The Fula and Islamic Education in Freetown, Sierra Leone

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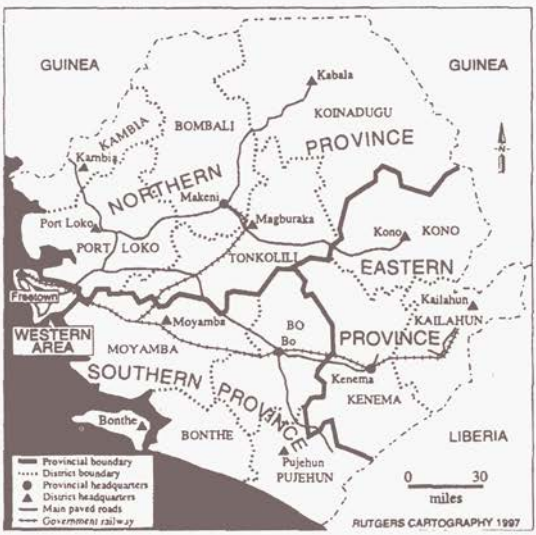
Introduction

This study examines the role of the Fula in Islamic education in Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone, from the colonial to the post-colonial period. The Fula educational initiative forges a partnership between the Muslim private sector and local educators. Not only does it provide a model for responding to the challenge of developing Islamic education in Sierra Leone, but it is a model that can be implemented throughout Africa. It is especially important given the increasing multi-ethnic student population and limited government support for Islamic education in Sierra Leone and across the continent. The recent decline in support from foreign Islamic countries for education in Africa adds urgency to the need for African Muslims, such as the Fula, to pursue alternative approaches to promoting Islamic education through broad-based co-operation among local educators, indigenous Muslim businesspersons, and the government.



For over two centuries the Fula, a devout Muslim group in Africa,[1] were pioneers in the spread of Islam not just in Freetown but throughout Sierra Leone. In fact, the Fula

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played a major role in the conversion to Islam of almost half of the 4.5 million population of Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone is characterized by interreligious tolerance that welcomes diverse religious groups, whatever their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In fact, reflective of the country's multiethnic diversity, all of the ethnic groups are represented within the Muslim community. Despite the large number of Muslims in Sierra Leone, no broad-based Muslim group seeks to turn the country into an Islamic state and provide it with an Islamic constitution.[2]

Pioneers of Islam

The pioneers of Islam in Freetown were Mandinka and Fula.[3] (The Fula's origins are unknown, but they are thought to come from the East.) However, the major evidence suggests that their first known settlements were along the lower course of the Senegal River. Here they intermarried with the Serer and the Wolof. For over seven centuries there has been a steady movement of the Fula, roughly from the region now known as Senegal, through Maasina, Fuuta Jalon, the Hausa States, Adamawa, and beyond. According to one popular legend, the Fula first accepted Islam through their progenitor Anabi Ukuba, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad. It is believed that Ukuba left Makkah for Africa after the death of the Prophet in 632 and wandered in North Africa until he reached a place somewhere in the northeast where he met an African woman and that the Fula people were the result of that union.[4]

In Freetown, the Fula are mostly immigrants from Fuuta Jalon in Guinea and Senegal. They are part of a larger diaspora in Sierra Leone that includes the Koinadugu District, Tonkolili District, Bombali District, Kailahun District, and Pujehun District in the Sierra Leone interior. Fula migration to these areas dates back to the seventeenth century, but the major waves of migration occurred between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Like the Fula who migrated to Freetown, these Fula were primarily motivated by commerce. They also played a major role in the spread of Islam in the Sierra Leonean hinterland through the establishment of educational institutions, proselytizing, and the creation of Islamic communities among the indigenous inhabitants. Moreover, some families such as the Bunduka in the north and the Kai Kai in the south even created political ruling classes in their communities, which have survived until today.[5] Over the years Fula families such as the Bunduka, Jah, and Kai Kai were acculturated through cross-ethnic marriages. Many of the offspring of these Fula immigrants migrated to Freetown, where they settled permanently. A notable example is *Alhaji* (*al-hajj*)[6] Abubakr (A. B.) Tejan-Jalloh, who lived in East Freetown.[7]

Several studies have been done on the Fula who live elsewhere in West Africa, including Nigeria and Guinea, detailing their pastoral mode of

existence, mercantile pursuits, and Islamic activities. Prominent religious and political leaders, administrators, and educators among the Fula who have played an important role in the spread of Islam in West Africa are Karamoko Alfa in eighteenth-century Fuuta Jalon, Usman dan Fodio in nineteenth-century Hausaland, and al-Hajj Umar in nineteenth-century Senegambia.[8]

The Fula presence in the Freetown area dates back to the seventeenth century when the Fula traveled to the coastal peninsula where Freetown was later built to trade slaves, gold, cattle, and cloth with the Portuguese and coastal ethnic groups such as the Temne.[9] But the Fula did not establish a permanent settlement; instead, they returned with European goods along the long-distance trade routes, which originated primarily in Fuuta Jalon in French Guinea (now Republic of Guinea).[10] With the establishment of a settlement of freed slaves on the peninsula in 1787, Fula trade with this area expanded greatly. The settlement was originally named Province of Freedom and then, in 1791, renamed Freetown by the Sierra Leone Company after the original settlement was destroyed by the Temne residents. The Fula success was due to their initiative and the efforts of the Sierra Leone Company, which comprised English businessmen and philanthropists such as Granville Sharp. The company sent several trade delegations to Timbo, the capital of Fuuta Jalon, to meet with the *almamy*.[11] In 1794, for example, James Watt and Thomas Winterbottom left Freetown for Timbo where they stayed for two weeks in consultation with the *almamy*, returning to the colony with news that the *almamy* had agreed to expand trade with Freetown.[12]

