriculturalists, and clerics performed many useful services for their broader communities, and the long-established political structure afforded the population a rather stable social environment. Large numbers of people from non-Muslim families—even among the royal houses—had attended Muslim schools and some had converted to Islam. Heightened religious fervor developed into militancy. By the early 19th century the Muslim population had become large, well-organized, and politically active (Babou 2007; Barry 1988; Galloway 1974; Quinn 1972; Sidibe 1974). Mande leaders began to challenge policies and practices of the non-Muslim ruling families (referred to as *sòninkee* or *chado/ceddo* in the sources).¹¹

According to British authorities in Bathurst (Banjul), before 1850 the increasingly large number of Muslims in Kombo “embittered by religious differences” had fortified their towns and prepared to drive out the *sòninkee*. This militancy was “not confined to that Kingdom alone—a religious and fanatical war extends through many other nations and tribes three hundred miles along the banks of the river Gambia.”¹² In 1853 Governor O’Connor, cautioned against

¹¹ In the Gambia River region *soninké* is used to identify a category: “pagan.” The word is derived from the Mandé language, *sòninkee* (a noble warrior). In this context it is not an ethnic group (see Giesing and Vydrine 2007: 369, 377, 382). *Chado/Ceddo* was the term used north of the river to identify non-Muslim warriors.

¹² Dispatch 22, January 9, 1852, CO 87/52; and dispatch 31, February 5, 1853, CO 87/55, TNA, Kew.

interfering with the wars because he thought African armies had been underrated, noting that the Kombo Muslims had allies for two hundred miles up the Gambia River. The leader of the Muslim uprising in Kombo was a prominent scholar, Fodé Kaba Turé, “the high priest of Gunjur,” who later participated in military action in Niimi on the north bank and who continued to lead uprisings throughout the 1850s and 1860s. Turé claimed that his uprising was the precursor of the “true *jihād*,” organized by his nephew, Fodé Sillah Turé, who established the Muslim state of Kombo after 1870 (Skinner 2012). During the 1860s many Muslim-led wars were reported by British authorities in Bathurst, not the least of which was Ahmad Ba Jakhu’s military activities from 1861 to 1867.

The Mandé component in Ahmad Ba’s “*jihād*”

Ahmad Ba Jakhu, generally known as Maba, was a son of a recently arrived migrant from Futa Toro. His father, N’Diogou Ba, was a Muslim scholar and ensured that his sons had proper education: Maba in Cayor and Jolof, and his half-brother, Mahmud N’Dari Ba, in Mauritania. According to family tradition Maba settled down and taught for many years in Jolof but was persuaded to return to take his father’s place in Baddibu where the ruler gave him permission to build a town, Keur Maba Diakhou.¹³ Details of his early life are not given in the oral sources, and the events after his return to Baddibu are rather contradictory. Oral sources from the Turé and Sisé families of Baddibu suggest that Maba was welcomed as a respected *marabu* by Sambu Umani Turé and Handala Buré Sisé. Handala Buré acted as his host, presented him with one of his daughters for marriage, and gave him land for a farm. Sambu Umani Turé sent two sons, Said Kané Turé and N’Dari Kané Turé, to study with Maba, while Handala Buré also entrusted him

¹³ Charlotte Quinn (1979) collected oral histories from descendants of Maba. See also Klein 1968: chapter 4; Ba 1957; Barry 1988.

with two sons, Biram Sisé and Hali Hoya Sisé.¹⁴ In the oral history documents Sambu Umani Turé and Handala Buré Sisé are identified as devout and prominent Muslim leaders who greatly enhanced Maba's status in Baddibu.¹⁵

Oral documents relate that the first Muslim uprising in Baddibu occurred because of an insult to a *marabuṭ* at Mangiji, and in the subsequent conflict the town was burned and fifty Muslims killed by Bur (king) Saloum's soldiers. When Muslims met to decide what to do, the Imam of Mangiji said he wanted to lead the uprising, but Sambu Umani Turé claimed leadership because so many from the Turé and Sisé families were present. Handala Buré intervened and argued that Tamsir Maba Jakhu "is pious and has will power" and descended from the lineage of Sunjata Keita. The Muslim notables called for Maba to join them; they prayed together and swore their allegiance to him, after which they returned home to prepare for the war. The next year Shaikh Umar Tal came through their country, and Sambu Umani, Handala Buré and Mahmud N'Dari Ba accompanied Maba to meet with Shaikh Umar at Kabakoto.¹⁶

At Kabakoto Shaikh Umar told Maba he would lead a *jihād* but he would have to wait for the proper moment. The Muslims prayed and meditated, and Shaikh Umar gave Maba "a great Muslim name" and a stone that he would be able to lift when the time for the *jihād* had arrived. Maba and his entourage returned to their villages to prepare themselves for the time of conflict.

¹⁴ In the oral histories Hali Hoya is spelled variously as Ali Huja and Ali Koja and in British documents as Ali Khoja. His brother's name is given as Hama or Hamat Huja. In British documents Ali Khoja's brother is named Amara Khoja. Oral histories and the British identify Ali Khoja with the Sisé *qabila*. In this paper I refer to the brothers as Ali and Amara Khoja. See Samba 593/A, 593/B, 594; Jagne and Sisé 596/A, 596/B, 597; Samba and Jagne 599/A; and Kamara 600/A, OHD, Banjul.

¹⁵ These families were not only linked through their religious activities, but were related by marriage. Handala Buré's son, Biram Sisé, was married to Ndobey (Ndaba) Turé, and one of Biram's uncles was Said Kané Turé. Handala Buré, a highly respected teacher and scholar, is reputed to have cured a queen of Siin who had been cursed by a *jinn*, for which he was richly rewarded. The ruler of Siin asked Handala Buré for his assistance, and he provided an Islamic charm to protect Siin from conquest. This protective charm figures later in a warning to Maba not to attack Siin.

¹⁶ The year that this meeting occurred is generally given as 1850; Cessay and Jagne 596/A; and Kamara 600/A, OHD, Banjul. Quinn (1972, 107–08) indicates that the *sòninkee*-Maba conflict was caused by Maba's violation of a treaty with the "king" of Baddibu and did not originate for religious reasons.

If the meeting with Shaikh Umar actually occurred, it took eleven years for the preparations to bear fruit. While preparing for war, Maba consulted with two renowned clerics, Saidu Jenné at Salikéné and Jaiteh Jang at Jaaba Kunda, and asked them to meditate and give him their opinions about when the *jihād* should commence. Maba entered into *khalwa* (spiritual retreat), and after some time (some traditions say three years), Saidu Jenné and Jaiteh Jang informed him that their prayers were completed and the war could begin. Maba then called on his closest associates, Sambu Umani Turé, Sawalu Musa Jaino, Gombo Gaye, Biram Sisé, Ali Khoja Sisé and others to attack Madh Jaherr at Passe Huru.¹⁷ One tradition states that Sambu Umani Turé began the war prematurely and attacked Bala Bass and others in Upper Baddibu. Umani Turé ruled at Ngeyen Sanjal for one or two years and collected taxes for Maba. Next he extended the war to Kaymor in advance of Maba's *jihād*. While Umani Turé was praying at Ndama, the Bur Saloum counterattacked, killed Umani Turé, and burned the town. When Maba heard this, he called on his students and followers, including Biram Sisé, Ali Khoja Sisé, Said Kané Turé, N'Dari Kané Turé, Handala Buré Sisé, and Mahmud N'Dari Ba to plan the war against Bur Saloum. He wrote a letter to all Muslims, urging their support.

According to Governor George Abbas Kooli D'Arcy, what afforded Maba the opportunity to launch his war was the British punitive expedition to Baddibu in 1861, which resulted in a treaty of peace and commerce with the king, Jerriba Marong. In his view the weakened position of the king encouraged Maba to declare war.¹⁸ Whatever the cause and the date of the first war, numerous local and regional wars are attributed to Maba and various

¹⁷ According to the traditions, Madh Jaherr was chosen because he and his father, the *mansa* of Baddibu, had insulted and threatened Maba and his family; Samba 593/A, OHD, Banjul. D'Arcy confirms this version in dispatch 102, 22 May 22, 1862, CO 87/73, TNA, Kew. In 1879 a British administrator reported that "Alimami Jarley Jang is the chief priest of all Muslim Mandingos" in Baddibu; dispatch 60, August 15, 1879, CO 87/113, TNA, Kew.

¹⁸ Military dispatch 7, February 26, 1861, CO 87/71, and dispatch 54, August 24, 1861; and dispatch 126, August 20, 1862, CO 87/74, TNA, Kew. See also, Quinn 1972, 107–08.

supporters north and south of the Gambia River between 1862 and 1867 when Maba was killed while battling for control of Siin. In addition to the intimate followers of Maba already mentioned, other associates or allies in war have been identified as Amer Fall in Jokadu and Niumi, Samba Malick Sisé in Saloum,¹⁹ Ha Fodé Jawla in the MacCarthy Island area,²⁰ Fodé Kaba Turé in Kombo,²¹ Fodé Kaba Dumbuya in Jarra and Maba's nephew, Ousman Ba in Kiang. Maba himself took refuge in several places where he had allies when his forces were at a low ebb.²² In an August 1863 dispatch, Governor D'Arcy wrote that "the Muslims opposite MacCarthy Island have failed to capture the capital of the king of Kataba, and the *marabuṭ* chief Ha Fodé was killed and his Lieutenant Suhu was wounded. Sedhiou, one of Ha Fodé's war leaders, considers himself to be superior to Maba."

Jihād or Not-Jihād

Oral histories and French and British documents indicate that Maba's forces and allies were involved in many small battles and some large-scale fighting in Niumi, Baddibu, Saloum, near Tendabar, around MacCarthy Island and finally in Siin.²³ All sources relate that the Muslim

¹⁹ Samba Malick is called Maba's general in Saloum. He was a son of Handala Buré Sisé. Dispatch 221, September 11, 1863, and dispatch 17, December 27, 1863, CO 87/77, TNA, Kew.

²⁰ Dispatch 219, August 24, 1863, CO 87/77, TNA, Kew.

²¹ In 1862 Maba joined with Amer Fall to conquer the "Barra kingdom" and convert the *sòninkee* to Islam. On May 26 he attacked Essau with cavalry and sent three *marabuṭ* with a demand to surrender and to convert. Governor George D'Arcy states that Fodé Kaba Turé of Gunjur was "in daily communication" with Maba but on this occasion did not join the battle as he did later in 1862. Dispatch 102, May 22, 1862; dispatch 107, May 24, 1862; and dispatch 108, June 16, 1862, CO 87/73, TNA, Kew. "Mahaba had been heard to say, 'first let us destroy the Soninkees, and then throw the white houses of Bathurst into the sea,' —his well-known intrigues with Mahomedan Cabba of Goongour gives a colour to the probability of the boast." On December 8, 1862 Gunjur war boats landed near Essau and tried to burn it in support of local Muslims. Dispatch 161, December 24, 1862, CO 87/74, TNA, Kew.

