

copy, as far as we know; it is not polished, and it may have circulated only in the immediate confines of the Segu court.² This limited distribution is surprising given the magnitude of the issues involved, and suggests that Aḥmad may not have found a very receptive audience for Sa'id's opinions and his actions.

TRANSLATION

[66v] In the name of God, praise be to God. Prayers and peace be upon the Messenger of God and his family and all the party of God.

From Sa'id to the Commander of the Faithful Aḥmad ibn Shaykh 'Umar. Complete salutations, prayer and respect. We wish to inform you that our purpose in writing this document is to answer your request for advice about your brothers who have revolted against you and thus have acted at variance with the books³ of God and the *sunna* of His Messenger (may God bless him and grant him peace), as well as the consensus of the companions (may God be pleased with them) and the command of your father Shaykh 'Umar ibn Sa'id (may God be pleased with both of them).⁴

As for the books, [I refer to] what the Most High says: "Hold fast by the covenant of God all together, and be not disunited."⁵ "He has made plain to you the religion" up to [the phrase], "not to be divided therein."⁶ "And whoever acts with hostility to the Messenger after guidance has become manifest to him"⁷

² BNP, MO, FA 5561, ff. 66-9.

³ The four books of revelation given to the prophets: the Torah given to Moses, the Psalms given to David, the Gospels given to Jesus, as well as the Qur'ān.

⁴ That is, with 'Umar and his father.

⁵ Qur'ān 3:103.

⁶ Qur'ān 42:13. Sa'id gives two phrases from the verse, which refers to the revelations of religion in the four books.

⁷ The truth manifested through miracles.

and follows other than the way of the believers, We turn him to that which he (himself) turns⁸ and make him enter hell; and it is an evil resort."⁹

As for the *sunna*, there is the saying of him [the Prophet Muḥammad] (may peace be upon him): "If two *khalifas* are paid homage [to], kill the last one [to be paid homage to]."¹⁰ And in his saying (may peace be upon him): "My community shall not agree upon an error, so follow the majority. He who differs from the community even as little as a span removes the harness of Islam from his neck." Also, in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī,¹¹ it is related on the authority of Abū Hurayra, who said: "The Prophet (may peace be upon Him) said that there are three whom God will not speak to on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He be charitable towards them, and they will be consigned to painful punishment: any man who has an excess of water and withholds it from a passer-by; any person who promises his fidelity to an imām for worldly ends, and if he achieves these honors he remains loyal, but if he does not he reneges: and any man who sells an article in the late afternoon, swearing by God that he had sold it to so-and-so who agreed to take it, but then [the seller] refuses to hand over the article."

As for Shaykh 'Umar (may God be pleased with him), he presented you in Markoya¹² and he made you a *muqaddam* for giving the *words* [of the Tijaniyya]¹³ in the presence of many people. In Masina I was told that Shaykh 'Umar assembled all the elders of Futa¹⁴ and consulted about who would succeed him. They are the people who make the decisions.¹⁵ They all consented to his making you his successor. The next day he went to the

⁸ That is, the error which he chooses.

⁹ Qur'ān 4:115.

¹⁰ From the *ḥadīth*. See, for example, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 5 vols. (Cairo, 1283), book 33, tradition 61.

¹¹ From the *ḥadīth*. Al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4 vols. (L. Krehl and T. W. Juynboll, eds., Leyden, 1862-8, 1907-8), book 42, chapter 10.

¹² The author writes *Mankoya*.

¹³ See Document 2.

¹⁴ A way of referring to the inner circle of disciples from Futa Toro. See Document 20.

¹⁵ Literally "those who loose and bind."

mosque where he gathered the people of Futa and the people of Masina. Here he rose, made you rise, and put his hand on you. Then he asked the people: "Is this one fit to be a *khalifa*?" They answered: "He is, he is." Then Shaykh 'Umar said: "I have made him successor from Timbuktu to Futa. Whoever asks me for the blessing of the Messenger of God (may the blessing of God and peace be upon him) and the blessing of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī (may God be pleased with him), let him ask for their blessing from him."¹⁶ This was the first set of actions.

