

Poem of the First Màggal

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In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This poem is about the Màggal¹ of Tuubaa or its first celebration. May peace and blessings of God be upon the Prophet!

In the name of God, we begin.

we seek safety and protection in You, the Giver of longevity.

Our actions and words belong to You.

We belong to You, take all our properties!

By Your Will You can turn your common servant into

the most virtuous servant gifted with spiritual excellence!

You have gifted human beings with special qualities,

and many other special virtues.

You have appointed leaders and offered them supporters.

The preoccupation of Murids is to listen to their leader.

Human beings, I want to talk to you. Listen!

If you listen, I will share with you some wisdom.

I will share with you something better that brings you rewards,

¹ *Màggal* means in Wolof to celebrate, glorify, or commemorate. In the Murid tradition, it refers to the annual celebration of the deportation of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba to Gabon in 1895 by the French colonial administration.

which is to comply with injunctions and expand the farm!²

Take the road to go celebrate Mustafaa [Mbakke],

for he gave us what is worth the blessings of Marwa and Safa!³

Shaykh Mustafaa had invited people to Tuubaa for the Māggal.

Now the Māggal is celebrated everywhere!

He initiated every Māggal we know of and celebrate today.

He showed us the greatness of those we celebrate!

He gave us the blessings of the commemoration day we have.

He honored us and made us comfortable. Well done, Mbakke!

Without him, the Shaykhs would be divided,

writing complaints and our path would be like a game of *yooté*,⁴

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turning the community into a blame contest,

where everyone seeks his friends' support.

The day we received Mustafaa's injunction,

everyone came and immediately complied!

It was a very long day, one Sunday

when God entrusted the blessings to Hamdi!

Tafaa showered everyone with the blessings.

Prosperity ensued, preventing many from begging for a living!

² Because Murids are farmers, farming metaphors are commonly used in their Ajami poetry to refer to their Sufi order or life in general.

³ *Shaykh Mustafaa Mbakke* (1883-1945), also spelled *Cheikh Moustapha Mbacké*, was the oldest son of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba and the first Caliph of the Muridiyya. He was also known as *Hamdi* ou *Amdi*, *Tafaa* ou *Tapha*. *Marwata* and *Safa* are two small hills which are pilgrimage sites in Mecca.

⁴ *Yooté* is a local board game. The poet alludes to the accusations, competitions, and tensions that could have emerged between Murid religious leaders after the death of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba in 1927, if Mustafaa did not act wisely.

See, for example, the day Mustafaa commemorated in 'Tuubaa,

how beneficial it has been for all the inhabitants of 'Tuubaa!

He is the only one I know whose kindness is contagious.

He is the shining light of perfection that has shed light on others!

Thank you, Mustafaa, for broadening your path.

You have expanded the farm in all directions,

to the extent that everywhere looks like 'Tuubaa!

There is no one like this man. He holds the divine light!

If it were not thanks to him, Mecca would have buried ['Tuubaa] Mbakke!

But going to Mecca today is like going to 'Tuubaa.

Whoever goes to Madina pays a pious visit to the Prophet.

Meccans have also paid pious visits to Bamba in 'Tuubaa!⁵

These three cities are the most

popular destinations in the world.

Shaykh Bamba said that a fourth city like these three

cannot fit in this world! Smart people, ponder over it!

Mecca is first, Madina second,

and 'Tuubaa is third. They are the top!

Let us dive in 'Tuubaa to pay Bamba a pious visit!

Paying 'Tuubaa a pious visit is paying the Prophet a pious visit!

⁵ The poet refers here to the delegation of dignitaries from Saudi Arabia who have visited 'Tuubaa during and after the death of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba.

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Let us dive in Tuubaa, Men of God!⁶

Whoever follows the path will see the Prophet!

Congratulations, Mustafaa for enlightening the paths!

His superb leadership is recognized by all the families!

The mystical secrets of the Master [Bamba] has brought all his peers to Tuubaa!

All of them came. By God, ponder over that day!

Large crowds with their noises could be seen everywhere.

They were not unlike the pilgrims visiting the zam-zam well [in Mecca].

They shared the busyness, proximity, and admiration for each other.