When the British government declared a crown colony in Freetown in 1808, the authorities recognized the importance of the Fula caravan trade and continued their earlier efforts to attract the Fula by sending trade delegations to the *almamy* of Fuuta Jalon. In 1819, as Freetown became a major trading center in West Africa, the Fula established a permanent settlement in the eastern part of the colony to take advantage of expanding commercial opportunities. Fula Town, as it came to be called, became a place of residence for permanent as well as itinerant Fula traders who participated in the commerce of Freetown. It was also a center of Islamic culture and proselytizing as Muslim Fula embarked on the mission of converting the colony's multiethnic population to Islam. Needless to say, this was not readily welcomed by the Christian missionaries and the colonial administration. As a Christian settlement of freed slaves in the eighteenth century, Freetown was the first successful mass movement in African Christianity in which Africans were both members and leaders, with their values incorporated into Christian worship.[11]

Though the homeland of the vast majority of the Fula of Freetown was Fuuta Jalon, there were divisions among them; the main clans were

Jalloh, Bah, Barrie, and Sowe. The vast majority of the Fuuta Jalon Fula in Freetown retained these clan identities as *yettoode* (family names). The immigrants were involved in chain migration that resulted in the clustering of migrants from the same towns in Fuuta Jalon in Freetown. They formed tightly knit communities around the large groups of kin and fellow townspeople to which the majority of the immigrants belonged. In addition, many of them retained strong links with their hometowns, links reinforced by ongoing flows of money and people.[14]

Besides the Fuuta Jalon Fula, there were the Fula from Senegal, such as the Bunduka, *Alhaji* Amadu-Sie, and *Alhaji* Momodu Allie,[15] whose homeland was Fuuta Tooro along the Senegal River. These Fula, like the Fuuta Jalon Fula, came to Sierra Leone primarily for trade. *Alhaji* Momodu Allie, for example, left Senegal in 1904 and traveled with a French cattle trader, Ernest Furrer, along the coast through Bathurst (the capital city of the Gambia) and Conakry (the capital city of Guinea) to Freetown to trade in cattle. He then settled permanently in the east of the colony among a multiethnic Muslim immigrant population. Between 1904 and 1948 *Alhaji* Momodu Allie exploited several commercial opportunities in the butchering business and real estate market of Freetown to become one of the most successful entrepreneurs in colonial Sierra Leone. He also created extensive social networks that, together with his financial success, gave his family an elite status in the colonial and postcolonial Fula community.[16]

Many of the immigrant Fula who were agents of Islamization in Freetown and elsewhere in Sierra Leone arrived after the Fuuta Jalon *jihad* (holy war) of 1727, which contributed greatly to the diffusion of Islam throughout Sierra Leone. This *jihad* of pastoralist Fula was led by the noted scholar, *Karamoko* (Muslim teacher/scholar) Alfa Ba, who was supported by his military general Ibrahima Sori. The *jihad* was against the Yalunka, a southern Mandinka people who spoke a language closely related to Soso. They were agriculturalists who practiced traditional African religion in Jallonkadu, which was the name of Fuuta Jalon before the *jihad*. The conflict between the Fula immigrants and the indigenous Yalunka was over religion and the threat posed by the increasingly wealthy and influential Muslim Fula to Yalunka rulers. The *jihad* led to the ascendancy of Muslim Fula and the establishment of a theocracy in Fuuta Jalon where the Fula embarked on converting pagan Fula and non-Muslim ethnic groups such as the Yalunka to Islam.[17]

The reasons for the proselytizing success of the Muslim Fula immigrants in Freetown and elsewhere in Sierra Leone has been their Arabic literacy (useful for both commerce and religious study), their role as mediators in disputes and as counselors, and the widespread perception that they have great supernatural power, which has led to their characterization as *morimen* (mystics). This mystical power is often shown in

the making of *sebehs* (protective amulets), which are especially sought by chiefs and warriors in pursuit of political power. Another factor that has assisted the development of Islam is that converts have regarded the religion as a sign of prestige and status. Well-educated and devout Muslims, such as the Fula, are highly thought of and become, for many, a reference point and a model.[18]

Islamic Education

One of the most important religious contributions of the Fula to Freetown society is Islamic education. In contrast to many Freetown residents who view Western education as a status symbol, a primary indicator of social prestige in the Fula community is Islamic learning. The interaction of the Fula community with Islam is especially significant in view of the overriding importance of Islam and the religious nature of their community. It is not always easy to distinguish between the Islamizing role of Fula merchants, on the one hand, and of teachers and holy men, on the other, since these two activities are often associated in the Fula community and regularly combined in the same person. But there are some Fula who are either full-fledged scholars or full time merchants. Some Fula are full-time traders for part of their life and later retire from commerce to continue their studies and become full-fledged scholars.[19]

The Fula, like Muslims elsewhere, demonstrate full awareness of their responsibilities to educate their people. The importance attached to knowledge in Islam cannot be overemphasized. It is a prerequisite to, and therefore precedes, ritual worship. Indeed, education, from the beginning, was so much a part of the structure of Islam that the religion has firm views on the structure, substance, and process of education. As Muslims, the Fula merchants believe that it is the duty of every Muslim and every Islamic community to educate everyone, including children, adults, women, the underprivileged, the disabled, peasants, and nomads. In Islam, learning is obligatory upon every Muslim; it is not simply a right or privilege.