I was also told [67r] in the second place that he called you, seated you in his seat, then sat in front of you and swore his allegiance to you. Then he commanded all the people to do likewise, and they did. He swore that if anyone among the descendants of Sa'īd¹⁷ foreswore his oath he would pray for his annihilation. This curse, he said, would be upon all who went against you, whether they were present or absent. This is what we heard and it was also told to us by those who were present.

If this be true, it follows that anyone who differs with you or rises up against you, the judgement upon him is well-known in the pure *shari'a* of Muḥammad, for the Prophet said: "If two *khalifas* are paid homage to, kill the last one [to be paid homage to]." As for the consensus, the companions (may God's pleasure be upon them) agreed unanimously that there can be only one *khalifa*. Shaykh 'Uthmān Fūdi said the same thing in his Pular¹⁸ poem....¹⁹

Shaykh al-Khalīl said in his *Mukhtaṣar*:²⁰ "The rebels are a group that has gone against the great imām²¹ or his deputy. Their purpose is to deny what

¹⁶ For the context in Masina, see Robinson, *Holy War*, pp. 299-300. Note the definition of the Umarian domain and the close parallels to 'Umar's language at Markoya (Document 2).

¹⁷ 'Umar's father.

¹⁸ Written *fulāni*.

¹⁹ A short excerpt from an *'ajami* poem, in Pular in the Arabic script, follows at this point. The meaning is very similar to the quotations from the Qur'an and *ḥadīth* made earlier. We do not translate it here.

²⁰ The *Mukhtaṣar* is a summary of Maliki law widely used in North and West Africa and compiled by Khalīl ibn Iṣḥāq (d. 1374). This work is translated by G.H. Bousquet in *Al-Mukhtaṣar. Abrégé de la loi musulmane selon le rite de l'imam Mālik*, 4 vols. (Alger, 1956-62). Sa'īd gives an incomplete version of these passages from the *Mukhtaṣar*.

²¹ That is, the *khalifa*.

is due to God or to His servants, or to depose him or to refuse to enter into obedience to him." The author of *Al-Mu'īn* said: "He who dies without an oath of allegiance around his neck, dies the death of ignorance.²² It is incumbent upon the just imām to fight them. If they ally themselves with the infidels against you, it is permissible to use those who are for them [the rebels] against them."

As for what you said about these rebels against you, there is nothing left to do but either to execute the judgement of God upon them or to ignore them despite their rebellion. As for the latter course, leaving them to commit mischief on earth through banditry and rebellion and to attract people to rebellion, this is forbidden to you by the book [Qur'ān], the *sunna* and the consensus, for the sultan is the shadow of God on His earth to whom those who have been unjustly treated come for refuge.

Shaykh Muḥammad al-Rāji²³ said: "You should know that the shaykh ['Uthmān] spoke to the companions of the shaykh.²⁴ Most of them [the companions] are dead and most of those now alive belong to another generation, as is evident from the words [of the poet]: 'Do what you will, for God is generous. No harm shall come to you if you sin, except for two which you must always avoid: association of another with God and causing harm to people.'" Although this was not witnessed but only related in the tradition, he²⁵ did an injustice himself after that and he informed Shaykh 'Uthmān that he had expelled the unjust one from his people. He even repeats this assertion in his statement.

Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī said in this connection: "Beware, heaven forbid that one should wear the cloak [67v] of security from God, a belief that while committing sins one is nonetheless free from God's punishment. Whoever takes such a position before the Exalted Truth, and persists in it, deserves to die,

²² That is, dies as an unbeliever who has never known Islam. *Jāhiliyya*, the word which is translated by "ignorance," refers to the pre-Islamic period and to paganism in general.

²³ An important Tijaniyya leader in the Sokoto community. See Last, *Sokoto Caliphate*, pp. 216-9; Robinson, *Holy War*, pp. 106-8.