²² In 1863 Governor D'Arcy reported that Maba took 5,000 men to Kiang to assist Ousman Ba, Mahmud N'Dari Ba's son, who had been defeated in fighting near Kwinella. Maba's force, in turn, was routed at Kwinella, and he lost his amulets, Qur'ān, horse, and war drum. He took refuge at Sumbundu, "a Tukulor town" to the east of Tendaba: dispatch 183, April 24, 1863; dispatch 193, June 5, 1863, CO 87/76; and dispatch 219, August 24, 1863, CO 87/77, TNA, Kew. The Mission to Maba in Sumbundu reported that Maba was waiting for additional troops from Baddibu; his troops at Sumbundu were starving and deserting him.

²³ For discussions of the wars, see Klein 1968: 63-113 and Quinn 1972: 107-131. For a report about Maba's death, see dispatch 35, August 12, 1867, CO 87/87, TNA, Kew. According to oral histories, Maba was warned not to fight

forces were victorious in some battles, lost others, and occasionally had to give up territory that had once been conquered. Oral historians mention that many Muslim leaders were heroes in battles that were lost in Saloum and Siin. In the Gambia River region Maba frequently communicated with French and British authorities through messengers, letters, and occasionally, trips to Banjul. At times he asked the British and French to help him make peace in Baddibu and Saloum. He told them that he had accomplished his goals—to spread Islam and to protect trade—and it was time for his followers to settle down to farming and for him to teach about Islam in his large school. Unfortunately, the wars, some of which he had initiated, were not so easily ended. Many local Muslim leaders sought power for themselves. In addition, the British and the French, who were vying for influence in the same territories, were suspicious about his motives and accomplishments. The uprisings led by Maba and others had resulted in political instability, so Maba was unable to consolidate his disparate conquests into a formal state structure. With this in mind, Charlotte Quinn’s assessment (1972: 196–97) of the situation would seem to be incorrect: “The nineteenth century had seen disintegration of traditional authority within the Gambia River states and the accumulation of power by a militant Islamic group. The revolution that followed substituted, however briefly, *a newly centralized authority in the form of a theocratic state* (emphasis added).” While there were certainly revolutions in the Gambia River region led by Muslims who were inspired by similar ideas, there was no single revolution led “by a militant Islamic group,” and there was no overall “centralized authority in the form of a theocratic state” at any time during the nineteenth century.

No doubt Maba was a pious Muslim scholar who sincerely desired to spread the faith to the unbelievers and unobservant Muslims and to protect the Islamic community from oppression.

in Siin, because Handala Buré had made a charm that would protect the region against conquest.

He clearly stated the goal of creating a broader Islamic community: “God is our Father and he has brought this war, and we are in his hands (*alhamdillahi*).”²⁴ Handala Buré Sisé made similar statements and said that Maba was the one to lead the Muslims; but other Muslim notables also proclaimed *jihād*. These leaders included Fode Kaba Turé and his nephew Fode Sillah of Kombo, Fode Bakari Dumbuya and his son Fode Kaba in the south bank area and al-Hajj Mahmud Lamin Dramé in eastern Gambia. All were well educated, devoted Muslims who sought to promote Islam in the region. The issue to consider is whether these wars meet the criteria for *jihād* as developed in Islamic doctrine by Muhammad and *‘ulamā’* (scholars of Islam).²⁵

In my analysis, Maba’s movement does not meet the criteria. He was called back to Baddibu by a brother to be head of the family, and Handala Buré Sisé and other local notables selected him to lead the local Muslim community. There are references to a meeting with al-Hajj Umar who prayed with him and instructed him about when to lead the uprising, and oral sources mention *khalwa* and consultations with renowned scholars about the precise time for revolt. Collectively, however, the sources are ambiguous about why and how the uprising began and who was responsible for it. Not only are the motives obscure but, early on, devoted Muslims, some of whom were converts, were attacked and killed. The ruler (*sumar*) of Niumi, a devout convert and powerful figure, resisted the Muslim invasion. In fact, at the time of the invasion in 1862 almost the entire territory had come under the influence of Muslim notables due to long-term migration, settlement, and conversion. For some leaders in the movement the objective

²⁴ Maba had proclaimed his intention to turn the Gambia region into a Muslim territory. The Arabic expression *al-ḥamdu lillāh* means “praise be to *Allāh*.” Dispatch 175, March 23, 1863, CO 87/76, TNA, Kew.

²⁵ I have argued elsewhere that Fodé Sillah Turé’s war probably meets the criteria, but Fodé Kaba Dumbuya’s does not (Skinner 2012). Mahmud Lamin Dramé’s movement did not have a significant impact on Islam in the Gambia region; for more on his career, see Barry 1988; Hrbek 1979.

seems to have been acquisition of territory or access to trade centers. Even Maba, who was fundamentally a teacher-scholar, grew weary of the war and sought to establish a peaceful environment in response to what was essentially a political rift. Although the model for a *jihād* movement and creation of an Islamic administration were well established in Islamic literature and by example, there is little evidence that Maba systematically tried to follow that model. He took the title *al-imām* not *amīr al-muʿminīn*, he did not create a *shūrā* (counsel of loyal advisors), nor did he appoint territorial representatives.²⁶ There is no evidence that a *sharʿia* court system was established or that a body of *ʿulamāʾ* was officially recognized to support an administration. Perhaps this is an unfair critique, for, given the circumstances of political disarray and European colonial opposition, Maba had very little time or space within which to form a theocratic state. As Martin Klein (1968: 83) concludes, “[Maba] failed because he did not devote enough attention to political questions, and did not completely control his marabout allies.”

The sources clearly demonstrate that many of his “allies” had their own agendas and sought territory and the spoils of war. The classic rules of engagement, developed from the time of Muhammad, were frequently ignored. Civilian males, women and children were killed or captured; property was wantonly destroyed; and devout Muslims were besieged and killed. Frequently, Muslim clerics complained about the reckless actions of the warriors and about Maba’s lack of control over his allies or his authoritarian leadership. The Mbacké family was negatively affected by the turmoil and criticized Maba’s leadership, as Babou demonstrates:

²⁶ One source, Ousman Tamsir Ba (1957), states that the territory conquered by Maba’s forces were divided into districts, each under one of Maba’s trusted lieutenants, but there is no reference to an Islamic structure. Other archival and oral sources on the impact of Maba’s wars do not describe such an arrangement. Indeed, after significant battles the leaders seem to have returned to the towns where they had developed their own power base.

Maba's controversial decision to deport the clerics of Jolof, Bawol and Kajoor to Saalum after he withdrew from these kingdoms fueled the hostility of many Muslims toward his movement. ... [Bachir] Mbacké mentioned that despite his good intentions, Maba made many mistakes due to his authoritarianism and impatience. He also objected to the alama's method of government and questioned the legitimacy of his political ambitions. Majakhate Kala, another respected Muslim cleric from Kajoor, also doubted Maba's competence (Babou 2007: 41–42).²⁷

Whether one accepts Maba's actions as a legitimate *jihād* or not, he failed to establish an Islamic state; and it is clear that his military and political successors had very little interest in creating a theocratic state or even in promoting Islamic institutions.

After Maba: Warfare and divisions among Muslims in the Gambia River region

Muslim leaders who survived the Saloum-Siin wars (principally Mahmud N'Dari Ba, Said Matti Ba, Gombo Gaye, Ali Khoja Sisé, Biram Sisé, N'Dari Kané Turé, and Said Kané Turé) demonstrated little interest in pursuing a *jihād* path. Their activities were directed toward building their own bases of power, acquiring territory, developing plantations, and controlling commerce on the Gambia River.²⁸ The wars that occurred between 1867 and 1887 were fought among themselves, engendered shifting alliances, and ultimately involved the intervention of European forces who intended to establish colonial boundaries that had nothing to do with Islamic states or theocratic systems. By 1901 all of the Muslim states that had been in the process of being created disappeared under the combined weight of European boundary commissions, surveyors, and military expeditions.

²⁷ Bachir Mbacké was the son of Amadu Bamba and the grandson of Anta Sali, who, although an advisor to Maba, had strong reservations about the military activities of the movement. Later Amadu Bamba, founder of the Muridiyya, argued that military *jihād* was not justified in Senegal, citing verses from the Qur'ān to support his *fatwā* (Babou 41–47, 60, 155, 252 n53). Robinson (1997) also discusses the conflicting roles of Muslim notables during the era of 19th century French colonialism in Senegal. In another work, Robinson (1999) analyzes French policies on Islam.

²⁸ Export goods included rice, corn, hides, beeswax, textiles, peanuts and animals. Cf. note 6.

It is generally accepted that Mahmud N'Dari Ba was selected as “regent” over what was left of Maba’s political organization after his defeat in Siin and that Said Matti Ba, Maba’s young son, would assume leadership when he reached adulthood; but ultimately he and his uncle became rivals for leadership and no unified state was created. Indeed, the various Muslim “war heroes” during the era of Maba contended for power north and south of the Gambia River. After Maba’s death the principal leaders of his movement dispersed. The *jali* Alagi Sait Kamara reported:

One warrior called Biram Ceessay went to Kanyemorr, Ndeba and made his settlement. Hali Huja [Ali Khoja Sisé] went home. Sait Kanneh [Turé] went to Kataba and made his settlement and Ndirey Kanneh [Turé]. The warriors all separated. When that happened, his griot, Wali Nyang, said: ‘Now, Gombo Gaye, what do you do?’ Gombo replied, ‘Go back to Sanjal; Maba has given me Sanjal.’²⁹

In none of the family histories nor in colonial documents do these war leaders claim to be pursuing *jihād* after Maba’s death and the dispersal of the military forces.

Fodé Kaba Dumbuya, who may have assisted Maba and certainly was associated with Mahmud N'Dari Ba after Maba’s death, returned to his father’s town, Dumbuto Kerewan, with thirty cavalry provided by N'Dari Ba and three “generals” from Nioro: Ali Khoja Sisé, Biram Sisé and Lamin Marang.³⁰ His return to Dumbuto Kerewan was very likely caused by the murder of his father in 1871.³¹

²⁹ See Kamara 600/A: “The History of Soninke-Marabout Wars,” OHD, Banjul. *Jali* is a title given to a person who is the repository of the history of a family or society; a *jaliba* is considered to be a highly regarded historian. The title originates from the Arabic root *jlw*: *jallā* (to manifest, to reveal).

