The Problem with Malik Sy and the Foundation of Bundu.
Monsieur Michael A. Gomez

Résumé
M. A. Gomez — La question de Malik Sy et la fondation du Bundu.
On a prétendu qu'en fondant l'État du Bundu (ca. 1698), Malik Sy s'inspirait consciemment du réformateur Nâsir al-Dîn, initiateur de jihâd en Mauritanie (la Shurbubba) et dans le nord-ouest du Sénégal (le mouvement tubenan) entre 1672-73 et 1677. Les sources concernant Malik Sy doivent être utilisées avec précaution, étant donné leur caractère presque exclusivement oral : aucune n'est contemporaine de Malik Sy. Dans ces conditions, un réexamen des matériaux ne confirme pas la thèse selon laquelle Malik Sy était le protégé de Nâsir al-Dîn. Il n'a pas participé aux jihâd de ce dernier, et on ne peut prouver qu'il ait mené son propre jihâd dans le futur Bundu. En outre, bien qu'ayant adopté le titre d'eliman, il n'en faisait pas, à la différence de Nâsir al-Dîn, l'équivalent légal d'amir al-mu'minin puisque le Bundu n'était pas gouverné selon les règles de la shar'i'a. Plutôt qu'un réformateur, Malik Sy était un fonctionnaire clérical spécialisé dans la fabrication d'amulettes. Ceux qui veulent voir un lien entre Nâsir al-Dîn et les jihâd ultérieurs au Futa Jalon et au Futa Toro doivent chercher ailleurs.

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As a result of findings published by Philip Curtin (1971) and Mervyn Hiskett (1973), the notion that reformist movements in the Hijaz and Mauritania directly influenced subsequent events in West Africa remains largely uncontested. In Hiskett's view, the jihād ('holy war') led by Usman dan Fodio in Hausaland (1804 to 1812) was inspired by the Wahhabi reform of the 1740s. Similarly, Curtin has tried to link the activities of Malik Sy (and the foundation of the State of Bundu) to the jihād of Nāṣir al-Dīn (1672/73 to 1677) in southern Mauritania. The present discussion will focus on the data concerning Malik Sy, and represents material from a larger dissertation on the history of Bundu (Gomez 1985). In contrast to the prevailing thesis, it will argue that Malik Sy did not seek to emulate Nāṣir al-Dīn, and that the two movements were separate and distinct.

Bundu was a precolonial Islamic State in what is now eastern Senegal (see Map). Lasting from 1698 to 1905, and ruled by a single dynasty, it played an important role in the development of commerce in the Senegambian region. Its history consisted in a series of conflicts arising from both internal and external pressures. The nature of these conflicts usually produced two-party dualities, divided over issues of religion, trade, foreign relations, and the recurring problem of peace and war. Towards the end of Bundu's existence, the political strains proved overwhelming, the result being the virtual disintegration of the polity.

Malik Sy was the founder of Bundu. His story is well known and frequently told throughout Senegambia, being second only in popularity to that of Samba Gelaajo Jegi (Kane 1970; Curtin 1975). In conducting a comparative analysis of the Malik Sy material, Curtin utilized twenty-five of the more complete versions, which will also serve as the basis of the present discussion. Seven were gathered prior to 1900: Raffanel (1846), Carrère and Holle (1855), Lamartiny (1884), Bérenger-Féraud (1885), Roux (1893), Rançon (1894), and Diakité (published in 1929, but gathered in 1891). Five were published during the colonial period: Adam (1904), Moussa Kamara (edited in 1975, but written in 1924),

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Djibril Ly (1938), Brigaud (1962) and Dieng Doudou (quoted in Brigaud). Curtin collected thirteen more in 1966. To these will be added here the materials of Alfa Ibrahim Sow (1968).

It is not always known where, nor from whom, the traditions were recorded (Curtin 1975: 189). At least six came from outside Bundu. Of the pre-1900 collectors, Roux (1893) served as commander of the French fort at Bakel, and he conducted interviews during his tenure. It can be assumed that Lamartiny spent some time gathering data in the kingdom itself, since he was commissioned to write a monograph of it by the Société de géographie commerciale de Paris. Rançon (1894: 4), in turn, cites both Lamartiny and Roux as sources, combining their findings with data he collected from Abdul Sega, a Sisibe who was the leader of Koussan in Bundu. Mamadou Aissa Kaba Diakité (1929) was a Soninke cleric living in Nioro, and was descended from a family originally living in the Bakel area. He is himself a source, his accounts having been produced at the request of a Commander Claude in the 'cercle' of Nioro in 1891. Ten years later, at the age of 36, Diakité (1929: 189) recounted the story of Malik Sy to Adam (1904). Therefore, of the seven pre-1900 recordings, only three can be confirmed as having originated in Bundu.