²⁴ Here follows a brief passage in Pular which we do not translate.

²⁵ Al-Rāji.

ending [life] in affliction.²⁶ So ask God to spare you and deliver you from His affliction. The poet said: 'Do what you will, for God is generous. No harm shall come to you if you sin, except for two which you must always avoid: association of another with God and causing harm to people.'" Shaykh 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī (may God be pleased with him) said [as much] in his Pular poem....²⁷

Therefore I see that your problem with those who refused to swear allegiance to you is similar to what God related in the story of the children of Adam, Abel and Cain....²⁸ This story is precisely the story of those who oppose you among your brothers, because their father commanded them to obey you and to accept your authority. Therefore it is unlawful for them to disobey his command.

You should also know that what Shaykh 'Umar (may God be pleased with him) has done is identical with what his righteous predecessors (may God be pleased with them) -- the companions, the saints and the just sultan -- have done.²⁹ He [Muḥammad] (may God's blessings and peace be with him) signaled the succession of Abū Bakr (may God be pleased with him) at the end of his own life, when he said to the people of his house: "Command Abū Bakr to lead the people in prayer." Our ladies 'Āisha and Ḥafṣa (may God be pleased with both of them) said: "Command 'Umar to lead the people in prayer, because Abū Bakr is too soft-hearted." But he [Muḥammad] (may God's blessings and peace be with him) said: "You are Yūsuf's friends,³⁰ I command no other than Abū Bakr," or words to that effect.

As for 'Umar (may God be pleased with him), Abū Bakr declared clearly for his succession. I saw this in *Kitāb Jannat al-Murīd al-Ṣādiq* by Shaykh Sidi

²⁶ The concept that good Muslims may, close to the end of their lives, commit unforgivable sins and incur divine punishment.

²⁷ Another short passage in Pular follows. We have not translated it.

²⁸ The rest of 67v (from line 14) and the first 12 lines of 68r recount the story of Cain and Abel and follow closely, and sometimes word for word, the account in the Qur'ān 5:27-30, and in the *hadith*. Reference is also made to the story of Noah in chapter 11. We have not translated these passages.

²⁹ From the *hadith*, principally al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, book 62.

³⁰ A reference to the imprisonment of Joseph in Egypt, and thus to bad advice.

Muḥammad (may God be pleased with him), when he said: "When his death approached, Abū Bakr called to his side our lord 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (may God be pleased with him) and told him: "Write: in the name of God this is Abū Bakr's last day in this world and his first day in eternity. I have appointed 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may God be pleased with him) to succeed me. If he does well, this is what I expect. If he does not do well, then those who act unjustly shall know how they shall be turned upside down [on the Day of Judgement]."³¹

Regarding [the succession] of our lord 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (may God be pleased with him), when the Commander of the Faithful 'Umar was stabbed in the mosque while praying, the two men nearest to him were 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Āwf. 'Umar took the hand of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Āwf, fell on him and appointed him to complete the prayer with the people. 'Abd al-Raḥmān shortened the prayer, concluded it, and carried the Commander of the Faithful 'Umar to his house. He prepared for him a drink of *nabīdh*,³² but when he drank it, it came straight out of his stomach. They did the same thing with milk, with the same result. [68v] They realized that he was dying, so they commanded him to name his successor. He replied: "If I do not name my successor, then one who is better than me did not. And if I do name a successor, then one who is better than me did name a successor." This was a reference to what he [the Prophet Muḥammad] (may the blessing of God and peace be upon him) had done with Abū Bakr and what Abū Bakr had done with him ['Umar].

Then he told them: "Let this matter be decided by six men among you, those who, when the Messenger of God (may the blessing of God and peace be upon him) died, were in his grace -- our master 'Uthmān, our master 'Alī, al-Zubayr, Ṭalḥa, Sa'd and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Āwf. And let 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Āwf be the arbiter among you and let Sa'd assist him." When he ['Umar] died 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Āwf said to them: "Let three of you [name] three candidates." So al-Zubayr stepped down in favor of 'Alī, Ṭalḥa stepped down in favor of 'Uthmān and Sa'd stepped down in favor of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn

³¹ Qur'ān 26:227.

