

The Life of Cerno Ibraahiima Hoore Doqol

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

May God's blessings and peace be upon our Master, Muhammad, his family, and his followers.

I praise God, the Creator of all species, in the name of

his masterpiece, Ahmad,¹ the ultimate standard.

May God bestow his infinite blessings upon him,

blessings that are unfathomable and timeless!

He is the beloved [of God], the best of creation

among the Arab and Ajam [non-Arab] of all generations.

Rare are those among the Fula people who understand Arabic in this generation,

and even when they do, they don't master it like their mother tongue.

So listen in order to better understand in your own tongue,

for even a mere call to prayer [in a foreign tongue] can be confusing for some.

Today you have access, close to your heart,

to someone who speaks Pular [the Fula language] that is intelligible for your generation.

Start by consulting the people of your generation,

chiefs and chiefdoms of your generation.

Listen to the champions of this generation,

for we consult one another for the common good of this generation.

How pitiful it is that spoken Pular must be hidden!

The generation to whom my message is destined awaits [assistance].

¹ *Ahmad* is 1 of the 99 or so names by which Prophet Muhammad is known.

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I consulted believers, both men and women,

and I consulted scholars of this generation.

What is so sad in Fuuta is large enough to rival

the sun, the moon, and the stars of all the generations.

I consulted the people of Timbo and Timbi,²

and I consulted everyone in this generation.

Not just the people of Labe and Mali,³ but also those from Kindia to Conakry

and, of course, those of Dalaba, O Lord of all generations!

I consulted scholars and laypeople,

and every social class in this generation.

Then I went weeping to the town of Kala,⁴

and made the people of this generation weep.

I recited poems to enlighten the people.

Those who heard and witnessed my recitations are enough for this generation.

Doḡol and Jeyleebe people of Tulel and Luda,

please accompany me to Hoore Doḡol by boat!

I am consulting you and entrusting myself to Shaykh Lambel,

slowing down to await your assistance!

If you lose a sibling, you may find solace someday.

But if you love a comrade, you will lose all your senses.

² *Timbo*, *Timbi*, *Labe* are provinces of the theocracy of Fuuta Jalon. In the subsequent lines, the author lists other areas inhabited by the Fulbe.

³ *Mali*, a place in the northern part of Guinea, not to be confused with the sovereign country of Mali (the Republic of Mali).

⁴ *Kala* is a town in the province of *Dalaba* in Fuuta Jalon.

Please accompany me to Hoore Dogol by boat,

a boat I can embark on with empathy for this generation.

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"A full stomach eases comprehension,"

so say those with limited wisdom!

As the bees get larger, the need for reminders will grow too.⁵

Without scholars, who would guide this generation?

As grievors begin grieving, the corrupt show up too!

It is clear now that he [Shaykh Lambel] had shielded society from damnation.

From the village of Aynghel to the plains of Zawiya, people boarded their boat.

Why didn't you seek my help to rescue this generation?

I would have come in dreams as I came on foot

to shine the light, bring clarity to this generation,

and take away mundane earthly desires

so that this generation attains joy devoid of stress.

I empathize with his children and his Sufi disciples,

the active members who follow his path in this generation.

I empathize with the mothers⁶ and the grandchildren

and his neighbors who are defenders of the faith.

I deliver these messages to the public

in order to elevate religion in this generation.

Come closer, all mothers and children,

⁵ In Pular, bees are associated with interrupting the peace, causing havoc. The author uses "reminders" to refer to scholars who are responsible for reminding members of each generation about their obligations toward God.

⁶ Here, the author is most likely referring to the widows of the deceased.

I empathize with you and this generation.

My Lord, please forgive and be pleased with our saint

along with all late members of the faith.

Please protect their families and their wealth,

and bless the work they did for each generation.

Please shower Your blessings on their people,

and inspire their surviving relatives to act according to the faith.

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It is safe to assume that all in attendance,

will receive salvation. Indeed the whole crowd will be saved!

His bronze skin tone [light skin] always shined in Kala,

where he taught many people and served as Imam for generations.

Those who studied with him will be saved from the torments in the afterlife,

just as those who used to pray behind him will not be burned in the afterlife.

If you seek salvation, follow the saint,

knowing that those he has blessed in this generation will not be burned.

Anyone who has seen his face would escape the torments in the afterlife,

let alone those who were his friends in this generation.

Even those who heard his name will receive heavenly treasures,

let alone those who have interacted with him in this generation.

