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The Lost & Found Children of Abraham In Africa and the American Diaspora



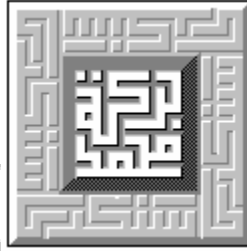
**The Saga of the *Turudbe'* *Fulbe'* & Their Historical
Continuity Through Identity Construction in the Quest
for Self-Determination**

by

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا

The *Turudbe' Fulbe'*: the Lost Children of Abraham
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Abstract:
“The Lost Children of Abraham”
The *Turudbe’ Fulbe’* The Persistence of Historical Continuity Through Identity Construction in the Quest for Self-Determination

The *Turudbe’ Fulbe’* have been the purveyors of social reform and the creators of kingdoms in the *Bilad’s-Sudan*, for more than 9 centuries; and we mean by the *bilad’s-sudan*, are those lands that lie between the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea, and what is between the beginning of the *Sahel* savannah lands below the Sahara until the beginning of the tropical forest. However the origin of this Fulbe’ clan have been cast in a veil of mystery mainly due to the diverse opinions among ancient and contemporary scholars concerning them. Furthermore, the various names given to these people do nothing to remove this enigma. For example: *Takrur*, *Tukulor*, *Turunkawa*, and *Turudbe’* (sing. *Turuudi*), are all names referring to one people. The Arab historians referred to them as *Takruri*, in spite of the fact that this cognomen today refers to every Black from West Africa. In Franco-phone West Africa, the Wolof called them *Tukulor*. Among the Hausa speaking people, they are called *Turunkawa*. However, the Fulbe’ refer to themselves as *Turudbe’* in their own language or *Turudiyya* in Arabic. The last two cognomens are how they are known among the rest of the Fulani clans as well. What is key here, is that this *Turudbe’ Fulbe’* clan played a key role as leaders of religion and purveyors of intellectual reform throughout the regions of African known as the *bilad’s-sudan* (these are the lands which lie south of the Sahara desert and north of the tropical forest, between the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea). The comprehension of this function played by the *Turudbe’* is a *sine qua non* to an understanding and apprehension of movements and events in the *bilad’s-sudan*, especially during the 19th century.

This study will, Allah willing, highlight the history of this enigmatic clan by examining them from their own writings as well as the writings of contemporary scholars. I will attempt to delineate the role that the *Turudbe’* played in the reform and *jihad* movements of the 18th and 19th centuries. Their resilient historical consciousness and how this identity construction helped in the survival of this people will be examined in depth. Furthermore, I will also show how during the period of African enslavement in the western hemisphere, the *Turudbe’ Fulbe* helped produce some of the most dynamic leaders of reform and change in the African American struggle for freedom and justice. Men like Frederick Douglass, Denmark Vesey and David Walker were all influenced either directly or indirectly by enslaved *Turudbe’ Fulbe* men. In this regard, reference will be made to *Amir Abd’r-Rahman ibn Ibrahim*, *Alfa Umar ibn Sayyid*, and *Muhammadu Bilali* who were the purveyors of *Turudbe’ Fulbe* Islamic beliefs and who reflected the continuity of this great people and their contribution to western civilization.

“The *Turudbe’ Fulbe’*: the Lost & Found Children of Abraham”
The Persistence of Historical Continuity through Identity Construction in the Quest for Self-Determination

In order for the identity of any ethnic group to have continuity, there must be an intentional codification and transmission of the fundamental ideals of the ethnicity to succeeding generations. These transmitted identity constructs become the critique and balance principle against which all human ventures must be measured, revised, and changed. Thus, identity construction acts as the social/historical precedence which functions as the primary model for that ethnicity. My professor, Dr. Joseph K. Adjaye asserted that “vital to identity construction are two preconditions: first, recognition of commonly held values that incorporate the moral and cultural universe of the self, and second, the outward, interactional interpretation of values by reference to the values that constitute the cultural universe of the community.”¹ Thus, the preservation and transmission of the symbols, myths and collective memories is extremely important for individual and group survival through time. Charles Weston suggested that the conception of time could be influenced by identity construct when he said:

“Many parts go to making the ethnic identity. The most powerful and universal one pertains to the mythological conception of common ancestry. All my ancestors, right back to the creation, have their place in time. In this respect, ethnic identity indeed is past oriented.”²

This historical consciousness, which is aware of its place in past time, accentuates itself in present time and formulates itself for transmission into the future. It is for this reason that Cheikh Anta Diop noted that the historical consciousness is the most effective tool that a people can utilize in defense against all cultural, economic and political aggression. He said: “The historical conscience, through the feeling of cohesion that it creates, constitutes the safest and the most solid shield of cultural security for a people. The essential thing for a people is to rediscover the thread that connects them to their most remote ancestral past. In the face of cultural aggression of all sorts, in the face of all disintegrating factors of the outside world, the most efficient cultural weapon with which a people can arm itself is this feeling of historical continuity.”³ By definition, the preservation of the cultural identity of any people can only be maintained through history. Thus, its preservation is the function of its people. No one else can tell a people’s story. They must speak for themselves.

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¹ Joseph K. Adjaye, “Kwame Nkrumah and the Legacy of African Identity”, unpublished paper, pp. 3-4.

² Charles Weston, “ Self-reference, Consciousness and Time”, Identity: Personal and Socio-Cultural: A Symposium, edit. Anita Jacobson-Widding, (Atlantic Highlands: Uppsala, 1983), p. 100.

³ Cheikh Anta Diop, Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology, (New York), p. 112

The Origin of the *Turudbe'* Fulbe'

In looking at the identity construct of the *Turudbe'* Fulbe' it is important to inquire into their origin and to trace the geneses of their intellectual traditions and traditions of historiography. The origin of the *Turudbe'* has been cast in a veil of mystery, mainly because of the diverse opinions among the ancient and contemporary scholars concerning them. Furthermore, the various nomenclatures given to these people do nothing to eradicate this enigma. They refer to themselves in the singular as *pullo* and as *fulbe'* as a group.⁴ For example: *Takruur*, *Tukulor*, *Toronkawa*, and *Turudbe'* (sing. *Turuudi*), are all names referring to one people. The Arab historians referred to these people as *Takruri*.⁵ Today this cognomen is used to refer to every Black from West Africa. In Franco-phone Africa, the Fulani are called by the Wolof term *Tukulor*, which was the Wolof referent to the people of *Takruur*.⁶ Further east among the Hausa speaking nations the Fulani are called *Toronkawa*. However, they refer to themselves as *Turudbe'* in their language of Fulfulde' or as *Turudiyya* in Arabic.⁷ The last two cognomens are how they are known among other Fulani ethnicities, as well. In the region of Futa Toro, the Fulani refer to themselves as *Haalpulaar'en* (those who speak *Pulaar* or Fulfulde' language).⁸ It is from this name that the French refer to them as Peul. The *Fulbe'* in general and the *Turudbe'* in particular are dispersed throughout the Sahel region of Africa, from Cape Verde in the west to Ethiopia in the east, and from the equatorial regions of Illorin in the south to edge of the Sahara desert in the north.⁹ Suret-Canale rightly points out that the reason for the dispersion of the *Fulbe'* across vast areas of Africa is the fact that they specialize in the herding of cattle and the Sahel is best suited for this specialization.¹⁰

However, the *Turudbe'* were distinguished from the other Fulani ethnicities due to the fact that they played a key role as leaders of religion and the purveyors of intellectual and religious reform throughout the Western, Central and Eastern Sudan. Our study will show that their reform even survived the 'Middle Passage' and played a significant part in the identity construct and struggle for freedom for many Africans in the Diaspora of the Americas. The comprehension of this function performed by the *Turudbe'* "is a *sine qua non* to an understanding and appreciation of the movements and events in the Western Sudan, particularly in the nineteenth century."¹¹

Umar al-Naqar points out that the origin of the *Turudbe'* comes from the region of Futa Toro.¹² Here he uses the evidence established by the Arab historian al-Bakri, which is the earliest reference to the *Turudbe'*. The name *Takruur* is the name given to the capital of the ancient African-Islamic state that later came into alliance with the

⁴ Jean Suret-Canale, "The Social and Historical Significance of the Peul Hegemonies in the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: Essays on African History, *The Slave Trade to Neocolonialism*, (C. Hurst & Co., London), p. 31.

⁵ Abu 'Ubayd al-Bakri, *Kitab'l-Masaalik wa'l-Mamaalik*, (Algiers, 1968), p. 68.

⁶ Moustapha Kane and David Robinson, *The Islamic Regime of Fuuta Tooro*, (East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1984), p. 2.

⁷ Waziri Junayd ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari, *Dabt'l-Multaqaat Minna'l-Akhbaar 'l-Muftaraqaat fi'l-Mu'alifaat*, unpublished manuscript in the possession of the author, f. 5.

⁸ Ibid. p. 2.

⁹ Suret-Canale, p. 31.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ B. O. Oloruntimehin, *The Segu Tukulor Empire*, (New York: Humanities Press Inc., 1972), p. xiii.

¹² Umar al-Naqar, "Takruur: the History of a Name", *Journal of African History*, x, 3 (1969), p. 366.

Almoravid movement (*al-Murabitun* – ‘the People of the Military Garrisons’) led by Abdallah ibn Yassin in the tenth century. Al-Bakri gives an interesting account of these people when he said:

“The people of Takruur are black and were previously idolaters like the remainder of the Sudanese. They worshipped *dakaakir* – the name of the gods in their language. This was until the rule of War Jabi ibn Abi Rabis. He accepted Islam, introduced the *Shari`a*¹³, ordered them to follow its judgments and opened their eyes to the Truth”¹⁴

This indicates that the *Turudbe`* were Muslims prior to their contact with the Almoravid movement and had attained a high level of Islamization. According to Nehemia Levtzion, it was the *Turudbe`*’s fervent adherence to Islam that caused Abdallah ibn Yassin, the founder of the Almoravid movement (*al-Murabituun*), to immigrate to the lands of Takruur. This event made the *Turudbe`* allies of the Almoravid in their wars against the kingdom of Ghana.¹⁵ This alliance can be seen in the presence of more than 4,000 Sudanese troops who accompanied Yusef ibn Tashfin in the Almoravid conquest of Spain in 1087 C.E.¹⁶ This is significant because it shows that the self identity of the *Turudbe`* Fulbe had been developed prior to their encounter with the Almoravid. In fact, the emigration of the Almoravid leader into the lands of Takruur indicates that perhaps it was the *Turudbe`* that influenced the Arab invasion of the Iberian peninsula, and not the reverse.

Oloruntimehin gives another view of the people of Takruur which defines the *Turudbe`* as a sub-clan of the Tukulor inhabitants of Takruur. He points out that the Tukulor had an extensive caste system divided into three major groups. The more dominant of the groups were the *rimbe`* (free men) and that the *Turudbe`* were the elite of this group. This high social status among the Tukulor was due to their “religious aristocracy who led Futa Toro in its religious wars and conquests which had so much impact upon its history.”¹⁷ This is in contrast to the opinion that the *Turudbe`* were a clan in and of themselves as Willis recognized.

John Willis gives a more humble picture of the *Turudbe`* when he said: “The Torodbe clerisy evolved out of that rootless peoples who perceived in Islam a source of cultural identity.”¹⁸ He affirms the view of Oloruntimehin, that the *Turudbe`* became a ruling elite in Futa Toro, but he adds that they did not have a precise ethnic origin. According to him, their society was open to all individuals prepared to adopt their Islamic customs and beliefs. He and other scholars maintained that the *Turudbe`* roots did not spring from blood, but from “the craft of Islam and indeed attracted their livelihood from

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¹³ The Arabic term *shari`a* takes its etymological root from the Arabic word *shara`a*, which means to commence or begin. In the form used here it means “the place which leads to water”. In the language of the Arabs the word *shari`a* means the commencement of the watering place which humans enact to drink and provide water for their livestock. *Imam* Layth said: “It is for this reason that the term *shari`a* is used to indicate everything that Allah has enacted (*shara`a*) for His servants as a divine law (*shari`a*) and includes prayer, fasting, alms, pilgrimage, marriage and the like.” [See Ibn al-Manthuur al-Ifriqi, *Lisaan ‘l-Arab*, (Cairo, 1956), vol. 15, p. 113.

¹⁴ Al-Bakri, p. 68.

¹⁵ Nehemia Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali*, (London: Methuen & Co. LTD), pp. 43-44.

¹⁶ Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalikan, *Wafayat`l-`Ayaan wa Anba``z-Zamaan*, (1882), p. 484.

¹⁷ Oloruntimehin, *The Segu Tukulor Empire*, p. 11.

¹⁸ John Willis, “the Torodbe Clerisy: A Social View”, *Journal of African History*, xix, 2 (1978), p. 196.

this pursuit.”¹⁹ According to Moustapha Kane and David Robinson the cognomen *Turudbe*’ is often attributed to the region of Toro by those living outside of Futa, but the name is actually derived from the Fulfulde’ verb *tuurade*, which means, “to beg for alms”.²⁰ The begging for alms was and still is a practice for the students of the *Quranic* schools throughout the *Bilad’s-Sudan*. This practice has been a custom designed to instill humility in students and disciples of the Spiritual Way (*at-tareeqa*). However, this concept of ‘begging’ flies in the face of what Leger and Mohammad described as the key component of being *Fulbe*’, the concept of ‘*semteende*’ (‘shamefulness’), that is to say, not brining shame on oneself by begging or depending on others.²¹

A. Arcin believed that the *Turudbe*’ were the clients of the Ba clan of the Fulaani whose origin was a mixture “of Berber, Tajakant, Idaw’ish, Kunta, and Takruri (Dhiankhanke’) elements.”²² He also points out that the *Turudbe*’ were basic ally slaves of the above different clans. Kane and Robinson assert that the *Turudbe*’, in particular were an oppressed group under the above mentioned Dhiankhanke’ rulers of Takruur.²³ Because their members were recruited from the submerged levels of society, the *Turudbe*’ have been depicted as having very humble and modest origins.

Having said this, it is fitting here to mention what the *Turudbe*’ say about themselves, despite the fact that many of the ethnic groups among the Sudanic peoples customarily give fabricated lineages to establish ‘nobility’ of origin for its people. The significance of examining the *Turudbe*’ Fulbe’s view of themselves is to analyze how they construct their identity and how they employ that identity construct for their own survival. Their Self Knowledge helps them to return to the idealization of their cultural values, myths and heroes in order to uphold and reaffirm their collective personality.²⁴

Waziri Junayd ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari, drawing from earlier sources of the origin of the Fulbe’, combines them into a synthesis of opinion. He said regarding their origin:

“It is said that the origin of the *Turudbe*’ are from the Jews. It is said that they are from the Christians. It is said that they are from the Bambara from among the Sudanese who came and settled between the Nile and Euphrates rivers. It is said that they are from a band of the Banu Israel who relocated from the region of Sinai to the lands of Tuur. It is for this reason they are called *Turudbe*’. Tuur is a land in the western part of Yemen. The most sound opinion is that they are the descendants of Ruum ibn ‘Esau ibn Is’haq ibn Ibrahim, (upon them be peace).²⁵ They settled near the meeting of the two seas.”²⁶

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 198.

²⁰ Kane and Robinson, *The Islamic Regime of Fuuta Tooro*, p. 5.

²¹ Rudolf Leger & Abubakar B. Mohammad, “The Concept of *Pulaaku* Mirrored in Fulfulde Proverbs of the Gomba Dialect”, *Berichte des Sonderforschungsbereichs*, 268, Band 14, (Frankfurt, 2000), p. 302.

²² John Willis, “The Diffusion of Islam”, *Studies in West African Islamic History*, Vol. 1 (London: Frank Cass, 1979), p. 24.

²³ Kane and Robinson, *The Islamic Regime of Fuuta Tooro*, p. 5.

²⁴ Joseph K. Adjaye, pp. 6-7.

²⁵ According to the Bible in Genesis 36: 10 the name of this son was Reu’el who was the son of Bash’emath the daughter of Ishma’il. However in Genesis 28: 9 the name of this daughter of Ishma’il that ‘Esau took as his wife was Ma’halath. In 1 Chronicles 1: 35 Reu’el had four sons: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. Allegedly, it is from one of these sons that the *Turudbe*’ Fulbe’ descended.

Though some contemporary scholars dispute the above account, yet John Willis points out “this need not be taken as a fatal objection to their claims of Arabic ancestry” or even for that matter Hebrew ancestry, as well.²⁷ Here in this context, the *Turudbe*’ trace their lineage and origins back through the two sacred communities the Jews and the Christians and then on to the sacred covenant of Abraham, the father of the People of the Book. This is significant because the narrative of the ‘covenant’, the ‘promise’ and the ‘return’ becomes a motivating factor in the self-image of the *Turudbe*’. This identity construct becomes what Ibn Khaldun would call the point of solidarity (*asabiyya*) that binds the *Turudbe*’ and provides them with a philosophy in their historical consciousness. It gives them their reason for being and what Nietzsche would call ‘the will to power’. Abdullahi Dan Fuduye’ places *Turudbe*’ genesis deep within the ethos of the Bani Israel when he said:

“The origin of the entire *Fullaatiyeen* (Fulbe’) ethnicity comes from the geographical area of Mount Sinai (*Tuur Sina*). They thereafter persisted in migrating from place to place until they reached the lands of the far west (*aqsa’l-maghrib*) and to the lands that Allah ta’ala had willed for them to reach.”²⁸

This positing of the *Turudbe*’ in the sacred mount where the Torah was originally revealed to Prophet Musa (Moses) provides them with the mechanism for organizing their collective experience around the Creator and infuses them with divine purpose and destiny. This self-image will be played out repeatedly throughout the long history of the *Turudbe*’ in every region of Africa where they settled. This concept will reemerge again among the enslaved descendents of the *Turudbe*’ in the Americas as well.

Building on the Abrahamic line signification, Abdullahi Dan Fuduye’ traces the *Turudbe*’ to ar-Ruum who was a descendent of both Is’haq and Isma’il, the two sons of Abraham, consequently, assuring for his ethnicity a complete fulfillment of the ‘covenant’ given by the Creator to Abraham. Abdullahi says:

“You also know that this *ar-Ruum* is the son of ‘Esau ibn Is’haq ibn Ibrahim, upon them be peace. His mother was Nasmāt the daughter of Isma’il ibn Ibrahim, upon him be peace. Dhu’n-Nasibeen said in his *Kitab’t-Tanweer*: “Isma’il fathered twelve boys and one girl and it was from his descendents that all the Arabs descended. When death approached he bequeathed to his brother, Is’haq, that his son, ‘Esau should be married to his daughter, and from their marriage *ar-Ruum* was born. *Ar-Ruum* was yellowish in color for which reason his children were called the Banu al-Asfar.”²⁹

It is interesting to note that the *Turudbe*’ trace their lineage to two sons whose birthright have been in question. One being Isma’il, the first born son of Abraham and the African/Nubian woman, Hajar; and the other was ‘Esau, the grandson of Abraham through his second born son, Is’haq. According to the Bible, ‘Esau, the first born of Is’haq, first had his birthright taken by his younger brother, Jacob.³⁰ Then through the

²⁶ Here reference is made to the southern Arabian peninsular where the Red sea and the Indian Ocean converge. This would place them around the ancient Arab lands of Tuur. [See Waziri Junayd ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari, *Dabt’l-Multaqataat*, f. 3.]

²⁷ John Willis, *Studies in West African Islamic History*, p. 23.

²⁸ Abdullahi Dan Fuduye’, *Aslu ‘l-Falaatiyeen*, unpublished manuscript in the possession of the author, f. 2. [See Appendix 3 for full translation].

²⁹ Abdullahi Dan Fuduye’, *Kitaab an-Nasab*, unpublished manuscript in possession of author, ff. 1-2.

³⁰ King James Version Bible, Genesis, 25: 29-34.

deception their mother, Jacob was able to attain the blessings that was destined for 'Esau.³¹ Isma'il was the first born of Ibrahim, yet Is'haq is said by the Jews to have received the 'covenant of blessing' from his father. Isma'il, on the other hand was overlooked and treated like an unwanted and rejected son. This is significant, because it lays the foundation for two other identity-constructs: that of the 'lost tribe' and 'the rejected stone'. The Lost Tribe referent is a key element in the identity construct for the Bani Israel because it opens the hope of future redemption and affirmation after rejection and spiritual fall of the scattered tribes. The referent of the Rejected Stone takes its origin from a people who were despised and discarded due to some outward or inward imperfection, yet the Creator 'chose' them, redeemed them and made them the Corner Stone of a 'New Spiritual World'. This signification will be seen throughout history of the *Turudbe*, especially in the Diaspora of the Americas. This self-image laid the foundation for the individual and collective quest for authenticity among the *Turudbe*, giving them a common historical experience that provided them with a frame of reference that was stable and continuous.³²

There is discrepancy regarding the above-mentioned *ar-Ruum* descendent of 'Esau. Was *ar-Ruum* his real name or an honorific title? In the *an-Nasab wa's-Sahr* another name is given for the son of 'Esau ibn Is'haq, which raises the question of authenticity. The text says:

"It is said regarding the lineage of the *Fulaani* in the *Hassan'l-Muhaadira* of as-Suyuti: "They are traced back to 'Imraan ibn Fulaan ibn al-'Esau ibn Is'haq." It says in the *Taaj'l-Uruus*: "Their origin is from the *Tukruur*, a nation from the Blacks in the lands of the far west. This was narrated by as-Safaani, although our teacher denies this."³³

Was this Fulaan the same as ar-Ruum? If so, then the discrepancy is removed. The name Fulaan in Arabic means 'so-and-so' like when you want to obscure a particular person's name you say for example: *ra'aytu fulaanan* ("I saw so-and-so."). Did the above chronicler designate ar-Ruum as Fulaan (so-and-so) because he did not know his real name? Or was Fulaan his real name and ar-Ruum an honorific title, like for example Fulaan ar-Ruum? If the name ar-Ruum was an Arabization of the biblical name Reuel mentioned as the son of 'Esau in Genesis, then it would explain the connection of this family with Musa (Moses) and Mount Sinai.

Having posited their historical consciousness in ancient history within the fountainhead of the Abrahamic line, the *Turudbe* went a little further to give themselves legitimacy within the Islamic ethos as well. According to the *Nasab 'l-Falaata* (the Lineage of the Fulbe) authenticity for the *Turudbe* Fulbe' identity was given on the tongue of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. This text says:

"The Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and grant him peace once said: "Honor them for they are believers after whom Allah will show mercy to on the Day of Judgment." Umar ibn al-Khataab may Allah be pleased with him said: "Who are they O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "They are the *al-Fulaat* those who will establish the prayer at every time and give the alms in everything." Abu Bakr as-Siddiq may

³¹ Ibid, Genesis, 27: 30-40.

³² Joseph K. Adjaye, p. 15.

³³ Bashir ibn Ahmad ibn Modi Abdu ibn Bellel, *An-Nasab wa 's-Sahr*, unpublished manuscript in possession of author, f. 4.

Allah be pleased with him said: “What will be their marks O Messenger of Allah?” He said: “Their mark will be that they will wear white turbans. Their language will be similar to the Arabic language. They will call a book *difteen*. They will call the gazelle *lalwah*. They will call a stick *sawru*. They will call water *diyam*. They will call sandals *fadiy*. They will call glorification of Allah *tasbirghul*. They will perform what they are ordered. Most of them will believe in Allah and His messenger. They will not disobey Allah in what they are ordered and will perform exactly what they are ordered. They will name the cow *neggi*... They will call millet *muhri*. They will call the long shirt *linsiri* they will call the lower wrap *sarla*. Some of them will recite the *Qur'an* while others of them will not. Their original tongue was of *Adnaani* origin. The ignorant ones among them will be just like the scholars among them in worship of Allah. They will worship at all times believe in Allah and His messenger and the Last Day. They will listen carefully to the words of Allah and adhere to His worship.” Umar may Allah be pleased with him then said: “What is their origin O Messenger of Allah?” He said: “They will be from the descendents of ‘Uqba ibn Yaasir ibn ‘Aamir ibn Mu’adh ibn Magheesh ibn Salim ibn Sa’eed ibn Mura.”³⁴

Here a clear description of the inner spiritual character, outer attire and Arabic origin of the *Turudbe* are given, which distinguishes them from other ethnicities. The wearing of the white turban has been a mark of honor for its scholars and later became a social custom that had political significance especially during the 18th century *jihads* in the central *Bilad’s-Sudan*. Dr. Joseph Adjaye underscores the “communicative capacity of clothing as a highly visible instrument in the expression of cultural identity.”³⁵ Clothing and outward attire distinguishes a people and allows them to project their identity to the rest of the world. The alleged description given of the *Turudbe* by Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, affords them the legitimacy and authenticity essential for collective solidarity and political sovereignty. According to the *Nasab ‘l-Falaata*, the *Turudbe* embraced Islam completely and scholarship spread among them.

According to the above Arabic sources, there is incongruity regarding the personage of ‘Uqba ibn Nafi’.³⁶ The above mentioned source names the ancestor of the *Turudbe* as ‘Uqba ibn Yaasir ibn ‘Aamir ibn Mu’adh ibn Magheesh ibn Salim ibn Sa’eed ibn Mura. In the *Dabt’l-Multaqataat* of Waziri Junayd, he cites ‘Uqba ibn Nafi’ as being the common ancestor of the *Turudbe*. One of my *Turudbe* teachers in the Republic of the Sudan, Bashir ibn Ahmad ibn Modi Abdu in his *an-Nasab wa ‘s-Sahr* attempted to clarify this discrepancy in the following story when he related the story of the *Turudbe* encounter with the armies of the Companions of Muhammad:

“The *Turudbe* said to them: ‘We have recognized the Truth and we will adhere to it.’ Then the armies of the Companions waged war against the *Sironkulle* and when they intended to depart, the leader of the *Turudbe* said: ‘You came to us with the religion, while we were ignorant. Therefore leave with us someone who can teach us.’ They

³⁴ *Nasab ‘l-Falaata*, writer unknown, unpublished manuscript in possession of author, folios , unpublished manuscript in possession of author, ff. 3-5. [See Appendix 4 below].

³⁵ Joseph K. Adjaye, p.9.

³⁶ According to Bashir ibn Ahmad, ff. 12-13, “‘Uqba ibn Nafi’ was the son of Abd’l-Qays ibn Laqeet ibn ‘Aamir ibn Umayya ibn at-Tarab ibn Umayya ibn al-Harith ibn Fihir. He was among the Quraysh.”

then left behind 'Uqba ibn 'Aamir. Some say it was 'Uqba ibn Nafi', which is the correct view. He settled with them and taught them the religion and the divine law (*shari'a*). Then the leader of the *Turudbe* married his daughter, Bajjemanga to 'Uqba."³⁷

Junayd cites that the *Turudbe* migrated to the west until they reached the lands of Futa Toro. He further explains that when 'Uqba ibn Nafi' led the armies of the Companions of Muhammad across North Africa in 675 C.D. during 'Amr ibn al-'Aas's rule of Egypt.³⁸ He established the great learning center of Qayrawan. He then moved southward to Ghadames, the lands of the Berber, the Suus al-Aqsa, Widaan and from there he led his armies as far as the frontiers of the Sudan, where he encountered the people of Takruur.³⁹ According to Waziri Junayd:

"The *Amir* (leader) of the *Turudbe* married his daughter, whose name was Bajimanga, to 'Uqba ibn Nafi' and she soon gave birth to four sons: Da'atu, Naasa, Waya, and Wa'araba."⁴⁰

Here Waziri Junayd demonstrates that the emergence of the *Turudbe* were from among the Fulbe' people because of a merger with the Arabs. He implies that their descent from 'Uqba ibn Nafi' gave them their militant Islamic outlook and made them more sedentary than the rest of the Fulbe'. The *Turudbe* were known for not herding cattle as is the custom of the remainder of the Fulbe' and for taking up the profession of Islam, similar to the Zawaya clerical groups among the Tuareg and Berber. It is not surprising that both the Zawaya and the *Turudbe* claim descent from 'Uqba ibn Nafi' and that both ethnic groups initially acted as clients to more militant ethnic groups around them.⁴¹

Finally, *Shaykh* Bashir ibn Ahmad gives a summary of the identity construct of the *Turudbe* Fulbe' people, when he said:

"The *Fulaaniyun* as we said previously are Arabs from the direction of their ancestor, Uqba. The Arabs are originally from Isma'il ibn Ibrahim. From the direction of their paternal uncles, the *Turuuudiya* are from Ruum ibn Esau ibn Is'haq ibn Ibrahim and from the direction of Nasma, the mother of Ruum. She too is from Isma'il ibn Ibrahim, upon him and our Prophet be blessings and peace."⁴²

The identity construct of the *Turudbe* Fulbe', thus arrives at its origin, where they descend from the sacred line of Abraham, from his two sons, Isma'il and Is'haq. The *Turudbe* further amalgamated their line back into the line of the source house of Isma'il, to whom the last Messenger and Prophet, would be sent, the House of Quraysh. This assured them the right to self-rule and independence and the right of autonomous leadership among the Muslims. This is true because of two Prophetic traditions narrated in *Saheeh* Muslim that deals with this subject. The first one was related from Jabir ibn Samr, who said;

"My father and I once visited the Prophet when we heard him say, 'This affair (i.e. the glory of the religion and rectifying the condition of the Muslims) will not cease until there has come twelve Caliphs.' He then

³⁷ Bashir ibn Ahmad, ff. 6-7.

³⁸ Ibid. f. 10.

³⁹ Ibid. f. 13.

⁴⁰ Waziri Juanyd, *Dabt'l-Multaqataat*, f. 7.

⁴¹ John Willis, *Studies in West African Islamic History*, pp. 3-13.

⁴² Bashir ibn Ahmad, f. 12.

said something that I did not hear. I asked my father what he said. He replied, 'He said all of them will be from the Quraysh'.⁴³

The second tradition is similar, except now the 12 Caliphs are connected to governance (*wilayat*). It was also related by Jabir ibn Samr, that he heard the Prophet say on the Friday evening that al-Aslami was stoned;

"The religion will continue firm and unflinching until the coming of the Hour, or until there is appointed over you twelve Caliphs. Each of them will be from the Quraysh."⁴⁴

These two prophetic traditions indicate that the *Turudbe`* Fulbe` held to the view that all the promises and fulfillment of prophecies regarding the "seed of Abraham", would be realized in them. The sojourn of the Bani Isra'il in bondage in Egypt was only one aspect of the fulfillment of Divine prophecy. In order for the prophecy to be truly fulfilled all of the "seed of Abraham" would of necessity have to go through the same purifying fire of exile, bondage and oppression. They would remain in this condition until the return of the Messiah of the house of Abraham who said: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Isra'il."⁴⁵

What is clear from the above is that the *Turudbe`* Fulbe` nation found their origins from Abraham through his sons: Isma'il and Is'haq and indeed were the 'People of the Covenant' which was given to Abraham. But more importantly, is that unlike the ancient Bani Isra'il and the present European pretenders to this 'covenant', the present 'jewish' ethnicities in America, Europe and those who control the western outpost in Palestine – 'Israel'; the *Turudbe`* did not develop a racist or exclusivist identity construct of being 'chosen' in the sense of an 'Oberman', or 'super race' theory. That is a particular trait of the Aryans of the sub-continent of India, their ancestors in Europe and that 'peculiar' group of European Kazar tribes who accepted 'judaism' in the 9th century C.E. and have caused social problems and upheavals internationally ever since. Nor did the *Turudbe`* follow what happened with the 'chosen' ethnicities among the *Quraysh* and the *Ansar*, who after three generations of adhering to the covenant to spread Islam to the world, later morphed into the 'Arab nationalism', 'bathism' or 'ethnocentric' strains of shiism that has also caused as much social upheavals internationally so apparent in our news today.

And where this 'exclusivist' trend did emerge among the Fulbe`, the result always ended in the utter humiliation of its people, the subjugation by and marginalization from the societies in which they lived. The 'oberman' or 'super race' concept among the Fulbe` appeared under the guise of 'pulaaku' (elite *fulbe*-ness). Reisman described the meaning of 'pulaaku' to be the superiority appropriate to a Fulbe`.⁴⁶ While my friend Dr. Al-Amin Abu Manga of Maiurno describes '*pulaaku*' with a more affirmative meaning by asserting that it is the foundation of being Fulbe`.⁴⁷ In my opinion, it is exactly this attitude which led to the subjugation of the Fulbe` nations throughout Africa. To define virtue and benevolence to '*pulaaku*' and disconnect it from its Islamic origins is absurd and destroys the 'covenant' given to the Fulbe` from their ancestor Abraham. Indeed it is this attitude of '*pulaaku*' which the *Shehu* and his colleagues condemned among the

⁴³ Muslim ibn Al-Hajjaj al-Nisaburi, *as-Sahih*, (Isa al-Babi al-Halbi Publishers, Cairo), 1962, Vol.2. p.121.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp.121-122.

⁴⁵ Bible, Mathew – 15:24. King James Version.

⁴⁶ Paul Reisman, *Freedom in Fulani Social Life: An Introspective Ethnography*, (Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, 1988) p. 127-128.

⁴⁷ Leger & Mohammad, p. 302.

Fulbe` in the same manner in which the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace eradicated the 'elitism' of Arab supremacy during his time.

Supremacy and preeminence was defined by spiritual attainments as defined in the *Quran* and *Sunna*, and racial or ethnic supremacy defined by '*pulaaku*' was the cause of the destruction and subjugation of the Fulbe` throughout their long history in Africa, and indeed in the Diaspora of the western hemisphere. It was only when the *Turudbe`* amalgamated themselves and intermixed on the basis of religious association with other ethnicities did they attain social ascendancy and were able to fulfill the 'Devine Covenant' and become a Blessing to nations in which they lived.

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Social Stratification of the *Turudbe'* Fulbe'

When the *Turudbe'* settled the lands of Futa, they became known as the *Fuutankoobe'* ("the people of Futa").⁴⁸ The Futa region was divided into three distinct regions: the oldest northern most region of Futa Toro, the middle region of Futa Jallon and the southern region of Futa Bundu. Futa Toro was the original disembarkment of the *Turudbe'*, who became stratified into three social classes. The highest social caste being the *rimbe'* (nobility) who included the *Turudbe'* scholars, the *Sebbe'* rulers, the *Jaawambe'* political counselors, and the *Subalbe'* fishing lineage.⁴⁹ The second tier caste were the *neenbe'* (artisans) who included the *Wayilbe'* smiths, the *Sakkeebe'* leatherworkers, *Lawbe'* woodworkers, *Buurnabe'* potters, and the three classes of griot/oral historians: the *Awlube'* chief dynastic griot, the *Maabube'* weaver griot, and the *Wambaabe'* the pastoral griot.⁵⁰ The third and lowest caste were the *Jeyaabe'* domestic servants and the *Maccube'* slaves.⁵¹

The *Sebbe'* ruling class known as the *Dhiankhanke'* were nominal Muslims who mixed traditional Fulbe' pagan practices with Islam. They were at odds and constant conflict with the *Turudbe'* who were the Islamized element of the Fulbe' ethnicity. The majority of the Fulbe' came from a pastoral tradition and many of them today remain attached to their cattle. However, about 1000 years ago in Takruur, the *Sebbe'* and *Turudbe'* became occupied in agriculture, eventually settled the land, and became sedentary. The history of the region of Futa revolved around the conflict between the *Sebbe'* and *Turudbe'* groups.⁵²

According to Canale, the *Dhiankhanke'* held power and sway over the ancient homeland of the *Fulbe'* in Futa Toro from 1559 until 1776. The *Dhiankhanke'* ruling classes were also responsible for the massive sell of Muslim *Fulbe'* to the Portuguese, Spanish and others Europeans. With the invasion of Songhay and the sacking of Timbuktu by the Portuguese/Moroccan armies, the pagan *Dhiankhanke'*'s political hegemony was strengthened. During this crucial period they affectively persecuted and demoralized the *Turudbe'* Fulbe', which led to their mass exodus or *hijra* towards the 'east' in the 17th century.⁵³

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⁴⁸ Kane and Robinson, The Islamic Regime of Fuuta Tooro, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 4.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Jean Suret-Canale, "The Social and Historical Significance of the Peul Hegemonies in the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", trans from the French by Christopher Hurst, in Essays on African History: From the Slave Trade to Neocolonialism, (C. Hurst & Co, London) pp. 25-55.

⁵³ Ibid. .p. 38.

The *Turudbe*' and the Diffusion of Islam in Western *Bilad's-Sudan*

In order to understand the commitment of the *Turudbe*' Fulbe' to the practice and dissemination of Islam, one must comprehend the mission of Abraham, their ancestor and the 'covenant' of his descendents to call mankind to Allah.

The *Turudbe*' social identity as verified in the sources show that they were heavily influenced by militant Islamic orthodoxy based upon a rigorous observance of the *shari'a*.⁵⁴ The tradition of the *Turudbe*' was that of militant adherence to 'the Way of the People of Medina' (*amal Ahl 'l-Madina*), which was a joining of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), personal austerity (*zuhd*), and the concept of perpetual *jihad* – whose base of operation was the autonomous Muslim military enclave (*ribat*).⁵⁵ The *Turudbe*' clerisy advanced the idea of the *jihad* against the corrupt soul as a prerequisite of the *jihad* against disbelief, social corruption and injustice. The above tradition of reform was transmitted to the *Turudbe*', not from Abdallah ibn Yassin and his *Murabitun* (Almoravid) as some assert.⁵⁶ On the contrary, scholars from the *Turudbe*' were the teachers of Abdallah ibn Yassin under the auspices of *Shaykh* Wajaj ibn Zallu the founder of the famous Islamic learning center called *Dar'l-Murabituun* during the middle of the 8th century. According to Levztion, there exists evidence in Walo oral traditions where their first ruler claimed descent from Abu Bakr ibn Umar (the famous *amir* of the *Murabitun*) from a *Turudbe*' woman.⁵⁷ Prior to the emergence of the *Murabitun*, the people of Takruur were at war with the Sudanese state to the east, Ghana or *Waghadu*. This was no doubt due to the vehemence with which the *Turudbe*' embraced and spread Islam. The people of Ghana, on the other hand, continued to maintain their traditional African customs. Levztion points out that the people of Takruur gained strength and prosperity at the expense of Ghana.⁵⁸ This indicates that the *Turudbe*' were actively involved with the Islamization of Ghana and other surrounding Sudanese states during this time.

After the decline of Ghana in the beginning of the 9th century there emerged two small kingdoms, both with the designation of 'Djia'. The first one was Djia-Funki and the other was Djia-Ra. The kingdom of Djia-Ra had friendly relations with the *Murabitun* to the north, while the kingdom of Djia-Funki was at one time a vassal kingdom of the Sosso to the south.⁵⁹ These two kingdoms lay west of the former kingdom of Ghana, which means they were situated in the same local as ancient Takruur. The Djia-Funki kingdom was ruled by the *Dhiankhanke*', whom John Willis identified as the people of Takruur.⁶⁰ This factor alone allows some speculation that the *Dhiankhanke*' were in fact the *Sebbe*' rulers of Takruur prior to their suppressive wars against the Muslim scholar notables among the *Turudbe*'.

The second kingdom, Djia-Ra, emerged immediately after the collapse of Djia-Funki. The rulers of this new kingdom were known as *Djia-wara* ('the People of Djia'). According to Mahmud al-Kati, the rulers of Djia-Ra were "men of exceptional simplicity

⁵⁴ Nasab 'l-Falaata, ff. 3-5.

⁵⁵ Nehemia Levztion, "Abdallah b. Yasin and the Almoravids", *Studies in West African Islamic History*, ed. John Willis, vol. 1, pp. 78-79.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 78.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 102.

⁵⁸ Nehemia Levztion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali*, p. 44.

⁵⁹ Ibid. pp. 47-49.

⁶⁰ John Willis, *Studies in West African Islamic History*, p. 24.

and austerity, whose authority was in no way pretentious”.⁶¹ The description given by al-Kati depicts the same social identity for which the *Turudbe*’ were celebrated. Eventually, with the emergence of the Malian kingdom at the end of the 12th century, these *Turudbe*’ confederated states aligned themselves with Mali, took on the Malinke’ language and served as Muslim clerics of the kingdom. Here is clear evidence of the persistence of the tradition where Muslim clerics were employed as advisors to the state, while maintaining a sense of autonomy.

The Djia-wara (*Turudbe*’) people claim their origin from the ancient town of Djia. According to Elias Saad, this town was a major metropolis and ancient center of Islamic learning. Djia “was a town of jurists which had no authority other than that of its judge.”⁶² This is an indication that, by the 13th century, the *Turudbe*’ lived in autonomous regions separate from the other Fulbe’ pagan clans. This sense of autonomy and self-determination became a trademark of the *Turudbe*’, where real governance remained in the hands of the Islamic judiciary or *Imamate*. This is highly significant, because it demonstrates the emergence of the ancient Islamic bi-polar system of government, where the executive component is checked and balanced by the learned judiciary component.

Mention was made earlier to the fact that the *Turudbe*’ were vassals of the Soninke people. Thus, when the Soninke conquered Mali,⁶³ many of the generals of the armies were of *Turudbe*’ origin. Among these vassal generals was Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr at-Turuudi, later known as Askiya and would lead a rebellion against the Soninke and establish an empire founded upon the principles of Islam.⁶⁴ Like the tension between the former Dhiankhanke’ of Takrur and the *Turudbe*’, there was also tension between the Sosso rulers of Songhay. The leader of the Soninke people during this period of tension was Sonni Ali the Great from 1464 to 1492. In 1468 Sonni Ali captured the metropolis of Timbuktu and expelled its Tuareg and *Turudbe*’ notables. According al-Kati:

“He could not see any of the Fulani without slaughtering them. This was regardless if he were a scholar or illiterate; man or woman; ...He decimated the Sanqara clan and only left a group small enough to gather under the shade of one tree.”⁶⁵

The decimation of the clerics among the *Turudbe*’ and Tuaregs is what caused one of Sonni Ali’s vassal generals among the *Turudbe*’, the above mentioned *Askiya* Muhammad, to revolt. This general was apart of the learning circles which were thriving at that time among the *Turudbe*’ and the Tuareg. Thus, he had the full support of the Muslim literati of Timbuktu, Djia, Djenne’, Gao and Wallata. The real origin of *Askiya* Muhammad, as the sources demonstrate, was from among the *Turudbe*’.⁶⁶ One of the first acts of this *Turudbe*’ ruler of Songhay to appease his Fulbe’ kinsmen was to recruit more than 500 scholar/masons from the ancient town of Djia who were responsible for refurbishing and modernizing the metropolis of Gao, Tindirma and Timbuktu. With these

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⁶¹ Mahmud al-Kati, *Tarikh al-Fattash*, (Paris, 1964), pp. 39-40.

