

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَتَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ أَمْرٌ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ
 عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَعَلَى آتِهِ وَوَعْدِهِ وَعَلَى كَلِمَاتِهِ هَذَا أَوْلَادِي أَوْلَادِي كِتَابٌ مَسْلُوحٌ وَرَفُوعٌ وَإِلَى
 أَمَا بَعْدُ فَإِنَّمَا أَجَسَدُنَا رَجَاءُكُمْ فِيمَا بَارَزْنَا فِيهِ وَلَا نَمَانَا فِي مَا نَالَكُمْ فَلَسْنَا وَأَمَّا
 وَلَا نَأْخُذُ بِهِ أَبَدًا وَإِنَّمَا أَخَذْنَا مَوَالِ النُّصْرَى وَفَدَدُ بَعْدَنَا لِأَوْلَادِي كِتَابٌ مَسْلُوحٌ
 وَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَسْبِ أَحَدٌ مَالِ النُّصْرَى فَالْمَسْبِي أَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا نَامِرًا مِنْهَا أَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا
 لَا يَبِيعُ عَوْرَتَنَا لِنَا لِسَلَامٍ وَلَا لَنَا لَهَا لِحَبْلِهِمْ أَنَّمَا مَسْتَعِينُونَ عَنْهُمْ وَفَدَدُنَا لِرَسُولِ
 مَا نَعْبُدُ حَيْرٌ جَاءَنَا فِي سِرِّ مَنَّا الرِّجَالُ الْمَنْعُ لِسَبِّ إِهْلِكَ فَوَيْتَ الْيَوْمَ لِنَسْتَأْمُرَ إِهْلَ فِئْتِ
 وَأِنَّمَا نَحْنُ هُوَ عَمِيرٌ مَعَ جَاهِدِ أَعْوَاءَ اللَّهِ فَلَا يَجْعَلُنَا مِنْهُمْ وَيَجْعَلُنَا مِنْهُمْ بِمَا يَجْعَلُ بِهِمْ
 يَبْكُونَ سَبْبًا لِكُتُبِ مَعَكُمْ وَأَنَا مُنْتَقِلٌ رَسُولُهُ وَجَمَعَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ فِي كُلِّ
 هَجْرِي بَيْنَهُمَا كَلَامُ الرِّبِّ قَالَ لَهُ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ الْبَيْعَ الشَّيْخِ فَأَدْرَأَ فِي سِدِّ
 لَكَ وَلِعِيَالِكَ جَمِيعَ تِجَارَتِكُمْ وَيَسُدُّ الْبُرُوقَ وَيَسُدُّ بَيْعَتَكُمْ وَيَسُدُّ الْبُرُوقَ وَيَسُدُّ مَالَكُمْ
 فِي لَبْدِهِ مَا نَعْتَدُ بِغَفْوَتِهِ فَيُجْعَلُ وَفَاتِنَهُ عَمِيرُ اللَّهِ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ حَيْرٌ سَمِعْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ وَمِمَّا لَمْ يَكُنْ
 وَمِنْهَا أَنَّنَا رَسَلْنَا إِلَى طَاغِي بِكُلِّ بَيْعَتِنَا الْعَارِ بِسِرِّ مَنَّا إِلَيْهِ فَأَمْتَنَ
 وَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِ بَلَدَهُ لَمْ يَعْطِنَا إِلَّا بِحَقِّ مَا سَمِعْتُمْ وَبَلَدَهُ لَكَ فَلَمْ يَبِيحِ
 وَقَالَ أَرِذْلُكَ لَكَ وَمِنْهَا أَنَّنَا بَلَّغْنَا جِيَالِي فَوَاحِدٌ مِنْ عُلَمَاءِ النُّصْرَى وَهُوَ الَّذِي
 بَدَأْنَا بِالْعُقْبَالِ وَالْأَرِثَانَا مَسْتَعِينُونَ بِفِئْتِ اللَّهِ وَلَا نَتْرِكُهُ حَتَّى يَكُونَ طَلَبًا لِنَسْتَلِيمَ
 مِنْ حَبْلِهِ مَا عَوْتَكُمْ وَبِنَفَادِ كَمَا قَالَ رَبَّنَا فَاتْلُوا الَّذِي لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَجِدْ بِالْيَوْمِ
 الْآخِرِ وَلَا يَجْرَمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَمِيمِ الَّذِي رَأَى تَوَالِي الْكُتُبِ
 حَتَّى يَجْعَلُوا الْعَرَبِيَّةَ عَرِيدًا وَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا وَانْتَمُوا لِأَوْلَادِي فَدَنَاهُمْ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ
 وَيَسْرَتْنَا تَوَالِيهِمْ فَإِنَّهُ كَافِرٌ وَمَنْعُ بَقُولِهِ لَا تَنْخُذُوا وَالْيَهُودَ وَالنُّصْرَى أَوْلِيَاءَ
 يَعْضُقُوا أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ مَبْغُوضٌ لَكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّلَامُ

