

## 17. THE SECOND STRUGGLE AGAINST THE BROTHERS

The second conflict of 'Umar's sons is a topic of continuing debate among Umarians.<sup>1</sup> The version we translate here comes from an Arabic account of Aḥmad al-Kabir's reign, which itself is a section of a longer chronicle of local history. The chronicle appears in two French translations, edited by the colonial officials M.G. Adam and Maurice Delafosse.<sup>2</sup> They obtained their copies from Muḥammad 'Āisha Kaba Jakhite, the grandson of the Soninke leader al-Ḥājj 'Umar Kaba Jakhite.<sup>3</sup> Delafosse attributes authorship of the Kaba Jakhite chronicle to Muḥammad,<sup>4</sup> but it is likely that Fode Buyagi, Muḥammad's father, wrote some of the sections.<sup>5</sup> Muḥammad undoubtedly composed the concluding part, including the narrative of the brothers' conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> Published sources based on oral testimony heard shortly after the conflict include Colonel Henri Frey, *Campagne dans le Haut-Sénégal et dans le Haut-Niger (1885-86)* (Paris, 1888), pp. 98-106; Blanc, "Contribution à l'étude," pp. 301-4; and 'Āqib's testimony in de Loppinot, "Souvenirs," pp. 42-6. Researchers working in the last twenty years have recorded several other accounts of the drama: Oudiary Makan Dantioko, Abdoul Aziz Diallo, John Hanson and David Robinson. Dantioko offers a full translation of the testimony he recorded in "La Genèse d'El Hadj Oumar Tall; texte narré par Djammé Tounkara et Sadio Sakhoné" (Bamako, mimeo., 1980), pp. 51-60.

<sup>2</sup> Adam, *Légendes historiques*; Delafosse, "Traditions historiques."

<sup>3</sup> For the Kaba Jakhite family, see the sources cited in Document 4, note 1.

<sup>4</sup> Delafosse, "Traditions historiques," p. 293.

<sup>5</sup> Fode Buyagi resided in Segu during the 1870s and probably composed the section concerning 'Umar's *jihād* (which is strikingly similar to the narrative in Document 1). He undoubtedly wrote the passages detailing Aḥmad's Segu campaigns -- episodes which a Nioro-based author might not have known or reported. For Fode Buyagi's career, see Marty, *Soudan*, vol. 4, pp. 212-4.

The two French translations of the Kaba Jakhite narrative offer slightly different versions of events. The Delafosse translation, arguably the most faithful to the original text,<sup>6</sup> presents Aḥmad in a favorable light as a brother who attempted every means to resolve peacefully his conflict with Muntaqā. While Adam's version shares the same structure, it includes editorial comments and testimony from informants critical of Aḥmad al-Kabir. Adam was interested in publishing the account in France, where additional details about the motives of the protagonists made for a better story.<sup>7</sup> To give but one example of the differences, Delafosse's version does not mention the encounter at Bassaga, while Adam draws on oral testimony to develop the episode, heightening the readers' sense of the conflict between the brothers.<sup>8</sup> Adam provides a synthesis which transforms a core narrative expressing sympathy for Aḥmad's position into a drama accentuating the perspectives of both protagonists.

Unfortunately an Arabic copy of the Kaba Jakhite chronicle was not available to us; neither Adam nor Delafosse provide an Arabic text with their published translations. We have translated from the French of the Adam version and provide annotations which highlight its differences with the Delafosse version and other accounts of the conflict. The selection which follows begins with the passage devoted to Aḥmad's return to Segu from Nioro in 1873 and follows the saga through to its culmination in Nioro.

## TRANSLATION

[112]...Called by events at Segu, Aḥmad left the Sahel,<sup>9</sup> forcefully taking with him twelve slave villages, invaluable contingents for future wars.<sup>10</sup> He

<sup>6</sup> Delafosse states that his version is a faithful translation, whereas Adam's version clearly adds anecdotes from local informants.

<sup>7</sup> Adam's translation appears both as a monograph (*Légendes historiques*) and in a colonial journal *Revue Coloniale*, nos. 3-4 (1903-4). The pages included in the *Reproduction of Documents* at the end of the volume come from the monograph.

<sup>8</sup> The Bassaga episode appears in several accounts: Dantioko, "La Genèse," pp. 56-8; Blanc, "Contribution à l'étude," pp. 302-3; and de Loppinot, "Souvenirs," pp. 43-4.

<sup>9</sup> An early colonial term referring to the regions of Karta and Bakhunu.

brought Muṣṭafā along and replaced him [as governor] at Niuro by one of the leaders of his [elite guard of] slaves known as Almamy.<sup>11</sup> The following rainy season he sent from Segou to the Sahel seven of his brothers, one of whom was Muntaqā, the oldest, and to him he gave the command [113] of Niuro. Sa'īd would govern [sic] Kanyareme; Nūr,<sup>12</sup> Diafunu; Bashir, Konyakary; Dā'ī, Diala.<sup>13</sup>

Numerous conquests defined the rule of Muntaqā.<sup>14</sup> He took possession of Sero, and he killed its king, Moriba, at Tambacara. He conquered Sefe without firing a shot. Comintara [also fell] with slightly greater effort.

On his side, Aḥmad waged numerous battles against the Bamana.<sup>15</sup> Victor at Kantegela<sup>16</sup> and Diogo, he clashed without success at Nonko, and at Dorobugu which he could not take. The following rainy season, he took possession of Baukoli and Baufo,<sup>17</sup> but his lieutenant Cerno al-Ḥasan failed before Kunia and Tugune.<sup>18</sup> Happily he took his revenge in destroying Moribugu and Sanankoro.

