

Regarding the Tokolor who are in the land of Futa and who want their brothers to return to them in Futa, they may identify them by putting the names of their brothers in writing and then giving the lists to the commandants entrusted with rule in their regions. Then they will send the list to the commandant at Niuro by an intermediary, the commandant at Kayes. The commandant at Niuro will refer the requests to the relatives of the people who made the requests through the mediation of the indigenous leaders<sup>7</sup> working under his authority, and they [the relatives] will make the decision. The commandant at Niuro mentioned above will inform the commandant at Kayes of the particulars of the request [and] arrangements for it. The commandant of Kayes will inform the commandants of the regions of the results of the order and mention the progress of the order and its outcome.

Also, the commandant at Niuro mentioned above will not force any one among the people to leave the land of Kingi,<sup>8</sup> but he can advise them to return to their people.

The Governor of Ndar and its Dependencies,  
de Lamothe

Commandant Supérieur of the French Sudan,  
Archinard

## 19B. AḤMAD AL-KABĪR TO THE SULTAN OF MOROCCO

After Archinard's conquest of Niuro in 1891, Aḥmad al-Kabir made his way to Bandiagara -- the one remaining Umarian capital. Two years later Archinard moved against this redoubt and forced him out once again (Document 20). It was only a few days after Aḥmad's departure from Bandiagara that he composed the following indictment of the French and their

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<sup>7</sup> *Al-ru'asā' al-sawādīn*, literally "black chiefs." These were the leaders whom Archinard appointed to supervise different parts of the Umarian community in Karta.

<sup>8</sup> The province in which Niuro is located. The order does not refer to Diombokho, the other region of significant Futanke settlement in Karta.

duplicitous relations with him over the thirty years of his reign, in the form of a letter and plea for help to Sultan Mawlāy al-Ḥasan<sup>9</sup> of Morocco. It indicates that Aḥmad, despite all of the displacements of the previous years, maintained an effective secretariat and archive which allowed him to be very specific about treaties and French violations.

Aḥmad's letter raises interesting questions about the influence and suzerainty of the Sultan of Morocco in the Western Sudan. In the 1880s Ḥasan, working from the Moroccan claims dating back to the days of the Songhay Empire, had made an effort to counter French advances in North and West Africa by reasserting control over the region, especially around Timbuktu.<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to observe that Aḥmad al-Kabir, in the context of his distress and plea to the sultan, makes no mention of his titles of *khalifa* and Commander of the Faithful.

This document appears in the archives of the Government General of Algeria, in a packet dated 4 April 1895.<sup>11</sup> French officials in North Africa were being alerted to the connections between West African Muslims and the Sultan of Morocco, a still independent although beleaguered Muslim ruler. The same packet also contains a letter from the community of Timbuktu asking for Ḥasan's intervention. The French translation which we have worked from was probably made in Morocco, by French consular or intelligence agents, or in Algeria, after the material was communicated to the Governor General.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Reigned 1873-94.

<sup>10</sup> Kanya-Forstner, *Conquest*, p. 219; Miège, *Le Maroc et l'Europe*, vol. 3, p. 372.

<sup>11</sup> GG ALG 22H 36. The original Arabic letter may exist in the Bibliothèque Générale in Rabat.

<sup>12</sup> The French were very interested in the links between the Moroccan Tijaniyya, highly suspect compared to the Algerian lodges, and the Umanian Tijaniyya in what was becoming colonial Sudan. Another relevant cluster of letters is contained in 16H 45, Governor General of Algeria to the General commanding Constantine, 28 April 1896. It is also conceivable that the French may have acquired the Arabic version in Bandiagara in 1893, or intercepted the courier from Aḥmad al-Kabir to the Sultan of Morocco. Two seals attributed to 'Umar and Aḥmad al-Kabir were brought to France by Commandant Bouvier, and photos of them appear in Depont and Coppolani, *Confréries*, p. 440.

## TRANSLATION

[5] Second letter, written by Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥājj 'Umar, commander of Timbuktu [sic], to the Sultan of Morocco, Mawlāy al-Ḥasan, the 14 Qa'da 1310 / 31 May 1893.<sup>13</sup>

Preamble.<sup>14</sup>

The reason for our writing is that the shaykh, our father, delegated us with his powers and the direction of affairs. We accepted this mission and assumed the carrying out of a heavy responsibility. The infidels [the Bamana and others] had returned to their former state of impiety after conversion; violating their commitments they had [6] taken back their liberty. They [the French] came first to us in 1280 (1863-4) of the *hijra* to ask for peace. We allowed ourselves to be fooled by them.<sup>15</sup>

Here is the letter which the commander,<sup>16</sup> Aḥmad al-Kabir, your servant, wrote to the French in Ndar.<sup>17</sup> After the *bismillah*<sup>18</sup> and praise to God, [he wrote]:

"From Aḥmad al-Kabir al-Madani (may the Exalted God bring him help) to the leader of Senegal. May God grant his blessing to those who follow the good path.