⁶² Elias Saad, *The Social History of Timbuktu*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 8.

⁶³ Nehemia Levzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali*, pp. 50-51.

⁶⁴ Mahmud al-Kati, *Tarikh al-Fataash*, p. 10. “Allah favored us by the appearance in our time of the upright leader, the just Caliph, the conquering ruler and victorious general Askiya al-Hajj Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr, who was *Turudbe*’ by origin and resided in Gao.”

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 44.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 10.

scholar/master builders (*modibe*) came civilization, commerce, and the persistence of the learning traditions earlier established among the people of Takrur.

Among the *Turudbe*' purveyors of Islam during the rule of Songhay were the pious erudite of Djenne', *Fuduye*' Muhammad Sanu.⁶⁷ He originally came from the Fulbe' autonomous town called Bitu, which lie south of Djenne'. Abd'r-Rahman as-Sa'di narrated an account of the piety of this scholar which gives an example of the status which the *Turudbe*' scholars held in the eyes of the people of the *Bilad's-Sudan*. In his *Tarikh 's-Sudan*, he speaks of how one of the ruling notables of Songhay had a vision of *Fuduye*' Muhammad Sanu in his dream in which he was told that in whichever land this erudite lives that land will be safe from tribulation.⁶⁸ This resulted in *Askiya* Muhammad asking him to settle in the city of Djenne' and appointing him as the chief judge of the city. *Fuduye*' Muhammad Sanu eventually established a learning center which vied with and rivaled the universities of Timbuktu.

Among the *Turudbe*' scholars who were famous during the 14th century throughout the western *Bilad's-Sudan* was Muhammad Gidadu. He was appointed as the *imam* and dean of the famous Jingerber university/mosque in 1569. He held the post for more than twelve years.⁶⁹ The Jingerber university/mosque was the main mosque of Timbuktu where the Friday congregation prayer was performed. Thus, Muhammad Gidadu held an important post in the city, which allowed him to have major influence upon the judicial policies of the scholars and notables of the city. After him, his children and grandchildren established a monopoly over the leadership of education from this learning center. The Gidadibe' ('the family of Gidadu') not only helped diffuse Islamic learning among the Songhay state, but also protected the commercial interest of the families who had little or no standing among the commercial families of Timbuktu.⁷⁰ Students flocked to sit in the learned circles of the Gidadu family from all the regions of Futa, Timbu, Air, Sus'l-Aqsa and Hausaland, which resulted in the dispersion throughout the *Bilad 's-Sudan* of the learned chains of authorities (*asaaneed*) and teaching licenses (*ijaaza*) going back to this literate *Turudbe*' family.

Another of the *Turudbe*' families of repute who had major influence upon the intellectual and religious life of Songhay were that of Muhammad Gurdu. This scholar was considered the primary source for learning in Songhay during the 16th century. His father was *Mudi* Muhammad Saj, the chief judge of Massina.⁷¹ Abd'r-Rahman as-Sa'di tells us that the diffusion of Islamic reform and learning throughout Songhay during the 16th century, rested upon the shoulders of two of the sons of Muhammad Gurdu: Ahmad Baghayughu and Muhammad Baghayughu. These two along with their sons were considered the direct intellectual masters of the renowned Kunta family, who emerged during the 17th through to the 18th centuries.⁷² The family of Gurdu was exceptionally gifted scholars who maintained erudition when learning declined in Songhay because of

⁶⁷ The title *fuduye*' is a Fulbe word which means 'jurist' or one exceedingly learned in the sciences of Islamic jurisprudence.

⁶⁸ Abd'r-Rahman as-Sa'di, *Tarikh as-Sudan*, (Paris, 1898-1900), pp. 16-18.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 62.

⁷⁰ E. Saad, *The Social History of Timbuktu*, p. 146.

⁷¹ The honorific title "*mudi*" takes its root from a common *Fulbe*' name and title "*modibo*" (the teacher). It in turn comes from an Arabic etymological root "*mu'adib*" (one who educates).

⁷² Ibid. p. 215.

the Moroccan/Portuguese invasion in 1591.⁷³ Ahmad Baba, may Allah be pleased with him, considered his teacher, Muhammad Baghayughu as the expected reformer (*mujjadid*) of the 9th century *hijra*, and he was probably the most learned *Turudbe'* scholar of his time. Baba said the following about the humanistic values of this teacher:

"He was our shaykh and *baraka*, a learned jurist who was accomplished in many sciences. He was an upright servant, abstinent...and a right-acting scholar. He was a man stamped with goodness, perfectly loyal and pure in nature. He innately wished for the good and believed the best concerning people...they were all treated equally with him because of the excellence of his opinion towards them and his lack of knowledge of evil from them...He sincerely advised people towards the love of knowledge and being persistent in acquiring it. He used to spend his entire time on behalf of learning and keeping company with its people ... This was also demonstrated by his patience with teaching and conveying beneficial knowledge to the dull-witted... without any show of irritation or annoyance with their mental disabilities... We were amazed at his fortitude for learning along with his clinging to the worship of Allah and his receiving with honor and respect those who possessed destructive characteristics... He entertained nothing but good for all creatures even to the point of accepting to help the unjust while avoiding plunging into excess and unimportant matters. He was draped in the most magnificent cloak of discretion and reserve. With his noble hands, he held up the greatest banner of integrity with tranquility, dignity, excellent character, and a modesty that indulged all desires and breasts. The hearts of all people loved him and the entire populous praised him unanimously. There was none that did not have love, esteem, and praise him for his virtuousness and veracity. He was forbearing and long-suffering and never scorned teaching the beginner or the slow-witted. In this, he spent his entire years, along with adhering to taking care of the needs of the common people and the matters of the judiciary. In this, they could not find besides him a substitute nor could they procure besides him an equal. The *sultan* sought him out to confer upon him the authority of the judiciary of his region. This he rejected, abstained from and relinquished it to others, although people sought him out as an intermediate and arbitrator",⁷⁴

The above narrative of Ahmad Baba reflects the love and affection that he had for this *Turudbe'* sage. The above description of Muhammad Baghayughu depicts the goal and objective of Islamic learning as developed and transmitted by the *Turudbe'*, which was to create a compassionate humanist whose goal, was to convey illumination and human excellence. Even the erudite historian *Shaykh* Abd'r-Rahman as-Sa'di, the author of the famous *Tarikh as-Sudan* traced his own maternal origins back to the *Turudbe'* ethnicity when he said:

"Notwithstanding all the evils and miseries which *Sonni* Ali inflicted upon the scholars, he did acknowledge their eminence and used to say, "Without the scholars the world would be no good". He did favors for other scholars and respected them. When he had completed his incursion against the Fulani of the Sanqara clan, he then dispatched many of their women as gifts to the notables of Timbuktu, some of the scholars and the righteous men. He ordered them to take these women

⁷³ Ibid. p. 124.

⁷⁴ As-Sa'di, pp. 37-42.

as concubines. Those who had no real concern for their religion took these women in their homes as concubines. However, those who had care for their religion married these women. Among them who did this was the grandfather of my grandmother⁷⁵, the mother of my father, the excellent *sayyid*, the ascetic *imam* Abdullah 'l-Balbali. He married the women that was dispatched to him and her name was A'isha 'l-Fulani. From her *Nana* Biru Ture was born and she was the mother of my father. I had the chance to meet this great grandfather of mine when he was very old and had gone blind.”⁷⁶

Between the 8th and 14th centuries, the *Turudbe'*, were among the key transmitters of Islamic learning and reform throughout the *Bilad's-Sudan*. The legacy of learning which emerged in the different regions as a result of the activities of the *Turudbe'* scholars created learning municipalities that exemplified a standard of urban autonomy and scholarly leadership that was independent of the executive centers of the *Bilad's-Sudan*.⁷⁷ These autonomous learning centers held the distinction of being cities of scholars and jurists – in other words they were the first ‘college towns’ to emerge during the Middle Ages.

The autonomy which the *Turudbe'* scholars, jurists and judges enjoyed cannot be over emphasized because it is this legacy which will later give the scholar notables of the *Bilad's-Sudan* the militancy which characterized the emergence of Muslim states during the 18th and 19th centuries. There were several features which depict the autonomy of the scholars of the *Turudbe'*. John Hunwick attributes the autonomy of these scholars to the charisma and dynamism that they held among the people.⁷⁸ The autonomous nature of the *Turudbe'* clerisy class helped to foster social and economic security throughout the regions. This is true because *Turudbe'* scholars were given financial incentives from the government for settling among the people to help foster learning centers as well as trade and commerce. The *Turudbe'* scholars became “a semi-corporate *jama`at*” who were linked with the corporation of masons, metallurgists, and commercial sections of the *Bilad's-Sudan*.⁷⁹ Unlike the 17th to the 19th centuries, the *Turudbe'* during the earlier centuries up to the 16th century were considered erudite, honest and spiritually influential, yet they lacked the courageous and heroic qualities necessary to bring about social transformation by military means. Abd'r-Rahman as-Sa'di said about them: “They (the Fulbe`) have resided in that region (Futa Toro) until the present. As for the Fulbe` people of Jolof, they are the best of the people in good deeds and natural disposition. Their nature is far superior to the remainder of the Fulani in every respect. Allah ta`ala singled them out with the traits of excellent character, noble deeds and praiseworthy behavior. In this respect they presently have attained great strength and momentous integrity. However in the realm of courage and bravery they have no portion in these. But in the realms of fulfilling oaths and promises, these qualities both begin and end with them based upon what we have heard.”⁸⁰

⁷⁵ His grandmother was *Nana* Biru Ture who married `Amir 's-Sa'di.

⁷⁶ Abd'r-Rahman as-Sa'di, p. 59.

⁷⁷ E. Saad, *The Social History of Timbuktu*, p. 17-18.

⁷⁸ J. O. Hunwick, “Ahmad Baba and the Moroccan Invasion of the Sudan”, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 1962, vol. II, 3, p. 315.

⁷⁹ Op. cit. pp. 115-125.

⁸⁰ Abd'r-Rahman as-Sa'di, p. 67.

This indicates that the *Turudbe*’ enjoined a strong reputation as conveyors of Islamic values, learning and customs, and enjoyed like most of the clerical communities around them a since of social autonomy from the governments that prevailed in Mali, Masina, Songhay etc. However, in 1591, this cozy relationship between the executive governments of the *Bilad* ‘-*Sudan* and the semi-autonomous Islamic learning and trading centers came to an abrupt end. In the 15th century the Moroccans sent a small force and took control of the salt mines of Taghaza. This was the beginning of the conflict between Morocco and Songhay, which would end with the collapse of the state and the dispersal of the scholars of this region. This attack, which was directed by the collaboration between the Sultan of Marrakech and Portuguese mercenaries, did not just attack the executive centers of the *Bilad*’s-*Sudan*. It was an attack upon some of the key learning/commerce centers as well. One of the cities that experienced pillage was the famous learning center of Timbuktu. The scholars narrated a prophecy that perceived the destruction of Timbuktu as one of the Signs of the End of Time.

“Oh, people of Timbuktu, if it should come to pass by Allah’s decree that you should be driven out of this town, whereby it will be destroyed, and some of its people will die in chains, after having been dispersed from it, prepare you then for meeting your Lord with evidence of good deeds, for that is one of the signs of the End of the world.”⁸¹

During the terrible ordeal of the destruction and sacking of Timbuktu, many of the scholars were taken in chains across the desert to Marrakech.⁸² Elizabeth Hodgkin points out that the invasion fostered millenarian feelings among the *Turudbe*’ scholars.⁸³ Thus, a new stage emerged for the scholar/notables wherein ‘messianic’ movements would arise from among these learned communities attempting to establish the ideal Islamic society. Prior to this period, scholars acted as advisors to *Sudanic* states and believed it reprehensible to be actively involved in the executive government.⁸⁴ However, after this period, the learned clerics (*fuqaha*, *ulama* and *marabout*) took upon themselves the commanding of the good and forbidding indecency and entering into direct conflict with the prevailing governments in the *Bilad*’s-*Sudan*. It was a time of turmoil, when European slave trading states were making their way along the West coast of Africa. This caused a domino effect throughout the region. In fact, the escalation of the European slave trade was the exact result of the destruction of Songhay.

It was during this period that the *Turudbe*’ clericy took the lead in the militant expansion of Islam. Among the first of these millenarian reformist was Nasir’d-Deen, who, between 1673 and 1677, conquered the entire region of Futa Toro, Futa Jallon, Futa Bundu and parts of Traza, Brakna and the lands of the Wolof.⁸⁵ Nasir’d-Deen fought on three fronts to reform the country and bring Islam to the people. He fought against his own ethnicity, Moors (*baydaan*) in the north who raided *Turudbe*’ Muslim towns

⁸¹ E. Saad, p. 183.

⁸² As-Sa’di, p. 211.

⁸³ Elizabeth Hodgkin, “The Ulama Under ‘Colonialism’: The Timbuktu Ulama After the Moroccan Invasion”, in *Islam in Africa: the Changing Role of the Ulama*, March 28-31, 1984, by the Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, (Illinois, 1984), pp. 2-3.

⁸⁴ Assad Busool, “Expose of the Actual Relationship Between the Ulama and the Government in the Islamic Empire During the Period of Decline”, in *Islam in Africa: the Changing Role of the Ulama*, March 28-31, 1984, by the Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, (Illinois, 1984), p. 2.

⁸⁵ Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa*, (London: Longman, 1984), p. 140.

capturing men and women to be sold as slaves. He also fought against the pagan African Wolof and Cayor ethnicities. Finally, he waged the *jihad* against the Muslim ruling elite who intermixed Islam with pagan practices and ruled unjustly. This movement was highly influenced by 'Mahdist' ideas and the conviction of preparing for the End of Time.⁸⁶ These wars were the causative factors behind the increased number of *Turudbe'* slaves being brought into the western hemisphere during that period.

Another prominent militant *Turudbe'* led reform movement was that led by *Karamoko Alfa* Ibrahim Sambega Barry of Futa Jallon in 1725. He established an Islamic confederation whose center was at Timbo.⁸⁷ His confederation lasted until the French invasion in the 19th century. It was from this *Turudbe'* clerical community that the famous enslaved African – *Amir Abd'r-Rahman* ibn Ibrahim, of Natchez, Mississippi originated. In the 1760 as a result of repression from the *Dhiankhanke'* rulers, and the slave trade, the *Turudbe'* organized themselves into a resistance movement, led by *Cheirno* Sulayman Baal.⁸⁸ The griot Seegaa Nan gives us this picture of the *Turudbe'* reformer:

"Sulayman Baal was the very first to come back to Futa.
 Right from Danaana he began preaching, saying: "Hurry to prayer!"
 He spoke of the foundations of the religion that Allah had commanded.
 Once he had done this, people believed and came into Islam.
 At that time, the Moors used to come from the north
 They came to plunder the property of the blacks
 They did not consider the black people to be human beings,
 They would kidnap children and enslave them, take away cattle,
 They simply did that continually. At that time praying was not common.
 He (Sulayman) came from Futa and encouraged them to pray. Futa prayed.
 He encouraged them to believe in Allah and they accepted.
 One by one, Futa altogether became Muslim."⁸⁹

In 1776 the authority over the confederation founded by Sulayman Baal was given over to *Chierno Abd'l Qaadir* Kan, who opened the door of *jihad* among the *Fuutankoobe'* (the people of Futa).⁹⁰ Abdal Qaadir was able to defeat the Moorish slave raiders and garner allegiance of the Wolof, *Dhiankhanke'* and Walo kingdoms.⁹¹ The new confederation was known as the *Almamaagal* or the Imamate where the *Turudbe'* under Abdal Qaadir redistributed lands, assigned local *imams* to villages and expanded *Turudbe'* Islamic influence over the entire region of Futa.⁹² It was not until 1807 that this *Turudbe'* led Islamic polity was destroyed by the combined efforts of the African pagans, Europeans and Moors. The enslaved *Turudbe'* erudite, *Alfa Umar* ibn Sayyid of

⁸⁶ 'Mahdist' ideas refer to the Islamic eschatological belief of the appearance just prior to the End of time of an Islamic religious reformer and political revolutionary who will renew the religion of Islam and spread justice and equity throughout the world. His name will be Muhammad ibn Abdullah and his honorific title will be al-Mahdi. [see Uthman Dan Fuduye', *Tanbeeh al-Umma ala Qurb Ashrat 's-Saa'*, unpublished manuscript in possession of author, ff. 13-17.

⁸⁷ Terry Arford, *A Prince Among Slaves*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 4-7.

⁸⁸ Waziri Junayd, *Dabt 'l-Multalqataat*, f. 11. The title *chierno* is a Fulbe title meaning *shaykh* or teacher.

⁸⁹ Moustapha Kane and David Robinson, p. 37.

⁹⁰ Waziri Junayd, ff. 11-12.

⁹¹ Mervyn Hiskett, pp. 142-143.

⁹² Kane and Robinson, p. 6.

Fayetteville, North Carolina, was the unfortunate result of the destruction of this kingdom.

During this period throughout the regions of the western *Bilad's-Sudan*, the *Turudbe'* scholar/warriors took upon themselves the responsibility of establishing the 'just society'. These movements were characterized by the emphasis placed upon acquiring literacy in the Islamic sciences, and their adherence to the spiritual path of *tasawwuf* (spiritual purification). This spiritual path was a codification of the science of *Ihsaan* (spiritual excellence) whose foundation was with Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He is reported to have responded when asked about the meaning of *Ihsaan*: "It is that you worship Allah as though you see Him. If you do not see Him, (know) He sees you."⁹³ This science was divided into two divisions: [1] character reformation (*tasawwuf li't-takhalluq*); and [2] spiritual illumination (*tasawwuf li't-tahaqquq*), the first division being a prerequisite for the second.⁹⁴ The first division, which was character reformation, was further divided into two subdivisions: [1] repudiation (*takhalli*); and [2] enrichment (*tahalli*). Repudiation meant the removal from the heart of the root destructive blameworthy character traits like conceit, arrogance, unwarranted anger, envy, pretension, false ambition, and love of leadership. Enrichment entailed enhancing the heart with the root redemptive praiseworthy traits like repentance, austerity, humility, contentment, patience, fearful awareness and gratitude.

It was by means of this science the *Turudbe'* Muslim clerics were able to garner the respect and love of the masses of the people. According to Hiskett, the *Turudbe'* began to move towards the east during the middle of the 14th century. They migrated into regions such as Hausaland, Bornu, and Baghirma.⁹⁵ With them came the spreading of Islamic learning and a more militant adherence to Islam. The emigration or *hijra* of the *Turudbe'* to regions of central and eastern Sudan has continued from the 14th century until the present. From these immigrants emerged the dynamic scholar/warriors who would be responsible for the theocratic states that became the trademark of the 19th century.

According to Waziri Junayd, after Nasir 'd-Deen, Ibrahim *Karamako Alfa Ba*, *Cheirno* Sulayman Baal and Abdal Qadir laid the foundation of Islamic sovereignty in the Futa; the kingdom of Cayor successfully rose up against the *Turudbe'* clericy and defeated them causing a mass emigration towards the east.⁹⁶ Waziri Junayd gives an account of the individual who led one of the one of the earlier *hijra* from Futa Toro towards the east:

"After Musa emigrated fleeing with his religion from persecution along with his ethnicity among the *Turudbe'* and directed his face towards the east. He was their leader until they arrived in the land of Konni.⁹⁷...The Bani Musa then became divided into five groups. The house of 'Aal, the house of Kaghi, the house of Belari, the house of Renaru, and the house of Birnighu."⁹⁸

⁹³ Uthman Dan Fuduye', *Sawq'l-Umma Ila Ittiba' as-Sunna*, manusc. in possession of the author, folio 7.

⁹⁴ Uthman Dan Fuduye', *At-Tafriqa Bayna 'Ilm at-Tasawwuf Alladhi Li't-Takhalluq wa Bayna 'Ilm at-Tasawwuf Alladhi Li't-Tahaqquq*, manuscript in possession of author, folios 1-2.

⁹⁵ Hiskett, pp. 52-53.

⁹⁶ Waziri Junayd, f. 11.

⁹⁷ Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, (London, 1977), p. 108; Konni is located about 30 miles north of the Rima River in present day Niger.

⁹⁸ Op. cit. p. 12.

Again, the imagery of the Bani Israel is provoked in this story where Prophet Moses (*Musa*) led the persecuted tribes eastward from the affliction of Egypt. Here Musa's emigration towards the east personified the 'exodus' of the House of Israel from their bondage. The *Turudbe*' transformed the lands in which they settled, beginning with Takrur, Djia, Mali, Songhay, Futa Toro, Futa Jolon and Futa Bundu. In the Hausa Habe' city states, the *Turudbe*' lived by the profession of Islamic teaching, scholarship, scribes and court clerics. As a result around them emerged the persistence of an educational system, which had been established in the autonomous learning centers of Mali and Songhay centuries earlier.

Among the most learned of the five houses of the *Turudbe*' in the Habe' kingdoms, was the house of 'Aal. This family materialized as the axis of learning of the five families and thus became the focus of learning throughout the region. Along with mastering the 'outward sciences' such as Qur'anic recitation and commentary, prophetic traditions, jurisprudence and medicine; they also became masters of the 'inward sciences' as well. These esoteric sciences were the result of what they believed their personal piety and adherence to the Islamic customs. The institution that fostered these esoteric sciences was the spiritual practices (*tasawwuf*) of the *Qaadiyya* brotherhoods⁹⁹. The discipline which *Qaadiyya tasawwuf* offered allowed the adherent to develop Gnostic qualities that set him apart from the ordinary jurist who sought his livelihood from his learned profession. This discipline included the concept of personal austerity (*zuhd*). It was their personal austerity that endeared them with the masses of oppressed people, and was the cause of the appeal that the much earlier *Murabitun* scholars had with the common people of Morocco and Spain. Waziri Junayd gives a hint of the level of mystical sciences that this family had mastered.

"The house of 'Aal was the most numerous of the children of Musa. It was a house famous for piety, good and knowledge, the memorization of Qur'an, the learning of diverse sciences and acquaintance with its mysteries. This was a mystical secret, which was passed among them from generation after generation until it became outwardly apparent with *Shaykh* Muhammad, who was known as *Fuduye'*, may Allah be pleased with him."¹⁰⁰

From the above it becomes clear that there was an intentional persistence of a learning tradition among the *Turudbe*'. They were united by a common belief system and eschatological creed that was very complex and systematized. Gnosis and the understanding of esoteric knowledge as well as mastery of the outward Islamic sciences was an established fact among this family. Mystical secrets "moved freely among them as it willed."¹⁰¹ It was these secrets or esoteric knowledge, which distinguished this family grouping from other scholarly families of the region and time. Outside of the *Turudbe*' clerical families there were the famous Kunta family, who held the same status among the Berber, Tuareg and Sudanese as did the 'Aal family among the Habe' kingdoms.¹⁰² Perhaps this is the reason that the 'Aal family had a strong spiritual alliance with the

⁹⁹ The *Qaadiyya* is the name of a spiritual brotherhood which takes its name from the famous mystic, preacher and spiritual leader *Shaykh* Abdal Qadir al-Jaylani (1077-1166) [see Ali ibn Yusef as-Shattanawfi, *Buhjat as-Asrar*, (Cairo, 1304), pp. 113-117.

¹⁰⁰ Waziri Junayd, *Dubt*, f. 13.

¹⁰¹ Abd 'l-Qadir ibn al-Mustafa, *Kitab 'l-'Uhud wa 'l-Mawaathiq*, TMs, f. 4.

¹⁰² A. A. Batran, "The Kunta, Sidi al-Mukhtar al-Kunti, and the Office of *Shaykh al-Tariqa'l-Qadiriya*", in *Studies in West African Islamic History*, ed., John Willis, vol. 1, 124-126.

Kunta family.¹⁰³ These spiritual traditions were persistent partly because they were inherited charismatic qualities. Among the *Qaadiriya* there was the consistent belief that sainthood (*wilayat*) was acquired in three ways: through inheritance (*waaritha*); by means of divine attraction (*jadhaba*), and spiritual exercise (*mujaahida*).¹⁰⁴ *Wilayat* attained by inheritance meant that the line of descent from the very beginning of the people retained the state of *wilayat* as a right of birth.¹⁰⁵

Consequently, the concept of sainthood and gnosis (*ma`arifa*) was the factor that elevated *Fuduye`* Muhammad above his brothers among the house of `Aal. According to Abdullahi Dan Fuduye`, most of their maternal and paternal uncles and aunts, were men and women of exceptional learning and wisdom.¹⁰⁶ Among them was *Shaykh* Muhammad Sanbu who taught jurisprudence from *al-Mukhtasar* of Khalil ibn Is`haq. There was Muhammad ibn al-Raj who taught the *Alfiyat al-Athar* of as-Suyuti and *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Others included Mustafa ibn al-Hajj, Muhammad al-Buttugha, Ahmad ibn Muhammad, Muhammad ibn Muhammad, Abdallah ibn al-Haj, Muhammad al-Farabri, and others. Each of these men were apart of the *Turudbe`* house of `Aal. Among the women of the learned family were A`isha Iya-garka, the mother of one of the judges of Sokoto. There was also Hawa Inna-garka, Khadija Jija and others.¹⁰⁷ This family became known by the cognomen *Fudiawa* because of the outstanding erudition and piety of *Fuduye`* Muhammad. The name *Fuduye`* means 'the learned jurist' in the language of Fulfulde'. This appellation of designation became fixed to the entire *Turudbe`* of his generation and afterwards due to the fame of *Fuduye`* Muhammad, and the recognition given him by the learned teachers of the house of `Aal. The mother of *Fuduye`* Muhammad, Mariam was a great granddaughter of `Aal and his paternal grandmother was a granddaughter of `Aal.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, both maternally and paternally, *Fuduye`* Muhammad was descended directly from the house of `Aal.

The students of *Fuduye`* Muhammad were many. Among them were his sons Ali, Ibrahim, Abu Bakr, Muhammad Burro, *Alfa* Umar, Muhammadan, `Adi and his two famous sons: Abdullahi Dan Fuduye` and Uthman Dan Fuduye`.¹⁰⁹ Among his daughters who were his students were Mariam, Fatima, Khadija, and A`isha. One of the most famous students of *Fuduye`* Muhammad among the *Turudbe`* who was not from the house of `Aal, was Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Fulani. This scholar was skilled in many branches of learning, whose special skills were the science of astronomy, mathematics, numerology and magic squares. He was well versed in the esoteric sciences and there is no doubt that these sciences were learned from *Fuduye`* Muhammad. This scholar later became the chief executor of the library of the famous Egyptian geographer and historian al-Hassan al-Jabarti.

The transmission of learning from *Fuduye`* Muhammad's generation to the following generation of the *Fudiawa* of the *Turudbe`* was thorough and profound. This transmission was a deliberate persistence of an educational and historical consciousness

¹⁰³ Ibid. pp. 137-138.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. pp. 132-133.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Abdullahi Dan Fuduye`, *Tazyeen 'l-Waraqaat*, TMs, f. 3.

¹⁰⁷ Jean Boyd, *The Calipha's Sister: Nana Asma'u*, (London: Frank Cass, 1989), pp. 6-7.

¹⁰⁸ Op. cit. f. 2.

¹⁰⁹ Muhammad Bello, *Ishaarat wa A`alaam Fi Ba`di Umuur Sillat al-Arhaam*, manuscript in possession of author, ff. 3-9.

that spanned more than a millennium. The next generation of the *Turudbe'* in Hausa Habe' kingdoms proved to be the greatest generation of learning and erudition to emerge. This period was the beginning of the 19th century *jihad* movements that were led by the *Turudbe'* in general, and the sons of *Fuduye'* Muhammad in particular. It was an age wherein the scholars began the active role of transformation of the society. During the earlier periods, the *Turudbe'* were concerned with learning (*ta'leem*) and teaching (*ta'lum*). However, after the time of *Fuduye'* Muhammad, the *Turudbe'* *Fudiawa* moved to the militant activity of commanding the good (*amr bi'l-ma'ruf*) and forbidding indecency (*nahyi 'an'l-munkaar*).¹¹⁰ Murray Last narrates a poem which describes the revolutionary spirit which the *Fudiawa* manifested throughout the Hausa Habe' kingdoms.

“Verily a cloud has settled on Allah’s earth
A cloud so dense that escape from it is impossible.
Everywhere between Kordofan and Gobir
And the cities of the Kindin [Tuareg]
Are settlements of the dogs of the Fellata
Serving Allah in all their dwelling places
...In reforming all districts and provinces
Ready for the future bliss
So in this year of 1214 they are following their beneficent theories¹¹¹
As though it were time to set the world in order by preaching.”¹¹²

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¹¹⁰ Murray Last, pp. 6-8.

¹¹¹ 1799 C.E.

¹¹² Ibid. p. 11.

““Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine”¹¹³”

Uthman Dan Fuduye’ and the Persistence of *Turudbe’* Historical Consciousness

Almost certainly the most famous son of the *Turudbe’* Fulbe’ was *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye’. He was born in the town of Maratta, in present day Niger, on December 15 1754 to *Fuduye’* Muhammad and Hawwa bint Muhammad. He was one of 15 children who had gotten their early education from their father and mother. Jean Boyd points out how the transmission of education to Uthman Dan Fuduye’s generation was carried out in large by many of the women of the *Turudbe’* clan.¹¹⁴ This tradition perhaps began with the *Shehu*’s maternal grandmother, Ruqayya, who was considered very erudite and laid the foundation of education for Muslim women that later emerged into the ‘Yan Taru’ Islamic ‘college without walls’ for women. From these erudite parents they were passed to their many uncles and aunts for further education. After exhausting their studies with their nearest of kin, they then sought scholars outside of the immediate family either among the *Turudbe’*, Hausa, Arab, Tuareg, or Dyula scholars.

After more than fifteen years of study, *Shehu* Uthman decided not to follow a quiet career of reading, teaching and writing. On the contrary, at the age of 20 in the year 1772, he began publicly calling the people of the Hausa Habe’ kingdoms to Allah. This methodology was learned from his uncle Uthman Binduri upon whom the *Shehu* molded his character based upon piety, commanding the good and forbidding indecency.¹¹⁵ According to Uthman Gidadu, the *Shehu* had more than 88 teachers. Eighteen of these were from his immediate Fudiawa *Turudbe’* clan, three were Berber Inesliman and the remainder were members of the larger *Turudbe’* Fulbe’.¹¹⁶

Another teacher who exerted the most influence upon *Shehu* Uthman was Jibril ibn Umar. This teacher taught Uthman, Abdullahi, Muhammad Bello and others many Islamic sciences. He also initiated them into three Sufi brotherhoods: the *Qaadiriya*, the *Khalwatiyya*, and the *Shadhiliyya*.¹¹⁷ Jibril was a very militant teacher and was keen on initiating reform among the people of the Habe’ kingdoms. The key points which the Jibril and later *Shehu* Uthman aimed to change in the Hausa people were: [1] general ignorance of the fundamentals of theology and worship; [2] syncretists mixing of Islamic practices with animists customs; [3] heretical innovations emerging among the Sufis and the ‘evil scholars’; [4] governance based upon un-Islamic modes and methodologies; and [5] rampant injustice and oppression. *Shehu* Uthman sought to resolve these social ills by means of teaching. He taught that the salvation of mankind was based upon people following the Qur’an and the *Sunna* of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Knowledge to the *Shehu* was divided into three fundamentals: *Iman* (faith/belief); *Islam* (outward surrender); and *Ihsan* (spiritual excellence). Each of these

¹¹³ Exodus 19:5.

¹¹⁴ Jean Boyd, p. 5.

¹¹⁵ Murray Last,

¹¹⁶ Uthman Gidadu ibn Laima, *Raudat’l-Jinaan*, TMs, pp. 75-82.

¹¹⁷ B. G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 18.

divisions were firmly elaborated in the revelation of the Qur'an and in the daily practices of Muhammad, called the *Sunna*.¹¹⁸

Another aspect of the reform ideas of *Shehu* Uthman was his substantial reliance upon mystical visions and messianic doctrines. This factor gave the *Shehu* his charismatic appeal to his followers and supporters and would garner the assistance he would need in his eventual conflict with the rulers of the Habe' kingdoms. The mystical visions of the *Shehu* confirmed to his followers that he was a saint (*waliy*) who was guaranteed the support of Allah in the face of all sorts of aggression. The messianic forecast of the appearance of the Expected *Mahdi* by the *Shehu* also assured his followers that his social transformation was connected to the eschatological events that would signal the End of Time.¹¹⁹ These ideas were transmitted systematically to hundreds of students and jurists who in turn helped him to transform the central *Bilad's-Sudan*.

By 1804 conflict between his community and the rulers of Hausaland led to his *hijra* and by 1808 he and his community had successfully conquered most of the kingdoms of Habe' rulers of Hausaland resulting in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate. This African Islamic government had its own eschatological beliefs and cosmogony that imbued it with a sense of 'manifest destiny' and placed it above all the existing governments of the world of the time due to its adherence to the primal community of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. The Sokoto Caliphate saw itself as the key example of the Prophetic model created by Prophet Muhammad centuries earlier. In his *Najm'l-Ikhwaan*, the *Shehu* outlined the distinguishing marks of the Sokoto Caliphate:

"As for what will clarify what Allah ta'ala has conferred upon us in these times of religious and worldly blessings, so that the people of these times can be grateful for them. This will make them and us worthy of increase, because Allah ta'ala says: 'If you are grateful, He will increase you in blessings.' We also clarify these blessings so that every person of insight may know that we are following in the footsteps of Muhammad the Chosen Prophet, in all affairs. Realize, O Brothers! Allah ta'ala, has conferred upon us in these times: [1] a clear explanation of what is to be believed in (*'aqeeda*) from the religion of Allah; [2] a clear explanation of what is to be done (*'amal*) from the religion of Allah; [3] a clear explanation of what is to be avoided (*tark*) from the religion of Allah; [4] a clear understanding of what is highly recommended (*mubaah*) from the religion of Allah; [5] He has conferred upon us the removal of obscurities (*shubuhah*) from the religion of Allah; [6] He has conferred upon us the favor of commanding what all that is good (*amri bi'l-ma'ruf*); [7] forbidding indecency (*nahyi 'an 'l-munkar*); [8] frightening the people to cause them to leave disobedience of Allah; [9] giving good tidings to the people to urge them to the worship of Allah; Then He conferred on us [10] the favor of making the emigration (*hijra*); [11] the nominating of an *Amir'l-Mu'mineen*; [12] the taking up of the instruments of *jihad* which are cavalry horses, arrows, longbows, spears, swords, shields, armor, belts, helmets and other military equipment. He then conferred on us [13] the favor of making the *jihad* with them; [14] the appointing of prime ministers (*wazir*); [15] appointing the amirs of the armies; [16] the establishment of the public treasury (*khaazin*); [17] the appointing of regional amirs; [18] the appointing of government secretaries (*kaatib*); [19] the appointing of ambassadors (*rusul*) to foreign kingdoms; [20] taking civil servants (*khudaam*) for domestic

¹¹⁸ Uthman Dan Fuduye', *'Umdat 'l-'Ulama*, TMs., pp. 2-5. and *Fat'hu'l-Basa'ir*, TMs., pp. 10-19.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 20-27.

affairs; [21] appointing of the judiciary (*qudaa*); [22] appointing of the *amirs* responsible for executing legal punishments (*huduud*); and [23] the appointing of the *Amir* of pilgrimage (*hajj*). Thus, these 23 characteristics are the fundamental rites of *Islam*. And there number is like the number of years of the mission (*risaala*) of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. We are grateful to Allah who has favored us with the manifestation of these fundamental Islamic rites during the Last Days."¹²⁰

This model of the ideal government connected to the cosmology of the Prophet's twenty-three year mission created a point of solidarity that every succeeding generation of the *Turudbe'* could always revert to for cultural and spiritual renewal. These twenty-three criteria formed the basis of the new Caliphate of Sokoto, which guaranteed its endurance for more than a century precisely because of the transmission of these ideas until the Last Days. So we are not only looking at an African Islamic epistemology but we are also seeing the development of cosmogony and eschatology designed to give the community longevity and connect it with the Ends of Times. It is for this reason the *Shehu's* son, Muhammad Bello reported in the *Infraq'l-Maysuur* when his father sent him towards the east to the people of Birnin Gida with the following message:

"My father sent his greetings to them and commanded them to take the oath of allegiance (*ba'aya*) to hear and obey and to follow the *Sunna* in words and deeds, inwardly and outwardly, in movement and stillness, during night and day, therefore hear and accept. I informed them that he sends them the good news that Allah will open the lands for them and establish them firmly in the earth. Therefore take heed against mutual envy after that, becoming divided amongst themselves and altering the *shari'a* of Islam, the way those who were conquered had altered it. They then rejoiced and accepted my advice. I then informed them with the good news he gave of the nearness of the appearance of the *Mahdi*, and that the *Jama'at* of the *Shehu* are his forerunner (*talaa'uhu*), and finally that this *jihad* will not cease, with the permission of Allah, until it reaches the *Mahdi*."¹²¹

Shehu Uthman planted these ideas firmly in his wives, children, companions, grand children, and even his former teachers. *Shehu* Uthman's first students were his younger brother, Abdullahi, and his wives A'isha, Maymuna, and Hawwa. Although, he had many students, these along with his close friend Umar Kammi proved to be his closest students and supporters.

Gidadu ibn Laima listed some of the students who embodied the teachings of the *Shehu* and who were responsible for transmitting them to other generations. These students were called *muriduun* (disciples) because not only did they learn all of the outward sciences upon which Islamic social life was based, but they also mastered the science of the Spiritual Path (*Tariqa*) of gnosis of Allah.¹²²

Not all of them were from the Fudiawa *Turudbe'* clerisy, but for the purpose of our study, we will concentrate on those *muriduun* who were from this clan. It was through them the historical conscious and aspiration of its people were maintained and communicated through an elaborate philosophy of history and identity.

Among them was the fearfully aware sage, **Umar al-Kamuni**, the possessor of radiant metaphorical understanding and exquisite guidance. He was among the first of the

¹²⁰ Uthman Dan Fuduye', *Najm'l-Ikhwaan*, manus., ff. 9-10.

¹²¹ Muhammad Bello, *Infraq al-Maysuur Fi Tarikh Bilad at-Takrur*, (Rabat, Institute of African Studies), 1996, p. 205.

¹²² Uthman Gidadu ibn Laima, pp. 72-74.

companions to the *Shehu* and has acted as his adviser and has served him for many years. Among all men Umar al-Kamuni alone possesses the highest status with the *Shehu*.¹²³

Among them was the famous brother of the *Shehu*, Abu Muhammad **Abdullahi Dan Fuduye'**, who had attained the rank of absolute *mujtahid* in the sciences of Arabic linguistics and morphology.¹²⁴ *Shaykh* Abdullahi ibn *al-Qadi* al-Hajj said about him in his *Ta'leef Rajeez*:

"He was the author of many exceptional works both in prose and poetry that are widely known in distant countries and regions and acknowledged by scholars in the east and west. Students of knowledge regularly utilize his works in their studies and education, which have also become a source of immense benefit for the common as well as the elite. This is particularly true regarding his work on *Qur'anic* exegesis called *Diya't-Ta'weel*, to which no comparable text has ever been produced in these times. And I have heard from reliable sources that this text has reached the furthest east and west and the scholars of the science of *tafseer* in these times rely upon it."¹²⁵

He also composed several excellent texts on the origin and history of the *Turudbe'* Fulbe people. Among these were his *Asl 'l-Falaatiyeen* (the Origin of the Fulani), *'Id an-Nusuukh* (the Depositor of Texts), *Kitab'n-Nasab* (The Book of Lineage), and *Tazyeen al-Waraqaat* (the Beautification of the Pages).¹²⁶ In each of these texts, Abdullahi delineates the ethnic origin and group solidarity of the *Turudbe'* Fulbe. It is from him that the succeeding generations after the *Shehu* learned the values and beliefs of the *Turudbe'* Fulbe, and he became his brother's undeniable successor and unsurpassed teacher among his colleagues.¹²⁷ *Shaykh* Abdullahi was the mainstay of his brother and the general of the armies. He defended Islam both militarily and intellectually against every attack and left behind a virtual library of seminal and original works that fed the reform movement established by the *Turudbe'* for many centuries.

Among them also was **Modi Mamaru**, may Allah be merciful to him, was learned, well versed in various sciences and proficient in the sciences of Arabic linguistic. Because of his mental powers he was unique in his times in the sciences of logic and scholastic theology. There was no one who had reached his level of comprehension in the mathematical sciences and what is related to it regarding the science of division of inheritance. Through *Shaykh* Modi, the rational sciences were transmitted among the *Turudbe'* Fulbe.¹²⁸

Among them was the learned *Shaykh* **Muhammad Yero** ibn Ghara, who became the teacher par excellent of his time, possessed superb erudition, uprightness and fervent desire for the advancement of good and excellence in the society. Along with this, *Shaykh*

¹²³ Muhammad Bello *Infag al-Maysuur*.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p. 6.

¹²⁵ Abdullahi ibn *al-Qadi* al-Hajj, *Ta'leef Rajeez Bi Ta'reef Shaykh Mustafa*, unpublished manuscript in possession of author, f 3.

¹²⁶ All of these texts are unpublished manuscripts in the possession of the author. I have translated all of them and others and made them as appendices to this text.

