

= Karamokho Alfa =

Karamokho Alfa (born Ibrahima Musa Sambeghu and sometimes called Alfa Ibrahim) (died c . 1751) was a Fula religious leader who led a jihad that created the Imamate of Futa Jallon in what is now Guinea . This was one of the first of the Fulbe jihads that established Muslim states in West Africa .

Alfa Ba , Karamoko Alfa 's father , formed a coalition of Muslim Fulbe and called for the jihad in 1725 , but died before the struggle began . The jihad was launched around 1726 @-@ 1727 . After a crucial , concluding victory at Talansan , the state was established at a meeting of nine Fulbe ulama who each represented one of the Futa Jallon provinces . Ibrahima Sambeghu , who became known as Karamokho Alfa , was the hereditary ruler of Timbo and one of the nine ulama . He was elected leader of the jihad . Under his leadership , Futa Jallon became the first Muslim state to be founded by the Fulbe . Despite this , Karamokho Alfa was constrained by the other eight ulama . Some of the other Ulama had more secular power than Karamokho Alfa , who directly ruled only the diwal of Timbo ; for this reason the new state was always a tenuous confederation . Karamoko Alfa ruled the theocratic state until 1748 , when his excessive devotions caused him to become mentally unstable and Sori was selected as de facto leader . Karamokho Alfa died around 1751 and was formally succeeded by Ibrahim Sori , his cousin .

= = Background = =

The Futa Jallon is the highland region where the Senegal and Gambia rivers rise . In the fifteenth century the valleys were occupied by Mandé peoples - Susu and Yalunka farmers . Around that time , Fulbe herders began moving into the region , grazing their livestock on the plateaux . At first they peacefully accepted a subordinate position to the Susu and Yalunka . The Fulbe and Mandé peoples intermixed to some extent , and the more sedentary of the Fulbe came to look down on their pastoral cousins .

Europeans began to establish trading posts on the upper Guinea coast in the seventeenth century , stimulating a growing trade in hides and slaves . The pastoral Fulbe expanded their herds to meet the demand for hides . They began to compete for land with the agriculturalists , and became interested in the profitable slave trade . They were increasingly influenced by their Muslim trading partners .

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century the Zaw?y? reformer Nasir al @-@ Din launched a jihad to restore purity of religious observance in the Futa Toro region to the north . He gained support from the Torodbe clerical clan against the warriors , but by 1677 the movement had been defeated . Some of the Torodbe migrated south to Bundu and some continued on to the Futa Jallon . The Torodbe , the kinsmen of the Fulbe of the Futa Jallon , influenced them in embracing a more militant form of Islam .

= = Jihad = =

Alfa Ba , Karamoko Alfa 's father , formed a coalition of Muslim Fulbe and called for the jihad in 1725 , but died before the struggle began . The jihad was launched around 1726 or 1727 . The movement was primarily religious , and its leaders included both Mandé and Fulbe marabouts . The jihad also attracted some formerly non @-@ Muslim Fulbe , who associated it not just with Islam but with freedom of the Fulbe from subordination to the Mandé peoples . It was opposed by other non @-@ Muslim Fulbe and by non @-@ Muslim Yalunka leaders .

According to tradition , Ibrahim Sori symbolically launched the war in 1727 by destroying the great ceremonial drum of the Yalunka people with his sword . The jihadists then won a major victory at Talansan . A force of 99 Muslims defeated a non @-@ Muslim force ten times greater , killing many of their opponents . After this victory the state was established at a meeting of nine Fulbe ulama who each represented one of the Futa Jallon provinces . Ibrahima Sambeghu , who became known as Karamokho Alfa , was the hereditary ruler of Timbo and one of the nine ulama . He was elected

leader of the jihad . He took the title almami , or " the Imam " . Under his leadership Futa Jallon became the first Muslim state to be founded by the Fulbe .

Karamoko Alfa managed to enlist disadvantaged groups such as gangs of young men , outlaws and slaves . Karamokho Alfa 's maternal cousin was Maka Jiba , the ruler of Bundu , and both men studied in Fugumba under the famous scholar Tierno Samba . However , there are no records of Bundu participation in the Futa Jallon jihad , perhaps because of the internal troubles in Bundu at that time , or perhaps because Maka Jiba was not greatly interested in the cause . Although he was an inspired religious leader , Karamoko Alfa was not qualified as a military leader . Ibrahim Sori took this role . Some of the population resisted conversion for many years , particularly the nomadic Fulbe herders . They rightly feared that the marabouts would abuse their authority .

= = Ruler = =

Karamokho Alfa was constrained by the other eight ulama , each of whom ruled their own province , or diwal . The structure of the new Fulbe state had an almami at its head , Karamokho Alfa being the first , with his political capital at Timbo . However , some of the other Ulama had more secular power than Karamokho Alfa , who directly ruled only the diwal of Timbo . The religious capital was at Fugumba , where the council of the alama sat . The council operated as a strong curb on the power of the almami , and the ulama retained much autonomy , so the new state was always a loose federation .

Karamokho Alfa was known for his Islamic scholarship and piety . He respected the rights of the old " masters of the soil " , saying " it was Allah who had established them . " Despite this ruling , the imams reserved the right to reassign land , since they held it in trust for the people . In effect the existing property owners were not displaced , but now had to pay Zakat as a form of rent . Karamoko Alfa ruled the theocratic state until 1748 , when his excessive devotions caused him to become mentally unstable and Sori was selected as de facto leader .

= = Legacy = =

Karamokho Alfa died around 1751 and was formally succeeded by Ibrahim Sori , his cousin . Ibrahim Sori Mawdo was chosen because Alfa Saadibu , son of Karamoko Alfa , was too young . Ibrahim Sori was an aggressive military commander who initiated a series of wars . After many years of conflict , Ibrahim Sori achieved a decisive victory in 1776 that consolidated the power of the Fulbe state . The jihad had achieved its goals and Ibrahim Sori assumed the title of almami .

Under Ibrahima Sori slaves were sold to obtain munitions needed for the wars . This was considered acceptable as long as the slaves were not Muslim . The jihad created a valuable supply of slaves from the defeated peoples that may have provided a motive for further conquests . The Fulbe ruling class became wealthy slave owners and slave traders . Slave villages were founded , whose inhabitants provided food for their Fulba masters to consume or sell . At one time more than half the population were slaves . As of 2013 the Fulbe were the largest ethnic group in Guinea at 40 % of the population , after the Malinke (30 %) and Susu (20 %) .

The jihad in Futa Jallon was followed by a jihad in Futa Toro between 1769 and 1776 led by Sileymaani Baal . The largest of the Fulani jihads was led by the scholar Usman dan Fodio and established the Sokoto Caliphate in 1808 , stretching across what is now the north of Nigeria . The Fulbe Muslim state of Masina was established to the south of Timbuktu in 1818 .

Karamokho Alfa came to be thought of as a saint . A story is told of a miracle that occurred more than a hundred years after his death . The chief of the Ouassoulouké , Kondé Buraima , opened Karamokho Alfa 's tomb and cut off the left hand of the body . Blood poured from the severed wrist , causing Kondé Buraima to flee in terror .