

Ndigël: Murid Newspaper in Wolof Ajami 2

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[Letter 1: Official Approval Letter]

Cheikh Abdoul Ahad M'Backé

General Caliph of the Murid Order

Tuubaa, Ramaḍan 1982

Touba

May peace and blessings of God, the Most Exalted, be upon you.

That being said, Sëriñ Muusaa Nduur, Sëriñ Maxtaar Njaay and their companions were here today,

Friday, the fifth day of Ramadan, 1398 AH (1980 CE). They brought a copy of the Quran and

stated that they have joined their forces in order to hold celebrations dedicated to the servant of the

Prophet (Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba), peace be upon him and may the grace of God be upon his

family, on December 24 and 31 every year. For this purpose, they were requesting my approval.

Thus, I have told them that celebrating the servant of the Prophet is an obligation for each of his

followers as long the celebration complies with the teachings of the Quran, the devotional poems [of

Bamba], and engaging in righteous acts and uttering righteous words, and not to engage in anything

play or prohibited by God. May peace be with you!

Shaykh Abdul Ahad Mbakke¹

¹ Serigne Abdoul Ahad Mbacké (in the French-based spelling) or Shaykh Abdul Ahad Mbàkke is also known as Baay Laat (1914-1989) and Abdu Lahat Mbakke, and Shaykh Abdu. He is affectionately remembered for his straight talk and as a visionary leader who built the central library and numerous other infrastructures in the city of Tuubaa (Touba in French). He served as the third Caliph of the Muridiyya from 1968 to his death in 1989.

[Letter 2: Official Acknowledgement Letter]

Tuubaa, the 19th of Rabi‘ al-Awwal²

Cheikh Abdoul Ahad M’Backé

General Caliph of the Murid Order

May peace and blessings of Allah, the Most Exalted, be upon you.

Dear members of the organizing committee of the National Federation of Young Murids, I extend my warmest greetings to you! I thank you. I thank you very much for your steadfastness and good standing as Murid disciples. I wanted to let you know that Sëriñ Muhammadul Basiir Joob, Sëriñ Maxtaar Njaay, and Alhaaji Yaande Joob have brought your pious gift to me, a sum of 40,000 Francs CFA.³ Thank you very much once again. May you continuously have the means to bring such pious gifts, and may we be here to receive you each time! May your wealth increase every hour, every day, every month, and every year! May God protect you and bless your work, by the grace of the servant of the Prophet [Bamba]. May the grace of God be him and his family. May peace be with you!

Shaykh Abdul Ahad Mbakke

² *Rabi‘ al-Awwal* in Arabic is the third month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

³ 40,000 Francs CFA is the equivalent of \$80. Funds that Murid disciples in Senegal and abroad send to the Caliphs to support Murid events and projects vary from few dollars to millions of dollars. Each contribution, regardless of its monetary significance, is acknowledged in Wolof Ajami writing.

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[Letter 3: Public Announcement]

Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba Day in Brussels⁴

Fellow Murid disciples, fellow Muslims,

This is to inform you that on July 4th and 5th, we will host our International Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba Weekend in Brussels. It will be similar to the one we held at the UNESCO venue [in Paris] in 1979. Some days will be devoted to exhibitions. Speakers will come from Senegal and Morocco. About one ton of equipment will be shipped from Senegal. For this reason, we seek your support and ask that you write to the following address to request your donations cards: 4, Rue de Château. St Quen, 93400. Those who reside in Paris can get in touch with Sëriñ Saar Joob at this telephone number: 2597352.

⁴ *Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba Day* or simply *Bamba Day* is an annual celebration by Murid communities living abroad. Murids in the diaspora use the day to celebrate and showcase Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba's achievements. Murids living in Europe first started it and the holiday has now been adopted by Murids in Brazil, Canada, and especially the United States. In New York and Chicago, *Bamba Day* is recognized by city officials. For more on *Bamba Day* and the religious activities of Murids in America, Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa, see Cheikh Anta Babou, *The Muridiyya on the Move: Islam, Migration, and Place-Making* (Ohio University Press, 2021), 197.