After other expeditions, notably that of Kana which he commanded himself,<sup>19</sup> Aḥmad left Segou and travelled up the Niger [River] to Nyamina.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For Almamy's involvement in Kartan affairs, see Blanc, "Contribution à l'étude," p. 301, and de Loppinot, "Souvenirs," p. 39. For Muṣṭafā, see Documents 4 and 8D.

<sup>12</sup> The father of Seydu Nuru Tal. He was very young at the time of this appointment.

<sup>13</sup> Written *diaba*. Delafosse's version also lists these five brothers in "Traditions historiques," p. 365. The two other brothers sent west in 1874 were Dāḥa and Murtaḍa. Umarian sources disagree as to their posting. See the Introduction to Section II.

<sup>14</sup> Delafosse does not include this discussion of Muntaqā's campaigns in his translation. Adam's additions have the effect of underscoring the conflict between Muntaqā and Aḥmad. For Muntaqā's military campaigns, see Solcillet, *Voyage à Ségou*, pp. 387-8; Charles Monteil, *Les Khassonkés* (Paris, 1915), pp. 370-1; Sékéné-Mody Cissoko, *Le Khasso face à l'Empire toucouleur et à la France dans le Haut-Sénégal, 1854-1890* (Paris, 1988), pp. 243-65; Hanson, "Umarian Karta," pp. 209-10.

<sup>15</sup> Adam uses Bambara, a colloquial term for Bamana. After this sentence, Adam's version returns to the core narrative which it shares with Delafosse's version.

<sup>16</sup> Delafosse does not mention this battle.

<sup>17</sup> Delafosse does not mention this battle.

<sup>18</sup> Delafosse only mentions Kunia, and does not identify the leader of the mission as Cerno al-Ḥasan.

<sup>19</sup> In addition to Kana, Delafosse mentions battles at Tudiala, Kaya, and Kolina.

There, surprised by Nto, chief of Beledugu, he suffered a setback which he soon rectified with a victory.<sup>21</sup>

As we said before, he had left in Nioro, to manage the country, one of his brothers named Muntaqā.<sup>22</sup> The news that he [Aḥmad] received of him [Muntaqā] confirmed his suspicions and he formed a plan to return to the Sahel by lesser-known routes, hoping thereby to surprise Muntaqā.<sup>23</sup> He found a guide who led him in secret, in eight days, to Bassaga in Bakhunu. There, he dispatched to Muntaqā, Bashir, Munir [and] Aḥmid<sup>24</sup> [his envoy] 'Alī 'Uthmān<sup>25</sup> to ask them to travel to Bassaga.

As soon as he received the messenger, Muntaqā called to Nioro all the notables of the country (Tokolor,<sup>26</sup> Sarracolet,<sup>27</sup> and Bamana) and announced to them the desires of his brother. "Aḥmad," he said, "wrote me this letter out of distrust. His only motive in coming from Segou is to punish me, and yet, what wrong have I done to him? I know that some have taken complaints against me to him, and, unfortunately, events outside my control have prevented me from exonerating myself in time." "Have no fear," responded his brothers,

<sup>20</sup> Delafosse does not mention Aḥmad's stop at Nyamina, but merely states that he left Segou to go to Nioro. Aḥmad remained at Nyamina for several months during 1884.

<sup>21</sup> Aḥmad was injured during Nto's attack on Nyamina, according to 'Āqib in de Loppinot, "Souvenirs," p. 43. He also may have lost several lieutenants and a considerable number of men. Méniaud, *Pionniers*, vol. 2, p. 357. This may have provided the circumstances for the consultation in Document 16, which mentions encounters with the Bamana. Delafosse does not report this.

<sup>22</sup> This passage introduces the Bassaga encounter, an episode omitted in Delafosse's version.

<sup>23</sup> Aḥmad also was trying to avoid Nto, who, according to 'Āqib, pursued his army as it left Nyamina. De Loppinot, "Souvenirs," p. 43.

<sup>24</sup> Munīr and Aḥmid were two of the younger brothers and did not receive appointments in 1874. They asked the French commandant at Kita for assistance against Aḥmad al-Kabīr during his siege of Nioro in 1885. For a French translation of their Arabic letter to the Commandant at Kita, see ANS 15G 77, *pièce* 104. Also see Blanc, "Contribution à l'étude," p. 304; de Loppinot, "Souvenirs," pp. 45-6; and Frey, *Campagne*, p. 104. Munīr eventually served as leader at Masina in the late nineteenth century. See Documents 1 and 20.

<sup>25</sup> According to Blanc ("Contribution à l'étude," pp. 302-3), the envoy was Alfa 'Umar.

<sup>26</sup> This is the usual term for Futanke in francophone West African usage.

<sup>27</sup> Or Soninke.

"Aḥmad insists that you go and receive him since he is the leader of the country."

The evening brought counsel and dissipated a few of the apprehensions of Muntaqā. The next day he made preparations to depart, and, accompanied by a large escort, he began the journey. When [114] he arrived at Bassaga, he had nothing about which to complain regarding Aḥmad, who received him cordially and gave a grand drum ceremony in his honor.<sup>28</sup> Despite these amicable demonstrations, he held his guard and, when Aḥmad proposed to him to leave the people of Nioro camped on the outskirts of Bassaga and to reside with him in his compound,<sup>29</sup> he declined the invitation, invoking the anxiety that would gain control over his men if he left them. Outside of that, nothing would prevent him from always being at his [Aḥmad's] disposition, day and night, as soon as he [Aḥmad] expressed the desire. "I am happy to leave you with your men," responded Aḥmad, "but I find that they are too numerous. You seem to have come with an army with the intention of treating me as an equal or an enemy."