¹²⁷ Omar Bello, *Islamic Education in 18th Century 'Nigeria': Tarikh Mustafa al-Torodi*, (Sokoto, the Islamic Academy), 1994, p. 6.

¹²⁸ Abdullahi ibn *al-Qadi* al-Hajj, f 5.

Mudi had an abundant portion in personal worship and litanies.¹²⁹ He was among the ten right acting scholars that the *Shehu* announced would enter Paradise from his *jama`at*.¹³⁰

Among them was the literary genius, *Shaykh Gidadu ibn Muhammad*, who was highly learned in the sciences of linguistics, grammar and eloquence. He was well known for his prodigious memory having preserved thousands of Arabic poetic verses from which the etymological roots of the language emerged. He spent all of his time either learning or educating others. Along with his extraordinary intellect, he possessed excellent character and was renowned for his peaceful and unpretentious heart. From him the science of virtue and moral fortitude was transmitted to the *Turudbe Fulbe*.¹³¹

Among them was **Al-Mustafa ibn Muhammad** at-Turudi, who was the pillar of the *Sunna* of his time. He was the chief of the scribes of the *Shehu* and was the husband of the eldest and most learned of the daughters of the *Shehu*, Khadija. He was well versed in the science of jurisprudence, having memorized from the *Shehu* many texts. He too was gifted from Allah ta`ala with superb character, passive heart and adherence to good opinion towards the Muslims.¹³² He was appointed the *Amir* of Salaame' and was instructed by *Sultan* Muhammad Bello to establish a university for the purpose of transmitting knowledge and wisdom north of the Rima River.

Among them was **Muhammad Sa`d**, the first born of *Shehu* Uthman Fuduye'. He had mastered both traditional and rational sciences and was responsible for transmitting the sciences of Arabic grammar to the following generations of the *Turudbe*.¹³³ He was named after his famous maternal grandfather, the learned sage Muhammad Sa`d ibn Abdullahi ibn Muhammad ibn Sa`d ibn Muhammad Ladan ibn Idris ibn Maasiran.

Among them was *Shaykh Muhammad al-Bukhari* ibn *Shehu* Uthman, who was an expert in the science of jurisprudence, having sat under the tutelage of his father and especially his uncle, *Shaykh* Abdullahi Dan Fuduye'. Under the guidance of *Shaykh* Abdullahi, Muhammad al-Bukhari became expert in the linguistic sciences as well as literature. He possessed a piercing intellect along with a generous nature, which was reflected in his great love for the people of learning and piety. He had attained a high station with Allah ta`ala being given the gift of acceptance of supplication (*mustajaab ad-da`awat*) as well as spiritual unveiling and gnosis of Allah ta`ala. He was appointed by his uncle, Abdullahi, as one of the governors of Gwandu, and later brought Oyo, Nupe, and Kontagora under the hegemony of the Sokoto Caliphate.¹³⁴

Among them was the son who inherited the political authority of the *Shehu*, **Muhammad Bello** ibn Uthman Dan Fuduye'. Since he was young child had learnt the *Qur'an* from memory and studied the religious sciences. Muhammad Bello had been attached to the *Shehu*, influenced by his spiritual states and listened to his teaching from the time he was a young boy, and through the *baraka* of the *Shehu*, he attained what few people could have attained. Bello took the science of Arabic language and rhetoric from his above-mentioned uncle, Abdullahi. He read with him the *al-Alfiyya*, the *Laamiyat 'l-Af`aal* with its commentaries joining together the sciences of linguistic, etymology and

¹²⁹ Abd'l-Qadir ibn al-Mustafa, *Turjumaan Ba`d Ulama Zamaanhihi*, manuscript in possession of author, f 2.

¹³⁰ *Al-'Ashiraat 'l-Mubaashiraat bi'l-Janna*, author unknown, manuscript in possession of author, f 1.

¹³¹ Abd'l-Qadir ibn al-Mustafa, *Turjumaan*, f 2.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Omar Bello, p.5.

¹³⁴ Abdullahi ibn *al-Qadi* al-Hajj, f 1.

verbal conjugation. He read with him in the science of rhetoric the Talkhees al-Miftaah and the al-Jawhara'l-Maknuun. Further, he took from his father, the *Shehu* the science of *Qur'anic* exegesis, the science of theology in the foundation of the religion, the science of prophetic traditions and studied with him the al-Insaan al-Kaamil in the science of the spiritual realities. Bello took from him an abundance of sciences and innumerable benefits, until he became well known among the students for lacking any laziness or boredom when it came to acquiring knowledge. He kept the company of my father, the *Shehu*, advised him, helped establish his affairs and struggled militarily against the enemies. Bello became one of the three top advisers to the *Shehu* and eventually inherited his position over the *caliphate* as *Amir'l-Mu'mineen*.¹³⁵

Among them was the knower of Allah ta'ala, the ascetic worshipper, *Shaykh Muhammad Sanbu* ibn *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye'. He was one who had gathered together the sciences of the *shari'a* (law) and the *haqeeqa* (divine reality). He secluded himself from people out of fear of Allah ta'ala except in times of necessity. He was an upright *waliyy* who was well acquainted with Allah ta'ala, who had achieved a tremendous station in saintliness and gnosis. He was the Pole (*qutb*) of the circle of reliance upon Allah ta'ala in his time and had attained through his unveiling the station of champion of Truth (*siddiqiyya*) and redemption (*ghawthiyya*). His chief student and disciple, *Shaykh Abd'l-Qadir ibn Mustafa* said that this pious friend of Allah ta'ala had been given the gift to walk on water, fly in the air, and could go for forty days without eating or drinking while still being occupied with strenuous physical labor and chores.¹³⁶

Among them was the illuminated sage upright scholar, *Shaykh Muhammad Tukur*. He was one of the chief disciples of the *Shehu*, who had inherited from him a vast amount of spiritual sciences. It is said that Tukur came to the *Shehu* already a learned scholar from a town called Talata Mafara, but desired to take the esoteric sciences from him. Tukur became the live-in disciple of the *Shehu*, which kindled good-humored jealousy among some of his well-known students, like Abdullahi and Bello. He authored many excellent texts on the secret meanings and usages of the Divine Names of Allah. Among these was his famous Qira't al-Ahiba. He composed a text at the request of Muhammad Bello, which dealt with the science of conjugal relationships with women called Ma'awanat 'l-Ikhwaan. He also composed a well-known text on the science of disputation and conflict resolution called Tanbeeh 'l-Khusama, which was widely used throughout the *caliphate* in the courts as well as in domestic and business matters. During the early stages of the *jihad* to establish the *caliphate*, the *Shehu* appointed Muhammad Tukur as an *amir* to govern the regions northeast of Sokoto near his hometown in Talata Mafara.¹³⁷

These were just a few of the scholars who had inherited the profound identity construct of the *Turudbe Fulbe* and had disseminated these concepts to the second succeeding generations. However, no real social transformation can occur without the active participation of women. The transmission of identity construct and historical consciousness flows down through each generation by means of both the male and female genders. When we go back several generations and examine the biographies of the

¹³⁵ Muhammad Bello, Infaq

¹³⁶ OpCit.

¹³⁷ Muhammad Bello, Infaq.

women of the *Turudbe`* family of Aal, it is easy to see that the identity traits which *Shehu* Uthman ibn Fuduye` inherited came by means of his female line.

One particular female ancestor of note was the sage **Taati**, the daughter of Hamm ibn Aal ibn Muhammad Jubba ibn Muhammad Sanbu ibn Maasiran. According to Muhammad Bello, she was among those who had subjugated and had been given authority of an entire 'tribe' of Muslim *Jinn*.¹³⁸ This is significant, because the King/Prophet Sulayman ibn Dawud, upon him be peace was given authority to subject Muslim as well as malevolent *jinn*, as is well known in the *Quran* and the *Sunna*. So here we have this quality of subduing invisible psychic forces granted to the descendents of Abraham manifesting in its fullness with a woman from the *Turudbe`*. The story behind this gift was that one day she ordered her servant girl to ignite a fire in the house in order to warm some milk. However as soon as she lit the fire it was mysteriously extinguished. The servant girl out of shire terror fled the kitchen and informed Taati what happened. Thus, Taati came herself in the kitchen lit the fire, and no sooner had it ignited, that it was mysteriously extinguished. She then left the kitchen and came back with the milk and said: "I am giving this milk as alms to whatever is in the house." She then left and laid down to sleep in front of her house. Then a unknown woman came and woke her up saying: "I do not intend to frighten you, but I am a female *jinn*, to whom you have be kind to. I only extinguished the fire because my daughter gave birth to a child in your house. So it is a must that you be present at the naming ceremony of the child. We are located in so-and-so place." When the day of the naming celebration came Taati went to the place that was told to her. When she arrived suddenly innumerable host of *jinn* were unveiled to her in manifold forms. Then, the particular female *jinn*, whom she met in her home approached her and said: 'Do not be frightened with what you see before you; because all of them have heard of the good deed you did for us.' Then all the *jinn* gathered around her and said: "As long as you live in this world we will be required to show you love and are under a covenant to you. Whenever you desire our presence just simply call our names and we will make ourselves present to you, Allah willing, and we will take care of any of your needs."¹³⁹ Muhammad Bello went on to describe the actual words in Fulfulde` that the *jinn* taught her to say when she wanted to subjugate them for her needs. Taati bint Hamm ibn Aal ibn Muhammad Jubba not only had the ability to control invisible psychic forces but she was also learned in the exoteric and esoteric sciences of Islam which were disseminated from generation to generation from her great ancestor Musa , to her grandfather, the learned sage Aal ibn Muhammad Jubba ibn Muhammad Sanbu ibn Maasiran ibn Ayyub ibn Buba Baba ibn Abu Bakr ibn Musa ibn *Imam* Dambuba who diffused this *baraka* to all his descendents.¹⁴⁰

Shehu Uthman Dan Fuduye` was educated and reared by two well-known erudite women. The first was his mother, **Hawwa**, the daughter of Muhammad ibn Uthman ibn Hamm ibn `Aal ibn Jubba ibn Muhammad Sanbu ibn Maasiran. She was a direct descendent of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.¹⁴¹

There was **Inna Alfa** the stepmother of the *Shehu*, being one of the wives of *Fuduye`* Muhammad. She was the daughter of a learned scholar named *Malam*

¹³⁸ Muhammad Bello, *Majmu` 'n-Nasab*, digitized manuscript in authors' possession, f 46.

¹³⁹ Ibid, ff 46-48.

¹⁴⁰ Waziri Junayd, *Dubt*, f. 13.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, f 12.

Mudharagha and her mother was a renowned scholar named Jalle', the daughter of the learned Faatu, the daughter of the renowned erudite *Malam Bi Sa'd*.

There was the sister of the *Shehu*, the learned **Sawda** bint *Fuduye`* Muhammad ibn Uthman ibn Saalih. She was married to the *amir* of the scribes under the *Shehu* the learned, al-Mustafa ibn Abd'r-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr ibn Umar ibn Abd'r-Rahman ibn Zaynab bint Mughadhi ibn Baayi. She like her husband shared in the responsibility of the archiving of the texts and the production of rare and needed books by the scholars. Her mother was the learned **Juda**, the daughter of the learned Muhammad Dikku and his erudite wife **Atti**, the daughter of the jurist Muhammadan ibn Dadi bint Ghurdu.¹⁴²

Among them was his paternal aunt **Inna Kebbi**, the daughter of the learned Uthman ibn Saalih. Her mother was the pious and ascetic, **Maryum**, the daughter of the famous jurist and teacher, Jibril ibn Hamm ibn Aal ibn Muhammad Jubba ibn Muhammad Sanbu ibn Maasiran. Inna Kebbi was a learned scholar who was responsible for teaching the women in her village under the direction of her husband, the erudite Muhammad Hajj ibn Ibrahim ibn Mane ibn Muhammad ibn Haaju bint Litt¹⁴³. She was the mother of eight children all who became scholars in their own right. Among them was the erudite and saintly wife of the *Shehu*, **Maymuna** bint Muhammad Hajj, who was the mother of the founder of the famous women's college without walls, the sacred Yan Taru, **Nana Asmau**.

As for **Nana Asmau** bint *Shehu*, so much has been said about her, that there is little that I can add to the mountainous praise lavished on this pious scholar and dedicated social activist. However, her great grandson, my *shaykh*, *Waziri* Junayd ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari said about her in his *Irf 'r-Rayhaan*: "She was Asmau, the righteous sage, the ascetic worshipper, pious scholar and dedicated social activist, may Allah be pleased with her. She produced innumerable poetic works designed to give admonition and council. She also produced many poems in praise of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. She was persistent in commanding the good and forbidding evil, in encouraging the people to adhere to the *shari`a* and follow the *sunna*, maintain family ties, and adhere to noble character. She may Allah be pleased with her had memorized the whole of the *Qur'an* and was extremely patient with the evils of people. She possessed amazing virtues...The author of the *Mawsufat as-Sudan*, which was an Arabization of her own work in Fulfulde' said in praise of her:

I will narrate in it what Asma'u put in poetic verse

Of hers composed in non-Arabic in which she dictated¹⁴⁴

A woman of noble attributes and the mother of dauntless heroes

An assessment of her by the universal judgment of the times as is well known
Where her fragrance defused among the *Nujaba*

And the People of Contentment numbered her among the *Nuqaba*.

Among her scholarly productions were her *Tabshir al-Ikhwan bi't-Tawassul bi Suwar 'l-Qur'an 'Inda al-Khaaliq al-Manaan*; as well as her *Tanbeeh al-Ghaafileen*, in

¹⁴² Ibid, f 28.

¹⁴³ Ibid, f 14.

¹⁴⁴ The poem which Asma'u dictated is called in Fulfulde' *Fitilaagu* and in Hausa it is called *Waka'r Ghiwaaya*. She composed this poetic song first in Fulfulde' and then translated it herself into Hausa. These two compositions became renowned throughout the Hausaland even to the present day. She composed them in the year 1282 during the time of the rule of her nephew, *Amir'l-Mu'mineen* Ahmad ibn Abu Bakr Atiqu ibn *Shehu* Uthman ibn Fuduye, and made its stanzas equal 134.

which she discussed at length the barriers which stand between humanity and Paradise. She produced other works besides theses as well...She died in the year 1282 of the *hijra* at the age of 72.”¹⁴⁵

Among these *Turudbe`* women who inherited the identity construct of the ‘Children of Abraham’ was the learned and pious wife of the *Shehu*, **A`ishata**, the daughter of the above mentioned learned jurist Muhammad Sa`d ibn Abdullahi ibn Muhammad ibn Sa`d ibn Muhammad Ladan ibn Idris ibn Maasiran¹⁴⁶ Her grandson, the sage and mystic Abd`l-Qaadir ibn Mustafa said about her in his *Salwat al-Ikhwan* in which he mentioned the elite among the sages and mystics surrounding the *Shehu*: “Among them was the female spiritual master, our grandmother, A`ishata, the wife of *Shehu* Uthman and mother of my spiritual master, Muhammad Sanbu. She possessed an ample share of the traits of uprightness and spiritual excellence, and a well established precedence in the affair of spiritual realization and gnosis...She was reknown for her constant spiritual states and stations and had reached the highest levels in asceticism, uprightness, piety, and complete spiritual struggle and discipline. She was from among the ‘*Ibad Allah as-Saaliheen* and the obedient *Khiyaar al-Umma*.”¹⁴⁷ She gave birth to eight children, all who became like her, learned sages of high spiritual ranks. Among them were the above mentioned, Muhammad Sa`d, Muhammad Sanbu, Muhammad al-Bukhari, Mu`allayidi, A`ishata, Aminatu, Juwayratu and the famous Khadijatu.¹⁴⁸

This **Khadijatu**, the daughter of the *Shehu* from his above mentioned wife, A`ishata bint Muhammad Sa`d, “was from among the *awliyya*, and the righteous and humble ascetics. She was among the daughters of the *Shehu* who made the *hijra* with him from Degel. She was famous for her virtuous spiritual states, pleasing character, copious learning and magnificent comprehension of the Divine realities. She possessed a well established foot hold on many diverse sciences, and was from among those disciples of the *Shehu* who had been spiritually instructed to reach the Goal of direct knowledge of Allah ta`ala. She also produced many poems in the Fulfulde` language, among them was her famous poem on the ‘Signs of the Appearance of the Mahdi’; her poem of eulogy to her husband the erudite Mustafa ibn Muhammad at-Turudi, the father of the renown sage, Abd`l-Qaadir; her poem on ‘A Supplication for the Village of Wurno’, which *Amir`l-Mu`mineen* Muhammad Bello used to recite and himself arabized; her poems on the science of jurisprudence; filial piety; grammar; and others which cannot be enumerated.”¹⁴⁹

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¹⁴⁵ Junayd ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari, *Irf`r-Rayhaan Fi`t-Tabarruk Bi Dhikr`s-Shaykh Uthmaan*, xerox copy of manuscript in possession of author, ff 55-60.

¹⁴⁶ Muhammad Bello, *Majmu`n-Nasab*, f 7.

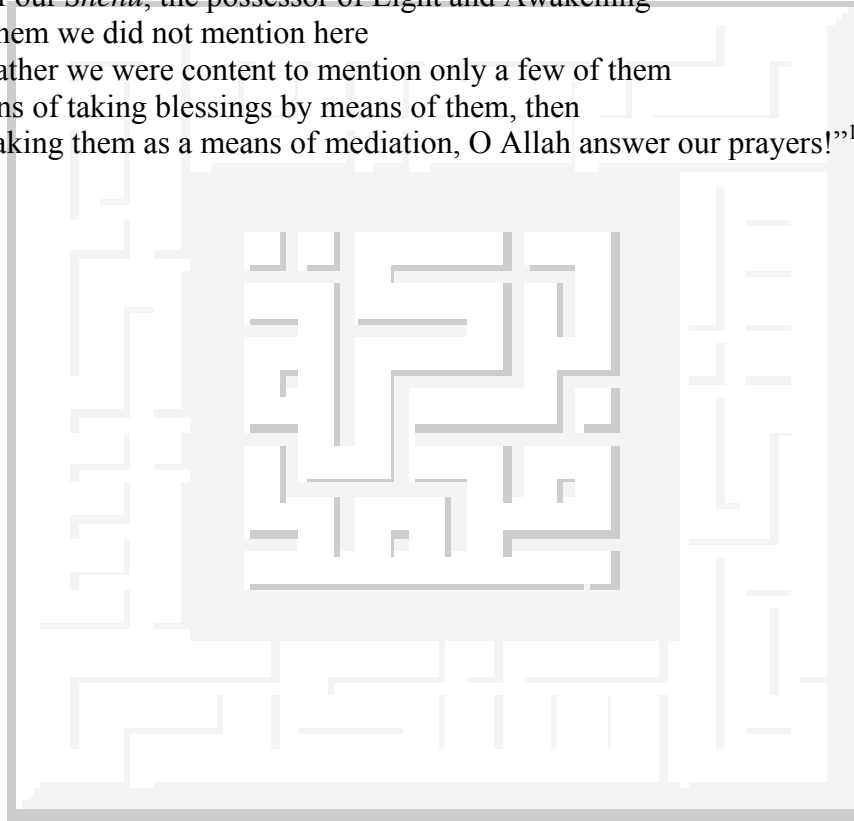
¹⁴⁷ Abd`l-Qaadir ibn Mustafa, *Salwat al-Ikhwaan Fi Dhkir Ba`d`l-Khawass Min Ahl`z-Zamaan*, digitized manuscript in possess of author, f 8.

¹⁴⁸ OpCit. F 7.

¹⁴⁹ Junayd ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari, *Irf`r-Rayhaan*, ffs 50-51

Our spiritual master *Waziri* Junayd gave an excellent description of these many *Turudbe`* women who had inherited the identity construct and historical consciousness of this ancient 'lost and found' sprout from the Tree of Abraham:

"These were the women from among the servants of Allah
The women of uprightness, high spiritual states and asceticism
God fearing women who protected what should be hidden
Women of remembrance of Allah and who possessed excellent hearts
They were steeped in the study of the *Qur'an* always
And never feared the blame of anyone regarding Allah
Constantly listening to the sermons and admonitions
Of our *Shehu*, the possessor of Light and Awakening
Most of them we did not mention here
Rather we were content to mention only a few of them
As a means of taking blessings by means of them, then
Taking them as a means of mediation, O Allah answer our prayers!"¹⁵⁰



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¹⁵⁰ Junayd ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari, *Qasidat 't=Tawassul bi Awliyya Allah ta'ala Min 'n-Nisaa 'l-Kumal*, xerox copy of manuscript with the author, f.10.

“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.”¹⁵¹

The *Asabiya* (Solidarity) of the *Turudbe*’ and the Philosophy of History

Ibn Khaldun defined *asabiya* (group solidarity) as “the force, which impels groups of human beings to assert themselves, to struggle for primacy, to establish hegemonies, dynasties and empires”.¹⁵² Group solidarity is the fundamental bond of human society and the basic motive force of history; as such, the term has been translated as “*esprit de corps*”. It is a people's will to power and the key factor that inspires them to self-realization. Although, Ibn Khaldun applied the concept *asabiya* (group solidarity) to non-religious factors, the fundamental motive force which has impelled the *Turudbe*’ was clearly religious as well as ethnic. This alone is what gives the *Turudbe*’ their cohesiveness through long periods of time. The *asabiya* for the *Turudbe*’ is in effect their historical consciousness, which I believe was inculcated so deep and for such a prolonged period that it could not be uprooted even from the psychic. The historical consciousness continued to impress itself on the reality of the *Turudbe*’ even to the point of forcing and motivating the descendents of the *Turudbe*’ among enslaved Africans. We will return to this theme in the conclusion.

Let us now examine the key elements of this self-image which comprised the *asabiya* of the *Turudbe*’. First Abdullahi composed a poem in his *Kitab an-Nasab* which gives an indication of the motive power that launched the *Turudbe*’ towards erudition, reform, and eventual nation building. It sums up the argument of group solidarity and basis identity construction. He said:

“O critic abstain from blaming me for I am eager to
Clarify my lineage and to preserve my honorable rank.
For we have the relationship to ‘Uqba that connects us to Isma’il
And we have an unbroken ethnic root that connects us to Isra’il.
Our paternal uncles are the Arab, just as our maternal uncles
Are the children of Isra’il, which is an enduring source.
Thus our root is from Mount Sinai and our *Jihad*
Goes back to Futa for by us the land was revolutionized
Then subsequent events brought about our *Jihaad*
Until it arrived at the lands of Hausa, my place of birth and abode
And eventually we reverted to the *Jihaad*, our birthright
Accompanying our *Shaykh*, Uthman, my near blood brother.
For he prepared the way for the upright religion and our
Legal judgments have progressed and will remain until the Forgiving One.”¹⁵³

Abdullahi clearly paints a timeline that traces the *Turudbe*’ back through time to its most remote ancestral past. He establishes legitimacy and authenticity for both the paternal and maternal lineage of the ethnicity. Hebraic origin with the powerful spiritual

¹⁵¹ Genesis 17:7

¹⁵² Extract from the Encyclopaedia of Islam CD-ROM Edition v. 1.0 © 1999 Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.

¹⁵³ Abdullahi Dan Fuduye’, *Kitaab an-Nasab*, ff. 2-3.

signification it has, is established on the maternal line. Islamic Arab origin with its subsequent implications is established on the paternal line. He uses words like ‘unbroken ethnic root’ and ‘an enduring source’ to illustrate continuity and persistence of a historical consciousness. Mount Sinai, the mountain of revelation is the spiritual source from which the *Turudbe*’ spring and Futa was the place where the *Turudbe*’ initiated their *jihad*.

Perhaps no cultural ingredient that binds a people together cohesively is more important than linguistic unity. Through language a people can assert its values using its own internal reference. Through language unanimity, people define themselves, their universe and project themselves and project themselves into the future. More importantly language allows a people to defend themselves against cultural aggression of all sorts. The measure of their enemy is defined using their own frame of reference and the diameter of their struggle defensively precludes any encompassing by the dogma their enemies.

The linguistic cohesiveness of the *Turudbe*’ demonstrates their desire for cultural unity and continuity. *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye’ indicated this in his *Wasiyya* (Final Testament), which was the last writing that he bequeathed, to his nation. He reiterated the importance of the linguistic unity of the *Turudbe*’ and how this helps in the stability of their struggle. He said:

“Those who are from among us, should never neglect the *Fulfulde*’ language, because it is our language and the language of our fathers and grandfathers. Whoever abandons the *Fulfulde*’ language, then he is not from among us. Therefore, I implore you by Allah, do not forsake speaking with the language of *Fulfulde*’ and do not discard it. And the least you should know from it is the greetings of morning and evening and what is required in taking care of the needs of the house.”¹⁵⁴

Clearly *Shehu* Uthman made the knowledge of the *Fulfulde*’ language an integral element of the cultural personality of his people as well as those who followed them. Linguistic unity among the *Turudbe*’ was “the unique common denominator, the characteristic of cultural identity par excellence”.¹⁵⁵ The unanimity engendered by linguistic unity can never be disregarded because it lays down the diameter of cultural expression, which in turn establishes the circumference and extent of civilization. Thus, the *Turudbe*’ were able to establish a linguistic referent that allowed them to define themselves, their environment and delineate their enemies from their own perspective. Diop emphasizes this cogent point, quoting Montesquieu, when he said: “as long as a conquered people have not lost its language, it can have hope.”¹⁵⁶ This principle proved extremely important for the descendents of the *Turudbe*’, who were able to maintain some semblance of their language among the Gullah-Geechee nations of Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and the Sea Islands of Georgia.

The *Shehu* insisted that even the use of daily greetings was sufficient to include his followers in the ‘linguistic umbrella’ of his *Jama`at*. It was not necessary for his disciples to know the entire lexicon of *Fulfulde*’ to be included in the embrace of the

¹⁵⁴ Uthman Dan Fuduye’, *Wasiyya’s-Shaykh Uthman ibn Fuduye’*, (Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria, 1989), pp. 23-24.

¹⁵⁵ Cheikh Anta Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism*, p. 214.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

spiritual covenant that was given him. This is significant because one modern linguist said precisely that when language is used as a 'covert agency' where mere microlinguistic features of a language are intentionally used to identify membership, include outsiders and exclude those undesirables.

"The link between language and identity is often so strong that a single feature of language use suffices to identify someone's membership in a given group. On the battle field after the victory over the people of Ephraim, the Gileads applied a language identity test to sort out friend and foe: All of the soldiers were asked to pronounce the word *shibboleth*; those who pronounced the first consonant as [sh] were friends, those who pronounced it [s] were enemies and therefore killed at once (Judges: XII-6). Hence a single phonetic feature may be sufficient to include or exclude somebody from any social group."¹⁵⁷

Thus, the *Shehu* established a microlinguistic watershed for determining who were considered 'real' members of the *Jama`at*, along with the spiritual and erudition required for such inclusion. It is no wonder that generations after the demise of the Sokoto Caliphate in northern Nigeria, and the devolving and near disappearance of Fulfulde' as a common linguistic factor among his descendents; that *Waziri* Junayd took it upon himself to learn the language of Fulfulde' on his own while in his mid forties is indicative of the devolution of the language as a lingua-franca in Northern Nigeria; the original home of the *Khalifate*. It is also not surprising that the leading Fulfulde' linguist in northern Nigeria is Prof. Ibrahim Makoshi, who originates from the lands of the *hijra* in Sudan from the town of Maiurno on the Blue Nile. In 1966, *Waziri* Junayd composed his *Ta'leem al-Ikhwaan Bi Dhikri Man Ta'allamtu Minhum Lughata 'l-Fullaan* in which he listed more than twelve *Turudbe'* masters of the Fulfulde' language that he studied with. Among them were Mallam Ibrahim ibn Abdullahi Wajaka, Mallam Mugaaje Bujji, the learned Muhammad Bi Murri, *al-Alim* Limaam, the ascetic female erudite Manmanghi; Mallam Isa Bi Maruuta, Mallam Muhammad Ghududu, Mallam al-Haj Bi Asarakkawa, Mallam Jedo, Mallam Bughanshu Gida, Mallam Mawdu al-Mufti, and Mallam Abd'l-Qaadir Maalanuuraji.¹⁵⁸ After mastering the lingua franca of the *Jama`at*, *Waziri* Junayd then composed his famous *Marti`u al-Adhaan `Ala Lughat 'l-Fulaan* in Arabic in which he systematized the entire gambit of the Fulfulde' language. After this he composed his famous *al-Bakuurat al-Janiya `Ala al-Lughat al-Falatiya* in prose in which he elaborated and explained what he had versified in the *Marti`u*.¹⁵⁹

What is significant in the above is that some seven generations after the *Shehu* his disciples continue to learn and systematize the Fulfulde' language as he advised in his final testament to his nation. In the *Wasiyya*, *Shehu* Uthman reminded the *Turudbe'* of their connection with the Abrahamic line and of the mission and responsibility that such a connection brings. The Bible gives an indication of the mission that Abraham was given to keep and preserve the covenant. This covenant was given to the seed and descendents of Abraham throughout the generations.¹⁶⁰ The Creator promised to make of the

¹⁵⁷ Thomas, B. Klein, "Linguistic Identity, Agency, and Consciousness in Creole: Gullah-Geechee and Middle Caicos", *Linguistic Identity in Postcolonial Multilingual Spaces*, (Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, in press), p. 9.

¹⁵⁸ Junayd ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari, *Ta'leem al-Ikhwaan Bi Dhikri Man Ta'allamtu Minhum Lughata 'l-Fullaan*, xerox copy of manuscript in possession of author, ff. 1-6.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, f. 10.

¹⁶⁰ Bible – Genesis: 17:9.

descendants of Abraham a great nation and bless all the nations by means of him.¹⁶¹ The *Shehu*, in his final testament, like the Patriarch Abraham enjoins on his followers, children and supporters of the *Turudbe* to adhere to the Way and the covenant of their father Abraham as it was fulfilled in the last and seal of the Prophets, Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He reminds the *Turudbe* of their mission to guide the world to the Truth, as a solemn pledge to Allah.

“Verily I only hope that I can be included among those spiritual leaders who are the answer to the supplication of our great grandfather Ibrahim al-Khaleel, upon him be peace, in which He said: ‘*And make us to be spiritual leaders for the pious.*’ I have derived much benefit from the general meaning of this verse because Allah ta’ala includes in this supplication the descendants of Ibrahim, and we (the *Turudbe*) are from among them.”¹⁶²

Here he persuades the *Turudbe* that the covenant of Abraham is not just a covenant of blood, but also a covenant of a spiritual commitment to be leaders and guides for the righteous. This identity construct induces a perpetual commitment to fulfill the Divine promise of the Creator and an answer to the supplications of the ancestors. This type of *asabiya* is very hard to eradicate once it has been established in the psychic.

The *Shehu*, with the help of the *Turudbe* scholars and jurist established a powerful kingdom with more than 23 separate regions; each led by an *Amir* (ruler). He painstakingly guided his people to establish just government. He composed seminal texts on the principles of government and the methodologies of rulership. Some of these text included his Usuul ‘l-’Adl (the Foundations of Justice), Kitaab ‘l-Farq (the Book of the Distinction), Bayaan Wujuub al-Hijra (The Explanation of the Obligation of Emigration) and many others that clarified the purpose of government, the responsibilities of the governed and the government, and the means to guarantee justice and equity. His brother Abdullahi composed his Diya ‘l-Hukaam (the Light of the Governors), the Diya ‘l-’Umara (the Light of the Rulers), the Diya ‘l-Uula’l-Amr (the Light of Those who Possess the Authority), and others. Muhammad Bello, the son of the *Shehu*, wrote more extensively than the others in the area of politics and constitutional theory. He composed the Usuul as-Siyaasa (the Fundamental Principles of Politics), the Ghayth ‘l-Wabl Fi Seerat ‘l-Imam ‘l-Adl (the Abundant Downpour Regarding the Behavior of the Just Leader), and the Risaalat Ila al-Jama’at ‘l-Muslimeen (the Letter to the Community of the Muslims). With all of this obvious dedication to politics, government and sovereignty, yet the *Shehu* as a form of spiritual discipline gave up temporal authority in 1815.¹⁶³ He eschewed rulership and returned to his original mission of calling people to the door of Allah ta’ala. He said:

“It for this reason, that I have openly declared that I am not a king or ruler. I am simply a leader of his people who guides them to correct their affairs. I am simply inviting them to the religion of Allah, seeking by means of that His forgiveness, His mercy and desiring His pleasure. I am following the ways of my fathers and imitating the traces of my grandfathers who have passed. This is because our ancestors were the people of uprightness, guidance, learning, and struggle in the Way of

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 12: 2-3.

¹⁶² Uthman Dan Fuduye’, Wasiyya, TMs, ff. 4-6.

¹⁶³ Abd’l-Qadir ibn Mustafa, Mausufaas as-Sudan, trans, Muhammad Shareef (SIIASI, YanQing, 2008), p. 16.

Allah against the enemies of the religion; in order to make it wide and to deliver it. I am doing this following the command of the Prophet and answering his call when he said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: "Deliver the message from me even if it is just a single verse."¹⁶⁴

The *Shehu* reminds the *Turudbe* that the *asabiya* (group solidarity) and social identity that binds them is not based upon blood, but it is built on a commitment to the spiritual and moral guidance of the world. The *Quran* speaks to that when Allah tells Abraham: "*I am making you a leader of the whole of mankind.*" Then Abraham replied: "*And will You do the same for my descendants?*" Allah ta'ala replied: "*My covenant will not embrace the unjust oppressors.*"¹⁶⁵

"This is our inheritance and the inheritance of our grandfathers. We are upon that mission without being kings and rulers who practice oppression and injustice. And those who follow me in that then they are from me, and if not, then not! So that all those who love me from the brothers, the descendants and loved ones, rather all those who follow my commands and are content with my teachings and have answered my call – may know that I am not a wretched oppressor devoid of compassion, as some have said. It is necessary and obligatory for every reasonable believer to follow the traces of their believing ancestors, to follow the Way of their righteous grandfathers and imitate them. For this reason, I have chosen to imitate my grandfathers in adhering to the *Sunna* strongly so that I can be a guide to what is good like they were. For the one who guides to what is good is like the one who does that good and will attain the reward of those who act on that good."¹⁶⁶

The identity construct of the *Turudbe* being as it is connected to the Abrahamic line includes the blessings of the covenant, but also comprises the promise of affliction. This is a reflection again on the concept of the 'tried stone' and the concept of 'sacrifice' that is so essential in the identity construct of the Abrahamic tradition. The idea of rejection and being made a 'stumbling block' for the nations comprise the core belief system of the Bani Israel and it is reflected in the supreme sacrifice that Abraham was called upon by Allah to perform. This self-sacrifice becomes the means by which nations will be judged and rewarded. The same stone that was a stumbling block for many and was rejected by oppressive nations would become the 'corner stone' of a New World. This identity construct becomes the most powerful element of defense in the face of social and cultural aggression.

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¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ *Qur'an*: 2: 123.

¹⁶⁶ Op. cit.

The oppression itself becomes a form of purification, edification, atonement and preparation for a new just and equitable social order. The Bible narrates this affliction in the Book of Genesis:

“And He said to Abram: ‘Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.’”¹⁶⁷

Thus, the *Turudbe*’ developed through their identity construct a redemptive philosophy of endurance of rejection, sacrifice, commitment to the covenant, promise of redemption, and eventual emancipation that would help them in the horrible ordeal of oppression and injustice.



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¹⁶⁷ Bible – Genesis: 15:13-14.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thine art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff they do comfort me. Thy prepareth a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.”¹⁶⁸

The Persistence of *Turudbe*’ Identity Construct in the Diaspora

The sacrifice that Prophet Abraham was asked to do of his most beloved son has been the greatest symbol of obedience to Allah ta’ala throughout the monotheistic faiths. The ‘sending away’ of Hagar and Isma’il to the ancient House of Baka in Mecca echoed this same sacrifice. Isaac (*Ishaaq*) demonstrated his ability to forfeit what he loved through the loss of Esau. Esau, in turn, demonstrated his selflessness through the surrendering of his birthright to his brother Jacob (*Yakub*). He, in turn, made the supreme sacrifice through the plight of his most beloved son, Joseph (*Yusef*). He, in turn, sacrificed his freedom rather than succumb to the wishes of the elite women of Egypt. The Bani Israel through 430 years of bondage in Egypt, and then the additional slavery in Babylon symbolized their failure to sacrifice their own souls for their Lord and Creator. Sacrifice and the selflessness that it demands became a form of edification for these ancient communities. It was a way of Allah ta’ala showing His favor by bringing His people out of circumstances that were difficult and harsh, and redeeming them and making them untarnished again. Likewise, in the study of the plight of the *Turudbe*’ Fulbe descendents of Abraham in the western hemisphere, one sees a narrative of sacrifice and eventual redemption.

Allah ta’ala says: “*I have created you from a single male and female and made you into nations and ethnic groups so that you may know yourselves and others. The most noble of you with your Lord are those who are most fearfully aware of Him.*”¹⁶⁹ Consequently, self-knowledge constitutes the *raison d’être* for all innate human groupings. This self-knowledge precludes all human arrogance and deprivation when it is coupled with *taqwa* (fearful awareness of Allah).” The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said: “The white is not superior to the black nor is the black superior to the white except by means of *taqwa*. The Arab is not superior to the non-Arab nor is the non-Arab superior to the Arab except by means of *taqwa*.” True, history and the traditions connected with it should never be used to promote conceit, arrogance, greed, and over consumption. On the contrary, the science of history is the record of our human achievements and failures, authenticated and transmitted to urge us onward towards greater perfection and recognition. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace once said: “Learn from your lineage that which will connect you with your family heritage.”¹⁷⁰ Thus, the science of history, whether local and personal or universal and public, serves to place the subject within its rightful time and place. History deposits the subject at a point in time, assesses the movement of that point backwards into time, and gives us the time line necessary to make educated deductions about the future of the subject.

In twelfth century Mali, the *Mansa*, Maghan Kon Fata, advised his son, the great *Mansa*, Sundiata Keita regarding the importance of the oral historian (*belen-tigi*): “From

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. Psalms 23: 3-5.

¹⁶⁹ *Quran* 49:13

¹⁷⁰ Abdur Rahman as-Suyuti, *Jaam’I as-Sagheer*, Vol. 3, p. 213.

his mouth you will hear the history of your ancestors. You will learn the art of governing Mali according to the principles which our ancestors have bequeathed to us.” The above citations demonstrate that history has a universal utility designed to create group consciousness, designate legitimacy, overcome enemies, and prove continuity. From the standpoint of society, history serves countless pragmatic functions to insure its survival and coherence.

However, when the historical conscience has been disjointed and disconnected, this rupture off-times leads to deep personal and collective schizophrenia. The great *Turudbe'* Fulbe' scholar of the 20th century *Waziri* Junayd ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari elucidated the nature of identity disruption in a poem in his work concerning the lineage of his great grandmother, Nana Asma'u, the daughter of *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye' called *Nayl 'l-Arab Fi Istifsaa'i 'n-Nasab*.¹⁷¹ This poem was taken from a 15th century Timbuktu scholar and it describes the deep psychological harm a people can face when they lack the self-knowledge that the historical consciousness bequeaths. He says: “Whoever does not inform his children of his grandparents has destroyed his child, marred his descendants, and injured his offspring the day he dies. Whoever does not make use of his ancestry, has muddled his reason. Whoever is unconcerned with his lineage, has lost his mind. Whoever neglects his origin, his stupidity has become critical. Whoever is unaware of his ancestry his incompetence has become immense. Whoever is ignorant of his roots his intellect has vanished. Whoever does not know his place of origin, his honor has collapsed.”¹⁷²

Although this scathing poem was written more than five hundred years ago, it accurately delineates the present mental state of many of the descendents of Africans in the western hemisphere and in many parts of present day Africa. When a people are cut off from their own history and are forced to look at themselves from the perspective of their enemies then the result is cultural aggression, imperialism, and domestic colonization. This poem originating from the *Turudbe'* Fulbe' indicates that they understood the importance of self-knowledge and the role that historical consciousness plays in the development of the construction of the identity. Thus, when the disruption with the historical conscience occurs then a people become disjointed from their wellspring and find themselves open to aggression and oppression. Jacobson-Whidding underlined this when she argued:

“When a person's moral universe is suddenly invalidated because of a lack of 'fit' with social reality, his conception of himself in relation to alter will be invalidated too. Such an invalidation of a person's moral universe may be the outcome of its confrontation with a new, alien, or changed social structure, in which a person's own role is changed too. When, as a result of this, his self-image does not correspond to actual

¹⁷¹ I am grateful to al-Hajja Nana Asma'u and her son al-Hajj Ahmed Abideen, of Khartoum for allowing me to borrow this text. They are both descendents of the *Turudbe'* Fulbe', who made the great emigration from Northern Nigeria to the Sudan in 1903, that had been foretold by their great ancestor Uthman Dan Fuduye'. Ahmed Abideen and his mother are cousins to the *Waziri* Junayd, making them the direct heirs of Nana Asma'u, the daughter of *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye'.

¹⁷² *Waziri* Junayd ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari, *Nayl'l-Arab fi Istifsaa'i'n-Nasab*, manuscript in possession of author, f 4.

social reality, the center of gravity of this personal identity may disappear.”¹⁷³

Dr. Joseph Adjaye points out that oppression, slavery or imperial domination reinforces, through its propagation, those repressive values designed to coerce enslaved or colonized groups to accept their ‘proper place’ as inferiors and subordinates in the oppressive society.¹⁷⁴ However, Adjaye goes on to clarify that a powerful historical consciousness and identity construct that persists in spite of slavery, colonialism and oppression, can redeem a people and give them the means to their emancipation and freedom. He said:

“Although slavery and the trans-Atlantic pulls of capitalist labor have intervened to create points of difference, ruptures, disjuncture and discontinuities in our pan-Black world, we must nevertheless recognize our common historical experience. We must in fact recognize that cultural identities do not develop in a vacuum; they emanate from somewhere, from a common history. Therefore, identity is something more than simply a (re) discovery or ‘remembering’ of the past; it also should be a reproduction into the future. Though the ‘re-invention’ of the past might seem imaginative, it is a powerful and critical tool in providing coherence to a people fragmented by colonialism, traumatized by slavery and subjugated by neocolonialism and capitalism.”¹⁷⁵

The above insight, by Dr. Adjaye supplies the core ideation that will be the central part of this section of the research. We will try and demonstrate the continuity of an identity construct that survived the ‘rupture, disjuncture, and discontinuities’ brought on through the trans-Atlantic slave trade. If as Dr. Adjaye asserted that the ‘re-invention’ of the past provides coherence to a people, even when that ‘remembering’ is the result of leaps of the imagination – then what of those cultural reproductions that are real, continuous, persistent and intentional. Said another way, what if the identity construct includes within its ethos the process of ‘rejection, enslavement, rejuvenation and eventual emancipation and redemption’? What if, in the eyes of the people concerned, the entire process is a part of Divine Providence?