³⁰ Ta Sankung Jaabi 132/B, OHD, Banjul. Although some sources refer to Fodé Kaba Dumbuya as Maba’s “lieutenant,” “general,” or even “disciple” there is no clear evidence that he fought with him in these documents. Certainly, Fodé Kaba was attracted to seek help from Baddibu/Saloum because of Maba’s formidable reputation, but Fodé Kaba was engaged with his own battles south of the river during most of the 1860s; and his mentor early on was his father, and his principal teacher was Simoto Kemo Saghanugu, from one of the most distinguished scholarly families in West Africa.

³¹ Fodé Bakari Dumbuya was killed while defending his town and plantations; some sources attribute the attack to Alfa Molo Baldé who had been entrusted with protecting the Dumbuya family, but who feared that they were recruiting forces to attack Fuladu. Other sources identify the attacker as Yunka Manku Mané who sought to avenge the murder of his father at Suma Kunda. One source claims that the attack was organized by a joint *sòoninke*-Fuladu army. N'Dari Ba reported that Alfa Molo captured Fodé Kaba’s wife and children. Dispatch 35, April 29,

The Dumbuya

The Dumbuya *qabīla* descend from Fa Koli Koroma, the famous military commander during the time of Sunjata Keita.³² According to family informants, the Dumbuya came from Hamana and Kulunkalanna/Kulunkangna several generations prior to the time of Fodé Bakari and his son. One branch crossed the Falémé River into Bundu and farther to the south during the eighteenth century.³³ Branches of the *qabīla* are found throughout western Africa. The following information was given by Dumbuya elders in Kukuna, a small kingdom in northern Sierra

Leone:

Dumbwiya is one of the Susu appellations of the clan better known elsewhere as Koroma. ... They are perhaps of Serakholé origin and go back to the days of the pre and post Islamic empire of Ghana or Walata which lay to the North of the upper Senegal and to the W[est] of the middle Niger [River]. ... The known ancestors of the Dumbwiya of Bramaia [rulers of Kukuna] were Koroma from Bambouk, the country to the south of Kayes, and bounded by the R[iver] Falune [Falémé] to the West [and by] the Upper Senegal to the East. ... They came down it would seem under the leadership of Faran Lahai, or perhaps an earlier ancestor, and kept at first to the West bank of the Kolenté [River].³⁴

The Dumbuya of Kukuna were prosperous landowners and merchants and became the *kandé* of the small state. They were viewed as a powerful and useful family by British colonial officials in Freetown.³⁵

1875, CO 87/108, TNA, Kew; and Jaabi 132B, OHD, Banjul.

³² Much of what we know about the Dumbuya and their activities in western Africa comes from oral sources, and we are confronted by a number of problems in developing a coherent history: (1) the perspectives of informants differ; (2) they may have heard only portions of the history (or they may be interested in only portions of it); (3) their memories may be faulty; and (4) there is a tendency to compress historical events or to place them within a vague historical framework. However, the Dumbuya story presented in this paper is recent, and the story can be reconstructed, especially when informed by colonial documentation. Contradictions in the informants' presentations will be discussed as they occur.

³³ Ebrima Dumbuya 384A/B; and Ebraima Ousemane Doumbaya 241A and 199A, OHD, Banjul.

³⁴ Report by E. F. Sayers, district commissioner, Karene district, June 29, 1926, Susu-Limba file, Kambia District Archives, Sierra Leone. In 1976 this document was transferred from Kambia to the National Archives of Sierra Leone, University of Sierra Leone, Freetown.

³⁵ Dispatch 14, enclosing Dr. Brian O'Beirne's journal, CO 267/53, TNA, Kew; Skinner interviews with Kemokho Dumbuya and Kande Sadu Dumbuya II, Kukuna, February 26, 1976.

Another branch of the Dumbuya migrated toward the coast of Guinea early in the eighteenth century and engaged in trade between the coast and the interior. Eventually, Fenda Muhammadu Dumbuya, the son of one of the traders, settled in Sumbuya kingdom. He became the owner of substantial properties and a principal advisor to the king, Mungo Simba Bangura.³⁶ From their base in Sumbuya, Fenda Muhammadu and his son, Dala Muhammadu, visited the British colony of Sierra Leone in 1794. Within a few years Dala Muhammadu had acquired land at Lungi, across the river from Freetown. He named his town Madina, built mosques, supported Islamic education, developed large rice and cotton plantations, engaged in extensive trade with the colony, and became the first *alimami* (headman, from *al-imām*, but used in a political sense) of the Susu community in and near the colony (Harrell-Bond, Howard, and Skinner, 1978: 42-44, 53, 64, 86 132; Skinner 1980: 25-32, 35, 38, 57-59, 70, 92, 203-04, 210).

The information about the Dumbuya of Bundu is similar to other traditions from this area. Ibrahima Dumbuya and Jarafin Kaba Dumbuya, the grandfather and father of Fodé Bakari, traveled in territories north and east of Bundu. They were devout Muslims. When Fodé Bakari came of age, he was told that he would be the father of a great Muslim scholar and leader, but he must “go where a great fire is lighted in a small country where the hearts of men are pure. There is where he [his son] must [be] born. It is you who must be his father.”³⁷ He was told to look for a particular young woman with a scar on her foot, and he found her in the village of Gumbel in Bundu where he settled and founded a *madrasa* (school) with a large number of students. He resided there for two or more years before he asked her father for her hand in marriage. She was Hawa Kassama, a daughter of one of the great Jakhanké *qabīla*. Fodé Kaba, their second child,

³⁶ Skinner interviews with Alimami Sindamore Dumbuya and Bolobinne; elders of the Dumbuya Family, Lungi, March 21, 1976; and Mr. Bright’s journal, CO 270/8, TNA, Kew.

³⁷ Abdoulaye Cissokho and Maye Doumboye 157/158, OHD, Banjul.

was born in Gumbel. The settlement of Fodé Bakari in Gumbel may provisionally be dated at around 1815, and the birth of Fodé Kaba between 1818 and 1828.³⁸

The careers of Fodé Bakari Dumbuya and Fodé Kaba Dumbuya

After Fodé Bakari married Hawa Kassama, they remained in Gumbel, and several children were born there. Fodé Bakari had a thriving *madrassa* and introduced Fodé Kaba to *al-qurʿān*³⁹ and *sunna*.⁴⁰ Before long the king of Bundu became suspicious of Fodé Bakari's large following, so he took his family to Badari in Wuli while Fodé Kaba was still an adolescent.⁴¹ Fodé Bakari built another large *madrassa* and settled down for several years, but the king in Wuli also became nervous because he had so many devoted followers.⁴² Fodé Bakari and his entourage left for Dobonkunda, a Muslim religious center in Upper Nyani where he again established a school and attracted many scholars. It is not clear whether he was forced to leave that town or whether he wanted to create his own community. Whatever the reason, he and his scholars cleared the land and ritually purified an area upon which they built Kerewan Dumbuto, a religious and commercial center on the south bank of the Gambia River.⁴³ Fodé Bakari's "fortress became the seventh fortress of Jimara. He was an advisor for the rulers."⁴⁴ There he had many *tullāb*

³⁸ Various sources give Fodé Kaba's age at his death in March 1901 as 83, 81 or 73 years old. It is unclear whether informants were using a solar or lunar calendar. Christian Roche (1985: 132) identifies his year of birth as 1818.

³⁹ Spelling varies—sometimes *al-qurʿān*, sometimes *qurʿan*—according to usage and/or context in the documentary source used.

⁴⁰ Informants Cissokho and Doumboye give the names of five children: Isatou, Kaba (who also was given the name Ibrahim after his great grandfather), Aminata, Karamo, and Maye, but do not state if all were born in Gumbel. Fodé Bakari told his son that he was destined to serve Allah and to fulfill a great purpose, "But this predicted flame cannot shine in Goumbel."

⁴¹ It is reported that Hawa Kassama died in Bundu, and the sources do not disclose whether all of their children accompanied Fodé Bakari to Wuli. I estimate that the migration occurred between 1836 and 1840. Another reason given for the king's suspicion was that Fodé Bakari was storing gunpowder, something a *marabuṭ* normally would not do.

⁴² For political and economic conditions in Wuli at the time, see Weil 1984.

⁴³ Ebrima Dumbuya 384A/B, OHD, Banjul.

⁴⁴ When the rulers of Kerewan gave Fode Bakari permission to settle evidently they offered him land no one else wanted, for it is reported that he cleared the forest and performed "miracles there" by pouring "*nasoo*" into the river

(students, sing. *ṭālib*) who met early in the morning and in the evening after farming. They grew very fine crops of rice and coos.⁴⁵ A few years after he established the agricultural and religious community, Fodé Bakari issued an order to collect customs on goods that were traded on the Gambia River in exchange for which he purchased paper, presumably for his *madrassa*. This action created conflict with merchants and with the elders of Cha Kunda who evidently had the right to collect taxes on river transport. Up until this time there had been no military force used either by Fodé Bakari or by those suspicious of his intentions, but this dispute led to military confrontation, and informants relate that Fodé Bakari engaged in *jihād*⁴⁶ for two years against forces from the *sòninkees* and Fulas.⁴⁷

During most of the period that Fodé Bakari was creating his religious community Fodé Kaba was studying with Simoto Kemo Sanuwo, a renowned scholar in the Senegambia region.⁴⁸ Simoto Kemo and his father, Fodé Bakary Sanuwo, were born in Kantora Sama. Simoto Kemo studied first with his father and later with al-Hajj Salim Kassama, often called Karamokho Ba (the great teacher), in Futa Tuba.⁴⁹ After his studies he founded the religious center, Simoto

to drive away “big snakes and devils” who were “the original owners” of the land. This town, upriver from Bansang, is also referred to as Kerewan Dumbo Koné. Kuyate 576A/B and 577B, OHD, Banjul. (*Nasoo* is identified as holy water made by writing a verse from *al-qurʿān* on a board and washing the text into a bowl; the word is derived from Arabic: *naṣṣ*, which means text).

⁴⁵ Ebrima Dumbuya 384A/B, OHD, Banjul.

⁴⁶ Spelling varies: sometimes *jihād*, sometimes *jiḥād*. Sometimes English translations—‘holy war’ or ‘war for Allah’—are used. What is clear is that militant jihad against enemies of devout Muslims is the excuse for the war and that some leaders intend to launch a militant jihad, not a spiritual jihad.

⁴⁷ Jaabi 132/B; and Ebrima Dumbuya 384A/B, OHD, Banjul.