Beginning with *iqra'* (read) in *Surat al-'Alaq* (Chapter 96 of the Qur'an), there is in Islam considerable evidence in both the Qur'an and the Hadith (Prophetic traditions) to show the obligation to education.[20] Besides encouraging learning, the Qur'an and Sunnah honor the learned with a preferential position. Islam abhors ignorance and the Qur'an holds that in the hereafter it will be difficult for man to produce before Allah an acceptable excuse for ignorance. Seeking knowledge is regarded as one of the most meritorious acts of worship that a Muslim can perform. No wonder, then, there is the prophetic injunction to seek knowledge even in China. Like other religions, Islam enjoins proselytizing, which

would be impossible without education on the part of the proselytizer. Education is necessary because a Muslim must always make informed decisions. The Muslim knows that God will judge his actions by the intentions behind them, which have resulted from his decisions. Education is also necessary to properly discharge the duties required of a Muslim.[21]

Fula Islamic education, as education elsewhere in the Muslim world, has been designed to realize the following: First, the transmission of religious knowledge so that the student knows Allah, obeys His Laws as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, worships Him, and fulfills all the religious obligations. For the individual, this is also a means of liberation, a path to independence and self-reliance. The educational system achieves this by teaching the individual to firmly anchor himself in Allah and through self-catharsis to purge himself of self-centricity through the appreciation of the insignificance of self. Here lies a great paradox on which successful Muslim living depends. Man is noble before Allah, yet man's greatness is possible only through the annulling of self, only through the surrendering and anchoring of the self in Allah. Only those who are independent depend unwaveringly on Allah; only those who are equipped to grow spiritually submit absolutely to Allah.

Second, Fula Islamic education has been designed to instill the discipline of hard work and to train the hands, mind, and intuitive faculty to cultivate the earth and benefit from what Allah has created. Third, Fula Islamic education has been designed to teach the individual to be a responsible and useful citizen, capable of performing his duties in the best interest of his community, according to the pattern of the Prophet Muhammad.[22]

Fula Islamic education exists in three forms: first, as a parallel system outside the formal school system of Freetown; second, side by side with Western education in the formal school system; and third, as exclusive schools formally set up but devoted wholly or principally to Islamic education. The Fula not only have improved the quality of Islamic education in Freetown, but they also have increased the number of Muslims literate in Arabic. This is seen as necessary to preserve the Islamic identity of Muslims living in contact with Western ideas and attitudes. The Fula also see this contribution as leading to greater cohesion and unity in the transethnic Muslim community. As Islamic educators, the Fula have held various titles such as *karamoko, alfa* (Muslim scholar), *shaykh* (learned and respected Muslim), *cherno* (Fula title for Muslim teacher/scholar), and *imam* (leader in prayer) in mosques, which are not only places of worship but are centers of Islamic education and socialization.

One of the most important mechanisms through which Fula merchants have contributed to the diffusion of Islam in Freetown has been Islamic educational institutions at all levels, starting with the Qur'anic school or

karanta (primary school). This school is common among Sierra Leone's multiethnic Muslims in Freetown and the provinces. It has been established in houses, mosques, and public places. In fact, today the Qur'anic school is an essential and necessary part of the early education and training of Sierra Leonean-born Fula children in Freetown. The establishment of such schools is not the responsibility of the central government or local authorities but is a communal responsibility. Muslims regard the setting up of such schools as obligatory and believe that any person who contributes to this kind of meritorious activity will be abundantly rewarded by Allah.[23]

In the Fula *karanta,* a Fula *karamoko* instructs multiethnic male and female *karanda* (pupils) whose ages range from six to seventeen and who usually reside in the neighborhood of the *karamoko's* house. The vast majority of the Fula *karamokos* are male; many are shopkeepers who combine trading with part-time Islamic instruction. The school week normally begins on Friday afternoon after the 2:00 P.M. Friday congregational prayer held at the Fula mosque. Thereafter, sessions are held once or twice a day in the morning and afternoon until Wednesday, when only the morning session is held. From Wednesday afternoon to Friday morning, there is no school. The duration of a session is determined by the *karamoko,* but usually a lesson lasts from two to three hours.

The *karamokos* cover two of the main stages of Fula Islamic education: *jangugol* (reading) and *windugol* (writing), which helps to develop the pupils' mental and intellectual capabilities. The material used is the Qur'anic text, through which the *karanda* not only learn how to read and write Arabic but also memorize portions of the Holy Book, using the rote method. Reading is a labor intensive process, consisting of chanting the Qur'an according to strict rules unique to Qur'anic recitation. The pupils are required to write passages of the Qur'an on a *wala* (wooden slate) with a pen (made from a herbaceous monocot of the grass family), which is sharpened to a fine point and used with locally made black ink. The pupils then recite the passages aloud until the *karamoko* approves their memorization. Besides teaching the skills of reading and writing, Fula *karamokos* teach their pupils the basic principles of Islam, including the pillars of Islam and *'ibadat* (acts of devotion both in theory and practice). The pupils also learn the rudimentary principles of ethical values, which include how to behave at home and in public and how to respect parents, teachers, and elders.

Fula *karamokos* also teach their pupils to show deference to them in order to earn *barakah,* a virtue that assures blessing and success in life. Parents, who also provide their children with *barakah,* impose on them the duty of obeying *karamokos,* who are usually authoritative and held in respect bordering on fear. It is widely believed in Sierra Leone and elsewhere in Muslim West Africa that *karamokos,* who have an intimate

knowledge of the Qur'an and of the divine language, Arabic, have a particularly powerful *barakah* at their disposal to give or withhold, and it is this assumption that leads many parents to entrust their children to them. But *barakah* never works in reverse: pupils do not give *barakah* to their teachers or children to their parents. Also, husbands give *barakah* to their wives, but not the reverse. Although you may earn *barakah,* you cannot give it to yourself. Both individuals and communities can receive *barakah* or lose it; they can regain it and retain it. If you receive enough *barakah,* you will obtain immunity from misfortune. Those who have *barakah* are expected to expend it, and the more they expend it, the more it increases. If you hoard *barakah,* you lose it because it spoils from inactivity or miserliness. The *karamokos* also teach that *barakah* is a valuable asset that can enable the students to fend off evil and to pursue noble ends. *Barakah* is also intergenerational and therefore can be passed on through families.[24]

