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II O L L O Q U E I N T E R N A T I O N A L

SUR LES TRADITIONS ORALES DU GABU  
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THEME : ISLAM AND LOCAL RELIGION IN KAABU FROM THE THIRTEENTH  
TO THE MID NINETEENTH CENTURY.



ISLAM AND LOCAL RELIGION IN KAABU FROM THE THIRTEENTH  
TO THE MID NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Mandinka ruling classes and people of Kaabu, in common with other peoples of the ancient world, worshipped "Spirits" or "jinns" which were credited with remarkable powers. These Spirits were known as "Jalangs". A Jalang is a Super natural force present in a natural object. It is conscious. It can act and communicate its wishes in many ways. It was worshipped (and still is), spoken to and treated almost like a Grecian or Roman God (2). The jalang could take the form of a tree, snake, crocodile or spear. It needed constant propitiation in the form of locally distilled palm or cornwine, and after contact with European and other Spirits. Chickens, cows and other valuables were offered as sacrifice to it along with a great deal of festivity. Much more than the ordinary people, it was the Mandinka ruling family in Kaabu, the Nyanchos (3), who were most closely associated with jalang worship.

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- (1) See Cissoko. S. M, "Recueils des Traditions Orales". IFAN 1974 p. 45  
On the question of the religious beliefs of the early kaabunkas, Sana Kuyateh says -in the beginning there were no mansas, only the elder of the land..... a woman was responsible for the jalang, named Dominiki- She was a Bainouk who was later called Balanta mansa or Guardian ruler. Tape 567 C and 568 CA. In tape 568 CA, he says that when Tiramakang Traoré arrived in Kaabu bringing Marabouts in his train the land was uninhabited but for the Bainouks. It would appear that jalang worship was adopted from the autochtones the Mandinka met in Kaabu. e.g Bainouks Jola or Balanta see Roche Thesis P. 45-9, 66, 67 & p. 72 & 73.
- (2) According to B.K.Sidibeh, the Nyanchos (members of Kaabu dynasty) treated their jalang rather as they would a respected elder who was wiser than they and who had power to help them by Super natural means.  
Sidibeh. The Nyanchos of Kaabu. Unpublished Manuscript. Gambia Cultural Archives
- (3) It is significant that the Nyanchos claim descent from Mali's non-muslim Emperor Sundiatta, noted for his persecution of muslims and Tiranakang Traoré' his trusted general whom the jalis credit with the founding of jalang worship in Kaabu See. Sidibe B.K. Sunjata compiled & Ed. with an Introduction by W. Galloway Jan 1980. Gambia Cultural Archives p. 12.

They tapped the jalangs resources to obtain power to rule as divine kings (4). As these forces operated effectively only if their votaries drank alcoholic beverages, the name Nyanchu became synonymous with wine bibber or "Soninke", and by extension all commoners and slaves Mandinka, Fula, Bainunk or Jola who drank and did not pray to Allah were soninke (5). The jalang protected the soninke of Kaabu over the centuries (6) as long as they did not deviate from the rituals and norms laid down by tradition for its worship.

The Oral traditionalists or jalis provide evidence which suggest that the Islamic religion too took root in Kaabu right from the time of its foundation in the thirteenth century (7). Portuguese travellers testify to the existence of "convents" and Muslim religious settlements in the area when they arrived there from the fifteenth century onwards (8).

However one is left in no doubt that both nyanchu and other "Soninke" adopted aspects of the Islamic religion which complemented their jalang worship - a procedure which confirms Horton's Intellectualist Theory that in general, Africans responded to Universal Religions (e.g. Islam and Christianity) in much the same way as they had approached their own local religions which were essentially concerned with "the explanation, prediction and control of space-time events" (9).