Muntaqā, his fears dissipating a little, and in order to satisfy Aḥmad, agreed to keep only 300 horsemen, all mounted on white horses. Each morning, at their head, he went and greeted his brother. But this did not satisfy [Aḥmad], and on the fourth day, when Muntaqā presented himself, he [Aḥmad] said to him, "Is it necessary for such a [large] escort to come and greet one's brother? One would truly say that you wish to humiliate me. Remember that I alone command here, and I ask you, beginning tomorrow, to leave your cavalry behind when you bring me your greetings."

For two days, Muntaqā went to Aḥmad's compound with his slave, Fadiala, but the third day, he brought along a *sofa*, to whom entry was denied. Muntaqā did not dare complain and completed his visit as usual, but he did not breathe freely until he was outside, among his men. [He said:] "My friends, every hour I tremble for you and for me, a mere captive of my brother who

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<sup>28</sup> Muntaqā did not dismount when he met Aḥmad, according to 'Āqib in de Loppinot, "Souvenirs," p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> Aḥmad presumably resided at a compound in the center of Bassaga.

dares to impose his will on me. Here we are nothing, at the mercy of whim. They suspect us already, and I tremble for you and for me."

Immediately, a meeting was convoked and they decided that Muntaqā, with one hundred cavalry, would profit from the [cover of] evening to escape to Nioro. This decision taken, Muntaqā, without divulging the plan which he harbored, informed his brothers of his fears regarding Aḥmad; he held them responsible for what might happen, since it was their exhortations which had brought him to Kassaga [sic]. If he was a victim of misfortune, then he would appeal to the superior court of God.

In order to arrange the time necessary to prepare his [115] bags without raising the suspicions of Aḥmad, he [Muntaqā] let him know that he was ill and asked to be excused if he did not bring his greetings until the evening. Then [Muntaqā gave orders] to bar entry [to his compound] to anyone, made his final arrangements and escaped without [any further] obstacles.<sup>30</sup>

But all secrets are difficult to protect, and by the next morning several things had already transpired. Some of Aḥmad's men came and prowled around Muntaqā's camp and asked if he was in his hut. "Yes," they responded, "he is praying." "Are you certain?" the others responded, "for we believe that he no longer is here." Despite the denials which met their inquiries, they went back to Aḥmad to warn him of the flight of Muntaqā.

Immediately Aḥmad 'Umar<sup>31</sup> and some cavalry were sent in his pursuit. They caught up with him [Muntaqā] not far from Turugumbe, but they dared not attack him because of the escort which protected him.<sup>32</sup> He [Muntaqā] received Aḥmad 'Umar calmly and informed him of his firm intention not to return to Bassaga. Aḥmad 'Umar, after a discussion for the sake of form, had no choice but to withdraw, which he did discretely. When he returned to Aḥmad, he did not dare inform him of the results of the discussion, but only reported that he had been unable to overtake the fugitive.

<sup>30</sup> Muntaqā also received assistance from residents of Bassaga, according to the Dantioko account in "La Gènesè," pp. 56-7.

<sup>31</sup> See Blanc, "Contribution à l'étude," p. 303.

<sup>32</sup> The force was one hundred cavalry strong, according to Blanc, "Contribution à l'étude," p. 303. This figure is the same as the figure given for Muntaqā's entourage earlier in Adam's account.

The people whom Muntaqā had left at Bassaga were called by Aḥmad, who obliged them to swear their loyalty to him. They gave their oaths under duress and several days later returned to their master.

The next day Aḥmad left Bassaga and went to Turugumbe. He immediately told Muntaqā to come and meet him at this spot. The response was negative. A second messenger, a venerated *marabout* from Futa, was sent to Niuro with the same mission. He had no more success. For Muntaqā, going to Aḥmad [now] was like exposing himself to prison and perhaps death. He preferred to live freely at Niuro rather than to be confined to chains in the Tokolor camp!

From Turugumbe, Aḥmad advanced as far as Yerere, where he remained three months.<sup>33</sup> Everyday he invited Muntaqā to make his submission. During these negotiations, Muntaqā assembled many soldiers at Niuro, collected a large quantity of millet and excavated wells in the fort. He was preparing to hold out in a siege. When he received [116] an order to evacuate the fortress, he responded, "Al-Ḥājj is my father. I am in his fort. I am staying here."<sup>34</sup>

From Norma,<sup>35</sup> where Aḥmad was camped, he [Muntaqā] received another call to reconciliation and refused to respond to it. Aḥmad was not yet discouraged. He told the father of Kaba Cisse,<sup>36</sup> a friend of Muntaqā, Cerno Samba, and others:<sup>37</sup> "Go [and tell] him to leave the fort, I promise him no ill will befall him."

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<sup>33</sup> With this statement, Adam's version returns to the core story which it shares with the Delafosse translation. Instead of narrating the Bassaga episode, Delafosse's version merely states that Aḥmad left Segou for Niuro, an act which precipitated Muntaqā's announcement of his intention to prevent Aḥmad from entering the town. Delafosse's version continues by stating that when Aḥmad arrived close to Niuro, Muntaqā withdrew into the fort. Delafosse notes that Aḥmad learned of Muntaqā's decision to withdraw into the fort at Niuro during his three month residence at Yerere. Delafosse, "Traditions historiques," p. 365.

<sup>34</sup> The fort at Niuro is known locally as "al-Ḥājj 'Umar's fort" because he resided in it during the 1850s.

<sup>35</sup> Or Nomo, according to Blanc in "Contribution à l'étude," p. 303.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Ḥājj Kaba in Delafosse's translation.

<sup>37</sup> Delafosse notes that the mission included only al-Ḥājj Kaba and a certain Cerno Mūsā.

