

Description

Until recently, academic studies of Sufism have largely ignored the multiple ways in which Islamic mystical ideas and practices have developed in the modern period. For many specialists, Sufism was "on the way out" and not compatible with modernity. The present study of a twentieth-century Sufi revival in West Africa offers critical corrections to this misconception. Seesemann's work revolves around the emergence and spread of the "Community of the Divine Flood," established in 1929 by Ibrahim Niassé, a leader of the Tijaniyya Sufi order from Senegal. Based on a wide variety of written sources and encounters with leaders and ordinary members of the movement, the book analyzes the teachings and practices of this community, most notably those concerned with mystical knowledge of God. It presents a vivid and intimate portrait of the community's formation in Senegal and its subsequent transformation into a veritable transnational movement in West Africa and beyond. Drawing on letters, poetry, hagiography, and testimonies of opponents of the movement, the book traces Niassé's spectacular ascension as the widely acclaimed "Supreme Saint of His Era" and shows how the various stages of his career intersect with the development of his mystical teachings. Seesemann makes a compelling case for studying Sufis and their literary production in their social and historical contexts, throwing light on a little known chapter of the intellectual and social history of Islam.

Features

- The first book-length study of the movement.
- Relies on cross-disciplinary methodology by combining the philological study of texts with empirical fieldwork.
- It uses important primary sources that have been rarely or never seriously analyzed.
- Provides an in-depth discussion of Sufi teachings and practices in twentieth-century West Africa.
- Opens up new perspectives on Sufism and modernity, as well as Sufism and Islam in Africa.

PRESENTATION DU PROFESSEUR SEESEMANN

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Rüdiger Seesemann is an Islamicist specializing in the study of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa. He holds a Ph.D. in Islamic Studies from the University of Mainz (Germany, 1993) and joined Northwestern University in January 2005. He has done extensive research in various West and East African countries (most notably Senegal, Sudan, and Kenya) on a variety of topics including Sufism, Islam and modernity, Islam and politics, Islamism, and Islamic education. He is the author of *Ahmadu Bamba und die Entstehung der Muridiyya* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1993), a monograph dealing with the founder of the Muridiyya, a Sufi order based in Senegal, and *The Divine Flood: Ibrahim Niassa (1900-1975) and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). Together with Roman Loimeier he has edited the collective volume *The Global Worlds of the Swabili* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006). He is the co-editor of the series “*Islam in Africa*,” published by E.J. Brill, and deputy editor of the electronic journal *Islamic Africa*.

Seesemann's course offerings include Introduction to Islam; The Qur'an; Muslim Saints; Sufi Orders in Sub-Saharan Africa; Sufism: Doctrines, Beliefs, Practices; The Evolution of Islamic Political Thought; Theories and Practices of Knowledge in Islam; Converts and Apostates; and Islam and the Clash of Civilizations. He also teaches at the graduate level, where he is involved in the graduate track "Islam in Africa."

At Northwestern's *Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa* (ISITA) Seesemann currently directs a research project (funded by the Ford Foundation) concerned with literature produced by members of the Tijaniyya Sufi order, Africa's largest. His latest project investigates the interplay between competing Islamic traditions as reflected in theories and practices of Islamic knowledge in various African countries. Seesemann is also an active member of Northwestern's Program of African Studies, various Middle East initiatives on campus (MENA, Middle East Forum), and the French Interdisciplinary Group.

SELECTED WORKS.

1.-BOOKS.

Ahmadu Bamba und die Entstehung der Muridiyya. Rüdiger Seesemann. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1993.

The Global Worlds of the Swabili. Rüdiger Seesemann and Roman Loimeier. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006.

2.-ARTICLES

- "Three Ibrahims: Literary production and the remaking of the Tijaniyya Sufi order in twentieth-century Sudanic Africa." *Die Welt des Islams* 49, 2009 (pp. 299-333).
- "Being as good Muslims as Frenchmen: On marabouts, colonial modernity, and the Islamic sphere in French West Africa" (co-author with Benjamin F. Soares). *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39, 2009 (pp. 91-120).
- "Between tradition and reform: The Hadrami model of Islamic learning in 20th-century Kenya." *Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte* 22, 2007 (pp. 37-59).

- "Kenyan Muslims, the aftermath of 9/11 and the 'war on terror'." In: *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*, ed. Benjamin F. Soares & René Otayek. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007 (pp. 157-176).
- "Between Sufism and Islamism: The Tijâniyya and Islamist rule in the Sudan." *Princeton Papers. Interdisciplinary Journal for Middle Eastern Studies* 15 (Sufism and Politics, ed. Paul Heck), 2006 (pp. 23-57).
- "Islamism and the paradox of secularization. The case of Islamist ideas on women in the Sudan." *Sociologus. Journal for Empirical Social Anthropology* 55, 2005 (pp. 89-118).
- "The *takfir* debate. Part II: The Sudanese arena." *Sudanic Africa* 10, 1999 (pp. 65-110).
- "The *takfir* debate. Sources for the study of a contemporary dispute among African Sufis, Part I: The Nigerian arena." *Sudanic Africa* 9, 1998 (pp. 39-70).

Lien : (<http://www.religion.northwestern.edu/faculty/seesemann.html>).