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Activity Report: The National Federation of Young Murids

This is a statement made by Sëriñ Koso Mbakke,⁵ the Soldier of Sëriñ Tuubaa [the Master of Tuubaa] and Maam Seex Ibraahiima Faal. He made the statement on New Year's Eve. He greeted and thanked the Federation and those who had helped its members to reach their goals and those who attended the events, because of their love for the Shaykh [Bamba]. Speaking to Sëriñ Muhammadu Maxtaar Njaay and the public, he stated the following: "I will repeat what I told you before. We are soldiers of the Master of Tuubaa.⁶ Know that the success that happened today, what happened in the past, and what is to come are all inevitable. They are all part of God's rewards for the work the Master of Tuubaa has accomplished. All these successes prove that God has recognized the Shaykh's righteous acts. When a French colonial officer once handed money to the Master of Tuubaa, which was supposed to be a compensation for the time they deprived him of his freedom of movement and for all the unjust hardships they made him endure, what he did was to forcefully throw the money to the face of the officer to the extent that his face was scratched. The officer wrote a report about the event. Afterwards, the Master of Tuubaa said: "My hand belongs to the Generous Enricher and Eternal Benefiter. Riches do not come from a small kinglet)."⁷ This was a praise song that was never heard before and will never be heard again! He stated that all the

⁵ Sëriñ Koso Mbàkke or Mbakke is also spelled Serigne Kosso Mbacké. Maam Seex Ibraahiima Faal, also spelled as Mame Cheikh Ibrahim Fall (1856-1930), is also known as Lâmp Faal or Lampe Fall or Maam Shaykh also spelled Mame Cheikh. He was one of Bamba's most loyal disciples and one of the first disciples to be promoted to Shaykh. He is known for founding the Baay-faal way of life centered on service to the Muridiyya. Sëriñ Muhammadu Maxtaar Njaay is also spelled Serigne Mouhammadou Mokhtar Ndiaye.

⁶ The writer used *Soldar*, which is a wolofization of the French word *Soldat*. It is a metaphor used in Murid communities to refer to committed followers of Sëriñ Tuubaa [*The Master of Touba*], i.e. Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba (1853-1927), the founder of the Murid order in Senegal.

⁷ This is a versified, standalone Arabic statement that the copyist added between the regular lines of the text: *Li l-Lahi jalla yadi wa l-qalbu ma'a badani/Wa sawali fawqa ma'inda sulayṭimi* [To God, The Most-High, belong my hand [as a writer], along with my heart and body. And [He] has granted me more than is under the dominion of a kinglet]. See Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba's poem called *Rumnā shakār* [*We long for expressing gratitude*], verses 43-44.

French colonizers were not even worthy of being treated as small kings, and that they generate strife and are miserable. The events [of this Bamba day] are part of God's reward for his righteous work. And it is a reward that will endure until paradise! I would like to thank the government officials, because they have given us all the support that we requested. We have no one, except the Master [Bamba] and his followers. So, whoever has consideration for the Master and provides assistance to his disciples, we will be by your side in whatever you do.

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Those who do not support the disciples, we have no interest in whether they are wealthy or not. In his address, Sëriñ Muhammadu Basiiru Joob,⁸ the Federation president, said: "I would like to thank the public abundantly. I am sure Sëriñ Tuubaa [the Master of Tuubaa] is satisfied with our work, and so are Allah, the Glorious, and His Prophet, peace be upon him. The proof is that Sëriñ Muhammadu Murtalaa Mbakke presided over the opening ceremony and Sëriñ Muhammadu Mustafaa Basiiru Mbakke presided over the closing event. It seems that the two Muhammads, the one in Mecca [The Prophet] and the one in Mbakke [Bamba], are pleased! Therefore, we must be grateful. If you work for Sëriñ Tuubaa [the Master of Tuubaa] until he himself joins you in the process, you ought to be grateful.⁹ We thank everyone because we initially paid visits to all the authorities, especially the leaders of the Sufi orders, to inform them about our planned events. This is because we share the same religion and should equally share celebrations like these ones. They were all very supportive. Let us all keep cultivating unity, piety, and good manners. May peace be with you." After this beautiful speech,