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- (4) Roche C., Thesis, p. 73. See also Sara Kuyate Tape 568 CB. It was the jalang who decided on who would be the next ruler
- (5) Cissoko S.N. La Royauté chez les Mandingues Occidentaux p. 333. Quoted in Roche. Thesis p. 73. A Soninke was a hard-drinking pagan. The name Soninke is not to be confused with the ethnic group also known as Serahule. See Samah J.A.H. XVII n°1 1973 p. 1, 19, 72. Gray J.M., History of the Gambia p.388, 441 & 482.
- (6) Starting from approximately the 13th century when Tiranakang Traoré founded Jalang worship. Some jalis suggest it was the Bainunks who first worshipped jalangs. See Footnote.
- (7) See Sara Kuyateh Tape 568 C and Taa Sunkung Jaabi. Gambia Cultural Archives.
- (8) It has been suggested that Muslim migrants came to Kaabu long before the military conquests led by Tiranakang Traoré. See Bathily A, Islam and nineteenth century resistance movements. Aberdeen 1974 pp. 67-68. See also Roche. Thesis p. 75. Ancestors of the Mandinka the Portuguese met in the XVth century mention islamization from Futa Toro and Mauritania.
- (9) Horton J.B., African Conversion. Africa Journal of the Int. African Institute vol. XII AP. 1971 n° 2 p. 94.

Both the local religion and Islam had strictly demarcated places in the lives of the Kaabunka. For instance, Jalang and Sabu Tiyolu (10) were consulted during genral emergencies like wars, epidemics; over succession to the throne ect (11). But for protection against specific weapons or diseases it was to the marabouts (12) that the Soninke turned. Thus each religion was tested

for the availability of potential supernatural forces which could be utilized to solve their problems.

According to Oral tradition collected from Kaabu and the testimony provided by the Portuguese, it is generally accepted that from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century the local religion mutually co-existed with Islam (13). In fact jalang worship was more wide spread in the first two centuries. Only pockets of muslim morikundas existed (14). But by the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, muslims had come to acquire such elevated positions in the political, social and economic lives of the Kaabunka that jalang worship began to decline and with it the political power of the Mansa. Around the 1800, 15 Muslims forced, seizing the opportunity afforded by the internal instability of the States of Kaabu and the divided loyalty of its subjects (16), to effect a revolution which toppled the nyancho - Soninke dynasty creating "permanent bridge-heads" from which Islam was diffused into other parts of Senegambia (17).

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(10) Sabu Tiyolu were animist charm makers See Sama Kuyateh Tape 568 CA. Gambia Cultural Archives.

(11) I bid. See also Taa Sunkung Jaabi Libras 1971 Tape 97 C on Kaabu History. Also Innes. G. Kaabu and Fagiladu; p. 39, p. 43, p. 47 inter alia.

(12) Muslim Priest Monteil, among other Islamicists says this of the marabout. "The Marabout is frequently a magician, a seer, a diviner". Much of his work consists of making amulets or naso (Quranic writing washed off the writing tablet and given to suppliants to drink or wash with). He was also amind reader able to communicate through telepathy, saw visions and went into Kalwa (retreat). Super human powers were attributed to special groups of Marabouts, Sherifs, Wallis e.g. Fode Kaba Dombouya Innes. Kaabu and Fagiladu, p. 205, Nasir al Din, Al Hadjj Umar Tall Monteil - Kritzeck and Lewis. p. 94 - 102. Ba Tamsir 'Essai Historique' B IFAN XIX 1957 p. 564-591

(13) Harbot. J. op.cit. p. 58, p. 80. Moore Op. Cit. p. 85. Mungo Park. p. 45, p. 148, p. 150

(14) Jobson Op. Cit. p. 78. Almada Cited Thilmans. Bul. IFAN XXX, IV, Ser. B. n° 1, 1972, p. 28 + 31

(15) Roche. Thesis, p. 74. See Leary who suggests 1843. Leary Thesis, p. 95 (16) Innes p. 43. (17) Pellissier. p. 521

#### LOCAL RELIGION OF KAABU - SONINKEYAA

The Kaabu Soninke, we have indicated believed that the World and all in it were controlled by supernatural forces. These could be benevolent or malevolent depending on their whims and caprices. They were omnipresent and could take any form they chose. In order to get the maximum protection from them, the Kaabunka felt it necessary to locate and 'freeze' these metaphysical forces into acceptable tangible objects. These images or 'jalang' became objects of worship which could be petitioned, questioned or placated following the appropriate pattern of rituals (18).