He traveled up and down preaching to the people,

and he triumphed with his poetry that he shared with this generation.

From left to right he opened people's heart to the faith;

no place nor time escaped his reach.

The angels landed by the sides of his audiences

to meet the new converts into the faith in this generation.

The [angels] ingested faith in the hearts of the people

who repented in due time, for fear of God and of sinning.

Three thousand strong received the option of converting,

and he made them all Muslim and purified them in this generation.

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God has given him the privilege to intercede for them [the converts]

even before he does so for his own children.

He taught eight thousand before retiring,

and he will intercede for all of them. What a unique privilege!

He taught many who had strong faith,

people who will likely be saved in this generation.

He welcomed guests from everywhere

spending enormous resources, something unheard of in his generation.

He was granted longevity, maybe even longer than others,

and he rose up above everybody in his generation.

For us, his friends and his acquaintances throughout his life,

we shall have no worries for what is to come in the afterlife.

There will be countless torches lit up for miles and miles for us

so we can climb up and witness the beauty of salvation!

As the Prophet has exclusive singularity before God,

our saint is equally singular among saints.

He will be welcomed by six thousand hosts

even though his congregation was only thirty.

They numbered ten thousand, those who bore witness

the day he answered his calling as the saint of his generation.

Of the eight thousand qualities associated with saints,

he topped each quality; he was the most distinguished of his peers.

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Rare are the saints who were simultaneously preachers, Imams, and teachers

and who were never absent from any gathering of the people.

He left behind descendants who would be great successors

fit to lead Kala and defend its faith.

I implore my Lord to allow me to see his face in the afterlife,

when the prophets meet all of humanity.

Grant us the favor of seeing the light of Your Prophet

and every messenger of Truth, O Lord of all generations.

Grant shelter to every believing man and woman,

beneath the shadow of Your Throne, O Lord of all generations.

For the sake of the companions [of the Holy Prophet Muhammad],

grant our saint the capacity to intercede for his followers.

Saints would intercede, one after the other, by seniority

measured by the size of their following.

He will intercede for every person in attendance [at his funeral],

if they were committed to the faith.

The stature and rank of saints are tied to their faith. The points they earned

for their commitment to the faith determines their order of intercession.

My Lord, help those who have helped to expand the faith

from near and afar. Please, do so, Lord of all generations.

My Lord, uplift all the religious exemplars

from near and afar. Please, do so, Lord of all generations.

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My Lord, enable hypocrites to repent their ways,

and change liars into Your worshippers, O Lord of all generations.

Grant us all shelter under the saints' guiding torches,

when each saint will intercede on behalf of his contemporaries.

A Dayeejo in his paternal line and Ludaajo from Kala in his maternal line,⁷

he wrote many books that have enlightened generations.

How sad it is when everybody is crying and sobbing,

because the doors of the faith are closing to all of us [due to his death].

When darkness comes, everyone will be aware of it,

and if visibility is impossible, everything must be done where you are.

So when light comes, you should plan for everything

knowing that when light goes out again, it will be difficult to do anything!

I have seen the light going out on us [with his death].

So come over here, wail and weep for all of us in this generation!

The loss of the saint, Hoore Doŋol, who enlightened us

will bring darkness in this generation.

If only I could study and worship more [with him],

⁷ *Dayeejo* is another name for members of the *Bari* or *Barry* clan, one of the four major clans in Fuuta Jalon. *Ludaajo* refers to a subgroup of the *Bab*, *Bâ* or *Ba* clan, another one of the four major clans in Fuuta Jalon.

but all this is moot! All this is only a dream.

Since he departed this world, a foundation of the faith is lost.

Now observe Fuuta as it falls into ignorance!

It is the prophecies of such saints and the Prophet

that are making me weep, for this generation is doomed!

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It is ignorance and material wealth that shine when such righteous people are gone.

This is why I weep for the misfortune of this generation!

The death [of saints and prophets] is analogous to reading with an oil lamp,

which has the power to stop the reader when it goes out!

It was through [Cerno Doŋol] that God created a learning center in Kala,

where our people went to seek Islamic education in this generation!

What is now left is the quest for material wealth and the futilities of this generation!

People are not interested in religious subjects or being reminded of death in this generation!

What is in vogue is attending colonial [French] schools and accumulating wealth!

People will not study the language of their religion [Arabic] in this generation.

They obsess over earthly fame, stress over professions,

lose sight of their faith and waste their time. This is the new slavery!