It was [Tuubaa's] event on that day when people touched each other affectionately.

The noise of engines and human voices

blended with the lights coming from all places!

The lights [of Tuubaa] shone toward the sky enlightening everywhere!

Everywhere you turn, there are lamps or electric lights!

The dust rose and covered people,

blending with the voices chanting the names of God!

Some were quietly reading devotional poems with humility,

while others were reading the entire Quran⁷ to seek baraka!

Others were listening to public sermons of preachers that dazzled them.

They renewed their commitment as they shed tears [of joy].

Obviously, all insiders have no problem with the event!

⁶ *Rijālu l-Lābi* in Arabic is commonly used to refer to men of God or disciples in the Muridiyya.

⁷ The poet used the Wolof phrase *nasal abxuraan* which means to read the entire Quran alone or as a group.

If you do not understand it, then be quiet. Criticizing it makes you flawed!

Those who love the people of Tuubaa

will never be bound like animals about to be roasted [in the afterlife]!

Those who celebrate the people of Bamba

will never be dishonored. My good friend, please understand this!

Those who are vigilant will see wonders. Please listen,

and you will learn something you did not know!

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The wonders of the Māggal are like movies,

screened all day and all night in movie theaters!

It is a good occasion to reunite with families or make new friends.

By God, the day is worth neglecting your kin!

Well done, Shaykh Bamba! Your path has caused

all paths everywhere to be buried on that day. This is a fact!

Anyone you knew would show up on that day!

Wherever you had friends, you would see them on that day!

You will see any relatives who come there.

If you don't see them, you will hear about them!

Being there is a privilege combined with blessings!

Be always grateful on that day! Kayre, please keep talking!⁸

By God, whoever attend the Māggal

⁸ *Kayre* also known as *Sērīñ Maam Moor Kayre* or *Serigne Mame Mor Kayré* (1869-1951) was a disciple of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba. He was the oldest of the Murid Ajami poets. He specialized in hagiography and Islamic topography. See Fallou Ngom, *Muslims Beyond the Arab World: The Odyssey of 'Ajami and the Muridiyya* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 22.

will find all kinds of important people there.

In my view, attending the Màggal enhances people

physically and spiritually and lifts them up to the top!

Whenever the day of the Màggal approaches,

people are thrilled and keep saying they cannot wait!

When the day comes, nobody would care about their farm,

for everybody would go to Tuubaa because of the rewards!

Once they arrive in Tuubaa and see the place,

they are dazzled and grateful to the owner of the place [Bamba]!

Both men and women who go there are grateful,

resulting in a collective and widespread gratefulness like the sun!

It is the only day I know that outshines Tabaski,⁹

for the blessings of the day surpass those of Tabaski!

You will see there all the black people,

as you will see there all the white Moors!

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You will also see foreign language speakers there.

The image reminds you about the creatures gathered in Mecca [during the Hajj]!

You will see people kneeling or crawling to honor someone there,

as you will find people attending to someone's needs there!

No matter who you are, you will someone who outshines you in Tuubaa,

either in tangible ways or spiritually!

⁹ *Tabaski* or *Eid al-Adha*.

Everybody will learn something from someone

to improve themselves or fall more in love with Tuubaa!

If your eyes are good, you will see wonders there,

and if your eyes are not good, you will hear about the wonders!

If you are physically fit and accept to attend that day,

you will be rewarded with all kinds of benefits!

Prepare for the Māggal and bring your contribution¹⁰

so that you will be pleased on the Day of Reckoning!

This is why the people have the unwavering faith of Prophet Job!¹¹

[Mustafaa Mbakke] has honored Tuubaa and guided the disciples!

Congratulation, Mustafaa, the heir of Mustafaa [Prophet Muhammad],

whose bright light has shined up to Marwa and Safa!

He has gone up to Mecca, Jeddah and Madina!

May God protect us from misfortune, amen!

His bright light that shines in Tuubaa Mbakke

has enlightened those uninformed about Tuubaa!

His bright light shines in every place

has united all people's minds and words!

O God, we implore you to let Shaykh Bamba

be our leader forever so we remain in the path of righteousness.

