



Assalamu Alaykum, dear brothers and sisters in Islam,

All praise is for Allah (SWT), the lord of the worlds, the most gracious, and the most merciful. I bear witness that there is no God worthy of worship except Allah alone, and I bear witness that Muhammad is his slave and messenger who was sent as a mercy for mankind and jinn. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, his family, his companions, and those who follow his Sunnah.

I join the oumma, the Hadara Malikiya and the Khalife Cheikh Ahmed Tijan Al Maqum in welcoming you to this year's celebration of the Burda and Mawlid.

Following the elders and the vision of the [Islamic Tijaniya Foundation of America](#) (ITFA), the **Bourda** marks the beginning of our celebration of the birth of the Prophet Mohamed followed by a series of 15 Mawlids across the USA. This calendar has allowed ITFA members and the communities at large to participate to various Mawlids spanning from April to September, from Atlanta to Columbus, from Detroit to Dallas, and from Raleigh to Nashville.

While we gather in the nation's capital to praise the Prophet through the Burda, modern technology allows the hadaras across American states to join us via **internet** and the ITFA Radio by calling 415 325 0727. I hope that every night, we will rejoice together and renew our love for the Prophet.

This love of the Prophet, the yearning to follow his example and the highest regards for his Sunnah were the main motivations of Muslim scholars who devoted themselves to studying all aspects of his life and existence. In this discipline called Seera (biography of the prophet), the most notorious African figures include the Egyptian Muhammad Busairi and the Senegalese El Hadj Malick Sy. Poets, eulogists and biographers of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), both shared the distinctive attribute of having excelled in the use of the Arabic language with ease and rare eloquence.

Suffering from a long illness that hardly improved, Busairi was inspired to compose a poem on the Prophet. This poem was a way to implore the divine magnanimity of our Lord, the most Beneficent, the most Exalted; a way to probe for His compassion through the Prophet (PBUH), The Passing Gate of Mercy. Pleased with Him, the Prophet appeared to the author in his sleep and wrapped him with his own *Burda*, coat in Arabic. Upon his wakening, he was cured of his illness, and rise to notoriety and fame. Excerpts include:

“Famablaghoul ilmi feehi annahou basharun,
Wa annahou khayru khalqi laahi kullihimi”

***(The extent of what we know of him is this: He is a man,
And yet, without exception, he is the best of God's Creation).***

In Senegal we owe the propagation of this work to the venerable El Hadj Malick Sy of Tivaouane. Scholar and great writer, he echoed Busairi and composed many poems in honor of the Prophet. Among his well-known works, we can mention the famous Khilas Zahab or the pure gold on the prophet's life, one of the most prominent praise ever made on the messenger of Allah.

Maodo Malick Sy is considered in Senegalese Islamic circles as a living encyclopedia. Thus, his intellectual literary production extends beyond prophetic praises to cover knowledge areas such as: prosody, morphologic syntax, Islamic jurisprudence to name just a few. This work has been distinguished by its intransigence to be always based on the principles laid down by the Almighty Creator.

To propagate this work of salvation, he reminded the faithful Muslim that the Prophet said: "The Almighty has created me to His Image in order to pay tribute to Himself, He then revealed me to Humanity as a salvation model to magnify the human being". He used this teaching of the Prophet as an argument to defend this noble cause, saying: "if after Allah, the Most Exalted, the prophet is the reason for all, we have no other choice but to magnify this human being that God has already chosen above all. Thus came this idea of commemoration to celebrate the anniversary of his birth. Indeed, when we rejoice a person chosen and elevated by Allah, we also elevate ourselves.

At first, El Hadj Malick Sy initiated the celebration of Mawlid with a public reading of the Quran during the whole night with his faithful muqadam, outstanding disciple and inseparable friend El Hadj Rawhane Ngom of Paal. They never ceased to celebrate, determined to make this noble practice reach all horizons. The magnitude that the Mawlid celebration reached today is a sign of its blessed nature.

Later, Maodo Malick integrated this Mawlid model with the Burda. For 10 nights, the 10 chapters of the Burda are read every night, at the beginning of the month of Rabi ul Awwa to galvanize the crowds and prepare them for the Mawlid on the 12th night.

The rationale behind this model is worth delving into. Biographers have debated for decades the date of the birth of the Prophet. The majority agreed on the 12th day of the month while others voted for the 9th, 10th or 11th day. To avoid any controversy and bring consensus, Maodo Malick decided to celebrate during the 12 days. These 12 days of reunion were also an opportunity for Maodo Malick to gather all Mukadams for a state of the union: assignments were assessed, current affairs debated and future directions planned.

This Mawlid style, model of wisdom and humility, started in 1902 under his supervision, has grown with the inclusion of Khilas Zahab, a legacy of Maodo Malick that has kept the talibes in awe.

As ITFA member, you have each contributed to the dissemination of Maodo Malick's heritage through your dedication.

I command your effort to keep your faith while away from home and your effort to strengthen ITFA's vision.

I praise your dedication to spreading worldwide the Sharia, the Sunna and the Tariqa through the teachings of our spiritual guide, Seyd El Hadj Malick Sy (RTA) and his children, true men of God through their intrinsic qualities.

I pray that Allah's blessings be upon all of you and your family. May He make this Mawlid, a successful one!

Sheikh Ahmed Sy Ibn Habib

For info, visit www.tjaniya.org