This is the core value system of the plight of the children of Abraham and underscores the philosophy behind the history of the *Turudbe*. The fulfillment of the covenant and the fulfillment of prophecy in history also provide coherence, but go further and reproduce itself into the future as a form of redemptive miracle. This factor will become apparent in the history of the descendants of enslaved *Turudbe* Muslims in the Diaspora of the Americas.

From the 16th century until the mid 19th century more than 15.4 millions Africans were taken from the African continent.¹⁷⁶ These enslaved Africans were composed of the most able-bodied young men and young women. Europeans particularly sought after women of childbearing age. According to Sylviane Diouf’s assessments, there were between 2.25 and 3 million African Muslims exported to the Americas.¹⁷⁷ This

¹⁷³ Anita Jacobson-Widding, “Introduction”, *Identity: Personal and Socio-Cultural: A Symposium*, p. 14.

¹⁷⁴ Joseph Adjaye, p. 4.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 16.

¹⁷⁶ J.E. Inikori, “Africa in World History: the Export Slave Trade From Africa and the Emergence of the Atlantic Economic Order”, *Africa in World History*, p. 82.

¹⁷⁷ Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 48.

population assessment referred particularly to the Mande', Wolof, Hausa, Kanuri, Yoruba and *Turudbe'* Muslim ethnicities. Of all the Muslims who survived the ordeal of capture and enslavement, to narrate their stories, it seems that a great deal of these were *Turudbe'*. There are three possible reasons for this. [1] A greater proportion of the enslaved Muslims were *Turudbe'* Fulbe', due to the fact that they were involved with the *jiḥād* movements that permeated the entire *Bilad 's-Sudan* at that time. [2] The penetration of Islamization of the Fulbe' was deeper than in other groups because as we demonstrated the *Turudbe'* were the principal purveyors of Islam during the period. [3] The *Turudbe'* Islamic identity construct was more cohesive than in other groups, which guaranteed its surviving the ordeal of slavery.

Diouf demonstrates that Islam arrived in the Americas at the same time as the Judeo-Christian faith; accept that Islam survived under hostile circumstances. The *Turudbe'* Muslims who arrived here were apart of successful erudite civilizations that were on a par with the European and American civilizations of the time. Walter Rodney demonstrates convincingly that minus the trans-Atlantic slave trade, African civilizations would have developed at the same rate as that of western nations. Both Inikori and Rodney highlighted the fact that when core countries develop it leads to underdevelopment and dependency for those countries on the periphery.¹⁷⁸ In order for Western Europe and the European colonies of the Americas to exploit agricultural based economies, there had to be the need for massive influx of free labor, depleting the skilled labor of Africa. Inikori says:

“The key element in the structuring of the economies and societies of the New World during the period was large-scale plantation agriculture. In mainland North America, the products were mainly tobacco and cotton, but in Latin America and the Caribbean, sugar was king. The scale of operation of the new economy necessitated a complete repopulation of the New World.”¹⁷⁹

In short, European and American greed was the chief cause of the underdevelopment of African civilization. The most highly developed societies at the time were that of African Islamic civilization, and the *Turudbe'* were the ideologues of this high civilization. As shown in previous chapters, the *Turudbe'* clerisy were at the core of every Islamic civilization that emerged in the *Bilad's-Sudan*. They had more than 8 centuries of experience as rulers, governors, judges, jurist, clerks, civil servants, military scientist, merchants, builders, medical practitioners, professors, and craftsmen. The *Turudbe'* composed seminal and primary research discussing all the above sciences, reflecting their independent comprehension and unique perspective and application.

The European slave trade brought this to an abrupt halt. Millions of the most able bodied *Turudbe'* youth were snatched from their homes. Scholars and clerks essential to the development of the society were suddenly snatched and placed in irons. Even *Turudbe'* rulers were shown no deference in the avarice for Black bodies. These learned and cultured groups were not kidnapped to function in the new society as clerks, judges, *amirs*, or civil servants. They were stripped of their clothing and eventually their humanity and left with nothing except their ability to perform brute labor. The deep morality and ethical values that had been refined over the 8 centuries of high Islamic civilization were disregarded by the 'Christian whites'. George Fitzhugh writing in the

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 80; W. Rodney, pp. 82-85.

¹⁷⁹ Inikori, p. 88.

17th century summed up the attitude of Anglo-Americans towards the enslaved Africans when he said:

“He the Negro is but a grown up child, and must be governed as a child...The master occupies toward him the place of parent or guardian. We shall not dwell on this view, for no one will differ with us who thinks as we do of the negro's capacity, and we might argue till dooms-day in vain, with those who have a high opinion of the negro's moral and intellectual capacity.”¹⁸⁰

The enslaved *Turudbe*’ Abu Bakr as-Sidiq of Timbuktu recounts in Arabic this terrible ordeal: “As soon as I was made prisoner, they stripped me, and tied me with a cord, and gave me a heavy load to carry”.¹⁸¹ Here, Abu Bakr could have been more useful as a clerk or even a guide on the ship, but in the process of ‘making the slave’, any cultivation, and civility had to be eradicated from his soul. As Willie Lynch said in his famous advice in breaking and controlling the African endowed with their own sense of historical consciousness “that is break them from one form of mental life to another, keep the body and take the mind. In other words, break the will to resist.”¹⁸² Writing some years later Frederick Douglas wrote this about the scientific method of ‘breaking the soul of the African’ espoused by Lynch and adopted universally throughout the slave plantations of the United States:

“Conscious of the injustice and wrong they were every hour perpetrating and knowing what they themselves would do, were they the victims of such wrongs, they were constantly looking for the first signs of the dreaded retribution. They watched, therefore, with skilled and practiced eyes, and learned to read, with great accuracy, the state of mind and heart of the slave, through his stable face. Unusual sobriety, apparent abstraction, sullenness, and indifference, indeed any mood out of the common way afforded ground for suspicion an inquiry. "Let's Make a Slave" is a study of the scientific process of man breaking and slave making. It describes the rationale and results of the Anglo Saxon's ideas and methods of insuring the master/slave relationship.”

In spite of this systemic psychological warfare and physical repression, the *Turudbe*’ held to their covenant with Islam. Diouf asserts that they actively preserved their religious customs of prayer, fasting, giving alms and belief in the oneness of Allah ta’ala.¹⁸³ She said: “During slavery, on both sides of the Atlantic, Africans were devout Muslims, sincere believers, strict practitioners, and active agents in the development and shaping of their religious and cultural world.”¹⁸⁴

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¹⁸⁰ Leslie H. Fishel, Jr. and Benjamin Quarles, The Black American A Documentary History, Third Edition, Scott, Foresman and Company, Illinois, 1976,1970.

¹⁸¹ Sylviane A. Diouf, p. 42.

¹⁸² Willie Lynch, “The Origin and Development of a Social Being Called ‘the Negro’”. Digital copy in the archives of the auhor, p. 1.

¹⁸³ Op. cit. pp. 69-70.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

The erudite and saintly *Turudbe'* woman *Nana Asmau bint Shehu Uthman* summarized this commitment to the religion of Islam in spite of adversities in a poem she called: *Verily With Hardship There is Ease* where she said in 1822 C.E.¹⁸⁵:

فَمَنْ تَعْلَمُ يَدْعُ اللَّهَ هَبِي دَلَّاهُ اَعْطَاهُ خَلَّاهُ تَعْلَمُ

'Uuna tammihuri yandaba Allah hinbiy Dataayye' uhataaye' ku'u tammuhuraa
Everyone who seeks Allah's help will receive it
For He allows people to seek assistance

اللَّهُ تَرَاهُ اَخِيْنَ زَيْنَ بَشَاغَ وَحَدِيْنَ هَمَّ اِيْدَرَا

Allahu turaami uhuyanana'y'aana Bu'ashaaghu hideena famaa yuawaraa

I supplicate Allah that He will show me
The Way of the religion and keep it until death

اَنْ كُصْرَتَمَنْ اَنْ يُّبَشَّتَمَنْ اَنْ يُّسَبِّتَمَنْ هَنْ تَكْ دَرَا

An kussara tamnay an bu'ashatamina An yuseybitamina min tukidiraa
May He bless us and show us the Way
And may He help us to remain One People

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¹⁸⁵ The above excerpts from Fulfulde' poem were taken from a manuscript found in the home of *Shaykh* Bello Abd'-Raaziq ibn Uthman ibn Abd'l-Qaadir ibn Mustafa in the town of Maiurno on the western banks of the Blue Nile in the Republic of Sudan. I am grateful to *Shaykh* Muhammadu Ma'mun ibn Yusef ibn Maasirana ibn Baikatiy ibn Abd'l-Qaadir ibn Mustafa in the town of Sokoto Nigeria for assisting me with the translation of the Fulfulde' poem and placing it within its proper historical context.

“I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrow; and I am come down to deliver them out of the land of the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land unto a good land and a large land...”¹⁸⁶

The ‘Lost and Found’ *Turudbe*’ Fulbe Children of Abraham: The Ordeal of Slavery and the Promise of Redemption

There are three distinct types (or ‘*discourses*’) of resistance that enslaved Africans in America have utilized in their struggle for freedom, justice and self-determination. The first form of resistance to emerge, which dates back to the initial arrival of enslaved Africans to these soils, was the *discourse of armed resistance*. Indeed, Africans had been involved with armed struggle for centuries in Africa during the emergence of civilizations and nation building. It is absurd to think that armed struggle, which is the right of all oppressed men, would have been abandoned in the United States. This is a myth perpetuated by Anglo-American ‘scholars’ that reflect their own psychosomatic fear of those they oppressed. In fact, one particularly scholar points out rather succinctly, that armed struggle was “rather a regular and ever-recurring phenomenon in the life” of America.¹⁸⁷ Every year from 1511 until 1864, in every region of the North American continent, where Africans lived, there were revolts or insurrections for freedom and justice using the medium of armed struggle. Sometimes these revolts took on the form of flight or *hijra*, while sometimes it took on the form of passive resistance, like the breaking of plantation equipment, theft and vandalism. Examples of this form of resistance were many, but men like Muhammad Sanbu of Baton Rouge, Usuman in the Florida everglades, Gabriel Prosser and Nat Turner of Virginia, Harriet Tubman, Gullah Jack and DENMARK VESEY of South Carolina. There were many more men and women who exemplified this noble tradition of arm struggle, but the above mentioned seven champions are the fixed stars in the cosmology of the African arm struggle for freedom in America. However, most ‘scholars’ for political and perhaps psychological reasons obscure this fact. Aptheker explains the reasons for these ‘studious’ oversights when he said:

“These Bourbons have been motivated by a desire to apologize for and, more than that, to justify a barbarous social system. To do this, they have been forced to commit every sin of omission, falsification and distortion. That they have done their job well is attested by the fact that the monstrous myth created by them is believed by most people today.”¹⁸⁸

We owe a great debt to Herbert Aptheker for his monumental work on the struggle of enslaved Africans during antebellum, colonial and pre-Civil War America. Indeed, he has produced seminal works on the militant and radical tradition of Africans in this country throughout its long history.¹⁸⁹ Many others then followed him, but particular

¹⁸⁶ Bible: Exodus 3: 6-8.

¹⁸⁷ Herbert Aptheker, *Negro Slave Revolts in the United States, 1526-1860*, (New York, International Publishers), 1939, p. 11.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ Here is a list of Herbert Aptheker’s works for those interested in an indebt study of the radical tradition among Africans in America. “Maroons Within the Present Limits of the United States,” *Journal of Negro*

mention must be given to the inspired work of Vincent Harding in his historic There Is A River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America.¹⁹⁰ These scholarly works must be studied in order to debunk the myth that obscurantist academics like Ulrich B. Phillips, John D. Hicks, James G. Randall and their ilk have perpetuated, where “slavery emerges as a delightful social system admirably contrived for the efficient and undisturbed subordination of an inferior people”.¹⁹¹

The second form of resistance was the *discourse of radical debate* epitomized by the militant intellectual tradition where Africans utilized print, publications and the podium to validate their claim to human rights and self-determination. In 1827, the publication of the first African newspaper called *Freedom Journal* declared: “We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us.”¹⁹² Great orators and organizers such as H. Ford Douglas, Martin Delaney, David Ruggles, John Jacobs, Henry Highland Garnet, James T. Holly, and DAVID WALKER made compelling arguments on behalf of the just rights of Africans in America. Though these seven original luminaries did not take up arms in defense for freedom, their voices called for nothing less. They were indeed the seven ideologues of the armed struggle, and were more dangerous than the former, because people can be killed, but IDEAS last eternally.

The third type of resistance that Africans in America made for freedom was the *discourse of acquiescence*, which was perhaps the most widely supported and acceptable form of struggle by the Anglo-Americans. Actually, this form of struggle for freedom was the only type acknowledged in the literature of the Anglo-Americans and given support from so-called ‘white liberal’ elements within the country. This form of struggle was defined by compromise and endorsement of the legitimacy of the American government and its institutions, while at the same time pushing for gradual change through assimilation, suffrage and legitimate social protest.¹⁹³ The proponents of this ‘discourse’ were men like William Whipper, Charles Ray, William Howard Day, Charles H. Langston, William Jay, J. McCune Smith, and FREDERICK DOUGLAS. These seven men represented the voice of peaceable protest through the gradual adjustment of the inner values of the country in order to establish the fundamental principles of the American Constitution for all men. Although this form of discourse was peaceable, it nevertheless challenged the core values of the Anglo-Americans and opened their eyes to the daily injustices of its people, while at the same time heightened the contradictions inherent in the US constitution.

It is significant that these three responses remain the three legitimate and internationally recognized means for an oppressed people to gain their self-determination.

History, 24 (Apr. 1939): 167-84; American Negro Slave Revolts, New York, International Publishers, 1943; “Additional Data on Maroons”, Journal of Negro History, 23 (Oct. 1947): 452-60; To be Free: Studies in American Negro History, New York, International Publishers, 1948; Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States, ed. 3 vols. New York: Citadel Press, 1951; One Continual Cry: David Walker’s Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World, New York, Humanities Press, 1965; Nat Turner’s Slave Rebellion, New York: Humanities Press, 1966.

¹⁹⁰ Vincent Harding, There Is A River: the Black Struggle for Freedom in America, (New York, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1981).

¹⁹¹ Herbert Aptheker, p. 4.

¹⁹² Joanne Grant, Black Protest: History, Documents and Analyses, 1619 to the Present, (Greenwich, Fawcett Publications), 1968, p. 10.

¹⁹³ Vincent Harding, p. 167-69.

The emergence of the Republic of New Afrika and their military leg, the BLA (Black Liberation Army) represents the continuity of the *discourse of armed struggle*. The fact that most if not all of the leadership of this maligned and marginalized liberation movement has become associated with Islam or are now devout Muslims, has not gone unnoticed by the US government. Comrade Assata Shukur's heroic liberation from an American federal prison and her existence in Cuba today reminds us and our enemies that this discourse is valid, vital and sometimes NECESSARY. Al-Hajj Malik El Shabazz and his systematic call to internationalize the struggle of African Americans and to link our struggle with the internationally recognized rights of self determination; is an example of the persistence of the *discourse of radical debate*. Few Muslim leaders have stepped into his shoes and many are afraid to confederate and gain international recognition for their rights at the United Nations. Yet, this *discourse* remains the cutting edge means to guarantee the protections of the descendents of enslaved African Muslims in the United States. This is a method which the Sankore' Institute upholds and adheres to. With the emergence of the Muslim Association of North America (MANA), perhaps we will witness the political sophistication needed to raise this *discourse* to its proper place as the international spokesman for Muslim national minorities in the US and elsewhere. Finally, one example that stands out above all others of the *discourse of acquiescence* is the stellar example put forward by *Imam W. D. Mohammed*. Today, his followers have the majority Muslim representatives in local, state and national government. The majority, if not all of the federal and state judges that are Muslims are his followers. His followers have successfully infiltrated the three branches of the US military and have successfully passed the 'screen' of background clearance and have joined the FBI, the CIA as well as the NSA. In fact, *Imam W.D. Mohammed* upheld loyalty to the American flag and its Constitution as far back as 1978, when even 'normal' US citizens had become disillusioned with everything 'american' as a result of the Vietnamese War. It was not until after the 'terrorist attack' on September 11, 2001, that we witnessed other media 'savvy' Muslim leaders and opportunist waving the flag and declaring their loyalty to the US. Although, this author disagrees with this form of *discourse* in the absence of an internationally recognized SOCIAL CONTRACT, yet it remains the one discourse which the US government has historically allowed and accepted.

These three discourses on the struggle of Africans in America did not come out of a vacuum. They occurred from a people who were immersed in nation building in Africa for more than 14 centuries. Each of these *discourses* have their precedence within our historical development in Africa. How else can you explain why the Anglo-Americans did not begin their so-called revolution from under British hegemony until 1776? What were they waiting for? Did it take them two centuries to learn what freedom really was? Or did they discover the thirst for freedom and liberty through the countless slave revolts, fiery oratory, and ardent appeals of Africans and Indians in their midst? Did the imageries of 'the sojourn in Egypt'; 'crossing the River Jordan'; 'the sweet ship chariot'; 'bound for the land of Canaan'; - and other Abrahamic metaphors suddenly jump from the pages of the Bible? Or were they apart of the historical consciousness of a people?

For the answers to these questions, our attention must turn to the *Turudbe'* Fulbe Muslim descendents of Abraham enslaved in the United States. The *Turudbe'* had a prolonged historical consciousness that lay at the foundation of the emergence of Islamic civilization in the whole of the *Bilad's-Sudan*. They were supported by a homogeneous

educational system and linguistic unity that gave them a sense of identity construct necessary in the defense against cultural aggression. Their ancient connection with Abraham through Isma'il and his nephew 'Esau ibn Is'haaq from one perspective and 'Uqba ibn Nafi' and the Quraysh from another gave them a sense of historical purpose and mission rooted in the ultimate purpose for the creation of mankind. Apart of this identity construct was the idea of affliction, self-sacrifice and eventual redemption that would lead to the salvation of humanity in general and the judgment against oppressors in particular. It is by examining the lives of some of these *Turudbe'* Muslims that this purpose and philosophy behind their narrative emerges. Indeed, some of these 'lost children of Abraham' played a direct role in the development of the three forms of resistance that African Americans took in their struggle for freedom, justice and equality in the United States.

Some of these enslaved *Turudbe'* Muslims were pacifists, some were militant proselytizers, some were gallant guerrillas opposing Anglo-American imperialism, while some were courageous participants in 'the American Revolution'. However, the common feature of all these men and women is that they were among the protected friends of Allah ta'ala (*awliyyaa Allah*) because they held to their Islam under dreadful circumstances. The American soil had been affected with some of the people of spiritual station and this phenomenon was both a blessings and a curse. It was a blessing because through them Allah ta'ala opened the hearts of the people to Islam where today the descendants of the oppressed among the Africans and Latinos are the fastest growing Muslim population in the world. It was a curse because the nation that subjugated the people of Allah ta'ala will eventually be judged for the crime of slavery and genocide. In fact, the very future of the United States hinges on its continued treatment of its chief national minority – the African Muslim community in its midst. Let us now look at some of these enslaved *Turudbe'* Fulbe Muslims and recount the legacies they left behind.

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Alfa Abu Abdullahi **Ayyub ben Sulayman** ibn Ibrahim Jallo



One of the most renowned of the *Turudbe'* enslaved Muslims was *Alfa* Abu Abdullahi **Ayyub ben Sulayman** ibn Ibrahim Jallo, who was captured in 1734, and came from the ruling elite of Futa Bundu. His grandfather, Ibrahim, who founded the city of *Bundu*, he was its *Amir* (temporal leader) and *Alfa* (or spiritual leader).¹⁹⁴ The father of Ayyub, Sulayman, was an *Alfa* who taught the children of the leaders the fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence and the sciences of *tasawwuf* (spiritual purification). Thus, *Alfa* Ayyub ben Sulayman was learned based upon the best traditions established in Bundu at the time.¹⁹⁵ Bluett reported that he had memorized the *Qur'an* by age 15 and had written 3 of them from memory.¹⁹⁶ He was appointed assistant *Imam* (prayer leader) to his father, a job that included leading the congregational prayers, teaching children the fundamentals of the religion and acting as scribe.¹⁹⁷ The whites described Ayyub as being ascetic and

¹⁹⁴ Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984), pp. 7-8.

¹⁹⁵ Philip D. Curtin, "Ayuba Suleiman Diallo of Bondu", *Africa Remembered*, edit. P. D. Curtin, (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p. 52.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 52.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 38.

having superb character. Thomas Bluett described Ayyub with the same noble traits that those who had mastered the science of *tasawwuf* were described. He said:

“On all occasions he [Ayyub] discovered a solid judgment, a ready memory, and a clear head...It was very observable with how much temper and impartiality he would reason in conversation upon any question of that kind, while at the same time he would frame such replies, as were calculated at once to support his own opinion, and to oblige or please his opponent. In his reasoning there appeared nothing trifling, nothing hypocritical or over-strained; but, on the contrary, strong sense, joined with an innocent simplicity, a strict regard to truth and a hearty desire to find it.”¹⁹⁸

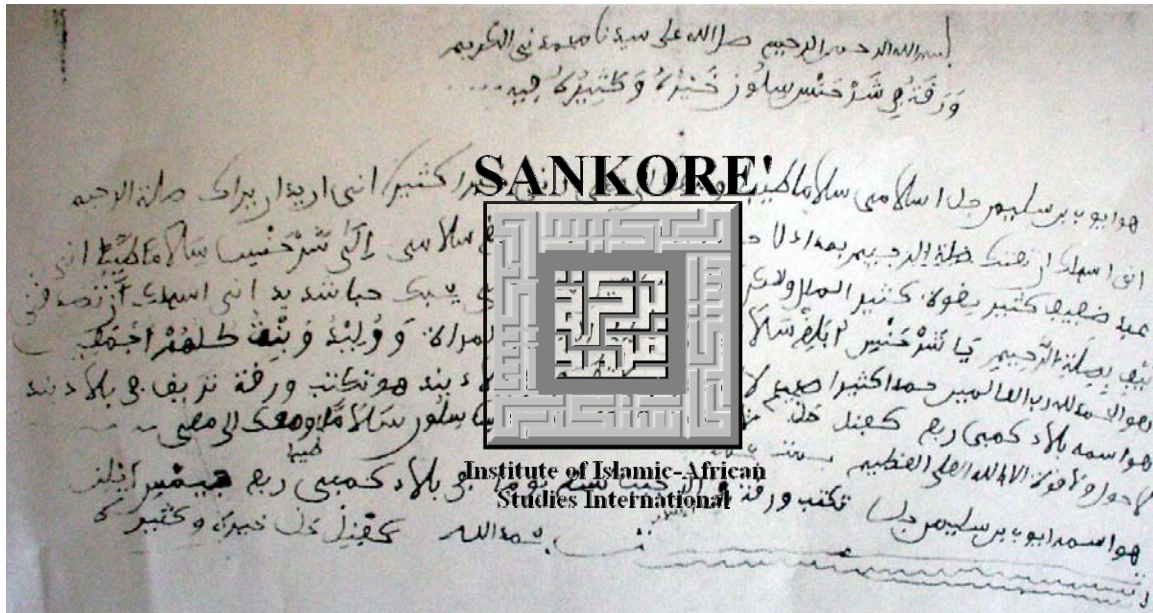
Alfa Ayyub was firm in his understanding of the Unity of Allah and was so dedicated to maintaining his religious practices that it was reported that he even kept up his prayers during the ‘middle passage’ and upheld the dietary laws of Islam.¹⁹⁹ As Diouf indicates that, *Alfa* Ayyub’s erudition and Arabic learning eventually won him his emancipation in return to Futa Bundu.²⁰⁰ The resilience of belief and culture of *Alfa* Ayyub confirms the persistence of the identity construct of the *Turudbe*’ and is a fulfillment of the ‘promise’ of the Abrahamic covenant. What is amazing is that in the process of the trans-Atlantic European slave trade, few African anthropological artifacts made it across the long tortuous journey of the Middle Passage. There were no Asantehene’ clothes, Yoruba drums or Benin fetishes that arrived with the enslaved Africans into the western hemisphere. However, from South America to North America, the enslaved African Muslims in general, and the *Turudbe*’ in particular, engendered hundreds if not thousands of Arabic manuscripts testifying to their cultural resilience and self-determination in spite of slavery. All anthropologist give credence to the fact that oral traditions, song, music, cooking styles etc are clear unambiguous signs of the survival of a people. However, there is no anthropological evidence which is more compelling than a written document using the colophon and language of that people. The existence of such documents, especially by ethnicities that have undergone the trauma of population dislocation, cultural aggression and systemic enslavement, are not only the greatest proof of the people’s survival, but they are also the highest symbols of their defiance and self-determination. One need only contemplate the importance that the written US Constitution has in the hearts of every government representative, public official and civil servant to get a grasp of the magnitude of the WRITTEN document.

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¹⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 52.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 44.

²⁰⁰ Sylviane Diouf, p. 138.



The Arabic writings of Alfa Ayyub ibn Sulayman Jallo

Above is an example of the survival of this authentic anthropology in the Arabic writing of Alfa Ayyub. In this letter, Alfa Ayyub stresses the importance of reconnecting with the ties of kinship. He sends his heartfelt greetings to the ruler of his lands, his teachers as well as his close relatives among the *Turudbe`* Muslims. It must be understood that what Alfa Ayyub was doing by reconnecting with his kinship, was fulfilling an obligation in the *shari`a* of Islam. As a learned scholar, one of the key *Quranic* verses that pressed upon the psychic of Alfa Ayyub was the words of Allah: “Fear Allah about whom you will be questioned and the nearest of kin.” Further, it has been related by Abdu ibn Humayd on the authority of Akrama who said about the above verse that Ibn Abass said that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said: “Connect with your relatives, for verily it will give you continuity in this world and it will be good for you in your Hereafter.” Imam Mujahid said about the above verse that it means: “Fear Allah and fear breaking the ties of kinship.” So clearly, as an enslaved *Turudbe`* Muslim completely estranged from his people as a result of the terror and trauma of slavery, the first social act which he was obliged to fulfill was to reconnect with his people. Alfa Ayyub utilized the sacred Arabic language as a link with his motherland, thus establishing an identity construct essential in gaining his freedom from slavery in the United States. The above text reads:

“In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful, may Allah bless our master Muhammad the Prophet of the Generous One. A Letter Regarding Sarrekolli! I give greetings to you in which there is much good

It is from Ayyub ibn Sulayman Jallo. I give you excellent greetings of peace. From what is with you to what is with me, know that I am in a very good state. I desire to see you, as a reconnection of ties of kinship. I ask you that you pass on my greetings in order to reconnect with the ties of kinship with the red and black. Deliver them all my greetings of peace to the people of Sarrekolli with an excellent greetings of peace from the extremely weak servant who is overcome with much weariness. My address is to every Muslim, to let you know that I love you dearly, and

that I ask you that you believe me by reconnecting the ties of kinship. O people of Sarrekolli, give my greetings of peace to the *Sultan* of all the men and women in Wulidu and Bundu all of them.

I give all praises to Allah the Lord of the worlds with abundant praises of a person who is healthy and not ill. Do not disperse in the lands of Bundu [the next two sentences are obscure]... There is no power or might except with Allah the Mighty the Wise... His name is Ayyub ibn Sulayman Jallo and the letter is written in on the 9th of *Rajab* in the country of [obscure]. It is complete with the praise to Allah [obscure]"

Alfa Abu Abdullahi Ayyub ben Sulayman is one of the many symbols of the resilience and persistence of the *Turudbe'* Fulbe' traditions, in spite of the hardships of slavery and difficulties of being cut off from the ancient homeland. He fulfilled that *Quranic* command to the descendents of Ibrahim: "*Adhere to My covenant and I will preserve your covenants.*"²⁰¹ Thus, *Alfa* Ayyub ben Sulayman, by the grace of Allah ta'ala was redeemed after four years in captivity, and returned to his beloved Futa Bundu as the ancient scriptures foretold: "with great substance."²⁰² Allah ta'ala made a covenant with Abraham that He would protect his descendents and honor them. This mark of distinction was demonstrated through *Alfa* Ayyub's adherence to the rope of Islam in spite of the sojourn of slavery. Allah ta'ala says: "*Struggle in Allah with the truthfulness of struggle for He is the One who chose you. And He has not made the way of life difficult for you. It is the religion of your father Ibrahim who named you Muslim from before and in this time so that the Messenger shall be a witness against you and you shall be a witness against mankind. Therefore establish the prayer, give the poor due and hold firmly to Allah. He is your Master, the Best of Masters and the Best of Helpers.*"²⁰³ There is no doubt that the great *Wali* of Allah ta'ala, *Alfa* Abu Abdullahi Ayyub ben Sulayman ibn Ibrahim Jallo, one of the lost but found descendents of Abraham, will be an everlasting witness against the many crimes committed by the Anglo-American against the People and Servants of Allah.

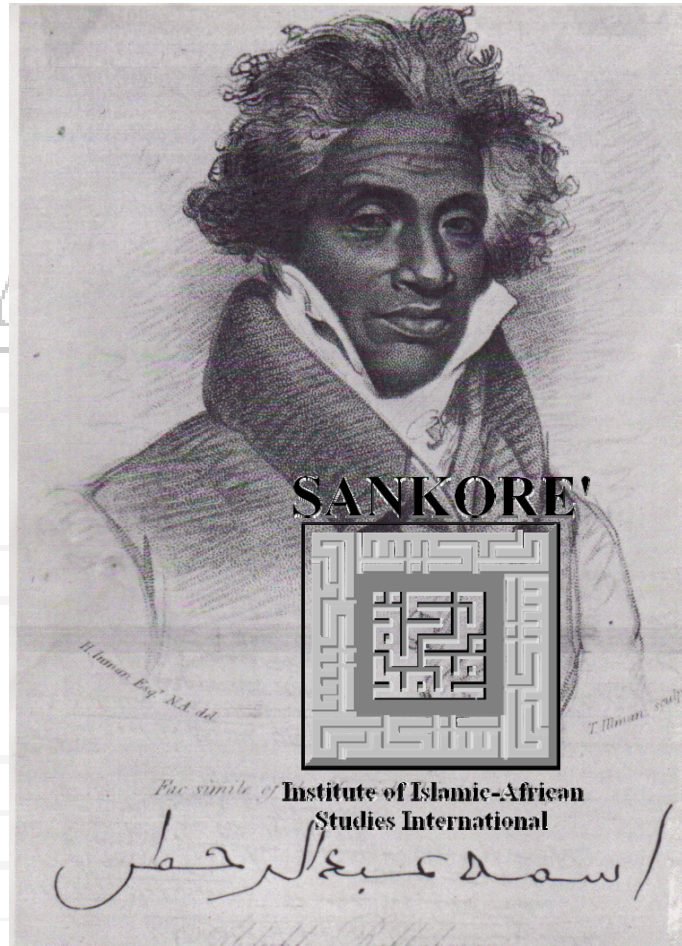
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²⁰¹ *Quran*: 2: 40.

²⁰² Allan Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles*, (New York, Routledge), 1997, p. 93. To distinguish between this text and Austin's earlier more extensive reference work I will designate it 'Allah Austin II'.

²⁰³ *Quran*: 22:78.

***Amir* Abu'l-Hussayn Abd'r-Rahman ibn Ibrahim Sori**



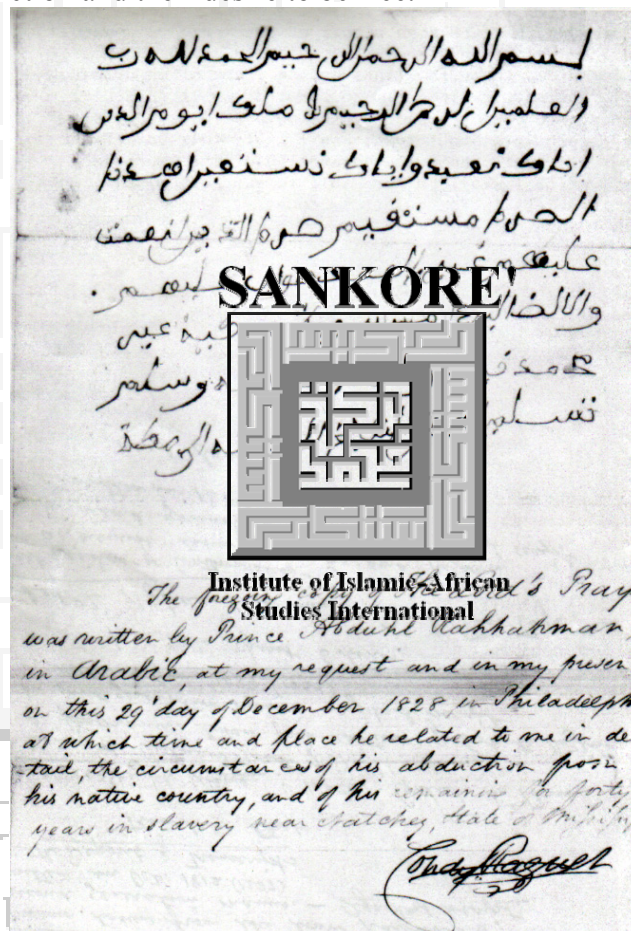
Another example of the survival of *Turudbe'* descendents of Abraham in the 'diaspora' of America was Abu al-Husayn **Abd'r-Rahman ibn Ibrahim Sori** from Timbo, whose father consolidated the Islamic confederation of Futa Jallon in 1776. He too was learned in the Islamic sciences and could speak at least 4 different African languages along with Arabic.²⁰⁴ In 1781, after returning from study in renowned city of learning, Timbuktu, perhaps at one of the three legendary centers of learning: the Sankore' University/*Masjid*; the Sidi Yahya University/*Masjid*; or the Jennkebere' University/*Masjid* - Abd'r-Rahman joined the armies of his father. He was made the *Amir* of one of the regiments that conquered the Bambara ruler.²⁰⁵ In 1788 Ibrahim Sori appointed his son, Abd'r-Rahman at the age of 26 to head a 2000 man army to the coast to protect and strengthen their economic interest in the region. It is clear that the *Almamy* Ibrahim Sori was preparing his son for leadership. It was during this military campaign that Abd'r-Rahman was captured and enslaved. He was sold to the French who brought him to Natchez, Mississippi, where Abd'r-Rahman remained a slave for more than thirty-

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 126.

²⁰⁵ Terry Alford, Prince Among Slaves: the True Story of An African Prince Sold into Slavery in the American South, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 16-18.

eight years before he was freed from bondage.²⁰⁶ Again, like Ayyub ben Sulayman, it was Abd'r-Rahman's knowledge of Arabic language that won him his freedom. His linguistic abilities and erudition, bequeathed by the high civilization of the *Turudbe'* literary traditions guaranteed him his freedom and self-determination. Thus, Arabic was the constituent element of the cultural personality of Abd'r-Rahman that he utilized in his quest for independence. Without this he would not have had any recourse to define himself vis-à-vis his oppressors and captors. His Arabic writing says to his European Christian captors: "I AM what I AM. And what I AM is what ALLAH made me. I AM not what you attempted to make me!"

The ability to speak, write and understand Arabic language for enslaved African Muslims had political implications that determined the nature of their enslavement or their eventual liberty. They were set apart because of their linguistic independence and the countless of African Arabic manuscripts discovered in the western hemisphere confirms their distinction and their desire to be free.



Copy of Arabic writings of Amir Abd'r-Rahman ibn Ibrahim of Timbo

One of the most effective tools utilized by the *Turudbe'* enslaved Muslims in the United States was the religious license of *taqiyya* (dissimulation). This religious stratagem is a license to pretend to renounce Islam with the tongue, while maintaining firm belief in the heart, for a Muslim who may feel his life is in danger or who desires to be freed from the bondage of the disbelievers. Allah ta'ala revealed the following verse

²⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 72.

regarding *taqiyya*: “Whoever disbelieves after his faith, except the one who is forced while his heart is tranquil in belief, however the one who manifest disbelief upon them is anger from Allah and they will taste a grievous punishment.”²⁰⁷

Abd’r-Rahman took advantage of this same license when his enslavers made conversion to Christianity one of the prerequisites for his freedom. In 1828 while in Philadelphia he was compelled to write down the ‘Lords Prayer’ in Arabic as a testimony of his new ‘faith’. And as the above manuscript demonstrates, Abd’r-Rahman wrote down the first chapter of the *Quran* called *al-Faatiha*, as a subterfuge to gain his freedom. The choice of *Amir* Abd’r-Rahman to write down the first and most important chapter of the *Quran* instead of the ‘Lord’s Prayer’, was not only the essence of *taqiyya*, but it was an act of defiance as well as a clear demonstration of his disdain for his European captors. The former *amir* was transmitting the methodology essential for effectively dealing with oppressors.

For more than three years, Abd’r-Rahman was conducted around the east coast of the United States in order to raise the money for his journey back to Africa and to raise money for the manumission of his wife and children. According to Robert Dannin, Abd’r-Rahman was firm in his Islamic beliefs despite attempts to convert him to Christianity. It is important at this point to cite Robert Dannin’s seminal work, where he describes the persistence of Abd’r-Rahman’s *Turudbe*’ adherence to Islam.

“Upon his arrival in Washington, [Abd’r-Rahman ibn] Ibrahima became a ward of the American Colonization Society, a Methodist-dominated organization that was planning to send missionaries to Africa...for [Abd’r-Rahman ibn] Ibrahima soon embarrassed his sponsors by stirring religious controversy everywhere. He relished the opportunity to question Christianity by arguing with religious leaders and insisted that Islam was the only true religion. Word of his notoriety spread, provoking local churches to retract their welcome and forcing him to lecture either outdoors, as he did in Niagara Falls, or in the Prince Hall lodges in Boston, Hartford, and Providence. Among freemen and slaves in his audiences, [Abd’r-Rahman ibn] Ibrahima’s attitude, as well as his exotic appearance, inspired more than passive curiosity. Some began to recall their own Islamic religious backgrounds. Several publicly reclaimed their African-Muslim names, invoking the wrath of local whites, who branded them as imposters.”²⁰⁸

This is significant, because this demonstrates that this *Turudbe*’ Muslim performed the same function that his ancestors before him performed throughout the *Bilad’s-Sudan*. Here, even under enslavement, the descendents of the *Turudbe*’ remained true to their covenant of a spiritual commitment to be leaders and guides for the righteous. There were perhaps other earlier examples of Islamic invitation, however, this is the first recorded example of the active Islamic Call being initiated in the United States. Just as the Hebrew Prophets persisted in reminding its People of their former ‘covenant’ during the period of bondage in Babylon, Abd’r-Rahman ibn Ibrahima, eloquently reminded the enslaved and colonized Africans of their former Islamic covenant and sacred Way of Life. Robert Dannin goes on to describe the significance of Abd’r-Rahman’s impact upon the struggle for freedom for Africans in the United States.

²⁰⁷ *Quran*: 16:105.

²⁰⁸ Robert Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage To Islam*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 20.

“[Abd’r-Rahman ibn] Ibrahima’s legacy of exclusion from the church pulpit and his affirmation of African-Islamic identity was one of the first publicly documented manifestations of unchurched autonomy. Shortly before sailing for Africa in 1828, [Abd’r-Rahman ibn] Ibrahima addressed a meeting at Boston’s African Lodge. Upon his arrival, he was honored by a fraternal committee led by David Walker, the young abolitionist thinker. Escorting the old Muslim through the crowd of black New Englanders who had come to bid him farewell, Walker seemed deeply affected by the old man’s resiliency after four decades in slavery. Pushed out of the church into the lodge halls, he had stimulated a collective African memory among his constituents, foreshadowing a collective space for black revolt, which found its first genuine voice in Walker’s manifesto of liberation.”²⁰⁹

It was one year later that David Walker composed his famous Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World, calling enslaved and free Africans alike to take up arms in defense of their freedom. Thus, the first documented and published call to freedom and liberation for Africans in the United States was influenced by a *Turudbe*’ Muslim former ruler. Abd’r-Rahman manifested the Abrahamic covenant of commanding the good and forbidding evil. He remained true to the Call of Abraham and acted as a Reminder to a African people who had been cut off from their culture and heritage and a proof against the Anglo-American hypocrites. Abd’r-Rahman made scathing attacks against the Anglo-Americans and their hypocrisy in establishing the ‘good principles’ in the Bible. He said:

“I tell you the Testament very good law; you no follow it; you no pray often enough; you greedy after money...you want more land, more neegurs; you make neegur work hard, make more cotton...Where you find dat in your law?”²¹⁰

This disparagement by the *Turudbe*’ son of Abraham of Anglo-American hypocrisy and injustice is a reflection of the responsibility Allah commissioned the *Umma* of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Allah ta’ala says: “*You are the best community which has emerged for mankind. You command the good and forbid indecency and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Book would believe it would be better for them. Some of them believe while most of them are corrupt.*”²¹¹ There is no wonder that Walker was so furious in his attacks against the Anglo-American Christians. The radical influence that the *Turudbe*’ son of Abraham had upon Walker can be seen throughout his Appeals:

“The Pagans, Jews and Mahometans try to make proselytes to their religions, and whatever human beings adopt their religions they extend to them their protection. But Christian Americans, not only hinder their fellow creatures, the Africans, but thousands of them *will absolutely beat a coloured person nearly to death, if they catch him on his knees, supplicating the throne of grace.* This barbarous cruelty was by all the heathen nations of antiquity, and by the Pagans, Jews and Mahometans of the present day, left entirely to Christian Americans to inflict on the Africans and their descendents, that their cup which is nearly full may be completed!”

