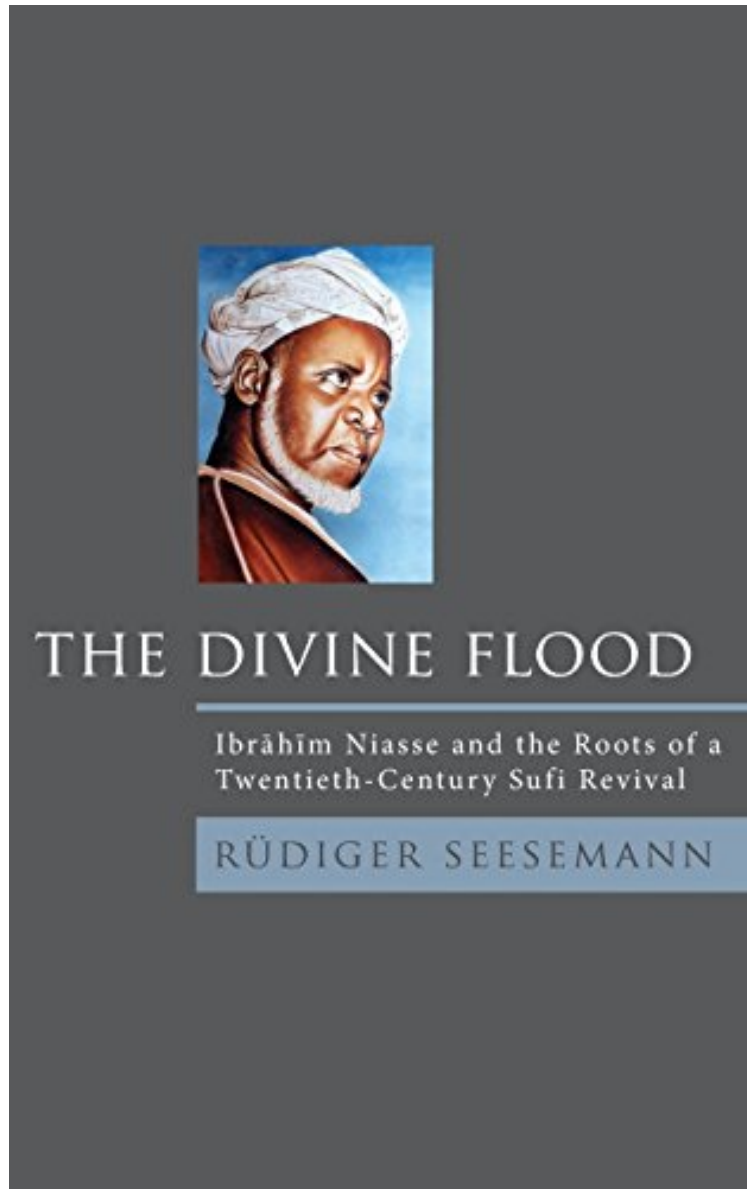


[Library ebook] The Divine Flood: Ibrahim Niasse and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival

## The Divine Flood: Ibrahim Niasse and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival

*Rudiger Seesemann*

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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 Niasse, 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 Niasse'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.

"Based on a meticulous analysis of the relevant literature in both Arabic and European languages, *The Divine Flood* traces the appeal of the Sufi message brought by Ibrahim Niasse from its doctrinal origins to its reception in the popular imagination. Few books provide such balanced insight into the inner dynamics of an expansive Muslim movement in sub-Saharan Africa." -- Louis Brenner, Emeritus Professor of the History of Religion in Africa, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London "Seesemann provides a truly remarkable portrait of a major Muslim scholar presenting a significant case study within the broad framework of Islamic spirituality in the twentieth century. The volume is based on a familiarity with both archival and analytical sources, extensive interviews, and the literary resources of the spiritual traditions of Ibrahim Niasse. This book should be required reading for anyone interested in the continuing dynamism of religion in the contemporary world." -- John Voll, professor of Islamic history and associate director of the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University "The *Divine Flood* succeeds brilliantly in providing a textured and highly engaging account of the emergence of Ibrahim Niasse as the most influential Tijani Sufi leader in West Africa in the mid-twentieth-century. Seesemann's research is expansive, imaginative, and incisive, and his superb book is sure to become a model study for the social construction of Sufi sainthood and Muslim identity." --Ahmet T. Karamustafa, Professor of History Religious Studies, Washington University in St. Louis. "The *Divine Flood* is both ahead of its time and past due. . . . Rdiger Seesemann is to be applauded and encouraged for selecting Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse as the paradigm for the success and continuity of Islamic scholarship and spiritual cohesiveness. His expertise is not lost in turgid terminology and yet still carries the weight of over a decade of personalised experience and study. It is hoped that further research on Islam in Africa and specifically the components of the Jama'at al-fayda will be given the proper due and investigation in the same fashion as Seesemann's masterful work here."--FLOODPLAINS blog About the AuthorRdiger Seesemann teaches in the Department of Religious Studies at Northwestern University and specializes in the study of Islam in Africa. He has done fieldwork in various West and East African countries and has published extensively on Sufism, Islam and politics, Islamism, Islamic education, as well as theories and practices of Islamic knowledge.