They are only focused on worldly endeavors and material wealth, and the relentless

pursuit of money, which will eventually disappoint them!

“Let’s go to the colonial schools and discuss it there,”

is now the common parlance of people in this generation!

They now contradict the wise words of their mothers and fathers

and equally disregard the advice of their religious leaders!

How many among them have learned the requirements of their jobs

only to feel used and tossed away like a bygone beauty?

It is the prophecy of the Prophet that is being fulfilled!

We are now like the rich people of this generation

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who are perched on top of their high chairs and cars,

and have given up on their faith and their peers!

As the end of time draws near, people focus on amassing wealth

and lose interest in all aspects of their faith!

They show off in their underwear with a beer in hand,

always stubborn until they find themselves in the grave!

Now commuters skip morning prayers. They wash their faces

and hurry to a job that will earn them a house in hell!

They like trendy hairstyles and choke themselves with puffs

of marijuana and tobacco, always in denial of their faith!

They build round huts and brick houses

doomed to collapse one day. My witness is the Lord of all generations!

Beloved people in this generation are those whose

newfound wealth benefits immoral folks!

Very few people are vigilant. Damned are those whose hearts

have succumbed to the worldly temptations of this generation!

Illicit wealth, wrongly sealed marriages, and fornications

will lead people to hell. My witness is the Lord of all generations!

[Luxurious] beds, boats, or even bicycles

and steering wheels [cars] have misled people in this generation!

This is why I mourn the departure of our Shaykh,

the exemplar of the faith in this generation!

At the market, he had tamed the obsessive love for material wealth.

Those whose love for material wealth is tamed will flourish in this generation!

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Keep a close eye on people's transactions in marketplaces,

and you will see the thieves and fornicators in this misguided generation!

Like flies from hell, look at how they calculate

the merchandise in markets, without regards to the Lord of all generations!

Since Judgment Day will inevitably come,

rest assured that if you are not held accountable here, you will be in the afterlife!

Those who focus on earthly wealth and fornicate in marketplaces

shall be impoverished for a long time in this generation!

Such flies from hell are celebrated by praise singers

who are devoid of faith in this generation!

When such people die, they will burn in hell,

except if they had repented sincerely in this generation!

Such people have few friends and many flatterers,

who are hypocrites in this generation!

Indeed, hypocrites are unbelievers,

for they follow no teaching of the faith.

O believers, men and women, listen!

Listen to the story of the saint [Cerno Hoore Doŋol] of this generation!

Listen about how he brought visible and invisible beings

together in Hoore Doŋol in this very generation!

The first to come were the saints, both living and deceased!

They came to purify the hearts of the residents of Doŋol.

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Since their souls were in the womb,

they cleanse the hearts of people.

When the [saints] visited [Cerno Doŋol], they exchanged greetings and consulted each other

on how to welcome the Messenger [Prophet Muhammad] in this generation!

The souls of the living [saints] were tasked with shielding

living people and the angels were asked to welcome the deceased.

They pledged and agreed on the successor [of Cerno Doŋol]

while he was still alive, before welcoming those who came by boat!⁸

They met six thousand among the living,

excluding the [spirits of the] deceased in attendance!

They welcomed angels who were followed by the strong

Angel of Death, who made himself visible to everybody!

The Messenger [Prophet Muhammad] and his followers came close to the door

before other messengers of truth joined the audience.

As the Prophet entered [the room], he greeted the saint [Cerno Doŋol], saying

“You are blessed in this generation!

It is time I bring you back to the Celestial Kingdom,

⁸ “Those who came by boat” here refers to the “normal people,” in contrast to the living and deceased saints who had been at the dying saint’s side in spirit all along.

away from this world that impoverishes this generation!"

[The saint] responded: "I still have a favor to ask of you!

Could you make it easy on me, Oh the best of all generations?"

Then the saint stood up to thank the Lord of Greatness.

He prayed upon the Prophet and pled for the people of this generation.

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[The Prophet] said to him: "Hurry and make your request,

for the Lord of all generations will fulfill all your requests!"

[The saint] then said: "I implore the Lord to forgive my people,

my students, and everyone who has ever joined me in prayer,

along with the new converts I brought into the faith,

and anyone who ever saw me or heard my name.

Could you please plead with my Lord to forgive all of them,

and those who pray for me when I am gone?"

To which the Chosen One [Muhammad] replied: "God has granted

your request for all generations."