This contemptuous attack upon the self-image of the Anglo-American Christian as being morally decrepit, is significant, and could not have come about except through a

²⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 21.

²¹⁰ Allan Austin, p. 129.

²¹¹ *Quran*: 3:109.

profound since of historical conscience and continuity. Walker's ability to redefine his oppressors in an inferior light had to be placed up against a self-esteem engendered through his encounter with the elderly *Turudbe*, Abd'r-Rahman. Walker's revolutionary ideas had become shaped and inspired by one of the 'lost children of Abraham', who was decidedly aware of himself as a servant of Allah, a descendent of African royalty and an heir of the Abrahamic covenant. Thus, it was Abd'r-Rahman's adherence to the *Turudbe* identity construct that helped launch a cultural revolution that effected the entire African population of the United States. Walker had this to say as a prayer for his *Turudbe* Muslim guest and mentor:

"Our Worthy Guest, who was by the African's natural enemies torn from his country, religion, and friends, and in the very midst of Christians, doomed to perpetual though unlawful bondage may God enable him to obtain much of the reward of his labor, as may purchase the freedom of his offspring."²¹²

On February 7, 1829, Abd'r-Rahman sailed on the *Harriet* accompanying, Joseph J. Roberts, the future first president of Liberia.²¹³ One can but wonder about the dialogue between these two great leaders. Did *Amir* Abd'r-Rahman influence the future president of Liberia in his desire for freedom and independence? It is amazing how the most important dignitaries in the history of the freedom of African Americans have had some encounter with 'the lost children of Abraham'. Abd'r-Rahman attempted to reach Timbo, but died before reaching his goal on July 6, 1829. When he died he bequeathed his Arabic manuscripts to the *Turudbe* scholars and jurist of Timbo.²¹⁴

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²¹² Op.Cit, p. 164.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 77.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

The Sea Island *Turudbe*' Muslims



The *Jaami'a al-Masjid* at Djia the Fulbe Learning Center of Massina

Other instances of the persistence of the Abrahamic tradition among enslaved Africans in the New World are those valiant *Turudbe*' Fulbe of the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina. Among them was Abu Bilali **Saalih Bilali**, a *Turudbe*' student of Kianah of Massina, who was born in 1765.²¹⁵ At age 12 in 1780 Saalih Bilali, was captured on the Niger River on his return to his hometown, Kianah, which was located in the Temourah region of the kingdom of Massina, and brought to the Ghanian coast and sold at Anamaboo.²¹⁶

Massina was a key home of the *Turudbe*' Fulbe going back centuries before the establishment of the Malian Empire. Their ancient center for learning and social reform was the city of Djia, where the *Turudbe*', known as *Djia-Wara*, set up an equitable society based upon Islamic learning and reform. The ancient center came into predominance again just after the disintegration of the Songhay Empire in 1592, but suffered from constant harassment from Moroccan and Bambara armies.²¹⁷ This social upheaval is what caused an exodus or *hijra* of the *Turudbe*' of Massina into Fata Jallon and Hausaland. Between 1755 and 1790 there were major cataclysms caused by the internecine wars between the Fulakoro and the Bambara in the entire region of Massina.²¹⁸

Because Saalih was still young when he was captured he had not completed his Islamic education. He could recite the *Qur'an* but could not write it.²¹⁹ He first resided in the Bahamas where he settled with many other *Turudbe*' Fulbe Muslims. While there he was able to intensify his earlier Islamic education with the enslaved Muslims scholars on

²¹⁵ Ibid. 313.

²¹⁶ Sylviane Diouf, p. 36.

²¹⁷ M. Abitbol, "The End of the Songhay Empire", *General History of Africa: Africa From the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, edit. B.A. Ogot, Vol. 5, p. 313.

²¹⁸ M. Izard & J. Ki-Zerbo, "From the Niger to the Volta", *General History of Africa: Africa From the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, edit. B.A. Ogot, Vol. 5, pp. 333-4.

²¹⁹ Ibid. p. 110.

the island.²²⁰ This is significant because it shows that the *Turudbe'* Fulbe had established *madaaris* for the study of Islamic sciences.²²¹ While he was there, he became acquainted with another *Turudbe'* from Timbo, Muhammadu Bilali, who also ended up in the Sea Island Muslim communities. In the Bahamas, Saalih spent another 23 years when in 1800 he was sold to an American named Couper from St Simon Island.²²² Saalih Bilali was now 35 years when he was brought to St. Simon Island and given the name 'Tom'.²²³ James Couper described Saalih as being:

"...tall, thin, but well made. His features are small, forehead well developed, mouth well formed, with lips less protruding than is usual with the Negro race, the nose flat, but not thick. His eyes are peculiar, being like those of a Chinese, without their obliquity."²²⁴

One of the spiritual disciplines that Saalih was known to be involved with was the spiritual exercise of constant fasting (*siyaam*) by which he was able to endure the hardships of plantation life, but also discipline the soul. Across the Atlantic, another *Turudbe'*, *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye', writing around 1794, highlighted the spiritual power and mystical potency of constant fasting when he said:

"The highest degree of discipline through fasting is that one should go three days or more without food. Some disciples who desire to discipline their souls make continual fast (*at-ta'y*), rather than restricting the amount of food, until they go without food continually for thirty to forty days. There were many among the notable scholars who practiced this. Among them were Sahl ibn Abdullah, Abd'r-Rahman ibn Ibrahim, Ibrahim at-Tamimi, and Sulayman al-Khawwaas. Abu Bakr as-Sadiq, may Allah be pleased with him in the beginning of his affair would go without eating for six days on end. Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr used to go continuously without eating for seven days. All this they did in order that hunger might assist them along the way of the Hereafter. One of the scholars said: "Whoever goes continually without eating food for forty days will have discernible to him a measure of the unseen kingdoms (*al-malakuut*), that is, some of the divine secrets will be unveiled to him."²²⁵

Thus, Saalih utilized the custom of fasting as a means to endure the adversity of slavery and provoke in himself a sense of personal discipline. These are the same qualities that gave the *Turudbe'* ascendancy in Africa for more than 8 centuries and set them apart from those about whom Allah ta'ala said: "*Have you not seen those who take their passions as their god?*"²²⁶ In the same manner Saalih was distinguished from others by his discipline and personal charisma. His personal austerity and integrity prompted one writer to refer to him as: "a patriarch who held rule over his tribe".²²⁷ What did this onlooker mean by 'his tribe'? It is clear that Saalih Bilali had not only united with other enslaved African Muslim brothers, but he was also able to galvanize the *Turudbe'* Fulbe descendants of Abraham. He kept alive their ancient brotherhood. Austin suggests that it was Saalih Bilali and his *Turudbe'* colleagues that caused the blossoming of the Fulbe'

²²⁰ Allan Austin, p. 316

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid. p. 309.

²²⁴ Ibid. p. 324.

²²⁵ Uthman Dan Fuduye' *Sawq's-Siddiqeen*, manuscript in possession of author, ff 11-12.

²²⁶ *Quran: al-Furqan*: 43.

²²⁷ Allan Austin, p. 313.

language in the Sea Islands.²²⁸ As the leader of the *Turudbe'* community and the head driver of the remainder of the Africans, Saalih gathered in himself those qualities essential for a leader. Couper described Saalih as having:

“Quickness of apprehension, strong powers of combination and calculation, a sound judgment, a singularly tenacious memory, and what is more rare in a slave, the faculty of forethought. He possesses a great veracity and honesty. He is a strict Mahometan; abstains from spirituous liquors, and keeps the various fasts, particularly that of the Ramadan.”²²⁹

Another significant element of the persistence of *Turudbe'* identity construct was the participation in nation building. Here too, *Turudbe'* Muslims took up the banner of military struggle to liberate themselves and in certain cases to assist in the formation of the United States. Accordingly, at the age 47, Saalih Bilali participated in the Revolutionary War of 1812 by encouraging the other 18 *Turudbe'* Muslims and other Africans on the plantation of St. Simon Island not to flee to the British.²³⁰ However, according to Austin, more than 80 *Turudbe'* and *Mandinke'* Muslim slaves absconded to the British.²³¹ These Muslims who fought on the side of the British were later freed and resettled on the island of Trinidad.²³²

James H. Couper once said he: “was the most religious man that he had ever known.”²³³ This adherence to the Islamic traditions persisted throughout the many *Turudbe'* Fulbe families on St. Simon Island and was transmitted to many generations after that.²³⁴ In 1842 Charles Lyell would have us believe otherwise when he said about Saalih Bilali and his descendents:

“He has remained a strict Mahometan, but his numerous progeny of jet black children and grandchildren, all of them marked by countenances of a more European cast than those of ordinary negroes, have exchanged the Koran for the Bible.”²³⁵

Again, the ‘power’ of the Anglo-American to characterize the *Turudbe'* Fulbe and make him into something other than what he really was, is what led Lyell to distort the reality of Saalih’s descendents. However, we know that he named his oldest child Bilali, who became the head butler at the Couper’s residence at Altama.²³⁶ In the 1930s, the Georgia Writers Project interviewed some of these descendents and discovered that Saalih Bilali had successfully transmitted his Islamic customs to his children.²³⁷

Bilali, the son of Saalih Bilali, took the last name Sullivan, after the Emancipation Proclamation, thus disavowing any relationship with his former Anglo-American slave

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid. p. 321.

²³⁰ Ibid. p. 326.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² This information came from informants on a recent trip to Trinidad in the year 2002, where I saw copies of the manumission papers for these *Turudbe'* Muslims, as well as their graves in the southern part of the island. Among the names of the Muslims manumitted by Kind Edward were Abu Yunus; Saalhiya a.k.a. Charles Alexandria; Muhammadu Wangara a.k.a. Bernardo; Muhammadu Rabi'a a.k.a. Littledale; Muhammad Sidibe a.k.a. Felix Dith; Toubia Torre' a.k.a. Sampson Boipiere; Abubakar Torre' a.k.a. Joseph Sampson; Ibrahima a.k.a. Adam Balthazar; and Muhammad Torrouke'.

²³³ Op. Cit. p. 316.

²³⁴ Ibid. p. 363.

²³⁵ Ibid, p. 371

²³⁶ Ibid. p. 316.

²³⁷ Ibid. p. 384.

owners. Bilali Sullivan had a son named Ben, and it was this grandson of Saalih Bilali that informed the Georgia Writers Project about the persistence of Islamic traditions among the Sea Island *Gullah* peoples. Ben Sullivan described one of the former colleagues of Saalih, named Israel, who he said had sharp features, a long, pointed beard, was very tall and wore a white turban.²³⁸ Ben Sullivan explained how the *Turudbe* Muslims built their own places of worship, performed the five prayers and often recited from the *Qur'an*.²³⁹ This indicates that they had written down their own hand copied *Qur'ans* from memory. Sullivan described one Muslim named 'Daphne' about whom he said:

"He weah loose wite veil on he head. He wuz shahp-feecehuh too an light uh complexion... Wen he pray, he bow two aw tree times in duh middle uh duh prayah"

Hodgson wrote that Bilali died in 1850 and the last words he pronounced at death was **Laa ilaha illa Allah and Muhammad Rasuulullahi** – (There is no deity except Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah).²⁴⁰ Although Saalih Bilali lived and died under Anglo-American captivity, yet he remained true to the covenant of Abraham in accordance with the Way of Muhammad, may Allah bless them and grant them peace. Allah ta'ala says: "*And Ibrahim and Jacob gave council to his children: O Children verily Allah has chosen for you the religion, therefore do not die except that you be Muslim.*"²⁴¹

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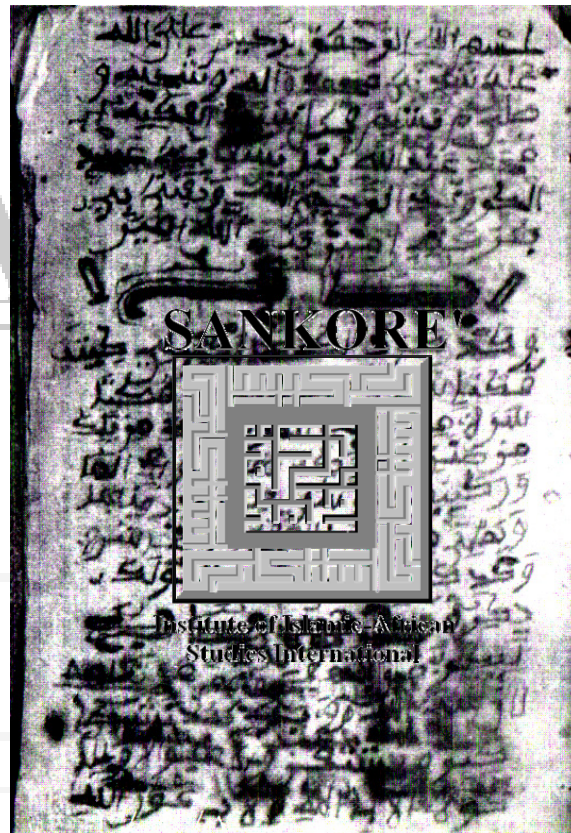
²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid. p 391.

²⁴⁰ Allan Austin II, p. 106.

²⁴¹ *Quran*: 2: 131.

The ‘Loyalist’ Muhammadu Bilali and His *Fulbe*’ Muslim Comrades of Sapelo Island



The first page of the handwritten text of *Amir* Muhammad Bilali of Sapelo Island

Probably the most illustrious of the enslaved *Turudbe*’ was **Muhammad Bilali**. He was captured from Timbo in Futa Jallon around the 1780s. He was first sold on the Bahamas where he married the daughter of another *Turudbe*’ and had many children.²⁴² He was alleged to have had twelve sons. He was the *amir* of the Sea Island Muslims, practiced polygyny and had more than seven children, half of whose names were Arabic.²⁴³ William McFeely suggested in his work on Frederick Douglass that Muhammad Bilali was an ancestor of Douglass, whose original name was Bailey.

“In the Sapelo Island, Georgia (where Baileys still reside), there was a Fulfulde-speaking slave from Timbo, Futa Jallon, in the Guinea highlands, who could write Arabic and who was the father of twelve sons. His name was Belali Mohomet.”²⁴⁴

Muhammad was a plantation manager who directed 500 to 1,000 slaves. He was the *Imam* and *amir* of more than 81 *Turudbe*’ Muslim families. He composed a “13 page manual in Arabic for his Sapelo Island, Georgia, *Umma* – the only known antebellum African Muslim community in the United States”.²⁴⁵

²⁴² Sylviane Diouf, p. 86.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, (London: W. W. Norton, 1955), p. 5.

²⁴⁵ Allan Austin, p. 6.



These are the living quarters of the *Fulbe' Turudbe'* Muslims of Sapelo Island, Ga, note the *masjid* to the right with its distinctive West African *minaret*

More significant was the role that this *Turudbe'* community played in the Revolutionary War of 1812. Their leader, Muhammad Bilali swore to defend the island from British attack. His master, Spalding, took him on his word and initiated something that had never been done before in Antebellum America, he supplied Muhammad Bilali and his *Turudbe'* community with eighty muskets. Bilali then declared in the event of an attack: "I will answer for every Negro of the true faith, but not for the Christian dogs you own!" He did not lose a single man nor did the British step foot of the Sapelo Island.²⁴⁶ This is historical evidence of the contribution that African Muslims have made in the formation of the United States. These *Turudbe'* Muslims fought as Muslims against the common enemies of the United States. Yet the country has failed give recognition to these Muslim Founding Fathers in the Sea Islands of Georgia.

What is even more significant is that this Muslim 'loyalist' community who placed their lives on the line for the preservation of the United States, were not motivated in their desire to take up arms in defense of the country by the 'Declaration of Independence', the 'Bill of Rights', the 'Preamble' or any clause from the Constitution of the United States. When *Amir* Muhammad Bilali decided to put down in writing the views and values that inspired him he composed a 13 page manual in Arabic which was actually a transcription from memory of the one of the best known text of theology, jurisprudence, social behavior and government in the entire *Bilad as-Sidan* – the *Risaala* of *Shaykh* Abu Muhammad Abdallah ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawaani (d. 389 *hijra*). This text was so well known in the *Bilad as-Sudan* that Abd'r-Rahman as-Sa'di list more than three hundred African scholars who transmitted this text and made commentaries upon it in whole or in part. The most famous of them being *Shaykh* Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Sa'id, the great grandfather of the famous judge of Timbuktu, Mahmud ibn Umar who taught the *Risaala* regularly in the city. There was also the famous *Tururdbe'* Muhammad Baghyughu who instructed the famous Ahmadu Baba in the text as well. There was Umar ibn Muhammad Aqit who transmitted the *Risaala* to Makhluaf ibn Ali ibn Saalih al-Balbali. There was *Alfa* Mahmud who studied the *Risaala* with *Shaykh* Ayd Haamid in

²⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 87.

the city of Timbuktu.²⁴⁷ In short the *Risaala* was the most widely transmitted text in the Western *Bilad as-Sudan* second only to the *Mukhtasar* of Khalil ibn Is'haq. This demonstrated that *Amir* Muhammad Bilali had attained a high level of learning before he was captured and enslaved in the western hemisphere. His attempt to transcribe this book from memory is a clear sign that he had a grasp of the seminal text which transmitted his Islamic identity construct, and that he, in spite of his loyalty to the 'Union', still maintained his distinct cultural identity as an African Muslim.

In addition to his transcriptions, Muhammad Bilali was known to wear his Muslim fez and carry his prayer beads (*tasbeeh*) at all times. Another trait of Muhammad Bilali's *Turudbe'* community is that they kept to themselves and remained aloof from the other slaves on the Island. This, too was a peculiar trait of the *Turudbe'* throughout their long history in the *Bilad's-Sudan*. This trait find its root in the science of *tasawwuf* (spiritual purification), where the adherent goes into a state of seclusion (*al-`uzla*) and solitude (*at-tafarrad*) in order to cleanse the heart for spiritual illumination. As late as the 1930s, Katie Brown, one of the great great granddaughters of Muhammad Bilali recalls the dedication and persistence that her *Turudbe'* ancestors had to Islam on the Sapelo Island:

“Dey waz bery puhticluh bout duh time dey pray and dey bery regluh
bout duh hour....Dey bow tuh duh sun an hab lil mat tuh kneel on. Duh
beads is on a long string.”²⁴⁸

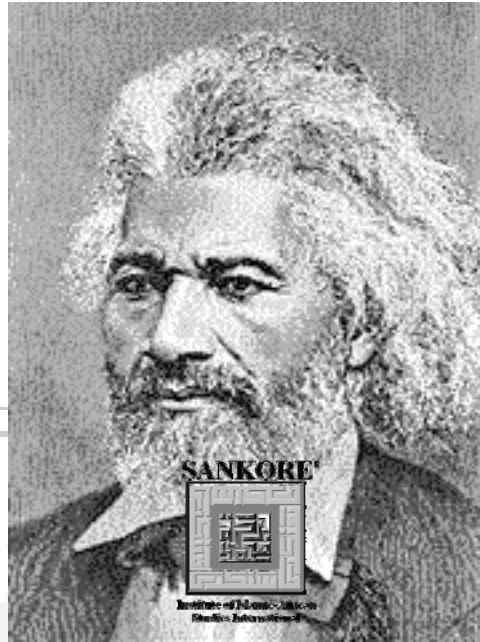
This indicates that the *Turudbe'* of the Sapelo Island maintained a deep understanding of the Islamic science of *buruuj* (astronomy) in order to determine the times of prayer, the direction of the *qiblah*, and how to determine the lunar months. The persistence of prayer mats (*sajaada*) and *sibha* beads on the island also demonstrates the will to maintain their religious distinction in the face of enslavement and captivity. It also indicates that these *Turudbe'* Muslims were deeply involved in spiritual purification (*tasawwuf*) and carried the symbols of constant remembrance of Allah ta'ala. When Muhammad Bilali died, he was buried with his hand written Qur'an, which also demonstrates the persistence of *Turudbe'* Islamic erudition and learning. For a more thorough analysis of this patriarch and Founding Father, I would suggest reading the excellent forthcoming study of him done by Muhammad Abdullah al-Ahari.²⁴⁹

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²⁴⁷ Abd'r-Rahman as-Sa'di, *Tarikh as-Sudan*, pp. 34-60.

²⁴⁸ Robert Danin, p. 17.

²⁴⁹ Muhammad Abdallah al-Ahari, *Bilali Muhmmad's Meditations Upon Beliefs of Islam and Calling Upon Your Lord at Morning Prayers*, (Magribine Press, 2008).



Federick Douglas (Bailey) a descendant of the *Fulbe' Turudbe'* Muslim leader and military commander
Amir Muhammad Bilali

This Muhammad Bilali was the direct ancestor of one of the most dynamic African American leaders of the abolitionist period – Frederick Douglas. One often wonders what gave Douglas his zeal, determination, and resolve to abolish the institution of slavery. In addition, the imagery that Douglas used in his eloquent debates reflected the teachings of his *Turudbe'* forebears. Douglas made constant appeals to Old Testament imagery regarding the 'seed of Abraham' and the 'sojourn in Egypt'. Was this simply a referencing of the Bible stories, or was this a manifestation of an ancient identity construct. It is known that the *Turudbe'* families under Muhammad Bilali transmitted to their descendents the oral traditions and ethnic beliefs which had been passed down generation after generation. This has been demonstrated repeatedly in the narratives and oral traditions collected from the Sea Island *Gullah* peoples of Georgia and the Carolinas. Fredrick Douglas became one of the most enduring icons of freedom for African Americans and exemplified the persistent desire for freedom of the *Turudbe'* people.

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Alfa Umar ibn Sayyid the *Fulbe*' Face Behind the Mask of 'Uncle Remus'



Alfa Umar ibn Sayyid

We come now to the illustrious and benevolent *Turudbe*' Muslim, **Alfa Umar ibn Sayyid**. Perhaps more than anyone else among the enslaved *Turudbe*' *Fulbe*' descendents of the Abrahamic line, Umar constitutes the best example of the persistence of an identity construct because of the extensive Arabic writings he has bequeathed to us. There is much controversy connected with him, because the Anglo-American writers have claimed that he had accepted Christianity. However, when careful examination is made of his writings, the evidence proves the contrary.

Umar ibn Sayyid was born in 1770 in *Futa Toro*, the original home of the *Fulbe*' speaking ethnic groups known as *Tukulur* or *Turudbe*'. As he said in his Autobiography: "The place of my birth was Futa Toro (which lay) between the two rivers"²⁵⁰ This region was for many centuries under the sovereignty of the Takrur, Malian and Songhai empires, respectively. With the Moroccan/Portuguese invasion and sacking of the Songhay empire in 1592, many *Turudbe*' speaking scholars took up the banner of *jihad* and attempted to establish Islamic government throughout the regions of the *bilad's-sudan* in general and in Futa in particular. From 1599 until 1670 the Denianke *Fulbe*' ethnicity ruled the area. The spiritual leader at that time was a *Qaadiri Imam* named Malik Sy. The decline of the Denianke was the result of the European slave trade.

The region of *Bundu* is the southern most tip of *Futa Toro* which lies on the west bank of the Faleme' River. Islamic learning was originally brought into the region of Bundu as well as Niokholo and Dentilia by the *Jakhanke*' clerical communities coming

²⁵⁰ Umar ibn Sayyid, Autobiography, digital copy of the original Arabic manuscript in possession of author, f 6.

from Diakha-Bambukha.²⁵¹ The *Imam* who originally established Islamic learning in this region was none other than the famous *al-Hajj* Salim Suware'. It is from him and his many students that the transmission of the Muwatta of *Imam* Malik, Tafseer 'l-Jalalayn and the as-Shifa of *Qadi* Iyad were transmitted in the entire region of *Futa Toro* and *Futa Jallon*.²⁵² In the region of Bundu at the central town of Didecoto, reside two grandsons of *al-Hajj* Salim: Shaykh Abdullah and *Shaykh* Ture' Fode where this learning tradition still persist.²⁵³ Later, *Futa Jallon* became a magnet for learned scholars and Arabic literacy where more than 60% of the inhabitants were versed in the Arabic language. Education in this region was propagated by the famous Saalamiyya families who spread the *Qaadiriya Tariqa* throughout Guinea, Senegal and Gambia and traced their ancestry to Umar ibn 'l-Khataab, may Allah be pleased with him. It was under the shadow of this great reform and intellectual tradition that Umar ibn Sayyid received his 25 years of training and instruction. He began his formal education of memorization of the *Quran* at age 6 in 1776 and by 1801 at age 31, he had completed an exhaustive and thorough Islamic education. There is no doubt, when we compare his education with the curriculum laid out by one of his contemporaries, another enslaved Muslim, Lamin Kebbe', that Umar had reached the level of *Alfa* or *al-faqih* (jurist).²⁵⁴ At this level Umar ibn Sayyid probably returned to his home to teach children the *Quran*, act as *kaatib* (scribe) for senior jurist, enhance his knowledge with the senior scholars, enter the higher esoteric training in the *Qaadiriyya* brotherhood, and assist the *Almami* Abd'l-Qadir Kan in the administration of the newly formed Muslim confederation. He said in his Autobiography:

"I was entrenched in seeking knowledge for twenty-five years. I came back to my region and after six years a large army came to our land. They killed many people and seized me bringing me to the great ocean. There they sold me into the hands of the Christians."²⁵⁵

When Umar ibn Sayyid was captured at the age of 37, and brought to the United States in 1807, it was the same year that the United States abolished the importing of African slaves from Africa.²⁵⁶ It was also the same year that the first Muslim slave revolts issued in Bahia, Brazil from Muslims mostly from the same region as Umar.²⁵⁷ In the same year the regions further east witnessed the major successes of *Turudbe*' social reformer and scholar/warrior, *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye'.²⁵⁸ It is clear that the Anglo-Americans did not want in their borders the emergence of the *jihads* that were engulfing Western *Sudan* and Bahia, Brazil. The reason for this no doubt is the effect that militant Muslims had upon the African freedom fighters in South Carolina. Among those directly

²⁵¹ Nehemia Levtzion, "Islam in the Bilad al-Sudan to 1800", The History of Islam in Africa, edit Nehemia Levtzion & Randall L. Pouwels, (Athens, University of Ohio Press, 2000), pp. 79-80.

²⁵² Ivor Wilks, "The Juula and the Expansion of Islam in the Forest", The History of Islam in Africa, edit Nehemia Levtzion & Randall L. Pouwels, (Athens, University of Ohio Press, 2000), pp. 98-101.

²⁵³ Ronald A. T. Judy, Dis-Forming the American Canon: Affrican-Arabic Slave Naratives and Their Vernacular, (University of Minnesota Press, London, 1993), pp. 168-170.

²⁵⁴ Ibid. pp. 172-173.

²⁵⁵ Umar ibn Sayyid, , f 6.

²⁵⁶ Keith Irvine, The Rise of the Colored Races, (New York, W.W. Norton & Company), 1970, p. 75.

²⁵⁷ Muhammad Shareef, The Islamic Slave Revolts of Bahia Brazil: A Continuity of the 19th Century Jihaad Movements of Western Sudan, (Houston, Sankore Institute), 1993, pp. 24-26.

²⁵⁸ Mervyn Hiskett, The Sword of Truth: the Life and Times of the Shehu Usman Dan Fodio, (New York, Oxford University Press), 1973, pp. 91-96.

influenced by militant Islam in general, and Umar in Sayyid, in particular, was Denmark Vesey. David Robertson said in his biography of Vesey:

“The escaped slave Charles Ball, a native of Maryland who wrote a memoir of his South Carolina slavery in 1806, noted the “great many” Africans he had met during his bondage in South Carolina, and that “I knew several who must have been, from what I have since learned, Mohamedans [sic].” The percentage of slaves at least nominally Muslim imported from Africa to the great trading centers such as Charleston has been estimated at 10 percent of the total number brought in during the years 1711 to 1808. Proportionately, approximately 8,800 of these Muslim individuals must therefore have been sold in South Carolina market in these years. In his decades both as a slave and as a freedman, Denmark Vesey almost certainly knew or observed fellow blacks who continued to practice Islam in their bondage.”²⁵⁹

Robertson goes on to suggest that *Alfa* Umar ibn Sayyid, at age 53, was one of the mentors of Denmark Vesey and that perhaps he accepted Islam at his or another *Turudbe* Muslim’s hand.²⁶⁰ Like the influence that the *Turudbe’* Amir Abd’r-Rahman ibn Ibrahim had upon the revolutionary thinking of David Walker, likewise, the *Turudbe’* teacher, *Alfa* Umar ibn Sayyid, had great influence upon the militant revolutionary, Denmark Vesey.²⁶¹ The sense of historical consciousness engendered through the connection with the patriarch Abraham that was transmitted through the *Turudbe’* identity concept transfigured the thoughts of Denmark Vesey and gave him the sense of belonging and self-esteem needed to accomplish his revolution. Herbert Aptheker tells us: “He (Vesey) read to them (his African colleagues) from the bible how the *children of Israel were delivered out of Egypt from bondage*”.²⁶² Thus, the radical intellectual tradition and the militant arms struggle tradition among Africans in America finds its source from the *Turudbe’* children of Abraham and their entrenched sense of knowledge of self. Robertson states it more succinctly when he said:

“He (Vesey) was a black man of great physical presence, strength, and intellect, able to grasp the demographic and strategic significance of a black majority in the state, and linguistically fluent and political facile enough to mold various African ethnic and religious groups into one unified fighting force. From the discipline of Islam he probably took the moral certitude of absolute military victory over unbelievers, just as Africanized Christianity he later publically took the role of a black messianic deliverer.”²⁶³

The Anglo-American writers, both contemporary with *Alfa* Umar, and thereafter, painted an altogether different picture of the enslaved *Turudbe’*. He was made out to be docile and compliant to his lot as a slave. Further, it was stated repeatedly that he had converted from his native religion of Islam. However, the evidence of his own writings prove otherwise. The most astounding evidence for the persistence of *Alfa* Umar’s belief in Islam was a letter written around 1820 at age 50 where the learned *Turudbe’* scholar says at the beginning:

²⁵⁹ David Robertson, *Denmark Vesey*, (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1999), pp. 37-40.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid. pp. 137-138.

²⁶² Herbert Aptheker, p. 41.

²⁶³ David Robertson, p. 39.

“You show Allah in male or female form? Behold, such is a division! [not clear] These are nothing but names that you have made up, you and your fathers, which Allah did not reveal. All good is from Allah and no other.”²⁶⁴

Here is a scathing attack, not unlike the criticisms made by *Amir Abd'r-Rahman ibn Ibrahim*, where Umar assails the Anglo-Americans for their Hellenistic paganism. He calls them to account for associating deities besides the One God Allah ta'ala. In spite of being under the abject subjugation of the white Christians, yet Umar remained firm on the Abrahamic covenant of commanding all that is good and forbidding indecency. Umar remained undeviating from the pure unadulterated monotheism that was bequeathed to Abraham, Isma'il, Ishaq, Yaqub and all the their descendent until Muhammad, may Allah bless all of them and grant them peace. Umar said in his letter citing one of the most fundamental verses that established the tenets (*aqeeda*) of Islam:

*“The Messenger believes in what was revealed to him from his Lord, as well as the believers. All of them believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books and His Messengers. We make no distinction between any of them.”*²⁶⁵

This verse revealed at the end of the second chapter called *Al-Baqara* (the Cow) delineates the fundamental creed of Islam. Given Umar's dept of understanding of these verses along with the causative factor behind their revelation, there can be no doubt that he remained consistent with the fundamental beliefs of Islam.

Alfa Umar ibn Sayyid left behind a clear picture of himself, his place of origin, his level of learning and what he thought about those who oppressed him. His Arabic Autobiography stands as a living testimony of the persistence of the will to BE and the rights of self-determination for the 'lost children of Abraham'. Umar ibn Sayyid composed his Autobiography in 1831 at the age of 61. He began his autobiography by recording from memory the entire *Qur'anic* chapter called *al-Mulk* (the Kingdom) or *at-Tabarrak* (the Blessing). It is the sixty-seventh chapter of the *Qur'an* revealed in Mecca during the early days of prophet Muhammad's mission, upon him be peace. It comprises thirty verses. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace used to recite it every night before retiring to bed.

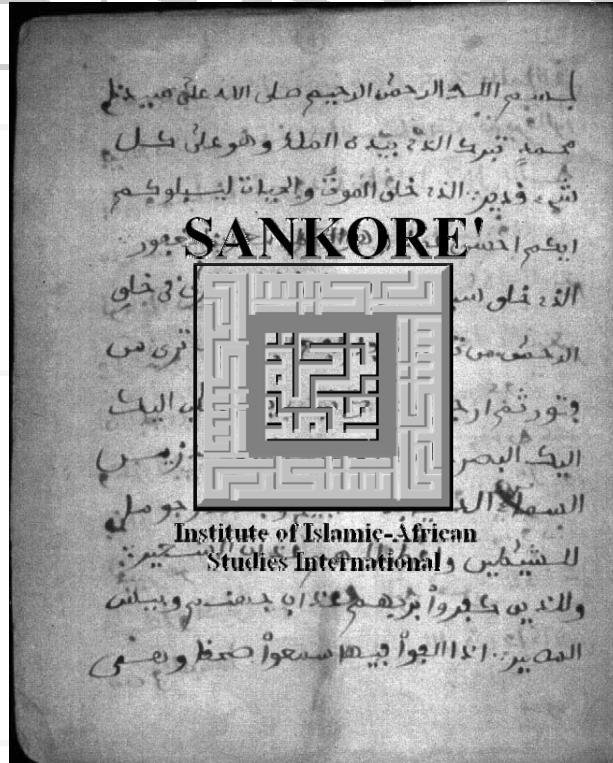
Modern academicians have pondered the reason why Umar ibn Sayyid, decided to record this early Meccan *Sura*. What was he trying to say to his would be readers? Who was he addressing by quoting these verses? Was it an attempt at proselytizing? Was it a veiled effort to call to account the souls of his captors? The answer to these questions can be found in the religion that he dedicated himself to study for more than 25 years. There has been narrated many traditions concerning the benefits of this tremendous chapter of the *Qur'an*. Among them are the words of the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace on the authority of Ibn Abass: “*It (al-Mulk) is the preventer. It is the redeemer. By it one is saved from the punishment of the grave.*”²⁶⁶ There are more narrated traditions that demonstrate the importance of this *Qur'anic* chapter and sheds light on the possible reasons that induce *Alfa Umar ibn Sayyid* to began his Autobiography with it. He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace also said on the authority of Abu Hurayra: “*Indeed there is a chapter from the Book of Allah which is only thirty verses, however it will intercede for a man and even bring him out of the Fire on the Day of Judgment and enter*

²⁶⁴ Allan Austin, p.456. The translation is my own because the translation offered in the text on page 513 is not clear.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 457. Again the translation is my own.

²⁶⁶ At-Tirmidhi, Jaam'u at-Tirmidhi, (Beirut, Dar'l-Kutub'l-'Ilmiya) Chapter Fadaa'il 'l-Quran, No. 3133.

him into Paradise. It is the chapter called *al-Mulk*”.²⁶⁷ Realizing the level of education that Umar had attained in Bundu, there is no doubt that he had come across these traditions. Thus, his evoking this *Quranic* chapter was a sincere call upon his Lord to redeem him from his captives and to assist him in the grave after death. Here was a *Turudbe*’ Muslim who knew he would die and perhaps not be buried in accordance with the rites of Islam, so he did what any Muslim would do in that same situation: *ufawwudu’l-amr ila Allah* (‘leave the matter over to Allah!’) The fact that Umar ibn Sayyid was able to remember this particular chapter after 26 years of intellectual discontinuance is proof of his faith in Allah and his continuity on the path of Islam, Iman and Ihsan.



A copy of *Surat'l-Mulk* written from memory by the *Fulbe*’ *Turudbe*’ Muslim Umar ibn Sayyid

Umar ibn Sayyid tells us in the beginning of his *Autobiography* about the extent of the cultural genocide that took place against the *Turudbe*’ Muslims. He says: “I have forgotten most of my language as well as the language of Arabic”.²⁶⁸ This is significant because reading and learning is an obligation upon every Muslim.²⁶⁹ Education and erudition were the hallmarks of Muslim life in the *bilad’s-sudan*. Alfa Umar’s admission of the lost of his native tongue and the use of the Arabic language could have been the result of the lack of Muslim co-religionist to communicate with. This is doubtful because David Robertson points out the population of *Turudbe*’ Muslims in South Carolina was

²⁶⁷ Ibid. No 3134.

²⁶⁸ Umar ibn Sayyid, f 5.

²⁶⁹ Ibn Maja, *as-Sunan*, on the authority of Anas ibn Malik that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said: “Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim and placing knowledge with people who are not deserving is like placing diamonds, pearls and gold on the neck of swine.”

great.²⁷⁰ Further, this lack of Muslim company would not have prevented him from writing down the *Qur'an*, and the other fundamental books on Islamic jurisprudence he had memorized in the *bilad's-sudan*.

There had to be another reason for Umar's testimony of the loss of his language, in spite of his many years of study and education. The answer can be found in the records of the captors and their laws designed to eradicate any vestige of civilization from the enslaved Africans. In North Carolina as well as South Carolina laws were passed in 1822 which declared it illegal for slaves to be taught to read and write. The penalty for so doing was capital punishment.²⁷¹ It is no wonder that Umar never got around to recording the knowledge, which he had gained for twenty-five years of 'diligent study'. The admission of Umar also indicates the level of education of its author because he was a polyglot capable of conversing in many languages, Arabic, *Fulbe'*, and perhaps Mandinka' and Wolof, because these were the prominent languages spoken in the regions of Futa Toro, Futa Bundu and Futa Jallon. One can only wonder at the vast number of African Muslims who lost the use of their language and the sacred language of Arabic due to this genocide.

Prior to being kidnapped from his native land, *Alfa* Umar ibn Sayyid was linked with the leading personages responsible for consolidating government and Islamic reform in Futa Toro, Bundu and Jallo. During this period *Chirnu* Sulayman Bal, a *Qaadi* Sufi *Shaykh*, arose leading the Fulani *Turudbe* Muslims against the slavers. This *Chirnu* Sulayman Bal was also known as Sulayman Ka'ba, named after one of the provisional capitals of the Muslim federation that he founded. This was the 'teacher' referred to in his *Autobiography*.²⁷² Later another *Turudbe Imam* emerged as the *Qaadi* leader, *Chirnu* Abd'l-Qaadir Kan. From 1776 until 1807 Abd'l-Qaadir led a successful Islamic state which united the Walo, Jolof and Cayor Muslims under a single banner.²⁷³ The war that led to the defeat and destruction of this *Fulbe' Turudbe'* confederation in 1807, was the causative factor behind the capture and enslavement of Umar ibn Sayyid.²⁷⁴ Thus, Umar ibn Sayyid was a highly educated African Muslim in accordance with the best standards of Islamic education available among the *Fulbe' Turudbe'* of Futa Bundu. He tells us in his autobiography that he studied for more than 25 years.²⁷⁵

Another feature that the *Autobiography* demonstrates is the religious license of subterfuge and dissimulation (*taqiyya*). Like the *Amir* Abd'r-Rahman ibn Ibrahim, Umar opted to not let the Anglo-Americans know what he was thinking. This was demonstrated in his constant reference to John Owen, his final slave master, and Jim Owen in a laudable manner:

"O people of North Carolina, O people of South Carolina, O people of America all of you have you among you two good men named Jim Owen with John Owen? These two men are good men. What food they ate, I ate. In what they clothe themselves, they clothe me."²⁷⁶

²⁷⁰ David Robertson. pp. 38-40.

²⁷¹ Vincent Harding, p. 102.

²⁷² Umar ibn Sayyid, f 6.

²⁷³ David Robinson, "Revolution in the Western Sudan", *The History of Islam in Africa*, edit. Nehemia Levtzion & Randall L. Pouwels, (Athen, Ohio University Press), 2000, p. 135.

²⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 136.

²⁷⁵ Umar ibn Sayyid, f 6..

²⁷⁶ Ibid. f 10.

History bears witness that Umar's praise for John Owens was an attempt at gaining concessions from a cruel taskmaster. Allen Austin identifies John Owen as the once governor of North Carolina from 1828-1830, who was responsible for passing legislature in North Carolina that 'seriously limited the rights of Africans in the state' in the same year in which Umar composed his autobiography. This was done no doubt out of fear that the Anglo-Americans had for the Africans because of the revolution of Denmark Vesey. If, as David Robertson points out, Umar ibn Sayyid had major influence upon the religious, cultural and political aspirations of Denmark Vesey, then it is clear that Umar could have been much more radical than history has portrayed him.²⁷⁷

Jim Owens and others depicted Umar as a gentle and contented slave who had eventually abandoned his *Turudbe*' Islamic beliefs for the religion of his 'good master'. There are statements in his manuscript, which when translated improperly and misunderstood may corroborate this erroneous view. For example Umar said:

"Jim along with his brother recite to me the *Injeel* of Allah our Lord, Creator, King; who regulates all our circumstances, our health and wealth, and who bestows His bounties willingly, without constraint according to His power. Open my heart to the way of guidance, to the way of Yusu'a, the Messiah, to the tremendous light."²⁷⁸

Many of Umar's contemporaries and later scholars believe that this statement by Umar is one of the proofs in the manuscript that he became apostate from the religion of Islam over to the religion of his captors. Only someone who is ignorant of the esteem that Muslims hold of the Messiah Issa ibn Maryum would believe that. In fact, what Umar said is nothing but an affirmation of what Muslims have believed from the beginning of the mission of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Writing in much the same time as Umar ibn Sayyid, the 18th century *Turudbe*' Muslim reformer *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye' said this about the belief that Muslims have in Jesus the son of Mary.

