

## Water Tower Inaugural Speech

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Shaykh Abdul Ahad Mbakke's speech  
at the inauguration of the water tower in the year  
Baḍsashin (1972) in Tuubaa

I hereby extend my regards to the officials who are here today with you [President Leopold S. Senghor] and who assisted you in your mission. I would like to remind you what I told you. I told you that if you come to Tuubaa, I would welcome you, honor you, and thank you. I thank you not just because I wish to do so. Neither do I do it out of fear.

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So why then am I thanking you? "Give the wealth to the rightful owner."<sup>1</sup> You have invested wealth here, and one should always thank the doer. It might appear odd when I say that I thank you for the construction of this water tower. This is because you are the head of the state of Senegal, and therefore you are responsible for providing water throughout the country. However, my expression of gratitude to you is sincere, and there is a tangible reason for it. This is because, despite the size of Senegal, it is only here [in Tuubaa] that I have found two water towers located within a five-kilometer distance.

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Thus, I regard the first water tower as an obligation on your part, but I treat the second one as a favor from you. And when you ask for help and receive it, you should always express your gratitude.

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<sup>1</sup> "Give the wealth to the rightful owner" used in the Ajami text is the Wolof equivalent of "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar."

And the expression of gratitude should be directed to the one who responded favorably to your request. I would also like to remind you what I told to you when we first met. I told you that if I ever ask you for something and upon close examination, you find that it is only for my personal benefit,

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and not for the good of the community, I beg you not to do it. This is because I am aware that you are an authority, and every hour of your time benefits many people. Therefore, I know better than sending you letters and requesting meetings with you to discuss my personal needs. I will never do that. This being said, whatever you do for the community, you have done it for me. If you make the community happy, you have made me happy. So, I thank you and I convey to you this expression of gratitude [of the community].

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If you were once negligent and were assisted in removing those unclean parts of yourself that troubled you, you ought to make the best of the remaining clean parts that could be beneficial. Since God has brought us together to follow the same path to where we will unite with our leader [Bamba in the hereafter], it is my wish that we all behave in such a way that, when we meet him, he will be pleased with us and assist us. The only way we can achieve this is by complying with his injunctions and prohibitions. I know that sometimes one may want something and struggle hard for it. But it is because one does not know the proper way to pursue it [...] <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Though the translation follows the *Ajami* text, there seems to be something missing here. The scribe might have omitted a section here.

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[...] They [the French colonial authorities] had a negative opinion about him [Bamba]. It was for this reason that they made his life very difficult. They sent him into exile in different places. However, he never forsook God no matter where he was brought. He had faith in the fact that Allah was his Lord wherever he found himself, that he was serving God and following His commands. And wherever he was, he always believed that God was his Owner. Wherever he was, he believed that he was there for the sake of God. This was well known. When this became clear to the colonial authorities, they made an agreement with him, which is the one we can only follow. They agreed that he would comply with the policies of colonial authorities that do not contradict God's commands and urge people to do so. He would also respect and call on his followers to respect colonial authorities' prohibitions if the latter do not violate God's commands. This was his conduct.

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This is how he acted with the French colonial government that you [President Senghor] replaced. But you replaced them after we became independent, in a context where we are all equal and where you are expected to act on behalf of the people who made you our leader so that you work for the betterment [of our country]. Our relationship with you is going to follow the example that my father has set. We are committed to work with you to help each other in everything that brings progress to our country and strengthens our religion. There is a piece of advice that our father [Bamba] gave to us. This is the only advice we can follow. We have no other choice. What did he say? He said: "I entrust you with the Quran. Make it

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your home; Make it your everything. Use the Sunna (traditions of the Prophet), peace be upon him, as the walls around your home. Who is the one standing outside of the wall calling to you? It is Satan

– do not pay attention to him.” This is the piece of advice we are following, but we do not hold anything against anybody. This is what defines us. Fellow religious leaders, I take you as witnesses of my expression of gratitude to the President [Senghor] for his beautiful gesture towards us. I am not among God’s creatures who would express gratitude to people who did nothing for them; for

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if you express gratitude to people who did nothing for you, and they are clever, they will know that you are disparaging them, though they did nothing wrong to deserve it. As a result, fellow religious leaders, I would like you to witness my expression of gratitude. The people of Senegal, I want you to be my witness. I would like to thank you, the religious leaders, who know that this is a moment of joy and something dear to me; and who came to share it with me. Let me make this commitment to you: As long as I live, I will always be by your side in everything you do. There is nothing that can stand between us because Allah commands us to stand in unity. Thank you very much.

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Now, Dear President [Senghor], an expression of gratitude must always be accompanied by tangible evidence. Anyone who expresses gratitude to you and does not tell you the reason is certainly not telling the truth... May peace be upon you.