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AUTHOR OF HIS OWN FATE? THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY WRITINGS OF AYUBA SULAYMAN DIALLO

Paul Naylor
(British Library and Loyola University Chicago)
Marion Wallace
(British Library)

Abstract

The life of Ayuba Sulayman Diallo (also known as Job ben Solomon) receives a fresh examination in this article, based primarily on his own writings. The son of an Imam from Bundu in Senegambia, Diallo was enslaved in 1731 and transported to America. He survived to gain his freedom, make his mark in London society, and return to Africa in 1734. This article offers an analysis of documents from the British Library, including items that have not been previously analysed and are here translated into English for the first time. In addition, they bring together what is known of his archive, including the letters he wrote before, during, and after his time in London, the Qur'ans he scribed there, and the scraps and snippets created as he discussed the Arabic language with friends.

A close analysis of Diallo's writings reveals new information about his life history; his relationships with the elites in both Bundu and London; his scholarly abilities; and the history of Bundu itself. Diallo used the technology of writing to direct the course of his own life and career, converting a disastrous course of events into favourable opportunities for himself.

Key Words

Gambia, Senegal, Senegambia, West Africa, archives, Atlantic World, biography, slavery, emancipation, Islam, scholarship, slave narratives.

INTRODUCTION

The case of Ayuba Sulayman Diallo (also known as Job ben Solomon) was celebrated in his day, and his story is still relatively well known. Diallo was sold into slavery in Senegambia in 1731 and enslaved in North America, but went on to gain his freedom, conquer London Society, and return to Africa in 1734 as an agent of the Royal African Company. Contemporaries were intrigued by the story, not least because the clergyman Thomas Bluett published Diallo's biography in 1734. More recent publications have kept Diallo's story in the public eye.

In this article, we take a fresh look at Diallo's life, focusing in particular on his own writings. A scholar of Arabic and a proficient linguist, Diallo created a rather extensive archive of letters and other documents, mainly in Arabic, some of which have survived. We focus in particular on documentation held by the British Library, including items that have not yet been analysed in the scholarship on Diallo and are here translated into English for the first time by Paul Naylor. We then bring together what is known of his archive, including

the letters he wrote before, during, and after his time in London, the Qur'ans he scribed there, and the scraps and snippets created as he discussed the Arabic language with friends.

A close analysis of Diallo's writings reveals new information about his life history; his relationships with the elites of his home country, Bundu, and of London; his scholarly abilities; and the history of Bundu itself. It also reinforces the fact that, although anxious to secure his own freedom, he was very far from being an abolitionist himself.

Exploring the extent and nature of Diallo's work as a whole allows for further fresh perspectives. We argue that these perspectives require us to re-examine what we know of Diallo's story and, above all, allow us to move beyond previous debates about whether it was Diallo's 'usefulness' to British commercial interests or, alternatively, the sympathy elicited by his 'civilisation' and learning which enabled his achievements. Both points of view tend to construct Diallo as a passive recipient of British benevolence or commercial acumen. By contrast, our focus is on his use of writing and his deployment of the tools of literacy and learning, together with his intellectual talents. These first gave him the means to demand and eventually achieve his freedom, and subsequently allowed him to create and maintain an influential network of contacts in Britain, which he continued to nurture after returning to Africa. Diallo, to a quite remarkable extent, used the technology of writing to direct the course of his own life and career, converting a disastrous course of events into favourable opportunities for himself.

Our arguments here thus restore Diallo's agency to its rightful place at the centre of his own history. We begin the article by looking briefly at his life story, with its complex contexts and multiple interpretations, before going on to analyse his letters and scholarship, and to assess the scattered and partially extant archive that he created.

THE LIFE STORY OF AYUBA SULAYMAN DIALLO[1]

Diallo was the son of an *alfa* (religious scholar) in the state of Bundu, which was founded in the late seventeenth century by Malik Sy, in what is now northeastern Senegal. Diallo came of clerical (Jakhanke) lineage.[2] He was educated and literate (in Arabic), having, according to Thomas Bluett, his biographer, received an education until the age of fifteen. After that time, he 'assisted his Father as Emaum [Imam]', and also appears to have worked for his father as a trader.

1 Much is known about Diallo from the contemporary account by T. Bluett, *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job, The Son of Solomon, High Priest of Boonda in Africa* (London, 1734), also republished (for instance) with an introduction and annotations in P. Curtin (ed.), *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, WI, 1967), 17–59 (page numbers below refer to the first edition). D. Grant, *The Fortunate Slave: An Illustration of African Slavery in the Early Eighteenth Century* (London, 1968), is now rather dated in style and outlook, but is nevertheless based on extensive archival research and was until recently the only modern biography of Diallo. A popular biography, also based on archival research but exercising some artistic licence, is M. Nossent, *Personne n'était jamais revenue: La vie d'Ayouba Sulayman Diallo, happé par la traite negrière* ([Saint-Denis], 2016). Our thanks to the author for kindly sharing this text with us. References to further works are given below.

2 For the history of Bundu see M. A. Gomez, *Pragmatism in the Age of Jihad: The Precolonial State of Bundu* (Cambridge, 1992).

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In early February 1731, Diallo set out from his home with the aim of selling two enslaved people.[3] Bundu, geographically well-positioned to control long-distance trade routes, was already engaging in the slave trade at this date. Although the Senegambian basin did not export enslaved people on the scale of areas to the south, the region as a whole was the site of a steady trade during the seventeenth century, which had risen to 4,400 departures per year in the 1730s.[4]

Diallo and his entourage travelled around 200 miles across country to the British trading factory at Kaur, on the northern bank of the Gambia River.[5] At Kaur, Diallo attempted to sell his two captives to Captain Pike of the *Arabella*, a British trading vessel owned by Henry Hunt.[6] Not satisfied with Captain Pike's offer, Diallo enlisted the help of a Mandingo interpreter, Lamine Jay, and crossed the Gambia River, where he sold his captives in one of the small Mandingo kingdoms on the southern bank.[7] On the return journey, however, he was captured along with his interpreter and brought back across the river to Kaur.[8] On 27 February he and Lamine Jay were themselves sold to Captain Pike and on 1 March boarded the *Arabella*, which left Kaur around ten days later – after Diallo had tried unsuccessfully to send a message to Bundu, a point to which we shall return.[9] On or soon after 11 April, the *Arabella* arrived at James Fort, Senegambia, the headquarters of the Royal African Company and the point of departure for slaving ships to the Americas. Two days later, the ship set sail for Annapolis, Maryland, with Diallo on board.[10]

Upon landing two months later, Diallo was sold by Vachell Denton (Henry Hunt's representative in Maryland) to a Mr Tolsey, who put him to work on his tobacco plantation on Kent Island, in Maryland.[11] However, Diallo soon absconded from the plantation, crossing Maryland's eastern shore to reach Delaware Bay, which was then a part of Pennsylvania, before he was arrested. It was here, at the beginning of June 1731, that

3 Bluett's account gives the date as February 1730; since he was using Old Style dating, in which system the year begins in April, this becomes 1731 in modern terms. The precise dating of Moore's correspondence (see Moore's letter to Richard Hull and Hugh Hamilton, 1 Jul. 1734, in E. Donnan (ed.), *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America, Volume II* (New York, 1965), 414–17) reinforces this interpretation.

4 Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 2–3, 52–3; P. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (3rd edn, Cambridge, 2012), 59. The Gold Coast, the Bights of Benin and Biafra, and West-Central Africa were the largest exporters of enslaved people in the eighteenth century.

5 Bluett, *Some Memoirs*, 16; D. Honeybone and M. Honeybone (eds), *The Correspondence of the Spalding Gentlemen's Society, 1710–61* (Woodbridge, 2010), 82. Curtin (*Africa Remembered,* 20–2) reports that in the 1730s it was standard practice for traders from Bundu and the wider region to travel 200 miles to the Gambia rather than the far shorter journey south through the kingdom of Galam to trade with the French at Fort St Joseph.

6 Bluett, *Some Memoirs*, 16.

7 *Ibid.* 17; Honeybone and Honeybone, *Correspondence*, 82. Bluett names the interpreter as 'Lamine Youas', while other sources have 'Lamine Jay' or 'Lahamine Ndiaye'.

8 Bluett, *Some Memoirs*, 17–18.

9 *Ibid.* 18; BL Lansdowne MS 841/65, letter from P. Thompson to J. Ames, 24 Mar. 1733, f. 71.

10 F. Moore, *Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa, Containing a Description of the Several Nations for the Space of Six Hundred Miles up the…Gambia* (London, 1738), 68–9. This text is also online at https://books.google.co.uk/books? id=3PNWAAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source= gbs_ge_summary_r&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed 5 Jan. 2019), and partly republished in Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 54–9. Unless otherwise stated, references are to the 1738 edition.

11 H. Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440–1870* (London, 2015), 799.

Diallo first met and told his story (via a Wolof interpreter) to Thomas Bluett, a clergyman who later became his biographer and protector.[12]

At this juncture, however, Diallo was returned to Maryland, where he wrote a letter to his father, the purpose of which, according to Bluett, was to 'acquaint...him [his father] with his Misfortunes, hoping he might yet find Means to redeem him'.[13] The letter reached Britain but was not dispatched to West Africa. Instead, it is said to have been read in translation by James Oglethorpe, deputy governor of the Royal African Company (RAC), who was apparently strongly affected by it.[14] Bluett reports that his reaction was one of compassion; other sources state that having read the letter, Oglethorpe 'immediately...interested himself in his [Diallo's] behalf', and that the letter gave Oglethorpe 'so much satisfaction, and so good an opinion of the man'.[15]

There were, however, reasons other than compassion as to why the discovery of a well-connected citizen of Bundu might, as Philip Curtin argues, have been an 'excellent opportunity' for the RAC, and the factor that gave Diallo an opportunity to escape from slavery.[16] The RAC was anxious to gain entry into the trade in gum arabic (the refined sap of the *Acacia senegal* tree), which was a vital material for the growing European textile industry. The French, from their position in Gajaaga and through their control of the River Senegal, had a near monopoly on the gum arabic growing to the north of the Senegal, as well as access to the Bambuk goldfields.[17] By contrast, the British, whose furthest trading base inland was at Joar, were too far away to profit from either of these natural resources. However, Bundu – which traded with both the French and the British under Bubu Malik Sy (d. ?1715) – commanded the overland route from the Gambia to the goldfields in Bambuk, and in the west bordered the untapped gum arabic forests in the Ferlo wilderness.[18] In the 1730s, the RAC was already actively exploring the possibility of expanding their trade to Bundu.[19]

Whatever Oglethorpe's thoughts – and we return to this below – having read Diallo's letter, he immediately gave his bond to Henry Hunt to pay for Diallo's purchase price and transport to Britain, where the latter arrived in late April 1733. In London, the RAC eventually took ownership of Diallo; he, however, insisted on being granted his freedom, which he eventually gained in January 1734 through the intervention and financial help of a number of supporters, including Bluett.[20] He went on to become a minor celebrity, a career that culminated in his presentation at court and his sitting for his portrait by the court painter

12 Bluett, *Some Memoirs*, 21.
13 *Ibid.* 23.
14 *Ibid.* 23; Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 84–5.
15 Bluett, *Some Memoirs*, 23; W. Smith, handwritten account of Diallo's life given in the flyleaves of a Qur'an we are told Diallo wrote from memory while he was in London (1733–4), and sold at Bonhams in 2013 (https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/21359/lot/137/, accessed 5 Jan. 2019); Moore, *Travels*, 202–3.
16 *Ibid.* 209; Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 22.
17 Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 18, 60; Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 59.
18 Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 22; Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 60.
19 J. M. Gray, *A History of the Gambia* (Cambridge, 1966; 1st pub. 1940), 209.
20 Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 84 and following pages.