After a *karamoko* is satisfied that his students has acquired the necessary Islamic education, which often lasts from two to six years, he informs their parents about the graduation ceremony, which often takes place at the Fula mosque. During the ceremony, the *imam* and his followers are among the visitors. Prayers are an important part of the ceremony and are led by the *imam,* who begins usually by making everyone present join in reciting the *Fatihah* and ends by thanking the *karamoko* for his service. In addition, parents bring a large offering of kola nuts, which is formally introduced to the gathering and then laid aside to be distributed after the introductory prayers. The graduates wear clean, white gowns and are expected to perform ablution (ritual cleansing) before attending the ceremony. The highlight of the ceremony is when the students announce the *surahs* from which their selections are taken and then commence the long, arduous task of recitation. One by one the students recite their pieces with confidence, to the great satisfaction of the people present. The *karamoko* is supposed to prompt the graduate if his confidence falters. Usually at the end of the ceremony the crowd, which includes friends and relatives, shake hands, offering short prayers, and then gather for a big meal prepared by the mothers of the graduates. In contrast to the provinces, the students do not perform domestic work such as gathering firewood or farming for the *karamoko*, who does not receive any fees. Instead, the student's family usually offer gifts such as kola nuts to the *karamoko* in appreciation of his instructional service. Unlike Western schools, the Qur'anic schools do not offer employment prospects in the civil service or similar institutions after graduation.[25]

Fula Islamic education does not end at the *karanta* but continues into *fennu* (higher studies). For Fula pupils from wealthy families or those from families with a long tradition of Islamic scholarship, the next educational step is to pursue specialized studies in Islamic law and sciences,

or comparative textual criticism of books on Islamic theology and law in such renowned places as Timbo, Dinguiray, Labe, Touba, or Fuuta Toro in West Africa. The curriculum includes *tawhid* (Islamic theology), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *adab* (Arabic literature), *tafsir* (commentary of the Qur'an), *hadith,* and *tasawwuf* (mysticism). In each of these disciplines different works are studied, such as *al-Muwatta* (a corpus of law and traditions), *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* (a Qur'anic exegesis), and *al-Shifa* (an ethical work). What is special about this system of education is the use of the Fula language in oral exposition and rhetorical training. *Alhaji* Momodu Allie, for example, sent his sons *Alhaji* Ibrahima Allie and *Alhaji* Baba Allie to Guinea, Senegal, Mali, and Mauritania to pursue advanced Islamic studies. After completing their advanced education, students receive various titles (*karamoko, alfa,* or *cherno*).[26]

Fula students who are born in Freetown combine advanced Islamic studies with cultural education in Fula homelands. In sponsoring the education of these students, Fula parents want to ensure that they are solidly grounded in Islamic values and traditional Fula culture before returning to Freetown where there are strong Christian-Western influences. From the colonial period until this day, many Fula parents do not send their children to Western schools; they view them as doing more harm than good, and, therefore, have the potential to destroy their children's spiritual beliefs. They feel that Western education is simply an instrument to be used for the purpose of converting them and their children to Christianity. In addition, they did not want to adapt Western education to Islam, but rather to construct an Islam with its own separate, distinct identity. These Fula emphasize the uniqueness and all-embracing, eternal relevance of Qur'anic teaching and oppose any form of change or innovation, which means that, among other things, they oppose Western ideas and ways.[27]

The Fula family plays an important role in the socialization of children in Islamic and cultural values. It is in the Fula household that a child is first exposed to the basic tenets of Islam, such as the five daily prayers. From the age of five, both male and female children are required to pray with the family in prayers that are led by the male head of the household. The male head of the household also tutors the children in the Qur'an and makes sure that they carry out the theoretical and practical assignments of the *karamoko,* who is usually also the head of a household. Not only are Islamic values taught, Fula traditions and history are also passed on to the children. Recognizing the widespread proselytizing activities of Christians and the propensity of children to speak Krio in the multiethnic Freetown society, but Fula merchants insist on speaking Pulaar and practicing Islam in their patrilineal households. To reinforce Islamic and Fula cultural values, many Fula children are sent frequently for vacation to Guinea, Senegal, and other Fula homelands in West Africa.[28]

In contrast to many Fula, such as *Alhaji* Momodu Allie, who favored exclusive Islamic education during the colonial period, a few Fula, such as *Almamy* Jalloh-Jamburia, supported integrating Islamic and Western education. This Fula minority continues to emphasize that, although the Islamic educational system should be developed and expanded (not only preserved), it is also necessary to provide more Fula men and women with the skills and qualifications that can be gained in the Western education system, which will enable them to participate more fully in the modern economy and government of Sierra Leone. In proposing an integrated curriculum, these Fula have succeeded in removing the fear of having to convert to Christianity in order to acquire the skills necessary for full participation in the affairs of the country. In fact, one of *Almamy* Jalloh-Jamburia's sons, who received both an Islamic and Western education, Abdul Aziz Jalloh-Jamburia, rose to the position of assistant master and registrar in the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone, located in Freetown.[29]

At the turn of the twentieth century, *Almamy* Jalloh-Jamburia presented a proposal to the colonial administration for the establishment of a primary school where Fula children would learn Arabic and English. Governor King-Harman endorsed the proposal and a Fula primary school named Madrasa Islamia was opened in the basement of the house of a local resident. The school was subsequently transferred to *Almamy* Jalloh-Jamburia's residence and later moved to his other residence in the east part of the city.

By 1903 there were six madrasahs (Muslim schools) for children in Freetown. They included Madrasa Islamia (Fula), Madrasa Omaraia (Mandinka), and Madrasa Harunia (Aku). In 1904 the colonial administration proposed that the Fula and Mandinka madrasahs be merged into a single Madrasa Islamia under a joint administration, which was endorsed by both groups. This resulted in a more efficient administration of the Madrasa Islamia. The Madrasa Islamia represented the core of what the colonial administration described as "Mohammedan education."