"After that. I and your envoy, we have reached an agreement about peace and the following conditions.<sup>19</sup> You will prevent no one from coming into our country, from any direction, whether from Futa<sup>20</sup> or elsewhere, and whoever wishes to prevent [anyone] from [7] coming to us, you will forbid it. Anything that we wish in your country, whatever the price, the small or large

<sup>13</sup> In fact, 14 Dhu'l-Qa'da fell on 30 May.

<sup>14</sup> The French typically did not translate the salutations.

<sup>15</sup> Initially infidels seems to refer to the non-Muslim Bamana, but by this point "they" refers obviously to the French, and specifically to Mage who resided in Segu from 1864 to 1866.

<sup>16</sup> *L'Emir*.

<sup>17</sup> The translator, based in North Africa, wrote "Ender (?)" for Ndar throughout the manuscript.

<sup>18</sup> "In the name of God."

<sup>19</sup> This is a reference to the treaty which Mage and Aḥmad agreed to on 3 May 1866. See Saint-Martin, *Relations diplomatiques*, pp. 130-1.

<sup>20</sup> The translator writes *Fout*.

size, you will [allow us to] buy it. We will collect the tenth<sup>21</sup> on all that you sell, and we will oppose unjust actions of any of your people in our country. Whoever has suffered a loss will not be able to reclaim it from you or us,<sup>22</sup> and for the losses which we cause, you will support our case in your country. You may establish yourselves to conduct commerce wherever you will, you will have complete freedom of circulation. If you accept these conditions, very well: send us someone to complete the treaty. Otherwise, stay where you are.

"Greetings to those who follow the right path."

Written in the second ten day period of Dhu'l-Qa'da 1282 (March-April 1866)<sup>23</sup> of the *hijra*.

[8] Then the chief of Senegal responded to us by a letter written by the very learned al-Hājj Bū El Mogdad,<sup>24</sup> that he accepted our conditions and would observe all of them.

This situation lasted 12 years.<sup>25</sup> Then they began to show bad faith and ceased to honor the conventions. They joined forces with bad elements among the believers and took the side of infidel blacks, because they violated the conditions of the treaty one after the other and delayed the execution of them from one year to the next. Each time we were on our guard against their deceitful ways and countered the plots of these devils of the human species.

Once they had started on the path of deception, they declared war against us and began to prepare openly for it. We wanted to resist them, and to rise up to march against them, but [9] alas, destiny rose up against us. All of the country, with its inhabitants, turned towards them at the call of a certain number of wicked persons among the believers, and they all joined forces to revolt against God. We fought them with the few faithful who remained with

<sup>21</sup> Probably translated from *'ushr*, "the tithe" and the conventional customs percentage.

<sup>22</sup> This is certainly a mistranslation from the Arabic, for the 1866 treaty called for the Umarians and French to protect trade in their respective spheres.

<sup>23</sup> Between 28 March and 6 April 1866.

<sup>24</sup> The very prominent citizen of St. Louis and diplomat of the colonial regime. The translator writes *El Hadj ben el Mogdad*. See Robinson, *Holy War*, pp. 213-4, and Document 13C.

<sup>25</sup> That is, until 1878 when the French resumed their eastward march by capturing Sabusire, a town commanded by an Umarian partisan. See Document 14.

us, but these were too few to struggle against the unbelievers, and of course one cannot avoid the determination of the Master of the two worlds.

By their treachery and their villainy, they took the following [territories]: 1, Futa, 2, Karta, 3, Segu, 4 Bundu, 5, Tenbagh<sup>26</sup>, 6 Han<sup>27</sup> 7, Bark<sup>28</sup> and 8, Baghna.<sup>29</sup>

And now, O lieutenant of God on earth, successor to the Prophet for his people,<sup>30</sup> descendant of the chief of the prophets, make haste, make haste! Your friends have been abandoned, your country [10] is ruined and your subjects are dispersed. Death, captivity and pillage, that is the end which awaits them. The enemy has destroyed mosques, burned Qur'āns, thrown our scientific books into the desert,<sup>31</sup> and has transformed our places of prayer into churches -- the church bell has replaced the muezzin. He has kidnapped the daughters of the shaykh and has forced his sons into his service.<sup>32</sup> The children of Muslims have been divided among the chiefs of the army which has taken the whole country (which requires a month to cross).