William Hoare. He also interacted with a number of scholars and antiquarians, including Sir Hans Sloane (founder of the British Museum and by extension the British Library).[21]

Diallo, showered with presents by his friends in London, returned to Africa in July 1734, where he acted as agent for the RAC. The RAC had high hopes for Diallo and instructed the governor of James Fort, Richard Hull, to send a Company employee with Diallo to his own country to see whether he could assist by 'opening and settling a trade and correspondence between the natives of those parts and our highest factorys'.[22] The care with which the RAC treated Diallo is clear from the correspondence of officials with and about him. His influence was such that the RAC agreed to a policy change, assuring Diallo that any Muslim enslaved in the RAC's area of interest in Senegambia could be released – in exchange for two non-Muslims. These instructions were communicated explicitly to agents on the ground in West Africa.[23]

After his arrival at James Fort at the end of July, Diallo was keen to negotiate the safe passage of the goods he had acquired in Britain to Bundu, travelling to and from the RAC's factory at Kaur with Francis Moore, the RAC factor.[24] In the following year, he returned to Bundu for the first time, to emotional scenes and reunion with his family.[25] In 1736, he travelled again to Bundu, as before in the company of Thomas Hull, nephew of the governor of James Fort, and journeyed further to Niani-Maro in the Ferlo, known by Governor Hull to be a possible source of gum arabic.[26] Diallo reported this mission in a letter to Sir Hans Sloane, giving a favourable account of British prospects in the gum arabic and gold dust trades, and promising to help them 'to the utmost of his power, which is very considerable in that country'.[27]

However, French officials at Fort St Joseph noticed the second journey to Bundu and eventually captured Diallo in June 1736, holding him on charges of 'acting as an English agent and for having introduced an Englishman into Bundu'. Contemporary sources suggest that local marabouts protested to such an extent that he was released six months later.[28] In January 1737, Company agents lost Diallo's goods *en route* to Bundu.[29] Perhaps in an effort to placate him, later that year the RAC sent their employee Melchior de Jaspas, an Armenian who knew some Arabic, with presents and a letter asking

21 *Ibid*, 99–107.
22 Gray, *Gambia*, 210, citing correspondence in the UK National Archives, London (TNA) T 70/55, 7 Jul. 1734.
23 Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 108.
24 Moore, *Travels*, 205–11.
25 Royal Society, London (RS) EL/12/22, letter from Diallo to Jacob Smith, 27 Jan. 1736; RS EL/12/21, letter from Diallo to unnamed, 27 Jan. 1736. RS EL/12/22 is published in Donnan (ed.), *Documents*, 455–6, with annotations to show the variations in RS EL/12/21.
26 Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 32; RS EL/12/21; RS EL/12/22; Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 68.
27 The letter does not appear to have survived, but a summary was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and other periodicals (see Appendix 3 for details). Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 186; Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 32.
28 Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 69, citing Archives Nationales de France ANF C6 11, various reports (1736); Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 32n21, citing J. Machat, *Documents sur les établissements français et l'Afrique occidentale au xviiéme siècle* (Paris, 1906), 46; Nossent, *Personne*, 118 and ch. 8; Grant, *Fortunate Slave,* 189–91.
29 TNA T70/55 245–6, letter from RAC to Governor of James Fort (?), 13 Jan. 1737. The RAC stated that the company 'might much more have expected from him [Diallo]' had their agents followed instructions to deliver the goods via an alternative route, and ordered the 'strictest and most particular enquiry' into the affair.

for Diallo's assistance in promoting British trade. De Jaspas went to Bundu in the company of Lamine Jay, Diallo's Mandingo interpreter, whose release Diallo had requested.[30] In 1740, Diallo returned to James Fort with De Jaspas, reportedly eager to engage with the RAC, and returned with some currency courtesy of Governor Orfeur.[31] However, with Diallo under French surveillance and the RAC facing its own difficulties, the RAC's efforts to court Diallo petered out. In 1744 the RAC concluded an agreement directly with the French for supplies of gum arabic – 360,000 pounds per year, in return for one hundred enslaved people.[32]

Of Diallo himself, little more is known. Nevertheless, he appears to have remained in touch with contacts in Britain even after the RAC was dissolved in 1752. The Spalding Gentlemen's Society (SGS), of which he had been elected an honorary member, recorded his death in 1773.[33]

DIALLO'S MULTIPLE STORIES

Diallo's life history was first recorded by the clergyman Thomas Bluett, whom, as we have seen, he met while imprisoned in Maryland, and with whom he subsequently travelled to England, where Bluett became his protector. That book, published in 1734, was written at Diallo's behest: 'I was desired by himself', writes Bluett, 'a little before his departure, to draw up an account of him agreeable to the information he had given me at different times, and to the truth of the facts, which I had either been a witness to, or personally concerned in upon his account'.[34] Bluett's statement of authenticity is augmented by a letter to Joseph Ames, an antiquary who knew Diallo well, in which Bluett asks Ames to help with the book by sending 'hints of [his] own knowledge'.[35] A handwritten account of Diallo's life, probably in Bluett's handwriting, is also held by the British Library. On the verso appears a sketch-map of Senegambia, almost certainly annotated by Diallo; the positioning of these two documents strongly suggests that the notes were taken by Bluett from Diallo's dictation.[36]

In *Some Memoirs*, in addition to relating Diallo's story of capture in Africa, enslavement, and release, Bluett delineates Diallo's character in glowing terms, describing him as possessing 'a solid judgment, a ready memory, and a clear head' and 'a happy mixture of the grave and the chearful, a gentle mildness, guarded by a proper warmth, and a kind and

30 TNA T70/56, letter from RAC. to C. Orfeur, 2 Feb. 1738, and RAC to 'Mr Job at Boonda in Africa', 19 May 1737, cited in Gray, *Gambia*, 212, 211; Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton (NRO) Montagu Volume 7 ff. 209, 211, letter from Job ben Solomon to the Duke of Montagu, 5 Apr. 1735 (English version published in Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury, Volume I* (London, 1899), 385).

31 TNA T70/4 110, letter from C. Orfeur, H. Hamilton, and S. Turner to RAC, James Fort, 19 June 1740.

32 TNA T70/1515 99, contract between C. Orfeur and C. C. François, 22 May 1744.

33 According to Grant, the Spalding Gentlemen's Society noted in their records that Diallo had died in 1773, although it is unclear who informed them of Diallo's death. Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 199.

34 Bluett, *Some Memoirs*, 9–10.

35 British Library, London (BL) Lansdowne MS 841/63, letter from T. Bluett to J. Ames, 26 Aug. 1734.

36 BL Add. MS 32556, correspondence of C. Macro, f. 239. Notes probably by Bluett, with sketch map on reverse, ?London, n.d., 1733–4.

compassionate disposition towards all that were in distress'.[37] Further information on Diallo's life is given in a number of sources, including: *Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa*, Francis Moore's record of his time as a factor for the Royal African Company in Senegambia; the journal of Thomas Hull, the nephew of the British governor at James Fort, who journeyed with Diallo to Bundu in 1735; an account of Diallo's life written by Joseph Ames to support Diallo's application to become a member of the Spalding Gentlemen's Society in November 1733; a later unpublished account of his life, probably by William Smith, great-nephew of his acquaintance Joseph Smith; the files of the Royal African Company; surviving correspondence among Diallo's friends in Britain, some of which is held by the British Library; and miscellaneous printed notices.[38]

It is evident, therefore, that Diallo's life is extremely well documented for someone who was enslaved in Senegambia in the early eighteenth century. In addition, during the course of researching this paper it has become increasingly clear that there is a scattered Diallo archive consisting of documents he authored directly, which in many cases survive in his own hand (of which more below).

Before moving on to discuss this material, it is worth pausing to consider the wider context of Diallo's story. It is very likely that Bluett's is the first published single narrative of any person enslaved in the course of the transatlantic slave trade, and the first of an enslaved Muslim transported to the Americas, or indeed visiting Britain.[39] It was also extremely rare for anyone enslaved through the transatlantic slave trade to be released and return to Africa.[40]

Diallo did have contemporaries, in the sense that a small number of people enslaved in Africa at about the same time have left life histories, albeit of a much later date. These

37 Bluett, *Some Memoirs*, 46–8.

38 Moore, *Travels*, 54–9. See also Donnan (ed.), *Documents*, 393–427. Hull's journal, the RAC correspondence and some of the BL letters are investigated in Grant, *Fortunate Slave*. Nossent, *Personne* also includes analysis of some of the BL letters. For the Spalding Gentlemen's Society correspondence, which also includes a note about Diallo dated 1750 by Maurice Johnson, the Society's president, see Honeybone and Honeybone, *Correspondence*, 81–3. Copies of the correspondence are held by the Society, which is still in existence, at Spalding Gentlemen's Society (SGS) MB1 Fol. 186A, 17 Nov. 1733 and MB2 f. 100A, 29 Nov. 1733 (see Appendix 3 for full details). Our thanks to Dustin Frazier Wood, the Society's archivist, for help with tracing and contextualising these documents. William Smith's handwritten account, as noted above, is given in the flyleaves of a Qur'an we are told Diallo wrote from memory while he was in London (1733–4) and sold at Bonhams in 2013. Other texts mentioned here are referenced through this article and in Appendix 3.

39 Frances Foster, in her seminal 1979 study of slave narratives, notes the 1703 collection of documentation collectively dubbed 'Adam Negro's tryall' as 'a precursor of the slave narratives…it emerges as the first American writing to depict clearly the actions and circumstances under which a black slave rejected the role of chattel or permanent bondsman…' Marion Wilson Starling, in her study published two years later but researched in the 1940s, calls 'Adam Negro's tryall' the first of the slave narratives; she makes no mention of Diallo. Foster analyses Bluett's work on Diallo as the first 'separately published factual account' of the experiences of an enslaved person. Apart from 'Adam Negro's tryall', we have been unable to identify any earlier auto/biographies than Diallo's. Earlier stories may emerge as research continues in this field. F. S. Foster, *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-bellum Slave Narratives* (Madison, WI, 2nd ed., 1994), 31–3. M. W. Starling, *The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History* (Washington, DC, 1981), 51–2.

40 Moore asserts that the Bundunke knew of one other person to whom this had happened, but does not specify who this was (Moore, *Travels*, in Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 57).

include Yarrow Mamout, Belinda (Royall), Venture Smith, Ofodobendo Wooma, and James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw.[41] In the next generation, the man who became Richard Pierpoint, a pioneering Canadian settler, was enslaved in Bundu around 1760.[42] Diallo's biography is, though, closer in time and in other respects to that of William Ansah Sessarakoo, who was sold into slavery when sent by his father 'John Corrantee', a prominent African trader in slaves and gold on the Ghanaian coast, to be educated in Britain in 1747. Subsequently released, he achieved some celebrity status in London, returning to Cape Coast Castle in 1750; the story of his life was published in London in 1749.[43]

There is now an extensive literature of and on the autobiographies and biographies of people enslaved in the course of the transatlantic slave trade.[44] Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of Gustavus Vassa*, first published in London in 1789, and republished many times, is only the most celebrated work of both a 'slave narrative' tradition and corpus of literary writing by people of African heritage that developed in Britain and North America, whose founders also include Briton Hammon, Gronniosaw, Phillis Wheatley, Ignatius Sancho, and Ottobah Cugoano.[45] Historians continue to identify new published narratives as well as to explore sources such as court records and other unpublished papers. The writings of enslaved Muslims are also important, with documents by Lamine Kebe, Ibrahim Abd-ar Rahman, and Omar Ibn Said among the most noted.[46]

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41 A. D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (New York, 1997), 30–33; J. S. Handler, 'Survivors of the middle passage: life histories of enslaved Africans in British America', *Slavery & Abolition*, 23:1 (2002), 34, 46–7, 45.

42 P. Meyler and D. Meyler, *A Stolen Life: Searching for Richard Pierpoint* (Toronto, 1999).

43 *The Royal African: or, Memoirs of the Young Prince of Annamaboe* (London, 1749). See also D. Bindman, 'William Ansah Sessarakoo' in J. Hackforth-Jones (ed.), *Between Worlds: Voyagers to Britain 1700–1850* (London, 2007), 36–43.

44 In her 1979 study, Foster notes the existence of over 6,000 accounts, in a number of media including published books, newspapers, and court and other archival records. Foster, *Witnessing Slavery*, ix. This, together with Starling, *Slave Narrative* and W. L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760–1865* (Urbana, 1986), were works of ground-breaking scholarship that created renewed interest in the slave narrative genre in the twentieth century. Andrews locates the beginning of the autobiographical genre in Briton Hammon's 1760 publication. Important online collections include the Library of Congress's *Born in Slavery*, https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/about-this-collection/, accessed 5 Jan. 2019, and *Documenting the American South*, which includes a 'North American slave narratives collection', http://docsouth.unc.edu/index.html, accessed 5 Jan. 2019.

For the collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century oral knowledge of slavery in Bundu see, for example, A. F. Clark, 'The challenges of cross-cultural oral history: collecting and presenting Pulaar traditions on slavery from Bundu, Senegambia (West Africa)', *Oral History Review*, 20: 1/2 (1992), 1–21. African recollections of slavery and the slave trade have recently been published in the major work A. Bellagamba, S. E. Greene, and M. A. Klein (eds), *African Voices on Slavery and the Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 2013).

45 Foster describes the slave narrative form as '…personal accounts by black slaves and ex-slaves of their experiences in slavery and of their efforts to obtain freedom' – and written after escape/manumission (*Witnessing Slavery*, 3). Modern editions of Equiano's autobiography include O. Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, ed. Vincent Carretta (London, 2003). On this literature see also, for example, D. Dabydeen and P. Edwards (eds), *Black Writers in Britain, 1760–1890* (Edinburgh, 1991); V. Carretta and P. Gould (eds), *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic* (Lexington, 2001).

46 Austin, *African Muslims: Transatlantic Stories*; see also A. D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York, 1984); A. Alryyes, *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar ibn Said*

Paul Lovejoy references both Muslim and non-Muslim auto/biographies in proposing a sub-genre of the 'freedom narrative'– stories of people enslaved in Africa who attained their emancipation.[47] Diallo's biography can be argued to fit clearly into such a model.