You, the Shepherd of all Creatures,

¹⁰ Here the poet used *badīyya*, which means a pious gift, contribution to the collective effort in cash or kind.

¹¹ Here the poet used the phrase *gëmmug Ayyuba* (the faith of Ayyub). Prophet Job's (*Ayyub*) is known in Islam for demonstrating steadfast faith when he was tested by God with a long and painful illness.

redirect us and put us on the straight path.

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Lift us all up and keep us close to your heart like babies!¹²

Then we will be preserved from misfortune and fully shielded!

Amen! O God, strengthen our faith!

Give us comfort on the Day of Reckoning and accept our prayers!

Now turn your attention to Gaynde Fatma,¹³

and let all creatures know that Shaykh has the medal!

Gaynde Fatma has no equal!

his mystical potency surpasses his exoteric potency!

The master of creatures has risen in Tuubaa! Look at him!

His dazzling light has shined brightening everywhere!

Go pay pious visits to Shaykh Mbakke for he is now reachable!

Even the virtuous men know full well that has risen!

He is the sky! Look at him in the sky above you!

Even if you refuse to look at him, he is still in the sky above you head!

His internal and external generosity are legendary!

From East to West, all Sufi orders unanimously concur!

Shaykh combines internal and external generosity!

He gives and strengthens anyone who solicits his favor!

¹² Here the poet used the Wolof word *laxpandu*, which means to lift up and hold close to the heart a baby in order to soothe them.

¹³ *Gaynde Fatma*, also known as *Sëriñ Shaykh Mbakke Gaynde Fatma* or *Serigne Cheikh Mbacké Gaindé Fatma* (1913-1978), was the eldest son of Mustafaa Mbakke and the oldest grandson of Bamba. He was the first Murid leader to open a mixed Franco-Arabiic private school in Tuubaa in 1953-54 and to send his children to the French school. He was also a mentor of the senegalese scholar *Shaykh Anta Joob* also known as *Cheikh Anta Diop* (1923-1986).

And these words I uttered are verily undeniable.

If you don't believe me, then ask Abdu Sekk!

I have seen in him what is worth serving him

forever till you received the blessings you desire!

Blessed be God! You are the ocean of knowledge!

You are the expert in all disciplines! Mbakke, you are remarkable!

Shaykh Mbakke, you are the generous and the pious!

Your generosity is known everywhere. You are the best wherever you are!

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I know there is no one like you in this era!

All creatures should be grateful to Balla Aysa!¹⁴

I am grateful and overwhelmed

with a feeling of joy and dual salvation!¹⁵

But Mbakke, we solicit from you, on the Day of Reckoning,

to offer us more blessings and boundless peace!

Let all the Murids who love Tuubaa

pray together and ask God to reward our actions!

Amen, amen! O God, grant us Īmān

Islām, Iḥsān, and bring us all to heaven!¹⁶

Fellow creatures, please pray and and pray for Mustafaa,

¹⁴ *Balla Aysa*, also spelled *Balla Aissa Mbakke*, was the paternal grandfather of Bamba.

¹⁵ The poet used the Arabic word *fanṣayni* here. In the Murid tradition, it is commonly used to mean "success in the two worlds" (in this life and the afterlife). It is the title of one of Bamba's poems: *Mathlab al-fanṣayni*. For many Murid scholars and historians, the poem is believed to be the blueprint for the founding of Tuubaa. See Ross, Eric. 1996. *Tūbā: An African Eschatology in Islam* (Ph.D. thesis, McGill University), 52-58.

¹⁶ In Islamic theology, there are three degrees of faith. *Islām* is the first degree of faith. *Īmān*, is the first second of faith. *Iḥsān* is the third degree of faith.

So that we are forever showered with blessings for the sake of Tafaal

May God elect him to a loftier position,

make us his friends and witnesses of his election!

May God spread among us the baraka of Mustafaa,

grant us permanent dwellings in heaven!

Amen, amen, please say amen!

All praises belong to Him [Allah], for He is the Trustworthy!

May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet for eternity

and upon his family and companions. May God forgive the people of this century!

May the peace and blessings of the Lord of the Worlds be upon him! Amen, O Lord of Creatures!