⁸ Sëriñ Muhammadu Basiiru Joob (or Jóob) is also spelled Serigne Mouhammadou Bassirou Diop. Sëriñ Muhammadu Murtalaa Mbakke or Mbakke is also spelled Serigne Mouhammadou Mourtalla (or Mourtada) Mbacké (1921-2004). He was the youngest son of Bamba and the founder of the largest private schools network in Senegal. Sëriñ Muhammadu Mustafaa Basiiru Mbakke also spelled Serigne Mouham- madou Moustapha Bassirou, is the son of Sëriñ Basiiru Mbakke or Serigne Bassirou (Bachir) Mbacké, one of Bamba's sons.

⁹ The writer treats the presence of Bamba's son and grandson in the events as representing Bamba's own presence.

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Sëriñ Muhammadu Muxtaar Njaay, the vice president, took the floor. After greeting the attendance on behalf of the organization, he added: "First of all, I would like to thank you all and the authorities we consulted when we decided to organize these activities. I would also like to thank our fellow Murid disciples who assisted us. I will start by reminding you about the content of the letter that Sëriñ Abdul Ahad Mbakke wrote with his own hand. He urged us to ensure that our activities focus on reading the Quran and the Qasaa'id (Bamba's devotional poems), righteous acts, and to avoid engaging in anything unrighteous. He also said that dedicating a night to the celebration of the servant of the Prophet [Bamba] is a duty for every Murid disciple. This is what he wrote in the letter he handed to us. We wanted to remind this to everyone here. Let us all renew our firm determination to follow his injunctions. May we all reach his level of determination." Sëriñ Muxtaar Njaay and the audience, I beg your pardon. Before you thank all the authorities who are present on behalf of the Federation, please allow me, Saalihi Ka, to pass a quick message.¹⁰ I sincerely apologize for cutting the script of Sëriñ Muxtaar Njaay's speech in order to send greetings and a message of gratitude and to express our determination to continue the work. To show my satisfaction with the work, I leave my address here for anyone who needs copies of Sëriñ Muusaa Ka's poems.¹¹

¹⁰ At this point, the scribe, Saalihi Ka, is adding a message of his own before continuing to the report.

¹¹ Sëriñ Muusaa Ka or Serigne Moussa Ka (1889-1963) was Bamba's disciple and the greatest Wolof Ajami poet. He was a hagiographer and historian who drew on Bamba's writings, Islamic sources and the works of his senior colleagues. His monumental work, which is read, recited, and chanted, has been critical in the spread of the Muridiyya in Senegambia. For more information on him and other Murid poets, see Fallou Ngom, *Muslims Beyond the Arab World: The Odyssey of 'Ajami and the Muridiyya* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 22-23