To these literary contexts can, we argue, be added the fact that the *act* of writing was in itself important for many enslaved Muslims, connecting them intimately to their faith and allowing them to draw on powers believed to be inherent in the written word – beliefs which stemmed from Islamic practices, as exercised, in this case, in Africa. This can be seen, for example, in the widespread use of amulets (Arabic paper documents conferring power and blessing) in the 1835 uprising in Bahia, Brazil, or in Omar ibn Said's use of talismanic symbols.[48]

Rather than being understood as an exceptional figure, therefore, Ayuba Sulayman Diallo can be seen as one whose biography has many resonances with those of a slightly later period – indeed, *pace* concerns about mediation through a white narrator, there is much to be said for Austin's argument for *Some Memoirs* to be seen as the foundation of the slave narrative tradition.[49] Diallo has much in common, in particular, with those authors of slave narratives who had benefited from the West African Islamic education system. Indeed, he was arguably a typical product of that education system, and not at all unusual in his own context.[50] (He also, Curtin argues, falls within a minor tradition of African diplomats at European courts.)[51] Nevertheless, his story stands out from those of these later authors. His visit to London took place in a very different context, coming as it did half a century before the movements to abolish the slave trade and slavery began in earnest in the 1770s and 1780s, and his return to Senegambia as an agent of the Royal African Company is surely unique.

Diallo's rather ambiguous story has been the focus not only of renewed interest, but also of tensions around aspects of his life. His portrait, painted by William Hoare in 1733,

(Madison, WI, 2011). M. A. Al-Ahari, *Five Classic Muslim Slave Narratives: Selim Aga, Job Ben Sulaiman, Nicholas Said, Omar ibn Said, Abu Bakr Sadiq* (Chicago, IL, 2006), reprints the Diallo narrative as well as four others. See also Library of Congress, 'Omar Ibn Said Collection', https://www.loc.gov/collections/omar-ibn-said-collection/about-this-collection/, accessed 25 Jan. 2019. Gomez, 'Muslims in early America' in Alryyes, *Muslim American Slave*, 112, marshals evidence to suggest the presence of the Arabic language (spoken and written) and the Islamic faith among enslaved communities.

47 P. E. Lovejoy, '"Freedom narratives" of transatlantic slavery', *Slavery & Abolition*, 32:1 (2011), 91–107.

48 J. J. Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* (Baltimore, MD, 1993), 98 and *passim*; J. Hunwick, '"I wish to be seen in our land called Afrika": 'Umar b. Sayyid's appeal to be released from slavery', *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 5 (2003), 62–77. Austin also notes a 'Negro slave' of a Captain David Anderson who wrote down some Qur'anic *surahs* in 1768 – perhaps, as Austin speculates, 'to console himself at a low point'. A. D. Austin, 'Contemporary contexts for Omar's *Life* and life' in Alryyes, *Muslim American Slave*, 136–7.

49 Austin, *African Muslims: Transatlantic Stories*, 52, 59; see also M. S. Al-Badaai, 'Positioning the testimony of Job ben Solomon, an enslaved African American Muslim', *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 4:6 (2015).

50 That Diallo was certainly not the only literate person in Bundu is attested by Moore's comment that, on his return to Africa, 'he used to give his country people a good deal of writing paper, which is a very useful commodity among them, and of which the [Royal African] Company had presented him with several reams.' Moore, *Travels,* in Curtin, *Africa Remembered,* 58. See also W. A. Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672–1752* (Chapel Hill, 2013), 193.

51 Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 15–16.

came up for auction in London in 2009 and was bought by the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA). However, a ten-year export ban was placed on the picture because of its cultural significance. The National Portrait Gallery (NPG) raised the purchase price (partly through a public appeal for £100,000); QMA refused to sell, but allowed the display of the portrait at the NPG and funded related tours and public events in the UK.[52] The artist in residence in this programme, the writer Ben Okri, produced a poem on Diallo.[53] Since then, a second portrait of Diallo, which relates indirectly to that by Hoare, has surfaced, and has been bought by the Jamestown–Yorktown Foundation. At the time of writing it is on display at the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown, Virginia, USA. The history of this work is unknown; smaller than the NPG portrait, it is likely to have been intended for a gentleman–scholar's collection and so may possibly have been made for one of Diallo's friends.[54]

Diallo's attitude towards slavery can be seen as controversial in a modern context – a point that arose in discussion during the NPG programme. As we have seen, when he was captured he was actually attempting to trade two people himself, and this was not his first such journey.[55] Our analysis of the letters, below, also suggests that Diallo may have sought to procure two slaves for his own ransom, following established trading practices.[56] Moore tells us that on his return to Africa he bought two horses and a 'woman-slave'.[57] Moreover, his deal with the Royal African Company to exchange two non-Muslims for any Muslim situates his attitude toward slavery firmly within contemporary Islamic beliefs that allowed the enslavement of non-Muslims, within certain limits – an issue dealt with at length in a well-known treatise by Ahmad Baba, the great scholar of Timbuktu.[58]

Similarly, there are tensions in both contemporary and later accounts among multiple versions of Diallo's story. There is disagreement about the level of his scholarship and his precise social standing. As we have seen, there is also debate as to whether his treatment by the British was a generous response to the nobility of his character and a recognition by like-minded souls of his culture and learning, or an astute self-interested move in response to his potential as a commercial agent. These ideas of nobility and usefulness are both present in Bluett's account, although praise of Diallo's character, and sympathy with his plight, undoubtedly dominate.[59] On the other hand, the RAC correspondence makes clear his potential worth to the Company, which may cast doubt on Oglethorpe's

52 See the NPG press release of 19 Jan. 2011 at https://www.npg.org.uk/about/press-old/ayuba-suleiman-diallo-display.php, accessed 5 Jan. 2019. See also the *Guardian*'s report at https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/jul/07/slave-national-portrait-gallery, accessed 5 Jan. 2019. Our thanks to Lucy Peltz at the National Portrait Gallery for information and assistance.

53 For the NPG's coverage, including Okri's poem, see their web pages on Diallo at http://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/diallo/home.php, accessed 5 Jan. 2019.

54 Press report, 13 June 2014, at http://www.historyisfun.org/blog/diallo-portrait/, accessed 5 Jan. 2019; pers. com., T. Davidson, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, 9 Feb. 2017, to whom we are grateful for assistance.

55 Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 63.

56 We have already noted Diallo's agreement with the RAC that the latter accept two non-Muslims as a ransom for a Muslim captive. Captain Pike also commented that 'the custom of ransoming is two slaves to one'. BL Lansdowne MS 841/65, letter from Peter Thompson to Joseph Ames, 24 Mar. 1733–4, f. 71.

57 Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 114.

58 Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 86.

59 Bluett, *Some Memoirs*, 23.

philanthropic motives in rescuing Diallo after reading his letter to his father, as discussed above.[60] Even here, though, there is ambiguity: William Pettigrew has argued that, by the 1730s, the RAC was distancing itself from the trade in slaves to focus on other commercial opportunities in Africa, presenting itself as enlightened and able to treat Africans humanely.[61] Oglethorpe himself was a noted philanthropist who seems to have genuinely disapproved of the slave trade.[62] (The RAC's conversion was clearly not total, given the exchange of gum arabic for enslaved people noted above.)

If Diallo's status – whether in the twenty-first or eighteenth centuries – as 'hero' is ambiguous, this should alert us to the importance of situating him within his own, multiple contexts. As recently as 2011, Michael Gomez highlighted 'the absence of a satisfactory dialogue between historians of Africa and of North America'.[63] Diallo should be understood as someone emerging from the particular conditions and exigencies of the state of Bundu – a state both theocratic and pragmatic, as Gomez has argued, and one deeply enmeshed in the broader political and economic dynamics of the Senegambian region. He was also heir to a very long-established West African tradition of both basic Qur'anic learning and more advanced scholarship.[64]

In Diallo's life story are thus entwined the histories of African scholarship; of the transatlantic slave trade; of plantation slavery in Maryland; of British attempts, through the Royal African Company, to extend their influence in West Africa; and of Enlightenment scholarship in a Britain, where there was also new interest in Islam. This is a truly entangled history, and one that needs to be read with regard to all its subtleties.

There are elements of truth in both versions of Diallo's story – nobility versus usefulness – but this binary opposition misses an important dimension. Here, we are arguing for an alternative reading in which the protagonist actively deploys his own resources to gain the powerful patronage he needs, (correctly) reading American and British society as hierarchical constructions with, in that respect, much in common with his own. This reading puts Diallo's own agency centre-stage, focusing on his writings and how he used them to express and project himself.

Our reading of the Diallo archive suggests that he fully understood his value to the various actors he encountered, and used this understanding, with some brilliance, to make the most of his situation. The RAC, threatened by French interests and wanting to expand into the interior, jumped at the chance of a local contact in Bundu. Members of the English high society of the time competed to ingratiate themselves with intriguing people from 'exotic' parts of the world, while proto-abolitionist clergymen such as Thomas Bluett sought out humanitarian cases to demonstrate the evils of the slave trade. Despite the weakness of

60 Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 22.

61 Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt,* 110–11, 193–5. By 1725 the RAC had lost its monopoly of the English slave trade to 'separate traders' – independent operators such as Captain Pike.

62 On Oglethorpe see B. Wood, 'Oglethorpe, James Edward (1696–1785)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004; online edn 2006) (http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20616). For an older biography see, for example, R. Wright, *A Memoir of General James Oglethorpe* (London, 1867).

63 Gomez, 'Muslims in early America', 96.

64 Gomez, *Pragmatism*, especially 2–3, 47–51, and *passim*. On West African scholarship see especially Ousmane Oumar Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa* (Cambridge, MA., 2016).

Diallo's position, he was not a passive vehicle of his fate. At every turn it was the British who courted Diallo and bent their will to his own agenda, not the other way around. The RAC's acquiescence to Diallo's demand that they cease the enslavement of Muslims demonstrates that he felt able to enforce his worldview onto a seemingly more powerful actor.

DIALLO'S ARCHIVE: A LIFE SHAPED BY LETTERS

As we have seen, Diallo was literate in Arabic, having received an education well above the basic level, and a devout Muslim. He was someone who turned readily to the pen to express himself in numerous contexts, and who seems to have had a genuine interest in scholarship, or at least in supporting scholarly friends. In addition, it is clear that he had a hand in fashioning the telling of his own life story in the versions written down by Bluett and Ames. A significant number of his letters and other writings survive or are known to have existed; these are listed in Appendix 3 and discussed further below.

In what follows, we divide Diallo's writings, self-narration, and scholarly activity into three distinct periods – before, during, and after his time in Britain – and examine them with particular reference to documents held by the British Library. These consist of five letters and a number of other short texts authored by Diallo. Of the letters, three are accompanied by English versions and have previously been published in facsimile, but two are in

Figs. 1 and 2: One of Diallo's letters to his father
British Library Add MS 20,783a, 1731–3 (Appendix 2 below)
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Arabic only and have received little attention. Such an approach has the potential to reveal much of Diallo's self-framing and positioning with regard to his captors, and to the British more broadly, and his development of these strategies over time. It should, however, be noted that this periodisation is largely shaped by those years when he had the most intense contact with the British; it is likely that he created a much larger archive both before and after his period in North America and Britain, which, to our knowledge, has not survived.

Diallo's archive: before arrival in Britain

The earliest of Diallo's letters held by the British Library are in Arabic script only and are addressed to named people in Bundu.[65] They were almost certainly written from captivity, before Diallo's arrival in England. They are the most surprising of the BL letters, and in many ways the most difficult to unpick. Historical sources show that Diallo wrote at least two letters during his period of captivity, but it is not easy to marry up the evidence in these accounts with the letters in hand.

Diallo is first said to have written a letter while held on board ship in Kaur (during the first two weeks of March 1731). Moore and Bluett both agree that he sent a message to a friend, asking him to let his father – Sulayman – know that he had been captured and to quickly redeem him. A later account given by Captain Pike, and held in the British Library, explicitly states that Diallo wrote to a friend, who then came to the ship but was not allowed to see Diallo. On being told by the friend that it would take at least two months for a message to come back from Bundu, Pike says that he proposed that the friend redeem Diallo and keep him until the ransom came, 'all which he declined'. Pike set sail ten days later. Moore and Bluett say that his father sent slaves to redeem him, but they arrived too late.[66] A message had therefore certainly been sent to Bundu, although it is not clear whether it was actually written by Diallo.

We next hear of Diallo attempting to communicate with Bundu when, as discussed above, he was returned to Maryland after his abortive attempt to escape from slavery. The letter, which Bluett clearly states was addressed to his father, was sent via Vachell Denton and Henry Hunt, but failed to reach Captain Pike, whose ship was the intended means of transport to West Africa, before he left Britain on his journey back to James Fort.[67] Hunt instead took the letter to the Deputy Governor of the Royal African

65 BL Ames.10 no. 120, letter from Diallo to ?his father, 1731–3, in unpublished scrapbook: J. Ames (comp.), '[Catalogue title:] A collection, ms. and printed, illustrative of various alphabets, etc., brought together by Joseph Ames and pasted in a scrap-book.' '[Title in work:] 'Various alphabets, characters and inscriptions used in divers parts and ages of the world, collected by Joseph Ames', ([London] [before 1761]); BL Add MS 20,783a, letter from Diallo to his father, 1731–3. Nossent, *Personne*, also analyses and translates the second of these letters into French. We would like to thank Dmitry Bondarev, Alfa Mamadou Diallo Lelouma, Nikolai Dobronravin, Fallou Ngom, and Darya Ogorodnikova for their invaluable assistance in the analysis of these letters.

66 Bluett, *Some Memoirs,* 18–19; Moore, *Travels,* in Curtin, *Africa* Remembered, 40–1; BL Lansdowne MS 841/65, letter from Peter Thompson to Joseph Ames, 24 Mar. 1733–4, f. 71. This account, a record of an interview with Pike, adds important new details to Bluett's; it should, however, be noted that Pike had a strong interest in vindicating himself from possible allegations of misconduct in enslaving Diallo, which may have influenced the content. Our thanks to Arnold Hunt for alerting us to this document.