At Nioro, the *sofas* watched.<sup>38</sup> When they saw from a distance cavalry gallop toward the village, they prepared to fire; but recognizing the father of Kaba, they lowered their guns. The envoys were received by Muntaqā in the name of the long-standing friendship which united them. However, this testimony of sympathy was all that he would grant them. He remained resolute in his intention to resist his brother.

The next day, Aḥmad, drawing nearer, camped near Diamwele, then at Nioro-Tugune.<sup>39</sup> There, new negotiations [occurred] with Muntaqā, who responded: "I will leave the fort tomorrow morning, but not today."<sup>40</sup>

The next day Muntaqā had not budged and he put off till the evening [his intention] to honor his promise. Aḥmad's lieutenants, irritated by the long wait, exclaimed:<sup>41</sup> "There are [in the fort] means to drag out things a long time. Muntaqā will only leave if we enter Nioro." With the authorization of their leader [Aḥmad], a portion of the army advanced up to the walls of the fort, where shots were exchanged. The next day, Aḥmad occupied the town.<sup>42</sup>

The fortress was impenetrable; they had to be content with surrounding it. Now Muntaqā still possessed numerous friends in the Tukulor camp.<sup>43</sup> One of them, Cerno Maḥmūd [ibn] Khayār, was profoundly devoted to him, and kept up secret communications with him. Each moonless night, he approached the walls of the fort and spoke with Muntaqā, who dreamed of searching for

<sup>38</sup> The *sofa's* perspective does not appear in Delafosse's version.

<sup>39</sup> According to Delafosse's version, Aḥmad sent al-Ḥājī Kaba on two additional missions to Nioro while he camped at Diamwele ("Diamoule") and Nioro-Tugune.

<sup>40</sup> Delafosse's version does not mention this concession.

<sup>41</sup> The impatience of Aḥmad's soldiers is reported in the correspondence of French officers posted at Medine. ANM 1E 207, Medine, Commandant to Commandant Supérieur, 13 April 1885.

<sup>42</sup> Delafosse's version notes that Aḥmad resided with Bakari Diane, whose compound was as far from the fort as any dwelling in Nioro.

<sup>43</sup> Delafosse's version does not refer to any support for Muntaqā among the residents of Karta, nor does it recount the episodes which follow this statement in Adam's version. Delafosse's translation merely states that Aḥmad put Muntaqā under siege for ten months, during which several rounds of gunshots were exchanged. The siege actually lasted nine months.

military support and of sowing [seeds of] disunity in the army of his father.<sup>44</sup> Cerno took charge of this delicate mission and received as subsidy 28 large gold bracelets and seven magnificent amber necklaces. With these means, he began his perilous propaganda. Soon some Futanke,<sup>45</sup> some Diawara,<sup>46</sup> some Fulbe Samburu<sup>47</sup> from Gidibine,<sup>48</sup> and one of Muntaqā's brothers, the one from Lambedu,<sup>49</sup> joined the plot. But a Futanke, a spy for the king, having uncovered the secret, divulged it to his master.

Without delay [117] they held an investigation and obtained the proof of Cerno Maḥmūd [ibn] Khayār's disloyalty. At once Aḥmad took certain measures. He ordered the Mashzūf<sup>50</sup> to take a position between Kamandappe and Nioro: he ordered his *sofas* [to stand] between the mosque and the town, [with orders] not to allow anyone to pass. At noon, all the *marabouts* of Futa and Muḥammad Yaḥyā of Walata<sup>51</sup> were called, as was Cerno Maḥmūd [ibn] Khayār. When they were assembled, Aḥmad called for their judicial opinions to settle an affair which existed between Cerno and himself, and he revealed the betrayal of the former. This betrayal was all the more inexplicable to him because Aḥmad had done nothing to antagonize Muntaqā, since for six months he had attempted by all peaceful means [to resolve the conflict]. He was astonished that after that, there were people who took sides against him.

<sup>44</sup> Muntaqā always referred to the jurisdiction of his father, not his older brother.

<sup>45</sup> In this instance, Adam does not use *toucouleur* to refer to Muntaqā's supporters.

<sup>46</sup> In Document 15D, Aḥmad warned Muntaqā about forming an alliance with the Diawara.

<sup>47</sup> The Fulbe Samburu were a Wolarbe faction which left Masina in the early nineteenth century under the leadership of Ardo Samunde ("Samburu"). Amadou Hampâté Bâ and Jacques Daget, *L'Empire peul de Macina*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1962), pp. 185-93.

<sup>48</sup> Gidibine was the major Fulbe Samburu settlement in the region. Blanc, "Contribution à l'étude," p. 303.

<sup>49</sup> A reference to Dāḥa.

<sup>50</sup> Umanian allies from the southern Sahara. See Documents 4 and 11.

<sup>51</sup> Probably the resident of Walata who delivered Document 11A to Aḥmad at Nioro in the early 1870s. According to local informants, the Futanke clerics refused to pass judgement on Cerno Maḥmūd, and Aḥmad was forced to rely on the Saharan visitor.

Cerno began to deny [the charges], but in the face of the conclusive evidence that his adversary brought [forward], he made a complete confession and acknowledged that he merited death. The tribunal delivered its sentence and ordered, to add to the severity of the torment, that Cerno have his head severed by a member of his own family.

Learning of the failure of the plot, Falil, leader of the Fulbe Samburu, did not hesitate to expose himself. He assembled a small column and called to Dāḥa, one of Aḥmad's brothers, who brought him a contingent of Sarracolet. The rebels concentrated themselves at Gidibine, then at Makana. With this news, Aḥmad entrusted several troops to Bubacar Samba.<sup>52</sup> Three hours later, an engagement took place, where Aḥmad's army was victorious. Falil was killed, and his head was sent to Niore. Bubacar seized all the villages of the Samburu – Gidibine, Gulombe, Makhana Kar Salla, Diadebugu.