See then what you must do, because we belong to you, we are yours, we have only you, and it is with you alone that we have relations, because we are descendants of Shaykh al-Tijānī who swore loyalty to your venerable ancestor.<sup>33</sup>

The enemies of your God and the competitors of your ancestors have [11] taken your country. Make them leave and cover them with humiliation,

<sup>26</sup> Perhaps a reference to Timbo or Timbuktu.

<sup>27</sup> Probably a reference to Kingi.

<sup>28</sup> This may be a reference to the Awlād Mubārak. See Document 4.

<sup>29</sup> Bakhunu.

<sup>30</sup> An allusion to the Sharifian credentials of the Moroccan dynasty.

<sup>31</sup> See the reference to the testimony of Saada Oumar Toure in the General Introduction, note 27.

<sup>32</sup> The Umarians had a particularly bitter memory of the capture of Segu in 1890, when members of the royal family were taken and distributed to the indigenous captors as wives or slaves. One son of Aḥmad was later taken into the French army. See Méniaud, *Pionniers*, vol. 1, pp. 445-6.

<sup>33</sup> See the relations of the Moroccan court and Tijaniyya in Documents 3 and 5.

these repugnant people, and make them pay the *jizya*,<sup>34</sup> because they force humiliation [upon us] without a moment's hesitation.<sup>35</sup>

Do not listen to their lying words and do not lend an ear to their false arguments, nor their vain insinuations, because the French are the most perfidious of God's creatures, and the most deceitful and villainous of races.

We have already written numerous letters since this event, and we are still waiting in vain for any response.

We write this letter at dawn on Friday, the 14th of Dhu'l-Qa'da 1310<sup>36</sup> of the *hijra* of the best of Messengers, Muḥammad (may God the Most High accord him the most [12] abundant prayers and the most pure blessing) (31 May 1893).

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<sup>34</sup> The translator writes *la capitation de main*.

<sup>35</sup> Literally *sans murmurer*.

<sup>36</sup> 30 May 1893. That date, however, fell upon a Tuesday.

avec la permission des notables de  
Tombouctou et de leur émir, Taha  
ben El Kabi, que Dieu le favorise.

2<sup>e</sup> Lettre écrite par  
Ahmed ben el Hady Omar, émir  
de Tombouctou au Sultan du  
Maroc, Moulay el Hassen, le  
14 Ga'da 1310 (31 mai 1893)

### Préambule . . . . .

La raison qui nous fait vous  
écrire, c'est que le Cheïkh, notre  
père, nous a délégué ses pouvoirs  
et chargé de la direction des  
affaires. Nous acceptâmes dans  
cette mission, et assumâmes le  
fardeau d'une aussi lourde —  
responsabilité. Les infidèles  
étaient retournés à l'impiété  
après s'être convertis, et violant  
leurs engagements, avaient

repris leur liberté.

Ils étaient venus une première fois chez nous en 1860 (1863-64) de l'hégire pour demander la paix : nous nous laissâmes tromper par eux.

Voici la lettre que l'émir — Ahmed el Kébir, votre serviteur écrivit à Euder (?) le Français.

(Après le bismillâh et la louange à Dieu)

De la part d'Ahmed el Kébir el Madani, que Dieu érige Haut le secours, au grand Euder.

Que Dieu accorde son salut à ceux qui suivent la bonne direction.

Ensuite :

Moi et ton envoyé, nous nous sommes entendus au sujet de la paix et nous sommes mis d'accord sur les conditions suivantes : Tous n'empêchez personne de venir dans notre pays, que quelque endroit qu'il vienne, de Fout ou d'ailleurs, et quiconque voudrait l'empêcher d'



d'arriver jusqu'à nous, vous le lui interdirez. Tout ce que nous voudrons dans votre pays, quel qu'en soit le prix, la petitesse ou la grosseur, vous l'achèterez. Nous prendrons le dixième sur tout ce que vous vendrez, et nous nous opposerons aux injustices de ceux d'entre vous qui viendraient dans notre pays. Celui à qui il surviendra une perte, ne la réclamera ni à vous ni à nous, et pour les pertes que nous ferons, vous soutiendrez notre cause dans votre pays. Tous vous établirez pour faire le commerce où bon vous semblera, vous aurez libre circulation partout.

Si vous acceptez ces conditions, très-bien : envoyez-nous quelqu'un pour terminer le contrat. Sinon, restons-en là. Salut à ceux qui suivent la bonne voie.