67 Bluett, *Some Memoirs,* 23.

Company, James Oglethorpe, who sent it to John Gagnier, Laudian Chair of Arabic at Queens College, Oxford, so that he might translate it.[68]

How does this evidence relate to the two British Library letters in Arabic script with which we are concerned here?

The letter we shall deal with first, translated in Appendix 1 below, is among material held by the British Library relating to Joseph Ames. It consists of 29 lines of Arabic text occupying the recto of one folio. The paper shows signs of having been folded, but there is no postmark, and the text does not seem to be complete.[69]

Joseph Ames (1689–1759) was a ship's chandler at Wapping, London, a collector of antiquities, and, from 1741, the *de facto* Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries.[70] He befriended Diallo during the latter's time in London. After Ames's death, an auction of his manuscripts took place on 5 May 1760. In the sale catalogue, we find item 393: a copy of Bluett's biography of Diallo with 'some notes by Mr. Ames, and several original Letters concerning him'.[71] It seems that at least some of the material held by Ames pertaining to Diallo made its way to the British Museum Library (now British Library), where it is now held in a bound volume of Ames's collection of 'scriptural curiosities'.

This letter has been labelled – perhaps by Ames – 'Jouba the Affrican's Letter from Maryland to London 1729 among Mr. Hunts papers'.[72] We know that the letter from Maryland mentioned by Bluett was sent to Professor John Gagnier at Oxford for translation, and that thereafter what happened to it is unclear. The identity of the 'Mr Hunt' referred to is also unclear, but there is a high probability that Ames was referring either to Henry Hunt, who had brought the letter Diallo had written to his father in Maryland to Oglethorpe (and apparently shown it to Ames), or to Thomas Hunt, who had written to Ames in August 1738, telling him that he had some of Job's correspondence.[73] Thomas Hunt (1696–1774) was Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford from 1738, and it is possible that he had received Diallo's letter from John Gagnier, his predecessor. Either of these identifications gives a clear link to Diallo and might suggest that this letter is the 'letter to his father' Bluett has Diallo writing from Maryland. Diallo's reference in this letter to the 'country of the Christians' and to his desire 'to go back to the country of Bundu' seems to support this assertion.

However, as discussed more fully below, this letter appears to be very concerned with the mechanics of Diallo's ransom, which perhaps suggests to the contrary that he could have written it at some point during his captivity before leaving Africa, possibly from Kaur. In

68 Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 84–5. In Ames's account (letter from J. Ames to W. Bogdani in SGS First Minute Book, f. 186, as summarised in Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 84), Hunt shows the letter to Ames who tries to get it translated. Grant (*Fortunate Slave*, 84n1) suggests that this may have been an elaboration of Ames's to give him a greater role in the Diallo story. See also Honeybone and Honeybone (eds), *Correspondence*, 81–2.

69 BL Ames.10, no. 120, letter from Diallo to ?his father, 1731–3.

70 J. Evans, *A History of the Society of Antiquaries* (London, 1956), 89–90; Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 84.

71 *A Catalogue of the…Collection of Scarce Printed Books, and Curious Manuscripts of Mr. J. Ames…Which Will be Sold by Auction, by Mr. Langford, etc. [With the names of the purchasers and prices in ms]* (London, 1760).

72 The 1729 date is clearly inaccurate because we know that Diallo was captured in 1731.

73 Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 198–9.

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that case, it could be the letter he is known to have written to a friend, or one he may subsequently have sent to his father. The process of its transmission and copying in that case is not at all clear, although a link with Henry Hunt would seem to make it possible.

The second letter discussed here was donated to the British Museum Library in 1855 by one Dr H. W. Scott (Figs. 1 and 2; translated in Appendix 2 below).[74] This consists of one folio. The recto bears a postmark, addressed to Sulayman Diallo – Diallo's father – in English, French, and Arabic, and the verso is the body of the letter, consisting of thirty lines of Arabic text. The folio had been folded for some time and shows signs of wear. The Arabic handwriting is similar to the first letter but appears less neat and straight.

These details raise the possibility of this letter being the 'letter to his father' Diallo wrote from Maryland for forwarding to Bundu via Captain Pike, as the English postmark suggests. The fact that Diallo seems to announce that he is 'on the way to the country of the Christians' in the letter complicates this theory. On the other hand, aspects of the phrasing of the letter in hand *may* suggest that it was written in America. Diallo writes that 'the country of the Christians is no good for a Muslim', perhaps a reference to his mistreatment in the Americas.[75]

It is, therefore, very difficult at present to tie these two letters to specific items in the historical record – and, to complicate matters further, Diallo may have written more letters to Bundu than is recorded. Nevertheless, both clearly date from his time in captivity and enslavement, and both have much to tell us.

From Bluett's account, we would expect the letters Diallo sent to Bundu during his captivity – especially the one said to have had such an effect on Oglethorpe – to contain an impassioned appeal for his freedom. But what we actually find in these two letters is far more nuanced.

In the letters, Diallo does not mention his father at all. While both letters seem to have practical goals (of which more below), in both cases the greater proportion of the Arabic text is concerned with proving his identity and highlighting his connections to local ruling elites. In the second letter (Appendix 2), Diallo gives the names of thirty-two people and – for some of them – where they live. Of the names that we have been able to trace, eight are members of his own family (his brother, brother-in-law, two wives, and three children, but not his father), three are members of the Sissibe (the rulers of Bundu), six are from the Bundu religious establishment (two *alfas*, one *tamsiru,* one *mudi*, and two *imams*),[76] while twelve names seem to be connected with the Denyanke royal dynasty of Futa Toro.[77] This is significant because, as we know from Bluett's account, the *satigi* (ruler)

74 BL Add MS 20,783a, letter from Diallo to his father, 1731–3. The British Library holds no further information about the provenance of this document.

75 Bluett (*Some Memoirs*, 20) states that in Maryland, Diallo faced persecution while trying to perform his prayers. Meanwhile, Nossent (*Personne*, 58) suggests that Diallo's mention of the river or sea of 'Kīz' in this letter is a reference to King's Creek in Kent County, present-day Delaware, where Diallo was recaptured after his first escape.

76 These terms are explained in Appendices 1 and 2 below.

77 For the Denyanke dynasty, see O. Kane, *La première hégémonie peule*: *le Fuuta Tooro de Koli Tenella à Almaami Abdul* (Paris, 2004). Diallo mentions the *Sire*, a branch of the Denyanke. He also makes frequent reference to Būbu/Boubou, which could refer to a number of Denyanke or Sissibe rulers. He lists three members of a 'Bār' family and nine from a 'Jām' family, which Kane (*Hégémonie peule*) mentions as

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of Futa Toro, Samba Gelaajo Jegi (ruled 1725–35; 1740–3), studied with Diallo while in exile in Bundu, and the two remained in close communication; oddly, however, Samba himself is not named here.[78] At the end of the letter Diallo repeats, 'without a doubt', that he is who he says he is and that 'there is no good in the country of the Christians for a Muslim', and requests that 'his two wives are not to remarry'.

Meanwhile in the first letter (Appendix 1), Diallo also gives a list of names. This time there is a total of seventeen. Six are members of his own family (his brother, his brother-in-law, his two wives, and two possible relations of his second wife), one is a member of the Sissibe, two are religious scholars (one *alfa*, one *fodio*), and eight relate to the Denyanke. Almost all these names appear in the letter previously cited.

In this letter, Diallo also mentions 'Kaur', 'two slaves', and the names of Lamine Jay and *Fodio* Kazāra, which must surely be a reference to his capture in 1731, repeating 'the country of the Christians is no good'.[79] Writing in Fulfulde *ajami* (Fulfulde in Arabic script), Diallo says that the country of the Christians is 'no good' and that he wants 'to go back to Bundu', and instructs the recipient of the letter to 'write a paper to send to me' and, possibly, to send two slaves to redeem him. The phrase 'two slaves' – in Arabic, but bookended by Fulfulde text, not all of which can as yet be deciphered – occurs seven times in this letter, suggesting its importance. Taken together with other identifiable phrases and words here, this *may* suggest that Diallo was asking for two slaves as his own ransom, which, as we have seen, was the normal trading practice at the time. Until the Fulfulde *ajami* can be fully deciphered, this remains a matter of conjecture.

As will be clear from this brief summary, while Diallo's letters are mostly in Arabic, certain parts – arguably, the most important – are in his mother tongue of Fulfulde, which is used to convey direct, practical information.[80] It is significant that only the Ames letter, which contains more precise information and instructions than the other letter we discuss, includes extensive phrases in *ajami*. Diallo perhaps felt that this information was best conveyed in the local language. By contrast, in Arabic Diallo makes extensive use of religious phrasing, and repeats that he is writing to 'all the Muslims of Bundu, male and female'.[81] He states that he 'performs prayers and keeps the fast', and ends the letter translated in Appendix 2 by stating that 'Muslims are brothers so pray among your brothers', followed by a Qur'anic phrase.

If we interpret these two letters correctly, aside from the practical details we have noted above, Diallo's purpose in writing them was also to claim a number of relationships and alliances: family members, scholars, royalty, and rulers whom he hoped would facilitate his release either from Pike's sloop at Kaur or from plantation work in Maryland. To

indicative of Fulani elites from the Futa Toro region. For brief background on the Denyanke in Futa Toro see also D. Robinson, *Chiefs and Clerics: Abdul Bokar Kan and Futa Toro 1853–1891* (Oxford, 1975).

78 In Bluett's account (*Some Memoirs*, 17–19), Diallo mentions receiving fine weapons as a present from 'King Sambo', while the latter apparently declared war on the Mandingos when he found out that they had captured and sold Diallo. Nossent (*Personne*, *passim*) analyses the nature of Diallo's relationship with Samba.

79 See letter from Governor Hull to Moore, 13 Nov. 1734, asking if 'Fody Cojear' had informed Ayuba's friends of his return to Africa (Moore, *Travels*, 154).

80 We thank Fallou Ngom for his assistance with the translation of these phrases.

81 Arabic: *jam[ā]ʿat al-muslimīn wa-l-muslimāt fī bilād Bundu*

this end, he highlighted his Muslim identity and appealed to others on that basis. The list of important regional actors he provided explains the dissonance between the letters held by the British Library and Oglethorpe's apparent humanitarian reaction to the translation he was shown.[82] The letters do not include an explicit appeal for clemency and assistance, and it is highly unlikely that the passages in *ajami* possibly concerning a ransom were translated into English. If these letters were indeed the same text that Oglethorpe saw in translation, they affected him, we can surmise, by supplying (together with what was otherwise known about Diallo) enough information to suggest that he was a person of substance (who perhaps should not, according to the norms of the time, have been enslaved), based in a geographically critical area for the RAC at that moment, who might be able to provide the elusive key to the interior of Africa.

The names that Diallo chose to include in his letters were evidently those whom he believed to wield power and influence in the Senegambian region. As such, these two letters reveal a good deal of new information about the history and geography of Bundu in the early eighteenth century. They shed light on the accounts given by Curtin and Gomez of Bundunke history and politics, based on oral histories they and previous anthropologists recorded inside and outside the region. The state of Bundu, it is argued, was founded in the late seventeenth century by Malik Sy, who obtained the territory from the *tunka* (ruler) of Tuabo, one of the rulers of Galam.[83] Malik Sy was succeeded by his son, Bubu Malik Sy, who established Bundu's independence from Galam and the dominance of the Sissibe rulers.

The period between the death of *Eliman* (ruler) Bubu Malik Sy, possibly in 1715, and the start of *Eliman* Maka Jiba's reign is not as well understood as the foundation of the state. Bluett's account of Diallo, set right in the middle of this period, has been seen to be of considerable importance in reconstructing this period of Bundu's history. Curtin reasons that this interregnum lasted until 1735, due to the fact that Diallo failed to mention the Sissibe in his account.[84] Making reference to the Diallo family's allegiance to the Denyanke *satigis* of Futa Toro, Gomez suggests 'his failure to mention Malik Sy and Bubu Malik is therefore in keeping with his family's refusal to acknowledge Sissibe sovereignty', and dates the end of the interregnum to 1725, based on French reports from Fort St Joseph.[85]

However, contrary to these assumptions, Diallo's letters held in the British Library make very clear references to the Sissibe and suggest that he did in fact recognise their claim to Bundu. Diallo, whose knowledge of Bundunke politics presumably dated no further than the time of his capture in February 1731, addresses his first letter to, among others, *Eliman* Tumane Bubu Malik Sy. In his letters he also mentions Maka b. Būbu Mālik Sy (Maka Jiba), who would become third *Eliman,* as well as Ḥamdi b. Būbu Mālik Sy, another son of Bubu Malik Sy. From Hull's journal we know that he and Diallo met Maka Jiba in July 1735.[86] Rather than making exaggerated claims about his own family background

82 Curtin, *Africa Remembered,* 23.
83 *Ibid.* 17–34; Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 32–51. For a discussion of earlier accounts, see *ibid.* 10–17.
84 Curtin, *Africa Remembered,* 30–1.
85 Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 61.
86 Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 172.