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<p>All the Wolof statements are by Sëriñ Muxtaar Njaay. He made cassette recordings of them and transcribed them in Wolof Ajami on behalf of the organization.</p>	<p>Address: Sëriñ Saalihu Ka, son of Sëriñ Muusaa Ka, Xaadimul Xadiim, Tuubaa Daaru Minan, Sëriñ Abdu Sàkkóor Faal bus stop, facing the Mosque, on the Mbakke-Bawol Road. This is my exact address.</p>
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The National Federation of Young Murids chose this delegation to go consult with all the religious leaders of the country. First, I, Sëriñ Muxtaar Njaay, was tasked with meeting Sëriñ Abdul Ahad Mbakke in order to seek his approval. I was accompanied by other people on that mission during the month of Ramadan. We brought him a copy of the Quran [as a gift] and he approved of our project. We also informed all his younger siblings, male and female, and many of the grandchildren of Sëriñ Tuubaa. We received their approval. They told us it was a noble and necessary enterprise, but a difficult one because others had undertaken similar projects before us but failed. We had long conversations, and they expressed their trust in us due to our reputations of being steadfast disciples as demonstrated by the previous events similar to these ones we had organized in 1981. We, the leaders of the Federation, noted that the editions that followed were even larger, and we were supported by the prayers we received from the family of the Shaykh [Bamba] and the support we received from various sources, including from religious and political authorities. Let us then thank the one who has the power to authorize or forbid these activities: Sëriñ Abdul Ahad Mbakke, the Caliph of the Muridiyya. We extend our thanks to his siblings, especially Sëriñ Muhammadu Murtalaa Mbakke who presided over the opening ceremony: the exhibit.

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We also thank Sëriñ Muhammadu Mustafaa Basiiru who presided over the closing of the exhibit. All this motivated the members of our organization more. May all the plans of Sëriñ Tuubaa [the Master of Tuubaa] and those of his family and disciples fully materialize, physically and spiritually. Amen, by the grace of Sëriñ Tuubaa and his mentor, the Prophet, peace be upon him! We pledge to continue the work and to rely on their guidance. This being said, we would like to thank Sëriñ Koso Mbakke, the Soldier of the Master of Tuubaa [Sëriñ Tuubaa] and Seex Ibraahiima Faal. We pray that the Master gives him the reward he deserves. We also thank Alhaaji Mbakke, son of Sëriñ Abdu Xari who came on behalf of Sëriñ Seex Mbakke-Bombaali, son of Sëriñ Mbakke-Madiina. Thanks also go to the many people who came to the event from Daaru Xudoos. Sëriñ Abdu Sakkoor Faal, the representative of the person in whose honor we named the December 31st events, sent a delegation. Thanks are also due to Sëriñ Seex Faal Xadi Gey, who represented the family of Seex Mustafaa Faal, and who came accompanied by a group of people, including Soxna Astu Faal, daughter of Seex Ibra Faal in Njurbel, Sëriñ Saaliwu Mbakke, son of Sëriñ Ibra in Ndar, the caliph of Daaru Salaam, and other leaders. We paid visits to these religious leaders.

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Sëriñ Abdul Aziiz Si, the Caliph of the Tijaniyya, encouraged us to invite all Muslims to join our work. Sëriñ Siidi Yahya Kunta [of the Qadriyya] put us in touch with his grandson, Maam Aali Kunta. We visited Sëriñ Mansoor Si [of the Tijaniyya] in his residence in the Liberté 5 neighborhood in Dakar, and he put us in touch with his younger brother, Sëriñ Abdu Aziiz Si Jr. We met with Sëriñ Iisaa Caw Laay, the Caliph of the Layeen order, one day after the Maghrib prayer. We had a long conversation during which he offered our group excellent advice. Sëriñ Moor Mareema Joob,

the Grand Sëriñ of Dakar,¹² and Sëriñ Mawdo Silla, the imam of the Grand Mosque of Dakar, also offered us insightful advice. The latter provided us with significant support and sent a delegation of well-respected dignitaries. Sëriñ Mambay Sow, the spokesman of the Caliph of the Qadriyya, and Sëriñ Maggat Njaay, the leader of the young members of the Qadriyya in the Cap Vert region, also contributed to the events.¹³ May God reward them all by the grace of the Prophet, peace be upon him. To close these acknowledgments, the members of the Federation and the committee who were tasked with meeting authorities would like to express their earnest gratitude to the people I mentioned above. Though we cannot fully express our gratitude to them in this newsletter, we can certainly register our appreciation before [Bamba] on behalf of whom our work is done.