³² An infusion of dates which ferments rapidly. In Modern Arabic it means "wine."

'Āwf. Then 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Āwf asked them to give him their confidence. They did. So he went to 'Alī, took his hand and made him promise that if 'Uthmān became *khalifa* he would obey him and be on his side and would be his *wazīr*. Then he went out and confided in 'Uthmān in a similar manner, asking him what he ['Abd al-Raḥmān] had asked 'Alī [to do], and to solemnly promise that if 'Alī became *khalifa* he would support him. 'Uthmān agreed. Then 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Āwf asked him ['Uthmān] to give him his hand, which he did. Then he ['Abd al-Raḥmān] declared his allegiance to him ['Uthmān] as the successor. Then he told all the people to swear their allegiance to him.

This is one account, but there is another which says that it was al-Zubayr who went to 'Alī and said to him, "We shall choose you as successor provided you follow the *sunna* of our prophet Muḥammad (may God's blessings and peace be with him) and the *khalifas* who preceded you and do not fall short of them." 'Alī replied: "I shall do what I can." Then al-Zubayr went to 'Uthmān and said the same thing that he had said to 'Alī. 'Uthmān consented without any qualification. So he [al-Zubayr] swore his allegiance and commanded the people to do the same. They did. A certain man [protested], saying: "You have chosen 'Uthmān and left 'Alī!" Al-Zubayr answered: "This is not my fault, I told 'Alī and he imposed a condition; I said the same thing to 'Uthmān and he accepted without any conditions." In the case of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (may God be pleased with him), death came suddenly to him and he did not name a successor.

Once I heard the learned man 'Abd al-Ghani explaining the Qur'ān in the Prophet's mosque in Medina.³³ When he reached the story of Sulaymān son of Da'ūd (may he rest in peace), he told the story of the trials that befell him [Sulaymān] (may he rest in peace) after he lost the ring. He told also that Muḥammad had a ring with a secret related to Sulaymān's ring. When he [Muḥammad] died, his ring passed on to Abū Bakr, then to 'Umar, then to 'Uthmān. 'Uthmān went one day from Medina a short distance to visit some of the relics of the Prophet. He came with his friends to a well. Here he removed his ring and began to turn it about in his hand. The ring fell in the

³³ Presumably a reference to Sa'īd's own pilgrimage, which gave him great authority in the circles of the Segu court.

well. They searched for it but could not find it. They offered a lot of money [but it was not found]. Then there fell upon him the same misfortunes as had befallen Sulaymān.

When the Commander of the Faithful 'Uthmān was killed, 'Alī was chosen, but there was disagreement among the companions of the Messenger of God (may God's blessings and peace be with him) until 'Alī was killed. 'Alī was killed by the wretched 'Abd Allāh ibn Muljam.³⁴ He [Muḥammad] (may peace be upon Him) said: "The most miserable of the former days was the one who cut the limbs of the camel of Ṣāliḥ, and the most miserable of the later times is the one who kills 'Alī." I do not know whether or not he had passed the succession to his son Ḥasan, but only [69r] that he instructed his children in matters concerning the other world.

When it came to Mu'āwiya (may God be pleased with him), he recommended his son Yazīd. He had commanded him [Yazīd] to do a certain thing, but the cursed one disobeyed him.³⁵ Aḥmad al-Tijānī (may God be pleased with him), in a book written by one of his disciples and entitled *Ifādat al-Aḥmadiyya li-Murid Sa'ādat al-Abadiyya*,³⁶ says under the letter yā: "Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya is cursed because the Most High says: 'But if you turn away, you are sure to make mischief in the land and cut off the ties of kinship!'³⁷ Also the Most High said: 'Surely those who cause injury to God and His Messenger, God has cursed them in this world and the hereafter, and He has prepared for them a humiliating chastisement.'³⁸ And what injury is greater than killing his [Muḥammad's] child?"³⁹ Shaykh 'Uthmān [ibn Fūdī] used to tell his community: "O my people, some clerics said that Yazīd was not to be cursed after he died; [even if that is so], I have cursed him and you should curse him."