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or supporting one faction of rival claimants over another for control of Bundu, it is more likely that, as we argue above, Diallo was simply appealing to as many people as possible in his home country for assistance.

The evidence of the Diallo letters matches the Bundunke rulers' lists, which state that Tumane Bubu Malik, son of Bubu Malik Sy, took power upon his death and ruled for four or five years.[87] Gomez has argued that 'It is probable that the rulers' lists seek to mask the fact that the Sissibe had lost power during this period, while maintaining accuracy regarding the period's duration'.[88] Diallo's letters suggest that the version given in the Bundunke king lists seems to be more reliable than previously thought.

This new evidence does not clear up all the confusion relating to the interregnum. Gomez estimates that Bubu Malik Sy died in 1715. If Bubu Malik was succeeded by Tumane Bubu for four or five years as stated in the Bundunke king lists, this only takes us to about 1719/20. The Diallo letters suggest Tumane Bubu was still *Eliman* in 1731. The dates of Bubu Malik Sy's death and of Maka Jiba's accession (1735 at the latest) remain unclear. But the Diallo letters at least give a clear indication that *Eliman* Tumane Bubu Malik Sy did indeed reign in between these two regnal periods, and certainly in 1731.

The letters also correspond closely to what we know of the geography of Bundu and add further information. As is clear from Gomez's work, Bundu (called 'Boonda' or 'Bondu' by contemporaries) was a state rather than a town. In his journal, Thomas Hull identified Diallo's home as a town or village called Chambey or Diamwali in north-eastern Bundu.[89] The British Library letters include a number of local place names, but Chambey/Diamwali is not among them. Diallo mentions Boulebane, Fissa, and Sambacolo, which Gomez has identified as towns in northern Bundu, stating that Boulebane had become Bundu's northern capital by 1797, although its status before that time is not clear.[90] In the Ames letter, Diallo says that he wishes to 'go back to the country of Bundu, Boulibouki', which in the postmarked letter he identifies as the home of the Sire, a branch of the Denyanke dynasty of Futa Toro. Thomas Hull described 'Bullabuck' as a small village within five miles of Chambey, at which he spent the night before meeting Diallo's family the next day.[91] In sum, the locations that Diallo mentioned in these letters confirm that his home was located in northern Bundu, but the exact name remains unclear.

The English postmark on the letter cited in Appendix 2 is, however, rather unspecific, reading: 'Mr Solomon the son of Abraham, Priest at Bundo near Mackana in Foutre up the River Senegall in Africa'. As Gomez notes, Mackana (variously spelled Makhana, Macanat) was one of the towns in Galam (also known as Gadiaga and Gajaaga) bordering

87 Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 62.
88 *Ibid*. 62.
89 Grant, *Fortunate Slave,* 170.
90 Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 94 (where he gives a map situating Boulebane and Diamwali) and 100–1. Similarly, in the Ames papers (BL Ames.10 f. 120), Ames states that Diallo lives 'in Boondo bulla bana in Foutre', that is, Bundu, Boulebane, in Futa. Other so far unidentified place names in Diallo's letters are Wāsa, Māmadawā, and Fiḥa, as well as 'Bīli' and 'Bayāli', the homes of his brothers.
91 Grant, *Fortunate Slave,* 170.

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northern Bundu.[92] It was located on the Falamé River in the vicinity of the French fort of St Joseph, rebuilt there in 1715, a place Diallo may refer to in Bluett's memoir.[93] In the Arabic postmark, Diallo gives his home region as 'the country of Bundu in the country of Futa in the country of Galam'.[94] However, it is not clear from his use of the Arabic word *bilād* whether Diallo meant any large settlement or specifically a 'country' or region.[95]

Diallo's archive: in Britain

Once he arrived in Britain, Diallo actively strove to establish his point of origin and its wider context. The geographical information he gave Bluett was, again, rather unspecific. Bluett states that Diallo's birthplace was 'a Town called Boonda in the County of Galumbo [Galam]', and that Diallo said that his grandfather founded the town of Boonda in the 1680s under the suzerainty of the *satigis* of Futa Toro.[96] On the other hand, the sketch map held by the British Library which he and Bluett seem to have drawn together appears to be a map of countries, showing Bundu ('Bonda') in the context of England, France, Spain, 'Foota' (Futa Toro), Senegal, 'Jaloff', 'Manding', and others.[97]

The apparent contradiction between describing Bundu as a town or a country may perhaps be explained by Diallo's ability to speak in different registers, giving detailed locations for home consumption – for the intended recipient(s) of his letters, who would need proof of his identity in order to believe that their correspondent from lands unknown was indeed their lost son – and perhaps a rather more general, less specific view of Bundu for the foreigners amongst whom he found himself. For the same audience, he may also have been aiming to aggrandise his status by making the (untrue) claim that his grandfather had founded Bundu itself.

These geographical engagements with Bluett formed just a part of Diallo's efforts to narrate and shape his own story through Bluett's pen. As we discussed earlier, the sketch map of Senegambia seems to have been a collaborative effort, and it is highly likely that the two men also worked together on the handwritten notes of Diallo's biography.[98] Diallo's self-fashioning in Britain more generally – through his archive and other means – provides further evidence of his deeply skilful agency. Bluett writes that, through a patron, he was able to procure 'a rich silk Dress, made up after his own Country Fashion' in order to be presented at court, strongly implying that Diallo initiated this whole set of social transactions.[99] It is in this robe, with a Qur'an manuscript around his neck, that he presents himself to the world in the carefully crafted image of his portraits.

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92 Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 41.

93 A. Sabatié, *Le Senegal: Sa conquête et son organisation (1364–1925)* (St-Louis, Senegal, 1925); Bluett, *Some Memoirs*, 44: 'the French Factory in their Neighbourhood, has much confirmed them in an Opinion that all Christians are Idolaters'. For locations of European forts in this region, see W. R. Wood, 'An archaeological appraisal of early European settlements in the Senegambia', *The Journal of African History*, 8: 1 (1967), 39–64.

94 Arabic: *bilād Bundu fi bilād Fūta fi bilād Kalam*

95 In BL Ames.10, f. 120, Diallo says: 'Ḥamdi b. Sulayman [and] Aḥmad b. Būbu, the name of their country [bilād] in Bundu is Fiḥa.' Here the meaning of 'bilād' must surely be 'town' or some form of settlement.

96 Bluett, *Some Memoirs*, 12–13.

97 BL Add. MS. 32556, f. 239v., sketch map by Diallo and Bluett. Probably written in London. N.d., 1733–4.

98 *Ibid.* f. 239r.

99 Bluett, *Some Memoirs*, 31.

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Diallo's surviving or known written archive from this time reflects to some extent the elite networks among which he moved in London. His patrons, friends, and acquaintances included the Duke of Cumberland, the Duke of Montagu (who presented him at court), the Earl of Pembroke, Queen Caroline, Nathaniel Brassey (a London banker, MP for Hertford and one of the prime movers behind the public subscription to redeem him from slavery), Sir Hans Sloane, Joseph Smith (writing-master at St Paul's School), and a host of others. The first three all gave him presents to take back to Africa.[100] Such networking was assisted by Diallo's knowledge of English, which he learned to understand and speak well, if not quite fluently.[101]

While in Britain, he is said to have scribed three Qur'ans from memory. The recipients were Nathaniel Brassey, the Duke of Montagu, and Sir Hans Sloane.[102] Thus, Diallo seems to have been engaging in gift-giving in order to strengthen these relationships. Although two of these copies remain lost, one of them has recently come to light and been acquired by a private owner.[103]

What his writings from this period attest to most strikingly are his scholarly activities and friendships – which were not, of course, unconnected with his pursuit of status within British society, but which nevertheless brought him into contact with a wide range of people, and strongly reflected his commitment to Islam. In addition to his Qur'anic scribing activities, he engaged with George Sale, who published (from an anti-Islamic point of view) a major translation of the Qur'an into English in 1734. Sale is known to have obtained an Arabic version of the New Testament, Psalter, and catechism for Diallo.[104]

Diallo's engagement with his friends is brought to life by a collection of short entries pasted into the Ames scrapbook. These include a table showing equivalent characters in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syricac, and Arabic, 'drawn out by Mr M:Mattaire [*sic*] for Jouba [Ayuba] the affrican's observation' (the Arabic characters in this document are not in Diallo's hand); a table of Arabic, the characters of the Arabic alphabet almost certainly written out by Ames under Diallo's tuition, and showing obvious influences of Diallo's own handwriting; Qur'anic verses written by Diallo, with his English explanation recorded by Ames; and Diallo's illustration of the different methods of joining the Arabic letters *lām* and *alif*.[105] These fragments also include indications of Diallo's friendships with Joseph Smith,

100 Moore, *Travels*, 203, quoted in Donnan, *Documents*, 415.

101 Bluett, *Some Memoirs*, 25.

102 The source of this information was Maurice Johnson, president of the Spalding Gentlemen's Society (writing in 1750). Honeybone and Honeybone, *Correspondence*, 83.

103 Qur'an scribed by Diallo. We are grateful to the owner, Mr Rami R. El Nimer, for allowing us access to this manuscript and for lending it to the British Library's 2015–16 'West Africa: Word, Symbol, Song' exhibition (for which see British Library, *West Africa: Word, Symbol, Song* (https://www.bl.uk/west-africa), 2015–16).

104 Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 97. Diallo also sent greetings to a 'Mista Sail' in one of his letters from Africa (letter from Diallo to unnamed, Bundu, 27 January 1736. RS EL/12/21). Austin (*African Muslims: Transatlantic Stories*, 56) speculates that he may have had a hand in George Sale's translation of the Qur'an. G. Sale, *The Koran, Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammed: Translated into English Immediately from the Original Arabic* (London, 1734).

105 BL Ames.10, nos 8, 116, 117 and 120, 1733–4. Michael Maittaire (*sic*) (1668–1747) was a scholar of classics and typography.

'Mrs Smith', his wife, and Mrs Ann Harris, her sister, as well as a Dr Oxley (as yet unidentified).[106]

These documents, once deciphered, have a moving immediacy in their ability to suggest the to and fro of discussion and the sharing of information as Diallo and his friends explored the writing of their respective languages and the nature of their sacred texts. Diallo also translated inscriptions in Arabic for Hans Sloane, and is said to have taught Arabic, while still in North America, to John Humphrys, Minister of Annapolis, as well as discussing religious matters with the Bishop of Maryland.[107] Perhaps it is not surprising that he would have wished to engage further in these activities by joining the Spalding Gentlemen's Society, one of the learned societies which were vibrant centres of intellectual enquiry in Britain at this date. Joseph Ames made an application on his behalf on 17 November 1733; although the original correspondence has not survived, the SGS archive holds a copy of the application, which includes Diallo's greeting and signature in Arabic.[108]

During this period, Diallo also used correspondence to attempt to re-establish links with his family in Bundu. Letters he wrote during this period, although they are not known to have survived, were received by his father.[109]

Diallo's archive: after return to Africa

After Diallo's return to Africa in 1734, his letters take on a new meaning as a tool of long-distance communication, superbly exploited, with his friends, allies, and patrons in Britain. Looking both at Diallo's surviving correspondence and at what has not survived but is noted in other sources, it is clear that, in the first years after his return to Africa, he was an active letter-writer, maintaining his network of contacts, patrons, and friends, and endeavouring both to promote the interests of the Royal African Company and to achieve his own goals through doing so.

The earliest three surviving letters after his return to Senegambia, probably all written in December 1734, are in the British Library's collections and were written by Diallo to friends and contacts in Britain. Each consists of an Arabic original with a contemporary translation into English on the same page, and they all seem to have been written on 8 December 1734 at James Fort. The Arabic letter to Hans Sloane of this date has been commented on briefly (and was published in facsimile) by Curtin, but all other studies refer only to the English translation accompanying the letter made by the RAC.[110] The other two letters are to Nathaniel Brassey, who, as we have seen, was a key ally in releasing Diallo from slavery,

106 BL Ames.10, nos 118 and 120, 1733–4.

107 BL Sloane MS 4068, f. 276, letter from H. Sloane to unnamed correspondent, 16 Sep. 1735; letter from J. Ames to W. Bogdani, 17 Nov. 1733, in Honeybone and Honeybone, *Correspondence*, 82.

108 Application by Diallo to join the Spalding Gentlemen's Society, 23 May 1734, published in Honeybone and Honeybone, *Correspondence*, 81–3. Diallo greets the SGS, signs his name and includes the Arabic phrase 'I ask God's forgiveness', a modest formula used when receiving a compliment or honour. Our thanks to Dustin Frazier Wood for help with these documents. For full details see Appendix 3.

109 Curtin, *Africa Remembered,* 55, 58.

110 BL Sloane MS 4053, f. 341; Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 26n6, facing 52.

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and John Chandler, a London apothecary who read a paper to the Royal Society in 1734.[111] These have been published in facsimile by Austin and more recently by Nossent.[112]

The most interesting thing in these letters is the disparity between Diallo's Arabic letters and their English counterparts. According to the copyist, the English was dictated by Diallo and written down by the RAC at James Fort. Since Diallo could speak English quite well, both versions seem to have come directly from him.[113] The English letters contain more, if brief, specifics of his travels and reference more of his correspondents. The Arabic letters are shorter and far simpler than the English counterparts, and there is not much variation between them. The main body of the letters to Hans Sloane and John Chandler are almost identical. However, there are several points of interest.

