

## **The Encyclopaedia of Islam Three**

### **The Dahiratoul Moustarchidina wal Moustarchidaty**

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The Dahiratoul Moustarchidina wal Moustarchidaty (Ar., dà"irat al-mushtarshidina wal-mustarshidati, lit., the circle of those men and women who follow the straight path) is a Senegalese Islamic movement that originated in the Tijàniyya (a sùfi order founded in Tlemcen, Algeria, in 1195/1781 by Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Tijàni, d. 1815, who had a great influence on North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa).

Created in the 1970s in Tivaouane (Wolof, Tiwawane), a city in western Senegal, near Thiès, and in the Tijàni zàwiya (sùfi lodge) of the Sy family of marabouts, it was originally an Islamic educational movement for young Senegalese Muslims who had pledged allegiance to this family. Its first objective, strictly religious, was to pass down advanced knowledge of this sùfi way, or order. Mustafa Sy (b. 1952), spiritual leader and great-grandson of El Hadj Malick Sy (d. 1922), the founder of Tivaouane, assumed the leadership of the movement in 1976. In 1980 he settled in Dakar in order to organise the movement, which had begun to gain ground. He gave it a pyramid-like, hierarchical structure, which worked essentially through daairas (Ar. sing., dà"ira, lit., circles), quarters in which the young believers gathered every Thursday evening to pray, discuss the Tijàniyya, deal with social problems, and sing the Taïssir (Ar., taysir, a poem in praise of God by El Hadj Malick Sy). This organisational structure persists today. Other important events enliven the movement throughout the year, including conferences by Mustafa Sy or his father, Sheikh Ahmed Tidjane Sy (b. 1925), a popular spiritual leader in Senegal; conferences organized during Ramadan; and the Mawlid (mawlid al-nabi, the anniversary celebrating the "birth of the Prophet").

During the 1980s, the Dahiratoul Moustarchidina wal Moustarchidaty became enormously popular, bringing together tens of thousands of believers. This enthusiasm may be understood in the context of the Senegal of the time, in which religious practices underwent a resurgence as a result of the decline of the major political ideologies, impoverishment, and other social and economic problems. At the time, many young Tijànìs sought to perfect their Islamic education as members of this religious group, and even decades later it was socially approved for young Senegalese to participate in this kind of movement and publicly display their Islamic practice.

#### **1. A movement focusing on social issues**

Beginning with the Dahiratoul Moustarchidina wal Moustarchidaty in Dakar in the 1980s, Mustafa Sy focused his Islamic teachings on a more social education, based on the idea that a good Muslim is a citizen who is committed to the development of his country. "Citizen activities" were established, including the donation of blood, clothing, and food and visits to hospitals and prisons. Much publicised actions at the time showed the Moustarchidines cleaning the streets of Dakar, dredging sand from waterways, collecting trash, or planting trees. The objective was three-fold: to promote awareness among the young disciples regarding the problems of their immediate social

environment, to show them their own capacity for changing that environment, and to project a positive image of the movement for the whole of society.

This last point is fundamental to the new education of the Moustarchidines, who would, in future, need to serve as an example for other Senegalese youths. All their daily actions, private or public, were rethought in the context of the religious group so as to project an image of good Muslim believers ready and willing to work for their country. They learned, for example, to walk in the streets correctly, without turning around or spitting, to dress decently with clean and neat clothes (the girls were not obliged to wear a headscarf), and to speak to their elders with respect. Education focused essentially on the girls and women of the movement, the future wives and mothers, who would need to transmit a perfect education to their children for the good development of Senegal. They took courses on contraception in order to space out their births and learned to be submissive to their future husbands, to cook well, and to bring up their children in the ways of Islam. Their social behaviour was prescribed by Mustafa Sy : they should not laugh boisterously but should appear discrete and earnest. Although originally strictly religious, the Dahiratoul Moustarchidina wal Moustarchidaty, with its new social focus, gradually brought into the Senegalese Islamic arena the question of how to be a good Muslim in an impoverished society. This new path led quickly to the politicisation of Mustafa Sy.

## **2. A politicised religious movement**

In 1993 Mustafa Sy made a sensational entry into political life (Kane and Villalon, *Entre confr risme, r formisme et islamisme*) by encouraging the opposition candidate, Abdoulaye Wade (b. 1926; elected in the presidential elections of 2000), during the presidential elections. His aggressive speeches against the political team in power led to his imprisonment on 2 November 1993, and he would spend almost a year in prison. In February of 1994, a demonstration organised by the opposition, in which the Moustarchidines also participated, degenerated into confrontations with the security forces, and some policemen were killed. The Dahiratoul Moustarchidina wal Moustarchidaty was then banned until it was readmitted in 1995, following a rapprochement between the Moustarchidine leaders and the Socialist Party, which was in power at the time. In 1999 Mustafa Sy created his own political party (the PUR, *Parti de l'Unit  et du Rassemblement* (Party of Unity and Gathering)) and was a candidate, for a certain time, in the first rounds of the presidential elections of 2000. The politicisation of Mustafa Sy, together with the influence of his father, initiated at a young age into politics (Samson, *Les marabouts de l'islam politique*), made the religious discourse of the movement evolve toward a moralisation of Senegalese society and a re-Islamisation of the youth. It targeted essentially a young urban public, and it described the city, with its bars and nightclubs, as a place of debauchery. Mustafa Sy's new ambition was to protect young citizens from this environment, with the help of Islam. His objective in politicising the movement was not to seize power but to moralise the political world and to gain recognition in social debates and in the public arena.

The Dahiratoul Moustarchidina wal Moustarchidaty distanced itself dogmatically from s fism as it was traditionally practised in the z wiya of the Sy, and mixed opposite Islamic tendencies, blending s fi and Salafist references (Kane and Villalon, *Entre confr risme, r formisme et islamisme*). It retained the teachings of the Tariqa (literally, the "way" and thus "S fi order"), as well as the charismatic and mystical legitimacy of Mustafa Sy, but it rejected the cult of saints, talismanic practices, the veneration of the

shaykh, and the cultural and secular legacy of the West.

### 3. A reform movement

Modern and urbane, Mustafa Sy initiated a completely new generation of spiritual leaders in Senegal, who profoundly reformed the local marabout system. He understood the need to differentiate himself in order to compete with other brotherhoods. His targeted public, his concept of a total Islam, encompassing all social aspects, his politicisation, and his work for re-Islamisation made him a leader, albeit somewhat effaced in modern times, in beginning a fundamental transformation in the contemporary way of being religious in Senegal.

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