Tiramakang Traoré is regarded as the founder of jalang worship in Kaabu. According to Sana Kuyateh, he established the greatest of them all, Alfa Duta at Mampating during the thirteenth century (19).

As he expanded the boundaries of Mali westward into what later became Kaabu so he set up Jalangs in each territory he conquered. Soon these assumed the proportions of state religions. The mansa or Farim treated like a divine king. (20). The most famous Jalang was Tumbi Dibi -a Spear in the dark. It was originally at Kaataba. Later it was moved to Tamba Dibi near Kankalefa. When it took human form it always appeared in shadowy places (21)

#### WORSHIP AND CONSULEATION

The Jalang was treated rather like an Oracle which possessed the wisdom distilled through the ages.

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(18) Galloway. Thesis 1974 p. 269. Sana Kuyateh tape 567 CA.

(19) Sana Kuyateh tape 568 C.

(20) See Foot note 4. Also Jobson, p. 61.

(21) Sana Kuyateh tape 568 C. B. On major Jalangs and their Origins. Other Jalangs were set up at Panyinku - East of Maane-Kunda- jalang bantang. The jalang of Tumanua Sumakunda was an old tortoise. Those in Sankolla, Sutuko and Farinko (Faring) and Manjang Kunda were Sootoo trees. The wali Jalang was a Spear. Galloway Thesis, p. 246. Sunjata's jalang was a horn. Sunjata by B.K. Sidi-beh, p. 13.

Its guardianship was entrusted to the "mansajong" - a loyal head of a slave family (22). Once a year at harvest-time, and from time to time when the need arose, he organized the ceremonies connected with jalang consultation following the appropriate rituals (23).

One of the commonest ways of eliciting answers from the jalang was for the Guardian-Priest to ask it a question, kill the prescribed sacrificial (24) animal and examine its kidneys. A positive answer was indicated by the presence of light kidneys, a negative one by dark ones. In cases where the jalang was a tree and consultation took place during the day, it shook violently if the answer was in the affirmative (25). But a whirlwind sprang up instead during nocturnal consultations. In cases where the response was negative the tree remained calm (26).

Underpinning this religious strata was the Universal belief among the Kaabunka (27), (and mandinka) in general, in the existence of nyamo, an innate Spiritual force given by the Creator (28) to all living things as protection against external attack.

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(22) Sana Kuyateh. Tape 567 C. See Footnote 1.

(23) He put questions to the jalang, interpreted the answers and offered the Sacrifices; Galloway. Thesis, p. 272.

(24) See Moore, p. 145. Records divination the witnessed were the animal used was a chicken. See also Barbot, p. 79. Red, black or white bulls were also killed. Cowries and cloth could be offered too Sana Kuyateh 568 C. Human Sacrifice has been reported but that practice had long ceased. Galloway p. 273/4. The Nyancho were famous for their wine Sacrifices Sidibe to Galloway. Galloway Thesis p. 275. Barbot p. 80, 85

(25) E.g. when a Mansa needed advice as to the propitiousness of way, the tree would shake if it favoured war, the Spirits would be heard laughing loudly. If it did not approve of the venture all would be quiet. Sana Kuyateh Tape 568 C.

(26) Ibid.

(27) Mandinka, Fula, Jolof, Baincunk. Galloway. Thesis p261. (28) See Adanson p 53 and Park m. p. 9, 10, 209-210.



Galloway has described it as a "Spiritual venom" triggered off automatically when a creature is harmed (29). Every living creature is endowed with nyamo, but the greater animals and people like the Nyanchos and hunters had more than the average share of it (30). People in Kaabu consulted sooth sayers or Sabu Tiyolu, to help them prepare charms and potions to ward off or overpower the evil machinations of their enemies (31).

Age grade associations and masquerades (the "Kankurang" and "Mama para") were instruments of social control devised by the elders of Mandinka society to keep both rulers and people in check (32). Detractors were punished and trial by ordeal was widely used (33).

It was this intimate association of jalang worship belief in nyamo, the powers of the Sabu Tiyolu, rigid control of society which militated against the total conversion of the Kaabunka to the Islamic faith and way of life. Besides, Muslims lived apart from their Soninke brethren and intermarriage, though not uncommon (34) was generally frowned upon (35). The ruling classes were particularly noted for upholding Soninke -anti muslim values whilst exploiting the physical and spiritual powers of their muslim subjects.