To better regulate the *madrasah* system in Freetown, the colonial administration appointed Dr. Edward W. Blyden as director of Mohammedan education in 1901. He had long been an advocate of an educational system for Muslim children that combined Islamic and British education. In 1902, the colonial administration adopted the Mohammedan Education Ordinance, which committed it to financing and inspecting the madrasahs. The ordinance also provided for the appointment of Dr. Blyden for a term of five years. Besides supervising the madrasahs, Dr. Blyden was responsible for directing a training school for Muslim elementary school teachers. After he retired in 1906, a Mohammedan Board of Advice was appointed in 1907 on the advice of

the governor, which consisted of *Almamy* Jalloh-Jamburia and six prominent Muslims in Freetown. In 1928, the colonial administration introduced further changes in the *madrasah* school system. It changed the status of the Madrasa Omaraia and Madrasa Sulaimana to that of Infant Schools. It divided the Madrasa Omaria in Aberdeen into Infant and Standard Schools. Madrasa Harunia in Fula Town, which rejected the proposed reforms, did not receive financial support from the colonial administration.[30]

In 1913, *Almamy* Jalloh-Jamburia was appointed by the colonial administration to the Government Muslim Board of Education which had oversight of the *madrasah* system and Bo Government School. Following *Almamy* Jalloh-Jamburia's death in 1931, his son *Alhaji* M.S. Jalloh who was also a trader and literate in Arabic, French, and English continued his work as an Islamic educator and leader in the Fula community. *Alhaji* M.S. Jalloh had graduated from the Muslim teacher's program directed by Dr. Blyden in 1912, and in 1958 he established Madrasa Omaria in the east of Freetown in memory of his father's contribution to Islam.

When *Alhaji* Momodu Allie became Fula chief in 1931, following the death of *Almamy* Jalloh-Jamburia, he continued his predecessor's financial support of Madrasa Islamia. In fact, *Alhaji* Momodu Allie contributed hundreds of pounds in supplemental aid to the school. In contrast to the Christian schools, the madrasahs were poorly funded by the colonial administration. This resulted primarily from the fear that strong Muslim education would undermine Christianity in Freetown. Therefore, the support of the Muslim schools was left to wealthy Muslims.[31]

One of the chief beneficiaries of Fula Islamic education, especially during the colonial period, was the Aku community at Fourah Bay and Fula Town in the east of Freetown. The Aku were Muslim Krio of mostly Yoruba ancestry who had settled in Freetown since the early nineteenth century as "recaptives" or "liberated Africans" following the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807. From its founding, the Aku community welcomed the Fula as Islamic educators and *imams*. Faced with the prejudice of British colonial and Christian missionaries because of their Islamic faith, the Aku turned to the Fula for support. In 1871, the Aku Muslims informed Dr. Blyden of their indebtedness to the Fula for their contribution to the development of Islam in their community. A prominent Fula merchant-scholar in the Aku community was Chernor Mohammed Jalloh (Chernor Mahmadu Madina), who was a *karamoko* at Foulah Street and at the Omaria School in Fula Town. His *karanda* included *Haja* Umu Daniyah of the well-known Daniyah family of Foulah Town and *Haja* Dausi Wurie. Chernor Madina's contemporaries included Chernor Ahmed Seray-Wurie, Alpha Taju-Deen, and *Alhaji*

M.S. Mustapha, a former Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) politician and cabinet minister.

Besides helping the Aku build mosques and establish Qur'anic schools, the Fula traveled with many Aku for advanced studies at Fula Islamic centers such as Timbo and Labe where they specialized in Islamic law, theology, and literature. One such Aku was Alfa Yadali who left for Fuuta Jalon in the 1830s to study Islamic theology, law, and the sciences for several years. At the completion of his studies, Yadali was given the title of *muqaddam* (representative of the shaykh) of the Tijaniyya *tariqah* (brotherhood), which gave him the authority to initiate others into the brotherhood. Upon his arrival in Freetown, Alfa Yadali embarked on the dissemination of Tijaniyya doctrines in the Aku community. Another noted Aku Tijani was Legally Savage, who studied under Fula Tijani scholars at Dinguiray for over twenty years before returning to Freetown in the mid-1870s, where he was appointed assistant *imam* of Fourah Bay mosque. By the late nineteenth century, the Aku Muslim community was able to produce its own *karamokos, alfas,* and *imams*. One of the outstanding Aku *alfas* of this period was Mohammed Sanusi of Fula Town. He received his advanced Islamic education at Timbo and subsequently pursued a career as Arabic teacher at Fourah Bay and translator for Dr. Blyden between 1872 and 1873. He was the chief Arabic translator for the colonial administration from 1873 to 1901 and manager of the Fula Town *madrasah* from 1901 to 1907.[30]

The Fula played a major role in the spread of the Tijaniyya *tariqah* in Freetown. This sufi (mystical) brotherhood was devoted to mysticism, ascetism, *barakah* and miracles attributed to saints. It was named after its founder Shaykh (the highest level of leadership in a sufi order) Ahmad al-Tijani, an Islamic scholar from southern Algeria. He attracted a large following in his adopted city of Fez, in Morocco, where he claimed his teachings were revealed to him by God and the Prophet Muhammad. After his death in 1815, his tomb in Fez became a popular pilgrimage site and the spiritual center of the brotherhood. In West Africa, the Tijani order was spread largely by *Alhajj* Umar al-Futi, a Torodo Fula from Fuuta Toro, who received his Tijani *wird* (litany of special prayers peculiar to a sufi order) from Moorish scholars in his homeland. Umar's Tijani followers were called *talibe* (students) and, like other sufis such as the Qadiris, the Tijanis practiced *dhikr* (communal recitation). But the Tijanis professed doctrinal exclusivity, which asserted the supremacy of the Tijaniyya *tariqah* over all others and demanded that its adherents reject all previous *tariqah* affiliations. Unlike West African countries such as Senegal, where the Mourid brotherhood founded by Ahmadu Bamba and the Tijaniyya under the leadership of Ibrahim Niass were very successful in popularizing Islam and winning converts for their brotherhoods, the Freetown Tijanis had limited success, primarily

because of the absence of a charismatic leader who could appeal to the transethnic Muslim community, as was the case in Senegal. The Tijanis also faced competition from other sufis, such as the Qadaris in Freetown.[33]