First, throughout his letters Diallo is at pains to replicate the correct forms of address, transliterating the English 'Sir', 'Mr', 'Governor', etc., and for Nathaniel Brassey going as far as to transliterate 'Member of Parliament, Lambeth Street'.[114] Meanwhile, in his letter to Hans Sloane, Diallo takes an opportunity to pay his respects to the royal family (as he also does in a letter to the Duke of Montagu held at Northamptonshire Record Office).[115] From these points, it is clear that, whether in his letters to Bundu or to Britain, Diallo understood the importance of terms of address and included them whenever possible. Secondly, throughout his letters Diallo repeatedly requests that his associates in London maintain their ties with him and the people of Bundu. He tells Hans Sloane and John Chandler that he wishes to see them again due to the familial bond between them.[116] In his letters to Nathaniel Brassey and Sloane he states that 'all Muslims' love them and wish them well.[117] Lastly, Diallo is at pains to present himself as 'a weak servant lacking power and money' – a phrase he uses in two cases, perhaps as a rhetorical device to elicit further patronage from his British friends.

In other letters, too, we find similar friendly words. He tells the Duke of Montagu that 'I prayed for you the very best', while at the same time requesting news of his 'brother', his interpreter Lamine Jay, whose freedom Diallo had asked the Duke to procure.[118] Other correspondents, or people to be greeted, include George Sale, Dr Oxley, Joseph Smith,

111 BL Add MS 32556, f. 235, letter from Ayuba Sulayman Diallo to J. Chandler, 8 Dec. 1734; BL Add MS 32556, f. 237, letter from Ayuba Sulayman Diallo to N. Brassey, ?8 Dec. 1734. For Brassey and Chandler see Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 102 and *passim*; G. T. Bettany, 'Chandler, John (1699/1700–1780)', rev. T. A. B. Corley, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5104, accessed 5 Jan. 2019.

112 Austin, *African Muslims: Sourcebook*, 72; Nossent, *Personne*, 160–3.

113 Maurice Johnson, who knew him personally, wrote that he 'spake English well enough to be understood'. Honeybone and Honeybone, *Correspondence*, 83.

114 Arabic: ممب بالمن لمب سترت

115 BL Sloane MS 4053, f. 341: 'convey my greetings to the ruler of men and women, of boys and girls, of every person'; NRO Montagu vol. 7, ff. 209, 211, letter from Diallo to the Duke of Montagu (via Francis Moore), Joar Factory, 5 Apr. 1735: 'convey greeting to my dear friends, the King [Arabic: *amīr al-balad*] and his wife'. Our thanks to Crispin Powell, Buccleuch Archivist, for making this correspondence available to us.

116 BL Sloane MS 4053, f. 341; BL Add. MS 32556, f. 235. Arabic: صلة الرحيم Thanks to Muhammad Isa Waley for his advice on this translation.

117 BL Add. MS 32556, f. 237; BL Sloane MS 4053, f. 341.

118 NRO Montagu vol. 7, ff. 209, 211.

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and Joseph Ames; and he even sent Hans Sloane a sample of poisoned arrows to test while hunting.[119]

Diallo's correspondence after his return to Africa gives us clear and moving accounts of his first return to Bundu in late 1735, and, in a letter to Hans Sloane (lost but reported in several newspapers) a summary of a further trip into the interior in 1736.[120] Diallo's business mission on behalf of the RAC (noted above) is evidenced not only in this communication, but in the records of his correspondence with the RAC as well as their various letters and records of discussions concerning him.

Despite the RAC's continued efforts to cultivate Diallo after his imprisonment by the French in 1736, the surviving and known archive, like the relationship, peters out at this point. If it is true that Diallo himself survived until 1773, it is inconceivable that he did not continue to create an archive. Subsequent letters to friends in Britain may have been lost, or perhaps the dissolution of the RAC in 1752 severed Diallo's connection to Britain and thus his means of transferring letters there. Alternatively, perhaps Diallo became sufficiently disillusioned to cut the ties he had created and cultivated (although the SGS must have had a source of information for his date of death). Whatever the case, it is highly likely that he created a parallel archive of documents destined for correspondents in West Africa – which, if it still exists, may yet come to light.

DIALLO AS WRITER AND SCHOLAR

Throughout his stay in North America and Britain, Diallo constantly attracted wonder and admiration at the extent of his learning. Bluett's account suggests that he had a high level of Islamic knowledge: 'His Learning, considering the Disadvantages of the Place he came from, was far from being contemptible'.[121] However, Curtin, referring to Diallo's 1734 letter to Hans Sloane, suggests that 'the level of his knowledge of Arabic...points to the kind of education that might be expected of a *diula* or travelling merchant, rather than an important Islamic scholar'.[122] Diallo was indeed captured while he was on a trading mission. He stated that his father was an *alfa*, a term denoting religious learning, but never made the same claim for himself. Still, this does not suggest that the education he received was insignificant.

Now that we have a reasonable sample of Diallo's Arabic writing, we can properly assess the extent of his education in the Arabic language. In the two 'letters to his father', the number of words Diallo spells incorrectly is high. Most words are misspelt due to a

119 RS EL/12/22, Diallo to J. Smith, Yanimerow, 27 Jan. 1736; BL MS. 4068, f. 276, Sloane to unnamed correspondent, 16 Sep. 1735.

120 RS EL/12/22, letter from Diallo to J. Smith, Yanimerow, 27 Jan. 1736 and RS EL/12/21, Diallo to 'Sirs', 27 Jan. 1736; *Gentlemen's Magazine*, Nov. 1736.

121 Bluett, *Some Memoirs*, p. 52.

122 BL Sloane MS 4053, f. 341; Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 26. Curtin goes on (26n6) to say that Diallo's Arabic is 'ungrammatical or lifted from the Koran by whole phrases' and – bizarrely – compares it unfavourably to that of Mahmud Kati and Abd al-Rahman al-Sa'di, two seventeenth-century chroniclers from Timbuktu.

confusion between the Arabic letters *sīn* and *ṣād*, *hā'* and *ḥā'*, and *tā'* and *ṭā'*, but other examples may have been due to misremembering the word in question.[123] Meanwhile, other examples of unexpected words are clearly due to the influence of oral pronunciation and/or Diallo's use of his native language of Fulfulde.[124] Diallo's use of grammar and syntax is also basic. Both of these letters are written in the third person.[125] Further, the text consists almost entirely of nominal (non-verbal) sentences or lists of names prefixed with the Arabic vocative particle *yā*. In the Ames letter, Diallo switches to Fulfulde *ajami* to articulate the essential parts of what he wants to convey, but whether this is because he could not do so in Arabic is open to debate.

We must remember that Arabic was not Diallo's mother tongue and that he probably never, or seldom, used it as a spoken language. Furthermore, Diallo almost certainly wrote these letters while in captivity, when he would have been experiencing mental and physical hardships. When writing from Maryland, Diallo had been away from his country for four months or more without access to writing material or Arabic texts. However, in the letter Diallo wrote to Sir Hans Sloane from James Fort on 8 December 1734, we find his Arabic much improved. Far from consisting entirely of Qur'anic phrases, as Curtin has claimed, this letter to Hans Sloane suggests a good knowledge of Arabic epistolary standards.[126] The many eloquent but unfamiliar turns of phrase suggest a local tradition of Arabic letter-writing of which we are scarcely aware.[127] Rather than giving an occasion to make value judgements about Diallo's use of Arabic, his letters should remind us how little is known about the use of Arabic in eighteenth-century Senegambia, especially since, to our knowledge, there are no contemporaneous Arabic documents from the Senegambian region with which to compare it.[128]

Meanwhile, the extant copy of the Qur'an Diallo made while in London seems to be a perfect copy.[129] Whether it was indeed written from memory (as Maurice Johnson of the SGS claimed some years after the fact) is uncertain; the accuracy of the copy and the fact that Diallo knew George Sale, translator of the Qur'an into English, *may* suggest that he had access to the Arabic version. Whatever the case, Diallo was evidently well-versed in the document. He prefaced his copy with two Qur'anic verses decrying those who copied out the Qur'an for money, perhaps to demonstrate that this was not his reason for doing

123 Examples of letter confusion include *siddīq* instead of *ṣiddīq* (friend), *Ibrāḥīm* instead of *Ibrāhīm* (Abraham), *yasūm* instead of *yaṣūm* (he fasts), *tarīq* instead of *ṭarīq* (way), *Ramalan* instead of Ramadan, *tazawwaz* in place of *tazawwaj* (to marry), *shayyidnā* in place of *sayyidnā* (our master).

124 *asalāmu* instead of *al-salāmu* (peace), *an nasārā* instead of *al-naṣāra* (the Christians).

125 *ismuhu Ayūba* (his name is Ayuba) appears repeatedly.

126 For example, Diallo introduces his letter with the standard *salāman ṭayyiban* (heartfelt greetings).

127 On two occasions, Diallo uses the Arabic phrase *bi-midād al-aḥmar wa-bi-midād al-aswad* (in red ink and black ink), with the probable meaning of 'emphatically', to ask his British friends to consider him part of their family. Red and black are the principal colours used in Arabic calligraphy, the Qur'an Diallo scribed in London being no exception. Omar Dene (Nossent, *Personne*) has a different theory, taking Diallo's words to mean, 'I want to maintain fraternal ties between the white man and the black man.' However, this may be reading too much into the expression.

128 Gomez, *Pragmatism*, 10 found little surviving written documentation from Bundu, and that what there was dated only from the later nineteenth century. The earliest works from the area listed by John Hunwick (*The Writings of Western Sudanic Africa* (Leiden, 2003)) also date from the nineteenth century.

129 Qur'an scribed by Diallo.

so.[130] Following calligraphic tradition, he wrote out the vowels in red ink and included an index of *surahs*, noting where each was revealed and how many verses it has.

As we have seen, the tables of alphabets and samples of Arabic text in the Ames papers reinforce the argument for Diallo's scholarly credentials and paint him as a competent teacher. The view of Maurice Johnson, President of the SGS, was that Diallo 'was skilful in and wrote Arabic very well & fast or very readily', as well as speaking six languages in Africa. Ames tells us that, as well as Arabic, he spoke 'Fuller' (Fulfulde – confirmed by the *ajami* of the Ames letter), Bluett recorded his ability to speak Wolof, and we know that he could also speak English.[131]

In sum, lacking a comparative example, we cannot say how 'good' or 'bad' Diallo's written Arabic was. What we can say is that the learning he did have attracted wonder wherever he went, notwithstanding the implied prejudice behind such remarks, and was a large part of the reason that Diallo was able to procure his freedom. Further, Diallo's ability in writing was only a part of his appeal, which also lay in his increasing development as a sophisticated communicator. We do not know the extent of his political dealings while still at home. But in Maryland and especially Britain, without kin and other allies to rely on, this very intelligent man built an extremely effective, multi-layered network of friends and allies, in part through his writings. The overall effect of the correspondence was Diallo's success in inserting himself into elite networks in Britain – arguably on a presumption of equality, coming as he did from the elite levels of Bundunke society.

It is easy to imagine that this represented a flowering of his diplomatic ability, as he successfully learned how to negotiate the *mores* of a society very different from his own. On his return to Africa, his attempts to represent British interests will have been a new departure not only for the RAC, but for the kingdom of Bundu. That these efforts ended in failure may, in turn, have had a negative effect on Diallo's standing in Bundu itself, but of this we know nothing at present.

CONCLUSION: AN ALTERNATIVE READING OF THE DIALLO STORY

The analysis of the correspondence and other writings of Ayuba Sulayman Diallo presented here makes possible a long-overdue shift in focus. Our attention to his writings throws his own motives, intentions, and methods into relief. Diallo's agency is restored to centre-stage, rather than the question of whether he was freed through British altruism or self-interest, although it is granted that both these factors played a role in the willingness of friends, allies, and the Royal African Company to respond to his overtures.

The list of his successes is long: he gained his own manumission and return to Africa; attained the freedom and return to Africa of his interpreter Lamine Jay; became a figure of some note in the upper ranks of London society; spread knowledge about Islam and its texts; changed RAC policy with regard to the enslavement of Muslims; made firm

130 Qur'an 2:79, 6:93.

131 Honeybone and Honeybone, *Correspondence*, 81–3. Among the other languages were 'Gallumbo', which could be GalamBe, a reference to the people of the Kingdom of Galam bordering Bundu, whose language would presumably have been Soninke, and 'Ganna', which could be a reference to a language of the ancient Soninke Kingdom of Ghana/Wagadou.

friends and exchanged knowledge with learned people in London and Spalding; became a proficient interpreter of courtesies and knowledge between Arabic and English; and amassed some personal wealth. That he failed in his project to assist British trade in the interior after his return was, we know, a consequence of French resistance to this plan and, we can speculate, perhaps also to do with dynamics within Bundu, which would have been heavily affected by such a development.

Through the tracking down, translation, and careful analysis of his writings – held in the British Library, a number of other UK repositories and private hands – it is possible to appreciate the extent of Diallo's abilities, and to gain a glimpse of his worldview. Such analysis also produces new information about the rulers of Bundu and relations between regional powers, while the form and style of Diallo's writing give us vital information about the development of the Arabic language in eighteenth-century Senegambia.