1. The Sisibe were the descendants of Malik Sy.
Of the colonial period versions, at least two came from outside the kingdom. The other three were gathered either in Bundu or from sources originally from there. Moussa Kamara’s data (1975: 785) are mostly oral in nature, for Malik Sy as well as for his entire history of Bundu. As for the post-colonial period, Curtin’s oral data on Malik Sy were collected in Pulaar, Soninke, and Malinke. His informants were all celebrated for their knowledge of the realm’s past, and the interviews were conducted either in Bundu, Bakel, or Dakar. Although chiefly concerned with the Futa Jallon almaami, some of Ibrahim Sow’s material (1968: 55-83) recounts the adventures of Malik Sy in epic form.

Beyond categorization of the Malik Sy material by periods and areas of origin, the question of the informants’ reliability is obviously important. Prior to 1900, only Rançon and Diakité identify their sources by name, Brigaud and Adam being as precise in the colonial period, while Curtin is comprehensive. The dependability of the remaining versions is weakened by their anonymous nature. This renders dubious the preference given to accounts earlier than Rançon’s, on the ground of their closer proximity to the events described. On the other hand, traditions recorded some 200 years after the fact can hardly qualify as solid data. Further complicating matters is the lack of external corroborating evidence. So that Malik Sy is known almost exclusively through oral traditions. There are no contemporary accounts.

How to rank the relative reliability of the various versions is problematic. The fact is, earlier ones were often registered in a manner designed to appeal more to the popular reader than to the historian. Because of the thoroughness of his research, Rançon clearly stands out as the more dependable of the 19th-century collectors. The 20th-century accounts are at some variance with the earlier ones, and due to the longer time span between the events and their recording, are less reliable. Because of the very nature of oral transmission, changes in detail are to be expected over periods of time. With the exception of Carrère and Holle, traditions concerning Malik Sy date from 200 to 270 years after his death. This time lapse renders Malik Sy enigmatic. What exists are in fact late-18th and 19th-century perspectives of a 17th-century figure. Current values and political realities have been projected back into time; existing power relations needing explanation and justification, Malik Sy became the vehicle through which these needs were addressed. What is certain is that Malik Sy once lived, that he emigrated from Futa Toro to what became Bundu, and that he was the progenitor of the ruling dynasty.

To obtain a clearer picture of Malik Sy, one must approach the sources with the idea of establishing consensus, internal logic, and plausibility. The four or five major phases of his life, on which a significant number of sources agree, must be examined more closely, whereas incidental
episodes only reported by a single source must necessarily be rejected as improbable. Details are not so important as are overall themes. Matters of contemporary relevance, not at issue during Malik Sy's tenure, must be identified and dissociated from the historical period, since anachronistic tendencies, endemic to the oral transmission process, can result in important distortions of the events themselves.

Ancestry and Early Years

Malik Sy was born in the town of Suyuma (Sonima, Souima, Soima, or Sonyma), a few kilometers from Podor in Futa Toro. Although Bérenger-Féraud (1885: 179) states that he was of Manding origin, all other sources indicate that he was Fulbe. The year of Malik Sy's birth is unknown, but according to Rançon's itinerary, it would have been around 1637. N'Diaye's dating (1971: 471-487) of 1512 is a singular instance and can be discounted.

Rançon was the first to provide insight into Malik Sy's background. According to his sources, his family was very old, descended from a cleric named Ibn Morvan, a shari' from southern Mauritania (Rançon 1894: 41). Settling in Suyuma, Ibn Morvan married a Fulbe woman and begot a son named Hamet, who became 'chef d'une tribu toucouleur du Toro' (ibid.: 40-41). Hamet in turn had two sons and two daughters. The oldest son, N'Diob-Hamet, produced a large family which later became an important source of aid for the progeny of Malik Sy. One of the daughters, Maty-Hamet, married an important cleric who later moved to Futa Jallon, and whose sons assisted Malik Sy's successor, Bubu Malik Sy. It was the other son, Dawuda-Hamet, who went on to become head of the village, and he apparently enjoyed a measure of notoriety as a cleric. He was Malik Sy's father.

