MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

Fonds Cheikh Moussa Kamara
(Senegal)

PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1. SUMMARY

The Fonds Cheikh Moussa Kamara (or Shaykh Musa Kamara) contains several Arabic manuscripts. Written during the colonial period, Kamara’s work focuses on history, anthropology, theology and law. Kamara was considered an important historian in his era and a reputed intellectual. He was also held in high esteem by the colonial administration and his compatriots. He was awarded the Légion d’honneur in 1930. Kamara was chosen to represent all the marabouts in French West Africa (AOF) at the inauguration of the Cathedral of African Memory in Dakar, the federal capital, in 1935, during which he promoted the unity of the “religions of the Book”. As an historian and anthropologist, he was supported in his efforts by Maurice Delafosse, Henry Gaden and other Africanists.

His monumental literary work, Zuhūr al-basāṭīn fi tārikh as-sawādīn (Flowers of gardens concerning the history of Blacks), was written between 1920 and 1925. Cheikh Moussa Kamara is also the author of a number of treatises on specific subjects such as the leader and scholar al-Ḥajj ʿUmar Ṭa’ll, al-Majmūʿ an-naṭīs (Precious compendium on the history of certain Moorish and Fula, and Ṭanqiyat al-ajhām (Purification of thoughts on the uncertainties of prejudice). Also among his work are two other manuscripts, translated into French and published by Amar Samb in 1973 and 1976 respectively entitled: L’Islam et le christianisme (Islam and Christianity) and Condamnation de la guerre sainte (A condemnation of the holy war). These items and documents provide a full account of the lives of princes and peasants in their struggle against colonial domination.

At his death in 1945, Kamara’s works were bequeathed to the Fundamental Institute of Black Africa (IFAN) to allow scientists to study them. Housed in the Islamology laboratory, the collection is an invaluable resource for studying the social and cultural history of Senegal and West Africa. Some of these manuscripts provide extensive data and are instrumental in the study of Islam and Arabic literature, rhetoric and thought throughout history.

Generally speaking, the works of Cheikh Moussa Kamara are clearly of inestimable value and, as such, transcend the boundaries of time and culture and should therefore be preserved for current and future generations.

2. DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

2.1 Name (person or organization)

The Islamology laboratory of the Fundamental Institute of Black Africa Cheikh at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop (IFAN-CAD)

2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated

The Islamology laboratory of the IFAN – Cheikh Anta Diop is in possession of all the manuscripts.

2.3 Contact person(s)

- Professor Khadim Mbacké, Researcher and head of the Islamology laboratory, IFAN-CAD;
- Dr Thierno Ka, Researcher at the Islamology laboratory, IFAN-CAD;
2.4 Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email)

IFAN-CAD, University of Cheikh Anta Diop, BP 206, Dakar, Senegal, Tel: (221) 33 825 98 90

Email addresses:

- khadim.mbacke@ucad.edu.sn
- thierno.ka@ucad.edu.sn
- ndeye.gueye@ucad.sn
- souleymane.gaye@ucad.edu.sn

3. IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

Named after its author, the Fonds Cheikh Moussa Kamara is one of eight collections held at the IFAN-CAD’s Islamology laboratory. The collection reflects a varied literary production. Assembled between 1920 and 1943, the Fonds Cheikh Moussa Kamara is mainly composed of Arabic manuscripts on paper. It is the result of the intellectual work of a great scholar, considered to be the most important Arabic-language historian and anthropologist in Senegal’s history. The Arabic manuscripts focus essentially on history. The author also examines subjects related to the Muslim faith, magic and traditional medicine. His most famous work, Zuhūr al-basātīn, retraces the history of the Fouta Tooro, Mauritania and the Fuuta Jallon. His writings have served as a basis for numerous research projects, including those carried out by Vincent Monteil, Amar Samb, Thierno Kâ, Khadim Mbacké, Omar Kane, David Robinson, Jean Schmitz and many other Islamic scholars, historians and literary experts. Other work that has been carried out on the collection includes the restoration and publication of two manuscripts (the life of al-Ḥajj ‘Umar Ṭa’ll and his war) by Ahmad Chokri and Khadim Mbacké, made possible by cooperation between the IFAN and Institute of African Studies at Mohammed V University in Rabat. A third manuscript dealing with the history of the Deeniyan koobe was restored by the same researchers and offered to the same Institute. Sections of the second most important manuscript, al-Haqq al-mubīn (The clear truth), were translated by Moustapha Ndiaye and published in the IFAN’s Bulletin B. This manuscript was also the subject of a PhD thesis. Similarly, a team of researchers including Khadim Mbacké translated the Zuhūr into French for France’s National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). A section of this work was published in 1997.

3.2 Description

Assembled between 1930 and 1943, the Fonds Cheikh Moussa Kamara is essentially composed of Arabic manuscripts on paper. A key piece in Kamara’s work is a document written in Arabic in the 1920s for administrators/ethnologists of the time, such as Henri Gaden and Maurice Delafosse: the monumental Zuhūr al-basātīn, a compilation of numerous traditions transcribed in Arabic and of chronicles from different Fula states founded after a holy war, from Sokoto in the east to Fouta Tooro in the west.

