The life of Omar ben Saeed
a Foulah Slave
written by himself

The narrative is very diffuse in language, the writer, as he himself declares, being ignorant of the grammatical forms, confounding together gender, number, person, tense. It is written in a plain, and, with few exceptions, very legible Maghreby or Western arabic character. It offers an idea of the degree of education among the Moslem blacks when we see a man like this one, able to read and write a language so different from his own mother tongue. Where is the youth, or even the adult among the mass of the people who is able to do the same in latin or greek. We may find them, it is true, but our search may be long and tedious.

From the recollection that I have of the hand writing of a letter shown to me by Mr Hodgson m.d by him from a slave of the name of Omar, two years since, I should suppose it the same as that of this MS. and that the same individual is the writer of both.

(1 to 4) Four pages not connected with the narrative. They appear to have been previously written in the copy book which was afterwards used by O'Malar to write his life in. ~~May~~ ~~To the~~ Peace of God be upon our Lord Mohammed. Blessed be he who is governed by His hand. He over all things is Omnipotent. He creates life and death &c &c

(5) Oh Mr Hunter (?) I cannot write my life. Much have I forgotten of the language of the Arabs. Oh my brother, reproach me not. Praise be to God, even great praise, that He should awaken me from slumber and favor me with measure of His Grace.

(6 to 13 blank)

(14) In the name of God the Merciful the Compassionate
Thanks be to God, the don. of Good Works, the Beneficent
the Benevolent the Bountiful. Thanks to God who
created all Creatures, that they should worship Him,
who knows even their deeds and their words

From me Omar to Mr. Hunter (?) who has asked
me to write my life.

I am not able to write my life. I have
forgotten ~~many kinds of words~~ much of the language of the Arabs
I read not the grammatical, and but little of
the ordinary dialect. I ask that Ob brother to re-
proach me not, for my eyes are weak and
my body also. My name is Omar ben Saeed,
the place of my birth is Foota Toro between the
two Seas. The teacher of Bondoo Foota was a sheikh named Moham-
med Sayed my brother and the sheikh Soleiman Kimba
and the sheikh Jebraeel Abdel. I was teacher twenty
five years, in the place six years. There came
into my country a great army. They killed many
people. They took me to the sea and sold me into
the hands of a christian purchaser who put me on
board a great vessel on the great sea. On the great sea
(15) I passed a month and half a month until I arrived
at a place called Charleston (?) in the language of
the Christians. They sold me and I was purchased by
a man, small like myself and weak called
Johnson (?)

Johnson(?) an infidel who feared not God even in the least. I was a little man and not able to do hard work so I fled from the hands of Johnson to a city called in that place Fayetteville(?) I saw houses in the city and I entered the house to pray. I say a boy riding a horse, I went with the boy to the house of his father and I saw a Soodany man in a tent, he was called Hinda and other men. One of them riding a horse with a great many dogs. They took me to go with them twelve miles to the place called Fayetteville(?) to spend houses. I was not able to go out from the house and I remained with the ~~elder~~ elder called ~~Jabla~~ Said(?) in the language of the Christian sixteen days and nights

(16) On Friday I went to the ~~great~~ house and opened the door and I saw many persons all of them Christians, they asked me what I wanted but I did not understand the Christian language. I saw a man called Bob Memfady(?), who told me to go out of the great house I asked much to go with them to their kindom I remained in the place four nights and days A man called James Owen(?) married to the daughter of Memfady asked me to go with him to his place called Bilden(?) Wilmington(?) I said yes and went with James Owen and have remained with him to this moment

~~Before~~ I fell into the hands of James Owen I

was

was purchased by a man named Middel(?) who asked me if I would go back to Charleston I answered no no no no no no no I will never never go to Charleston so I remained with James Owen

(17) Oh people of North Carolina(?) oh! people of South Carolina(?) oh people of America all of you, you have among you a righteous man named James Owen and with him John Owen, these are pious men. All that they ate, I ate, they digested, I digested I dreamed. James and his brother read to me the Gospel, God our Lord, our Creator, our King, the Arbiter of our Condition, the Bountiful, opened my heart to the right way, the way of Jesus the Messiah, to the Great Light

Before I came to the country of the Christians my faith was the faith of Mohammad the prophet of God, may God favor and protect him. I used to go to the mosk before break of day, wash my face, my head, my hands and my feet and then pray: so again at Noon I prayed, and at mid-afternoon I prayed, and at Sunset I prayed and at mid-evening I prayed

(18) I gave alms every year; of gold and of silver; of grain and cattle, and camels and goats and wheat and barley; of all of them gave I alms. I was called to the war every year against the infedels. I was called

called to the place and City of

My father had six Sons and five daughters and my mother three boys and an only daughter. On the day of my leaving my country my years seven thirty seven years, my sojourn in the Country of the Christians is twenty four years.

37
24
61
16
77 years old in 1841

1831
1841

(Written) in the Year One thousand and one and thirty of Jesus the Messiah

Oh peoples of north Carolina, oh people of South Carolina, oh people of America all of you, know that the children of James Owen are Thomas and his Sister called Mary Jane (?) Which is the generation punishment :. Tom Owen, Nell (?) Owen, Sons two sons and one daughter, the five called James and the other John, the daughter called Melissa (?) — Mr James Owen had two boys and five girls the first Thomas, John and Martha (?) and Mary and Sophia (?) and Margaret (?) and Elisa (?) such is the generation

(19) (19)

John Owens wife was called Louisa (?) she was a pious woman three of her children died and two are living

oh people &c (as above)

are there many among you who fear God Where them

(20) (20) I Omar wished to read ~~Koran~~ the book of the great Koran, James Owen and his wife wished to read this

the Gospel for me much and God in his goodness (&c) opened my heart to the Gospel, to the right way, thanks be to the Lord of all creatures, even many thanks, that he hath awakened me from the sleep (of darkness) and bestowed unceasing grace upon me

(21) (28) As a commentary on Mohammedanism I give the first (Chapter of the Korán) and the gracious prayer of Jesus the Messiah

Fatiha or opening Chapter of the Korán of Mohammed

When you pray, say. "Praise be to God, the Lord "of the Worlds (that is of all creatures, namely the jinn, and "mankind, and the angels, and the beasts, and other beings; but "especially those endowed with intelligence), the Compas- "sionate, the Merciful, the King of the day of retri- "bution (which is the day of resurrection). Thee do we "worship, and of Thee do we beg assistance. Direct us "in the right way, the way of those upon whom Thou "hast conferred favor, by directing them aright; not of "those against whom Thou art incensed (who are the Jews), "nor of the erring (who are the Christians). Amen

Our Lord Jesus the Messiah says, when you pray, say
Our father &c ..... for ever & ever. Amen

(22) (29) I tremble in this country by reason of the great mis fortune of being taken by the infidels and sold by them into the hands of Christian families

I went to the great sea and after a passage of a month and a half reached Charleston where I became the property of a very little man who feared our God. He read not (the scripture) nor did he pray. I feared that I should, like that man, fall into great sin and I fled to the city and by the Grace of God I fell into the hands of a pious man who did fear God. He loved to do good works. His name was Daniel James Owen and his brother called Kamna John Owen, both righteous men. (23) While I remained with James Owen, there was no blows, no hard words, no hunger no neglect, no hard work. I could not do hard work, being small and weak and sick. I remained twenty years and then came to me no harm from the hand of James Owen

Mr. Cotheals' Translation
of Omar Ben-Saqeed's
letter to Paul.