Muntaqā's situation after these successive defeats became critical. As a crowning misfortune, an epidemic burst out in the fort, and every day took numerous victims.<sup>53</sup> Finally, the leader of the slaves deserted along with the few men remaining.<sup>54</sup> Muntaqā then assembled his *talibés*<sup>55</sup> and said to them, "We have lost. Those who wish to leave the fort may leave. For myself and my family, we will stay here until our last hour."<sup>56</sup>

All the *talibés* departed and left open the door which opened upon the mosque. In the fort were Muntaqā and his family, Dā'i, and the *griot* Farangalli.<sup>57</sup> They asked Aḥmad for a respite until the next day.<sup>58</sup> Aḥmad had

<sup>52</sup> Blanc, "Contribution à l'étude," p. 303.

<sup>53</sup> Delafosse's version states that a famine took its toll, but 'Āqib and Blanc agree with Adam's version that an epidemic claimed many lives. See de Loppinot, "Souvenirs," p. 46 and Blanc, "Contribution à l'étude," p. 303. A contemporaneous French report notes that lives were lost due to an epidemic and a shortage of firewood for cooking inside the fort. ANM 1E 207, Medine, Commandant to Commandant Supérieur, 16 September 1885.

<sup>54</sup> With this statement, Adam's version returns to the core narrative which it shares with the Delafosse version. Delafosse, as mentioned above, does not include the preceding discussion of the actions of Cerno Maḥmūd, Falil and Dāḥa. Delafosse refers to one of the deserters by name, Mussandi, in "Traditions historiques," p. 366.

<sup>55</sup> Adam uses a term derived from the Arabic *ṭalaba* for "students."

<sup>56</sup> Delafosse's version does not include this statement from Muntaqā.

<sup>57</sup> Also known as Faran Kenyi. This *griot*, according to Dantioko's account, was a former

accepted this proposition until someone persuaded him that it was a trick, [another] lie, and that it would be better to go and get them because he would never leave himself. [118] The Futanke, by the door to the mosque which remained open after the departure of the *talibé*, entered into the fort; it was five o'clock.<sup>59</sup> Muntaqā, leaving his family, withdrew into the powder room with Dā'i and Farangalli. A woman and Muntaqā's good horse were taken to Aḥmad, who advised wisely to guard all exits so that his brother could not escape. All the army, from the evening until the next day, surrounded the fortress. With sunrise, the *sofas* approached the powder room and, as they entered the first chamber, a terrific noise was heard -- it was the room which exploded. [The bodies of] Muntaqā, Dā'i, Farangalli and several Futanke lay in the ruins. Muntaqā had, by this heroic ending, kept his word -- he had abandoned the fort only with his life. After this Aḥmad, dressed in a white robe, buried the dead, except for Farangalli.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the demise of Falil, Dāḥa assembled the Sarracolet of Karta [at Lambedu] where, besieged by Aḥmad himself, he offered a very energetic resistance, and only after several violent clashes was Lambedu taken.<sup>61</sup> When defeat was certain, Dāḥa and Muḥammad, his friend and favorite captive, preferred to die rather than fall into the hands of the conquerors.<sup>62</sup>

servant to 'Umar Tal.

<sup>58</sup> The request for delay is not reported in Delafosse's version.

<sup>59</sup> Probably Adam's estimate based on an informant's reference to dusk or the early evening prayer.

<sup>60</sup> Farangalli was a member of a caste of *griots*, and therefore his body should not be touched by a nobleman. Delafosse's version mentions the name of the grave site, Kelekuna, but does not mention either the color of Aḥmad's gown nor the decision not to bury Farangalli. Delafosse, "Traditions historiques," p. 366.

<sup>61</sup> Dāḥa reportedly had made contact with Nto, but the Bamana leader abandoned the dissident brother. See de Loppinot, "Souvenirs," p. 46, and Frey, *Campagne*, pp. 104-5. Dāḥa also asked unsuccessfully for French support. For his Arabic letter to the Commandant at Kita, see ANS 15G 66, unmarked *pièce* attached to its French translation (*pièce* 20).

<sup>62</sup> Both the Adam and Delafosse versions follow this passage with a discussion of the revolt of Muḥammad al-Amīn (Mamadu Lamine).

« — De bonnes paroles.

« — Lesquelles ?

« — Promets-moi que tu vas mettre aux fers le marabout sarracolet, Mamadou Kaba.

« — Mais ce que tu me demandes est impossible, tu voudrais que je porte la main sur ce grand marabout, moi qui ne suis qu'un captif, je ne le puis.

« — Dans ces conditions, je ne suis plus cadi », et Dialia sort.

Je cherchai un autre cadi parmi les Foutankais, mais en vain ; personne ne voulut accepter ; c'est alors que je proposai Mamadou Kaba qui fut agréé par tous. Voilà pourquoi un Sarracolet est aujourd'hui le chef religieux de Nioro.

Après ces explications, Ahmadou écrit à Mamadou Kaba qui se trouve à Mounia dans sa famille, et l'invite à venir auprès de lui ; celui-ci se rend au désir de son roi et reçoit quelques présents : 1 femme, 1 captif, 300 moules de mil, 30 barres de sel.

Ahmadou poussa la bienveillance jusqu'à lui dire : « Je sais que, contrairement aux bruits que les Toucouleurs ont fait courir, Mustapha n'a pas ruiné le pays pour t'offrir des cadeaux. Tu possèdes, comme lui, toute ma confiance. »

Ces affaires terminées, Ahmadou marche contre les Bambaras Masassis, s'empare de Guémou Coura et de Sokola, puis retourne à Nioro où il séjourne deux années.