As in most primitive societies, there was no dichotomy between the Spiritual and temporal roles of the Kaabu -mansa. The powers of the jalang, the Nyamo of the Mansa and the secret societies which controlled society were the chief props of nyanchos political power. Any diminution in the strength of one of these props lessened the authority of the ruler in the eyes of his subjects. Further more, Nyanchos claimed descent and right to rule (mansaya) from Sundiatta Keita, the famous muslim persecutor of Mali, and his general Tiramang Traore, founder of jalang worship in Kaabu (36).

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(29) It is almost like a glorified instinct for self preservation

(30) Galloway. Thesis p 261 especially p 267 and 268. Also 2 Hunting Tales by Kamara B. Ed. Goering D Presidents office Banjul 1979.

(31) Sana Kuyateh Tape n° 568 C A. on Jalangs Marabouts and Sabu Tiyolu their relative merits.

(32) Moore p 116 & 117 refers to the "Mama-para" which he calls Marubo-jumba -a masquerade on Stilts. The king of Jarra (Jagra) and his wife were killed in 1727 for divulging its secret. See also Quinn C. Op.Cit p

(33) Rodney W. Op.Cit p 113 quoting from De Almada.

(34) See Dramé Buly. Sur la civilisation mandingue. London Manding Conference 1972 For 35 and 36 p.

According to Oral information, the nyanchos' jalangs were the most powerful of all those in Western Manding. This would explain why that class was wary of adopting in toto a religion which condemned all the qualities they held dear. Nyanchos' raison d'être was based on the ability to provide armed defence of their states, but Muslims were forbidden to participate in secular wars (37). Thus those who embraced Islam were no longer eligible to claim the noble status ascribed to that category of soldier rulers, in short, they lost their privileged status in society (38).

In fact some Muslims were treated with Skepticism and ridicule. A case in point being the story of a Marabout who was invited to the court of Faramba Tamba (39) but failed to live up to the reputation he had acquired in other parts of Kaabu. He was said to possess charms which provided protection against knife wounds. After twice asking him about the efficacy of his amulets and receiving a positive answer each time, the Nyanchos plunged his knife into the Marabout's stomach and that was the end of him (40). In general, Muslims were regarded as inferior to the well-born Soninke (41). Up until the latter part of the XVIIIth century the local cults vied with the Marabouts for Supremacy (42).

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(37) The Sherifian Monarchy in Morocco was also faced with this problem for centuries. Their Arabo-Berber subjects refused to fight all but jihads. See Anene and Brown Africa in the XIXth and XXth centuries. Article by AyardeleAE;

(38) Galloway. Thesis p 152. says The first mandinka families were from the nobility, but because their religion stopped them from participating in secular wars, they dropped out of the noble into the free man class. In p 150 She says Islam was regarded as an occupation rather than a belief to be spread. Muslims practised islam, nobles ruled and julas traded ect. See also Pelli-ssier p. p 513 who mentions that the Mandinka had a system of government essentially oriented towards military operations, sometimes for commercial and at others for religious ends.

(39) Of Kapedu. An outlying district of Kaabu. Sidibe B., The Nyanchos. Innes

(40) I bid

(41) See G. Innes p 57 who quotes a slave in conversation with Janke Waali, last mansa of Kaabu, as saying disparaging "those little marabouts with those little written patterns that they make..."