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After the acknowledgements, [Sëriñ Muxtaar Njaay] spoke to Sëriñ Mustafaa Basiiru and said the following: "We wanted to seize today's opportunity to explain our mission to you and to the disciples who joined us. Given the unique chance we have of sitting with Sëriñ Muhammadu Mustafaa Basiiru Mbakke, we must explain the objectives and goals of our Federation. Similarly, we need to lay out our plans. They include the changes we hope to bring in how the two nights [December 24 and 31] were traditionally celebrated by strangers who were misled and who used to spread sinful practices. We reject their practices and have decided instead to organize activities that celebrate our hero [the Prophet] and the one who brought his message to us [The Master of Tuubaa, Sëriñ Tuubaa]. We will organize similar events across the Murid diaspora and will invite young people and adults alike. We all need to wake up and walk together in the path of Sëriñ Tuubaa [The Master of Tuubaa]. We hope that this conversation will help us to better appreciate the significance

¹² A traditional chief in the city of Dakar.

¹³ *Kapver* also spelled *Cap-Vert* is an old name of the present-day region of Dakar, the capital of Senegal. It is not to be confused with the neighboring Portuguese-speaking country of *Cabo Verde*.

of what we are doing. When we met with Sëriñ Abdul Ahad and described our plans to him, he wrote a letter in which he instructed us to focus our activities on the following areas:

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Reciting the Quran and devotional poems of Sëriñ Tuubaa, doing and saying good things, and avoid engaging in anything unrighteous. This is exactly what we did when we came back. It was only last year (1980) that we could not hold the event here because it coincided with the Mâggal of Tuubaa, so we were the event there [in Tuubaa]. This year, 1981, we went back to him. I went to see him, and he advised us to continue to organize the event with courtesy and discipline and be steadfast, because when one is working for the sake of Sëriñ Tuubaa [The Master of Tuubaa], one should spare no effort. We strived to follow his advice. This is why we have innovated this year by adding an exhibition on the life of Sëriñ Tuubaa. It has attracted many people throughout the week. People came from all corners of the country and marveled at him. We added this [exhibition], and to do that, we met with Sëriñ Seex Muhammadu Murtalaa Mbakke. He agreed to preside over the opening of the exhibition and prayed for us. He did as you [Sëriñ Muhammadu Mustafaa Basiiru Mbakke] did for us today: He had a conversation with us, counseled us, and expressed his satisfaction with our work. This is why when we have reached

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the end of the event, we thought about inviting you. This is because, we had invited Shaykh Murtalaa Mbakke, the youngest of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba's sons, for the opening ceremony, and we find it fitting to invite you, the grandson [of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba] who is responsible for coordinating all the activities of the Muridiyya path, for the closing ceremony and to pray for us so that God may bestow his blessings on us and on our hearts and limbs and in everything we undertake. This is the reason why we came here in Thiès to inform you. Over the past four years, we have held the events during those two nights until last year when Sëriñ Abdul Ahad talked about

them in his speech for the preparation of the Mànggal of Tuubaa. He said that we should all value the Mànggal because it is a special event for Sëriñ Tuubaa [The Master of Tuubaa]. This is because it marks the day he obtained everything he sought from Allah and His holy Prophet. He added that the day of the Mànggal is our *Independence Day*. Sëriñ Abdul Ahad also noted that: "All Muslims ought to be united like a pile of wood tied with a rope. The pile is made up of separate pieces of wood taken from different trees and different locations. Yet all the pieces of wood can be brought together in a home thanks to one single rope. Let us be united like a pile of wood so that whatever door we knock at will open, providing benefits to all." His speech inspired us to plan to turn our organization into a National Federation with local chapters in all areas. In order to create the local chapters,