"He Prophet, upon him be peace related many traditions notifying Muslims that Issa ibn Maryum is the Messiah and that he would return in the End of Time to renew the religion of Islam and revive his *sunna*. Allah ta'ala says in His *Quran*: "*O People of the Book do not go to extremes in your religion and only speak the Truth about Allah. Verily the Messiah Issa the son of Maryum is the Messenger of Allah and His Word that He cast into Maryum and a Spirit from Him. Therefore believe in Allah and His messenger and do not say three gods. If you desist from this it will be best for you. Verily Allah is One, glory be to Him far is He from having a son. To Him belong what is in the heavens and the earth and Allah is sufficient as a Guardian.*"²⁷⁹ Imam al-Bukhari narrated in his *Saheeh* the tradition: "The son of Mary will truly descend as a just ruler. He will break the cross, kill the swine and set aside the *jizya*." In the same tradition narrated by at-Tayaalisi it says: "He will break the cross, kill the pig and diffuse wealth until Allah destroys during his time the one-eyed lying forger. Trust and immunity will come to pass in the earth until the lion will graze with the camel, the tiger with the cow and the wolf

²⁷⁷ David Robertson, pp. 37-40.

²⁷⁸ Op.Cit, f 9.

²⁷⁹ *Quran* – 5:77.

with the sheep. Even children will play with snakes. And neither of these will harm the other.”²⁸⁰

Thus, the *Turudbe*’ erudition in Islam throughout the lands of the *Bilad’s-Sudan* would preclude Umar ibn Sayyid of being ignorant of the nature of Muslim belief in Issa the son of Maryum, upon him be peace. Given Umar’s extensive Islamic education it is difficult to comprehend that he would relinquish this deep grasp of Islamic belief for the paganism or man-worship of Christianity. Along with the fact that the environment from which Umar was captured was inundated with the belief in millenarianism and messianic expectations that would redeem the Muslim world from the European invasion. This was the fundamental belief of the leaders and reformers under whom Umar studied and lived, like Karamako Alfa Ibrahim Barri, Sulayman Bal and *Almamy* Abd’l-Qaadir.²⁸¹

Another of the significant proofs of Umar ibn Sayyid’s continuous Islamic beliefs is the statement made in his Autobiography regarding the primordial status of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. This proclamation is made on a line separate from all the other lines as if Umar intentionally wanted to distinguish this statement from the other sentences. It says in Arabic: “The first is Muhammad.”²⁸² Why would Umar distinguish this statement from the remainder of the lines of the folio? It is clear that after twenty years of intense study in the lands of *Futa Toro* and *Futa Jallon*, Umar no doubt studied the three main text which were transmitted in that region: namely, the Muwatta of *Imam* Malik, the Tafseer ‘l-Jalalayn and the as-Shifa of *Qadi* Iyad. The transmission of the *asaaneed* (chains of authority) in these three text is still issued in these regions to this day among African Muslim Fulbe, Soninke, Jahanke’, Tukulor and Mandinke’ scholars. It is important to cite here what *Qadi* Iyad said in his as-Shifa which will explain exactly what Umar ibn Sayyid was denoting with the above enigmatic statement: “The first is Muhammad”.

“Qatada once said that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said, ‘*I was the first of the Prophets in existence and the last of them to be sent*’.” *Shaykh* Ahmad ibn Muhammad said in his commentary upon the as-Shifa concerning the above prophetic tradition, “*I was the first of the Prophets in existence*’, means that Allah created his spirit before their spirits; or in the world of atoms; or in the decree by recording him first in the Guarded Tablet; or he was the first to appear to the Angels. ‘*And the last of them to be sent*’ means that he is the seal of the Prophets.”²⁸³

This primordial status of the nature of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace was diffused throughout the *Bilad’s-Sudan* by means of the Sufi brotherhoods, particularly the *Qaadiriya*. The *Turudbe*’ have left an extensive amount of *Fulbe*’ poems that speak to the transcendent nature of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, which would leave no doubt about the belief that the *Turudbe*’ Muslims has regarding the Best of Creation, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

²⁸⁰ Uthman Dan Fuduye’, Tanbeeh’l-Umma `Ala Qurb Ashrat ‘s-Sa’a, manuscr. In possession of author, folia 39-40.

²⁸¹ Louis Brenner, "The 'Esoteric Sciences' in West African Islam", in The Changing Role of the Ulama, Conference, March 29-31 1984, Northwestern University, Lansing, p. 6.

²⁸² In the Arabic the text it reads: الأول محمد.

²⁸³ Shihabudeen Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Khifaji, Naseemu’r-Riyaad Fee Sharh Shifaa’l-Qaadi `Iyad, (Daar’l-Kutub, Beirut), 2001, Vol. 1, p. 67.

Another momentous proof of Umar's persistence in Islamic belief and practice was his evoking of the first chapter of the *Qur'an* in his *Autobiography*. Again, due to the fact that the transmission of learning in the regions in which Umar lived is well known, we can say with certainty that during his twenty five years of intensified study, he had to have read the *Tafseer 'l-Jallalayn*. This fundamental text of *Qur'anic* exegesis was the first and the most renowned *tafseer* that was transmitted in that region of the *bilad's-sudan*. It is significant to know that the *tafseer* (commentary) upon the last verse of the *al-Faathiha* rendered by the *al-Jalalayn* and all seminal *tafaaseer* is the following: "*Not among those who have earned anger*", these are the Jews. '*Nor who have gone astray*', these are the Christians." Because Umar had to have known the classical commentary upon this important chapter, which is an obligation for every Muslim to know and recite in his prayers - it goes without saying that his reason for citing it was to demonstrate his continued adherence to the faith of Islam. Another *tafseer* that was famous and in widespread use in the lands of the *Turudbe'* was the work of Abdullahi Dan Fuduye' called *Diya 't-Ta'weel Fi Ma'ana 't-Tanzeel*. In this text he adds,

"It is as though Allah is saying 'There is no anger upon them nor are they astray'. Astray here means to deviate from the even path intentionally or by mistake. The word astray is intensified with the negative particle لا (nor) in order to separate between the two ways in order that everyone can avoid both of them. This is because the path of the people of true faith encompasses both knowledge of the truth and acting in accordance with it. The Jews have lost acting in accordance with the truth and the Christians have lost the knowledge of the truth. It for this reason that the divine anger is against the Jews and being astray is against the Christians. This is due to the fact that whoever knows the truth and neglects acting in accordance with it, deserves anger, in contrast to the one who does not know the truth. The bottom line is that both the Jews and the Christians are astray and have earned divine anger. However the Jews have been distinguished with the attributes of divine anger and the Christians have been distinguished with being astray. It has been related on the authority of the prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "*Those who have earned divine anger are the Jews. Those who are astray are the Christians*".²⁸⁴

It is in this light that the above citation of the *al-Faathiha* by Umar ibn Sayyid must be understood. Umar demonstrated clearly his continued adherence to the covenant of Abraham through the Way of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He did not capitulate over to the corrupt mores and pagan man-worship of the Anglo-American Christians. He held firmly to the rope of Allah ta'ala. The Anglo-Americans attempted to categorize Umar ibn Sayyid within the confines of their own narrow-minded descriptions. The Anglo-American defined the enslaved African as sub-human lacking any ability to know or define himself, not to speak of determining his own course. This psychological warfare was conducted at every level of the Anglo society, even at the constitutional level.²⁸⁵

Umar ibn Sayyid had a clear sense of the geopolitical situation that he was in. He knew that the Africans who captured him were non-Muslims and that the enemies that he had been sold to were European Christians. Umar said:

²⁸⁴ Abdullahi Dan Fuduye', *Diya at-Ta'weel Fee Ma'ana 't-Tanzeel*, (unknown publishers), Vol1, pp. 9-10.

²⁸⁵ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, (London, Harvard University Press), 1981, pp. 2-3..

“Truly my residing in my country was by reason of great detriment. The disbelievers seized me unjustly and sold me to the Christians, who purchased me. We sailed a month and a half on the great ocean to the place called Charleston in the language of the Christians. I fell into the hands of a small, weak and wicked man, who did not fear Allah at all. He could neither read nor did he pray. I was afraid to remain with a sinful man who had so many sins. Thus, I fled”²⁸⁶

Perhaps when Umar spoke of ‘great detriment’ he was speaking of the many wars that were taking place during the period he was seized. During that time the pagan Africans were successful at raiding many centers of the *Fulbe* Muslims. It was the same year in which he was captured that the pagans sacked the central religious town of *Almamy* Abd’l-Qaadir and had him murdered. The period was a period of insecurity and internecine warfare. Thus, Umar utilized his ability to write as a means of defining his own reality and speaking out against his captors. The ability to evoke and define oneself and the enemy constitutes the most essential element in self-determination. The ability to understand and delineate the inner being and the surrounding universe is what placed mankind over and above the creation. This was the hallmark of Adam and remains the quality of his descendents. This must be understood when examining any referents utilized by enslaved *Turudbe*’ Muslims. The *Turudbe*’ had a deep sense of who they were, and understood their historical relationship with the Europeans. They were fully aware the role that they and other West African Muslims played in the civilizing of Spanish and Portuguese Europe.²⁸⁷ The protective historical conscience of *Turudbe*’ identity, the inner psychological fortification of Islam, as well as the linguistic security of Arabic, gave the *Turudbe*’ the assurance and ability to create their own referents. Thus, the existence of Umar, as he was, defied the Anglo-American’s futile attempt to deconstruct him and define him. Umar cannot be understood through the prism of Anglo-American Christian scrutiny, but through his own ethnocentric frame of reference.

Allen Austin defined this endeavor on the part of Anglo-Americans to ‘redefine’ Umar as a ‘Christian’ as “largely the creation of romantic-white and militant Christian wishful thinking”²⁸⁸. The fact that he was ‘owned’ means that he could not define himself, thus he had to be ‘handled’ and ‘packaged’ to suite the Anglo-American image of the good docile slave. An example of this type of historical fallacy is in the following picture painted of Umar:

“The name of the man from whom I obtained this manuscript for you, I believe is Monroe (Umar); ...an Arab by birth, of royal blood...He fell into the hands of Gen. Owen, of Wilmington, who...proffered him his freedom, and offered to send him back to his native land. But Monroe (Umar) declined the offer, saying that his friends were probably either destroyed or dispersed and that his condition was much better where he was...He is respected by those who know him, and is a worthy member of the Presbyterian Church.”²⁸⁹

Not only does the Anglo-American redefine this *Turudbe*’ Muslim as Christian, but they went further in claiming that he did not desire his own freedom, that he was

²⁸⁶ Umar ibn Sayyid, f 13.

²⁸⁷ Dana Reynolds, “The African Heritage & Ethnohistory of the Moors”, *Golden Age of the Moors*, edit. Ivan Van Sertima, (London, Transaction Publishers), 1996, pp. 96-98.

²⁸⁸ Allan Austin, p. 445.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 474.

content to remain under the yoke, all be it 'benevolent' of the white man. This coincides with their own racist views of Africans and other non-white peoples, as Lester Scherer said that white tradition: "affirmed that the heathen could legitimately be treated differently from Christians. They could be enslaved for life; and they could be driven harder and fed less."²⁹⁰ The opinion that Africans were resigned to slavery and were naturally disposed to it, was pervasive throughout Europe and the United States. Writing in South Carolina, about three decades after Umar ibn Sayyid was captured, William Harper, who spoke of Africans' "indifference to personal liberty". He raised the question: "Let me ask if this people do not furnish the very material out of which slaves ought to be made, and whether it be not an improving of their condition to make them the slaves of civilized masters."²⁹¹ This sentiment is even echoed today by certain Anglo-American 'Muslim' converts who encourage people to study in Mauritania, where the enslavement of African Muslims is seen as benign. The same attitudes prevail where the ability of the African Muslims to endure their lot as slaves is seen as noble and venerable, but to revolt and rebel is seen as unnatural to them.

Umar ibn Sayyid was no exception in this mass self-deception among the Anglo-Americans. Umar's image as a convert to Christianity was utilized to help advance the myth of African innate inferiority. However, when close examination is made of Umar's Autobiography another picture emerges. For example, whenever Umar referred to Jesus in any context, the Anglo-Americans deduced from this acceptance of their view of Jesus as 'lord and savior'. On the other hand, Umar's understanding of Jesus the son Mary, must be comprehended from his own Islamic frame of reference. Umar said in his Autobiography: "And now the words of our lord *Yusu`a* the Messiah."²⁹² The use of the term 'our lord' in referring to *sayyidinaa* Issa ibn Maryum, upon him be peace, is perhaps the strongest evidence of the possibility of Umar ibn Sayyid's apostasy from the religion of Islam. However, again, when examining Umar's level of Islamic education, one is forced to reconsider other alternatives other than mere abandonment of his religion. First the term *rabb* (lord, sustainer) when used with the definite article (*alif & laam*) refers suitably to Allah ta'ala who is, as *Shaykh* Muhammad Murtada 'z-Zaydi said in his Taaaj: "The *Rabb* is Allah 'azza wa jalla, the sustainer of everything, i.e. its owner. He possesses lordship (*rubuubiyya*) over the entire creation. There is no partner to Him and He is the Lord of all lords, the King of kings."²⁹³ Abu Mansuur said in his Lisaan, "The *Rabb* unrestrictedly refers linguistic to the owner, the master, the manager and the educator. It is not used unrestrictedly to other than Allah except when the word is brought into relationship with something else. Like when you say: 'the *rabb* of so-and-such."²⁹⁴ The *Qur'an* utilizes the term *rabb* in many cases to refer to created beings that are in some way responsible for managing a created thing or person. Allah ta'ala says on the tongue of Prophet, Yusef, when he addresses the inmate who was destined to be freed from prison: "Mention me with your lord."²⁹⁵ Here reference is made to the owner or master of the inmate for whom he will be employed. Thus, Prophet Yusef utilized the

²⁹⁰ Lester B. Scherer, Slavery and the Churches in Early America, 1619-1819, (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 1975, p. 27.

²⁹¹ Ibid. p. 122.

²⁹² Allan Austin, p. 474

²⁹³ Muhammad ibn Makaram ibn Mandhur, Lisaan'l-'Arab, (Beirut, Dar as-Saadar), 1994, Vol. 1, p. 399.

²⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 400.

²⁹⁵ *Quran: Yusef*: 42.

term *rabb* as it was known and accepted with those whom he was addressing. Another consideration, and perhaps the most plausible, is that Umar was practicing dissimulation (*taqiyy*) out of fear for his life under the Christians. As previously discussed, this is a legally acceptable option for any Muslim who is under the jurisdiction of the disbelievers and can find no way to establish his religion nor can he find a means with which to make the *hijra* from under their control. This is the legal ruling for a free Muslim who finds himself in circumstances where he fears establishing the religion. Umar was not *hurr* (free). *Taqiyya* was perhaps the only logical option he had. Thus, Umar ibn Sayyid referring to *Isa ibn Maryum*, as 'lord' cannot be used as conclusive proof for apostasy because one can construe many implications from the *Quranic* meaning of the word. Further, when this is connected to the right of dissimulation (*taqiyya*), then Umar's persistent Islamic belief stands out. One must recall that *Amaar ibn Yasar*, the Afro-Arab Companion of Prophet Muhammad, said far worse than Umar ibn Sayyid, yet Allah ta'ala freed him apostasy by His words: "*Whoever disbelieved after having faith, except those who were coerced while their hearts were tranquil in belief.*"²⁹⁶ It is well known that Amaar verbally denounced Allah ta'ala and outwardly proclaimed the false deities of the *Quraysh*, yet Allah ta'ala declared him innocent due to the state of his heart. Like 'Amaar, the same about Umar ibn Sayyid, who being coerced through slavery, dissimulated to the Anglo-Americans in order not to be killed. We will return to the parallels between *Alfa* Umar and 'Amaar, and discuss the possible spiritual influence that the latter had upon the life of the former. Thus, contrary to being proof of his conversion, his dissimulation only proves his utter contempt for his captors and their own innate inferiority as disbelievers.

As mentioned earlier, the Anglo-Americans would often force the *Turudbe'* Muslim to write down the Lord's Prayer as a sign of conversion to Christianity. Umar ibn Sayyid was no exception to this rule. However, it is through understanding the early education of Umar ibn Sayyid that insight can be had into the real reasons behind his citing of the Lord's Prayer. As Umar claimed, he studied the Islamic sciences intensely for some twenty-five years. The system of education that permeated western *Bilad's-Sudan* comprised of a deep understanding of the science of the traditions of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. This included mastery of the *sihaah* (sound) collections, the *musaneed* collection (those collections organized on the basis of the last transmitter before the Prophet) and the *sunnan* collection.

Among the *sunan* collections that the student had to have mastered was the *Sunan* of Abu Dawud. In this collection there is a prophetic tradition related on the authority of Abu Darda, who said that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said, "When one of you is suffering or when his brother is suffering, he should say, '*Our Lord is Allah, who is in the heaven. Holy be Your name. Your command reigns supreme in the heaven and in the earth. As Your mercy is in heaven, make Your mercy in the earth. Forgive us of our sins and errors. You are the Lord of the righteous. Send down mercy from Your mercy and a remedy from Your remedies upon this pain so that it is healed up.*'"²⁹⁷ This prophetic tradition has striking resemblance to the Lord's Prayer as narrated in the New Testament: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is heaven. Give us this day our

²⁹⁶ *Quran: an-Nahl: 106.*

²⁹⁷ Muhammad Bello, *Ujalaat 'r-Raakib fi Tibb 's-Saa'ib*, manuscript in possession of author, ff 15-16.

daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen.”²⁹⁸ Because of the similarity in the expression of the ‘Lord’s Prayer’ and the famous *du`a ‘r-ruqiyya* “Supplication for Remedy” of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, perhaps Umar and other enslaved *Turudbe*’ Muslims saw no dilemma in recording it. Further, this tradition was narrated in the section of the prophetic traditions regarding medicinal remedies. This is significant because apart of the fundamentals of education in the *bilad’s-sudan* was a basic understanding of Islamic folk medicine called *Tibb ‘n-Nabiyyi* (the medicine of the Prophet). This entailed the student mastering the basic remedies transmitted by the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

In fact, a fellow *Turudbe* ‘scholar/warrior Muhammad Bello ibn *Shehu* Uthman Dan Fuduye’ cited the above-mentioned tradition in a 19th century medical text. The name of the text is *Ujalaat ‘r-Raakib fi Tibb ‘s-Saa’ib*. The bottom line is that the above tradition related by the Prophet to his community, as a cure is an exact rendering of the Lord’s Prayer. This means that given Umar ibn Sayyid’s level of education, he had to be familiar with the tradition that would entail him not seeing any harm of citing the Lord’s Prayer since it too, was related by Prophet Muhammad as a chanted formula for its curative qualities.

This means that Umar’s citing of the Lord’s Prayer as a sign of conversion is definitely inconclusive. The Anglo-Americans insisted on defining Umar in their own terms of reference while ignoring the clear evidence of his persistence in his Islamic culture and religion. This is an example of the countless cases of cultural genocide that led to the disappearance of 3 to 5 million of Umar’s co-religionist in America.

The *Autobiography* of Umar ibn Sayyid, stands today as the written anthropological evidence for the rights of self-determination for the descendents of African Muslim in the United States. This lost son of Abraham, the *Turudbe*’ Fulbe, *Alfa* Umar ibn Sayyid cried out in his work for justice and liberty, and in speaking out, he indicted the system that oppressed his people. As a *Turudbe*’ descendent of Abraham he fulfilled the call to command the good and forbid evil and indecency. He made a lasting impression upon revolutionary leaders in North Carolina, such as Denmark Vesey and the other African Freedom Fighters who took up arms in defense of freedom, liberty and self-determination. To his Anglo-American oppressors in the state of North Carolina as well as the remainder of the country, he demanded his freedom and liberty of his people. This cry for freedom, which was the hallmark of the Children of Abraham, was echoed in Umar’s words:

“O you Americans, you people of North Carolina - Are there among you!? Are there among you!? Are there among you!? Are there among you!? - good people who fear Allah much?!”²⁹⁹

Alfa Umar ibn Sayyid stands as an excellent example of the resilience of the *Turudbe*’ Fulbe Muslims, in the face of the aggression and oppression of Anglo-American slavery. With his quiet, unassuming and humble demeanor, Umar, was not only able to maintain his Islamic customs under the nose of his enemies, but he also had major impact upon one the most violent, revolutionary, well organized African slave

²⁹⁸ Mathew: 6:9-13.

²⁹⁹ Umar ibn Sayyid, f 11.

insurrection in the United States, led by Denmark Vesey. It is amazing how Umar ibn Sayyid was able to deceive his slave masters into thinking that he was docile and subservient to their will and had completely acquiesced and succumbed to man-worship. The following anecdote illustrates the subtleness of Umar ibn Sayyid's dissimulation to his enemies:

"When the name and history of the ex-Prince were discussed, Miss Ellen proposed sending for 'Uncle Moro'. He was received in her splendidly furnished parlor and introduced to each visitor...after which, was seated among the guests. He was a fine looking man, copper colored, though an African, well dressed, in a long black coat reaching below the knees, as worn by the nobility of foreign countries of his day, sat very erect on his chair, with both feet flat on the carpet, knees close together, and his hands opened and resting on his legs. He conversed for a short while gracefully, after which, Miss Ellen handed him the family Bible and asked him to read a lesson in his native language. He announced the 23rd Psalm and read it, when I asked if he would kindly write it for me, he did so, and came with it for another interview...the Psalm was written and left for me, which appears as written, with his communication."³⁰⁰

What is astounding is that Umar is now writing in 1855 at the ripe old age of 85, yet he still maintains a steady hand with the *Timbuktu* style of calligraphy which lucid and striking. He begins the 23rd Psalms with an opening statement that only a dedicated Muslim would make. He did not say anything about 'god the father, god the son and god the holy ghost'. He made no appellation to Jesus as being his personal savior, or even 'in Jesus' name'. He did not say in the name of Jehovah, or 'elohim' or any appellation that would indicate that he had indeed in this late period in his life had become resigned to the Christian faith. Perhaps, when speaking in English, he would refer to these deities; however, his written testimony indicated a spiritual allegiance to something completely different.

The text stands out as anthropological proof of the failure of Christianity as 'practiced' by the Anglo-Americans to dissuade *Alfa* Umar from his life-long faith and his adherence to the 'covenant' bequeathed to him by his *Turubdbe* ancestors. If the positive purpose of slavery was to transmit 'benevolent' Christian values to the Africans, then this well written text declared this claim as an utter failure. More significantly this reproduction of the 23rd Psalms by *Alfa* Umar stands as a proof in the face of racist ideas such as George Fitzhugh when he said

"We would remind those who deprecate and sympathize with [the] negro,... that his slavery here relieves him from a far more cruel slavery in Africa, or from idolatry and cannibalism, and every brutal vice and crime that can disgrace humanity; and that it christianizes, protects, supports and civilizes him; that it governs him far better than free laborers at the North are governed."³⁰¹

³⁰⁰ Allan Austin, p. 478.

³⁰¹ Leslie H. Fishel, Jr. and Benjamin Quarles, *The Black American: A Documentary History* (Scott, Foresman and Company, Illinois), Third Edition, 1976, 1970.



Copy of the 23rd Psalms written for John Federick Foard in 1855

He begins: “*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, may Allah send blessings upon our master Muhammad. Verily I am writing this letter in the year 1855, on Monday, the 15th of the month of November.*”³⁰² The statement: “*In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful*”, is called in Arabic the *basmalla* and is one of the most important formulas in Islam. Every chapter of the *Quran*, except one, begins with it. It is related on the authority of Abd’l-Qaadir ar-Rahawi in his *al-Arba’een* on the authority of Abu Hurayra, that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said: “Every matter of importance which is not initiated with: *bismillahi’r-rahmani’r-raheem* (In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful), will be cut off.”³⁰³ The importance of this designation in Islam cannot be overstated. During the same period when Umar ibn Sayyid was a student in Futa Bundu, another *Turudbe’* Fulbe scholar, named Muhammad Tukur composed a text comprising the secrets of the Divine Names of Allah ta’ala. The text was called *Qira’t’l-Ahibaa* and was composed around 1796, just before Umar completed his 25-year period of deep study in the Islamic sciences. The text is significant because it gives a picture of the level of the mystical education and the esoteric sciences that were being transmitted throughout the *Bilad’s-Sudan* by the

³⁰² Ibid. 477.

³⁰³ Uthman Dan Fuduye’, *‘Umdat’l-Ulama*, trans. Muhammad Shareef (Fairfiled, Sankore’ Institute), 2003, p. 8.

Turudbe’ Fulbe Muslims. There is no doubt, given Umar’s degree of Islamic education that he too understood some portion of this science. Muhammad Tukur delineates the secrets of the *Bismillahi’r-Rahman’r-Raheem* when he said:

“If you desire the expansion of your breast then say: ‘*Bismillahi*’. If you desire your burden to be removed then say: ‘*Bismillahi*’. If you desire your reward to be magnified then say: ‘*Bismillahi*’. If you desire your name to be extolled then say: ‘*Bismillahi*’. ‘*Bismillahi*’ is the share of those in need of the Merciful One. It is the portion of those who are reliant upon the Compassionate One. It is the stake of all the believers. The ‘*Bismillahi*’ protects the ship from inundation. The ‘*Bismillahi*’ will redeem the *Umma* of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace on the Day of Standing among the masses of the people. It has been narrated that the first person that the ‘*Bismillahi*’ was revealed to was Adam, upon him be peace, who said: ‘I have learned that none of my descendents will be punished in the Fire as long as they persists in reciting it.’ Then it was raised up after him until the time of *al-Khalil*, upon him be peace. It was then revealed to him when he was in the catapult and then Allah redeemed him from the fire. Then it was raised up after him until the time of Musa, upon him be peace. It was revealed to him and by means of it, he overcame Pharaoh and his forces. It was then revealed to Sulayman, upon him be peace and then to Isa ibn Maryum, upon him be peace and then to Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He was then commanded to write it at the head of every chapter, at the beginning of books, at the head of letters, and in the beginning of every action. When the tumult of mountains descends with glorification when thirst becomes severe on the Day of Standing and the sweat is flows; then they will say with one voice: ‘*Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*.’ It is then that the decree of Allah will be rendered. It has been related in a prophetic tradition: ‘Whoever says it one time every day and night with sincerity in his heart there will remain not even an atoms weight of his sins left. Therefore it is incumbent upon you to recite it and thereby protect its sanctity.’ It has also been related in a prophetic tradition: ‘Whoever recites it Allah will record on his behalf for every letter four thousand good deeds raise him up four thousand spiritual ranks and wipe away from him four thousand sins’.”³⁰⁴

Thus, when Umar ibn Sayyid begins his 23rd Psalm with the *basmallah*, he was fully aware of the import of the statement. It was not some passing reference used by habit because in all of his writings, he begins with this same designation. If *Alfa* Umar knew the esoteric sciences, narrated by the *Turudbe* Fulbe Muhammad Tukur, regarding the secrets of the *basmallah*, it is then inconceivable to conclude that he had abandoned the religion of Islam. In fact, the usage of the *basmallah* demonstrates a profound and mysterious aspect to Umar’s nature that none of the Anglo-American narrators of his life are willing to admit. What we are looking at is an extremely sophisticated *Turudbe*’ Muslims scholar who had mastered the science of *taqiyya* (dissimulation), with all of its subtleties. He had resigned himself to a prolonged lifetime of concealment of his true faith and belief, only manifesting it through his written testimony.

Then after the *basmallah*, Umar sends the blessings and peace upon the Seal of the Prophets and the Master of the Messengers, Muhammad, upon him be blessings and peace. Did Umar renounce his religion of Islam? Louis Moore, writing in 1927 would have us believe so by his saying: “Under the ‘careful’ tutelage of Governor Owen, his brother, Gen. Jas Owen, and the Presbyterian clergy, Moreau (Umar) entered upon a

³⁰⁴ Muhammad Tukur, *Qirat ‘l-Ahibaa*, manuscript in the hands of the author, ffs 8-9.

‘careful’ and ‘exhaustive’ study of the principles and ideals of the Christian religion. The Arabian prince soon professed Christianity.”³⁰⁵ If this is so, then why would he open all of his letters and correspondences with sending blessings upon the one whom he called: “our master Muhammad”? Would not “a careful and exhaustive study of the principles of Christianity” followed by conversion, have wiped out any and all-spiritual allegiance to Allah and His Final Messenger Muhammad? It is related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said: “Whoever sends blessings upon me in a letter or book, there will remain an Angel seeking forgiveness for him as long as my name is in that book or letter.”³⁰⁶ It is clear from this that the profound transmission of knowledge established by the *Turudbe* connected with a persistence sense of historical consciousness helped to defend Umar ibn Sayyid from the cultural aggression of his Anglo-American captors. As the above prophetic tradition demonstrates, Umar’s desire to attain forgiveness from Allah ta’ala, the God of his fathers, Abraham, Isma’il, Ishaaq, and the Tribes was so entrenched, that no amount of indoctrination would dissuade him.

Even when we look close at the text of the Bible that he decided to recite for Miss Ellen and her ‘distinguished guests’, the 23rd Psalms, there is nothing in it that is diametrically opposed to the teachings of Islam and the lucid monotheism and well structured concept of the Divine Unity (*tawheed*) upon which the religion of Islam is built. In fact, when one examines the choice of biblical verses that Umar decided to recite for his Anglo-American audience, one is witnessing with clarity a form of disdain and defiance on the part of a descendent of Abraham towards oppressors. The 23rd Psalms says:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil and my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever.”³⁰⁷

What, in Umar’s eyes is ‘the valley of the shadow of death’ if it is not the ability to endure 49 years of servitude under unjust Anglo-American slavery? One can only imagine what Umar was thinking when he recited this verse to his credulous audience: “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” The quiet resignation for which *Alfa* Umar was known, could it be that he saw the affliction and hardship of slavery as part of Divine Providence?

When one recognizes his close attachment with African freedom fighters such as Denmark Vesey and the slave revolts that were being planned daily in the vicinity of the venerable *Shaykh*, one cannot help but imagine that behind the exterior of humility was the quiet assurance of eventual victory and justice.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Allan Austin, 497.

³⁰⁶ Uthman Dan Fuduye’, *‘Umdat’l-‘Ulama*, p. 8.

³⁰⁷ My own translation of Umar’s text. Its source is from *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, Psalms 23:1-6.

³⁰⁸ According to Herbert Aptheker from 1807 to 1864, the period from Umar ibn Sayyid’s capture until his death, there were 18 major slave insurrections and more than 20 minor infractions by slaves throughout the immediate vicinity of Chaleston, Fayetteville and Wilmington

The last known writing of Umar ibn Sayyid that decisively testifies to his persistent Islamic beliefs, but also his understanding of the eventual triumph of Divine Justice, was a hand written manuscript composed during the period of his ‘alleged conversion’.³⁰⁹ General Owen gave this text to Mary Jones, the wife of Rev. Charles Colcock Jones of Rockland County, Virginia on July 27, 1857.³¹⁰ The manuscript written by Umar ibn Sayyid was supposed to be another copy of ‘the Lord’s Prayer’, but proves to be altogether different.



The copy of “the Lord’s Prayer” written by Umar around 1856-57

What made General Owen determine that this was the Lord’s Prayer is hard to ascertain. We know that as early as 1819 a copy of the Bible in Arabic was given to Umar ibn Sayyid. In a letter from John Louis Taylor to Francis Key, written on the 10th of October, 1819, it states: “I should be much gratified Sir, if you could indicate to me in what manner I could procure an Arabic bible for his use, as I think it possible that a person of his enlargement of merit could not but peruse it without perceiving its authenticity and divine origin.”³¹¹ So Umar had access to an Arabic Bible that he could refer to in order to copy the Lord’s Prayer verbatim. We know this because in the previous year he did exactly that when John Foard requested him to write the 23rd Psalms. In fact, rather than write the Psalms in front of Mr. Foard, Umar, went to his private

³⁰⁹ Allan Austin, p. 451.

³¹⁰ Ibid. p. 519.

³¹¹ Ibid. p. 455.

quarters, no doubt, to copy it from his own Arabic Bible.³¹² In fact, Foard states this explicitly when he said: “When I asked if he would kindly write it for me? He did so, and came with it for another interview. I was out visiting friends and failed to see more of him, but the Psalm was written and left for me.”³¹³

So why did Umar not simply make a copy the Lord’s Prayer verbatim from his Arabic bible for General Owen? In 1856 Umar was 86 years of age, being able to use his memory fairly well. The so-called Lord’s Prayer that Umar recorded for General Owen was the chapter called *an-Nasr* (the Help) and was revealed about two years before the death of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.³¹⁴ Umar wrote it from memory, some fifty years after he was captured and enslaved, so lapses of memory had to occur for him. His manuscript reads:

“*When the help from Allah comes and the victory (is near, so give good news to the believers). And you see mankind entering into the religion in mass, then glorify with the praises of your Lord and seek forgiveness of Him. Verily He is Oft Relenting.*” It is complete. My name is Umar – Yaa `Amaar!”

What was Umar saying to those who would come across this manuscript, and what was he saying to Owen, his slave master by citing this particular verse? In order to understand Umar’s motives, we have to look at the context of the *Quranic* verse and then at the events that were occurring at the time he wrote it.

Umar ibn Sayyid’s education in Futa Bundu included a deep and exhaustive study of *Quranic* exegesis (*tafseer*), which would also include the sciences of the causative factors of the descent of revelation called *asbaab ‘n-nuzuul*. Thus, Umar knew the context in which this verse was revealed, its history, and the applications to which this verse could be applied. Writing about two years after Umar was captured, in 1809, another *Turudbe’* scholar, Abdullahi Dan Fuduye’ gave the exegesis of this chapter using the same sources that Umar ibn Sayyid studied in Futa Bundu. He said:

“*When the help from Allah comes*’, this means to His Prophet against his enemies; ‘*and the victory*’, this means the victory over Mecca, or it is the help of Allah for the believers and the victory He gives them over all the lands. ‘*And you see mankind entering into the religion in mass,*’ this means in large groups after they used to enter into the religion one by one. This occurred after the conquering of Mecca. There came to him, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, delegations from many of the Arab tribes from the distant regions of the earth, showing their obedience to him after they saw that he had conquered Mecca and there did not occur to him what happened to the Companions of the Elephants. ‘*...then glorify with the praises of your Lord*’, that is, adhere to praising Him. ‘*...and seek forgiveness of Him*’, as a form of subjugation of your soul and realizing that the help and victory is not from you. ‘*Verily He is Oft Relenting*’, for the things you seek forgiveness for. After the revelation of this chapter, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to say often: **Subhaana Allah wa biHamdihi wa Astaghfir Allah wa Atuubu ilayhi** (Glory be to Allah and with Him is the praise. I seek forgiveness of Allah and repent to Him.). It was understood from this that his appointed time was near. Umar ibn al-Khataab said: ‘This chapter was revealed at Mina in the middle of the day of sacrifice during the Farewell Pilgrimage’.”³¹⁵

³¹² Ibid. p. 478.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Abd’r-Rahman as-Suyuti, *Asbaab ‘n-Nuzuul*, (Beirut, Dar’l-Fikr), 1994, p. 258.

³¹⁵ Abdullahi Dan Fuduye’, *Diya at-Ta’weel*, Vol. 4, p. 299.

Thus, Umar ibn Sayyid citing of this final chapter of the *Quran* is significant for many reasons. First Umar recognized the circumstances that he was in as an enslaved Muslim in the hands of pagan Anglo-Americans. This verse was consolation to his heart and a reminder of the eventual triumph of Truth over falsehood and Justice over tyranny. The help and victory of Allah ta'ala is the triumph of the worship of the One Creator, who has no partner, helper, or offspring. It is the widespread acceptance of the message of Divine Unity that all the Prophets taught to mankind.

In Umar's manuscript there is incorporated an error in the original *Qur'anic* chapter, which can be said to be a lapse of his memory. He said: "*The victory is near, so give good news to the believers.*" This verse that Alfa Umar was made to place in the beginning of *an-Nasr* is from the chapter called *as-Saff* (the Ranks).³¹⁶ Although it does not belong in the chapter he cited in his manuscript, its inclusion is quite revealing. One has to remember, he was not allowed to write for 48 years. Much of the *Quran*, and the other fundamental books of *tawheed* (theology), *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *tasawwuf* (spiritual purification) that he had memorized in his native land had been lost or dangerously altered. Therefore, lapses in memory are understandable. However, when it comes to the *Qur'anic* text, lapses of memory do not apply, because it has been related by al-Bukhari on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said: "Most evil it is when one of you say: 'I have forgotten *Qur'anic* verse such and such'. On the contrary, he was made to forget." So when looked at from the esoteric perspective, Alfa Umar's introduction of the new verse into Chapter *an-Nasr* was not intentional. It was apart of the action of Allah ta'ala as He says: "*It was not you who threw when you threw, however it was Allah who threw.*"³¹⁷ So from the perspective of predetermination the verse that Alfa Umar inadvertently introduced into *an-Nasr*, by the decree of Allah ta'ala, emerged because of the circumstance that the *shaykh* found himself in actually demanded it. Thus, Alfa Umar through his acknowledgment of his complete servitude and surrender to the power and decree of Allah ta'ala, then attributes his actions to the One who created him in the first place. Said another way, the venerable *shaykh* willfully disobeyed his earthly slave master by writing the chapter called *an-Nasr* (The Help) rather than 'the Lord's Prayer', as a result, his Real Master and Creator, Allah ta'ala subjugated him and drowned him in the station of servitude and induced him to insert a verse that was utterly relevant to the condition and circumstance he found himself in. Thus, Alfa Umar ibn Sayyid became the means of Allah ta'ala speaking out to the circumstances of oppression, tyranny and injustice. Let us now examine closely the 'inserted verse', in order to comprehend what Allah ta'ala emphasizes through Alfa Umar's "lapse". Allah ta'ala says:

نَصْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"The help is from Allah and the victory is near, so give good news to the believers."³¹⁸
The *Turudbe'* exegesis, Abdullahi Dan Fuduye', said:

"The meaning of His words: 'The help is from Allah and the victory is near', the victory over Mecca, or it means the impending victory over the Persians and the eventual victory over the European Romans. The meaning of His words: 'so give good news to the believers', is 'O Muhammad, give them the good news regarding what Allah ta'ala has promised them about the

³¹⁶ *Qur'an: as-Saff*: 14.

³¹⁷ *Qur'an: al-Anfaal*: 18.

³¹⁸ *Qur'an: as-Saff*: 13.

commerce they have made with Allah, now and in the future for Divine assistance, victory and Paradise.”³¹⁹

This *Qur’anic* verse was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in Medina at a time when the Muslim *Umma* had consolidated its military and political strength.³²⁰ This verse is an announcement of the good news of the ultimate spread of Islam in every land and the opening of the societies traditionally connected to the Roman Empire, which includes eastern and western Europe as well as the Americas. The *Turudbe’* Fulbe had always defined the Europeans and Americans as the *Ahl-Ruum* (The Romans). In a judicial ruling produced in 1901 by the *Turudbe’* Chief Justice of Adamawa, Mudi Abdu Bellel, he says:

“Realize! And may Allah make you and I successful at arriving at the that which is correct; with regard to what has transpired between the adherents among the People of Islam and the Europeans (*ar-Ruum*) accompanied by the remainder of the disbelievers, comes down to one of three matters. The first is to fight (*al-qitaal*). The second is the making of truce (*as-sulhi*). The third is emigration (*al-hijra*). And for each one there is a specific stipulation (*mahalum*) and definite legal ruling (*hukmun*).”³²¹

It is clear from this that *Alfa* Umar ibn Sayyid, understood the nature of his captors. He knew that the people who enslaved him and his Muslim and non-Muslim Africans were destined to be conquered through the Call of Islam. This would explain his ‘resignation’ and outward compliance with his Anglo-American captors. During the same fateful year of 1856, when *Alfa* Umar ibn Sayyid composed this far-reaching and millenarian manuscript, North Carolina witnessed astonishing slave insurrections. Aptheker tells us that during that year Africans who had freed themselves and escaped into the forest in the surrounding counties of Robeson and Bladen.³²² These *maroons* waged incessant guerrilla warfare against Anglo-American slaveholders. These brave freedom fighters were freeing many Africans, many of them who were *Turudbe’* Fulbe Muslim. The struggle for freedom and victory over slavery had been raging all around the United States.

Perhaps, the most overlooked aspect of *Alfa* Umar’s final written testament is the final statement after mentioning his name when he said: “It is complete. My name is Umar – Yaa `Amaaru!” The statement: “Yaa Amaaru” has baffled many academics and historians who have examined this Arabic manuscript. Some scholars maintain that it was *Alfa* Umar’s African or *Turudbe* nickname. However, the name Amaar in Arabic is well known, and it was preceded by the Arabic vocative particle– *Yaa*, which means O Amaar, or ‘Heh, Amaar’. Writing in the 13th century the famous Sanhajan Arabic linguist, Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ajurum said this about the vocative particle and the vocative noun.

“The *munaadii* (vocative noun) are five kinds: the *mufrad 'alam* (proper singular noun); the *nakira maqsuuda* (designated indefinite noun); the *nakira ghayru maqsuuda* (undesignated indefinite noun); the *mudaaf* (governing noun of a genitive construction) and that which resembles the *mudaaf*. As for

³¹⁹ Abdullahi Dan Fuduye’, *Diya’t-Ta’weel*, Vol. 4, p. 197.

³²⁰ Abd’r-Rahman as-Suyuti, *al-Itqaan Fee ‘Uluum’d-Deen*, (Beirut, Dar’l-Kutub’l-‘Ilmiya), 2004, Vol. 1, pp. 22-23.

³²¹ *Al-Qadi* Modibo Abdullahi Bellel, *Risaalat wa’n-Naseeha Ila al-Mu’asireen*, (manuscript in possession of author), f 1.