(42) See Moore, p. 116 - 117. Barbot p. 80 .ark p. 203



## ISLAM IN KAABU

Islam was introduced into Kaabu at approximately the same time as was Jalang worship (43). The agencies responsible for its spread in the empire were the Sulaas or Manding Maris (44), the Jahanka (45), the Futaanke and Mauritians (46). By both peaceful and militant means they established the islamic religion in the empire. Examples of peaceful extensions of the faith being the setting up of Koranic schools and other higher centers of islamic learning where they taught both muslim and non-muslim children, built mosques and morikundas and led diametrically opposed lives to their Soninke kith and kin. Gradually they created a tradition of islamic scholarship and orthodoxy which have attracted muslims from other parts of Africa as well as non-muslims around them. Shaikh-seeking (47) and pilgrimages to Mecca (48), and membership of the Qadriyya brotherhood (49) became the hall marks of the Islamized Mandinka of Kaabu. It was about them that Trimmingham wrote, they "introduced and taught Islamic law books" which "began the process of giving central Sudan an excessive legalistic imprint". One such scholar was Al Hadjj Salim Suare, commonly known as "Karamoko Ba"- the great Scholar, the Jahanka who lived during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and gave rulings on issues affecting Muslims living in bilad al Kufr (pagan territory) (51).

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- (43) Sara Kuyateh -says Islamic Settlements predated Tiramakange's Conquests. He found the Sulaas already living in the area. Information provided by Norris, Curtin and Alnaqar and Pellissier lead one to conclude that Islamic influences spread from Futa or Takrur and Mauritania South wards as well as from Manding. See Norris Znaga Islam' Bul SOAS 32, 1969 p 496ff. Curtin P.D, Uihads' J.A.H. 10, 3, 1969 pp 365 74. Pellissier p 556
- (44) Muslim clerics from Mali. Tha Sunkung Jaabi and Galloway p 152 say they had been muslim even before the Malian emperor and people were converted E.q. the Faatis,
- (45) From Jaha they followed the scent of holiness noro from their homeland in Masina, establishing islamic educational and agricultural sttlements. See Sarneh L. Thesis and Hunter T.C. "The Jabi Tarikhs" Loc. Cit. also Hunter's Fieldnotes in Gambia Cultural Archives. FN 157
- (46) See S a Kuyateh. Tape 568 CA and Pellissier p 556.
- (47) Shaikhs or Marabouts, Seringe (wolof) cherno (Pular), Fode Kemo (Mandinka) were of two kinds. One populist providing answers to worldly problems. See Monteil.OP.Cit p 90-91. Others were Spiritual leaders, possessing charisma or "baraka", much more learned, like the heads of brotherhoods, sherifs (or the prophet's descendants) Walis (or the prophet's messengers). The Faatis and Hydaras of Casamance, Fode Kaba Doumbouya, Maba Diakhou, etc. See footnote 12.
- (48) Umar al Naqar. MPhil Thesis. London.
- (49) Pellissier p 555 suggests membership of this brotherhoods kept Kaabu area orthodox. Rodney too says their emphasiss on religion kept the area in a state of pristine purity pp 220 - 230 .Leary suggest the Muslims of Kaabu (Casamance) rejected fode Kaba because he was Tijaniyya. See Leary F.A.Papers on the Manding' Ed. Carteton Hodge. Indiana African series Vol 3 p 230 footnote 9
- (50) Trimmingham J.S. in Kritzeck and Lewis p 18
- (51) See Sarneh "Clericalism" p 52, 64. He lived at Sutuco

To this category also belonged Kaabu muslim clerics like Thierno Mamadu grand father of Kemo Maja (52), Fode Kaba Dombouya and Fode Maja or Kemo Maja himself (53).

Fode Kaba Dombouya, like Shehu dan Fodio was a cleric attached to the court of his non-muslim overlord. He and the Jahanka (54) in particular exploited their positions to such an extent that they exercised political and economic influences for exceeding the traditional provisions of the Nyancha State System (55). The Jula (trading) families too came to acquire privileged positions in Kaabu (56). As many of these were muslims, they were influential in spreading the religion as they sold their goods. They and the clerics combined to work with their Soninke overlords. When the three forces, (Jula, cleric and nyancha) were balanced, they represented muslim - Soninke cooperation at its best.

What Galloway says of the Wuli situation could not be taken as representative of Kaabu society in general. "The Signatehs lent themselves to the Walis the Walis lent themselves to the Kemos" (57). The Walis (ruling class of Wuli) would only act in unison with other groups if they had the upper hand. By the Opening year of the nineteenth century there were clear signs that muslims were gaining ascendancy over non-muslims.

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(52) Roche p 75

(53) Roche p 75

(54) Personal Communication given to writer by Sidibe B.K.