Besides working with Muslim Aku in Fula Town, the Fula also had a long history of cooperation with those at Fourah Bay. For example, until his death in 1990, *Alhaji* A.B. Tejan-Jalloh was well respected among Muslim Aku at Fourah Bay for his exemplary Muslim leadership and service in promoting Islam. This was evidenced by the large turnout of a cross-section of the Aku community at his funeral. He gave his time and financial support to the building of Islamic schools and mosques and served on Aku educational boards. For many years *Alhaji* A.B. Tejan-Jalloh was also a liaison between the Fula *jama'ah* (congregation/community) and the government on matters pertaining to Islam during the SLPP and All People's Congress (APC) eras. This role was facilitated by *Alhaji* A.B. Tejan-Jalloh's Sierra Leonean background, his profound knowledge of Fula culture, and his deep understanding of Islam. Other Fula who were well-respected for their Islamic service to the Aku community at Fourah Bay included *Alhaji* Misbaahu Jalloh, who was the chief *imam* of the Fula mosque in Freetown.[34]

Despite a shared Islamic faith with Sierra Leonean Muslims such as the Aku, the Fula have distinct differences. This is clearly evident on the issue of membership in secret societies, such as the *Ojeh,* which is of Yoruba origin, and the Bullom/Sherbro *Poro,* which entered Freetown from the provinces. The evidence suggests that the Fula, both immigrant and Sierra Leonean-born, have not become members of such societies in Freetown because they are considered un-Islamic. The Fula, especially the Fuuta Jalon immigrants, are of the strong view that members of such societies worship idols and that their behavior is immoral, indecent, and absolutely opposed to Islamic doctrines. Therefore, they call upon these Muslims who are members of the secret societies to disassociate themselves from whatever tends to recall pagan times, for they say Allah will punish them by burning them in hell in the hereafter. Still, many Sierra Leonean Muslims not only become members of such secret societies, they defend their participation in traditional festivals and masquerades on the grounds that they are "our culture." A large number of Muslim Aku, for example, were members of *Ojeh* and secret hunting societies. It is not uncommon for a Muslim Aku to go to the mosque on Friday and pray to Allah and then later in the evening put on his *Ojeh* dress to join his fellow members in social festivities. Moreover, many Temne Muslims are members of the *Poro* in Freetown, and there is evidence that some Fula in the provinces, especially in the Tonkolili and Bombali Districts, were members of the *Poro.* As early as the nineteenth century, Fula in the Yoni chiefdom in the Tonkolili District, including Fula

Mansa (Mande term for a ruler) Binbinkoro, the ruler of Yoni and the eldest son of a Fuuta Jalon immigrant, Amadu Jalloh, belonged to the *Poro*. According to C. Magbaily Fyle, the *Poro* spread from Yoni to the rest of Temneland in the provinces, and the Fula brought the *Poro* to the Temne. Fyle suggests that most of these Fula, are the offspring of interethnic marriages and that these Fula members of the *Poro* are not Muslims.[35]

Postcolonial Period

In the postcolonial period, Fula merchants have become better organized and are providing young Muslims with an Islamic education of higher quality and on a much wider scale than in the past. In 1965, the Fula chief *Alhaji* Momodu Bah received a large land gift located in the east of Freetown from SLPP Prime Minister Albert Margai to construct a school for Fula children. The Fula chief used his good relations with the prime minister to obtain the land, and he personally supervised its construction by visiting the building site twice daily until it was completed in 1966. The Fula School, which is both an elementary and high school, plays an important role in the socialization of Fula children. The students receive instruction in the conventional subjects, such as English and mathematics, as well as in Pulaar (the Fula language). Traditional Fula culture and history are also taught to the students. Some of the students are non-Fula from the multiethnic population in east Freetown. In addition to being used as an educational center, the Fula School is a meeting place for the Fula on the last Sunday of every month to raise funds and discuss matters affecting the community.[36]

In contrast to the colonial period, the Fula chief is joined by many elders in encouraging Fula parents to send their daughters to school and to allow them to pursue their education beyond the primary school level. Whereas the tendency in the past had been to encourage girls to limit their interests to domestic subjects, they are now being advised to broaden their horizons and qualify themselves for entry into such professions as teaching and nursing. A Western education does not, by any means, lead all Muslim Fula women to abandon Islamic domestic and religious norms and values. In Freetown many Western-educated Fula women willingly accept such traditions as their husbands having more than one wife. Although a minority of Fula men oppose the education of girls beyond the age of twelve and want women to be confined to such professions as shopkeepers, others believe girls and women should have the same opportunities as men.

In 1978, the Ansarul Islamic College was added to the co-educational, fourteen-classroom Fula School, which was renamed the Ansarul Islamic Secondary School. The college was built by the Ansarul Islamic

Mission founded in 1974 by three Sierra Leonean-born Fula from the Koinadugu District—*Alhaji* Abu Bakar Bah, *Alhaji* Sajallieu Bah, and *Alhaji* Mohammed Jalloh—who were diamond dealers in Sefadu, Kono District. Their goal was to use their diamond profits to build schools to provide Islamic education, not just to Fula children, but to all children in Sierra Leone, and to build mosques to spread the Islamic faith throughout Sierra Leone and elsewhere in West Africa. These Fula merchants, who were also involved in merchandise trade, were strongly influenced by the long-standing Fula Islamic educational tradition in Sierra Leone. Following its founding, the Fula pioneers devoted most of their time and resources to the advancement of the Ansarul Islamic Mission.