This approach also suggests the potential of the written word for multiple forms of influence. The act of writing itself carries power in Islam, and surely delivered spiritual benefits to a believer such as Diallo. While the function of writing as a means of communication may not seem worth remarking on, in Diallo's case this function was more nuanced. Through his cleverness and initiative, he was able to send transatlantic messages to Bundu, communicating across vast distances when most in his position could not. But the act of writing also gave him a channel of communication with his prospective benefactors, even though he wrote in a medium that they did not understand. From his first interaction with Bluett, Diallo turned to pen and paper to communicate what he could not through speech. Although Bluett could not understand what was on the page, that Diallo wrote skilfully and freely was a signifier that he was someone who, following the thinking of the time, should not have been enslaved. Even when he could communicate in English to a degree of fluency, back in Africa Diallo continued to accompany the written English of his dictations with written Arabic in his own hand in his communications with friends in Britain. Again, these Arabic letters communicated more than their content and constituted a conscious act of reaching out to his friends, while asserting his identity as a literate Muslim. Although probably not understood, they will surely have been treasured by their recipients. Thus, in Diallo's case, this technology became a means of gift-giving, as also with the three Qur'ans he scribed while in Britain. Diallo's standing as a man of learning was also hugely significant in ensuring his success in London: one can speculate that the implicitly understood role of writing as a signifier – perhaps the *key* signifier – of 'civilisation' must have played a role here.

Diallo is quite unique in being the earliest enslaved African to leave a written archive of this nature in Britain or America, and we would argue with Austin that, given Diallo's active curation of his own reputation, *Some Memoirs* is indeed a key founding work of the slave narrative tradition. By contrast, his level of scholarship was not unusual for the West Africa of the time, and the Diallo London story can be seen from this perspective as that of one society marvelling at the intellectual riches of another, of which, until then, it had been largely ignorant. Understanding the contemporary context, both geographical and historical, is essential for appreciating the complexities of Diallo's story.

This applies in particular to Diallo's long-term engagement with slavery, from his own trading activities, his apparent attempts to ransom himself in return for the freedom of others, his agreement with the RAC in this respect, and his owning of slaves on return

to Bundu. He was, it seems, a Bundunke citizen of some standing whose values and ambitions were produced by, and remained close to, his religion (as understood at that time in West Africa), nation, and social position. This attitude towards slavery would not have seemed incongruous in the pre-abolitionist London of the 1730s: in many ways, Diallo had much in common with British elite society of the time.

Such considerations show, we would argue, the importance of analysing Diallo's life in its multiple historical contexts, and of focusing on his own writings. He skilfully used his pen to gain his freedom, increase his social standing, return home, and continue to elicit support from the British after his arrival. At the same time, his correspondence makes no attempt to conceal aspects of his life that have increasingly been seen as problematic by later generations.

Diallo's emancipation came, not from the compassionate sentiments of the British, but as a direct result of his own efforts and advocacy, particularly through his writing. In sum, he can be argued to have become quite literally the author of his own fate.

APPENDIX 1[132]

BL AMES.10, NO. 120

In English at head of letter, presumably in the hand of Joseph Ames:

Jouba the African's Letter sent from Maryland to London 1729 among Mr. Hunt's papers

Text of the letter:

In the name of God, the most Gracious, the most Merciful. May God pray for our master, Muhammad.

His name is Ayuba b. Sulayman. The name of his country is Bundu, Tumāni.[133] [He is] Ayuba b. Sulayman.

Ḥamdi b. Sulaymān, Aḥmad b. Būbu, the name of their country in Bundu is Fiḥa;[134] Sire Muḥammad, Sire b. Mālik, surnamed Jām Bīli;[135] *Sayyid* Bār, Sire Bār, Mālik Bār. I am Ayuba b. Sulayman.[136]

Birāmi b. Bubu, surnamed Jām.[137]

The name of his wife is Finda b. Ṣidīq, the name of his [second] wife is Umm b. Būbu Birāmi b. Būbu, surnamed Kayta.

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132 We would like to thank Dmitry Bondarev, Alfa Mamadou Diallo Lelouma, Nikolai Dobronravin, Fallou Ngom, and Darya Ogorodnikova for their invaluable assistance in the analysis of these letters.

133 *Eliman* Tumani, ruler of Bundu at the time of Diallo's departure.

134 Diallo's brother and possibly his brother-in-law through his second wife. The geographical reference is unclear.

135 Sire, a branch of the Denyanke dynasty of Futa Toro (see above). Diallo uses the Fulfulde term *yeetore*, approximately translating to 'surname', or 'family name'.

136 Fulfulde: *miin* (first person pronoun). *Sayyid* (master, sir), an Arabic term of respect that may suggest descent from the Prophet Muhammad.

137 Possibly Diallo's father-in-law from his second wife.

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Ḥamdi b. Sulaymān, Aḥmad b. Būbu. Ayuba b. Sulayman [...].[138] His name is Lamine Jāy.[139] Ayuba b. Sulayman.

Hamadi b. Sulaymān, Aḥmad b. Būbu; Siri b. Mālik; Ibrahim Būbu Kayta;[140] Tumāni b. Liki; *Sayyid* b. Bār, Sire b. Bār, Mālik Bār; *Alfa* Ḥamdi al-Ḥajj;[141] *Sayyid* Jām. Ayuba b. Sulayman. The name of his country is Bundu.

Dimba Jāy.[142] Ayuba b. Sulayman. Lamine Jāy; *Fodio* Kazāra.[143]

Peace be upon you, all Muslims, [it is] Ayuba b. Sulayman.

Alfa Ḥamdi al-Ḥajj; Dimba Jāy. Speaking to Dimba Jāy.[144] Speaking to *Alfa* Ḥamdi al-Ḥajj. It is Ayuba b. Sulayman saying 'peace be upon you'. Ḥamdi Sulaymān, Aḥmad [b.] Būbu: Ayuba b. Sulayman [is] saying peace.

All Muslims [...] two slaves [...]. The name of his country is Kaur.[145]

Fodio Kazāra. Speaking to *Alfa* Ḥamdi al-Ḥajj.

I am Ayuba, the name of his country is Bundu Tumānī Māliki.[146]

Ayuba is saying to all Muslims [...] two slaves [...] the country of Kaur [...] two slaves [...] Ibrahim Kayta [...] country of Kaur. *Fodio* Kazāra [...].[147]

Ayuba b. Sulayman is saying to all the Muslims: I, Ayuba, no good [in] the country of the Christians.[148] No good [...] two slaves.[149] I, Ayuba, [want to] go back to the country of Bundu.[150]

I, Ayuba, say to all the Muslims, the ruler of Bundu his name is Tumāni Mālik.[151]

Sire Mālik, *Sayyid* Bār, Ibrahim Kayta. All Muslims peace be upon you.

Speaking to *Alfa* Ḥamdi al-Ḥajj: You take a piece of paper to send[152] [to] the country of Bundu [...] two slaves. Ayūba is speaking to Ibrahim Kayta: write a paper to send to me[153]

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138 Fulfulde passage too illegible for us to translate. Ayuba seems to be giving a list of names and/or places.

139 Diallo's Mandingo interpreter, with whom he was captured.

140 Possibly a relation of Diallo's second wife.

141 *alfa, f*rom Arabic: *al-faqīh* (jurist). A term of respect indicating religious learning, in this case referring to Fulbe religious scholars such as Diallo's father.

142 Possibly a relation of Lamine Jay.

143 See letter from Governor Hull to Moore, 13 Nov. 1734, asking if 'Fody Cojear' had informed Ayuba's friends of his return to Africa (Moore, *Travels*, 216–7). Fulfulde: *fodio* (teacher).

144 Arabic: *kalām* (words, speech). 'Speaking to' or 'addressing' may be Diallo's intended meaning here and in other instances.

145 Kaur, on the north bank of the Gambia. This is where Diallo first tried to sell his two captives to Captain Pike before crossing over the river and advancing through Mandingo country where he was later captured, returned to Kaur and held captive on Pike's ship. We have not been able to translate the other parts of this sentence, presumed to be Fulfulde.

146 Again, a reference to *Eliman* Tumani, ruler of Bundu.

147 We are unable to translate this sentence, but the words *tubaabu*, possibly equating to Fulfulde *tuubaako* (white [man]), and *duka*, perhaps equating to Fulfulde *dukugol* (to quarrel, dispute), are repeated. This may be interpreted as a reference to the circumstances of Ayuba's capture, or an attempt to pay a ransom.

148 Could be read as Fulfulde: *miin Ayuba o'o boodde bilaadi nasraan.*

149 Arabic: *lā khayr* (no good), followed by Fulfulde text we are unable to decipher but which may include the words *siiɓo* (slave) and *kaaɗo* (oppress), followed by Arabic: *ʿabdayn* (two slaves).

150 Fulfulde: *miin Ayuba mi hoota bilaadi Bundu.*

151 Fulfulde: *jom* (owner), presumably with the sense of 'ruler'.

152 Fulfulde: *ayoke kayitu nulda.*

153 Fulfulde: *wind kayit neldami.*

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the two slaves. I [...] the two slaves.[154] Ayuba want[s] to go back to the country of Bundu, Boulibouki.[155]

The name of his [two] wives are Finda b. Ṣidīq [and] Umm b. Būbu Ibrahim Kayta.

APPENDIX 2

BL ADD MS 20,783A

Postmark:

[English:]

To Mr. Solomon the son of Abraham, Priest at Bundo near Mackana in Foutre up the river Senegall in Africa.[156]

[French:]

A Mons. Mons. Solyman Fils d'Abraham Prêtre à Bundo proche à Mackana en Foutre sur la Rivière Senegall en Afrique

[Arabic:]

His name is Ayuba b. Sulayman [from] the country of Bundu. To all the Muslims male and female in the country of Bundu, Ayuba b. Sulayman [is] on the way to the country of the Christians [...] the sea/river of Kīz.[157] To all the Muslims male and female in the country of Bundu, it is Ayuba b. Sulayman. Peace be upon you all the Muslims in the country of Bundu. There is no power or strength but with God Almighty.

Letter text:

In the name of God, the most Gracious, the most Merciful. May God pray for our master, the noble Prophet Muhammad.

To all the Muslims in the country of Bundu in the country of Futa in the country of Galam, [it is I,] Ayuba b. Sulayman. Peace be upon you *Eliman* Tumāni in the country of Bundu.

To all the Muslims male and female in the country of Bundu, Ayuba b. Sulayman [says] peace be upon you.

The name of his brother[s] are Ḥamdi b. Sulaymān [and] Aḥmad b. Būbu. The name of [Ḥamdi's] village is Bīli, the name of [Aḥmad's] village is Bayāli [?].[158]

Sayyid Bār b. Bār, Mālik b. Bār, Sire b. Bār; Ḥamāt Maram;[159] Alfa Ḥamdi Aliyyu in the village of Bayāli. Ayuba b. Sulayman.

Peace be upon you Ibrahim b. Būbu Kayta. Ayuba b. Sulayman.[160]

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154 Several Fulfulde passages are illegible.

155 Fulfulde: *Ayuba hoota bilaadi Bundu.* Boulibouki was a village close to Diallo's home (see above).

156 Foutre: Futa [Toro].

157 Diallo uses the Arabic word *ṭarīq* (way, road). This phrase is confusing, but 'on the way' seems to be his meaning. One word in this sentence is illegible. Arabic: *baḥr kīz. baḥr* may refer to a sea, lake or river. The geographical reference to Kīz is unclear.

158 Arabic: *dār* (home). In this context it seems to refer rather to a village or homestead. The geographical references are unclear.

159 Perhaps an allusion to Dawudu Hamet, father of Malik Sy.

160 A relation of Diallo's second wife.

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Peace be upon you *Eliman* [Tumani], Ḥamdi b. Būbu Mālik Sy, Maka b. Būbu Mālik Sy;[161] Ḥamdi Ibrahim; *Tamsiru* Bubakr Dāwda in the village of Boulebane;[162] Sire b. Mālik Jām, Dimba b. Mālik Jām, Lamine Jām;[163] Ḥamdi Makka, his village is named Fissa; Sire b. Mālik, his son[s] are named Mālik b. Sire Mālik, ʿAlī b. Sire Mālik [and] Būbu b. Sire Mālik, his village is named Boulilbouki; Imām Būbu Sulaymān, his village is named Sambacole; *Alfa* Saʿīd, his village is named Wāsa; Sālim al-Amīnʿān, his village is named Māmadawā.[164]

To all the Muslims male and female in the country of Bundu, it is Ayuba b. Sulayman. Peace be upon you.

The name of [his] two wives are Finda b. Ṣidīq Bās [and] Umm b. Būbu Kayta. The name [s] of [his] children are Samba b. Ayuba, Dimba b. Ayuba [and] Fatimata b. Ayuba.[165]

To all the Muslims male and female in the country of Bundu, it is Ayuba b. Sulayman on the way to the country of the Christians. There is no good in the country of the Christians for a Muslim.

Ḥamdi b. Sulaymān, Aḥmad b. Būbu, all Muslims male and female in the country of Bundu, believe [?]. Ayuba b. Sulayman.

Ḥamdi b. Sulaymān, do not fear. Ayūba performs prayers and keeps the fast. Believe, Muslims of Bundu. Ayūba. There is no doubt in it.