Malik Sy's family and descendants, the Sisibe, were part of the torodbe nobility. According to Moussa Kamara (1975: 792), the term torodbe (sing. torodo) simply signifies 'people from Toro' (see also Willis 1978). On the other hand, Robinson (1973: 289) points out that it comes from the verb torraade, 'to ask for alms'; Willis (1979: 5-12) defines it as meaning 'imploring Allah'. What this implies is that the torodbe were at one time dispersed communities of Muslims, viewed as beggars by outsiders (Robinson 1973: 289). Rançon (1894: 39) states that they were descendants of manumitted slaves in Futa Toro. Apparently the torodbe

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3. Rançon (1894: 90-96) states that Malik Sy 'definitely' settled in Bandu ca. 1681. His first son was born when he was 30. He subsequently spent at least fourteen years travelling before arriving in the realm. I simply subtracted 44 from 1681. Curtin (1971: 18) estimates Malik Sy was born in the 1640s.
occupied a humble position within the Futanke strata, an element distinguishing Futa Toro society from others in Senegambia. The basic four features of the torodbe condition were the following: they were erudite in the Islamic sciences; they were Pulaar-speakers but Arabic-writers; they could not be fishermen, smiths, tanners, griots, or participate in any other caste-occupation; and they disavowed the nomadic lifestyle (Kamara 1975: 789-797; Willis 1979: 21-22; Rançon 1894: 39).

At some time after a formative period, non-Fulbe individuals joined the ranks of the torodbe, who became the functional equivalent of the Moorish zwāya (or clerical community).

According to oral tradition, the Sisibe were one of the last clans to become torodbe (Rançon 1894: 41). The implication of the various sources, notwithstanding the discrepancies, is that Ibn Morvan (Malik Sy’s great-grandfather) was the first to enter the torodbe ranks. If one allows thirty years for each generation, then he was born sometime in the 1540s. That the torodbe existed prior to Ibn Morvan means that they were a 15th-century phenomenon at the latest. The conquest of Futa Toro by the Denyanke in the latter part of that century may explain the torodbe’s drop in social status, or indeed their emergence as a self-conscious, stigmatized group of clerical villages.

Malik Sy’s first instruction came from his father, under whom he studied Arabic based upon recitation, memorization, and copying of the Qur’an (ibid.; N’Diaye 1971: 471-473). Qur’anic madrasa (‘school’) usually began after circumcision, around the age of 5, and lasted until the boys were 13 or 14. Malik Sy’s case was no different: he remained under his father’s tutelage until he was 15 (Rançon 1894: 41). At this point, he left Suyuma to study elsewhere. The contention that he went to Pir in Cayor has been effectively invalidated by Curtin (1975: 197-201). It is most probable that he went to southern Mauritania. What he would have studied there depends upon the precise region: in Adrar and Tagant, he would have been introduced to fiqh (‘jurisprudence’), principally the Mukhtasar of Khalil b. Ishāq (d. 776/1374); in the Trarza area, he would have read ashʿār (‘poetry’) and nahwa (‘grammar’) (Stewart 1973: 29).

The traditions diverge concerning what transpired following Malik Sy’s formal training. The possibility that he performed the hājj has been refuted elsewhere (Curtin 1975: 197-201). But according to four of the 19th-century sources, and three of the 20th-century ones prior to 1966, Malik Sy at some point headed for Diara, the Soninke State in the sāhil between Futa Toro and ancient Ghana.4 Before proceeding to Diara, however, Malik Sy returned to Suyuma after his studies away from home. Malik Sy was 20 years old when he returned to his natal village.

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(Rançon 1894: 41-42; Roux 1893: 2-3). His father died when he was 23, and the young cleric became the head of the family. Several years later, he journeyed to Galam (or Gajaaga) where he remained for three years. While there he would often visit the torolbe who had already emigrated to southern Galam—the region which later became Bundu. It was perhaps during this period that he began thinking about resettling his family there. He returned to Suyuma, where he remained another two years, after which he set out for Diara, passing through Galam and Khasso.

Diara had been founded by the Nyakhate clan, who were later overthrown by a new dynasty, the Diawara, towards the end of the 14th century. The capital at Kingui was a commercial center, and the State grew powerful at the expense of Mali. By 1754, the Bambara of Kaarta were able to extend their hegemony over neighboring Diara.

Beyond a high level of consensus, the internal logic of the Diara trip is sound. Because of the extensive relations between Bundu and Kaarta since the 18th century, it would have been easy to place the Bambara in Diara during the 17th century. Yet, the sources are careful to distinguish between the Diawara dynasty and the Bambara of Kaarta. The plausibility of the venture is also credible. Diara, besides being an important center of trade, fielded an impressive army. Armies in West Africa were noted for their usage of amulets. For a cleric trying to make a living by creating these amulets, Diara was an ideal market.