(55) Jobson R. p 81 says the king hired muslim Intendants. But according to the mechanisms built into the Mandinka system of government, no muslim, nomatter how influential could aspire to the position of Mansa or farim. See also Park M. p 25 who observed "though the Bushreen (muslims) are frequently consulted in affairs of importance, the executive government - rests solely in the hands of the mansa- and great officers of State".

(56) Galloway Thesis p 159. Also Sana Kuyateh 568 C A. Among the trading families were the Signatehs, Daabos, Bayos and Samaas. See also Roche p 75.

(57) Galloway Thesis p 160. Kemo is another name for Fode p 154.

THE SONINKE-MARABOUT WARS AND THE FALL OF THE NYANCHO DYNASTY OF KAABU IN THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Fula had their Fula Kundas, the Soninke had their tienecundas and the Muslims their Morikundas (58).

It has been generally accepted that Muslim and Soninke mutually coexisted in Kaabu from the period of its foundation to the end of the eighteenth century when the authority of the Muslims began to supersede that of their overlords and a series of revolutionary wars broke out which destroyed Soninke rule, replacing it with Muslim government. Judging from the way in which Islamists have argued about the causes of wars designated "religious", it is little surprise to find that same lack of unanimity among writers of Kaabu history over the question of the causes of the Soninke - Muslim wars. It seems to me that a meaningful understanding of the revolution which occurred in Kaabu in the 1830s is only possible if a wholistic approach is adopted and religious, political and socio economic factors examined to see why an evolutionary<sup>process</sup>/of Islamic acculturation turned into hostility and war.

Oral and Portuguese and other European travellers provide ample evidence to demonstrate that over the centuries the Marabout had come to acquire such a revered place in society that no occasion was considered complete unless he was present. At naming, marriage and funeral ceremonies, during circumcision of young boys and at harvest time, the Marabout was invited to participate and gives his blessings (59).

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(58) Teixeira da Mota, *Guiné Portuguesa* 1, p 158 quoted in Rodney

(59) See Trimmingham. J.S. *A history of Islam in West Africa.*

Cultru. P. Op;Cit., and Durand p 126. Sana Kuyateh 568 C.

Nor did Soninke<sup>yaa</sup> prevent the Nyanchos from being appreciative of the benefits of the Marabouts services or being converted to the religion. Some Nyanchos became early converts to Islam Sulali Joonyi and Koli Wuleng (60). Sulali adopted the name Ngansumana when he became muslim and his conversion did not prevent him from following the Nyancha code of Ethics nor stop the Soninke from installing him as their ruler (61). However the majority of the Nyanchos who accepted Islam, reverted to jalang worship because they found it difficult to adhere strictly to the tenets of Islam. In keeping with its iconoclastic tradition, Islam frowned on all idol worship, which practice, we have seen constituted the very essence of Nyancha socio-political existence. Nyancha ascendant position vis à vis other groups in Kaabu was maintained and guaranteed by this religious framework. Besides, Nyancha militaristic tradition was based on the consumption of huge quantities of alcohol forbidden by the Koran (62).

Never the less the Kaabu ruling classes sought the services and advices of their muslim subjects just as fervently as did the other Soninke in the empire. They used the marabouts in much the same pragmatic way they had conditioned their jalangs to gain power over their subjects rule their States efficiently and obtain mastery over their enemies. Fode Kaba Doumbouya and his father Fode Bakary were invited to stay at the court of Silati Kelefa (63).

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(60) Sana Kuyatch tape 568 C A.

(61) Ibid.

(62) Sidibe B.K. The Nyanchos of Kaabu.

(63) Roche p 194. Innes p 259 when he was still a scholar Fode Kaba was invited to stay at the court of Faramba Tamba of Kapendu.



Muslim clerics were employed in various political capacities,<sup>and</sup> as diplomatic emissaries to neighbouring states in both peace time and periods of inter - state hostility by (64). They also acted as intendants to the Nyancho. The Jahanka were particularly noted for their active role in the politics of the states they lived in, quite contrary to the rules governing the Mandinka state system (65). In some areas of Kaabu, the matrilineal line of succession was changed to the islamic patrilineal system (66). On islamization many Kaabunka abandoned the practice of throwing dust over their heads and prostrating to pay obeisance to their divine monarchs (67).