⁴⁸ Simoto Kemo’s *qabīla* is Saghanughu, a very notable Muslim *qabīla*, which was responsible for establishing schools and spreading Islam in western Africa for many centuries. It is closely connected through marriage with prominent *Jūla* and *Jakhanké* lineages (Green 1987; Saad 1983; Wilks 1964, 1968; al-Saghanughi 1964; Skinner interview with al-Hajj Ba Jaiteh, June 25, 1982. See also, Galloway SC 046 and Kassama 205A/1, OHD, Banjul). The paternal grandmother of Ta Sankung Jaabi, one of the principal informants, was Simoto Kemo’s daughter. Jaabi relates that the forefathers of Simoto Kemo migrated from Kong to Tamba Nyunyana to Kantora Sama: Jaabi 97/1, OHD, Banjul. This was confirmed by other informants.

⁴⁹ *Tūba* is derived from the Arabic root *twb* (repent); the verb *tāba* translates as “‘to repent, come back to Allah’, and *tauba* as atonement. *At-Tawwāb* (‘The Forgiving’) is one of the ninety-nine names of Allah. Among the Jakhanké and other notable scholarly families it indicates a center for specialized or advanced Islamic education and for spiritual renewal.

Koto, in Kābu. Later he established an important school at Sandu Tuba, and the family also built a neighboring teaching center at Wuli Tuba (interview, Jaiteh 1982).⁵⁰ How many years Fodé Kaba stayed with Simoto Kemo Sanuwo is uncertain, but, according to the usual pattern of Islamic learning and from inferences in the oral narratives, it was many years. Fodé Bakari Dumbuya informed his son that he was destined to serve Allah and must prepare himself intellectually and spiritually for leadership.

While Fodé Kaba was a student, Simoto Kemo was asked by Faramba Tamba Sané, the Mandinka ruler of Kapentu, for a promising *ṭālib* who could make *nasoo* to protect Kābu from attack by Fula forces from Futa Jallon; he chose Fodé Kaba to assist Faramba Tamba. The *mansa* and other principal Mandinka rulers of the Kābu empire were not Muslims, but Islam had been well-established there through the agency of scholars, and their help was elicited to support the rulers, as described by Sidibe (1974: 16-17):

...by the middle of the nineteenth century, the *jalang* [fetish] had a rival in every state of Kaabu, and this rival was the Muslim marabout. Eventually, marabouts became an indispensable part of each ruler's retinue. When rulers consulted the *jalang*, they consulted the marabout as well. In time, some rulers came to believe that particular marabouts with special training could give them more information and were better at prediction than the *jalang*).

The battle between the Fula and Kābu forces ended in stalemate, but resulted in the death of one of Futa Jallon's famous scholars, Abdul-Qudus. His collection of Islamic texts was brought to Faramba Tamba who gave them to Fodé Kaba, and from them he learned many "spells" (Arabic: *katama*, to keep something secret).⁵¹ Although the dates are not certain, Fodé Kaba probably

⁵⁰ At the time of the interviews conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, Simoto Kemo's descendants were still directing these educational centers.

⁵¹ There are two variants of this tale in the OHD documents. In the second one the books belonged to Fodé Barika, a scholar who worked for Faramba Tamba. He was killed by Abdul-Qudus who was subsequently killed in battle, and the books were given to Fodé Kaba who gave them to Simoto Kemo who told Fodé Kaba to keep some and give the rest to his father, Fodé Bakari. In both versions the "holy books" provided Fodé Kaba with additional spiritual powers. Jaabi 132/B; and Kuyate 576/A, OHD, Banjul. A third version of this story appears in Roche 1985: 133.

returned to his father in Kerewan Dumbuto between 1855 and 1860. One informant states that his father sent for his son to assist him with his affairs, while another says that Fodé Kaba meditated and prayed until Allah signaled that he should return to his father.⁵²

Pressures on Fodé Bakari's religious and commercial community intensified due to increased Muslim-*sòninkee* hostility during the 1850s and 1860s and also because of the rising religious fervor that developed over several decades. British colonial documents and oral historians refer to "civil wars" led by Muslims near McCarthy Island between 1862 and 1869, especially one led by Hafodé Jawla against the "king" of Kataba.⁵³ Although Fodé Bakari and Fodé Kaba are not mentioned by name, it is likely that they were involved in military actions during this period.⁵⁴ Fodé Bakari, who was by then quite elderly and feeling oppressed by his *sòninkee* and Fula opponents, needed the assistance of his younger, vigorous son. On his way home Fodé Kaba preached to the non-Muslims in various towns, but he did not receive a warm welcome. When he returned to Kerewan Dumbutu he told his father that he wanted to begin a *jihād*: "The father divined the matter; he retreated into '*kaliwaa*' [Arabic: *khalwa*—a state of spiritual meditation]. ...The '*Ruwaaniyes*' [Arabic: *ru'an*, visions] favour it for him to say that when he launch[es] it he will succeed...if he is going to start his wars, he should start at Baadaari [in] the eastern part of the country."⁵⁵

Fodé Bakari advised him to wait three years before beginning the war, and Fodé Kaba went out to raise an army in Nyani, Jimara, and from among relatives in Wuli. He launched the

⁵² Jaabi 97/1; and Kuyate 576/A, OHD, Banjul.

⁵³ Dispatch 44, June 20, 1864, CO 87/79, TNA, Kew; and Sillah 178C–189C, OHD, Banjul.

⁵⁴ Several published sources have erroneously identified the military activities of Fodé Kaba Turé of Gunjur in Kombo with those of Fodé Kaba Dumbuya. Fodé Kaba Turé, who was Fodé Sillah Turé's uncle, was very active during the 1850s and 1860s, and is frequently mentioned in colonial documents (Skinner 2012).

⁵⁵ Kuyate 576A, OHD, Banjul. There is no reference, either in the oral histories or in British colonial documents, that Fodé Kaba was initiated into the Tijaniyya order or that he was a follower of Maba; Fodé Kaba and his father pursued their own political and economic interests.

war sometime in the early to mid-1860s. The order of battles is not clear from the oral sources. Some have the first battles fought in Badari in the east, moving to the west and ending in Jimara.⁵⁶ Whatever the order, it seems that Fodé Kaba was motivated primarily by political consolidation. Not only did he attack *sòninkee* towns such as Badari but also Muslim towns such as Kundam Kunda. His justification in this instance was that Kundam had fired on his army as he besieged Badari; however, the Muslims of Kundam responded that they were part of the same community and were obliged to assist Badari. In another incident when his forces entered Korojula Kunda, the elders said, “Let no gun sound. We shall embrace the Muslim faith.” The fourteen elders presented themselves, but the Muslims made a secret pact: “You must place your knives on their heads; you must shave them [a sign of conversion]; when the knife comes to the back of their neck, it must cut their neck.” The elders who had converted to Islam were killed and the town was destroyed.⁵⁷ During these military engagements, the father of Yunka Mandu Mané of Suma Kunda (capital of Jimara) was killed when the town was destroyed. Yunka Mandu Mané was one of the rulers of the Kābu empire, and because of this murder Fodé Kaba thought it was prudent to return to Kerewan Dumbuto and consult with his father about the state of affairs.⁵⁸ This stage of the conflict can be dated, because when the army returned to Kerewan Dumbuto, Fode Bakari addressed the troops: “You say that this leader of yours [Fodé Kaba] is a saint. Well did he see what heaven has sent down upon us? Men of the army, let everyone who

⁵⁶ Bakari Sidibe (1974) has a very coherent description of the order, but the sources conflict. They seem to be describing two separate periods of warfare, one in the Jimara and Nyani kingdoms during the 1850s and the other in a wider region that included Wuli, Kantora and Jimara during the 1860s.

⁵⁷ Some oral histories, however, mention several towns where people converted to Islam. Fodé Kaba had places of worship constructed and left a teacher to assist the new converts with their devotions. A significant issue with Fodé Kaba’s actions, as indicated in the introduction, is that often they were directly in violation of Islamic laws about when and how to conduct *jihād*. These contradictions continued throughout his career. Suso 56A; and Kuyate 576B OHD, Banjul.

⁵⁸ Suso; Kuyate 576B; and E. O. Doumbaya 199A, OHD, Banjul. Furthermore, Fodé Bakari and Fodé Kaba were concerned that Alfa Molo Baldé, ruler of Fuladu would become involved in the conflict because some of the destroyed towns had Fula populations (Sidibe 1974).

has anything in the form of slaves or booty take his own share and go; *God's war has now come; it is not man's war*. [Emphasis added].” “God’s war” is a reference to the terrible cholera epidemic that swept the Gambia River region in 1869.⁵⁹ Shortly after Fodé Bakari disbanded the army, Fodé Kaba embarked on a visit to Nioro in Baddibu, perhaps to participate in the wars there, but particularly to seek the aid of some of the prominent warriors for his continuing efforts to create a state and maintain control over river trade.

Fodé Kaba and state formation

British and oral history sources agree that Fodé Kaba traveled to Nioro to work with and obtain military assistance from Muslim leaders. The conflict north of the river was well-known throughout the region, and Muslims from many districts had supported Maba. Muslim forces made forays across the river and attacked towns on the south bank near McCarthy Island in 1863.⁶⁰ Indeed, the British were concerned that Maba’s uprising would be joined by other Muslim forces to form a “super *jihād*” from Kombo to Wuli, and the British began to expand their political and military affairs along the river (Skinner 2012).⁶¹

British concerns seem to have been partially justified, because during the 1870s there were frequent references in colonial documents to joint expeditions by forces of Fodé Kaba and Biram Sisé or Mahmud N’Dari Ba. In April 1872 the king of Kataba complained to the British manager of McCarthy Island that forces led by Fodé Kaba and Biram Sisé had captured the

⁵⁹ The reference to slaves and booty in the document reflects the economic motives or outcomes of the conflicts; Suso 56A, OHD, Banjul. For a full report of this epidemic, see CO 87/92, TNA, Kew. Moreover, Ware (2014) points out that, although declarations of war by Muslims may have been inspired by the enslavement of Muslims, often the enslaved population increased as a result of the wars.

⁶⁰ Dispatch 183, April 24, 1863, CO 87/76, TNA, Kew; also see Quinn 1979. For an analysis of spiritual fervor in the Gambia River region, see Barry 1988: 267–80.