Écrit dans la 2<sup>e</sup> décade de Bou l'qa'da 1282 (mars. avril 1866) de l'hégire.

Alors le Chef Euder nous répondit, par une lettre écrite de la main du très-docte El Hâdj'ben el Moqdâd, qu'il acceptait nos conditions, et les observerait toutes.

Cette situation dura douze ans. Alors ils commencèrent à montrer de la mauvaise foi, et ne tinrent plus aucun compte des conventions. Ils soudoyèrent les mauvais sujets qui étaient parmi les croyants, et qui prirent fait et cause pour les noirs infidèles, puis ils violèrent l'une après l'autre les conditions du traité, et en rejetèrent l'exécution d'une année à l'autre. Chaque fois, nous fûmes en garde contre leurs fourberies et déjouâmes les sourds desseins de ces démons du genre humain.

Une fois qu'ils eurent la ruse entre leurs mains, ils nous déclarèrent la guerre et s'y préparèrent ouvertement. Nous voulûmes leur résister, et nous soulever pour aller à leur rencontre, mais

voilà que la destinée s'élève contre nous : Tout le pays, avec ses habitants, se tourna vers eux, à l'appel d'un certain nombre de scélérats parmi les croyants, et ne fit plus qu'un pour se révolter contre Dieu. nous les combattîmes avec le peu qui nous restait de fidèles convaincus, mais ils étaient en trop petit nombre pour lutter contre les impies, et d'ailleurs, on ne peut éviter les décrets du Maître des deux mondes.

Par leur perfidie et leur scélératesse, ils ont pris :

1° Fôûh — 2° Kart — 3° Sagh —  
 4° Boundou — 5° Tenbagh —  
 6° Hân — 7° Bartk — et 8°  
 Baghna —

Et maintenant, ô Lieutenant de Dieu sur cette terre, lieutenant de son Prophète auprès de son peuple, ô fils du Chef des Prophètes, hâtez-vous, hâtez-vous ! Vos amis sont dans l'abandon, votre pays

en ruines et vos sujets dispersés ;  
 la mort, la captivité, le pillage,  
 voilà le sort qui les attend. L'ennemi  
 a détruit les mosquées, brûlé les  
 Corans, jeté dans les déserts nos  
 livres de science ; il a transformé  
 en églises nos lieux de prière, et les  
 cloches ont remplacé l'appel du  
 muezzin. Il a enlevé les filles du  
 Cheïkh et assujetti ses enfants à  
 son service. Les enfants des musul-  
 mans ont été partagés entre les Chefs  
 de l'armée qui a pris tout le pays  
 que l'on peut parcourir en un mois.

Voilà donc ce que vous avez à  
 faire, car nous vous appartenons  
 et nous sommes à vous : nous n'  
 avons que vous, et c'est avec vous  
 seul que nous avons des rapports,  
 car nous sommes les descendants du  
 Cheïkh et Eidjani qui prêta-  
 serment de fidélité à votre aïeul  
 vénéré.

Les ennemis de votre Dieu et  
 les compétiteurs de vos aïeux ont

pris votre pays : faites-les en sortir couverts d'humiliation, ces gens répugnants, et faites-leur payer la capitation de main, car ils supportent l'abaissement sans murmurer.

N'écoutez pas leurs paroles mensongères et ne prêtez pas l'oreille à leurs arguments trompeurs, ni à leurs vaines insinuations, car les Français sont les créatures de Dieu les plus perfides, et la race la plus menteuse et la plus scélérate.

Nous avons déjà écrit de nombreuses lettres, depuis cet événement, et nous en avons vainement attendu le résultat.

Nous avons écrit cette lettre à l'aube du vendredi quatorzième jour du mois de Dhoul-Qa'ada de l'année 1310 de l'Hégire du meilleur des messagers, Moḥammed, que Dieu, Très-Haut lui accorde la plus

abondante des prières &c le plus  
pur des saluts (31 mai 1893).

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3<sup>e</sup> Lettre - de Sidi  
Elbachir Etkelmoudi et des  
notables de Gimbouktou.

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Preambule . . . . .

Notre Seigneur, que Dieu  
assiste de son secours, notre glo-  
rieux Khalife, notre auguste  
maître, fils de nos Maîtres  
glorieux, notre Sultan et notre  
bienfaiteur, Maulay Elhassou.

O notre maître, que vos avis  
soient toujours inspirés par le  
secours de Dieu ! Sachez que  
deux Soudanais de Gimbouktou,  
arriveront auprès de Votre Majesté  
comblés des bienfaits de Dieu ;  
ils sont envoyés en toute hâte  
par le peuple de cette ville pour