Yet, in spite of these outward signs that Islam had been accepted by people in Kaabu, there is evidence to show that the religion was to many a mere adjunct to their own religious and social systems. Jalang consultation continued to be popular. Both Sabu Tiyolu and Marabouts played their part in solving the Kaabunka "Space - time events" (68). When Janke Waali, the last Kaabu Mansa was to ascend the throne, both types of consultation took place (69). Even when Fode Bakary was invited to stay in Kerewan, the jalang and Sabu Tiyolu had warned against that step (70). Besides, the Kaabunka persisted in idolatry. The jalis emphasize that when Fode Kaba went to Kaabu territory, he went, to convert them to Islam but they rejected him because they had

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(64) Innes p 39

(65) See footnote 55

(66) See Sana Kuyateh Tape 568 CB  
H. Hecquard. Rapport sur un voyage dans la Casamance  
Revue coloniale Mars 1852. p 429

(67) Rodney p 26. Jobson p 61

(68) See footnote 9

(69) Sana Kuyateh Tape 568 CB. See also Innes p 103, p 111

(70) Sana Kuyateh Tape 568 CB. As had the Marabout resident at the court p 205  
Innes.

powerful gods to whom they offered animal sacrifices, and who from time immemorial had granted their wishes and desires (71). Other Europeans too had commented on the idol worship of people living in that vicinity (72) as well as their drunkenness (73). But these deviations from orthodoxy alone would not have led to war had it not been for the fact that political, socio economic and a new outburst of Mahdist expectations combined to disrupt the stability of the Soninke empire.

Firstly, some of the Kings muslim advisers, called kandas (74) in Kaabu, were jula who had grown extremely powerful and had by the 1830 created States within the greater Soninke empire. They had all but usurped Supreme authority, having taken over tax collection, allocation of land and been generally accepted as de facto rulers by the people: This was why/of them, Masajo Konateh was so incensed when Fode Bakary began collecting tax from itinerant traders on their way to Banjul, that he protested to Silati Kelefa who forbade the cleric from receiving any more customs duties (75).

The rise of the Atlantic trade also meant a corresponding decline in the powers of the nyanchos. They had been largely in control of the trans-saharan trade (76) but it was the muslims, Jahanké agriculturalists and jula who gained more from this new trade since the nyanchos looked down on manual work of kind (77). Consequently the muslims acquired wealth, stock piled arms and built forts, constituting real threats to the viability of the Soninke empire. Thus when Fode Bakary was banned from collecting tax, he simply retired with his family and supporters to his fort and commenced military operations against Silati Kelefa (78)

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(71) A. Badji. "Ce que dit la musique africaine...". L'Education africaine Av. Juin 1936 p 136.

(72) Jobson p 84-5, Barbot p 80

(73) Barbot p 80, p 35

(74) Cissoko S.M. La Royauté chez les Mandingues occidentaux quoted in Roche p 75. Celui-ci n'était plus un tolo mansa, c'est-à-dire un roi investi par la coutume, mais un homme qui s'était imposé à la coutume par la force ou par sa droiture. Kaŋŋa veut dire brave, audacieux" See also Galloway.

(75) Roche p 195

(76) Especially the slave trade. See Rodney Op. Cit

(77) Galloway. Sidibe B., The Nyanchos of Kaabu ANS.

(78) Roche p 195.

European presence in the Kaabu area from the eighteenth century onwards added to the instability of the nyanchos states. It created what John Galbraith has described as a "turbulent frontier". The french traders and officials interfered with the powers of the nyanchos, took land to build forts, forced them to sign treaties they hardly understood, mounted expeditions against them undermining the loyalty of their subjects. (A) They generated hostility not only against the rulers but against themselves too, since the muslim population classed all non-muslims -particularly those who drank as infidels with whom only limited social contact was advisable (B)

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(78)

A Roche pp 97 - 129

(78)

B See Robinson chapter 1 on Al Hadjj Umar's preaching tours

Secondly, Silati - Kelefa himself ruled with a heavy hand. He taxed the merchants very heavily and as they were mostly muslim, he faced the wrath of not only muslims in his own state but those in the neighbourhood as well, because there seems to have been an unofficial mutual assistance club among muslims which made them band together against outside threat (79). Thus when Fode Kaba began denouncing Silati - Kelefa many rallied to his side.

