

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 1893.¹³

Preamble.¹⁴

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.¹⁵

Here is the letter which the commander,¹⁶ Aḥmad al-Kabir, your servant, wrote to the French in Ndar.¹⁷ After the *bismillah*¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ You will prevent no one from coming into our country, from any direction, whether from Futa²⁰ 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

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

¹⁴ The French typically did not translate the salutations.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ *L'Emir*.

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

¹⁸ "In the name of God."

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ The translator writes *Fout*.

size, you will [allow us to] buy it. We will collect the tenth²¹ 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,²² 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)²³ of the *hijra*.

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

This situation lasted 12 years.²⁵ 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

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

²² 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.

²³ Between 28 March and 6 April 1866.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ 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, Tenbagh²⁶, 6 Han²⁷ 7, Bark²⁸ and 8, Baghna.²⁹

And now, O lieutenant of God on earth, successor to the Prophet for his people,³⁰ 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,³¹ 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.³² 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.³³

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

²⁶ Perhaps a reference to Timbo or Timbuktu.

²⁷ Probably a reference to Kingi.

²⁸ This may be a reference to the Awlād Mubārak. See Document 4.

²⁹ Bakhunu.

³⁰ An allusion to the Sharifian credentials of the Moroccan dynasty.

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

³² 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.

³³ See the relations of the Moroccan court and Tijaniyya in Documents 3 and 5.

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

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 1310³⁶ 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).

³⁴ The translator writes *la capitation de main*.

³⁵ Literally *sans murmurer*.

³⁶ 30 May 1893. That date, however, fell upon a Tuesday.