The author examines Fula chronicles – historiographical traditions also found in Fuuta Jallon – and Arabic histories. Inspired by Ibn Khaldun, Kamara presents a cyclical history of the Fula dynasties, which were characterized by a rise and fall. His works are original on several levels. First is his analysis of the conquest of power in Fouta Tooro by Toorɔ̀ɓɓe marabouts at the end of the eighteenth century. Second is the master/disciple relationship involved in the transmission of Islamic knowledge, including pilgrimages to study a particular book of grammar or theology with Muslim scholars, the search for secret knowledge, and the creation of training colleges. Third is Kamara’s rejection of jihad and the civil wars which undermined Fouta Tooro during this period of anti-colonial revolt.
4. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

4.1 Is authenticity established?

The collection was bequeathed to IFAN by Mamadou Djiby Kane, the Cheikh’s grandson. It contains authentic handwritten documents dating from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century and which are maintained in their original condition. We are fully convinced that Kamara’s manuscripts are an unparalleled documentary resource which should be preserved as part of the world cultural heritage.

4.2 Is world significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability established?

The collection is one of a kind and exists nowhere else. The entire collection is kept at the Islamology laboratory. It is a unique historical resource on a particular period in the history of humanity when Islam and Islamic culture emerged as one of the most important belief systems in the world. The manuscripts in the collection are also an invaluable rich source of document-based information on several subject areas, including history, anthropology, natural resources and local medicine. They consist of thousands of pages: the masterpiece of Kamara’s work, the Zuhūr al-basātīn, alone is 1,700 pages long. Given the volume of documents in the collection and their immense value, as well as the prestige of the Cheikh, the collection is of both regional and world importance. Furthermore, the information it provides embodies the history of an era marked by considerable movement and major change.

Numerous researchers have looked to Cheikh Moussa Kamara’s writings to learn more about the history of Fouta Tooro and the West Africa subregion. In his own time, Maurice Delafosse himself asked for the Zuhūr al-basātīn to be translated into French. This collection of manuscripts, an endless source of information, is still used extensively today by Senegalese and foreign researchers.

4.3 Is one or more of the criteria of (a) time (b) place (c) people (d) subject and theme (e) form and style (f) social, spiritual and community significance satisfied?

(a) Time

The entire body of Cheikh Moussa Kamara’s work was produced when Senegal was a colony. This era of colonial conquest had a definite impact on the author’s life. The European presence – the French, particularly, from the early sixteenth century, profoundly changed the entire river valley. On an economic level, the development of the Atlantic slave trade and hunting of humans created a permanent state of violence in the relationships between States. The continual development of the slave trade until the eighteenth century plunged the Fouta Tooro into insecurity and civil war (i.e. the Tooroodo revolution). In opposition to this trade, encouraged by the Deeniyanke dynasty, a Muslim revolution led by Tooroßße (“those who pray”) broke out in the second half of the eighteenth century (O. Kane, 1986; B. Barry, 1988: 155). In 1776, the Tooroßße ousted the Satigui Deeniyanke (a title of Soninke origin adopted by Fula Deeniyanke leaders) and established the almamiyat regime (from the Arabic al-imām, he who leads prayer). They imposed a Muslim theocracy and found themselves at the top of the social hierarchy. This regime ended with the annexation of Fouta Tooro by France in 1881.

With the abolition of slavery from 1848, French imperialist efforts in the Senegal River valley took the form of aborted attempts at agricultural settlement from 1813 to 1831 which met with opposition from the chiefs of Fouta Tooro and Moors. Having gained little from this form of colonization, the latter generated instability in the region and briefly restored the trans-Atlantic slave trade and commerce.

This interference met with resistance from Islamists, who were subdued through punitive expeditions led by colonial powers in Senegal. These wars were accompanied by natural disasters such as drought and ensuing food shortages and famine. Added to confiscations from the population of goods and cattle by those in power were the exactions of the French colonial authorities based in Saint-Louis, which stripped farmers of their harvests and livestock and set fire to villages already ravaged by epidemics.

It is in this near-permanent state of war and insecurity that Cheikh Moussa Kamara lived. Kamara denounced this violence. In one of his essays, he denounces jihad and war in the following terms: “Most of those who
have waged holy war since our Prophet are ostentatious, and do not care about the people who die in the holy war” (IFAN, Volume 15, edited and translated into French by Amar Samb, 1976).

(b) Place

Cheikh Moussa Kamara lived in Ganguel in the Fouta Tooro region in northern Senegal. The author travelled extensively, however, in upper Senegal and Niger, Mauritania and in Fouta Jallon, in search of knowledge. His narratives tell of the places he visited and his journeys throughout West Africa.

