

## Letters in Mandinka 1

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7/1/2023

Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the Best Guarantor.

May the peace, grace, and blessing of God be upon you. S.I.K.L,<sup>1</sup> it is your younger brother S.S.S. who wrote you this letter from S.S., with God's permission. I send you my cordial greetings. I think of you night and day. I greet all the members of the family, women, men, young and old. Me too, I'm doing well. Let's give thanks to God. The only problem is that I haven't found a job yet. That's why I couldn't send money. But I really ask for your prayers so that God can grant all wishes. To facilitate my receiving of documents,<sup>2</sup> I request your prayers as well as prayers for a long life and good health, God willing. On the matter<sup>3</sup> we talked about on the phone, I await your response and those of the members of the association. I called your joking cousin,<sup>4</sup> S.S., but he had gone to France. I am attaching three photos to this letter. One must be given to my grandmother. The other two are to be given to F. Tell her to give you two of her photos that you can send me, God willing. Send my regards to S., M. and Mom A. I send my dearest greetings to them. I await a prompt response, God willing.

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, and the Merciful.

May peace be with you. S.A.I.K, it is S.S. who wrote you this letter from Dakar, with the permission of God. I send you my dearest greetings. Apart from the greetings, I just want to let you know that I gave S.I.S. some things he's going to give you. So, you can give them for me to their recipients. First,

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<sup>1</sup> To keep names anonymous, we have abbreviated them in the transcriptions and translations.

<sup>2</sup> Here, he is referring to the documents that can allow him to work legally in Europe.

<sup>3</sup> The author used the expression "speaking Mandinka" here, which, in Mandinka society, can have two meanings. The first is to speak the Mandinka language. The second is to talk about a serious matter or a secret. It is the second meaning that is used here.

<sup>4</sup> "Joking cousins" is part of *joking relationship*, a social phenomenon found in many African societies. It allows members of certain families or ethnicities to make fun of each other without anyone being angry. This phenomenon is an endogenous source of fraternity, social cohesion, and conflict resolution.

there are eight liters of kerosene and ten pieces of soap, plus 1,000 CFA francs to be given to F. B. She can use the soap and kerosene for her needs. The 1000 CFA francs must be given to F. along with her 700 CFA francs. Give 1000 CFA francs to the housekeeper for her small expenses. (after that)

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The fabric is intended for Mom M. She had lent me some money that she was going to use to buy fabric. When she lent me this money, I promised to repay her with fabric. This is the fabric that I am sending. Please give it to her. You will explain these details to F. (after that) The woven loincloth is for F.S.T. She gave me loincloths on credit when my wife was joining the marital home. It was two woven loincloths. I paid off the first, and the second was the only one that remained to be paid. It is this second payment that is there. Give it to her, and convey to her my sincere thanks. (after that) The 1500 CFA francs, you will give them to S.J. I owe him 1500 CFA francs since last year. You will give them to S. and convey my sincere thanks to him.

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(after that) I once went to A.K.T. looking for medicine against worms. He gave me some medicine, but he did not give me a price. We didn't talk about money. When I asked him the price, he told me to take the medicine until next time. Please give him 1000 CFA francs on my behalf if you don't mind. I would like you to give him this money in person. You must bring it to where he is. You will explain to him what I told you. It will make me really happy. You will apologize to him on my behalf for the late payment. I should have given him more money, but times are tough. (after that) My mother J.S.K, she had asked me to help her purchase a small mammal<sup>5</sup> a long time ago. I couldn't do it, but I'll contact her to explain.

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<sup>5</sup> A small goat, sheep, or cow that can procreate.

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This is another money transfer via WARI.<sup>6</sup> You will give the money to F.B. She has to send it (after that) to A.B.S. During my trip to Dakar in the month of Ramadan, he lent me 5,000 CFA francs. I used it for my transportation costs. I gave this money to S.I. to give to B. on my behalf. You can ask him if he received the money. Please reply to this letter. If you receive them [the things I sent], here is the distribution and the recipients of the items I sent: F.S. must receive the kerosene, the soap, plus 1000 CFA francs. The fabric is intended for Mom M.F. For B, she must receive the woven loincloth. S.J., "the svelte," will receive 1500 CFA francs. A.K.T will have 1000 CFA francs. My Mom M.J.K will receive the curtains. Please send a reply as soon as you receive these parcels. You can give the response letter to S.I. I will be there until June 10th, in this period, God willing.

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, and the Merciful.

The letter was written by K.D. and addressed to A.K.S. I send my dearest greetings to you and all the members of the family, from B.M, N.J, J.S. to all the children and all the inhabitants of the house. Apart from the greetings, I am sending you 112,000 CFA francs. The 42,000 CFA francs are intended for the purchase of cement. The 5000 CFA francs is for food, the 3000 CFA francs for B.M; 3000 CFA francs for N.J; and 3000 CFA francs for J.B. You will again give 3000 CFA francs to J.B. They are intended for the purchase of milk for her baby; 2500 CFA francs to H.M; and 1000 francs to W.S. For yourself, A.K, you will take 1500 CFA francs for your transportation costs, 7500 CFA francs for your pocket money for your trip to Mankonomba. You will hand over 7500 CFA francs to N.S. You will hand over 27500 CFA francs to A.K so that he does everything possible to take the necessary steps for the celebration of my marriage with N.S. You will tell A.K. that I will call him on the phone, God willing. You will tell him to wait for two weeks after the religious

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<sup>6</sup> *Wari* is an electronic money transfer agency.

ceremony following the death of S. to go to K. Ultimately, when you receive the money, you must present it to him before making the expenses. But, concerning the money destined to N.S, do not tell anyone about it. Let it be between N. and you. (after that) You will give 10,000 CFA francs to H.D. Tell him it is for his transportation costs. Apart from that, concerning the education of the children, I urge him to redouble his efforts in their education, in the name of God and his prophet.<sup>7</sup> Please don't stay in Mankonomba. That's all. May God's peace, grace, and blessing be upon you.

Urgent response.

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<sup>7</sup> This expression is used for emphasis. It does not have a religious objective in this context. The author just wants to emphasize the importance of the children's education.