⁶¹ British officials were particularly worried about a combination of the forces of Maba and Fodé Kaba Turé of Kombo. See dispatches in CO 87/73–84, 1862–1866, TNA, Kew.

towns of Pallang and Sukuta and destroyed his kingdom. Biram Sisé proceeded eastward, while Fodé Kaba was camped with Lamin Marang at Kihie, nine miles from McCarthy Island. Fodé Kaba postponed attacking Alfa Molo Baldé's forces in Nyama and instead continued his local raids. In June it was reported that Fodé Kaba's forces attacked Fattatenda, appropriated cattle, and trade goods and then returned to Kerewan Dumbuto for the rainy season.⁶² Fodé Kaba's activities continued the following year, and British officials met with him, N'Dari Ba, and Hama Fall to protest raids on traders and British subjects. N'Dari Ba said he was not responsible for Biram Sisé or Fodé Kaba as they controlled their own forces. When the British proposed a possible treaty to protect traders Fodé Kaba agreed, and he was reported to be "an honourable and well-meaning man."⁶³ In August 1873 N'Dari Ba agreed to protect traders in his territory on the north bank. N'Dari Ba claimed that Fodé Kaba and Biram Sisé were "chiefs" under him; however, Fodé Kaba was based on the south bank of the Gambia River and was not a party to this treaty, which was signed on 6 October 1873.⁶⁴

By 1875 Fodé Kaba had become a formidable power on the south bank and was at war with Fuladu led by Alfa Molo Baldé. Fodé Kaba was joined in 1877 by N'Dari Ba, and Alfa Molo in turn sent a counterforce into Baddibu.⁶⁵ The conflict between Alfa Molo and Fodé Kaba was caused in part by Alfa Molo's murder of his father and abduction of his family at Kerewan Dumbuto in 1871, but the intensity of the hostilities stemmed from their competitive territorial ambitions. Alfa Molo was the ruler of Fuladu and an ally of Futa Jallon's territorial expansion.⁶⁶

⁶² Dispatch 28, May 21, 1872 and enclosure dated 21 April 1872; dispatch 43, June 4, 1872; and dispatch 46, September 2, 1872, CO 87/102, TNA, Kew.

⁶³ Dispatch 41, May 5, 1873, CO 87/104, TNA, Kew.

⁶⁴ Dispatch 119, September 30, 1873, CO 87/105, TNA, Kew. .

⁶⁵ Dispatch 12, July 19, 1875, CO 87/108, and dispatch 24, April 26, 1877, CO 87/110, TNA, Kew. For discussions of the Baldé family and the history of Fuladu, see Sidibe 1984; Barry 1988: 318, 324–38; Roche 1985: 237–63; Innes 1976; and Bellagamba 2001.

⁶⁶ Brooks (2007: 56–7) questions that this was the definitive battle of Kansala, capital of Kābu.

Fodé Kaba based his army in Sukuta and neighboring villages in Jarra and expanded his operations during the 1870s into the border areas of Alfa Molo's state.⁶⁷ According to Bamba Suso, Alfa Molo sent messengers to Fodé Kaba to make peace, but he killed five of them, so Alfa Molo left Saboulde for his fortress at Kerewan Pakawu. Fodé Kaba besieged the fort without success. Alfa Molo's son, Musa, and several associates escaped and through superior horsemanship eluded Fodé Kaba's army. In a counterattack Fodé Kaba's army was routed, and Fodé Kaba was unable to defeat the forces of either Alfa Molo or Musa Molo (Sidibe 1984: 2–8).⁶⁸

From his base at Jarra Sukuta Fodé Kaba planned an attack on Piniiai Fula Kunda, but Nyadu, the town ruler, asked Kutubo Kassama of Baro Kunda to be his *karamokho*. Kassama agreed, and met with Fodé Kaba and said, “My nephew, these people have entrusted themselves to my care; you must leave them alone. God will make them Muslims without a shot being fired.” Fodé Kaba responded, “I have gone into retreat for forty days against them. God has given me that place and I will not let them be.” Kutubo Kassama warned, “You will not escape with even a feather.” When Fodé Kaba attacked Piniiai, forces from nearby Katamina counterattacked and forced his army to flee.⁶⁹ He stayed at Baro Kunda where ambassadors from western Jarra asked for his help against Soma. On his way west he was welcomed by the Muslim

⁶⁷ Jaabi 132B, OHD, Banjul.

⁶⁸ Suso 56A, OHD, Banjul. Two oral sources attribute this failure to the protection afforded the father and son by *al-hājj* Umar Tal who initiated them into the Tijani order. The king of Jognere, who had been besieged for twelve months by Fodé Kaba, told him: “The Fula will escape you. I have taken him [in] but it is another Saint who has prayed for Musa. That is his father, I mean El Hadji Omar;” Cissokho and Doumbaya 157/158, OHD, Banjul. Some sources indicate that Alfa Molo was chosen for his training as a hunter/warrior; he was not a Muslim scholar, and “Alfa” was an honorary title conferred on him by the king of Futa Jalon in recognition for his military support against Kābu; Sidibe 1984, Kuyate 576B and E. O. Doumbaya 199A, OHD, Banjul.

⁶⁹ Karang Kutubo Kassama was a grandson of Karamokho Ba Kassama of Futa Tuba, and the grandfather of Ta Sankung Jaabi. He had a very large *madrassa* in Baro Kunda; Jaabi 97/1 and 132A, OHD, Banjul. Suso says that Fodé Kaba performed a miracle to allow himself and his army to cross the River. “That is why the griots call him ‘River Drier Muslim’”; Suso 56A, OHD, Banjul.

town of Karantaba, but another Muslim town Kani Kunda did not allow him to enter. He stayed at Sankuya (Sankwia), and before attacking Soma he burned down Kani Kunda for refusing to cooperate with his mission. He besieged Soma for eleven months, and in desperation the people invited him to make peace at the *masjid* (mosque, plural - *masajid*), but the building was burned with the Soma Muslims in it.⁷⁰

By late 1879 Fodé Kaba had moved across Jarra, through Kiang and was threatening the Jola towns and villages in the district next to Kombo. In December 1879 the chief of Bondali offered to cede “Jola country” to the British.⁷¹ Two months later the British reported that Fodé Kaba had taken all the towns for sixty miles on the south bank up to Kansala. He had established his headquarters in Bondali from where he intended to conquer all the territory up to British Kombo.⁷² A colonial official visited Bondali in June to discuss Fodé Kaba’s activities, but Kaba refused to meet with the official, who described Fodé Kaba as very wealthy, and he reported that he was told that Fodé Kaba occupied the Jola territory only to convert the people to Islam as *al-qur’ān* instructed him to do. From his base Fodé Kaba also supported a dissident Fula faction against Musa Molo to the south of Jola Fogy.⁷³

During the 1880s Fodé Kaba consolidated his control over the south bank and extended his state into Fogy Casamance. In this endeavor he had allies among some of the former rulers of Kābu, some Fula families at odds with Musa Molo and a few of the Mandinka Muslim

⁷⁰ The destruction of these towns illustrates further the absence of a justification for *jihād*; Suso 56A, OHD, Banjul.

⁷¹ Dispatch 95, December 13, 1879, CO 87/114, TNA, Kew.

⁷² Dispatch 15, February 7, 1880, CO 87/115, TNA, Kew.

⁷³ Dispatch 46, June 11, 1880, CO 87/115, TNA, Kew. The oral sources generally agree with the British documents for this period. While Fodé Kaba consolidated his control over Jarra, Kiang, and Jola Fogy, he had his headquarters at Kiang Batelling where he regularly held court at the peak of his power during the 1880s; Kuyate 577B, OHD, Banjul. As Peter Mark (2002) points out, most of the inhabitants in the areas where his forces were engaged considered Fodé Kaba to be nothing more than a slave-raider. He had almost no support among the established scholarly families who rejected the use of violence to convert non-Muslims (Jaiteh 1982). See also Kassama 205A/1, OHD, Banjul.

lineages. He established his headquarters at Madina at the invitation of Tumbong Badji who was the leader of this Muslim community, and he erected a fort at Dator, which was dominated by the Jobe lineage of Kabada West. He subdued the towns of Kulayi and Bongna, but was defeated at Sinjang. It took him eleven years to conquer Fogny.⁷⁴ These military campaigns brought him into conflict with Fula Muslim lineages in Kabada, with some of the Manding Moré and Jakhanké scholars in Pakawu, and with Musa Molo of Fuladu.⁷⁵

In 1885 Biram Sisé, a former ally of Fodé Kaba, crossed the Gambia River to join forces with Musa Molo against Fodé Kaba in Jarra, but he was forced to return to Baddibu because of civil war there. If Fodé Kaba had been attacked, Said Matti, his former opponent, was prepared to assist him.⁷⁶ Fodé Kaba had recently been driven from Bintang, and the Alkali and elders sought to place their land under British protection.⁷⁷ By late 1885 the “king” of Jarra, Koli Damfa, was offering to cede his territory to Great Britain. Fodé Kaba had conquered most of the territory and reduced several villages to ruins.⁷⁸ In early 1886 Koli Damfa sent the British a list of the towns controlled by Muslims and *sòninkees*.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Kuyate 577A; and E. O. Doumbaya 241A, OHD, Banjul; see also Sidibe 1977.

⁷⁵ For discussion of division in the Muslim communities in Kabada and Pakawu, see Manjang 372A; Dumbuya 384A/B; E. O. Doumboya 199A, OHD, Banjul; see also, Sidibe 1974 and 1977. Fodé Kaba fought and destroyed Muslim towns in both states.

⁷⁶ The shifting allegiances among the members of Maba’s family indicates that control of territory and resources was a higher priority than adherence to the doctrine of *jihād*.

⁷⁷ Sir Cornelius Alfred Moloney, the British official, met with the Alkali and Alimami at Bintang and reported that Fode Kaba’s headquarters were at Bondali south of the Bintang River and at Madina in Fogny (Casamance). His forces had destroyed the town of Manduar and enslaved about 300 women and children, because it had given refuge to Jolas fleeing from the fighting. Moloney recommended that the Jola territory be put under British protection in order to forestall an alliance between Fode Kaba and Fode Sillah. Dispatch 46, May 14, 1885; dispatch 51, June 3, 1885, and dispatch 80, July 11, 1885, CO 87/124, TNA, Kew. Also see Skinner 2012.

⁷⁸ Dispatch 166, November 20, 1885, CO 87/126, TNA, Kew.

⁷⁹ In the west the Muslim towns were: Jiffin, Toniataba, Seykunda, Soma, Pakali Nding, Jenoi, Sankuya, Kani Kunda, Karantaba, Lotey and Buyiba; and in the east: Jassong, Bureng, Sutukung, Baro Kunda, Pakali Ba, Darsilami, Laba and Sukuta. Dispatch 166, January 25, 1896, TNA, Kew. In 1888 J. C. Elliott, a colonial official sent to meet with Koli Damfa and Fodé Kaba, observed that four of the Muslim towns were ruined and abandoned: Kani Kunda, Karantaba, Soma and Seykunda. CO 879/27/348, p. 85, TNA, Kew.