The Kaabunka muslims were also receptive to the preaching of Al Hadjj Umar Tall, exhorting the Futanke to stop co-habiting with infidels and to emigrate to more religiously Orientated states. Many of their clerics had in fact come from that area (80). Like the Kaabu state religion, Islam admits no distinction between "church" and state (81). It also possesses a revolutionary ideology which compelled muslims to take up arms against non-muslims in general and unjust rulers in particular and to create societies run along Islamic lines (82). This preoccupation was all the more urgent in the nineteenth century because it co-incided with the thirteenth A.H., which in Muslim escatology signalled the beginning of disasters, chaos and dissensions calling for a reform of society along the lines laid down by the prophet Mohammed and the first 4 caliphs. A messiah or Mahdi would then appear, sent by God to usher in a new age (83). To Muslims in Kaabu, the situation prevailing required such remedy. Fode Kaba, Fode Madia and Ibrahim Silla fulfilled the qualities of such an elevated position. They attracted all the down trodden (84) as well as devout muslims. Although Fode Kaba's membership of the Tijaniyya

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(79) Grant. The Fortunate Slave. Leary Thesis p 102

(80) Roche p 75. Eq. Fode Maja. Leary Thesis p 103  
Ibrahim Silla. See Robinson. D. Chiefs and clerics 1st chapter

(81) See Park. M. p 25

(82) See Willis. J., "Jihad fisabil allah. p 398 & p 395 - 415 Also H.F.C. Smith. " Islamic Revolutions. J.H.S.N. 11 - 1971 p 180. Ba Samba. These Sorbonne. Paris 1969/70.

(83) Al Hajj M. "The 13th in Muslim Escatology". Research Center for Arabic Documentation, Institute of African Studies University Ibadan 1967 Vol 3 n° 2. Al so B.G. MAHDI Mahdist Document from the Sudan BIFAN Vol 25 Ser B written around the 1850s.

(84) Mandinka, Fula, Wolof, Muslim as well as Soninke.



brotherhood militated against his success in recruiting followers from the largely Qadriyya muslim community of Kaabu (85).

In 1830 (86), the Muslim revolt against their Soninke rulers began culminating in the Sack of Kansala by the Muslim Fulas of Futa Jallon in 1868. People's loyalties were divided. For Example, some Soninke fought on the Side of Fode Kaba against Silati - Kelefa, and Muslims fought along side the Soninke (87). The Fulas seized the opportunity to free themselves from their long and onerous subjugation which had systematically deprived them of their liberties and property. Moreover, in 1868, the Almamy of TIMBO went to convert Kaabu to Islam (88).

But even in the face of impending defeat and fall of their empire, the nyanchos resisted conversion. They continued to believe in their jalangs and the occult powers/<sup>of</sup> their marabouts. Tamba Dibi was said to have appeared before two warring nyancho states, Tamaana and Tama, exhorting them to stop fighting. "Ah Tamaana and Taama, dont kill each other. You have a war before you which is greater than this (89).

But Supernatural power stood no chance against a soberer, better armed and united side such as the muslims mustered against the Nyanchos. By 1868 Kansala lay in ruins, the nyanchos chased from their thrones and muslims installed in their places. Islam had demonstrated its superiority over local religion (90).

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(85) Leary. F., Papers on the Manding p 230

(86) Roche p 75

(87) One of Fode Kaba's generals was a Nyanchos Abdul Khudosa, the Fula muslim fought with Silati - Kelefa Innes

(88) Innes p 49

(89) Innes p 3

(90) Never the less worship of jalang and Sabu Tiyolu consultation continue to this day. Sana Kuyatch Tape 568 C A and B. Galloway interviewed a 'muslim' who claimed he only became one to escape being ridiculed at when he failed to have a muslim burial. Galloway field notes.  
when he died

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