Then the angels arrived swiftly

wearing clothes made with lights from Paradise!

It is at this moment that Archangel Gabriel was instructed to notify

Azrael [the Angel of Death] to take a seat at the table!

He [Azrael] was told to change his terrifying look

before approaching the saint of this generation!

He was asked to dress in bright clothes, come in a loving manner,

and to remain invisible to the offspring of the saint!

He then approached the saint from the right side and retrieved
his soul and wrapped it in a glowing shroud for Paradise!

It is at this moment that the saints and prophets shed tears
and mounted their harnessed horses headed to Paradise!

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But the Prophet returned saying to those who teared up
that it was appropriate to weep, but never to wail!

He said that the departure of such a saint is saddening,
and that those whose hearts are moved by the event will have eternal salvation!

Those who volunteer today [to assist in his funerals] will also earn a home in Paradise,
just like those who console people and accept his death!

The same is true for anyone who prepares food, fetches water for the guests,
or dug the grave, gathered burial wood,
or who provided any nourishment for the large crowd,
or anyone who attended his burial. God will forgive all of them!

His widows who are in ritual mourning⁹ are among the lucky ones in this generation,
for they will be in the company of Mother Aisha¹⁰ in Paradise!

I implore the Lord to include us among the exonerated ones,
which encompass all prophets, O Lord of all generations!

The people of Hoore Doqol are among the privileged few,
along with their dwellings in this generation!

⁹ Islam requires a widow to enter into a period of waiting that precludes widows from any potential marriage for the duration of 4 months and 10 days to rule out pregnancy. If during this period, the widow discovers she is pregnant, her waiting period will go on until childbirth, regardless of the duration.

¹⁰ One of the most well-known wives, and later on widow, of the Prophet.

Their neighbors and relatives will be saved from the torments of the afterlife,
and their in-laws are guaranteed access to Paradise.

Their families-in-law and sons-in-law are assured
similar privileges for up to seven generations!

Lord of Creation, please grant us the opportunity of marrying
the saint's daughters and granddaughters, O Lord of all generations!

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The poet composed this poem with the hope that it will be well-received.

I hope to be given this honor in this generation!

It is said that all the people of Kala
are assured salvation due to the saint of this generation!

He allowed everyone aboard his boat [of salvation],
except those who refused to board, and he led those aboard across the shore!

There are many conditions for being left out of the boat!
O people, give me your full attention as I list some of them here!

Those who chew tobacco or engage in immorality
have excluded themselves from the boat in this generation!

Those who cut ties with their family and loved ones
have also excluded themselves from the boat in this generation!

These are the four reasons, O people of faith!
Those who stay away from these will be saved from the sorrows of this generation!

May God forgive all those who are trustworthy,
as well as all the people of faith in this generation!

May God forgive the people who came to our aid,

and whose spiritual quest converged with ours in this generation!

May God forgive all the learned whose doctrines

have guided them in their perpetual quest for salvation!

May God make the rulers and kingdoms

put on the hat of the [Islamic] faith in this generation!

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May the faith be spread by people with power.

May those astray be disappointed in this generation!¹¹

May God guide the faithful in their religious quest.

May the weak stay away from excessive pursuit of material wealth.

May God remove hypocrisy and filthiness from the hearts

of His creatures and fill them with faith.

May God inspire the believers, both men and women

to work for the faith, O Lord of all generations!

May God make the Mahdi-to-come¹² a source of great mercy,

Oh the Beneficent, the Mysterious, Lord of the faith!

Forgive all of our relatives and loved ones

as well as all of our contemporaries in this generation!

Forgive my sins if I erred,

and elevate those who listen to these verses in this generation!

May God bestow His perpetual blessings upon him [Cerno Doqol],

¹¹ Here the author refers to the followers of Judaism and Christianity (including the French colonizers) he believes have gone astray from the original tenets of the Abrahamic faith, a central trope in Islamic sources.

¹² In Islam, *Mahdi* (The Guided One) is a figure who is believed to appear at the end of times to cleanse the world from unrighteousness.

and may He erase all his sins in this generation!

May God bestow His blessings and peace upon Muhammad,

and upon all his community in this generation.

May the Lord forgive and bestow His blessings upon you [Shaykh Doŋol],

and grant you divine enlightenment and a singular status in this generation!

Shaykh Ibraahiima Hoore Doŋol was 91 years old. May God forgive us and him. May He shower

His boundless peace and blessings upon our Master, Muhammad, his family, and his companions.