Muslims of the country of Bundu, do not marry off the two women. It is Ayuba.[166]

The year [?] of the Almighty [...],[167] the month of Ramadan.

Eliman Tumāni Mālik, Maka b. Būbu Mālik, Ḥamdi b. Būbu Mālik Sy; *Sayyid* b. Bār, Sire b. Bār, Mālik b. Bār; *Mudi* Sambo Kah;[168] Ibrahīm Kayta; Ḥamāt Maram; *Alfa* Ḥamdi Aliyyu; Būbu Mālik Jām, Sire Mālik, Dimba Mālik; Ḥamdi Makka; *Almāmi* Būbu Suli;[169] *Alfa* Saʿīd.

All the Muslims male and female in the country of Bundu, it is Ayuba b. Sulayman. Ḥamdi b. Sulaymān: there is no dispute, there is no doubt. Finda b. Ṣidīq and Umm b. Būbu Kayta are not to marry, it is Ayuba.

Year [...][170] on the 6th of Ramadan. There is no strength or power but with God Almighty.

161 Sons of Bubu Malik Sy, second ruler of the Sissibe line. Maka, known as Maka Jiba, became *Eliman* of Bundu at some time during Ayuba's absence (see above).

162 Tamsiru, from Arabic *tafsīr* (Qur'anic exegesis). A term given to middle-ranking members of the Bundu court.

163 This may be the same 'Dimba Jāy' and 'Lamine Jāy' given in Appendix 1, the latter Diallo's Mandingo interpreter and the former presumably a relation.

164 The last two geographical references are unclear.

165 Bluett (*Some Memoirs*, 15) notes that Diallo had three sons: Abdullah, Ibrahim and Sambo by his first wife, 'the daughter of the Alpha of Tombut', and a daughter, Fatima, by his second wife, 'daughter of the Alpha of Tomga'.

166 A reference to Diallo's two wives. One of them had, in fact, remarried by the time of his return.

167 Arabic: أبغز This may be an Arabic *abjad* (alphanumeric) date format, at present indecipherable.

168 *mudi*, from Arabic *muʾaddib* (learned person).

169 *almāmi*, from Arabic *al-imām* (prayer leader).

170 Arabic: ذرّوك This may be another *abjad* date format, at present indecipherable.

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Indeed Muslims are brothers, so pray among your brothers: 'There is no God but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God. God is one, there is no strength or power but with God Almighty.'

APPENDIX 3

THE ARCHIVE OF AYUBA SULAYMAN DIALLO: A PRELIMINARY LIST

Items known to survive in, or carrying, Diallo's hand; extant items prepared for Diallo or 919 under his direction; items containing copies of Diallo's hand

BL Ames.10, no. 120, letter from Diallo to his father, 1731–3. Written from Senegambia (Kaur?) or North America. Arabic and *ajami*.

In: J. Ames (comp.), '[Catalogue title:] A collection, ms. and printed, illustrative of various alphabets, etc., brought together by Joseph Ames and pasted in a scrap-book.' '[Title in work:] 'Various alphabets, characters and inscriptions used in divers parts and ages of the world, collected by Joseph Ames' ([London] [before 1760])

BL Add. MS 20,783a, letter from Diallo to his father, 1731–3. Written from captivity, Senegambia or North America. Arabic.

Online at http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/ayuba-suleiman-diallo-letter

BL Ames.10, no. 8, table of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac and Arabic alphabets 'drawn out by Mr M:Mattaire [*sic*] for Jouba the affrican's observation',1733–4. London.

Probably commissioned by Joseph Ames. Michael Maittaire (*sic*) (1668–1747) was a scholar of classics and typography.

BL Ames.10 nos. 116, 117, 118 and 120, all pasted onto the same page of Ames's scrapbook:

BL Ames.10, no. 116, table of Arabic characters entitled 'So much of Jouba the affrican's alphabet as I could learn from him' with, below, in Diallo's hand, the first chapter of the Qur'an (incomplete), 1733–4. London.

Table probably written out by Joseph Ames under Diallo's tuition.

Pasted beneath this table: part of the first chapter of the Qur'an (1:1-1:6). Arabic, Diallo's hand.

BL Ames.10, no. 120, Qur'anic verses 68:51, prefaced in Arabic with the Christian invocation 'In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit', Aug. 23 1733. London.

Written out by Diallo with his English explanation recorded by Ames. Pasted in Ames's scrapbook underneath the letter numbered 120 and listed above, and possibly attached to it. The text also suggests a connection with Dr Oxley.

BL Ames.10, no. 117, different methods of joining the Arabic letters *lām* and *alif*, Diallo's hand, n.d.

BL Ames.10, no. 118, Diallo's signatures in Arabic with note in English (presumably by Ames) below, indicating letters by Diallo to Mrs Ann Harris, sister to Mrs Smith in Cannon Street, London, and Mr Door, 8 Dec. 1731 [presumably 1733]. London.

It is possible that Diallo's signatures on this document were actually written by Ames, in order to practise his Arabic. The letters referred to are presumably lost. The 'Mrs Smith' mentioned will have been the wife of Joseph Smith, writing master at St Paul's school. William Smith, Joseph's great-nephew, wrote later that 'This Job when in London used to visit almost weekly at the House of Mr Joseph Smith my great-uncle, who then lived in Cannon Street in the City – anno 1733.' Reference: Smith's account in Diallo's Qur'an, for which see below.

BL Add. MS 32556, f. 239v, sketch map, n.d., 1733–4. ?London.

On reverse of account of Diallo's life, probably by Bluett; place-names in English and annotated in Arabic by Diallo.

Qur'an scribed by Diallo, in private ownership (see https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/21359/lot/137/, accessed 9 Jan. 2019), 1733–4. London.

According to Maurice Johnson, president of the Spalding Gentlemen's Society (writing in 1750), while in London Diallo scribed and gave copies of the Qur'an to Nathaniel Brassey, the Duke of Montagu, and Sir Hans Sloane. (Honeybone and Honeybone, *Correspondence*, 83).

SGS Minute Books Vol. 2 f. 100A, entry in Second Minute Book concerning Diallo's successful application to join the Spalding Gentlemen's Society, including copy of Arabic lines by Diallo, 30 May 1734.

Summary of letter of application (J. Ames to W. Bogdani, 17 Nov. 1733) and record of admission to SGS, with lines in Arabic copied from Diallo's original. Diallo greets the SGS, signs his name and includes the phrase 'I ask God's forgiveness', a modest formula used in Arabic when receiving a compliment or honour.

- Related correspondence is found in:
  - SGS Minute Books, Volume 1: 1710–29, f. 186r–v, copy of letter from J. Ames to W. Bogdani, applying for Diallo to join the Spalding Gentlemen's Society, 17 Nov. 1733.[171] Written at the Tower of London. Bound into the back of SGS First Minute Book. Published in Honeybone and Honeybone, *Correspondence*, 81–3.
  - SGS Grand Catalogue of Members, f. 21r, entry relating to Diallo, 6 June 1734.

  See also: Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 101.

171 These dates are correct despite appearing contradictory: the letter copy appears to have been bound into the volume of the wrong dates.

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Our thanks to Dustin Frazier Wood, the Society's archivist, for help with tracing and contextualising these documents.

BL Add. MS. 32556, f. 237, letter from Diallo to Nathaniel Brassey, n.d., ?8 Dec 1734. Written at James Fort. Arabic, with English version dictated by Diallo.

Published in facsimile in Austin, *African Muslims: Sourcebook*, 72; Nossent, *Personne*, 160–1. Nossent publishes an image of the Arabic text, and a transcription and translation into French of the contemporary English version of the letter.

BL Add. MS 32556, f. 235, letter from Diallo to John Chandler, ?8 Dec 1734. Written at James Fort. Arabic, with English version dictated by Diallo.

Published in facsimile in Austin, *African Muslims: Sourcebook*, 72; Nossent, *Personne n'était jamais revenu*, 162–3. Nossent publishes an image and translation into French of the Arabic text, and a transcription and translation into French of the contemporary English version of the letter.

BL Sloane MS 4053, f. 341, letter from Diallo to Hans Sloane, 8 Dec 1734. Written at James Fort. Arabic with English translation.

The Arabic version is published in facsimile in Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, facing 52; see also 26n6.

NRO Montagu Vol. 7, ff. 209, 211, Letter from Diallo to the Duke of Montagu (via Francis Moore), 5 Apr. 1735. Joar Factory. Arabic with English translation.

The Arabic text concerns the redemption of Lamine Jay, and includes greetings from Diallo to Dr Oxley, and the king and queen. The English letter is transcribed in Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Manuscripts of the Duke of Buccleuch*, *Volume I*, 385.

Our thanks to Crispin Powell, Buccleuch Archivist, for making these documents available to us.

RS, EL/12/21, letter from Diallo to unnamed 'Sirs', 27 Jan. 1736. Yanimerow.

In English, with signature and greetings to Mr Sale and Dr Oxley in Arabic in Diallo's hand, with a translation of the latter into English. This letter occupies the left-hand page of a large folded folio. The right-hand page is blank.

RS EL/12/22, letter from Diallo to Joseph Smith, writing master to St Paul's School, 27 Jan. 1736. Yanimerow.

Main text in English (in hand 1).

- At foot of letter:
  - Signature in Arabic in Diallo's hand, divided into constituent parts and transliterated into roman script, in hand 2, which may be Diallo's.
  - Greetings to Dr Oxley and Mr Ames, in Arabic with some English words in Arabic script, divided into constituent parts and transliterated into roman script, in hand 2, with a translation and elaboration in English below, in hand 1.

- Below this, two further lines greeting Oxley, Ames and (in the second case) Sale in English (roman script), in hand 2.
- Below this, direction 'To Mr Smith writing master to St Pauls school', possibly in hand 2.

RS EL/12/22 is published in Donnan (ed.), *Documents*, 455–6, with annotations to show the variations in RS EL/12/21. She describes these letters as copies; it is perhaps more likely that they were written for communication to different correspondents, perhaps Hans Sloane as well as Joseph Smith.

These letters, which are almost identical, recount Diallo's first visit to Bundu in late 1735 and the emotional reunion with his family. Donnan states that a summary of the text was published in the *Boston Weekly News Letter* (13 January 1737) and *Virginia Gazette* (28 January 1737). However, we believe this to be erroneous: the letter summarised in these publications appears to be a different and later work, detailing information from Diallo's second trip to Bundu in early 1736.

ITEMS PRESUMED LOST

Letter from Diallo to an unnamed friend, Feb./Mar. 1731. Kaur, Senegambia.

(Reference: BL Lansdowne MS 841/65, letter from Peter Thompson to Joseph Ames, 24 Mar. 1733–4, f. 71.)

There is a chance that this is the letter translated in Appendix 1 above.

Diallo's letters to his father from Britain, which his father received before he died, 1733–4.

(Reference: Moore's journal, quoted in Curtin, *Africa Remembered,* 55, 58.)

Letters to Mrs Ann Harris, sister to Mrs Smith in Cannon Street and Mr (?)Door, 8 Dec. 1731 [presumably 1733]. London (see above).

(Reference: BL Ames.10, no. 118).

Two copies of the Qur'an, scribed in Britain, 1733–4 (see above).

Letters sent to Bundu on Diallo's arrival in Africa, probably 1734, presumably authored by Diallo. He wrote later that '...my redemption was so remarkable that my messages and letters sent on my behalf on my first arrival here were not credited.'

(Reference: RS EL/12/21 and RS EL/12/22, 27 Jan. 1736; see above.)

Letters given to Moore by Diallo on the former's departure for England on 8 April 1735. Recipients included the Royal African Company, Oglethorpe and 'several other gentlemen in England'.

(Reference: Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 59).

Several letters from Africa to Hans Sloane. These include one letter, concerning Diallo's 1736 trip to the interior, on which Sloane reported to the Royal Society on 4 November 1736. Accounts of this report were published in several periodicals, including the

Gentlemen's Magazine (London), Nov. 1736, online at http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/ilej/image1.pl?item=page&seq=1&size=1&id=gm.1736.11.x.6.x.x.u60, accessed 9 Jan. 2019; the *Boston Weekly Newsletter,* 13 Jan. 1737; and the *Virginia Gazette,* 28 Jan. 1737.

We have been unable to locate mention of the 4 November report in the Royal Society's papers. (See also: Grant, *Fortunate Slave,* 116; Curtin, *Africa Remembered,* 32)

Letters to the Royal African Company, before 13 Jan. 1737. A letter of 13 Jan. 1737 from the Royal African Company to (?) the Governor of James Fort refers to 'Jobs letters to us'.

(Reference: TNA T 70/55, 245–6).

Letter allegedly written jointly with the director of the French fort St Joseph, Galam, while in detention there, before 1 Dec. 1736.

The letter was written in order to calm the situation in the region and signalled Diallo's willingness to cooperate with the French in order to secure his release.

(Reference: Nossent, *Personne*, 128, quoting French National Archives, Colonies C6-11 Conseil de Galam to Conseil supérieur of Sénégal, 1 Dec. 1736.)

Request from Diallo to RAC for another visit to England and concerning property claims, possibly in the form of a letter, 1740.

(Reference: Grant, *Fortunate Slave*, 197–8, referencing TNA T 70/56 f. 31.)