

Soxna Asta Waalo Mbakke

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

Glory to God. May prayers and peace be upon the Prophet of God.

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This is a brief presentation of the life of a great woman whose name is Soxna Aysatu Mbakke¹ also known as Maam Asta Waalo Mbakke Naawel.² To talk about her is to remember her religious erudition and efforts in the fields of moral and spiritual education. According to many accounts, she was born in Jolof.³ For others, her birthplace is Saa Ñanka.⁴ Her father's name was Ahmadu Soxna Buso, son of Maaram Mbakke.⁵ Soxna Asta Waalo is the mother of Soxna Maryama Buso Jaaratul Laahi⁶ and Sëriñ Busoobe Buso.⁷ She studied the Quran (which she memorized at an early age) and religious sciences in her father's Quranic school. It is also said that before she left to live with Maam Mabusu Awa Mbaay,⁸ she served as a Quranic teacher in her father's school. It is also said that he [Maam Buso] was so pious that he would enter in trance every time he heard the call to prayer. Maam Asta Waalo served as a Quranic and religious sciences teacher for one hundred years. According to Sëriñ Muusaa Ka:⁹ "She was erudite. She used to wear men's clothing. She used to sit in the middle of her students to teach them all the texts in the curriculum." She used to recite the

¹ *Soxna Aysatu Mbakke* is also called *Sokhna Aissatou Mbacké*.

² Naawel is the village where she later settled.

³ *Jolof* is also spelled as *Joloff*, *Djolof* or *Diolof*.

⁴ *Saa Ñanka* is also spelled as *Sa Niang Ka* or *Mbakke Saa-ñanka*. It is a village in Jolof inhabited by the *Niang* and *Ka* families. There is another village in the region of Louga called *Nianka*.

⁵ *Maaram Mbakke* is also spelled as *Maharame (Maramé) Mbacké*, the ancestor of the Mbakke family.

⁶ *Soxna Maryama Buso Jaaratul Laahi* is also called *Sokhna Mariama Bousso Diarratou Labi*, *Mame Diarra Bousso*, or *Soxna Jaara*.

⁷ *Sëriñ Busoobe Buso* is also called *Serigne Mboussobé Bousso*.

⁸ *Maam Mabusu Awa Mbay* is also known as *Mame Maboussou Awa Mbaye*. He was the husband of *Soxna Asta Waalo* and the father of *Soxna Jaara Buso*.

⁹ *Sëriñ Muusaa Ka* or *Serigne Moussa Ka* (1889-1963) was the greatest Wolof Ajami poet.

entire Quran in her nightly supererogatory prayers. She would always sit in the middle of her students wearing

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men's outfits and teaching them the Quran and religious sciences. This is the reason why so many peripatetic learners used to come to her in order to be trained in Quran exegesis and other religious sciences. It is said that she taught Maam Jaara Buso the famous text titled *Dalā'il al-Khayrātī* (*Waymarks of Benefits*).¹⁰ Before settling in Naawel, she had under her supervision her namesake Soxna Anta Njaay Mbakke.¹¹ She [Soxna Asta Waalo] was repeatedly targeted by kings, especially Gidel Mbooj.¹² But with God's help, all their plans were foiled. She even became later in her life a safe harbor for many seeking refuge. Before going to war, kings and their army commanders used to visit her to seek her prayers for their protection. She revealed one day to Sëriñ Tuubaa (Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba) the divine secret called *Sayful a'dā'i* (*Sword of the enemy*). In return, she received from him the poem *al-Sindidi*¹³ that he asked her to read all the time. [Because of the men's clothes she used to wear when teaching], one of her students noted that he only realized that his teacher was a woman when he was about to return home after graduation. Sëriñ Fallu¹⁴ used to say that Soxna Jaara Buso was the reward God gave to Soxna Asta Waalo for all her great achievements. Our Master [Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba] also used to say that anyone who visits Naawel or Poroxaan¹⁵ will find his spirit there. When Soxna Asta Waalo passed away, she was laid to rest in Naawel. She was

¹⁰ *Dalā'il al-Khayrātī* is a popular book containing a collection of prayers written by Muhammad al-Jazuli (died in 1465).

¹¹ *Soxna Anta Njaay Mbakke* also known as *Sokhna Anta Ndiaye Mbacké*.

¹² *Gidel Mbooj* was a prince in Saalum.

¹³ *Al-Sindidi* or *Sindidi* (*The Notable*) is a prayer poem of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba dedicated to prophets and saints.

¹⁴ *Sëriñ Fallu* (1888-1968) is also known as *Serigne Fallou* or *Serigne Falilou*. He was the second Caliph of the Muridiyya (1945-1968).

¹⁵ *Poroxaan* ou *Porokhane*, where Soxna Jaara Buso is buried in Saalum and place of the annual pilgrimage for the Murids.

one hundred thirty years old. May God be pleased with her. May God bless us in her baraka and grant us her longevity.

Amen, Lord of the Worlds.