The commercial nature of Diara suggests the underlying reason for Malik Sy’s departure from Suyuma. Multiple explanations have been forwarded regarding this specific event; the issue is fundamental to understanding the subsequent development of Bundu. According to Rançon (1894: 42), Malik Sy was simply adventurous. Such a characterization is hardly satisfactory in accounting for the cleric’s overall behavior. Two other explanations are related to Islam. According to one, Malik Sy was a missionary, a kind of successor to the 16th-century figure al-Maghîlî, in that he was primarily interested in converting rulers. This version maintains he had gone through the middle Senegal valley all the way to Segu making converts (Bérenger-Féraud 1885: 179; 1879: 219-223). The other religious explanation is that Malik Sy was an itinerant ‘âlim (‘scholar’), who toured various lands preaching and teaching the believers (Roux 1893: 2). While it is possible that Malik Sy performed these services, it is doubtful, the evidence indicating that he was not much of a scholar.

It is unlikely that Malik Sy left Suyuma to avoid the slave trade. Although slaves were being taken both into Mauritania and west to the Atlantic, the problem did not become acute until the 1720s and 1730s. Besides, by all traditions the cleric’s family remained in Suyuma while he travelled. Of greater pertinence is the issue of political persecution. Both Adam (1904: 47-54) and Diakité (1929: 210), relying upon the same source, record that Malik Sy killed a royal slave of the satigi, the title of
the Denyanke ruler of Futa Toro. This illustrates the tensions that existed between the Muslim torodbe communities and the Denyanke rulers, whose adherence to Islam was highly dubious. It must be remembered that torodbe had already emigrated to southern Galam and Futa Jallon, seeking to escape the policies of the satigi that were in conflict with the shari’a. The end of the tubenan movement (concurrent with, and related to, the Shurbubba of Nāṣir al-Dīn, but south of the Sénégal river) resulted in an even greater emigration, or fergo, as the torodbe had in all probability sided with the reformers. Without question, political tensions were an important factor in the final departure of Malik Sy’s family from Futa Toro (Willis 1979: 24).

However, the various traditions indicate that as many as fourteen years elapsed between the initial travels of Malik Sy (following his studies) and the time when he finally removed his family from Futa Toro (Rançon 1894: 42-43). The evidence suggests that he left for Diara prior to the beginning of the Shurbubba, and returned after its completion. All this indicates that the primary and original cause of his departure was economic in nature; the rather humble circumstances of the torodbe condition strengthen this observation. Because of the financial strains on his family, Malik Sy went on to Diara to earn a living, principally by writing amulets. Ly (1938: 316) records that he prospered by selling ‘des gris-gris et des amulettes qui avaient grand succès chez les Sarra-kolets [non-Muslims] de ce pays de l’Est dominé par les sorciers’. He reportedly acquired great influence due to the virtue of his amulets and the ‘réalisation de certaines de ses prédictions’ (ibid.). In short, rather than being a learned scholar, Malik Sy was a master of the hājin, or ‘secret’ science of Islam, an area which includes charms, prayers, divination and medicine.

The various sources, separated by time and space, are almost all agreed that Malik Sy was renowned for the efficacy of his amulets. Even when the primary reason for his leaving Futa Toro is given as something else, the benefits of his being an amulet-maker are mentioned also. An example of this is Bérenger-Féraud (1885: 159) who, after portraying Malik Sy as a missionary, adds that he made excellent gris-gris to guard against ‘tous les dangers quels qu’ils soient qui peuvent assaillir un homme’. Rançon (1894: 42) said it best: ‘Il voulait connaître un peu le monde et faire fortune’.

5. The term tubenan is derived from the Arabic tawba, ‘repentance’.
Diara and the Magic Sword

According to Rançon (1894: 42), Malik Sy was at least 35 by the time he left for Diara. He arrived there during the reign of Fari Mamadou Ben Damankalla (or Fie Mamadou, or Farène) (Diakité 1929: 210; Roux 1893: 3; Rançon 1894: 43; Adam 1904: 48-54). The sources are agreed that Malik Sy was well received by the ruler, rendering as he did great services, such as producing amulets and predicting the future (or interpreting the present). As payment, Malik Sy was given substantial wealth, and because of his sagacity, was honored by the residents of Diara with the title eliman (lit. ‘leader of the prayers’) (Adam 1904: 47-54). That this title may have been given before Malik Sy settled in southern Galam is important, and will be discussed later within the context of the imamate.

According to the traditions, there existed in Diara a certain sword possessing mystical qualities: if a man were to contemplate it for a period of time, he would be assured of eventually exercising political rule. Through cunning and skill, Malik Sy finally saw the sword. As a consequence, he was asked to leave Diara out of fear that he would usurp the throne.