³²² Herbert Aptheker, p. 55.

the *mufrad 'alam* and the *nakira maqsuuda* they are both based upon the *damma* without the *tanween*. Like (your saying): "yaa Zaydu" (O Zayd.); "yaa rajulu" (O man). The remaining three are always only in *nash* (accusative case).³²³

Thus, the name Amaar was in the accusative case but ended with the vowel movement of *damma* (that is the sound 'u') because as the 18th century *Turudbe* Arabic linguist, Muhammad Gamma said: "It is verbally constructed on the *damma* because it technically falls under the rule of the pronoun *anta* (you)."³²⁴ So clearly, *Alfa* Umar was calling upon someone named Amaar. Who was this Amaar and why did Umar ibn Sayyid have the need to call out to him in his final testament? The answer to this question raises profound issues of a theological nature and mysticism. It gives clear insight into the concepts that *Alfa* Umar had of creation, time, space and the After-Life. According to historical documents Amaar was the name of one of the Companions of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who was of African descent. He was `Amaar ibn Yaasir ibn `Aamir ibn Malik. His mother was an ex-slave of the Banu Makhzuum. According to al-Imam ad-Dhahabi, Amaar was among the first seven people who manifested their Islam in Mecca, who included the Prophet, Abu Bakr, Bilal the Abyssinian, Suhayb the Roman, al-Miqdaad and Sumayya the African mother of Amaar. Ad-Dhahabi describes Amaar as being extremely tall and dark skinned.³²⁵

Although, Amaar being an Afro-Arab could have been the reason for *Alfa* Umar ibn Sayyid's identification with Amaar, however, evidence shows that Amaar's history and suffering during the early days of Islam was similar to the repression that Umar ibn Sayyid had to undergo at the hands of the Anglo-American Christians. In fact, the physical torture of Amaar, his parents and brother was the causative factor behind the *Quranic* revelation allowing Muslims under duress to practice dissimulation (*taqiyya*). It has been related that Sumayya, the mother of Amaar, was punished so severely that that Abu Jahl came and took his spear and jabbed it into the her private parts until she died. This was done in the presence of Amaar to induce him to recant his Islam. As a result, his mother became the first martyr in Islam.

Uthman ibn Afan once said: "I will inform you of a prophetic tradition regarding Amaar. Both the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace and I came to a dry river bed until we reached where Amaar, his mother and father were being publicly tortured. Then Amaar said to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: 'The adversities of time are like this' Then he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said: "Be patient", and he then supplicated for them saying: "O Allah forgive the family of Yaasir and You have."

In a narration by Abu Balji on the authority of `Amr ibn Maymun who said: "When the pagans tortured Amaar with fire, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace passed by him and passed his hands over his head and recited: '*O fire be cool and safe*'³²⁶ for Amaar as you were for Abraham. O Amaar you will be killed by an unjust party." In another narration by Ibn `Awn on the authority of Muhammad, that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace encountered Amaar and he started

³²³ Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Dawud as-Sanhaji, *al-Ajurumiyya*, edited and translated by Muhammad Shareef, (Sankore Institute of Islamic African Studies), 1993, p. 59.

³²⁴ Muhammad Ghamma, *Kitaab'l-Iraab* original manuscript is possession of author, f 14.

³²⁵ Muhammad ibn Ahmad ad-Dhahabi, *Siyar A'laam 'n-Nubala*, Markaz ad-Diraasat al-Islamiya.

³²⁶ *Quran* - :69.

weeping. Amaar then wiped the tears from his eyes, may Allah bless him and grant him peace who then said: “The disbelievers will seize you and cover you with fire and you will be forced to say so-and-so; so when they come again to torture you say what they want you to say.” When the pagans seized Amaar they continued to torture him until he was forced to disparage the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace and mentioned good things about their false gods. So when the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace came, he asked Amaar: “What did you experience?” He said: “Nothing but evil O Messenger of Allah, by Allah they did not stop torturing me until I was forced to disparage you and to say good things about their false deities!” He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, then said: “How did you find your innermost heart?” Amaar replied: “It was tranquil in true faith.” He, upon him be peace then said: “If they come back and torture again, then do the same thing.” Al-Jazari narrated on the authority of Qatada that it was because of Amaar that the following verse was revealed: *“Those who disbelieve in Allah after their belief, except for the one who is forced while his heart is tranquil in true faith.”*³²⁷

It has been related by Umar ibn al-Hakim who said that Amaar was punished so severely that he was completely unaware of what he was saying and it was about him that Allah ta’ala revealed the following verse: *“Those who make the hijra for the sake of Allah after being victimized with injustice We will grant them good in this life and the reward for them in the Hereafter will be greater if they only but knew.”*³²⁸ The good in this life is that Umar appointed him to be the governor of the wealthiest district in Iraq, the region of Basra and said in his letter to the people Basra: “I am sending Amaar ibn Yaasir to be your *amir*, as well as Abadallah ibn Mas’ud to be your teacher and his *wazir*. Indeed these two are from among the superior men (*nujaba*) of the companions of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace from the people of Badr. So hear, obey and follow them.”

When we examine the above it becomes clear why *Alfa* Umar ibn Sayyid identified so closely with Amaar ibn Yaasir, because like him, he had to endure repression and humiliation and as the evidence reveals he too was forced to openly renounce his Islam. But, that still does not answer the question as to why *Alfa* Umar evoked his name on the final transcription? Why did he write: *Yaa Amaar*? What was he signifying to Muslims and others that would read this expression? There has been an ongoing heated debate regarding the permissibility and validity of taking created beings as a means to Allah (*tawassul*) in Islam. Some of the more strident among the sect of the *Wahabiyun* and their followers declare the person who makes *tawassul* as being a disbeliever. They take as their evidence the apparent meanings of the verses of the *Quran* which denounce calling on any besides Allah ta’ala for assistance and help in the fulfillment of needs. However, there are a large number of *Sunni* scholars from the four schools who openly support the permissibility of making *tawassul* by means of the *Quran*, the Angels, the Prophets, and the righteous. They bring as their evidence many prophetic traditions showing that the Prophet taught others to do so, as well as it was a common practice of the Companions. This study is not designed to resolve that argument or to take sides with either group. But what is clear is that *Alfa* Umar ibn Sayyid believed that making *tawassul* with Amaar ibn Yaasir was permissible as is clearly apparent in his

³²⁷ *Quran* - 16:106

³²⁸ *Quran* - 16: 41.

final and last manuscript. The reason for his acceptance of this is that Amaar ibn Yaasir was the first of seven people to accept Islam at the hands of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He was counted by the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace among the 14 rightly guided advisors to the Prophet, upon him be peace. Finally, because Amaar endured severe torture similar to what *Alfa* Umar ibn Sayyid had to endure at the hands of the Anglo-Americans.

The fact that chapter *an-Nasr* (the Help) was the last of the *Qur'anic* chapters revealed to Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace; perhaps this fact alone is what prompted *Alfa* Umar, to disobey General Owens request for the Lord's Prayer in Arabic. The revered *Turudbe'* in his later years produced this explosive *Qur'anic* chapter, not only as an act of defiance, but also as a supplication for his descendents and all the oppressed peoples in America. In Umar, the prophecies regarding the seed of Abraham was being fulfilled, and like a true patriarch of his people, he foretold the coming of Divine help and victory from Allah ta'ala. For today, his descendents in America, and all the oppressed in this country of the Romans, are the fastest growing Muslim population in the entire world, and this is in spite of the increased systemic repression of the Muslim national minorities in their midst. In 1864 *Alfa* Umar ibn Sayyid returned to Allah ta'ala at the venerable age of 94, the same year as the Emancipation Proclamation. That same year, on the other side of the Atlantic, two other *Turudbe'* Fulbe 'friends of Allah', passed on to their Lord, and was able to welcome *Alfa* Umar back into the fold of those martyrs and saints of this 'sacred people' – they were *Nana Asma'u bint Shehu Uthman Dan Fuduye'*, and her nephew, the mystic *Shaykh Abd'l-Qaadir Dan Tafa*, may Allah be merciful to all of them.



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Conclusion

There are many more examples of *Turudbe*’ Fulbe’ Muslims who lived and died in America under the oppressive hand of Anglo-American slavery. These children of Abraham practiced their religion thoroughly and strictly, in spite of the nature of their repression. The *Turudbe*’ held to their way of life in spite of the disruptive and disintegrating factor of slavery. Their traditions persisted through the ordeal of slavery because they were engrained in the collective psychic of the Fulbe’ since the time of their patriarch, the Friend of Allah, Abraham. The learning traditions shaped by the *Turudbe*’ in the *Bilad’s-Sudan* gave them the historical consciousness necessary to inoculate themselves against tyrannical African societies as well as the oppressive slavery of the American Diaspora. The *asabiya* (group solidarity) that united the *Turudbe*’ revolved around their unique identity construct connecting them with the two ancient sacred communities: the Hebrews and the first Christians. They built their collective identity around the personage of Abraham, and the mission of inviting the world to Allah ta’ala. The concepts of ‘rejection’ as exemplified in the two ancestors of the *Turudbe*’, ‘Esau ibn Is’haq ibn Ibrahim and Ishmael ibn Ibrahim, who were abandoned and later redeemed, became a motive factor in helping the *Turudbe*’ endure second class status among the Takruur, Malian, Songhay, Bambara and later Hausa Habe’ kingdoms. The idea of redemption through sacrifice, as embodied in the personage of Abraham, the common ancestor of the *Turudbe*’, became the guiding principle for the social reform and nation building they accomplished throughout the *Bilad’s-Sudan*.

These ideas were transmitted across the middle passage and helped in the struggle for freedom and liberty for enslaved *Turudbe*’ and other Africans. It is significant that the symbolism of the ‘children of Israil’ and their redemption from ‘Egypt’ became a key signification and referent in every period and sphere of the African American struggle for freedom. The concept of redemption through suffering is not new. It underpins the essence of Christian theology, Jewish historiography and indeed clarifies the very mission of the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. “Those who suffer the greatest afflictions gain the greatest rewards.” This ability to adhere to the Abrahamic covenant under suffering, affliction and oppression constitutes the means to eventual redemption and salvation.

The affliction of Abraham in the fire opened the gate for the decisive judgment against the tyrannical Nimrod and demonstrated Allah ta’ala’s loving protection of His ‘bosom friend’. Allah ta’ala said: “*O fire! Be cool for Ibrahim.*” The ordeal of the African woman Hajar and her son, Isma’il, through rejection and banishment demonstrated the mechanisms of human envy but also concealed the secret of the emergence of the Seal of all the Prophets and Messengers in the Ancient House at Mecca. “*The stone that the builders rejected became the corner stone of a new world order.*” The gnosis of rejection experienced by Ish’aq through the intrigues against his son Esau and his exclusion led to the emergence of the *Turudbe*’ ethnicity that would be the purveyors of Islam throughout the whole of the *Bilad’s-Sudan*. Jacob, (*Yakub*) would also experience this same redemptive gnosis through the enslavement of his son Joseph, (*Yusef*) and the conspiracy of his envious brothers. The affliction of slavery, imprisonment and eventual liberty of *Yusef* was the means of the redemption of the entire nation of Egypt and the reclamation of the wayward sons of *Yakub*. The sojourn of the Bani Isma’il in Egypt, through slavery, the sacrificing of their sons and the artificial self-sufficiency of their women for 400

years led to the eventual liberation and deliverance of all the oppressed of the Nile and the destruction of the tyranny of Pharaoh. The killing of John the Baptist (*Yahya*), the slaughter of Zakariya, the defamation and slander of the Virgin Mary and the attempted crucifixion of her son, Jesus, (*Isa*) revealed the deep psychosis and curse of a rebellious people against Allah ta'ala, but also held the seed of the redemption and spiritual salvation of those who held to the Abrahamic promise.

Finally, no descendent of Abraham suffered more than our master Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, his family and his Companions. The suffering that he and his community endured at the hands of the disbelievers of Mecca, forever opened the door of gnosis of Allah ta'ala through affliction. It laid the foundation of the redemption of the entire world and unleashed a light that continues to shine upon the oppressed throughout the world. The affliction of our master Muhammad and his eventual victory stand as an eternal signpost for the social transformation and spiritual liberation of the outwardly destitute (*masaakeen*) and inwardly poor (*al-fuqara*) until the End of Time. It is for this reason that he, upon him be blessings and peace said: "O Allah make me live with the destitute. Make me die among the destitute and resurrect me among the party of the destitute." He, upon him be peace also said: "The poor of my *umma* will enter Paradise five hundred years before the wealthy."

It is this gnosis, which emerges from affliction, rejection, suffering and eventual redemption and liberation that reinforced the identity construct of the *Turudbe'* Fulbe' Muslims. It gave them relevance and meaning through 430 years of slavery under the Anglo-Americans. Their personalities were sustained by their adherence to the covenant of Abraham through the religion of Islam and it was maintained through their personal piety, Arabic literacy and linguistic unity. This spiritual legacy stands as a proof against the hypocrisy of Anglo-American claims of liberty and justice and destabilizes the principles that form the basis of their sovereignty.

It is ironic that while this nation continues arrogantly to spread pax-Romania (Pax-Americana) throughout the world through the use of its militarism and economic globalization, Allah ta'ala is raising up the fastest growing Muslim population on its soil among the descendents of the *Turudbe'* Fulbe, African, Latino and other oppressed people. Like the ancient kingdom of Egypt, the very survival of this tyrannical nation hinges on its treatment of these Lost children of Abraham. Perhaps, the Anglo-American society can redeem itself and not follow the way of despotic nations of the past. Perhaps the Anglo-American society will accept the Call of Abraham and declare the Unity of Allah ta'ala and the Messengership of Muhammad, upon him be the best blessings and peace. The rule of Pax-Romania was only given longevity when it adopted the ways of the Children of Abraham that it oppressed. Just as the spread of the message of Moses and Jesus, as distorted and hellenized as it had become, redeemed the Roman Empire, likewise the rule of Pax-Americana will only survive through the adoption of a renewed Islam and the implementation of justice to it's and Abraham's lost but found descendants. "In order to show Pharaoh, Haman and their (collaborators) from among (the oppressed) what they feared most."

As for the descendents of Abraham in American who have endured the slavery and oppression of this nation and continue under domestic colonization, their survival hinges on their ability to have gnosis of their suffering, while adhering to the Rope of Islam. Our ability to comprehend the lessons hidden in our oppression and to avoid the

path of envy and resentment which was followed by those who hijacked our birthright in 1948 is the key to our redemption. Our ability to grasp the edification of patience (as the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said to Amaar: “Be patient”), as well as reliance upon Allah ta’ala and leaving matters over to Him, will give birth to a crystalline gnosis of the proximity of Allah ta’ala that will lead to their spiritual redemption and social liberation. Each little meaningless piece of distress and affliction must be understood and seen in this light. What the 430 years of oppression and degradation had all meant must be recognized and appreciated for what it was from the perspective of Allah ta’ala. In this gnosis is the Divine realization that in our sufferings was a service to Allah ta’ala more distinct and pure than had been given by any people. The Lost children of Abraham, through their capacity for suffering, will then be the means of Allah achieving His plan and revealing His purpose. The Lost and Found children of Abraham cannot succumb to the darkness of their oppression. They cannot yield to the call of resentment, envy and the rage of vengeance. To do so would affirm the Anglo-American’s distorted notions of themselves and their racist views of those they oppressed.

Allah ta’ala has already enacted His vengeance against this nation by making their hands drip with the blood of the righteous all over the Muslim world. “*Vengeance is Mine, sayeth the Lord*”, must be a banner under which the oppressed Muslims in America gather. The phenomenal natural disasters that are increasingly striking America should be proof enough for any person who believes in Allah and the Last Day, that indeed He watches over His People. The decline of the US dollar, the increasing corruption of its political life, and the systematic dismantling of its constitutional foundation is comfort enough to those who have suffered under its yoke. It took 40 years after the supplication of Musa, upon him be peace for Allah ta’ala to finally overthrow Pharoah and his ‘host’. Today, some forty years after the assassination of al-Hajj Malik El Shabazz, the United States has reverted back to the same domestic and geo-political paradigm that it was caught up in 1964 – the illegal surveillance and repression of its citizens as well as maintaining and ‘losing’ military intervention in a foreign country. There are no coincidences in this universe ruled by Law and Divine Order. History is clearly repeating itself. Because America and its oppressed national minorities failed to learn from the lessons of history, it is doomed to repeat them again.

The African Muslim and other Muslim national minorities in the United States without an internationally recognized SOCIAL CONTRACT, must have absolute belief, confidence and certainty in the Promise of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when he said: “Fear the supplication of the oppressed because between them and Allah, there is no barrier.” Redemption can only be had in Islam. It does not matter if the lost children of Abraham are in the ‘holes’ of the penal system of the Anglo-Americans, caught up in the gang and drug wars ravaging urban America, disconnected from loved ones or mesmerized by the allurements of the consumer slavery of America – Islam offers the only redemption and salvation. The dignity, humility and benevolence of *Alfa* Umar ibn Sayyid under affliction must be cultivated. *Cherno* Ayyub bin Sulayman’s adherence to Islamic erudition and saintliness, in spite of slavery must be followed. The resilience and determination of *Amir* Abd’r-Rahman ibn Ibrahim to call Americans to the Unity of Allah, must be adhered to. The bravery, courage, and loyalty of *Imam* Muhammadu Bilali and Saalih Bilali must be pursued.

The lives of these righteous ancestors stand as fixed stars in the heavens to guide them and give them hope in their struggle for self-determination. Regardless of the extent of their loss, rejection, affliction or alienation, the path of victory and Divine assistance can only come through repentance, glorification, gratitude and surrender to Allah ta'ala. Allah ta'ala says: *“When the help and the victory from Allah comes and you see mankind entering into the religion in mass, then glorify with the praises of your Lord and seek forgiveness of Him. Verily He is Oft Relenting.”*

Shaykh Muhammad Shareef

Wednesday 5th Rabi' Awwal, 1429 (3/12/08)

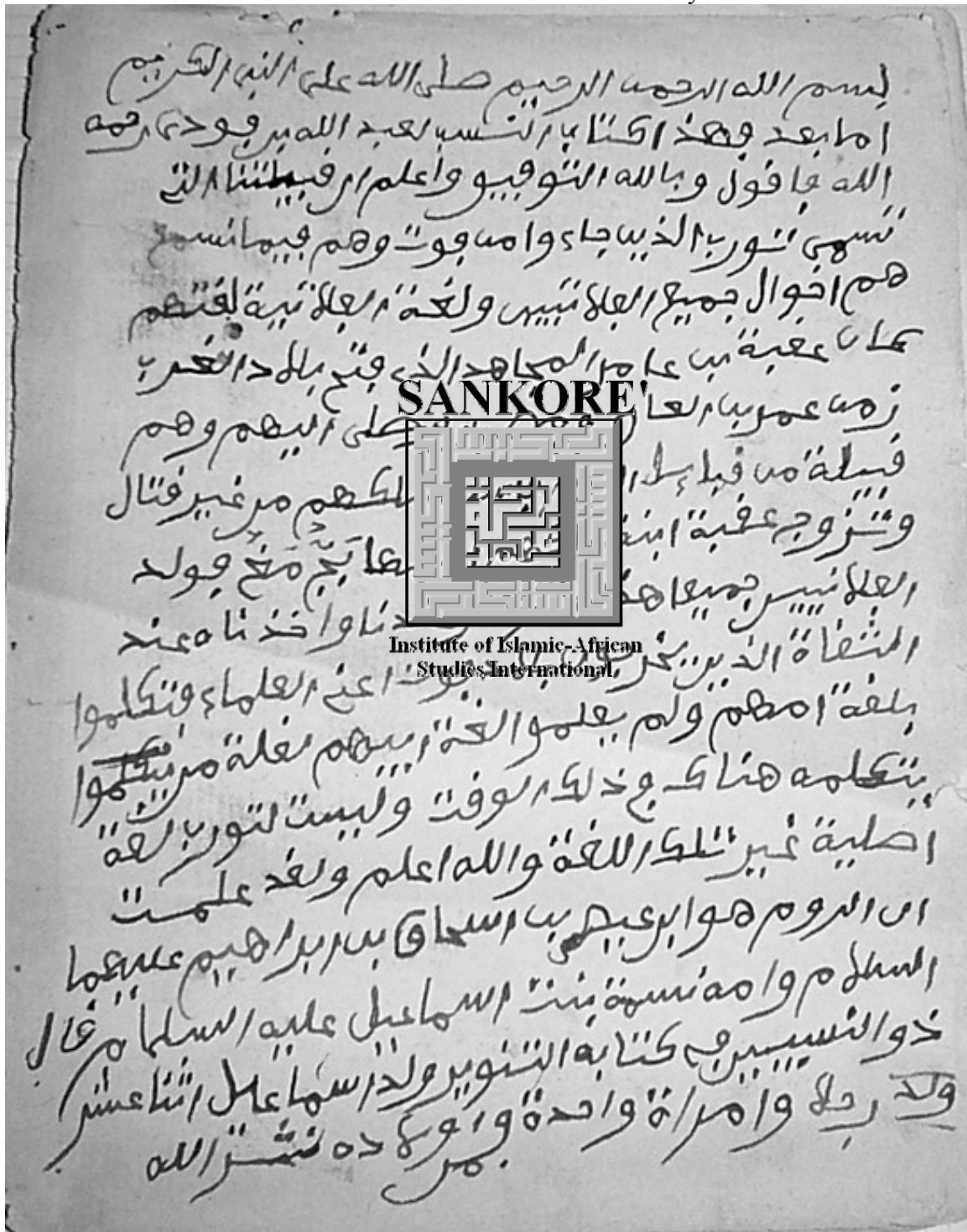
Changsha, Henan, People's Republic of China



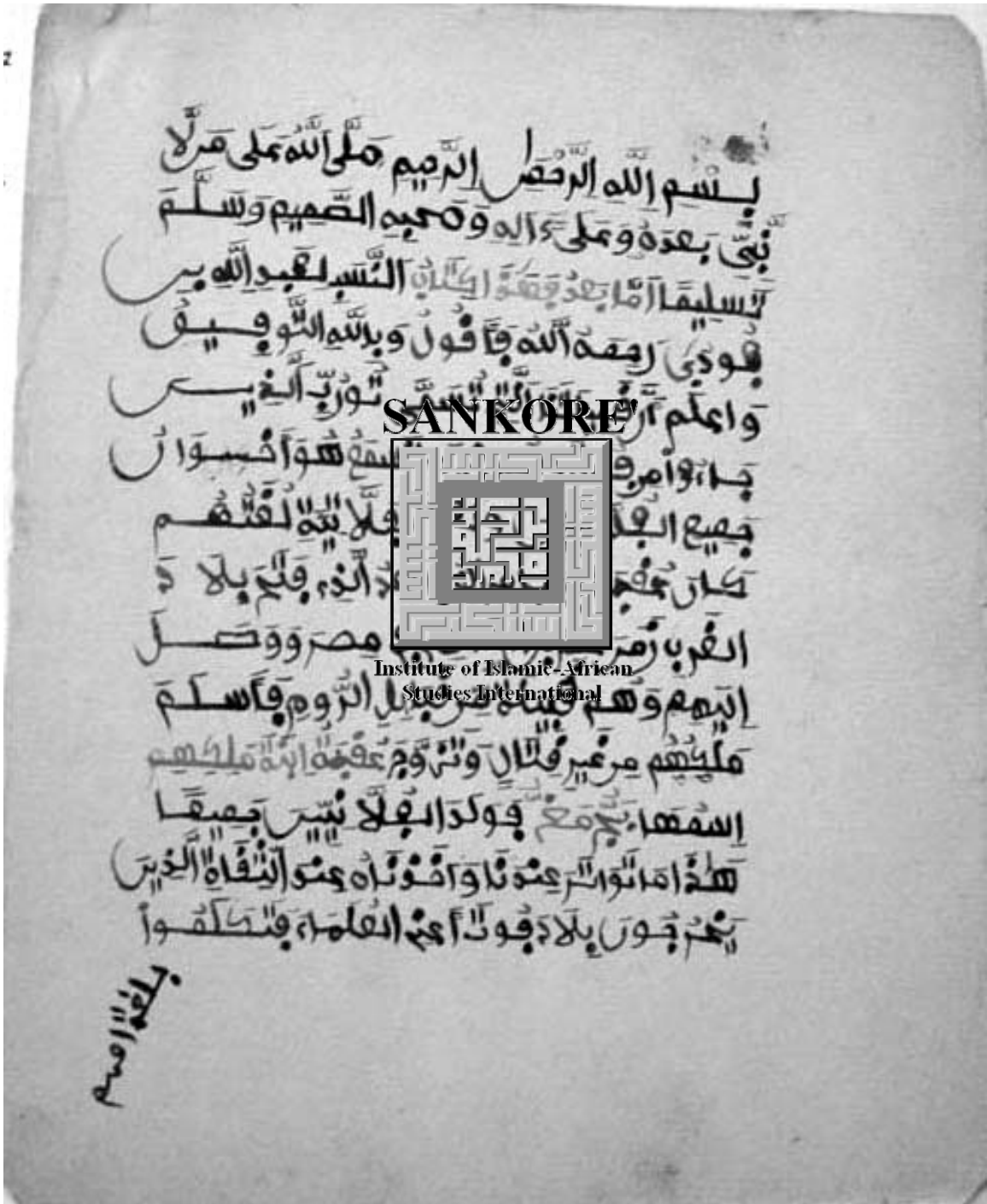
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Appendix 1

Kitaab n'-Nasab of Abdullahi Dan Fuduye'



Kitaab n'-Nasab of Abdullahi Dan Fuduye' photographed from the house of *Sultan al-Hajj* Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad Tahir ibn Muhammad Bello Maiurno ibn Muhammad at-tahiru ibn Ahmad Zaruku ibn Abu Bakr Atiku ibn *Shehu* Uthman ibn Fuduye', in Maiurno, Sennar, Republic of Sudan.



Kitab'n-Nasab of Abdullahi Dan Fuduye' photographed from the Archive Waziri Junayd ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari History Bureau in Sokoto, Sokoto State, Northern Nigeria.

In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful, may Allah bless the one after who there will be no prophet, and upon his family and his genuine Companions and give them peace. To continue this is the book called:

The Book of Lineage

By Abdullahi ibn Fuduye', may Allah be merciful to him

I say and success is with Allah, realize that our ethnic group which are called *Turudbe'*, who came originally from *Futa Toro*. From what we have heard is that they are the cousins of all of the *Fullaatiyeen*. The language of *Fulbe'* is their language. Uqba ibn 'Aamir, the *Mujaahid*, who conquered the lands west in the time that 'Amr ibn al-'Aas ruled Egypt. When he encountered our *Fulani* ancestors they were apart of the nations of *ar-Ruum* in North Africa. Their king accepted Islam without putting up a fight and then married his daughter, whose name was Bajimanga, to Uqba. Thus, all of the *Fulani* were born from this union. This is what was transmitted to us in an unbroken manner, which we received from the reliable scholars who came from the lands of Futa. They have been speaking³²⁹ the language of their mother from that time and did not learn the language of their father. The *Turudbe'* have no other original language other than this. Allah knows best. You also know that this *ar-Ruum* is the son of 'Esau ibn Is'haq ibn Ibrahim, upon them be peace. His mother was Nasmah the daughter of Isma'il ibn Ibrahim, upon him be peace. Dhu'n-Nasibeen said in his *Kitab't-Tanweer*: "Isma'il fathered twelve boys and one girl and it was from his descendents³³⁰ that all the Arabs descended. When he approached death he bequeathed to his brother, Is'haq, that his son, 'Eis should be married to his daughter, and from their marriage *ar-Ruum* was born. *Ar-Ruum* was yellowish in color for which reason his children were called the Banu al-Asfar.

As for our grandfathers, they are the ones who came from the lands of *Futa Toro* from what we have heard and Allah knows best. This is because our father, Muhammad was the son of Uthman ibn Harun ibn Muhammad Ghurtu, (the brother of 'Aal³³¹), from what we have heard. Their father was Muhammad Jubba ibn Sanbu³³² ibn Buba³³³ Baba ibn Maasiran ibn Ayyub ibn Musa. This Musa is the one who came from the lands of *Futa Toro* and from that time, they have continued to migrate to these lands of ours. Our mother's name was Hawwa, the daughter of Muhammad ibn Uthman ibn Hamma ibn 'Aal, from what we have heard and Allah knows best. The mother of our father, she was Maryum the daughter of Jibril ibn Hamma ibn 'Aal. Based upon this I composed a poem regarding that:

I had repented after reaching an advanced age from poetry.

And I attached myself to the *Qur'an* for it is now my stanza

However poetry comes out of me like a cascade every time

The heart overflows and it occasionally emanates from me.

O critic abstain from blaming me for I am eager to

³²⁹ Here ends folio 2 of manuscript B.

³³⁰ Here ends folio 1 of manuscript A.

³³¹ Aal was considered the leader (*amir*) of the *Turudbe'* Fulbe' in Konni. For an understanding of his status among the clan see above footnote 24.

³³² His name was Muhammad Sanbu [see above footnote # 24].

³³³ Here ends folio 3 of manuscript B.

Clarify my lineage and to preserve my honorable rank.³³⁴
 For we have the relationship to `Uqba that connects us to Isma`il
 And we have an ongoing ethnic root that connects us to Isra`il.
 Our paternal uncle is Arab just as our maternal uncle
 Are the children of Isra`il, which is an ongoing root.
 Thus, our root is from Mount Sinai and our *Jihad*
 Goes back to Futa for by us the land was revolutionized
 Then subsequent events brought about our *Jihaad*
 Until it arrived at the lands of Hausa, my place of birth and abode
 And eventually we reverted to the *Jihaad*, our birthright
 Accompanying our *Shaykh*, Uthman, my close blood brother.³³⁵
 For he prepared the way for the upright religion and our
 Legal judgments have progressed and will remain until the Forgiving One.
 For the fire of injustice and oppression diffused and despoiled
 The majority of the villages by means of the government of the disbelievers.
 And he has named us the party of Allah and we have shattered
 All the disbelievers, with the help of those who emigrated and the helpers.
 So do not think that Allah will allow His religion to fail
 Nor will its men be disappointed O party of corrupt rulers.
 May Allah send blessings upon the prophet and his Companions
 And the following generation and the remainder of the righteous.

Mentioning the Brothers and Sisters of the *Shehu*

The first of them was Ali and after him was Uthman may Allah engulf him in His mercy- Amen. Then there was Abu Bakr and Abdullahi, nicknamed Muhammad Abdullahi. There was Waadde' and the professor, Abdullahi, the author. There was Muhammad Aal, Alfa Umar and Muhammad Yero. The sisters were Munim, Yaghugu, Sawda and Findu.

Mentioning the Wives of the *Shehu*

They were Maymuna, Ghabindu, Hawwa, Huje, Hajju, A`isha,³³⁶ Jinne', Jumbajju, Tabaraaye', Hafsa, Asma'u, Furaa, and Marya, the servant girl.

Mentioning His Sons and Daughters

We will detail them house by house. As for the house of Maymuna, the first of them was Ali. Then there were Muhammad as-Sana, Muhamad Haaju, Umar and twins who did not reach the age to be named. Then there was A`isha, Hafsa,³³⁷ Muhammad Haaju, al-Hassan, and Nana Asma'u.

As for the house of Ghabindu the first of them was Muhammad Sa'd, who was the oldest of all the children of the *Shehu*. Then there was Muhammad Sanbu, Khadija, Muhammad al-Bukhari, Muhammad al-Farabri, A`isha, Juwayra, and there were three who did not reach the age to be named.

³³⁴ Here ends folio 2 of manuscript A.

³³⁵ Here ends folio 4 of manuscript B.

³³⁶ Here ends folio 3 of manuscript A.

³³⁷ Here ends folio 5 of manuscript B.

As for the house of Hawwa the first of them was Muhammad Bello. Then there was Abu Bakr, Fatima, Sawda, and Hanna.

As for the house of Huje she had one child A'isha.

As for the house of Hajju they were Abd'l-Qadir and Fatima.

As for the house of Shuturu the first of them was Abu'l-Hassan, Ahmad ar-Rufa'i, and Ahmad al-Badawi.

As for the house of his servant girl, Marya, they were Ibrahim ad-Dassuqi, Amina, Haajiru, Maryum, and another Ibrahim. Then there was Khadija, Isa, who was the last of the children of the *Shehu*, may Allah be merciful to him and include us from his *baraka*.

Mentioning the Servants of the *Shehu*

The first of them was³³⁸ his nephew, Kaawa Mangha. Then there was Sulle', Duudi, Sanbu, Dutte', Ibrahim the flag bearer, and his secretary al-Mustafa.³³⁹

Mentioning the Judges Under the *Shehu*

There were Shu'ayb, Laadan Raame', and Bi 'Aal.

Mentioning the *Imams* of the Mosques

There were Muhammad Sanbu, Muhammad Zanghi, and Abu Bakr nicknamed Malam.

On Mentioning His Spiritual Disciples (*murids*)

They were those whom the *Shehu* instructed in the path of *tasawwuf* and took by their hands to realize their spiritual goals. They thus experienced from his *baraka* that was unlimited. They were: [1] his brother, Abdullahi Dan Fuduye' professor; [2] his son, Muhammad Sa'd; [3] his son, Muhammad Bello; [4] his son, Muhammad Sanbu; [5] his close companion Umar al-Kammi; [6] the *majdhuub* Shaykh Muhammad Kiriangha; [7] the pious and ascetic scholar, Shaykh Muhammad Zanghi; [8] Isma'il; the learned Shaykh Habiballah as-Sudani; [9] the learned scholar the pious ascetic slave, Is'haq ibn Umar; [10] Fudayri; [11] the martyr Shaykh Umar Ghanburi Nakeeju; [12] Muhammadu Yero [13] the erudite scholar Kabeeju; [14] Shaykh an-Nuur; [15] the learned scholar, Abaan; [16] Modibo Suufi; [17] the learned scholar Umar Gorba; [18] Dhinbu Hamal; [19] the martyr Ghaabdu; [20] Malam al-Badawi Wuudi ibn Mahmud; [21] Sa'daan; [22] Nadumaam; [23] Modibo Jelli al-Mukaashif; [24] the ascetic scholar and pious slave, his nephew, the erudite Ibrahim Khalil³⁴⁰ ibn Abdullahi Dan Fuduye'; and [25] Siddiq Ghuneeje. We have concluded this text with mentioning them and with what we have mentioned is sufficient for the one who has insight. May Allah guide us to what is correct. May Allah gather them in *Daar's-Salaam*. All praises are due to Allah the Lord of the worlds. It has been completed with praises of Allah and the best of His help. Peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and grant him peace.³⁴¹

³³⁸ Here ends folio 4 of manuscript A.

³³⁹ Here ends folio 6 of manuscript B.

³⁴⁰ Here ends folio 5 of manuscript A.

³⁴¹ Here ends folio 6 of manuscript A and folio 7 of manuscript B.

Appendix 2

Aslu'l-Falaatiyeen - The Origin of the Fulaani by Abdullahi Dan Fuduye'



Aslu'l-Falaatiyeen Abdullahi Dan Fuduye' photographed from the archives of the Center of Islamic Studies, *Shehu* Uthman Danfodio University, Sokoto, Sokoto State, Northern Nigeria.

**In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, may Allah bless the Unlettered
Generous Prophet. Issue:**

The origin of the entire *Fullaatiyeen* (Fulbe') ethnicity comes from the geographical area of Mount Sinai (*Tuur Sina*). They thereafter persisted in migrating from place to place until they reached the lands of the far west (*aqsa'l-maghrib*) and to the lands that Allah ta'ala had willed for them to reach. There is no ethnic category more numerous than that of the of Fulbe', because they are found in most of the geographical regions of the lands under Islam (*al-ard 'l-islamiyya*). The reason that there are few other ethnicities that have attained their great number is because they are the masters of itinerant migration (*as'hab'l-intiqaal*). Even the etymological root of the *al-Fulaati* derives from the word *falata* [فَلَتَ], which means 'to escape, flee or be released,' that is to be redeemed or saved. Like when you say in Arabic:

فَلَتَ فُلَانٌ

"So and so escaped", when you want to say that someone redeemed or saved himself. This name was applied to this ethnic group customarily because they all redeem themselves (*yanjuuna*) and flea (*yaflituuna*) from the experience of trials and tribulations (*dark'l-fitna*). That is, it is Allah ta'ala who redeems them. By reason of the fact that as soon as they see anything that would cause them grief they migrate from that place immediately. The fact that they are a people who are migrant people is the reason also that they are called *Fullaatiyeen*. You should examine the *Kitab't-Tanweer*. I say: For this reason it is inappropriate for us O party of Fulani to be negligent with the Fulani language and no reasonable Fulani person should show disdain for it.³⁴² This is because this language is their foundation and whoever shows disdain for his language and is predisposed to another until he becomes preoccupied with it is like a person who shows disdain for his true parents and lends to the parents of another. The reason for this is that it is his foundation. This is true of every language except Arabic.

It is said that the best language is Arabic because by it the Generous *Qur'an* was revealed. Then it is the language that accords itself with most other languages. To Allah belong the praise due to the fact that our language, the language of *Fulbe'* has many words which conform to Arabic, like *khabr*, *sawt*, *'aafiy*, *modibo*, *suda*, *fahima*, *diyam*, *daftara*, *dawa'*, *sawm* and the like. If it were not for partiality to abridgement, I would produce the many congruencies between the language of Fulbe and the Arabic language. I could do this without boasting rather I could do it with illumination.

Our specific ethnicity the *Turudbe'* is a clan from the Fulani and there is no difference between them similar to every other group which has many clans. Further there is no disagreement that the forefather of all the Fulani even the *Turudbe'* and the rest of the clans of the Fulani is 'Uqba ibn 'Aamir who is from the descendents of Isma'il ibn Ibrahim al-Khalil upon him be peace. Their mother was³⁴³ Majju Manghu, the daughter of the one of the rulers of ar-Ruum, who descended from the ar-Ruum ibn 'Eis ibn Is'haq ibn Ibrahim al-Khalil upon him be peace.

It is from this kinship that all of the Fulani descend whoever they are and from wherever they are from among the clans of the Fulani. There is no difference between any of these kinships. Examine the voluminous text called *Bayaan as-Shu'uub wa'l-Qabaa'il az-Zamani* from which I chose a few items for my text called *Kitaab an-Nasab*.

³⁴² Here ends folio 2 after 14 lines of colophon.

³⁴³ Here ends folio 3 after sixteen lines of colophon.

Our grandfather Musa Jokolli came from Futa Toro with four hundred persons from the Fulani heading for pilgrimage during the fifth century of *hijra* of our master Muhammad the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Thus every Fulani in these regions meaning by that the regions of Hausa to Adamawa are from the descendents of these communities (*al-jama`at*) except a few. Musa Jokolli was the head of all these communities and he had three children. The oldest of them was Adam, then Jughuu, then and Ayyub.³⁴⁴

When Musa Jokolli and his community reached this region, they established their sojourn there due to the fact that Allah did not permit them to travel on to the pilgrimage. They thus resided in the region for a long time. When they despaired of journeying from the region the three sons of Musa separated and scattered into different regions. They did this following our master Ibrahim al-Khalil upon him be peace when he disembarked in Palestine for a long time since he was there grandfather as we mentioned earlier.

Between Musa Jokolli and `Uqba ibn `Aamir the ancestor of the Fulani there were forty-eight generations and between `Uqba and Ibrahim there were thirty-nine generations. If I did not fear elongation I would mention every man by his name up until our master Ibrahim upon him be peace that Musa Jokolli followed. Because it is necessary for every *amir* that he specifically follow³⁴⁵ in the footsteps of his righteous ancestors like our master Ibrahim upon him be peace about whom Allah ta`ala said: *“There is an excellent example in Ibrahim.”*³⁴⁶

Thus his oldest son Adam was sent a tropical garden full of blessings named Benwa of Binmaa. He then generated descendents who are now called Adamawiyeen deriving from the name of their father Adam. His second son Jughuu settled another tropical garden named Kuluu. From him was engendered descendents now named Jughuudijiyeen named after their father Jughuu. These are our brothers with respect to the above-mentioned Musa Jokolli. I have disregarded mentioning the third son Ayyub. He is the one from whose descendents our father Muhammad Fuduye' descended because he was the son of Uthman ibn Saalih ibn Haruun ibn Ghurtu ibn Jubba³⁴⁷ ibn Sanbu ibn Buba Baba ibn Maasiraan ibn Ayyub the son of the above mentioned Musa Jokolli who is the³⁴⁸ father of Adam Jughuu and Ayyub the righteous servant. These were all blood brothers based upon what has reached us. Their mother was Leeghu the wife of Musa Jokolli the famous *muhajir* and Allah knows best. The names of these grandfathers of ours can be gathered in your saying:

عَصَاهُفُجْ سَبِّ مَام

The ع represents Uthman. The ص represents Saalih. The ه represent Haruun. The غ represent Ghurtu. The ج represent Jubba. The س represent Sanbu. The ب represent Buba Baba. The م represent Maasiraan. The ا represent Ayyub. The final م represent Musa Jokolli.

The calligraphy has ended and blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Amen.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁴ Here ends folio 4 after sixteen lines of colophon.

³⁴⁵ Here ends folio 5 after fifteen lines of colophon.

