

## Mandinka letters 4<sup>1</sup>

### Letter 1

Allah is sufficient for us and He is our best guarantor.

May God's peace, grace, and blessing be with you. Apart from that, A.K.D, it is your daughter, A.D.<sup>2</sup> who is writing you this letter. She says that she sends her best regards to you and all your family. She says that she prays that this letter finds you in good condition. Apart from that, she says that she prays, in the name of the family ties that bind you, to send her one of your young daughters. She says that she doesn't have a nanny for her baby, and she will accept it even if you give her a very young girl to help. For God's sake, she's asking you to help her. She says that if you help her, it will be an important thing that will give her great joy. She asks you to discuss it with your wife, H.S. She awaits your response. Do respond! She says she is referring [in this letter] to your daughter K. [whom she would like to have as a nanny]. Understand it this way. She says that she is waiting for your response. She also says that her husband, A.A.J., sends his best regards to you and your entire family. That's all, D.<sup>3</sup> We are all doing very well. May God grant you peace.

### Letter 2

Peace be with you, A.K.D.

L.S. sends his warm greetings to all the members of the family: women, men, children, and adults [from the youngest to the oldest]. I also think of you night and day. K., I received your letter. I really appreciated it and I am very happy about it. But you will have to forgive me. The delay in my

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<sup>1</sup> To protect the anonymity of the people mentioned in these letters, we have used initials for their names and the names of the villages.

<sup>2</sup> Here, "daughter" does not mean biological daughter. It is a sign of respect due to the age of the recipient of the letter that the letter writer considers her to be akin to a mother.

<sup>3</sup> The *D* here represents the last name of the letter's recipient.

response is due to the fact that I was away when your letter arrived. That's why I didn't receive it sooner. But apart from that, there are no worries except joy and happiness. Please pray to God to grant you and all Muslims peace, luck, protection, prosperity, tranquility, and a long life with a happy ending. I also send my regards to B.K.S., his wife R.D., and B.L. Please convey my regards to A.Q.S., F., M.N., L.N., S.M., B.T.S., and his wife. Peace be with you.

### Letter 3

Allah is sufficient for us.

A.K.D., it is your brother and friend, A.D., who is writing you this letter. I send my warmest greetings to you, your wives, your mother, and all your friends. I received your letter. I really appreciated your words. It is with immeasurable joy that I learned about your marriage to your second wife. But if I didn't answer right away, it was because I didn't know whether you had returned to M. or not. I am sorry that I cannot help you now because I am having financial difficulties. But know that I won't make promises if I can't keep them. Nevertheless, I think about you night and day, as God, The Exalted, teaches in His Mighty Book [the Quran].

### Letter 4

Allah is sufficient for us.

May God's peace, grace, and blessing be with you. This letter is written by A.K.D., living in D. It is intended for T.S., living in M. K.D. sends you his warm greetings. He said that you should do whatever you can to send the money that M.K. left there. The owner needs it. He is facing financial challenges and he is counting on this money. I send my warm greetings to you and to all the members of the F. family, young and old. God willing, K. will come during the rainy season. I will give him five thousand francs [5,000 CFA Francs] for you.

#### Letter 5

May God's peace and grace be with you.

Mr. A.K.D., A.D. [the author of the letter] sends his warm greetings to you as well as to your wife, to all your children, and to Mama N.D. That said, I want to inform you that I have arrived in France safe and sound. If I have not written to you since my arrival, it is because I arrived somewhat ill from Dakar. But now, I thank God [I feel better]. I think about you night and day and I pray for you. Send my regards to K.M.S. and to all the members of his family. That is all. Peace be with you.

#### Letter 6

May God's peace and grace be with you.

Mr. A.K.D., Mr. A.D. sends you his warm greetings. He hasn't forgotten you. I think about you night and day. Mr A.L.D. gave me the letter that you gave him for me. Regarding the baby, may God give him a long life. May God grant you more children after this one. The person who gave me your commission also informed U.D. But I thought he had sent you a letter. I relayed your entire message to him. Send my regards to all the members of the family. Peace be with you.

#### Letter 7

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Peace be with you, K.D! A.B.N. says that he sends his warm greetings to you and to all your family members and members of the F. family. He says that he sends his sincere condolences to you on the death of your mother. He says he learned about the death but did not have peace of mind at the time. Truly, he cannot write a letter when he doesn't have peace of mind. A. [the letter writer] says he has not forgotten about you. God willing, the Almighty, he will never forget about you. He is

asking for your prayers so that God may grant him peace of mind in his studies, because having peace of mind is very important for one's studies. May God, the Almighty, grant him paradise and cover him with His protection. A. says he has never forgotten about you, day or night. He also sends his greetings to your father as well as to L.N., M.N., and to all the members of the F.K. Peace be with you.

#### Letter 8

A.K.D, I send you my warmest regards. Apart from greetings, we have no problems. Everything is going well here. I ask you to forgive me because I have received your two letters, but I could not reply to you, because I wanted to send you something in addition to my reply. But, God, the Almighty, did not decide so. I was very embarrassed to send you only a letter. This is the reason why I did not yet reply to your letter. I know you did not write this letter to beg. But for me, sending you a reply with a gift represents a mark of affection on my part.