SENEGAL
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handwritten notes or signatures in Arabic script.

8. CORRESPONDENCE EAST-WEST

In this section we provide translations of letters from the 1850s and 1860s which demonstrate the strong connection between the theatre of combat in the East and the sources of support in the West. 'Umar wrote the first two letters, urging and indeed ordering Muslims in the Senegal valley to support what had become the priority cause of the faith. The first of these dates from 1855, but we have included it in this anthology because it sets out so clearly the framework for recruitment and the ideal relationships, from an Umarian perspective, of European to Muslim. A disciple wrote the third letter, again in the vein of recruitment for the East. The final selection was also written in Nioro, but this time by Muṣṭafā to the French governor to call for respect of the 1866 arrangements worked out between Eugène Mage and Aḥmad al-Kabir.

8A. 'UMAR'S LETTER TO SENEGAMBIAN MUSLIMS

In the latter part of 1854 'Umar directed his energies against the hegemony which the Massassi Bamana kingdom exercised over the upper Senegal valley. He began to recruit actively and successfully among the Muslim populations of Senegal, especially in the Fulbe states of Bundu and Futa Toro. He expected to receive the tacit cooperation of the French, the dominant European power in the area, but instead he found a determined effort to counter his influence. Governor A. L. Protet and his successor, Louis Faidherbe, reinforced French fortifications at Bakel, posted gunboats at important commercial locations, and placed an embargo on selling guns and

munitions. The embargo in particular threatened 'Umar's effort to equip his expanding forces for the upcoming battles with the redoubtable armies of Karta.¹

'Umar protested the new French policy on several occasions in late 1854. In November he destroyed the river port of Makhana, which sheltered his enemies and which had maintained close commercial ties with the French. In early February 1855, he confiscated the merchandise that had been left in storage along the upper valley of the Senegal and burned the installations. In general he spared the independent Senegalese traders and concentrated upon the factories belonging to the trading houses of Bordeaux. To express their frustration and to inquire about 'Umar's intentions, the resident trading community in Bakel dispatched an envoy to the *jihād* headquarters. Ndiay Sur was a knowledgeable Muslim and head of the operations of Maurel and Prom, a Bordeaux concern which had suffered serious losses. 'Umar told Ndiay that weapons had been sold to his Bamana enemies, despite the embargo, and composed the letter which follows, addressed to Muslims in the Senegal valley, to explain his position.²

This letter is probably the best known single document from the whole Umarian enterprise. The reason is that Governor Faidherbe obtained the original and then included it, with a translation, in his report to the Ministry of Marine and Colonies in early March 1855. At the same time the President of the Imperial Court in St. Louis, Frédéric Carrère, wrote to the Ministry about the danger which the "fanatic" 'Umar posed for colonial interests in Senegal, basing much of his case on the same letter. By the end of 1855 Carrère had published, together with the mulatto officer Paul Holle, a book on contemporary Senegal that contained a translation.³

¹ See Robinson, *Holy War*, chapters 4 and 6; Yves Saint-Martin, *Le Sénégal sous le Second Empire* (Paris, 1989), chapter 17.

² For a full description of the circumstances in which this letter was written, see Robinson, *Holy War*, pp. 157-65.

³ Faidherbe's letter and the Arabic document are contained in ANFOM SEN I 41b, 11 March 1855. Carrère's communication is contained in ANFOM SEN II 7, 8 March 1855. The translation of the letter is found at pp. 204-7 of *De la Sénégambie française*. Excerpts from the translation appear in a number of French sources.

