THE HARVARD ISLAM IN AFRICA INITIATIVE

FIFTH CONFERENCE

APRIL 22-24, 2021

HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL

The Fayḍa Tijāniyya Sufi Community in the Twenty-First Century: A Major Articulation of Global Islam

CONVENER: OUSMANE KANE
ALWALEED PROFESSOR OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC RELIGION AND SOCIETY
CHAIR OF THE ISLAM IN AFRICA INITIATIVE HARVARD UNIVERSITY

https://scholar.harvard.edu/ousmanekane
With tens of millions of adherents worldwide, the Tijāniyya Sufi order is no doubt a major articulation of global Islam. It was born in North Africa, but its center of gravity shifted to West Africa in the course of the twentieth century, and, in the 21st century, it was carried by the African diaspora to the rest of the world. Very instrumental in this spread of the Tijāniyya is the action of the Senegalese leader Ibrahim Niassse and his followers. In 1930, Ibrahim Niasse claimed to be the bringer of the divine flood of Ahmad al-Tijani who would lead to the global spread of the Tijāniyya. His teachings have reached tens of millions of people worldwide.

Tijāniyya have written considerably about the doctrine of their order in the last two centuries since the birth of the Tijaniyya, and many biographies of prominent Tijāni masters are available in Arabic. Yet the first monograph introducing this fascinating Sufi order to a Western audience was published as recently as 1965 (Jamal Abun-Nasr’s The Tijāniyya: A Sufi Order in the Modern World (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), a work which hardly told the entire story of the Tijāniyya. It took another twenty-five years for another thorough study of this Sufi order to appear (David Robinson and Jean-Louis Triaud’s La Tijāniyya: une conférence musulmane à la conquête de l’Afrique, Paris: Katshala, 2000). This was mostly the work of historians and Islamicists, and focusing on the spread of the Tijāniyya from North Africa to Sub-Saharan Africa.

Since then, not only has the Tijāniyya spread to other continents, but the field of Tijāni studies has grown exponentially, attracting scholars from all the social sciences, including anthropologists, political scientists, religious studies specialists, musicologists, philologists, and more. Dozens of Master’s theses and Ph.D. dissertations and hundreds of articles have been completed on the Tijāniyya in Western and African universities, and many works of Tijāni scholars in the Arabic language have been edited and published and/or translated into Western languages. Furthermore, the Tijāniyya has spread in South Africa, Western Europe, North America, and South Asia, where hundreds of Tijāni zāwiyas have been created in recent years. Tijānis from West Africa in particular are constantly travelling between their countries of origin and those far regions to give lectures, initiate disciples, and connect with like-minded Muslims in a global Sufi campaign against opponents. Tijāni shaykhs have also re-appropriated the new technologies of information and communication to reach global audiences. Religious celebrations in West Africa are now attracting significant audiences from both within and outside the continent.

The international conference “The Fayḍa Tijāniyya in the Twenty-First Century: A Major Articulation of Global Islam” will address these new developments. Among questions that participants will answer, the following will be paramount: What contributions have West African scholars made to the articulation of Tijāni doctrines? How fast is the Tijāniyya—and especially the Fayḍa—spreading outside the African continent, particularly in Western Europe, North America, and South Asia? What impact is the translation into Western languages of major Tijāni works of West African scholars such as ‘Umar Tal and Ibrahim Niassse having on the reception of the Tijāniyya in the world? What are the new pilgrimage routes opened by the African diaspora that connect their host societies in the West and pilgrimage centers, especially Tijāni zāwiyas in Africa? What are the new legal forms of Tijāni Sufi associations?

Panelists in this conference will include scholars from various disciplines in the social sciences working on different regions of the world. It will also include some Tijāni practitioners. The conference will include a keynote speech and six panels, as well as a concert performed by three leading Fayḍa Tijāniyya singers.
PANEL 1

APRIL 22, 2021
8:00 AM - 10:00 AM EASTERN TIME
EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF TIJĀNIYYA SUFISM

The Sources of Kitāb al-Rimāh in Focus: Late Mamlūk/Early Ottoman Egyptian Scholars
Farah El-Sharīf, Harvard University

Praise Poetry and Political Imagination: The Prophet and Divine Sovereignty in the Construction of 'Umar Tall’s Authority
Amir Syed, University of Pittsburg

The Epistemic Foundation of Tijāniyya in Quranic Verses of Dhikr: Analysis of Shaykh Dahiru Bauchi’s Commentary in Nigeria (1950s -2020)
Umar Tahir, Columbia University

The Zayd of the Fayda: Muhammad Ibn al-Shaykh ‘Abdullāh and His Compilations
Adnan Adrian Wood Smith, Harvard University

PANEL 2

APRIL 22, 2021
10:30 AM-12:30 PM EASTERN TIME
Shaykh Ibrāhīm’s Intervention in Major Debates I

Debating the Need for a Spiritual Guide in the Contemporary Tijāniyya: The Kāshīf al-Ilbās
Zachary Wright, Northwestern University