The purpose of this anecdote is to legitimize Malik Sy as a temporal ruler. The sword, containing Arabic inscriptions, is from Mecca and was once in the possession of Sunjaata himself. What is implicit in the sources is that Malik Sy had a desire to rule, and that he consciously sought to realize his ambitions. He is portrayed as a ruthless individual, willing to employ deception to achieve his goals. This characterization of Malik Sy as a power-hungry imperialist comes up time and again; it will be argued here that it is more of a caricature, based upon the behavior of his 19th-century descendants. Because expansionist policies were pursued by later almaami it was assumed that such tendencies originated with Malik Sy.

It is also extremely interesting that the magic sword, which could have been placed anywhere, is at Diara. This choice draws attention to the close relations maintained between Kaarta and Bundu in the 18th and 19th centuries. Around 1754 the Masasi of Segu emigrated to Kaarta as a result of a civil war with the Kulubali. The region of Kaarta borders the realm of the Diawara, and from 1754 to 1777 the Masasi and the Diawara lived in peace (Tauxier 1942: 112-125; Monteil 1924: 104). By 1777, the Diawara had become the clients of the Masasi, and were given the northern province of Kaarta. Therefore, the Diara episode can be viewed as an attempt not only to legitimize Malik Sy’s position as a ruler, but also to justify Bundu’s relations with pagan Kaarta. This use of legal fiction would help quell the objections by the more shari’a-minded in Bundu to maintaining alliances with Kaarta.
Settlement in Southern Galam

Most of the sources agree that when Malik Sy left Diara, he returned to Tuabo, the capital of Galam. Once again here, Malik Sy is depicted as serving in the royal court, primarily writing amulets. The *tunka* belonged to the Bakiri dynasty, and apparently was not a Muslim. He is described as having had many virtues, but lacking in the military courage of the Fulbe and the Moors (Bérenger-Féraud 1885: 179). He consequently asked Malik Sy for an amulet to overcome this deficiency; Malik Sy complied, giving him the ability to always be victorious in war. This episode serves the purpose of explaining Bundu’s inability ever to subjugate Galam.

As payment for his services, Malik Sy asked the *tunka* for ‘un petit coin de terre dans ce pays plantureux’, in which to settle (Bérenger-Féraud 1885: 180-184; Lamartiny 1884: 6; Adam 1904: 47-54). Some of the sources indicate that the *tunka* immediately set out to establish the boundaries between Galam and Bundu (Rançon 1894: 46; Bérenger-Féraud 1885: 180-184). Others state that at first Malik Sy was only interested in maintaining his village, and that after his *jamâ’a* (‘community’; pl. *jamâ’āl*) had grown, he requested more land from the *tunka* (Dieng Doudou, quoted in Brigaud 1962: 291; Adam 1904: 48-54; Lamartiny 1884: 6). The elements of consensus, internal logic, and plausibility are sufficiently high to make this episode credible. Southern Galam had often served as a political refuge. That Malik Sy would request and be granted land in the area is entirely consistent with Galam’s previous policy.

Malik Sy sent for his family in Suyuma. Adam (1904: 48-54) writes that they had been badly treated for the murder of the *satigi*’s slave. Their move to southern Galam coincides with the defeat of the *tubenan* reformers in Futa Toro; that they suffered from the ensuing political fallout is a strong possibility.

Where Malik Sy settled is also an issue in the sources. Moussa Kamara (1975: 798) states that he finally established himself just east of the Falémé river. It is Diakité’s contention (1929: 211), reflected in Adam (1904: 48-54) as well, that he founded Boulibané. On the other hand, both Doudou and Brigaud relate that Malik Sy settled at Guirobé, eight kilometers north-west of Sénoudébou, and Rançon says that he built the village of Wuro-Alfa (‘village of the *alfa*’) near Guirobé. It is unlikely that Malik Sy crossed the Falémé river into Bambuk. Boulib-

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6. Title of the ruler. Malik Sy is described as having unsuccessfully tried to convert the *tunka* (Brigaud 1962: 218-219).
bané is usually described as an 18th-century construction. Since Guirobé was already established by \textit{torodbe} before Malik Sy came to southern Galam, it is likely that he first went to Guirobé, then built Wuro-alfa nearby.