By 1886 Fodé Kaba seemed to be in a position to consolidate his control over Fogy, Kiang, and Jarra. Some Jola and non-Muslim Mandinka had converted, and *masajid* and *madaris* were being constructed in towns conquered by Fodé Kaba's forces. In early 1888 Fodé Kaba was using the title *ʿamir al-muʿminīn*. He had not established a unified state, however, and therefore faced stiff opposition south of the Gambia River; the decline of Fodé Kaba's power was imminent.⁸⁰

The demise of Fodé Kaba Dumbuya, 1888–1901

During the fifteen years since his father's death, Fodé Kaba failed to build a state on the south bank and in Fogy Casamance. Although he made many alliances, he created many enemies in the process of destroying Muslim towns and killing converts. He could not expand into Kombo where Fodé Silla Turé ruled, while Musa Molo continued to contest for territories, particularly in Jarra and Fogy. Ultimately, Fodé Kaba had the misfortune of standing in the way of British and French plans for territorial expansion. Musa Molo was an eager ally in Fodé Kaba's demise, but at the cost of substantial reduction of his own territorial and political plans.

After the Berlin Conference of 1885, the British and French quickly began to arrange their affairs in Senegambia. In 1887 and 1888 the British signed a number of treaties, and flag raising ceremonies took place along the south bank in territory claimed by Fodé Kaba. In addition, Musa Molo's forces—in support of the *sòninkee* ruling lineages—raided villages in Jarra and Fogy. Fodé Kaba retaliated, and the British sent a delegation on a ship of war to meet

⁸⁰ Fodé Kaba Dumbuya to the Governor of Banjul. CO 879/27/348, p.86, TNA, Kew. The letter was meant for Samuel Rowe, governor of Sierra Leone, and was collected by Thomas Riseley Griffith, an acting commissioner, during his meeting at Toniataba in April 1888. It appears that both Fodé Kaba and Fodé Sillah of Kombo were identifying themselves as *ʿamir al-muʿminīn*.

with him at Toniataba in April 1888. The acting administrator Gilbert Thomas Carter firmly informed him that war against British-protected territory must cease:

Tell Fodey Cabba that I think he and his warriors, whom I see here around me, have entertained the ideas that because my Queen is a woman she cannot fight. I warn them not to make so foolish a mistake. ...I come to speak to you about those people who have done you no wrong, and whom you persist in catching and killing.

Fodé Kaba responded:

I have heard what the Governor said. I am a warrior. That is my calling. God made me so. But I am not a spoiler. Some are warriors and not plunderers. I am a warrior but never steal. Those who made the complaints are thieves. But whoever robbed me, at the first instance I shall forgive him, the second time also, but the third I will punish.

He complained that the troubles were caused by Musa Molo and his allies in Jarra and Fogny and by the ruler of Kabada. Fodé Kaba's conflict with the Jalloh lineage of Kabada resulted in the destruction of its principal town, Senuba.⁸¹

The British sent Fodé Kaba a list of the towns under their protection, and he complained that his subjects had betrayed him. Military conflict continued in the region, and Musa Molo wrote in 1889 that trouble would not end until Molo punished Fodé Kaba severely. The British began to discuss a military expedition—coordinated with the French—to drive Fodé Kaba out of the region, proposing to recruit Musa Molo to assist in the expedition.⁸²

Fodé Kaba's position in the south bank was decided by the activities of the Anglo-French Boundary Commission between 1889 and 1892. In 1891 the commissioners heard rumors that Fodé Kaba intended to attack them during their work in Jola territory, which resulted in the

⁸¹ For a record of the meeting at Toniataba, see CO 879/27/348, pp. 79–84. Senuba was a Tijaniyya stronghold in alliance with al-Hajj Umar Tal and Alfa Molo and Musa Molo (Sidibe 1977).

⁸² The British estimated that the forces of Fodé Kaba and Musa Molo were evenly matched (each had about 100 cavalry and 500 infantry), so British and French intervention would be necessary to defeat Fod'e Kaba's army. For extensive information about the regional situation, see CO 879/29/360 and 879/32/388, TNA, Kew.

British sending a large military force from Banjul to Bondali. The French commandant at Sedhiou was informed about the situation. He reported that Fodé Kaba had signed a treaty with France that acknowledge his territory in the Casamance, and had declared that he had no dispute with the boundary commission and had instructed his followers not to interfere with its work.⁸³ Thereafter, Fodé Kaba was a subject of France, although he continued to encroach upon Gambian territory, and in January 1892 the British sent a force to Kiang to try to capture him. He escaped to Madina, which was to remain his headquarters until the French defeated him in 1901. The French maintained that the British had exaggerated Fodé Kaba's activities in Kiang and embraced him as a distinguished *marabout*, but in 1893 his territory was severely reduced in return for 5,000 *francs* each year. As Rouche (1985: 197) observes:

A la fin d'une longue vie, pleine de dangers, seul le prestige attaché à sa réputation et à ses faits d'armes le rendait encore redoutable aux Casamançais qui, partisans ou ennemis, ne pouvaient manquer d'être impressionnés par son imposante personnalité.

Surrounded by numerous farming villages that acted as a buffer against attacks by his enemies, Fodé Kaba flourished in Madina. No doubt he would have died there peacefully had it not been for a land dispute between the *sòninkee* of Jattaba and the Muslim followers of Fodé Kaba at Sankandi in British Kiang. The British sent Commissioner Cecil Frederick Sitwell to examine the dispute in 1899, and he awarded the land to Jattaba. Sankandi did not accept the decision, and Sitwell returned in 1900 with Commissioner Frederic Edgar Silva to meet with the elders in Sankandi to settle the affair. They met a hostile reception, and Sitwell ordered the arrest of Alkali Dabbo. The British party was fired upon, and Sitwell, Silva, Sergeant Cox, Mansa Koto of Jattaba and four others were killed. The Sankandi people fled to Nema near Dator, Fodé Kaba's fort closest to British territory. The British demanded that Fodé Kaba return the leaders

⁸³ CO 879/34/405, pp. 68–71, TNA, Kew.

of the village. The French sent a negotiator to Madina, but Fodé Kaba said he was obliged to give them refuge.

Other villages loyal to Fodé Kaba on the south bank rose up against British rule, and in January 1901 the British dispatched a large force into Kiang to put down the revolt. As Fodé Kaba still refused to return the culprits, the French, in alliance with Musa Molo, mounted an attack on his strongholds. Madina was besieged on March 21, 1901. According to his grandson, Ebraima Ousmane Doumbaya, who was ten years old when Madina was attacked the next day, Fodé Kaba knew he was going to die and after prayers he came out of the fort against the French and was shot in the head. His eldest son, Ibrahima, buried him secretly and his body was not found. Musa Molo took Ibrahima to Hamdallahi, Fuladu, but when Molo fled to The Gambia in 1903 Ibrahima was detained by the French in Senegal. In 1912 Ibrahima Dumbuya settled at Morikunda in Casamance and later became *chef du canton* of Inor.⁸⁴

The “Baddibu Wars” in the post Maba era.

The series of armed conflicts after 1869 devastated a large area on the south bank of the Gambia River between Jarra and Wuli and on the north bank in the territories controlled by the former allies of Maba and his family. The forces, which were allied with Mahmud N’Dari Ba who was described as “the most powerful king in these parts,” were led by Biram Sisé, Samba Kumba, and Fodé Kaba Dumbuya, although Ba and Sisé later became Fodé Kaba’s opponents. Some villagers were forced to convert to Islam, while others willingly joined with the Muslim forces.⁸⁵ Due to the widespread damage to agriculture and trade British officials met with

⁸⁴ For more information, see CO 879/65/642 and 879/66/643, TNA, Kew; Fodé Kaba File, National Archives, Banjul (NAB): E. O. Doumboya 241A and Ebrima Dumbuya 384A, OHD, Banjul; and Roche 1985: 151–53.

⁸⁵ The force led by Biram Sisé and Samba Kumba was said to number 3,000, and they had convinced the community of Kunting to join them; dispatch 8, February 5, 1871, CO 87/99; dispatch 62, May 6, 1871 and dispatch 28, May

Mahmud N’Dari Ba in 1873 to discuss how to control the Muslim forces. N’Dari Ba said he had no control over them, as Fodé Kaba and Biram Sisé had their own independent forces.⁸⁶ This was certainly true of Fodé Kaba who had developed a distinct base of operations on the south bank, but Biram Sisé and his father, Handala, had been associated with the Maba movement, over which N’Dari Ba was regent until Said Matti Ba was old enough to rule.⁸⁷ In 1873 Mahmud N’Dari Ba signed a treaty with Cornelius Kortright, chief administrator of the Gambia, to the effect that he would keep the peace in his territory and protect trade with Great Britain. In return N’Dari Ba and his successors would receive £110 per year. Biram Sisé and Fodé Kaba were mentioned as those to be brought under control in the dispatch from Kortright.⁸⁸

By this date Biram Sisé had already returned with his forces to Ndaba, Kaymor and was building fortified villages. For several years he built up his power in upper (eastern) Baddibu. Mahmud N’Dari Ba became alarmed and demanded that Biram Sisé dismantle his fortresses. *Jali Alagi Sait Camara* relates it this way:

Biram Ceesay made a settlement. When he started making it, Mamur Ndirey sent a message to him and he called him to come. “I heard that you are making a settlement?” “Yes,” he replied. “Destroy it.” He agreed and did what Ndirey said. “It is true he is a great man. If I did not destroy it, he might do so by himself.” [N’Dari] called him again. Biram said to him: “Now, I am not following God, moreover a human being. I am going back to Ndeba. *My followers and supporters can come with me, because I was following Maba and he is no more now* (emphasis added).”⁸⁹

The date when these exchanges occurred is unknown, and, although the reference here is to N’Dari Ba, Biram Sisé also used the same argument when he opposed Said Matti: “Maba is

21, 1872, CO 87/102, TNA, Kew.

⁸⁶Dispatch 41, March 5, 1873, CO 87/104, TNA, Kew.

⁸⁷ Said Matti Ba, who was only 14 or 15 years old when his father, Maba, was killed was not yet in a position to exert his claim to rule the territory. At this time Mahmud N’Dari was using the title, *alimami* of Baddibu.

⁸⁸ Dispatch 119, September 3, 1873, CO 87/105, TNA, Kew; and African West 405, No. 25. October 1873, NAB.

⁸⁹ All of the members of the Sisé and Turé *qabīla* refused to give up their weapons; Kamara 600/A, OHD, Banjul.

dead. I do not fight for *jihād*, I fight for my family.”⁹⁰ After 1878 several wars among the Muslim factions on both sides of the Gambia River disrupted economic and political relations, which led to the French and British interventions discussed above.