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we went everywhere in Dakar, God willing! We set up the first local chapter in downtown Dakar [Dakar Plateau] and the Médina neighborhood. After that, we went to the neighborhoods of Fass Gibraltar, Cité Port, and Colobane. Then, we set up a chapter in Yarakh Tefes and Hann Montagne. We also set up a branch in Castor, Dieuppeul, and Derkhle. We did the same in Ouakam, Ngor, and Yoff. We have a chapter in Regroupement Pikine, where a significant number of people attended the first meeting. I [Sëriñ Muxtaar Njaay] participated in the meeting on behalf of the Federation. There is also a chapter in Teungueth [Rufisque].¹⁴ We intend to do the same everywhere in the Cap-Vert region, and then extend our reach to the remaining seven regions [of Senegal]. We also plan to expand our reach to the diaspora. We will set up a chapter wherever there is a group of people who want to work with us within the framework of the Federation. Our goal in doing this is to unite people for the sake of Sëriñ Tuubaa [The Master of Tuubaa]. What we all want is to work diligently and in unity for Islam regardless of Sufi brotherhood affiliations. Our utmost goal is to unite all

¹⁴ The popular French-based spelling of the names of these neighborhoods is used instead of the Wolof spelling.

Muslims so that they wish each other peace, interact in peaceful manners, and to ensure that peace and solidarity

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abound in countries and in the Muslim world, especially in our country of Senegal. The Federation is also planning to set up pedagogical committees within chapters so that members can increase their knowledge by studying works such as *Tazanmud al-Şighar* [Viaticum for the Youth], *Mawāhib al-Quddūs* [The Gift of the Absolutely Pure], *Masālik al-Jinān* [The Itineraries of Paradise], *Nahju Qaḍā'il Ḥāj* [The Path to the Satisfaction of Needs], among other texts dealing Islam. These are texts that Sëriñ Tuubaa [The Master of Tuubaa] wrote for us, Muslims, especially those of us who are his disciples so that we have good conduct and follow the path set by his early followers. We hope that this will turn us into sincere Murids so that we are among the *şidiqīna* [the steadfast affirmers of truth] that the Quran celebrates besides the Prophets.¹⁵ These are the ones that the Quran names, and then comes the rest. Fellow disciples, let us then be resolute. Shaykh Abdul Ahad Mbakke reminded us of this when he said that it is not easy to go by a name that is not yours. Therefore, let us strive to embrace the kind of behavior that turns someone into a sincere Murid and avoid what has misled those who were righteous and drifted away from the right path. May God save us from this! A [Wolof] poet warned against [such errors] as follows: “Miserable is the uncircumcised person who aimlessly wanders. He will realize he was unprepared the day he meets the traditional circumciser!”

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This is why the Federation urges all the chapter leaders to educate their members about Murid discipleship, the righteous conduct of a Muslim, and to teach about them all the requirements of

¹⁵ The speaker may be referring to this Quranic verse: “And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions.” Q 4:69, Sahih International Translation.

Muridiyya so that they can better appreciate who their leader [Shaykh Bamba] really is and the value of what they have. This is why we have named the organization National Federation of Young Murids for we are committed to becoming true Murids. To be a Murid is not about the amount of knowledge that one possesses. It is not either about age, gender, or wealth. Being a Murid is about steadfastness, willingness to act in tangible ways, and complying with the instructions and prohibitions whether they are pleasant or not. Regardless of the circumstances, we are committed to following this code of conduct, and we will invite others to adopt it. Sëriñ Mustafaa Basiiru, we make this commitment in your presence. We thought it would be helpful for you to know all this and ask for your support. Whenever something needs to be done, we ask that you assign us a share for the sake of The Servant of the Prophet, Bamba, and Seex Ibraahiima Faal, the Gateway to the Muridiyya. We thank you abundantly for your presence! We promise that we will come to inform you whenever we plan to do something. We will follow whatever advice you may offer us and will extend our collective gratitude to you. Thank you very much, Mbakke! May peace be with you. Sëriñ Muxtaar Njaay.