A la fin de cette période, sur laquelle la légende est muette, arrivent à Nioro deux frères d'Ahmadou : Alibou et Moctar ; ils venaient de Dinguiray, et en route s'étaient rendus coupables de nombreuses exactions. Ainsi, en traversant Mounia, ils distribuent des coups de corde à des gens dévoués à Ahmadou ; à Krémio ils essayent d'en faire autant mais ils sont mis en fuite par les habitants. Le bruit de leurs aventures parvient jusqu'aux oreilles de leur frère qui les atteint à Gadiaba d'où il les fait conduire à Nioro, enchaînés comme de vulgaires malfaiteurs.

Appelé par les événements à Ségou, Ahmadou quitte le Sahel, emmenant par force douze villages de captifs, précieux contingents pour les guerres futures. Il se fait accompagner de Mustapha, qu'il remplace à Nioro par un chef des captifs nommé Almanay. L'hivernage suivant, il envoie de Ségou dans le Sahel sept de ses frères dont Mountaga, le plus âgé de tous, à qui il donne le commande-

ment de Nioro. Saïdon gouvernera le Kéniarémé ; Nourou, le Diafounou ; Bassirou, Koniakary ; Daï, Diaba.

De nombreuses conquêtes jalonnent le commandement de Morintago ; ainsi il s'empare du Séro, dont il tue le roi Moriba à Tambacara ; il conquiert le Séfé sans tirer un coup de fusil ; Comintara, avec un peu plus d'éclat.

De son côté, Ahmadou livrait de nombreux combats aux Bambaras ; vainqueur à Kantéguéla, à Diogo, il se heurte sans succès à Nouko et Dorobougou qu'il ne peut prendre.

L'hivernage suivant, il s'empare de Baukoli et de Baufo ; mais son lieutenant Tienro Alassane échoue devant Kouina et Tougouné. Il prend heureusement sa revanche en détruisant Moribougou et Saoukoro.

Après d'autres expéditions, notamment celle de Kana qu'il commande en personne, Ahmadou quitte Ségou et remonte le Niger jusqu'à Nyamina ; là, surpris par N'Tow, chef du Bélédougou, il essuie un échec qu'il ne tarde pas à réparer par une victoire.

Comme nous l'avons dit plus haut, il avait laissé à Nioro, pour diriger le pays, un de ses frères nommé Mountaga. Les nouvelles qu'il reçoit de lui le rendent plein de défiance et il forme le projet de se rendre dans le Sahel, sans passer par les chemins connus, espérant ainsi surprendre Mountaga. Il trouve un guide qui le mène en secret, au bout de huit jours, jusqu'à Bassaga dans le Bakounou.

Là, il dépêche vers Mountaga, Bassirou, Mounirou, Ahmidou, Ali Ousman pour le prier de se rendre à Bassaga.

Dès qu'il reçoit le messenger, Mountaga appelle à Nioro tous les notables du pays. Toucouleurs, Sarracolets, Bambaras, et leur fait part du désir de son frère :

— Ahmadou, s'écrie-t-il, m'a écrit cette lettre sous l'empire de la défiance: il ne revient de Ségou que pour me punir et, cependant, quel mal lui ai-je fait? Je sais qu'on lui a porté plainte contre moi et, malheureusement, des faits indépendants de ma volonté m'ont empêché de me disculper à temps.

— N'aie aucune crainte, lui répliquent ses frères, Ahmadou tient à ce que tu ailles le recevoir à Bassaga, puisqu'il est le chef du pays.

La nuit porte conseil et dissipe un peu les appréhensions de Mountaga. Aussi, le lendemain, il fait ses préparatifs de départ et, accompagné d'une escorte nombreuse, il se met en route. Quand

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il arrive à Bassaga, il n'a pas à se plaindre d'Ahmadou, qui l'accueille cordialement et fait donner un grand tam-tam en son honneur; mais, malgré ces démonstrations amicales, il se tient sur ses gardes, et lorsqu'Ahmadou lui propose de laisser les gens de Nioro camper dans les environs du village et de venir loger lui-même dans son carré, il décline cette invitation, invoquant la peur qui s'emparerait de ses hommes s'il les quittait. Du reste, cela ne l'empêchera pas d'être toujours à sa disposition, le jour comme la nuit, dès qu'il en exprimera le désir.

« Je veux bien te laisser avec tes gens, répond Ahmadou, mais je trouve qu'ils sont trop nombreux. Tu sembles être venu avec une armée, dans l'intention de me traiter en égal ou en ennemi. »

Mountaga, dont les craintes se dissipent un peu, accepte, pour satisfaire Ahmadou, de ne garder que 300 cavaliers, tous montés sur des chevaux blancs. Chaque matin, à leur tête, il vient saluer son frère.

Mais celui-ci n'est pas encore satisfait, et le quatrième jour, alors que Mountaga se présente, il lui dit :

« Est-il besoin d'une pareille escorte pour venir saluer son frère, on dirait vraiment que tu veux m'humilier! Souviens-toi que moi seul ici commande, et je te prie, à partir de demain, de laisser au camp tes cavaliers quand tu m'apporteras tes souhaits. »

Pendant deux jours, Mountaga se rend chez Ahmadou avec son captif Fadiala, mais le troisième, ayant voulu se faire accompagner d'un sofa, l'entrée du carré est refusée à celui-ci. Mountaga n'ose se plaindre et termine sa visite comme à l'ordinaire, mais il ne respire librement que dehors, au milieu de ses hommes.