(c) People

_Zuhūr al-basātin_, Kamara’s main work, is peppered with the stories of charismatic characters. It is extremely important for our understanding of the life and works of Fula dynasties, peasants, marabouts and those who fought against French colonization. The author established ties with colonial administrators such as Henri Gaden, de Lamotte and Ballay; with reputed Africanists like Robert Arnaud, Maurice Delafosse, Paul Marty and Mariani. He was also friends with Senegalese deputies Blaise Diagne and Ngalandou Diouf; some Almami from Guinea, Cheikh Sa’ad Buh and many fellow countrymen, lawyers, linguists, grammarians and talented writers.

(d) Subject and theme

An original undertaking, Kamara’s work provides firsthand accounts in the fields of history, Islamic law, anthropology, theology, traditional medicine and magic. Along with comprehensive information about the Fula dynasties of Fouta and related subjects, the manuscripts also provide insight into land management, the peasantry and a variety of other matters, ranging from astronomy to zoology. The author gives a local and African interpretation of his country’s history and that of the surrounding region.

(e) Form and style

All of the documents are handwritten. The style is similar to that of Sudanese histories (sixteenth-seventeenth centuries), the Ṭārīkh as-Sūdān (History of Sudan) by Abderrahman as-Sa’di and the Ṭārīkh al-fattāsh (History of the Seeker) by Mahmud Kati. The work of these authors focused on dynastic and regional histories, biographies and genealogy. They also provided information of an economic, religious, social and geographical nature. Kamara’s style of writing can also be compared with that of Ibn Khaldun, who included facts about religious, military and economic events and even zoology and astrology in his analysis of successive local dynasties.

(f) Social, spiritual and community significance

These manuscripts are a unique source of Fouta Tooro and West African history. A large number of documents provide essential information about the organization of society, the lives of commoners, land ownership, Muslim culture, Christianity, etc. This documentary source has allowed many researchers to write about the events, feelings, attitudes and ways of life of people whom history has forgotten, and to have a clearer view of key chapters in West African history.

4.4 Are there issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management that relate to this nomination?

The manuscripts of Cheikh Moussa Kamara, held at the Islamology laboratory at IFAN-CAD, are unique. They are a mine of information for historians, theologians and literary and ethnolinguist academics. No other collection offers such comprehensive information about Fouta Tooro in particular and West Africa in general. This cultural heritage has begun to deteriorate, however, and some manuscripts are becoming illegible. In addition, these documents are handled without care.

5. LEGAL INFORMATION

5.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)
IFAN is responsible for conservation for research purposes.

5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner)

Fundamental Institute of Black Africa - Cheikh Anta Diop.

5.3 Legal status

(a) Category of ownership

Since the bequest of the Fonds Cheikh Moussa Kamara to IFAN, the entire manuscript collection is the public property of this institution.

(b) Accessibility

The document collection is accessible to the general public in the reading room of the Islamology laboratory for consultation, research or official business in accordance with special collection access rules.

(c) Copyright status

Every item in the document collection and associated rights are the property of IFAN-Cheikh Anta Diop.

(d) Responsible administration

The Islamology laboratory is responsible for the document collection.

(e) Other elements

6. MANAGEMENT PLAN

6.1 Is there a management plan in existence for this documentary heritage? No.

The Fonds Cheikh Moussa Kamara is classified according to a framework and catalogued. The state of conservation of the manuscripts is average and they are highly vulnerable. They are kept in metal lockers and urgently need to be restored and preserved so that they may be handled without risk of deterioration. The sheets are extremely fragile and have begun to yellow. They have suffered from exposure to dust and humidity. Certain manuscripts have been damaged by handling. The storage room is, however, equipped with an air-conditioning system. There are plans to facilitate access to the collection and to protect it from disasters and wear and tear from consultation (i.e. the digitization of the entire collection).

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Provide details of consultation about this nomination with (a) the owner of the heritage (b) the custodian (c) your national or regional Memory of the World committee

(a) Owner of the heritage

IFAN-Cheikh Anta Diop owns the document collection.

(b) Custodian

The Islamology laboratory at IFAN-Cheikh Anta Diop is the custodian of the collection.

(c) National or regional Memory of the World committee

A national Memory of the World committee was established under the auspices of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and National Languages in Senegal. All the major centres in Senegal which hold
documents of historical interest or of national, regional or international importance are represented on the committee. Documents were selected and the nomination prepared by members of the national Memory of the World committee.

PART B – SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION

8 ASSESSMENT OF RISK

8.1 Detail the nature and scope of threats to this documentary heritage (see 5.5)

This national treasure is not protected from the damage caused by humidity, dust and insects. The items show signs of deterioration and certain writings have begun to disappear. Their proximity to the coast raises concerns about humidity. The laboratory is protected by a 24-hour surveillance system and the security services in place throughout the IFAN building.

9 ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION

9.1 Detail the preservation context of the documentary heritage

The document collection is currently in an unsatisfactory state of repair. Due to lack of funding, the manuscripts are kept in metal lockers in a single air-conditioned room. Temperature, moisture and air quality conditions in the room are not optimal for the best possible conservation of these important elements of our cultural and documentary heritage.