The Jawāhir al-Rasā’il of Ibrahim Niasse: A Source for Understanding the Rise of the Fayda Tijāniyya
Sidi A. Niasse, Senegalese Consulate Morocco

Soaring into New Horizons: Shaikh Ibrāhīm Inyās and the Muhammadan Reality (al-Haqīqa al-Muhāmmadiyya)”
Abdul Latif Finch, University of Exeter

Al-Budūr al-Sutta’ Sharh al-Murhafāt al-Qutta’ (The Rising Moons: A Commentary on the Sharpest Swords by Muhammad Niasse), Commentary on the Rejoinder to an Anti-Tijani Pamphlet of Ibn Mayaba
Ousmane Kane, Harvard University

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PANEL 3
APRIL 22, 2021
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM EASTERN TIME
SHAYKH IBRAHIM’S INTERVENTION IN MAJOR DEBATES II

The Theological Legacy of Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse and its Contemporaneity
The Example of “Sabil al-Salam fi Iba‘ al-Maqâm
Salim Niang, independent scholar, Dakar

All Muhammad, All the Time: The Poetic, Prophetic Cosmology
and Epistemology of Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse in Three Treatises and Poems
Oludamini Oggunnaite, University of Virginia

The diwans of Shaykh al-Islam al-Hajj Ibrahim Niasse:
A Detailed Introduction
Fakhruddin Owaisi, International Peace College, South Africa

Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse and the Political Philosophy of Global Islam: The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict as a Case Study
Mohammed Darkhalil

PANEL 4
APRIL 23, 2021
8:00 AM – 10:00 AM EASTERN TIME
GLOBAL SPREAD OF THE FAYDA TJANIYYA I

The Metamorphosis of Leadership in the Faydah of Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse Cheikh
Abdoulaye Niang, UCAD

Introduction and Expansion of the Tijāniyya in South Asia with Special Reference to Kerala
Suhail Chitrath, Tijāni zāwiya of Kerala

The Sun Rises in the African West: New York City’s Black American Tijānī Spiritual Seekers
Rasul Miller, University of California Irvine

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PANEL 5
APRIL 23, 2021
10:30 AM-12:30 PM EASTERN TIME
GLOBAL SPREAD OF THE FAYDA TIJANIYYA II

In the Floodplains: The Islamic Society for Spiritual Cultivation and its Tijānī Roots
Armaan Siddiqi, Harvard University

Tijānī Festivals in Europe
Ahmad Boukar Niang, Al-Najah Institute

The Flood in the South: The Fayda of the Tariqa Tijāniyya in South Africa
Muhammad Milanzi

Spiritual not Religious? Baraka Boys, the Fayda, and Young Muslim Spiritual Practice in the West
Amadu Kunateh, Harvard University

PANEL 6
APRIL 23, 2021
2:00 PM – 4:00PM EASTERN TIME
TRANSNATIONAL LINKAGES

Ahmad al-Tijānī of Fes: the Multivocality of a Transnational Pilgrimage Site
Johara Berriane, Marc Bloch Center, Berlin

Rihla in the New Medina: African American Tijānī Youth Studying in Senegal
Samiha Rahman, California State University Long Beach

The Limitless Zāwiya: The Fayda Tijāniyya and Social Media
Antonio de Diego González

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PANEL 7
APRIL 24, 2021
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM EASTERN TIME
NEW FAYDA TIJANIYYA FEMALE LEADERSHIP

Shaykha Ruqayya Ibrahim Niass
Babacar Niang, Al-Najah Institute

Shaykha Mariam Ibrahim Niass
Ben Omar Kane, Dar al-Quran, Senegal

Shaykha Oumou Khayr Niasse of Niger
Sekou Aboubacar Hassoumi, Minister of Mines, Niger

From Hidden to Resplendently Wrapped Treasures: Tijānī Women’s Changing Spiritual Authority
Joseph Hill, University of Alberta

THREE UMARS CONCERT
APRIL 24, 2021
3:00 PM – 5:00 PM EASTERN TIME

Tijani Ben Omar, Oumar Niane and Pape Oumar Niang
Singing prophetic praise poems of Shaykh Ibrahim Niassse
Poems from the dīwāns Jabr al-Kasr, Taysîr al-wuṣūl ila ḥadrat al-rasūl and Sayr al-qalb

Tijani Ben Omar
Qad ṭala’al Hilālu (Dīwān Jabr al-Kasr)

Tijani Ben Omar
Ma’ānī Abî ‘Abbas (Dīwān Taysîr al-wuṣūl ila ḥadrat al-rasūl)

Oumar Niane
Ṭabībi qarībun (Dīwān Sayr al-Qalb)

Oumar Niane
Iwān Kisrā (Dīwān Sayr al-Qalb)

Pape Oumar Niang
Aba al-qalbu (Taysîr al-wuṣūl ila ḥadrat al-rasūl)

Pape Oumar Niang
Habâni khayr al-nâs birran (Dīwān Sayr al-Qalb)

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