« Mes amis, tout à l'heure j'ai tremblé pour vous et pour moi, un simple captif de mon frère a osé m'imposer sa volonté! Ici, nous ne sommes rien, à la merci d'un caprice; on nous prête déjà de mauvais desseins, et je tremble pour vous et pour moi. »

Aussitôt un conseil est tenu, où l'on décide que Mountaga, avec 100 cavaliers, profitera de la nuit pour s'enfuir vers Nioro. Cette détermination prise, Mountaga, sans leur dévoiler le projet qu'il caresse, fait part à ses frères de la crainte que lui inspire Ahmadou; il les rend responsables de ce qui arrivera, puisque c'est à la suite de leurs exhortations qu'il est venu à Kassaga; s'il est victime d'un malheur, il en appellera au tribunal supérieur d'Allah.

Afin de disposer de la liberté nécessaire pour préparer ses

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bagages, sans toutefois éveiller les soupçons d'Ahmadou, il lui fait savoir qu'il est indisposé et le prie de l'excuser s'il ne se présente pas à lui dans la soirée. Puis il défend sa porte à quiconque, prend ses dernières dispositions et s'évade sans encombre.

Mais tout secret est difficile à garder, et le lendemain matin quelque chose avait déjà transpiré. Des gens d'Ahmadou viennent rôler auprès du campement de Mountaga et demander s'il se trouve dans sa case : « Oui, leur répond-on, il est en prières. — En êtes-vous certains, répliquent les autres; pour nous, nous croyons qu'il n'est plus ici, » et malgré les dénégations qu'on leur oppose, ils accourent vers Ahmadou le prévenir de la fuite de Mountaga. Aussitôt, Ahmadou Oumar avec quelques cavaliers, est envoyé à sa poursuite; ils le rejoignent non loin de Tourougoumbé, mais n'osent l'attaquer à cause de l'escorte qui le protège. Il reçoit Ahmadou Oumar avec calme et lui fait part de sa ferme intention de ne pas retourner à Bassaga. Ahmadou Oumar, après une discussion, pour la forme, n'avait plus qu'à se retirer, ce qu'il fait discrètement, et, quand il revient vers Ahmadou, il n'ose pas lui rendre compte des résultats de son entrevue, il rapporte qu'il n'a pu atteindre le fugitif.

Les gens que Mountaga avait laissés à Bassaga sont appelés par Ahmadou qui les oblige à lui jurer fidélité : ils prêtent le serment, sous l'empire de la peur, et, quelques jours après, retournent auprès de leur maître.

Le lendemain, Ahmadou quitte Bassaga et gagne Tourougoumbé. Il fait immédiatement prévenir Mountaga de venir le retrouver en ce point. La réponse est négative; un second messenger, un marabout vénéré du Fouta, est envoyé à Nioro, avec la même mission : il n'est pas plus heureux. Pour Mountaga, aller vers Ahmadou serait s'exposer à la prison, peut-être à la mort; il préfère mourir libre à Nioro que chargé de chaînes dans le camp toucouleur!

De Tourougoumbé, Ahmadou s'avance jusqu'à Yérééré, où il passe trois mois. Tous les jours il invite Mountaga à faire sa soumission.

Pendant ces négociations, Mountaga réunit à Nioro de nombreux guerriers, rassemble une grande quantité de mil et creuse des puits dans le tata : il se prépare à soutenir le siège; comme il reçoit un

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jour l'ordre d'évacuer la forteresse, il répond : « Aladji est mon père; je suis dans son tata, j'y reste. »

De Norma, où Ahmadou est campé, il reçoit encore un appel à la conciliation et refuse d'y répondre. Ahmadou ne se décourage pas encore; il s'adresse au père de Kaba Cissé, un camarade de Mountaga, à Tierno Samba et à d'autres encore. « Allez vers lui, qu'il quitte le tata, et je lui promets qu'aucun mal ne lui sera fait! »

A Nioro les sofas veillaient; quand ils aperçoivent au loin des cavaliers galoper vers le village, ils s'apprêtent à tirer, mais en reconnaissant le père de Kaba, ils reposent leurs fusils; les envoyés sont reçus par Mountaga au nom de l'ancienne amitié qui les unit à eux. Toutefois, cette marque de sympathie est la seule qu'il puisse leur donner : il reste inébranlable dans son intention de résister à son frère.

Le lendemain, Ahmadou, se rapprochant, « campa d'abord à Dianwélé, puis à Nioro-Tougouné; là, nouveaux pourparlers avec Mountaga, qui répond : « Je quitterai le tata demain matin, mais pas aujourd'hui. » Le lendemain, Mountaga n'a pas bougé et remet au soir la réalisation de sa promesse. « Ce sont là des moyens pour faire traîner les choses en longueur, s'écrient les lieutenants d'Ahmadou irrités de cette longue inaction! Mountaga ne se rendra que si nous entrons dans Nioro » et, avec l'autorisation de leur chef, une partie de l'armée s'avance jusque sous les murs du tata, où des coups de fusils sont échangés. Le lendemain, Ahmadou occupe la ville.

