

## Grand Magal

Love

Islam, Sufism

Touba, Senegal

October to November 2018

Assan Ndiaye (40 years old)

My friend Assan “Billy” had not visited his home for ten years. He emigrated to Spain looking for a better future and had left his three-month-old son, Moustapha, and his wife, Fama. They were nine very difficult years, far away from his loved ones, but he never disowned the love he felt by them, which gave him the strength and support to move forward, to hustle and not give up.

I felt very fortunate to witness Billy’s reunion with his family in Ngiogomaye, his home and birthplace. We went on pilgrimage to the tomb of the *cheikh* Ahmadou Bamba, in Touba, during Grand Magal to thank him for the reunion.

The Grand Magal is an important religious pilgrimage, in which the twelve years of exile in Gabon of the Sufi religious leader is celebrated. Its origin dates back to colonial times when French authorities were afraid Bamba would instigate a popular uprising using his popularity; however, it never occurred.

Bamba is buried in the great mosque of Touba, a meeting point for his followers, who remember his exile and teachings. It is a very numerous celebration and it is not confined to humble families. For all this, on this specific date and after such a long time, my friend Billy’s return was very wonderful indeed.