The Fula founders were assisted by a prominent Fula politician, *Alhaji* Chernor Marjue, who was also a minister of state attached to the vice president's office in the APC government. Having learned about the plans of the three Fula pioneers, *Alhaji* Marjue led a government delegation to Kono to meet with them and make recommendations to the government. The delegation recommended that the Islamic association proposed by the Fula merchants be changed to a mission with a proper name. The name *Ansarul* was adopted with the motto "service to mankind" following a suggestion by *Alhaji* Abu Bakar Bah, who was also a shaykh and served as the first principal of the college. Besides the financial support of Fula merchants, the college received financial assistance and teachers from the Egyptian government. In addition to Freetown, the Ansarul Islamic Mission established primary and secondary schools, and Arabic Institutes in Bo, Kenema, Kono, Makeni, and Koindu in the provinces. The Fula founders cooperated with several local and foreign Muslim organizations as well as Christian educational organizations in the country as they pursued the common goal of providing education to Sierra Leonean children under the auspices of the ministry of education. The Ansarul Islamic Mission was affiliated with the Supreme Islamic Council (SIC), which was created by *Alhaji* Shaykh Ahmad Tijan-Koroma and other Muslims in 1969. In addition to forging a close relationship with the APC government, the SIC formed branches throughout Sierra Leone and solicited funds through the government and among private citizens for building schools and mosques. It also recruited teachers from foreign institutions such as Al-Azhar and provided scholarships to Sierra Leonean students to study at leading Islamic universities overseas.[37]

Unlike in advanced Western industrialized societies such as the United States, wealthy Fula merchants in Sierra Leone have not set up educational foundations or endowments to provide scholarships to needy Fula and Muslim students at any level of the country's educational system. This Fula attitude may be explained by three factors. First, many of the Fula who would contribute to an educational fund do not because they

do not want the government to know about their wealth, thereby evading tax payments to the Income Tax Department; if they did contribute to an educational foundation, they would be audited. Unlike financial donations to a mosque, those to a foundation or a non-profit educational organization have to be reported to the Income Tax Department. Second, many wealthy Fula businessmen are narrow-minded; they only want to help their families and kinsmen. They are afraid of competition from other Fula families and other Muslim groups (contradicting Islam, which encourages the Muslim to help all people, especially Muslims, without distinction by family or ethnicity). This attitude is exacerbated by the strong intraclan rivalry within the Fula community. Third, the wealthy immigrant Fula distrust the Western-educated Sierra Leonean-born Fula, who have the skills to manage educational foundations or endowments. Despite the constant plea of Fula visionaries, such as *Alhaji* A.B. Tejan-Jalloh and *Alhaji* Musa Jalloh, to wealthy Fula to pool their resources and set up an educational foundation that would provide scholarship money for Islamic and Western education from the primary level through college, it never materializes because of the lack of support from mainly conservative immigrant Fuuta Jalon Fula.[38]

Conclusion

For over two centuries the Fula have established themselves as leaders in Islamic education in Westernized Christian-Krio-dominated Freetown despite several obstacles, including limited financial support, Christian proselytizing, intra-ethnic divisions, and distrust between conservative Fula immigrants and Western-educated Sierra Leonean-born Fula. In promoting Islamic education through voluntary financial contributions (especially by wealthy Fula merchants) teaching, and mentoring, and building schools and mosques, the Fula have been fulfilling the Prophet Muhammad's injunction to spread Islamic knowledge to the distant corners of the world and to everyone without distinction. In addition, they have been motivated by their belief that through such good works in support of Islam, Allah will bless them with a place among the righteous in the hereafter.

This study of the role of the Fula in Islamic education in Freetown has national implications for the future development of Islamic education in Sierra Leone. Given the increasing number of Muslim children and limited government resources for Islamic education, the Fula educational initiative shows that the Muslim private sector can play an important role in supporting Islamic educational institutions. Moreover, in the face of declining support from foreign Islamic countries for education in Sierra Leone, this study demonstrates that Sierra Leonean Muslims can respond to the challenge of educating Muslim children in a modern society

through cooperation among local educators, the indigenous Muslim private sector, and the government.

Notes

1. Several studies have been done on the Fula elsewhere in West Africa detailing their Islamic activities. See, for example, J.R. Willis, ed., *Studies in West African Islamic History*. Vol. 1 (London: Frank Cass, 1979).

2. See Alusine Jalloh and David E. Skinner, eds., *Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1997).

3. The Fula, who are mostly nomads, are also known elsewhere in West Africa as Fulbe, Fulani, and Fulatta. Their languages, Pulaar (in Senegal, Republic of Guinea, and the Gambia) and Fulfulde (in Nigeria), belong to the West Atlantic subfamily of the Niger-Congo group, which also includes Wolof and Temne. There are variants of the spelling of *Fula* in Sierra Leone: Foulah, Fullah, Fulah, and Fulla. See R.V. Weekes, ed., *Muslim Peoples: A World Ethnographic Survey*, Vol. 1 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984), pp. 257–261.

4. See M.O. Awogbade, *Fulani Pastoralism: Jos Case Study* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1983).

5. See Alusine Jalloh, "The Fula Trading Diaspora in Colonial Sierra Leone," in *The African Diaspora*, Alusine Jalloh and Stephen E. Maizlish (eds.) (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1996), pp. 22–38.

6. See Meryn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (London: Longman, 1984).

7. There were Temne inhabitants in the Sierra Leone peninsula long before the British acquired this area to build Freetown in the eighteenth century. For more information about the Temne, see Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); A.G. Laing, *Travels in Timannee, Kooranko and Soolima Countries in Western Africa* (London: John Murray, 1825); and Kenneth C. Wylie, *The Political Kingdoms of the Temne: Temne Government in Sierra Leone, 1825-1910* (New York: Africana, 1977).