La forteresse étant imprenable, on se contente de la bloquer. Or, Mountaga possédait encore de nombreux amis dans le camp toucouleur. L'un d'eux, Tierno Mamadou Kaïa, lui était profondément dévoué et entretenait en secret avec lui des intelligences. Par les nuits sans lune il s'approchait des murs du tata et causait avec Mountaga. Celui-ci songeait à rechercher l'appui d'une colonne et à semer la désunion dans l'armée de son père. Tierno se charge de cette délicate mission, en reçoit comme subsides 28 gros bracelets en or et 7 magnifiques colliers d'ambre; avec ces moyens, il commence sa périlleuse propagande. Déjà des Foutankais, des Diawaras, des Peulhs Sambourous de Guidébéné, un des frères de Mountaga, de Lambédou adhèrent au complot. Mais un Foutankais, espion du roi, ayant surpris le secret, le dévoile à son maître; sans retard on

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procède à une enquête et on acquiert la preuve de l'infidélité de Tierno Mamadou Kaïa; aussitôt Ahmadou prend certaines dispositions : aux Meshdoufs, il ordonne de se placer entre Kaman-dapé et Niéro, à ses sofas, entre la mosquée et la ville et de ne laisser passer personne. A midi, tous les marabouts du Fouta et Mamadou Yaya de Oualata sont appelés ainsi que Tierno Mamadou Kaïa : quand ils sont réunis, Ahmadou réclame leur justice pour trancher une affaire qui existe entre Tierno et lui-même et il expose la trahison de celui-ci. Cette trahison est d'autant plus inexplicable que, lui, Ahmadou, n'a rien à se reprocher contre Mountaga, puisque depuis six mois il a essayé de tous les moyens pacifiques; il s'étonne, qu'après cela, il y ait des gens qui prennent parti contre lui.

Tierno commence à nier, mais devant les preuves évidentes que son adversaire apporte, il fait les aveux les plus complets et reconnaît qu'il a mérité la mort. Le tribunal rend sa sentence et ordonne, pour ajouter à la gravité du supplice, que Tierno aura la tête tranchée par un des membres de sa famille.

En apprenant l'insuccès du complot, Falilou, chef des Peulhs Sambourous, n'hésite pas à se démasquer; il réunit une petite colonne et appelle à lui Daa, un des frères d'Ahmadou, qui lui amène un contingent de Sarracolets. Les rebelles se concentrent à Guidébéné, puis à Makana. A cette nouvelle, Ahmadou confie quelques troupes à Boubakar Samba. Trois heures après, un engagement avait lieu, d'où l'armée d'Ahmadou sortait victorieuse. Falilou est tué, sa tête envoyée à Niéro. Boubakar s'empare de tous les villages sambourous : Guidibiné, Goulombé, Makhana Kar Salla, Diadiébougou.

La situation de Mountaga, après ces échecs successifs, devient critique. Pour comble de malheur, l'épidémie éclate dans le tata, et fait tous les jours de nombreuses victimes. Enfin, le chef des captifs déserte avec le peu d'hommes qui restent. Mountaga rassemble alors ses talibés et leur dit : « Nous sommes perdus, que ceux qui veulent sortir du tata sortent. Pour moi et ma famille nous resterons ici jusqu'à notre dernière heure. » Tous les talibés le quittent et laissent ouverte la porte qui s'ouvre sur la mosquée. Dans la forteresse se trouvent Mountaga et sa famille, Daï et le griot Farangalli; ils font alors demander à Ahmadou une trêve jusqu'au lendemain. Ahmadou avait accepté cette proposition, lorsqu'on lui persuade que ce n'est encore là qu'une feinte, un mensonge, qu'il vaut mieux aller le chercher, car il ne sortira jamais de lui-même.

Et les Foutankais, par la porte de la mosquée restée ouverte après la sortie des talibés, entrent dans le tata : il est cinq heures du soir. Mountaga, laissant sa famille chez elle, se retire dans la poudrière avec Daï et Farangalli. Une femme et le bon cheval de Mountaga sont pris et apportés à Ahmadou, qui recommande bien de garder toutes les issues afin que son frère ne puisse s'échapper. Toute l'armée, depuis le soir jusqu'au matin, enserme la forteresse; au lever du soleil, les sofas s'approchent de la poudrière et, comme ils pénétraient dans la première chambre, un bruit formidable se fait entendre, c'est la case qui saute. Mountaga, Daï, Farangalli, et quelques Foutankais gisent sous les décombres, Mountaga avait, par cette fin héroïque, tenu sa promesse : il n'avait abandonné le tata qu'avec la vie. Ahmadou revêt alors un boubou blanc et fait enterrer les morts, sauf le griot Farangalli.

Malgré le sort malheureux de Falilou, Daa rassemble à Lambidou les Sarracolets du Kaarta où, assiégé par Ahmadou lui-même, il offre une résistance très énergique, et ce n'est qu'après de violents combats que Lambidou est pris. Quand la défaite est certaine, Daa, Mamadou, son camarade et son captif préféré, aiment mieux mourir plutôt que de tomber dans les mains des vainqueurs.

Comme Ahmadou retournait à Niéro, Mamadou Lamine se soulevait contre les blancs, et se disposait à faire le siège de Bakel; or, le chef Toucouleur apprend que le Diafounou, sans lui en avoir demandé l'autorisation, prête son appui au marabout son ennemi personnel: il entre dans une profonde colère et quand les Sarracolets sont de retour il leur ordonne de renvoyer auprès de son père, Sonaïbon, un des fils de Mamadou Lamine, qui s'était réfugié auprès d'eux, mais l'almamy de Gori déclare qu'il gardera Sonaïbon. Trois fois, Ahmadou fait en vain renouveler son ordre au chef sarracolet; il s'avance alors jusqu'à Kérané où il séjourne quatre mois.

Usant du procédé qu'il a employé vis-à-vis de Mountaga, il essaie, par un envoi incessant de messagers, de régler pacifiquement l'affaire, mais, comme Mountaga, le Diafounou s'obstine dans son refus d'écouter les propositions de paix.

Quand il a réuni une forte colonne, Ahmadou pousse jusqu'à Dioukolama et de là dirige son avant-garde sur Gori. Les Sarracolets vaincus dans le premier engagement s'enferment dans le tata. Bientôt le gros de l'armée toucouleur se met en mouvement, et établit son campement à Bofana, non loin du centre de la résis-