

ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-JABARTI (1753–1825/26)
CHRONICLE OF THE FRENCH OCCUPATION (1798)

On Monday news arrived that the French had reached Damanhūr and Rosetta, bringing about the flight of their inhabitants to Fuwwa and its surroundings. Contained in this news was mention of the French sending notices throughout the country demanding impost for the upkeep of the military. Furthermore they printed a large proclamation in Arabic, calling on the people to obey them and to raise their “Bandiera.” In this proclamation were inducements, warnings, all manner of wiliness and stipulations.

[al-Jabarti cites the proclamation]

It ends here word for word. Here is an explanation of the incoherent words and vulgar constructions which he put into this miserable letter.

His statement “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. There is no god but God. He has no son, nor has He an associate in His Dominion.” In mentioning these three sentences there is an indication that the French agree with the three religions, but at the same time they do not agree with them, nor with any religion. They are consistent with the Muslims in stating the formula “In the name of God,” in denying that He has a son or an associate. They disagree with Muslims in not mentioning the two Articles of Faith, in rejecting the mission of Muhamad, and the legal words and deeds which are necessarily recognized by religion. . . . Then, their statement “On behalf of the French Republic, etc.,” that is, this proclamation is sent from their Republic, that means their body politic, because they have no chief or sultan with whom they all agree, like others, whose function is to speak on their behalf. For when they rebelled against their sultan six years ago and killed him, the people agreed unanimously that their state, territories, laws, and administration of their affairs, should be in the hands of the intelligent and wise men among them. . . . They follow this rule: great and small, high and low, male and female are all equal. Sometimes they break this rule according to their whims and inclinations or reasoning. Their women do not veil themselves and have no modesty; they do not care whether they uncover their private parts. Whenever a Frenchman has to perform an act of nature he does so wherever he happens to be, even in full view of people, and he goes away as he is, without washing his private parts after defecation.

His saying *fī hādhā 'l-taraf* (hither), means “this part of the earth.” His statement *wa-qūlū li 'l-muftariyīn* (but tell the slanderers) is the plural of *muftarī* (slanderer) which means liar, and how worthy of this description they are. The proof of that is his saying “I have not come to you except for the purpose of restoring your rights from the hands of the oppressors,” which is the first lie he uttered and a falsehood which he invented. Then he proceeds to something even worse than that, may God cast him into perdition, with his words: “I more than the Mamluks, serve God. . . .” There is no doubt that this is a derangement of his mind, and an excess of foolishness. . . . The Qur’ān is one of the miracles of the Prophet which proves his truth, and that he is the Prophet to the end of

time, and that his nation is the most noble of all nations. These people deny all that and lie in every thing they enumerate His saying “[all people] are equal in the eyes of God” the Almighty, this is a lie and stupidity. How can this be when God has made some superior to others as is testified by the dwellers in the Heavens and on the Earth?

Taken from al-Jabarti, “Chronicle of the French Occupation, 1798,” in *Perspectives from the Past: Primary Sources in Western Civilizations*, 5th ed., eds. James Brophy, Joshua Cole, John Robertson, Thomas Max Safley, and Carol Symes (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 2:294–297.