In the late 17th century, the population of southern Galam was both sparse and heterogeneous. The earliest inhabitants were the Fadube, the Badiar, the Wualiabe, and the Bakiri (Rançon 1894: 37-40; Roux 1893: 1-2). N'Diaye (1971: 473-487) records that when Malik Sy arrived, the Fadube owned the land; they lived beneath the ground and had tails; in responding to the preaching of Malik Sy, they came out of their holes and had their tails cut off. The clear implication is that the Fadube were subhuman, and that although they were first to inhabit the land, they did not deserve to own it. Curtin and Skinner, commenting on the story, suggest that the emergence from the subterranean lifestyle and the removal of tails imply conversion to Islam and circumcision (N'Diaye 1971). This is in keeping with Curtin's overall effort to portray Malik Sy as a reformer, but the sources themselves do not support the interpretation: Rançon (1894: 38) refers to the Fadube as 'pagans' who observed all kinds of non-Islamic practices; Roux (1893: 4) relates that Malik Sy signed a treaty with the Fadube; he would be their ruler and cleric, and in return they would be allowed to continue eating pork. In other words, Malik Sy is shown as having a 'civilizing' effect upon the Fadube, but it is doubtful that they became Muslims. In fact, because of their attitude to Islam, they were repeated targets of the jihadists, or mujāhidūn, of the 19th century (Rançon 1894: 39). In contrast, Malik Sy is depicted by most of the sources as compromising with the unbelieving element for political gain.

The Tale of the Walk

As a result of the \textit{tubenan} failure, southern Galam experienced accelerated growth in the latter part of the 17th century. Population density in Futa Toro also contributed to emigration. This is reflected in the account of how southern Galam became independent of the \textit{tunka} at Tuabo, and how the border was established between the two States. After initially settling at Wuro-Alfa, Malik Sy's \textit{jamā'a} is said to have increased to such an extent that 'il dut réclamer un agrandissement de concession pour loger ses prosélytes'.\footnote{Lamartiny 1884: 6; see also D. Doudou, in Brigaud 1962: 291; Bérenger-Féraud 1885: 179-183.} Adam (1994: 54), in an interesting contrast, states that Malik Sy requested independence for the whole region, not just Wuro-Alfa and its environs.

In order to solve the problem of Malik Sy's growing community, the
tunka proposed that on a certain day, he would begin walking south from Tuabo; for his part, Malik Sy was to walk north from his settlement. The place where they would meet would become the boundary between Galam and Bundu. The account of ‘the walk’ is found in all of the 19th-century versions except that of Diakité, and in eight of the nineteen sources from the 20th century. Some state that the tunka got off to a late start; others that Malik Sy departed before the agreed hour. In all cases, the boundary was established closer to Tuabo than the tunka had originally planned.

The account of the formation of the Bundu-Galam border is obviously a fiction, the purpose of which is to explain the proximity of the Bundu frontier to Tuabo (Curtin 1975: 192). What is more important, however, is the portrayal of Malik Sy: he is a deceiver, a power-hungry trickster who betrays a trust. The underlying issue is the right of sovereignty: southern Galam belonged to the Bakiri of Tuabo, and it somehow became the domain of the Sisibe. The transfer is related in mythical terms, thus suggesting that the reality it seeks to represent is in fact more complex and difficult to explain. For the reality is that what began as a group of clerical communities became, by the middle of the 18th century, a predatory State. The story communicates that such a transformation was illegal and an usurpation of the legitimate authority.

It thus becomes almost impossible to discern what the historical Malik Sy was really like, as the mythical figure has been made a composite of the expansionist tendencies of subsequent almaami. By the time Rançon made his collection, Bundu was seven generations removed from Malik Sy who, in the absence of any contemporary accounts, was for all practical purposes a remote and legendary figure. By contrast, Bokar Saada had just died after a thirty-year reign; under his leadership Bundu had reached its maximum territorial expansion, and he had left a lasting impression for all posterity. In many ways, the story of Malik Sy is a commentary on his successors.

The Death of Malik Sy

A number of the sources do not mention the manner of Malik Sy’s death at all. Of those which treat his death, all agree that it was violent. The key 19th-century versions indicate that the issue of sovereignty was creating conflict between Malik Sy and the tunka. One writes that Malik Sy had succeeded in conquering some Malinke strongholds in southern Galam, and that the tunka was anxious to regain control of these areas (Roux 1893: 4). Another states that Malik Sy was covetous of the tunka’s domain, and was awaiting an opportunity to seize it (Lamartiny 1884: 6). According to Rançon (1894: 47), the tunka gradually became aware of Malik Sy’s ‘profound ambition’ and of the great damage he
would cause to the realm if he went unchecked. All of this reinforces the view that Bundu had not become territorially defined during Malik Sy's time; that, in fact, Galam had not ceded him any territory with the understanding that he was to create a State.

