

Soxna Faati Ja Mbakke

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

Peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad, his family,

his companions, and his privileged servant.

Soxna Faati Ja is the oldest child of Sëriñ Tuubaa [Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba]. Her mother, Soxna Ja Ture, is the granddaughter of Soxna Faati Balla Sukhra, daughter of Maam Balla Aysa.¹ Born in 1878 in Mbakke-Kajoor, Maam Moor Anta Sali performed the ritual of her naming ceremony. She used to say that the Master [Ahmadu Bamba] used to remind her the following: "I hope you will never forget your grandfather Moor, who performed the ritual of your naming ceremony." Her education: She received her Quranic education from the Master [Ahmadu Bamba]. Then, she pursued her studies with other renowned scholars. She also received her Tarbiyya (ethical and spiritual training)² from the Master. She never lived apart from the Master, except when he was sent to exile.³ She said that in the early days of Tuubaa, "although there were plenty of food to eat, the Master [Bamba] would only serve them three handful of couscous and a cup of water every evening."⁴ Soxna Faati Ja

¹ *Soxna Faati Ja* is also known as *Sokhna Faty Dia* or *Fatimatu* (also spelled as *Fatimatou*). *Sëriñ Tuubaa* is also spelled *Serigne Touba (The Master Tuubaa)*. Tuubaa is the epicenter of the Muridiyya, founded by Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba (also spelled *Cheikh Amadou Bamba Mbacké*). *Soxna Ja Ture* is also spelled *Sokhna Dia Touré*. *Faati Balla Subra* is also known as *Fati Balla Soukhra*. *Maam Balla Aysa* also known as *Mame Balla Aissa Mbacké* is the paternal grandfather of Ahmadu Bamba. *Mame Mor Anta Sali Mbacké* (1814-1880), the father of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba, was a Quranic and religious sciences teacher. He was also a judge and advisor of the Wolof king *Lat Joor Ngoone Latiir Joop* (1842-1886). *Mbakke-Kajoor* also spelled *Mbacké Kadior (Cayor)* is a village founded by Bamba's ancestors. For more information on the Mbakke family and their relationships, see Cheikh Anta Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadu Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853-1913* (Ohio University Press, 2007, 30-50).

² *Tarbiyya* (spiritual and ethical training) is one of the three founding principles of Ahmadu Bamba's ethics-centered pedagogy. See Fallou Ngom, *Muslims beyond the Arab World: The Odyssey of 'Ajami and the Muridiyya* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 92-94.

³ This refers to the deportation of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba by the French colonial administration to Gabon (1895-1902).

⁴ Training Murids both males and females to be capable of enduring hunger and suffering was central in the Sufi training that Ahmadu Bamba provided to all his followers, including his sons and daughters.

was a devout Muslim who regularly performed nightly supererogatory prayers and read the Quran. She looked like the Master in many ways, including facial features

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and voice. Soxna Faati Ja was highly esteemed by her father. She used to say that "the Master told me something that I will never share." She also said that he told her the following: "My compassion for you surpasses anyone else's." Besides, she always regarded herself as a mere Murid disciple. When Soxna Maymuna Kubra⁵ completed her Quranic school, the Master [Bamba] sent her to [Soxna Faati Ja] so that she could train her in Murid discipleship [taalube] because he used to say that she was an exemplary Murid disciple. One day, a Moor from Mauritania said to our Shaykh [Bamba]: "I saw your daughter Faatimatu!" Our Shaykh responded to him saying: "She is a sincere Murid!" Soxna Faati Ja treated all her siblings as her own religious leaders. Once when Sëriñ Muhammadu Mustafaa paid her visit, when he was leaving, she took sand from the tracks of his car to seek baraka from him. During her stay in Daaru Salaam, she also used to wait barefoot at the train stop for the morning train coming from Tuubaa [the holy city] to seek baraka. She would say: "I salute you, the morning train, that comes from Tuubaa!" She sold all her jewelry in order to contribute to the funds for the construction of the great mosque [of Tuubaaa] and would cook meals for the workers.

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She is the one who built the shrines and used to take good care of the graves of the younger children of the Master of Tuubaa who passed away in Ndaam (or Dār al-‘Alīm al-Khabīr) or in Xuru Mbakke.⁶ Her commitment to the Master of Tuubaa [Bamba] led her to take full guardianship of

⁵ *Soxna Maymuna Kubra* is also known as *Sokhna Maimouna*, *Mainounatou Koubra*, or *Soxna May Kubra*. She was one of the daughters of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba.

⁶ *Dār al-‘Alīm al-Khabīr* (Abode of the Omniscient and the All Aware) is one of the first areas in the initial settlement of Tuubaa by Ahmadu Bamba. For more, see Cheikh Anta Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadu Bamba and the Founding of*

Soxna Buso Mbakke's children because of what the Master once told her. He had told her: "My Owner [God] has informed me that Buso is the one who is your daughter [spiritually]."⁷ For this reason, even though they were sisters, when Soxna Buso Mbakke passed away she took the guardianship of all her children and treated them as her own. She requested that the guardianship be documented by several witnesses. Sëriñ Mbakke Buso is one of the witnesses who recorded the guardianship document on her behalf before Soxna Maymunatul Kubraa, her representative. Sëriñ Moodu Dem Njaareem also did the same as a witness. Sëriñ Muhammadul Bashiir,⁸ her young brother, also recorded the guardianship document on her behalf. These documents are kept in her family. The scope of the exceptional relationships between Soxna Faati Ja and the offspring of the Master of Tuubaa cannot be exhaustively discussed in this paper. She was also highly esteemed by all the family members. She passed away in 1969 in Tuubaa. May God be pleased with her!

the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853-1913 (Ohio University Press, 2007), 69-74. *Xuru Mbakke* or *Khuru Mbakke* is a village in the vicinity of Tuubaa where Ahmadu Bamba spent his toddler years and where several of his siblings' graves are located.

⁷ She did not have a biological daughter of her own.

⁸ *Sëriñ Muhammadul Bashiir* or *Serigne Mouhammadoul Bachir* or *Serigne Bassiron Mbacké* (1895-1966) is one of the sons of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba. He is the author of the famous biography of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba in Arabic titled *Minan al-Bākī al-Khadīm* (*The Blessings of the Eternal or the Biography of Shaykhul Khadīm*) translated into French by Khadim Mbacké (IFAN, 1981). *Sëriñ Muhammadul Bashiir* is also the father of *Sëriñ Mountakha Mbacké* (b. 1930), the current and eighth Caliph of the Muridiyya.