One of the most serious conflicts among the Muslim parties occurred in 1879 when Said Kané Turé and his brother, N’Dari Kané, attacked the Ngeyen Sanjal territory held by Gombo Gaye. The territory had been conquered and ruled by their father, Samba Umani Turé, during the early years of Maba’s uprising. The Turé elders argued that the land was theirs:

Gombo Gaye, the wealth given to him [Samba Umani] and also Sanjal which Maba gave him, and he was praying to God to rule there, and he is the ruler there presently. But it is our father’s property, because our father first made the Jihad. He dominated the two Kings and he killed them all, then took the economy for two years. Then Borr Saloum killed him.⁹¹

Two important towns, Kumbijay and Kali Kunda, were destroyed and Gaye was killed. This assault was supported by their nephew, Biram Sisé, and his ally, Bur Saloum. It is unlikely that Biram Sisé was personally involved in this war, as he was leading a force in lower (western) Baddibu about 100 miles from his capital.⁹² It was apparent to the British that Biram Sisé was the dominant personality along the north bank of the Gambia River, and they had a high regard for his abilities at that time:

Beram Ceesay has taken, and is in possession of, nearly all the towns and villages in Baddiboo adjacent to the river, and his rule is well spoken of by the traders at the several wharfs. He is a man of enlightened ideas, and of considerable ability both as a general and statesman. Were he to succeed in the present struggle for supremacy—and such success seems probable—I think that it would be the most desirable termination to the present state of affairs that could occur.⁹³

⁹⁰Informants conclude that only Maba fought *jihād* for Allah. Those who came after him fought to be kings; Samba 593/B; and Ceesay and Jagne 597, OHD, Banjul.

⁹¹ Kamara 600/A, OHD, Banjul.

⁹² The British emissary could not meet with Biram Sisé because he was at war in alliance with forces from Saloum. The British emissary stated that the Turé family had been assisted in the Sanjal war by forces from Musa Molo, led by one of his sons. Dispatch 60, August 15, 1879; CO 87/113, TNA, Kew; Kamara 600/A, OHD, Banjul.

⁹³ Biram Sisé’s influence along the river extended beyond Baddibu, for he controlled the important river port of Kau-ur. British administrators had long advocated working with Muslim leaders to effect peaceful relations along the river. Gouldsbury to Rowe, May 28, 1879, enclosure to dispatch 60, CO 87/113, TNA, Kew.

In a subsequent report to the Colonial Office, the British administrator, Valerius Skipton Gouldsbury, recommended that Biram Sisé, “the chief of Upper Baddiboo,” be granted a stipend in return for the protection of traders. This would put him in the same position as Mahmud N’Dari Ba who was recognized as the chief of lower Baddibu: however, Biram Sisé stated that he controlled more than half of the ports along the river and that N’Dari Ba was a foolish old man with bad advisors. Governor Sir Samuel Rowe’s opined that Biram Sisé intended to become the king of Baddibu.⁹⁴

The attack on Sanjal and the killing of Gombo Gaye had serious consequences for political and economic stability of the region. Once again the Turé and Sisé families were called upon to disarm and submit to the authority of the Ba leadership. *Jali Alagi Sait Camara* relates that Maba’s *griot* told Said Matti: “‘Call them all; anyone given guns by Maba should come; they should answer you and support you or you attack them. They should all give back your father’s guns when you call them.’ [But] The Muslims refused, the Tourays, Ceesays, they all refused.”⁹⁵ Within a few weeks the forces of Mahmud N’Dari and Said Matti Ba attacked the Sisé stronghold of Kuer Samba Yassin where Samba Yassin and Samba Malick, two of Biram Sisé’s brothers resided; they were killed by the attackers. Biram Sisé, who was residing in his port town of Kau-ur, contacted the British and requested 200 men and cannons to help end the war. He described Mahmud N’Dari and Said Matti as “Strangers from Kayor.” In an attempt to receive assistance he declared his support for the British in Banjul.⁹⁶

These events set off a series of wars with intermittent peace along the Gambia River.

⁹⁴ Dispatch 66, September 5, 1879, CO 87/114, and dispatch 60, August 15, 1879, CO 87/113, TNA, Kew.

⁹⁵ Kamara 600/A, OHD, Banjul.

⁹⁶ The British officials described the two brothers as hostages. In 1880 the British administrator said that peace would be difficult to effect, because Baddibu is very rich and Mahmud N’Dari considered Biram “a little boy.” Further, the administrator praised Biram and castigated Said Matti as the real cause of the war. Kamara 600/A, OHD, Banjul; dispatch 34, May 1, 1880 and confidential dispatch, May 27, 1880, CO 87/115; and confidential dispatch 1, January 3, 1881, CO 87/117, TNA, Kew.

Immediately Biram Sisé retaliated, launching an attack against a town controlled by Said Matti and killing one of his relatives. While relations with N’Dari Ba remained unstable and skirmishes with Said Matti continued, Biram Sisé effected an alliance with Bur Saloum who supported him in his quest for territory. Biram made his headquarters in the heavily fortified port of Kau-ur, from where he gained control over large areas of Baddibu. A *de facto* truce existed between N’Dari Ba and Biram, but Said Matti attacked his towns because he had encroached on the territory formerly controlled by Maba.⁹⁷ In 1885 serious warfare erupted both north and south of the river and the French and British began a reevaluation of their territorial ambitions in the area. These permanently altered the power relations in the Gambia River region, and the various African rulers, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, found themselves dominated by colonial empires.

Early in 1885 Biram Sisé crossed the river from his stronghold at Kau-ur to join Musa Molo in an attack on Fodé Kaba Dumbuya in Jarra. It was reported that the forces of Said Matti Ba had crossed the river to assist Fodé Kaba. Before any military engagement could occur, Biram Sisé had news of an attack by Said Matti against his brother Ali Khoja Sisé and Kedel, the Bur Saloum, with whom he had an alliance. Ali Khoja had been a student of Maba’s with Biram and was one of the “war heroes” mentioned in the oral histories. British sources also identified him as Biram’s brother and Mahmud N’Dari Ba’s son-in-law and brother-in-law, a common marital arrangement among the notable Muslim families.⁹⁸ N’Dari Ba called for assistance from

⁹⁷ Traditions say that Ba could never defeat the family of Handala Buré Sisé. Confidential dispatch 4, September 17, 1881; dispatch 101, December 12, 1881; confidential dispatch 13, December 12, 1881, CO 87/117; dispatch 7, February 2, 1882; dispatch 19, April 3, 1882; and dispatch 34, June 8, 1882, CO 87/118. See also, Kamara 600/A; and Samba 593/B, OHD, Banjul.

⁹⁸ Ali Khojah’s sister was married to N’Dari Ba, while Ba’s daughter was married to Ali Khojah. The British administrator calls him Biram Sisé’s “own brother” and his “chief.” Samba 593/A, 593/B, 594; Ceesay and Jagne 596/A, 596/B, 597, OHD, Banjul. See also, dispatch 46, May 14, 1885 and dispatch 62, June 13, 1885, CO 87/124. Martin Klein (1968: 135) identifies him as Ali Khodia Ba, a nephew of both Maba and Mahmud N’Dari Ba and as the *marabut* chief of Laghem, but Sisé family histories clearly call him one of their own.

Kedel, Biram Sisé, and Amara Khoja (Ali's brother) to resist Said Matti's encroachment on his authority. Said Matti claimed that he was king of Baddibu and Saloum and that he controlled the river ports in the region. He accused Biram, N'Dari Ba, and Ali Khoja of conspiring to deny him his rights over the territory.⁹⁹

The Turé and Sisé forces mounted a strong attack in the Suwarra Kunda area, which had been a stronghold of Maba and was controlled by Said Matti. Said Matti had to flee to Banjul, and several of his towns were destroyed and plundered. Finally, he took refuge in Kaolack. Sir Cornelius Alfred Moloney, the British administrator, visited N'Dari Ba at Nioro, and chastised him for not protecting trade.¹⁰⁰ With the assistance of his uncle, Alhuri Njai, Said Matti counterattacked and forced Biram to take refuge at Ndimba. Although more warfare was threatened by Said Matti, a brief respite from the fighting ensued. Moloney recommended that Britain extend its control over Baddibu.¹⁰¹ Early in 1886 the British reported that Said Matti had besieged Biram Sisé and his supporters at Saba who were then forced to take refuge in Ndimba.¹⁰² Early in 1886 the British administrator visited Said Matti in Suwarra Kunda and reported that he had burned Nioro. By this time Said Matti controlled Baddibu, Sanjal, part of Saloum and many of the principal wharves from Suwarra Kunda to Kau-ur on the Gambia River. Clearly, the Sisé-Turé-N'Dari Ba alliance was waning, although, it was still capable of defeating

⁹⁹ In oral documents Hamad Khojah is referred to as Hama or Hamat, while in British documents he is called Amara (Umar), although it is possible that two separate brothers are being referred to. He is identified as a member of the Sisé family, but Martin Klein (1968: 141) calls him Omar Khodia Ba. In 1885, Manjay, Ousman, and Suliman Ba, three of Mahmud N'Dari's sons, felt that one of them should succeed their father as *al-imam* of Baddibu. Dispatch 62, June 13, 1885, CO 87/124, TNA, Kew.

¹⁰⁰ Moloney reported that merchants had claimed £1200 in losses as a result of the war and charged N'Dari Ba with restitution; dispatch 63, June 16, 1885; and dispatch 77, July 11, 1885, CO 87/124, TNA, Kew.

¹⁰¹ Dispatch 97, August 1, 1885; dispatch 114, August 22, 1885; and dispatch 132, September 5, 1885, CO 87/125; dispatch 160, October 31, 1885; and dispatch 182, December 23, 1885, CO 87/126, TNA, Kew.

¹⁰² Biram lost two generals in the battle, his uncle, Said Kané Turé, and Jatta Salang Jammeh. Biram, outraged by the death of his uncle, confronted Said Matti at Deek Taba and said to him: "If it was not your father – Maba Jahu, who is my Marabout and Parent, then you will be a slave or I will kill you." Dispatch 58, April 15, 1886, CO 87/127, TNA, Kew. See also Kamara 600/A, OHD, Banjul.

Said Matti's forces in small battles. At the end of 1886, Sir Gilbert Thomas Carter, the British administrator in Banjul recommended dividing Baddibu between Biram and Said Matti, each according to their territorial holdings, and granting them each a stipend of £100 to keep the peace.¹⁰³ On February 7, 1887 Biram Sisé and Gilbert Thomas Carter agreed on a treaty of peace and friendship. Four days later a similar treaty with Said Matti was effected. The treaties listed territory in Baddibu controlled by each of the rulers.¹⁰⁴ These treaties were deemed necessary not only to protect trade along the river but to forestall French expansion southward. Said Matti gained authority over most of the important towns and wharves.