As a result of heightened tensions, war broke out between the cleric and the *tunka*. Commanding an army of 2,000 men, Malik Sy captured three villages in a march on Galam. He then crossed the Falémé river at Sénouélébou, and marched north to the Sénégal river. He stopped near Arondou, about two kilometers west of the Falémé's mouth. There he was engaged and defeated by the superior forces of the *tunka*. Managing to escape, Malik Sy was mortally wounded shortly thereafter; the year was 1699 (Roux 1893: 6-7).

The Matter of *Jihad*

According to Curtin's framework, Malik Sy inherited the tradition of *jihad* from Naṣir al-Dīn. He is seen as the 'link' between the *tubenan* movement and the bona fide *jihad* of Futa Jallon in the 1720s and Futa Toro in the 1770s. In support of this view, it should be reiterated that fifteen out of the twenty-six accounts concerning Malik Sy indicate a military takeover of southern Galam (Curtin 1975: 191). Rançon and Roux concur that Malik Sy, prior to the war with Galam, fought the Malinke in the region. In a situation where various groups are vying for the same space, tensions are likely to issue in belligerence. The accelerated growth of the *torodbe* during this period resulted in friction with other groups; small-scale raiding could even have taken place.

However, in the light of Islamic law on the subject of *jihad* (Peters 1977), Malik Sy did not perform a regular *jihad*. From the existing data, it is clear that Naṣir al-Dīn was consciously conducting a *jihad*, according to the legal guidelines. On the other hand, of all the sources available for Malik Sy, none indicates that he followed the prescriptions for waging *jihad*, or that he was even aware of them. One of the more important of these stipulations is that before physically assaulting the enemy, he must first be invited to convert and pay the poll-tax (*jizya*). Naṣir al-Dīn followed this precept; Malik Sy did not. Even Curtin (1971: 19) had to qualify his appraisal: 'It is not clear that Malik Sy declared holy war in the traditional sense'.

It is not clear that Malik Sy declared a war at all. Although Roux states that he declared a 'guerre sainte' against Galam, and both Rançon and Roux agree that he was on the offensive against the *tunka*, each account being preceded by the observation that it was the *tunka* who first became alarmed at the events in southern Galam, and then immediately shifting into a description of the Malik Sy's march. Something is missing here, and the explanation that Malik Sy was anticipating the
tunka’s attack is unsatisfactory. A look at the relative positions of Tuabo, Guirobé (and therefore Wuro-Alfa), Sénoudébou, and Arondou provides a clue. Tuabo was located just north of Sénoudébou. Instead of proceeding directly to Tuabo, which would have been the logical route to pursue an offensive, Malik Sy is said to have gone south toward Sénoudébou, crossed the Falémé, and headed north to the Sénégal, some thirty to forty kilometers south-east of Tuabo. What is passed along as an offensive in the sources appears to have actually been a retreat. In all probability, it is the tunka who attacked the torodbe settlements, culminating in the battle of Arondou. N’Diaye (1971: 481-487) in fact states that the tunka initiated the war.

In a defensive war, it would have been permissible to characterize the struggle as a jihād (Peters 1977: 3). But in that case, there is no need for an ideological tie to Mauritania. In the protection of his community, Malik Sy hardly qualifies as a protégé of Nāṣir al-Dīn. To this must be added the presence of the Jakhanke communities and the concept of ‘implied knowledge’, whereby a doctrine formulated to offset the tenets of another doctrine presupposes that the earlier concept is understood. In the case of southern Galam, the Jakhanke clerics had probably already settled in the area. They espoused the rejection of jihād. Therefore the concept of jihād was not introduced into southern Galam by Malik Sy, and it cannot be established that he operated out of a vision of jihād fostered by Nāṣir al-Dīn. Furthermore, the example of the tubenan movement was one of failure. Without question, the torodbe as a whole were influenced by the events of 1673 to 1677. The question is, in what way were they influenced? After the resounding defeat of the reformist forces from the Atlantic coast to the eastern reaches of Futa Toro, the exodus of torodbe from Futa Toro indicates their desire to escape political entanglements, rather than the reverse.