³⁴ His name is often rendered 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muljim.

³⁵ The author defends Mu'āwiya as a companion of Muḥammad and makes Yazīd into a scapegoat for the divisions of the Umayyad period.

³⁶ By Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib al-Sufyānī (d. 1843-4). He was a close companion of al-Tijānī in Fez, and recorded his master's sayings. See Abun-Nasr, *Tijaniyya*, p. 26.

³⁷ Qur'ān 47:22.

³⁸ Qur'ān 33:57.

³⁹ The reference is to Yazīd's responsibility for the killing of Muḥammad's grandson al-Ḥusayn at Karbala in 681 AD.

Turning to the saints (may God be pleased with them) [we know that when] the time for the death of Shaykh Sidi al-Mukhtār al-Kunti⁴⁰ came, Sidi Ḥubayl came and asked him about who would succeed him. He answered with this sentence: "Blessing upon him who comes to visit." But Sidi Ḥubayl desired to have the matter more clearly explained. So the shaykh said: "Let your mother do that for me." She had died a year earlier. He called to her: "Arise!" Then they smelled the odor that was characteristic of her while she was alive. The shaykh said to him: "This is your mother. She asked for the command to go to Aḥmad al-Bakkāy."⁴¹ He was the eldest of his sons. Then he said: "The one who should succeed to this position is Sidi Muḥammad." When the shaykh died, Sidi Muḥammad was given the succession, while Aḥmad al-Bakkāy (may God be pleased with him) went back to Walata and died there.

Sidi Muḥammad remained as *khalīfa* for 18 years. When he had approximately forty nights more to live, he gathered his disciples and said to them: "God's saints gathered together yesterday at the tomb of the shaykh, my father (may God be pleased with him), and they designated for you the one who was named for his grandfather Sidi al-Mukhtār." In his hand there was a leaf of [the *Ṣaḥīḥ*] of al-Bukhārī, and he handed it to him [Sidi al-Mukhtār] and said: "Read for the people." But this one was timid, because he was not accustomed to reading, so he [Sidi Muḥammad] struck him with it and repeated: "Read for the people." Then he read so well that he said far more than had been covered by his father. When death came his son Ḥammād⁴² succeeded him, while Aḥmad al-Bakkāy was away. When al-Bakkāy returned he disputed the succession. This situation continued, until al-Bakkāy came to a point when he denied some of the saints, such as Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī and his disciples.⁴³ Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī (may God be pleased with him)

⁴⁰ The distinguished scholar of the late eighteenth century (d. 1811). He revived the Kunta family and established the Kunta network of clerics and merchants in the Central Sudan. See Louis Brenner, "Concepts of *ṭarīqa* in West Africa: the case of the Qādiriyya," in D. B. Cruise O'Brien and C. Coulon, eds., *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam* (Oxford, 1988).

⁴¹ The homonym and uncle of the Aḥmad al-Bakkāy who opposed 'Umar and the Tijaniyya and who emerges in the next paragraph.

⁴² Another name for al-Mukhtār. For the divisions among the Kunta, see Document 5.

⁴³ A reference to the death of Bakkāy in 1865 in the aftermath of the revolt of Masina in 1863 and the reconquest launched by Tijānī. See Document 5.

said: "Whoever denies one of them, that is the saints, God will cause him to die the death of an infidel. May God protect us from this through His grace and kindness. Amen."