Faidherbe and Carrère employed 'Umar's letter to encourage the ministry to strengthen the military capacity of the colony. Faidherbe and others used it subsequently, in conjunction with 'Umar's attack on the fort of Medine in 1857, to portray the holy war as a dramatic threat to the whole European presence in Senegal. Senegalese intellectuals, writing from a nationalist perspective, have employed the letter and the Medine siege to portray 'Umar as a hero of resistance. These French imperialist and Senegalese nationalist perspectives obscure the basic orientation of the *jihād* against paganism.⁴

Quite apart from its use in historiographical debates, this letter sets out clearly 'Umar's explanation for his actions, his grievances against the French, and the basis for recruitment of Senegambian Muslims. 'Umar asserted that the true Muslim should not tolerate close relations and dependence upon the Europeans. The letter defined the rhetoric for Umarian recruitment in the west for the remainder of the nineteenth century, and it is for this reason that we have included it in the anthology. The letter itself is short, filling only one page. It was probably written in some haste, for it does not appear to have been clearly recopied. We do not know whether 'Umar wrote the letter himself or dictated it to one of his scribes.

TRANSLATION

In the name of God. Praise be to God. I trust in God and entrust my cause to God and whatever I accomplish is through God. Blessing and peace be upon the Messenger of God and his family, his companions and whomever he befriends. From us⁵ to all the sons of Ndar.⁶ Greetings, good will and

⁴ See Robinson, *Holy War*, pp. 164-5, 370-5. For a different point of view, see Ly-Tall, *Un Islam militant*, chapters 1, 15 and conclusion.

⁵ 'Umar and Ahmad after him consistently used the expression *minna*, "from us," in their correspondence.

⁶ *Ndar* was the Wolof name for St. Louis, the capital of French colonial operations, and by extension indicated those operations in Senegambia. *Awlād Ndar* is used here as an ethnic and religious designation; it refers to all of the Muslim traders who made their permanent homes in St. Louis, but traded all along the river and in other locations during the commercial year. It thus refers to the Muslim community which resided part of the year in Bakel, where the letter was probably delivered.

honor [be with you]. We have not destroyed your hope in us but rather increased and strengthened it, because we have not taken what belonged to you, not one coin,⁷ and we never will. Instead, we have taken the possessions of the Christians. We have returned to the sons of Ndar everything that belonged to them.

If you ask the reason for the seizure of the Christian property, it is because they have committed injustices against us many times. Among these is the decision not to sell us arms and munitions,⁸ because of their ignorance. But in fact we can dispense with them. Indeed, we replied to the envoy of your tyrant,⁹ when he came to us at Sirmanna,¹⁰ that if the reason for the embargo was because of the people of Futa [Toro], we are no longer the people of Futa and are other than they, we wage *jihād* against the enemies of God, so let him [the Governor] not lump us together nor act towards us as towards them, lest it be a reason for me to join with them.

While I was waiting for his [the Governor's] envoy, God brought him [the Governor] together with 'Abd Allāh in Bakel,¹¹ and they had a discussion in which 'Abd Allāh said: "Do you not know that *al-hājj* the shaykh¹² has the capacity to destroy you and your dependents and all your trade, blocking the routes, preventing all sales and purchases and destroying your property?" And

⁷ *Fals* or *fiḥs*, "farthing" or any small coin.

⁸ *Ālāt*, literally "instruments."

⁹ *Taghī*, a stock epithet for a Christian ruler. Here it refers to the Governor of Senegal who, by his improper actions in 1854-5, was expressing opposition to the just and holy war. 'Umar set down his views on the obligations of *dhimmi*, the protected non-Muslim communities living within the Islamic world, in a document composed in the 1840s in Jegunko, under the title *Risālat Sawq al-Habīb ilā Fahm As'ilā Ibrāhīm al-Labīb*. It is found in BNP, MO, FA 5724, ff. 61-5. 'Umar draws on those views in this letter.

¹⁰ Sirmanna was a large village on the Tamboura ridge in Bambuk. 'Umar made his headquarters there in September, 1854. The discussions between French and Umarian envoys, in Sirmanna and Bakel, occurred during the last months of 1854.