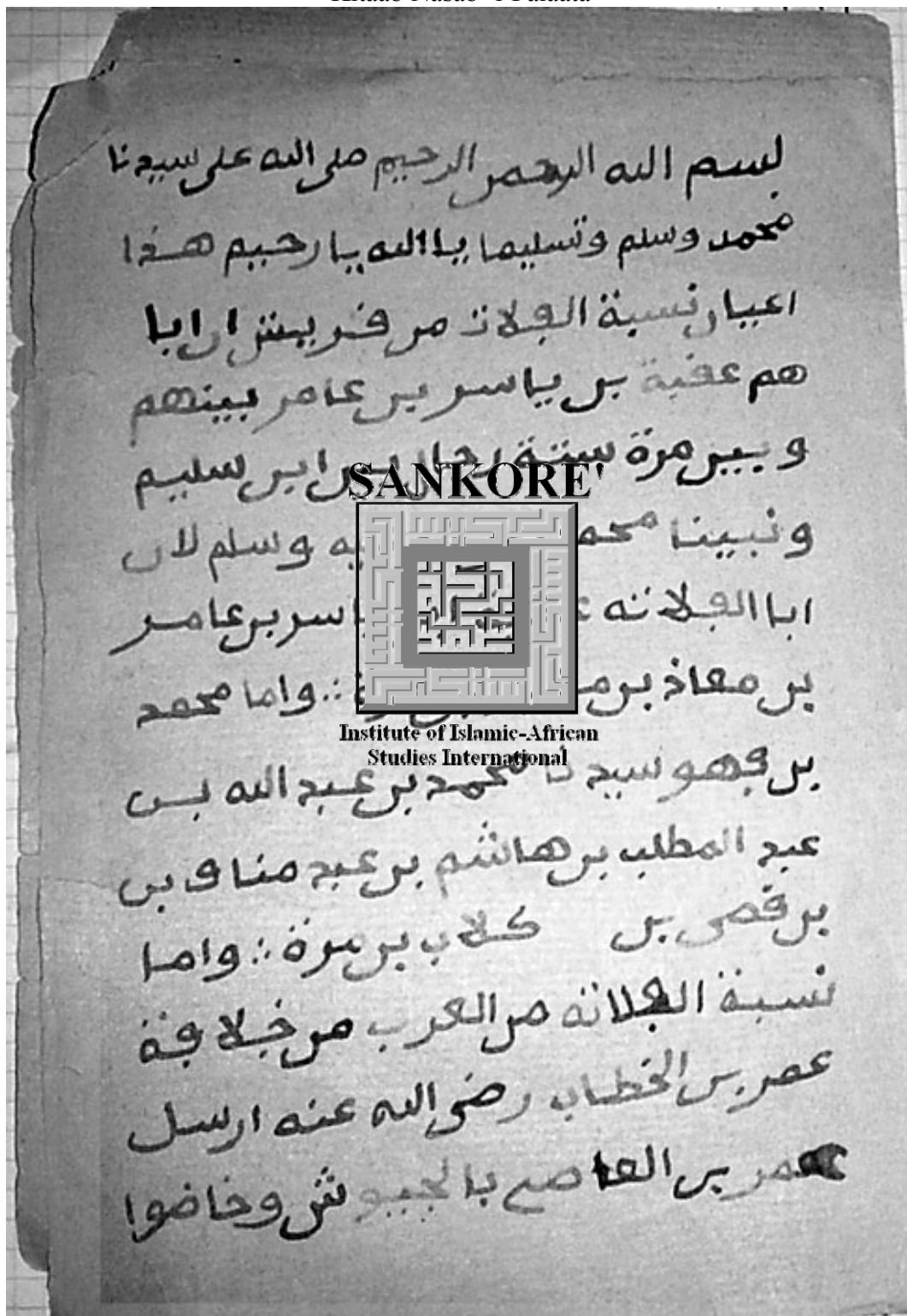
³⁴⁶ *Quran* – 60:4.

³⁴⁷ His sir name was Muhammad as it is mentioned in the *Nasab as-Shaykh Uthman* by Uthman ibn Ahmad ibn 'I-Qadi Bakr Ladan, unpublished manuscript in the hands of author, folio 3.

³⁴⁸ Here ends folio 6 after fifteen lines of colophon.

³⁴⁹ Here ends folio 7 after ten lines of colophon.

Appendix 3
Kitaab Nasab 'l-Falaata



Nasab 'l-Falaata, Author Unknown photographed from the house of *Shaykh Bello* ibn *Abd'r-Raaziq* ibn *Uthman* ibn *Abd'l-Qaadir* ibn *al-Mustafa* in *Maiurno*, *Sennar*, Republic of *Sudan*

In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful may Allah bless our master Muhammad and give him much peace.

O Allah O Individually merciful. This is the lineage of the Fulani from the direction of Quraysh. The grandfather of the Fulani is `Uqba ibn Yaasir ibn `Aamir. Between them and Mura are six men that is between Ibn Salim and our prophet Muhammad may Allah bless him and grant him peace. This is because the ancestor of the Fulani `Uqba was the son of Yaasir ibn `Aamir ibn Mu`adh ibn Mugheer ibn Mura. As for as the prophet Muhammad he was our master Muhammad ibn Abdullahi ibn Abd'l-Mutalib ibn Hashim ibn Abd Manaf ibn Qusay ibn Kilaab ibn Mura.

As for the lineage of the Fulani from the Arabs comes from the time of the *khilaafa* of Umar ibn al-Khataab may Allah be pleased with him who dispatched `Amr ibn al-`Aas with an army that penetrated³⁵⁰ all the way to the Atlantic Ocean in ships. Umar ibn al-Khataab then said: "When you reach the kingdoms of the earth send to them the dispatch from Allah ta'ala' s words: '*O people of the Book come to a word which is common between us and you.*'" When they reached the lands `Uqba ibn Yaasir was dispatched to the regions as Umar ibn al-Khataab may Allah be pleased with him commanded them. Every place he passed he left behind large numbers who are members of the *Umma*. Thus they were able to attain their goals. However when `Amr decided to return to Medina the ruler said: "Do you desire to return while leaving us in the darkness of ignorance?" `Amr responded: "Who would you like?" He said: "We would like `Uqba ibn Yaasir ibn `Aamir." Thus `Amr ibn al-`Aas returned to Medina and found that Umar ibn al-Khataab may Allah be pleased with him had³⁵¹ died. It is said that when he returned he was still alive.

Then after that `Uqba ibn Yaasir ibn `Aamir married the daughter of the ruler and there was born from this union three sons and one daughter. None of them spoke the language of Arabic. Rather they continued to speak *`ajami* which is the language of their mother and to this day have taught it to their children. This language is the language of Fulbe'.

[Lines 9-13 unclear]

The Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and grant him peace once said: "Honor them for they are believers after Allah showed mercy to you on the day of³⁵² Judgment." Umar ibn al-Khataab may Allah be pleased with him said: "Who are they O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "They are the *al-Fulaat* those who will establish the prayer at every time and give the alms in everything." Abu Bakr as-Siddiq may Allah be pleased with him said: "What will be their marks O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "Their mark will be that they wear white turbans. Their language will be similar to the Arabic language. They will call a book *difteer*. They will call the gazelle *lalwah*. They will call a stick *sawru*. They will call water *diyam*. They will call sandals *fadiy*. They will call glorification of Allah *tasbirghul*. They will perform what they are ordered. Most of them will believe in Allah and His messenger. They will not disobey Allah in what they are ordered and will perform exactly what they are ordered. [Final statements of line 14

³⁵⁰ Here ends folio 1 after fourteen lines of colophon.

³⁵¹ Here ends folio 2 after sixteen lines of colophon.

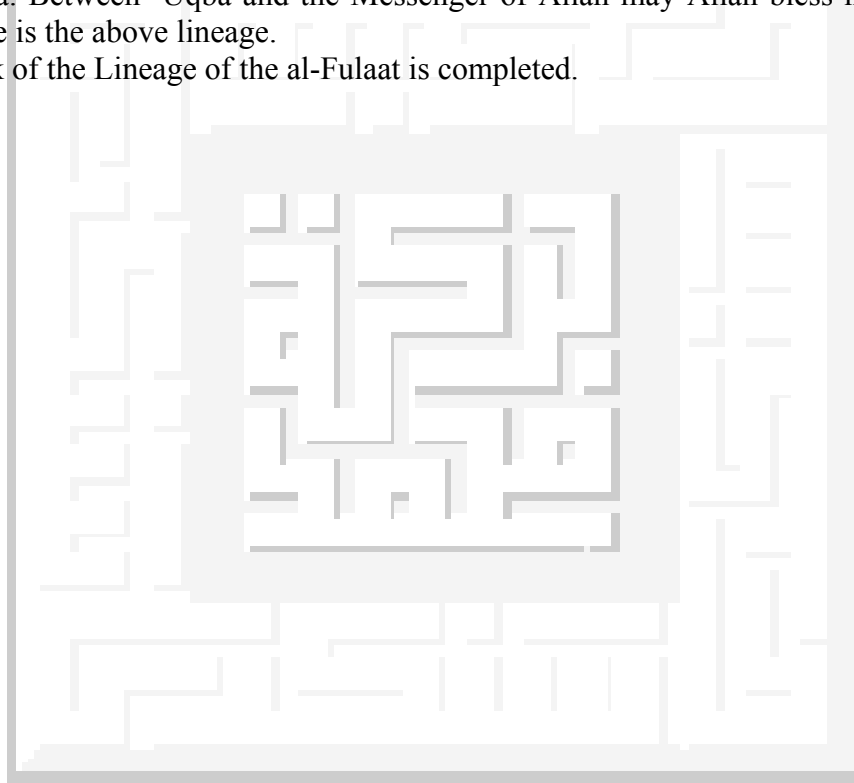
³⁵² Here ends folio 3 after fourteen lines of colophon.

not clear.]³⁵³ They will name the cow *neggi*. They will call [unclear line 1] *subbal*. They will call millet *muhri*. They will call the long shirt *linsiri* they will call the lower wrap *sarla*. Some of them will recite the *Qur'an* while others of them will not. Their original tongue was of *Adnaani* origin. The ignorant ones among them will be just like the scholars among them in worship of Allah. They will worship at all times believe in Allah and His messenger and the Last Day. They will listen carefully to the words of Allah and adhere to His worship.”

Umar may Allah be pleased with him then said: “What is their origin O Messenger of Allah?” He said: “They will be from the descendents of `Uqba ibn Yaasir ibn `Aamir ibn³⁵⁴ Mu`adh ibn Magheesh ibn Salim ibn Sa`eed ibn Mura. [Lines 2 and part of 3 not legible].

Muhammad ibn Abdullahi ibn Manaf ibn Qusay ibn Haashim ibn Zayd ibn Kilaab ibn Murra. Between `Uqba and the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and grant him peace is the above lineage.

The Book of the Lineage of the al-Fulaat is completed.

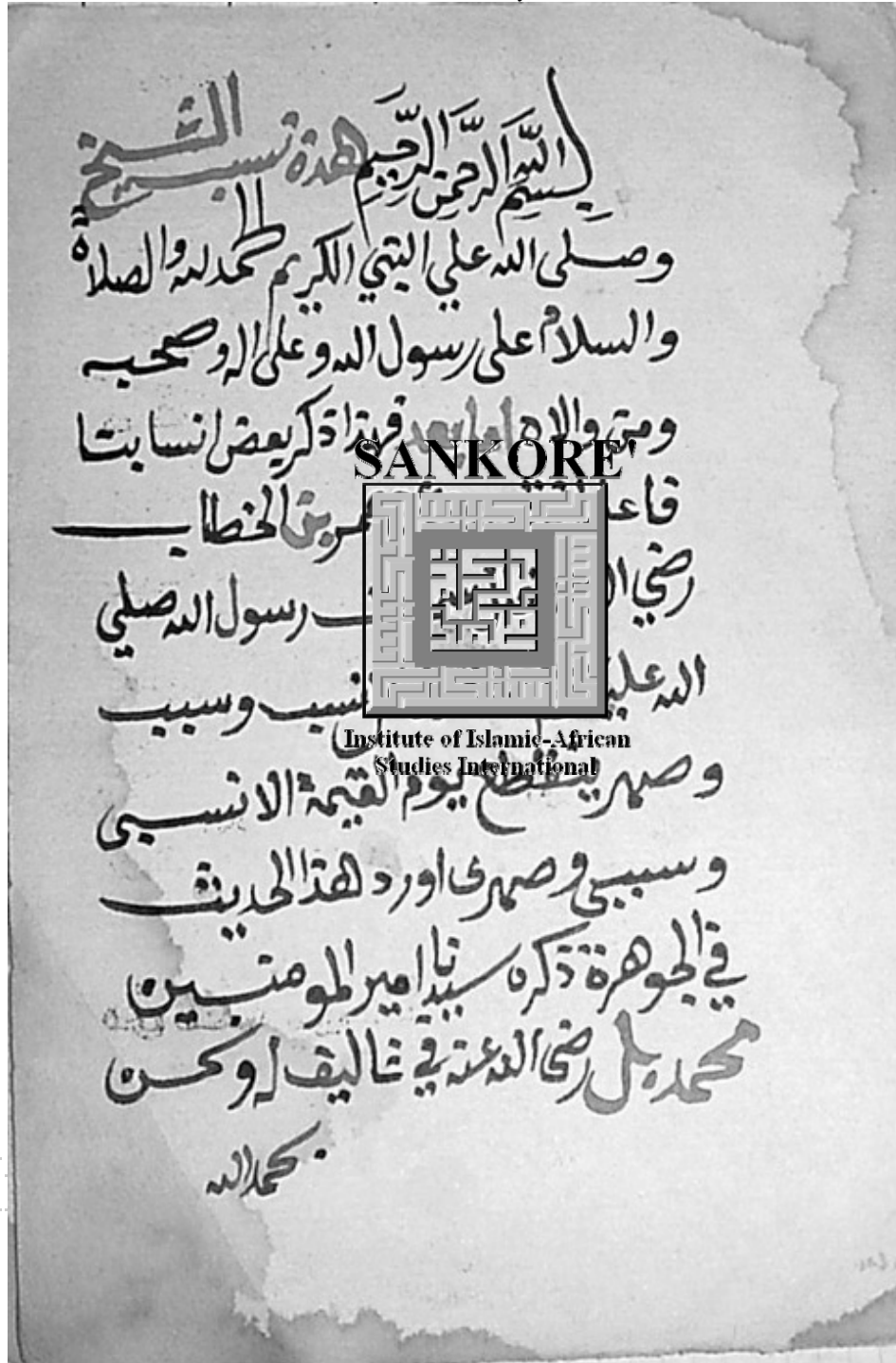


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³⁵³ Here ends folio 4 after fourteen lines of colophon.

³⁵⁴ Here ends folio 5 after thirteen lines of colophon.

Appendix 5
Nasab as-Shaykh



Nasab Shaykh Uthman ibn Fuduye' of Uthman ibn Ahmad photographed from the house of of Sultan al-Hajj Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad Tahir ibn Muhammad Bello Maiurno ibn Muhammad at-tahiru ibn Ahmad Zaruku ibn Abu Bakr Atiku ibn Shehu Uthman ibn Fuduye', in Maiurno, Sennar, Republic of Sudan.

This is the Book of Lineage Of *Shehu* Uthman ibn Fuduye' May Allah benefit us by his *baraka* Amen³⁵⁵

This is the Lineage of the *Shaykh*

In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful may Allah bless the generous Prophet.

All praises are due to Allah and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah his family and Companions and those after them.

To continue: This is mentioning of some of our lineage.

Realize that it has been related by Umar ibn al-Khataab may Allah bless him and grant him peace said: "I heard the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and grant him peace say: 'Every lineage relationships and pedigree will be cut off on the Day of Judgment except my lineage my relationships and my pedigree.'" This prophetic tradition is mentioned in the *al-Jawhara*. It was mentioned by our master *Amir'l-Mu'mineen* Muhammad Bello may Allah be pleased in his work concerning lineage. And we³⁵⁶ all praises are due to Allah have established for us kinship to the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and grant him peace from two direction. The first is from the direction of our grandfather whose lineage ends with the Quraysh. The second is from the direction of our grandfather whose lineage ends with al-Hassan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib. This is based upon what we have narrated from many scholars by means of oral transmission (*bi's-samaa`i*) and written transmission (*bi't-ta'leef*). We will first put forward the lineage of our master and model, the light of the age, the *Amir'l-Mu'mineen* Uthman ibn Fuduye', may Allah be pleased with him and pour out upon his *barakaat* and that of those like him, Amen.

It is not hidden from, Allah willing, from anyone who is a member of this community (*al-jama`at*) and ethnic group (*al-qabeela*)³⁵⁷ that our *Shaykh*, the light of the age, Uthman ibn Fuduye' and his brother, the professor Abdullahi were blood brothers. Their father was Fuduye' and he was Muhammad, the son of Uthman ibn Saalih ibn Haarun ibn Muhammad Ghurtu. This Muhammad Ghurtu was the brother of 'Aal from what we have heard. Their father was Muhammad Jubba the son of Muhammad Sanbu ibn Ayyub ibn Maasiraan ibn Bubba Baaba ibn Musa. This Musa is the one who came from the lands of Futa Toro from what we have heard. And Allah knows best, as our *Shaykh*, the professor Abdullahi mentioned in his *Tazyeen'l-Waraqaat*. Our master, *Shaykh*³⁵⁸ Muhammad Bello said: "Here the lineage that comes between 'Uqba and the above mentioned Musa is cut off. This Musa is the one who came with our ethnic group into the lands of the Sudan³⁵⁹ during the 5th century of *hijra* based upon what they claim. It is said that he was from among the descendents of 'Uqba ibn Naafi' ibn Abd'l-Qays ibn 'Aamir ibn Dhareeb ibn Amina bint al-Haarith ibn Dayth ibn Qahr ibn Malik ibn an-Nadr. This is the consensus of the lineage of the Quraysh as it is well known. It is said that Quraysh was the grandfather of an-Nadr. Then our *Shaykh*, Muhammad Bello said:³⁶⁰ "As for the those from the direction of my paternal grandmother, for I am Muhammad Bello, the son of Uthman, the son of Hawaa, the daughter of Muhammad, the

³⁵⁵ The calligraphy was performed by "the one hopeful of the pardon of his Majestic Lord - Ibrahim Sabeel.

³⁵⁶ Here ends folio 2 after eleven lines of colophon.

³⁵⁷ Here ends folio 3 after twelve lines of colophon.

³⁵⁸ Here ends folio 4 after twelve lines of colophon.

³⁵⁹ Here the author means the central *bilad's-sudan*, which was called Hausaland.

³⁶⁰ Here ends folio 5 after twelve lines of colophon.

son of Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad ibn Abd's-Samad ibn Ahmad as-Shareef ibn 'Ali ibn Abd'r-Razaaq ibn as-Saalih ibn al-Mubaarak ibn Ahmad ibn Abi'l-Hassan as-Shaadhili ibn Abdallah ibn Abd'l-Jabaar ibn Tamim ibn Hurmuz ibn Haatim ibn Qusay ibn Yusef ibn Yushu' ibn Wardi ibn Bataal ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Iesa ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hassan ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib. The mother of Ahmad as-Shareef, she was Tarqath, the daughter of as-Shi'r ibn al-Haaj³⁶¹ ibn Ibrahim ibn Abi Bakr al-Mu'ajir ibn Abdallah ibn Abi'l-Hassan as-Shaadhili and following the aforementioned lineage.³⁶²

And Allah knows best about the soundness of the above. *Shaykh* Muhammad Bello said: "Wherever I mention this above lineage I do so simply mentioning the blessings of Allah and hoping by it to obtain its *baraka* if it happens to be true regarding us on the Day of Judgment. I have not mentioned this in order to boast of my lineage nor in order to be chained by it, for boasting of one's lineage is among the emblems of *jaahiliyya*. A poem:

"We are the sons of Islam and Allah is One

For the foremost of the servants with Allah are those grateful to Him."

The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace said: "Verily Allah has removed from you the brotherhood of *jaahiliya*. You are now the children of Adam and Adam was from dust."³⁶³ Poem:

"Mankind from the perspective of comparison are all equal

Their father is Adam and their mother is Hawaa.

As for as the reliance upon the mere lineage

Without acting accordance with *taqwa*, this is deception."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said: "The one held back by his actions will not be hastened forward because of his lineage."

"O soul, my people why were they created

Were you not created for seriousness, not for play.

Do not consider that you can do acts of corruption

And still rely upon your nearness to the Prophet.

Nearness to the prophets is really understood

By the religion not nearness by lineage.

For if nearness of lineage were beneficial, then we would not

Have heard about the destruction of the hand of Abi Lahab."

Allah ta'ala says: "*Verily mankind will have only³⁶⁴ what he aims for. Every person is responsible for what it earns, so fear a Day when no soul will bear the burden of another.*". We mentioned earlier with the praises to Allah that we have lineage established for us to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace from the direction of our grandfathers whose lineage reaches the Quraysh, and from the direction of the grandmother of our grandmother whose lineage reaches to al-Hassan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib. This is ended and peace. It is complete with the praises to Allah and best of His success.³⁶⁵

³⁶¹ Here ends folio 6 after twelve lines of colophon.

³⁶² This Abi'l-Hassan as-Shaadhili was the son of Abdallah ibn Abd'l-Jabaar ibn Tamim ibn Hurmuz ibn Haatim ibn Qusay ibn Yusef ibn Yushu' ibn Wardi ibn Bataal ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Iesa ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hassan ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib.

³⁶³ Here ends folio 7 after twelve lines of colophon.

³⁶⁴ Here ends folio 8 after thirteen lines of colophon.

³⁶⁵ Here ends folio 9 after nine lines of colophon.

Appendix 5
The Autobiography of Umar ibn Sayyid



Autobiography of Umar ibn Sayyid photographed from original in possession of Yusha Rabah, Chicago, Illinois.

The Autobiography of Umar ibn Sayyid

In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful, may Allah bless our master Muhammad.

Introduction: *Surat'l-Mulk*

Blessed is He in Whose hands is the kingdom, and He has power over all things. Who created death and life is order to try you - which of you is best in deeds. And He is the Mighty the Forgiving. Who created seven heavens one above another. You do not see any inconsistency³⁶⁶ in the creation of the *Rahmaan*. Return the sight, do you see any rupture. Then return the sight again and again, your sight will return back to you afraid³⁶⁷ (rejected) and it is assembled (exhausted). And definitely We have beautified the lower heavens with lamps and made them missiles against the devils. And We have given³⁶⁸ (prepared for) them the punishment of roasting. And for those who disbelieve in their Lord the punishment of Hell and an ill-fated destiny. When they will be folded³⁶⁹ (thrown) therein, they will hear the grumbling of it³⁷⁰ as it boils.³⁷¹ Almost bursting from the fury. Each time a group is thrown therein, its custodian³⁷² says to them, 'Did not a warner come to you?'. They will say: 'Of course! A warner came to us and we rejected him (and)³⁷³ said: 'Allah has not revealed anything. You are merely in enormous error'. They will say: 'If we had only listened or used our reason we would not be among the punishment (companions) of the burning fire.'³⁷⁴ Then they will acknowledge their sins, but remote will be the companions of the burning fire.³⁷⁵ Verily those who fear³⁷⁶ their Lord in the unseen³⁷⁷, for them will be forgiveness and a tremendous rebuke (reward).³⁷⁸ And conceal your words or say them out loud³⁷⁹, truly He knows the contents of the breast. Does He who creates not know?! He is the Subtle³⁸⁰ the Aware. He it is who made (the earth)³⁸¹ smooth for you, so go through³⁸² its spacious sides therein and consume

³⁶⁶ In Umar's manuscript he uses the word تَفَاوُت as in the recitation of *Imam* Warsh as opposed to the recitation of *Imam* Hamza and *Imam* al-Kasa'i who recite it تَفَوُت. The recitation of *Imam* Warsh is the common recitation used throughout the *bilad 's-sudan* from which Umar took knowledge of Qur'an.

³⁶⁷ Umar uses the word خَاشِعًا (afraid) rather than the correct reading خَاسِيًا (rejected).

³⁶⁸ Umar uses the word اعطنا (we have given) rather than the correct reading اَعْتَدْنَا (prepared).

³⁶⁹ Umar uses the word الفوا (folded) rather than the correct reading أَلْفُوا (thrown).

³⁷⁰ It is at this point that folio one ends after twelve lines of graphology..

³⁷¹ Here Umar omits the genitive particle and the object pronoun governed by the particle: لهم and he rendered the correct reading of شَهِيْقًا as صحقا.

³⁷² Umar uses the word خَدَّتْهَا (its confidant) rather than the correct reading حَزَنَتْهَا (its guardian).

³⁷³ Umar omits the conjunctive particle الواو.

³⁷⁴ Umar uses the words عذاب الشعير rather than the correct reading اصْحَاب السَّعِير (the companions of the burning fire).

³⁷⁵ Umar uses the words لاصحاب الشعير rather than the correct reading لاصْحَاب السَّعِير (the companions of the burning fire).

³⁷⁶ Umar uses the words يخشون rather than the correct reading يخشون (who fear).

³⁷⁷ Umar uses the words بالغيب rather than the correct reading بالغَيْب (in the unseen) omitting the definite particle ال.

³⁷⁸ Umar uses the words عز rather than the correct reading أَجْر (reward).

³⁷⁹ Umar omits the genitive particle with its genitive objective pronoun به.

³⁸⁰ Umar uses the words لطيف rather than the correct reading اللطيف (the Subtle) omitting the definite particle ال.

³⁸¹ Umar omits the accusative case noun الأرض.

³⁸² Umar uses the words فامسوا rather than the correct reading فامشوا (so go through).

from His sustenance. To Him is the final return.³⁸³ Are you so safe from He in the heaven that He should not make the earth swallow you up? Suddenly it is³⁸⁴ in confusion. Are you so safe from He in³⁸⁵ the heaven that He should not send down upon you stones. Then you will know how was My warning. Those before them denied, then how was My disapproval. Have they not seen the birds above them expanding and advancing (contracting)³⁸⁶. Nothing upholds them except the *Rahman*. Truly He sees everything. (Who is it that will be supports for you who will assist you except the *Rahman*. Truly the disbelievers are only in deception).³⁸⁷ Who is it that³⁸⁸ will provide for you if He were to withhold your sustenance? Rather! They continue³⁸⁹ in their ridicule and distaste. Is he who goes prone upon his face better guided or he who³⁹⁰ walks upright upon a straight path? Say: He is the One who originated you³⁹¹ and made for you hearing, sight and perception. Little thanks do you give. Say: He it is who scattered you (multiplied you)³⁹² in the earth and to Him you will be gathered. And they say: When will this³⁹³ threat come, if you are truthful? Say: The³⁹⁴ knowledge of this is only with Allah and³⁹⁵ I am only a plain warner. But when they will see it approaching, the faces of those who disbelieve will be in sorrow³⁹⁶. It will be said: This is what you used to call for. (Say: do you see if your water were to dwindle, who is it then that will)³⁹⁷ Say: Have you considered if Allah were to destroy me and those with me, or if He were to show us mercy - yet who will back up (protect)³⁹⁸ the disbelievers from a severe punishment? (Say: He is the *Rahman*. We believe in Him and upon Him do we rely. You will soon know who is truly in clear error.)³⁹⁹ Say: do you see if your water were to dwindle, who are it then that will bring you flowing water?⁴⁰⁰

³⁸³ Umar omits the conjunctive particle الواو and uses the word نَسور rather than the correct reading التَّشْوُر (the gathering).

³⁸⁴ It is at this point that folio two ends after twelve lines of graphology.

³⁸⁵ Umar omits the genitive particle فِي (in).

³⁸⁶ Umar uses the words يَفْلَن rather than the correct reading يَقْبِضَنَّ (contracting).

³⁸⁷ Umar omits the above two verses.

³⁸⁸ Umar omits the relative pronoun الَّذِي.

³⁸⁹ Umar uses the words لَزُوا rather than the correct reading لَجُوا (continue).

³⁹⁰ Umar adds the relative pronoun مَنْ.

³⁹¹ Umar makes a calligraphic error by rendering اَنْشَاَكُمْ as اِنْ شَاَكُمْ.

³⁹² Umar uses the words زَرَعَكُمْ rather than the correct reading ذَرَأَكُمْ (multiplied you).

³⁹³ It is at this point that folio three ends after twelve lines of graphology.

³⁹⁴ Umar makes a calligraphic error by rendering اِنْ مَّا as اِنْ مَّا.

³⁹⁵ Umar makes the same calligraphic error in the above footnote # 29.

³⁹⁶ Umar adds the definite article ال to the correcting reading سَيَبُتُ rendering it السَيَبُتُ.

³⁹⁷ Umar adds this verse here, although it is the last of the *surat*. He indicates it is a mistake, which he himself recognized because he circled this statement with dots. This is a normative practice in correcting calligraphic errors in hand written manuscripts throughout the *Bilad 's-Sudan*.

³⁹⁸ Umar uses the words يَزِير rather than the correct reading يَجِيرُ (protect).

³⁹⁹ Umar omits these two verses and instead renders: قُلْ اِهْمِ الْعِلْمَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ. Here again Umar indicates that he realizes that he has not rendered the correct reading because he circles this statement with lines in order to separate it from the remainder of the text.

⁴⁰⁰ With the ending of this *surat* is also the ending of the forth folio after nine lines of graphology .

The Text of the Autobiography

O *shaykh* Hunter, I am unable to write (about) my life. I have forgotten most of my language as well as the language of Arabic. O my brothers, do not blame me.⁴⁰¹ All praises are due to Allah with much praises. He provides from blessings to those who increase in good.⁴⁰²

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful. All praises are due to Allah the Possessor of good, generosity, bounty, adoration and munificence from before endless time. All praises are due to Allah who created creation for His worship, even the provision of their actions and words.

It is from Umar to *shaykh* Hunter. You asked me to write down my life. Truly I am unable to write (about) my life. For I have forgotten much of my language as well as the language of Arabic. I have studied only a little grammar as well as a little linguistics. Therefore O brothers, I ask you by Allah, do not blame me. My eyes are weak as well as my body.

My name is Umar ibn Said.⁴⁰³ The place of my birth was Futa Toro⁴⁰⁴ (which lay between the two rivers⁴⁰⁵). I sought knowledge in Bundu⁴⁰⁶ and Futa⁴⁰⁷ with my *shaykh*, whose name was Muhammad Said, my brother, *shaykh* Sulayman Kabah⁴⁰⁸, and *shaykh* Jibril Abdaal. I was entrenched in seeking knowledge for twenty-five years.⁴⁰⁹ I came back to my region and after six years a large army came to our land.⁴¹⁰ They killed many people and seized me bringing me to the great ocean.⁴¹¹ There they sold me and I was sold into the hands of the Christians. They brought me in the enormous ship on the great ocean.⁴¹² We sailed on the great ocean for a month and a half. We came to a place named

⁴⁰¹ Here there every reason to believe that Umar is addressing his fellow Muslims who one day may come across this letter and find in it many grammatical and linguistic errors. It also indicates for whom was he writing this autobiography.

⁴⁰² It is here that the fifth folio ends after eight lines of graphology. On the left edge of the folio is a slight English type written in cursive: "For translation only."

⁴⁰³ In other manuscripts Umar mentioned that the name of his mother was Umm Hani Yarmake'.

⁴⁰⁴ *Futa Toro* is the traditional homeland of the Fulfulbe speaking ethnic groups known as *Tukulur* or *Turudbe*'.

⁴⁰⁵ The two rivers here either refers to the region between the Senegalese River and the Gambian River; or the region between the Senegalese River and the

⁴⁰⁶ The region of *Bundu* is the southern most tip of *Futa Toro* which lies on the west bank of the Faleme' River.

⁴⁰⁷ Here I believe Umar is referring to *Futa Jallon* because the level of Islamic learning in the region during the period in question superceded that of the *Futa Toro*.

⁴⁰⁸ This, no doubt refers to *Chirnu* Sulayman Bal, who initiated Islamic reform and education in the regions of *Futa Toro* and *Futa Jallon*. The surname *Kambah*, I believe, is a derivative of the name Kabba meaning that *Shaykh* Sulayman was a member of the *Turudbe*' clerical communities.

⁴⁰⁹ It was 1776 when Umar began his education at the age of six. This was the traditional age in which the Muslim child began his *Qur'anic* studies with a teacher throughout the *bilad's-sudan*. This period was the same time in which *Shaykh* Sulayman Bal and *Almamy* Abd'I-Qadir initiated their reform movements in the regions of *Futa Toro* and *Futa Jallon*.

⁴¹⁰ It was in 1801 when Umar returned to his region after twenty-five years of study. He was thirty-one years old.

⁴¹¹ The forts of Umar's possible sale could have been the English fortress called Fort James at the mouth of the Gambian River or one of the Portuguese forts called Goree Island and Cape Verde.

⁴¹² The Atlantic Ocean. Here ends the sixth folio after fourteen lines of graphology. This folio is numbered fourteen. This makes me wonder if there were not some folios between this one and the previous folio five.

Charleston in the language of the Christians.⁴¹³ There I was sold and bought by a diminutive, weak and wicked man, named Johnson, a serious disbeliever who had no fear of Allah.

I am a small man and unable to do strenuous work, so I fled from the hands of Johnson. Until (when) the month (arrived) I came to a place called Fayadil.⁴¹⁴ There I saw houses.⁴¹⁵ During the month I entered into one of the houses in order to make the *salaat*. A young boy riding a horse saw me and he went to his father's place and informed him, saying: 'I saw a Black man in the house'. A man by the name of Hunda⁴¹⁶ and another man riding a horse came with many hounds. They seized me and brought me with them for twelve miles to a place called Fayadil. They placed me in a large building which they called *jail*, in the language of the Christians. They kept me there for sixteen days and nights.⁴¹⁷ On Friday they opened the cells of the huge building and brought me to a place where I saw many men, all whom were Christians. Some of them called out to me, 'What is your name? Is it Umar or Sayyid?' I did not understand their Christian language. I saw a man called Bob Mumford who spoke to me and led me out of the jail.⁴¹⁸ I was extremely pleased to go with them to their place. I was situated in the place of Mumford for four nights and days. And then a man named Jim Owen, son-n-law of Mumford, having married his daughter Bansah (Betsey?) Mumford.⁴¹⁹ He asked me if I was willing to go to a place called Balden. I said, "Yes." I was pleased to go with them. I have been situated in the place of Jim Owen until now.

Before I came into the hand of General Owen a man by the name of Mitchell came to buy me. He asked me if I were willing to go to the place of Charleston. I said, 'No, no, no, no, no, no, I am not going to the place of Charleston. I will stay in the hand of Jim Owen.'⁴²⁰

O people of North Carolina, O people of South Carolina, O people of America all of you: have you among you two good men named Jim Owen with John Owen?⁴²¹ These two men are good men. What food they ate, I ate. In what they clothe themselves, they clothe me.⁴²² Jim along with (my brothers?)⁴²³ recite to me the *Injeel* of Allah, our

⁴¹³ Charleston, South Carolina, which was the chief port of disembarkment of African slaves..

⁴¹⁴ Fayetteville, North Carolina.

⁴¹⁵ It is not certain what type of houses Umar is referring to here. However, according to the translation of Rev. Isaac Bird, Umar was referring to churches. There is no indication in the Arabic text that these 'houses' were indeed churches.

⁴¹⁶ The translation of Rev. Isaac Bird renders this name as Hunter, however it is written different from the spelling in the beginning of the autobiography.

⁴¹⁷ It is at this point that folio seven ends after fourteen lines of graphology. Again this folio is numbered fifteen.

⁴¹⁸ According to Allan Austin Bob Mumford was the sheriff of Fayetteville's Cumberland County.

⁴¹⁹ In Rev. Isaac Bird translation he rendered the name of the women as Betsy.

⁴²⁰ It is at this point that folio eight ends after fifteen lines of graphology. This folio is numbered sixteen.

⁴²¹ Allan Austin identifies John Owen as the once governor of North Carolina from 1828-1830. Although Umar paints a glowing picture of Owen, however he was responsible for passing legislature in North Carolina which 'seriously limited the rights of Africans in the state' in the same year in which Umar composed his autobiography..

⁴²² This is a very significant judgment by Umar ibn Sa'id because it reflects the words of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace concerning the relationship between the master and his captive. '*Fear Allah in the matter of your slaves. Feed them with what you eat and clothe them with what you wear and do not give them work beyond their capacity. Those whom you like, retain, and those whom you dislike, sell.*

Lord, Creator, King; who regulates all our circumstances, our health and wealth, and who bestows His bounties willingly, without constraint according to His power. Open my heart to the way of guidance, to the way of Yusu`a, the Messiah, to the tremendous light.

Before I came to the lands of the Christians, my religion was the religion of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and grant him peace. I used to walk to the mosque before the appearance of dawn. I used to wash my face, (wipe) my head and (wash) my hands and feet. I prayed at the time of *dhuhr*. I prayed the time of *asr*. I prayed the time of *maghrib*. I prayed the time of *`isha*.⁴²⁴ I gave the *zakat* every year: gold; silver; seeds; cattle; sheep; goats; rice; wheat and barley. I gave the *zakat* on all that. I went to the *jihad* every year against the disbelievers. I went to Mecca and Medina, as all did who were able. My father had six sons and five daughters. Three of these sons and one of the daughters were from my mother. When I left my country I was thirty-seven years old. I have stayed in the country of the Christians for twenty-four years⁴²⁵.

In the year 1831 of Yusu`a the Messiah.⁴²⁶

O people of North Carolina, O people of South Carolina, O all you people of America. The first son of Jim Owen is called Thomas, and his sister is called Masa Jayne (Martha Jane?).⁴²⁷ These are people are very good people. Tom Owen and Neil Owen have two sons and one daughter. The name of the first son is Jim and the second is John. The daughters' name is Mulcy (Mercy?).⁴²⁸ Mister Jim Owen (and his wife)⁴²⁹ had two sons and five daughters. The first was Tom, then John, Maasa (Martha?),⁴³⁰ Miriam, Sophia, Maakit (Margaret)⁴³¹ and Eliza. These people are very good people.

The wife of John Owen is called Lucy. She is an upright wife. She had three and two children. Three of them died and two are still living.

O you Americans, you people of North Carolina - Are there among you!? Are there among you!? Are there among you!? Are there among you!? - good people who fear Allah much?!⁴³²

Verily I, Umar, love to recite the book of the Mighty *Qur'an*.

Do not cause pain to Allah's creation. He caused you to own them and had he so wished he would have caused them to own you." This tradition is related by Imam al-Ghazali in his *Ihya' 'l-'Uluum 'd-Deen*.

⁴²³ I believe Umar intends to say, 'his brother'.

⁴²⁴ It is at this point that folio nine ends after thirteen lines of graphology. This folio is numbered seventeen.

⁴²⁵ This means that Umar was first captured in 1807, the same year in which *Shaykh* Abd'l-Qadir was captured and killed. This resulted in increased instability for the Muslim Fulbe in the *Futa Jallon* and *Futa Toro* regions.

⁴²⁶ This means when Umar recorder his autobiography he was sixty-one years old.

⁴²⁷ It is at this point that folio ten ends after fourteen lines of graphology. This folio is numbered eighteen.

⁴²⁸ Allan Austin renders the correct spelling as Mercy.

⁴²⁹ This phrase is written on the borders of the folio near 'Mr. Jim's' name. I took the liberty to insert at this point because it seems the only logical place for it.

⁴³⁰ This is the name rendered by Allan Austin.

⁴³¹ Again Allan Austin is credited with this spelling.

⁴³² It is at this point that folio eleven ends after twelve lines of graphology. This folio is numbered nineteen.

General Jim Owen and his wife used to read the *Injeel*. They read it to me very much. Allah, our Lord, Creator, King; who regulates all our circumstances, our health and wealth, and who bestows His bounties willingly, without constraint according to His power. Open my heart to the way of guidance. All praises are due to Allah the Lord of the worlds, with abundant praises. He is plenteous in blessings and abundant in goodness.⁴³³

For reason that the law by Musa one must act. Further, the blessing and the truth were by *Yusu`a* the Messiah. The foremost is Muhammad: that he prayed saying “*All praises are due to Allah the Lord of the worlds. The Beneficent the Merciful, King of the Day of Judgment. It is You that we worship and You alone that we seek for assistance. Guide us to the straight path. The path of those upon whom You have blessed. Not among those who have earned anger nor who have gone astray. Amen.*”

And now the words of our lord *Yusu`a* the Messiah⁴³⁴: “Our father who are in heaven Holy be Your name. Your kingdom come. You will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us our daily bread. Forgive us as we have forgiven those who have done us harm. Do not enter us into temptations. But redeem us from evils. To You belong the Kingdom and the power, the majesty forever. Amen.”

Truly my residing in my country was by reason of great detriment.⁴³⁵ The disbelievers seized me unjustly and sold me to the Christians, who purchased me. We sailed a month and a half on the great ocean to the place called Charleston in the language of the Christians. I fell into the hands of a small, weak and wicked man, who did not fear Allah at all. He could neither read nor did he pray. I was afraid to remain with a sinful man who had so many sins. Thus, I fled for a month, when Allah, our Lord, lead me into the hands of a good man, who feared Allah and who loved to do good. His name was General Jim Owen along with his brother whose name was Colonel John Owen. These were two good men. I am presently residing in Bladen County.⁴³⁶

I am established in the hands of Jim Owen. He does not beat nor scold. I neither go hungry nor naked, and I have no hard work to do. I am not able to do hard work for I am a small man and feeble. During the last twenty years I have not seen any harm at the hands of Jim Owen.⁴³⁷

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⁴³³ It is at this point that folio twelve ends after nine lines of graphology. This folio is numbered twenty.

⁴³⁴ Just above these words is written the word *يُصَلِّي* (he prays) as though he wanted to add this to the sentence.

⁴³⁵ It is not clear what Umar meant here by these words. Perhaps he was speaking of the many wars that were taking place during the period he was seized. During that time the pagan Africans were successful at raiding many centers of the Fulbe Muslims. It was the same year in which he was captured that the pagans sacked the central religious town of *Almamy* Abd'l-Qadir and had him murdered. The period was a period of insecurity and internecine warfare.

⁴³⁶ It is at this point that folio fourteen ends after thirteen lines of graphology. This folio is numbered twenty-two.

⁴³⁷ This no doubt was from the *baraka* of *al-Mulk*. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said, “*Whoever recites it once every night will never be harmed by tribulation.*”

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Al-Falati, Sulayman ibn Abi Muhammad

Minhallu Maa' iadhin

Bello, Muhammadu

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Majm'u 'n-Nasab

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Asl 'l-Falaatiyeen

'Id an-Nusuukh

Kitab'n-Nasab

Tazyeen al-Waraqaat

Dan Fuduye, Uthman

Haqiqat 'l-Imaan wa'l-Islam

Kifaayat 'l-Muhtadeen

Mirat 't-Tulaab

Muudihuna Bi 'Awn Allah

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