This treaty marked the last attempt to unify Baddibu under British influence. Within three months Said Matti was attacked by the French at Kumbuf (Goumbof) and chased to the "Ceded Mile" in British territory on the Gambia River. He was taken to Banjul and never regained any position of authority. Like his father he succumbed to military forces more powerful than his.¹⁰⁵ Biram Sisé wrote to Carter to complain about French interference in Baddibu but was told France had a right to defend its interests.¹⁰⁶ Although Biram Sisé was signatory to the treaty with Great Britain that paid him a stipend of £100 and still had towns in British territory, he chose to be based in French territory. Biram Sisé, N'Dari Kané Turé and Omar Khodia Ba [Sisé] signed a treaty with the French and agreed to destroy their forts in return for recognition of their political positions and the right to collect an export tax (Klein 1968: 141–42).¹⁰⁷

Biram was granted the territory in Sabakh where he built the town of Djiguimar; today Medina Sabak is the principal town. Evidently, N'Dari Kané Turé had a position as Biram's

¹⁰³ Dispatch 95, May 17, 1886; dispatch 124, June 5, 1886; and dispatch 128, June 18, 1886, CO 87/128; and dispatch 235, December 31, 1886, CO 87/129, TNA, Kew.

¹⁰⁴ Correspondence relating to the affairs of Baddiboo, November 1887, CO 879/26/341, TNA, Kew.

¹⁰⁵ For these events, refer to correspondence dated May 1887 in CO 879/26/341, TNA, Kew.

¹⁰⁶ Dispatch 63, May 3, 1887, CO 87/130, TNA, Kew.

¹⁰⁷ Biram Sisé denied that he had a treaty with Great Britain. Omar Khodia Ba seems to be the same person as Hamad (Amara) Khoja Sisé in the British and oral history documents and was related to the Ba family by marriage.

subchief, but the Sabakh-Sanjal region had been under Turé influence since Umani Turé's conquest around 1860. Turé Kunda, the family village, was located to the southeast near Biram's old stronghold at Kau-ur. Not surprisingly, N'Dari Kané Turé did not accept his subordinate position. In 1888 Governor Rowe reported that fighting had erupted in Baddibu, and the French suspected that Biram Sisé was plotting to expel Europeans from his territory. Biram Sisé was removed from power in June 1888 and eventually exiled to Gabon. N'Dari Kané Turé replaced Biram as chief and continued to play a political role in the region for many years. According to Andalla Ceesay, while in exile in Gabon, Biram met Ahmad Bamba and became devoted to him: "He worked for him and worshiped him; he gave him clothes and other things. He told him: 'I want prayers from you.' [Bamba replied] 'If you and all your relatives can stop being rulers, then I will help you.' Biram agreed. Sherin Bamba gave him clothes and prayer beads. He promised to follow what Sherin Bamba told him."¹⁰⁸

When Biram returned from exile he settled at Louga where he married Kumba Sillah, and they had several children. Biram gave up the quest for political power and, instead developed a school and again devoted himself to teaching children about Islam. Many of his children, among them Samba Haddy, Badou, and Gaye Sisé, produced large extended families that continue to strengthen Islam in Senegal and The Gambia.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

Based on analyses by scholars whose research focuses on the justification for and the process of *jihād* and a review of archival and oral sources, I argue that the military actions

¹⁰⁸ Ceesay and Jagne 597; and Kamara 600/A, OHD, Banjul. See also, dispatch 19, February 21, 1888, CO 87/132, TNA, Kew; 13 G 322, June–August, 1888, Archives Nationales du Senegal, Dakar; and Klein 1968: 147, 155.

¹⁰⁹ Ceesay and Jagne 597; and Kamara 600/A, OHD, Banjul.

pursued by Muslim forces in Baddibu and by Fodé Kaba Dumbuya and his father do not accord with Islamic doctrines to justify martial *jihād*. The Dumbuya traditions presented by local historians indicate that Fodé Bakari was told that he would produce a son who would lead a movement to convert nonbelievers to Islam. Father and son had excellent Islamic educations and bore the title Fodé. Both entered into *khalwa* and sought guidance from *ru'an* and from *al-qur'ān*. Both performed “miracles” and used *katimu* (concealment) to further their quest for power. Late in his career Fodé Kaba adopted the title *ʿamīr al-muʿminīn*, and in 1886 he wrote a letter to the Governor in Banjul that declared “My occupation is a warrior and I make it my duty to fight against the Soninke who profess no religion whatever.”¹¹⁰ According to information provided by colonial documents and family historians his statement is only partially true.

After performing *khalwa*, Fodé Bakari and his son organized a military force, mainly from Nyani, and attacked several towns, both Muslim and non-Muslim to the east and south of Kerewan Dumbuto. After Fodé Bakari’s death, Fodé Kaba launched a series of wars on the south bank from Kerewan Dumbuto to Fogny. In these wars he was supported by some Baddibu families and allied with some families of the former Kābu empire, with some Fula Muslim leaders, with some Manding Moré lineages and with some *sòninkee* and Jola converts to Islam. However, he was opposed by Baddibu forces, by most *sòninkee* and Jola rulers, by some Fula and Manding Moré lineages and many Saghanugu and Jakhanké scholars, including his uncle, Karang Kutubo Kassama, one of the most respected scholars and teachers on the south bank. While he built many *masajid* and left teachers in many villages, hundreds of residents who offered to convert (and many who had converted) were killed, as were Muslims who opposed his wars, even after they asked to negotiate peace treaties; crops and villages were destroyed,

¹¹⁰ Class 7, box 88, no. 19, January 22, 1886, NAB.

including a few *masajid* burned with Muslims inside; and captives were taken, many of whom were enslaved. All of these actions were in violation of Islamic law.

Dumbuya families in other areas of western Africa were not normally associated with *jihād*, although they were not necessarily averse to using force to promote their economic interests. They excelled in commerce, the development of plantations, and the creation of well-organized small states. Once established they were devoted to building a strong Islamic community and investing considerable funds to erect *masajid* and *madaris*. This pattern closely resembles the activities of Fodé Bakari and his son who pursued their interests in commerce, plantations, and state building; however, Fodé Bakari's territorial ambitions seem to have been modest, while Fodé Kaba failed to construct a stable political system due to three factors. First, he was too ambitious for the resources available to him; the territory from Wuli to Fogny was far too extensive a region. Second, Muslim communities led by Sarahulé, Manding Moré, Fula and Jakhanké scholars were well-established and had begun to convert large numbers of people to Islam long before Fodé Bakari and Fodé Kaba entered the region. As Kawusu Sillah notes:

Conversion into Islam did not always come by force. Some *soninke* kings became marabouts because they became convinced of the truth of the Islamic faith. The *soninke* kings of that period had their fetishes but some went to the marabouts as well. This dual recognition of the fetish and Islam bringing into play the Islamic prayers gave the *soninke* more power than they had before. As their belief in Islam and the power of the marabout increased, they gradually converted to Islam. The marabouts continued to try to convince them of the truth of their religion by practical example and by persuasion.¹¹¹

Third, Fodé Kaba had to contend with other powerful forces in the region: Alfa and Musa Molo, who were allied with other Fula rulers, with members of notable Muslim families in the Gambia River region and with British and French colonial forces. Fodé Kaba managed to establish only a

¹¹¹ Sillah 178C–180C, OHD, Banjul. Families of scholars had been pursuing the spiritual *jihād* for centuries in western Africa and had no interest in taking up arms; Jaiteh 1982; Conteh 1982; and Sidibe 1984 and 1987; see also Jaabi 132B; and Girasi 381A, OHD, Banjul.

small state in Casamance for a brief time and under the supervision of the French. The fundamental criticism of his movement is that it was not based on doctrines established by Muhammad, the messenger of *Allah*, and further developed by scholars about when martial *jihād* may be launched and how *jihād* must be conducted. Consider, for example the opinion of Abou El Fadl (2005: 222–23):

“Holy war” (in Arabic *al-ḥarb al-muqaddasa*) is not an expression used by the Qurʾanic text or Muslim theologians. In Islamic theology, war is never *holy*; it is either justified or not... The Qurʾanic text does not recognize the idea of unlimited warfare, and it does not consider the simple fact that one of the belligerents is Muslim to be sufficient to establish the justness of a war. In other words, the Qurʾan entertains the possibility that a Muslim combatant might be acting unjustly, and if so, then that Muslim is not engaging in jihad. According to the Qurʾan, war might be necessary, and might even become binding and obligatory, but it is never a moral and ethical good.

The Qurʾan does not use the word *jihad* to refer to warfare or fighting; such acts are referred to as *qital*. ...Jihad is a good in and of itself, while *qital* is not. Jihad is good because it is like the Protestant work ethic: hard work toward a good cause.¹¹²

The same analysis can be applied to the territories on the north bank from Baddibu to Wuli. Many Muslim clans played a central part in the wars after Maba. During the period from 1861 to 1867 some non-Muslims were converted to Islam, although there is no evidence about how many were converted or whether they remained Muslims after his death. In the twenty years after Maba’s death the primary purposes of the wars were competition for territory and control of economic resources.¹¹³ The formation of a theocratic state was not a goal; there is no discussion

¹¹² It is notable how closely this resembles the teachings of Amadu Bamba, founder of the Muridiyya (Babou 2007) and the critiques of many scholars referred to in notes 1–6; in this context a quotation found in a manuscript by the famous Timbuktu scholar, Ahmad Baba (1556–1627), is interesting: “The ink of the scholar is more precious than the blood of the martyr” (Jeppie, Shamil, and Diagne 2008: 27). In addition, Qadiriyya scholars criticized the use of force: “Sidi al-Mukhtar did not advocate militant jihad, and his son and grandson opposed the jihad of Shaykh Ahmad of Massina and that of Al-Hajj ʿUmar. But Sidi al-Mukhtar, the nonmilitant sufi, supported the jihad of ʿUthman dan Fodio”... (Levtzion and Pouwels 2000: 86). In the case of ʿUthman dan Fodio, Sidi al-Mukhtar judged that the use of force was legitimate.

¹¹³ Although there is no direct evidence in colonial or oral history documents, the significant increase in peanut (groundnut) production in the Gambia River region may have been an additional motivation for these conflicts. For information about peanut production see Brooks 1975; Gray 1940; Barry 1988; and Weil 1984.

of it in any document. No doubt many found it expedient to convert, but the process of missionary work and conversion had been going on for centuries. This work was advanced through spiritual *jihād*, by the educational activities of scholars and by the performance of ritualistic services that especially benefitted non-Muslim rulers. Furthermore, Muslims contributed to the commercial well-being in many communities. Their spiritual, social, and economic activities continued whether there were wars or not. Indeed, many Muslims did not support the wars. They suffered as a result of the fighting, and their educational and missionary activities were disrupted. The wars ended not because stable political conditions had been achieved through conflict but because of the opposition of notable Muslim leaders to martial *jihād* and the interventions by European colonizers. Ironically, subsequent, more stable conditions allowed Muslim teachers and scholars to pursue their activities with great vigor and success during the colonial era (Glover 2007; Robinson and Triaud 1997; Skinner 2009; Ware 2014).

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