¹¹ Or Abdullay Ndar as he was known locally. He was a former slave of Bamana origin and master mason in St. Louis who enlisted with 'Umar. The governor was visiting the installations in Bakel.

¹² These are the two most frequently used titles by the Umarians. *Al-hājj* recalled his status as a pilgrim; shaykh reflected his distinctions in scholarship and Sufi leadership.

the tyrant of Ndar replied: "Then let him do it." 'Abd Allāh exclaimed: "Praise be to God, that I have heard this from your own mouth and not that of another."

Another reason [for attacking the Christians] is that we told the tyrant [the Governor] in Bakel to deliver to us those who were fleeing from us,¹³ but he indeed refused. We sent again to say that if he did not give them up, then we will win [in the forthcoming confrontation]. That message reached him, but he paid no attention and said that it would amount to a sign of weakness.

Another reason is that when we [one of the patrols] were at Jagili,¹⁴ a young officer¹⁵ began to attack us.

Now we are victorious¹⁶ by the power of God. We will not quit until we receive a plea of peace and submission from your tyrant, for our Lord said: "Fight those who believe not in God nor in the last day, nor forbid that which God and His Messenger have forbidden, nor follow the religion of truth, out of those who have been given the book [the Qur'ān], until they pay the *jizya*¹⁷ in acknowledgment of superiority, for they are in a state of subjection."¹⁸

Sons of Ndar, God forbids you to be in relations of friendship¹⁹ with them. He made it clear that whomever becomes their friend becomes an infidel, and one of them, through His saying: "Take not the Jews and Christians for friends.

¹³ In particular a woman from the royal family of Karta who was also linked to the royal family of Bundu.

¹⁴ A village in Gidimakha, on the right or north bank of the Senegal, and not far from Bakel.

¹⁵ Literally "one of the Christian youth." Faidherbe thought that this might be a reference to a Senegalese sailor who tried to organize the inhabitants of Jagili to defend themselves. ANFOM, SEN I 41b, Governor to Minister, 11 March 1855.

¹⁶ 'Umar here speaks of the success which his forces had enjoyed since the declaration of holy war in 1852.

¹⁷ The tax levied by Muslim rulers on Christians and Jews.

¹⁸ Qur'ān 9:29.

¹⁹ *Muwālat*. 'Umar used this term in 1861 to describe the close association of the Ḥamdullāhi regime with non-Muslim Segu and thereby to justify his military campaigns against Masina in 1862. Mahibou and Triaud, *Bayān*, p. 235.

They are friends of each other. And whoever amongst you takes them for friends he is indeed one of them."²⁰

Greetings.

8B. 'UMAR'S LETTER TO EASTERN FUTA

When 'Umar returned to Senegambia in 1858, after his defeat at Medine, he needed to recruit on a much larger scale than ever before in order to undertake the massive campaign against the kingdom of Segou on the middle Niger. In his preaching he reinforced the message of 1855: good Muslims must not associate with or be dependent upon the Europeans; their responsibility was to join in the holy war to the east.²¹ The result of his effort, conducted along the whole expanse from western Futa Toro to Bundu, was massive: some 40,000 men, women and children.

The caravans which moved east in 1859 were poorly prepared for the tasks which lay ahead. Many had been coerced into leaving, especially those from the eastern region of Futa who were swept up by the more enthusiastic recruits from the areas of western Futa. The recruits arrived in Niore in an exhausted state, only to discover that 'Umar was preparing to embark on an even more perilous journey to the middle Niger. The result was very substantial desertion back to Senegambia, which the French post commanders reported in late 1859 and 1860.²²

Many of the returnees came from the riverine region of eastern Futa. They were descendants of the Denyanke rulers, soldiers and farmers who had dominated the political life of Futa Toro until the late eighteenth century. Under the Islamic regime inaugurated by Almamy 'Abd al-Qādir, the eastern Futanke occupied a restricted but fertile area of the floodplain and exercised

²⁰ Qur'ān 5:51.

²¹ See Robinson, *Holy War*, chapter 6, and the Pular expressions used in Tyam, *Qaṣida*, pp. 109-20.

²² Especially in the letters from Medine (ANS 15G 108), Bakel (13G 168 and 177), and Matam (13G 157).