8. The geographic area, French Guinea, took shape only at the end of the nineteenth century when an Anglo-French agreement on the boundary of Sierra Leone and Guinea was reached in 1895. The name "Sierra Leone" was limited to the colony until 1896, when it became applicable to both the colony and the protectorate. The colony of Sierra Leone consisted essentially of the peninsula on the northern point of which Freetown is located. The protectorate, which was declared by the British colonial administration in 1896, covers the area outside of Freetown comprising the northern, eastern, and southern Provinces.

9. An *almamy* is also referred to as "tribal headman" in Sierra Leone. See B.E. Harrell-Bond, Allen M. Howard, and David E. Skinner, *Community Leadership and the Transformation of Freetown (1801-1976)* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978).

10. See Bruce L. Mouser, ed., *Journal of James Watt: Expedition to Timbo, the Capital of the Fula Empire in 1794* (Madison: African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994); Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*; and A. Arcin, *La Guinee Francaise* (Paris: Challamel, 1911).

11. See Edward W. Blyden, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* (Baltimore, Md.: Black Classic Press, 1994), pp. 199–276; and Thomas Winterbottom, *An Account of the Native Africans in the Neighbourhood of Sierra Leone*, Vol. 1 (London: Frank Cass, 1969).

12. Title of Muslim men who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

13. For more information about the Fula presence in the Sierra Leone interior, see M. Alpha Bah, *Fulbe Presence in Sierra Leone: A Case History of Twentieth-Century Migration and Settlement among the Kissi of Koindu* (forthcoming); C. Magbaily Fyle, "Fula Diaspora: The Sierra Leone Experience," in *History and Socio-Economic Development in Sierra Leone*, ed. C. Magbaily Fyle (Freetown: SLADEA, 1988), pp. 101–123; A. Wurie, "The Bundukas of Sierra Leone," *Sierra Leone Studies* 1 (1953): 14–25.

14. The early Fuuta Jalon settlers included *Almamy* Omarou Jalloh-Jamburia; *Alhaji* Chernor Mohamed Jalloh (Chernor Mahamadu Madina); *Alhaji* Misbahu Jalloh; *Alhaji* Abdulai Jalloh, better known as Moodi (title of respect in Pulaar); Abdulai Fulatown;

Alhaji Lamrana Bah; *Alhaji* Momodu Alpha Bah; *Alhaji* Amadu Sajor Bah; *Alhaji* Labe; *Alhaji* Sulaiman Bah; and *Alhaji* Momodu Bah.

15. Allie is a corruption of Ly, which is the family name in Senegal.

16. See Alusine Jalloh, "The Fula Trading Diaspora in Colonial Sierra Leone," in *The African Diaspora,* eds. Alusine Jalloh and Stephen E. Maizlish (College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1996), pp. 22–38, and "Alhaji Momodu Allie: Muslim Fula Entrepreneur in Colonial Sierra Leone," in *Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone.*

17. See C. Magbaily Fyle, *The Solima Yalunka Kingdom* (Freetown: Nyakon Publishers, 1979), pp. 6–46; and Walter Rodney, "Jihad and Social Revolution in Futa Jallon," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4 (1968): 3–14.

18. See Wurie, "The Bundukas of Sierra Leone."

19. See L.O. Sanneh, "Modern Education Among Freetown Muslims and the Christian Stimulus," in *Christianity in Independent Africa,* eds. Richard Gray et. al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 316–333.

20. *Holy Qur'an,* 4: 97–99.

21. See Jibril Aminu, "Towards a Strategy for Education and Development in Africa," in *Islam in Africa,* eds. Nura Alkali et. al. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1993), pp. 87–96.

22. L. Proudfoot and H.S. Wilson, "Muslim Attitudes to Education in Sierra Leone," *The Muslim World* 2 (1960): 86–96.

23. See David E. Skinner, "Islam and Education in the Colony and Hinterland of Sierra Leone," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 10 (1976): 499–520.

24. See D.B. Cruise O'Brien and C. Coulon, eds., *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); and Lamin Sanneh, *The Crown and the Turban: Muslims and West African Pluralism* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 117–146.

25. Interview with Shaykh Mohammed A. Barrie, Freetown, June 3, 1990.

26. Interview with *Alhaji* Baba Allie, Freetown, June 20, 1990; see also Willis, ed., *Studies in West African Islamic History.*

27. Interview with *Alhaji* A. B. Tejan-Jalloh, Freetown, June 21, 1990.

28. See Assanatu Jalloh, "Problems and Challenges of an Educated Fullah Woman," B.A. thesis, Fourah Bay College (University of Sierra Leone), 1986.

29. Interview with Rashid Jalloh-Jamburia (son of *Almamy* Jalloh-Jamburia), Freetown, June 30, 1990.

30. See Blyden, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race.*

31. Interview with *Alhaji* Baba Allie.

32. See Gibril R. Cole, "Krio Muslim Society of Freetown: A Case Study of Fourah Bay and Foulah Town, 1810-1910," unpublished B.A. (Hons) thesis, Fourah Bay College (University of Sierra Leone), 1978; A.J.G. Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone* (London: C. Hurst, 1989), pp. 1–18.

33. See J.M. Abun-Nasr, *The Tijaniyya: A Sufi Order in the Modern World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); J.S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); and D.B. Cruise O'Brien, *The Mourides of Senegal: The Political and Economic Organization of an Islamic Brotherhood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

34. Interview with *Alhaji* A.B. Tejan-Jalloh.

35. See Fyle, "Fula Diaspora"; Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone,* pp. 1–18; and K.L. Little, "The Political Function of the Poro. Part I," *Africa* 35 (1965): 349–365.

36. Interview with *Alhaji* A.B. Tejan-Jalloh.

37. Interview with *Alhaji* Mohammed Jalloh (one of the founders of the Ansarul Islamic Mission), Freetown, June 15, 1996.

38. Interview with *Alhaji* Musa Jalloh, Maryland (USA), October 13, 1991.