The Imamat

Of greater significance is the claim that Malik Sy formed a government based upon the concept of an imamate, in a conscious imitation of Nāṣir al-Dīn. The strongest evidence for such a claim is the assertion that while the usual title for a secular ruler would have been laamido, Malik Sy adopted the title eliman, following Nāṣir al-Dīn’s usage of al-imām. Rançon states that Malik Sy concluded a treaty with the ‘Guirobé’ (torodbe of Guirobé), under which it was agreed that the notables of the ‘two tribes’ (Guirobé and adherents of Malik Sy) would choose the most senior to become ruler of the communities. After Malik Sy had been recognized by the Fadube as their ‘chef et marabout’, he was then elected as head of the Guirobé, and given the title eliman. He then began collect-
ing the 'dime aumônière' and the 'dime récoltes'. Adam also states that Malik Sy was given the title eliman while still in Diara. Roux (1893: 6) simply says that before Amadi Gai (latter part of the 18th century), the rulers of Bundu were called eliman.

Although uncertain, it is probable that Malik Sy did indeed take the title eliman. The crucial question becomes, what did he understand the title to signify? When Nāṣir al-Dīn took the title al-imām, it was meant as the constitutional equivalent of amīr al-mu'mīnīn ('Commander of the Faithful') (Robinson 1975). He chose a wazīr and four qādī to help administer the State, and implemented the collection of zakāt ('legal alms'). This is in keeping with the legal responsibilities of the imamate. On the other hand, the sources concerning Malik Sy are silent on the subject of administration. There is certainly no mention of wazīr, qādī, or their equivalents. As for the contention that a legal treasury was instituted, Rançon (1894: 58) himself states that laws on taxation, as well as other administrative matters, were not enacted until Amadi Gai's reign. The text itself is ambiguous: the same taxes levied on Muslims are imposed upon the unbelieving Fadube. In fact, when Malik Sy later raids non-Muslim Malinké territory, he again imposes the same levies. No distinction is made between Muslims, dhimmī, and unbelievers, or between the status of the various lands under Muslim control—distinctions which are fundamental in order to impose the appropriate tax (Aghnides 1916). All of these difficulties point to the fact that not only did Malik Sy fail to pattern himself after Nāṣir al-Dīn, but he was either unaware of or unconcerned about the principles underlying the imamate.

Malik Sy was not the only person to adopt a religious title in southern Galam. The father of Ayuba Sulayman Diallo, otherwise known as Job ben Solomon (born ca. 1701), who resided in southern Galam, bore the title alfa (Bluett 1734). The fact that there were settlements in the area under leaders with religious titles was consistent with the clerical nature of the communities. One would not expect a cleric to employ a secular title.

When Cornelius Hodges passed through Galam in 1689, he failed to mention either Malik Sy or his imamate (cf. Stone 1924). Nine years later, in 1698, André Bruç also travelled through the area. Concerning its southern part, he is careful to describe the activities of what would appear to be the Jakhanko (Labat 1728, III: 294-371). But he fails to mention Malik Sy, and there is no hint of a torodbe regime. These two independent sources (Bruç and Hodges), combined with Ayuba Sulayman Diallo's account (cf. Bluett 1734), are a means of testing the traditions' claim that Malik Sy founded a State. In light of these sources, it is

9. Rançon 1894: 47. What the 'dime aumônière' refers to is unclear. Apparently, the 'dime récoltes' was the kharāfī, a tax on Muslim-owned land.

10. Dhimmī: a free, non-Muslim subject living in Muslim countries who, in return for paying the capital tax, enjoyed protection and safety.
impossible to verify such a claim. What can be said is that if Malik Sy did establish a State, he must have done it either between 1689 and 1698, or between 1698 and 1699, the year he died. Rançon (1894: 47) states that his struggle against the tunka began only one year after he was elected eliman. In all probability then, Malik Sy sought to establish some sort of confederation, and to become its leader. Revenues in some form were collected. But the experiment was short-lived, and successfully repressed by the tunka.

The momentary union of these previously independent jamā’āt lacked a theoretical foundation. The fact that Malik Sy adopted the title eliman reflects the clerical nature of the torodbe, and nothing more. The Jankanke towns in Bundu, with which Malik Sy was in contact, also maintained the dual leadership positions of alkali (from al-qādī) and imām. With the various settlements in southern Galam being led by imām, alkali, and alfa, it would be problematic to link Nāṣir al-Dīn to Malik Sy on the basis of an assumed title. Furthermore, the Malik Sy traditions do not support the view that he sought to emulate Nāṣir al-Dīn. Nowhere do they ever mention Nāṣir al-Dīn. And if Rançon’s dates are fairly accurate, Malik Sy left Futa Toro before the jihād sparked by Nāṣir al-Dīn began, and did not return until it was over. Therefore, the application of the title eliman was simply extended from a local usage to a national one. The term ‘imamate’, when applied to Bundu prior to the latter part of the 18th century, is a misnomer. Bundu was not the equivalent of the Sokoto caliphate, and Malik Sy was not amīr al-mu‘minin.

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