The same is the case with Shaykh al-Qāḍī al-Jājībī (may God be pleased with him). When he approached death, he made his son Muḥammad his successor even though his son al-Muṣṭafā was older. And Shaykh 'Uthmān (may God be pleased with him) made his son Muḥammad Bello succeed him as Commander of the Faithful even through Sambo, the saint of God, was older, as you may know from our first injunction.⁴⁴

When Muḥammad Bello was installed in Sokoto and his uncle, the jurisconsult 'Abd Allāh was installed in Bodinga, the learned man Muṣṭafā⁴⁵ [69v] came from Bodinga to Sokoto and entered the presence of the Commander of the Faithful Muḥammad Bello. He found him with the *wazīr* Gidado⁴⁶ and the commander of the army, 'Alī Jedo. The Commander of the Faithful Muḥammad Bello said: "What have the people of Bodinga done about this catastrophe?," by which he meant the death of Shaykh 'Uthmān ibn Fūdi. Muṣṭafā answered that the people of Bodinga had paid allegiance to the jurisconsult. Then the commander of the army 'Alī Jedo said: "Will you bring him here so that we may kill him, or do you want us to go to him and kill him? You surely know what the Prophet (may the blessing of God be upon him) said: 'If two *khalīfas* are paid homage to, kill the last one [to be paid homage to].'" Subsequently the *wazīr* almost killed him [Muṣṭafā]; he insulted him and accused him of hypocrisy. But the Commander of the Faithful Muḥammad Bello restrained him and said: "The commander of the army 'Alī Jedo has not sworn allegiance to him, nor the Ardo Sosobe, nor Moijo, the commander of the Wolarbe. Therefore the allegiance to him is not significant."

⁴⁴ The first injunction may refer to Sa'id's chronicle of the history of Sokoto; *Taqāyid Mimmā Waṣala ilainā Ahwāl Umarā' al-Muslimīn Salāṭin Hausa*, printed and translated by O. Houdas in his edition of *Tedzikeret en-Nisian* (Paris, 1899). Sambo was also called Muḥammad Sambo. For the struggles around the succession in Sokoto, see Last, *Sokoto Caliphate*, pp. 63-7, Robinson, *Holy War*, pp. 102-8, and Charles Stewart, "Frontier disputes."

⁴⁵ See Last, *Sokoto Caliphate*, pp. 93-4.

⁴⁶ Written *Ghiṭāto*, for the Pular *Gidādo*. The Pular names which appear in the same paragraph (Jedo, Ardo, Sosobe, Wolarbe) are also written with the Arabic equivalents of the Pular sounds.

Had our brothers the people of Futa⁴⁷ done as these have done, they would have relieved the Muslims from these unjust rebels who have disobeyed the commands of God and His Messenger and their father Shaykh 'Umar (may God be pleased with him).

Know then, my brothers, that this matter is an eternal fate for him for whom it is decreed in eternity. As it is said, whatever is [meant] for 'Amr cannot come to Zayd, what is [meant] for Zayd cannot come to 'Amr.⁴⁸ This is what Shaykh 'Umar has done. Verily he is only following the righteous ancestors. Had he seen even one of his own children more worthy than the Commander of the Faithful Aḥmad, he would have presented to us that son.⁴⁹ But he saw no other. Shaykh 'Umar and those like him do nothing without the true permission of God Most High and His Messenger (may God's blessings and peace be with him) and without direction from the saints -- who are the ones who are in charge and [who are] the people who govern.⁵⁰

The Commander of the Faithful Muḥammad Bello said: "I saw Shaykh Sidi al-Mukhtār in a dream as if in real life. He struck the mat on which I was lying and told me: "Sit up! We have placed you in this position."

In conclusion, God truly left all these questions in the hands of the people who are in charge and they are the people who govern. God grant us their love and the love of those who love them. Amen! Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, and may God bless our master Muḥammad, His Prophet, his family, and his companions and grant them peace. The end.

⁴⁷ A reference to the people of Futa who had settled in Karta under the auspices of the Umarian *jihād*, and allowed themselves to be recruited by Ḥabīb and Mukhtār.

⁴⁸ 'Amr and Zayd are frequently used in Arabic education to illustrate points. The sense here is to reinforce the main issue: there can be only one *khalifa*.

⁴⁹ Compare with the reasoning about Aḥmad at the end of Document 5.

⁵⁰ *Ahl al-dīwān*.