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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Homeland Is the Arena: Religion, Transnationalism, and the Integration of Senegalese Immigrants in America* by Ousmane Kane

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Source: *Islamic Africa*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (SPRING 2013), pp. 125-126

Published by: Brill

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42636215>

Accessed: 23-02-2018 21:03 UTC

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BOOK REVIEWS

DOI: 10.5192/215409930401125

Ousmane Kane. *The Homeland Is the Arena: Religion, Transnationalism, and the Integration of Senegalese Immigrants in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. xvi + 311. \$99.00, hardback (ISBN 0-19-973230-2); \$35.00, paperback (ISBN 0-19-973231-9).

In *The Homeland Is the Arena*, Ousmane Kane highlights the importance of religion, specifically Islam, to advancing studies of migration and transnationalism. He seeks to understand how migration abroad shapes Muslim thought and practice in Senegal as well as how the presence of Senegalese in America contributes to Muslim practice and perceptions of Muslims in this country. In fact, as he argues, there is now more than ever a need for scholarly work on Muslims in the West. Furthermore, as Africa has shifted to become what some would call the new front line on terror, Kane's book takes on increasing relevance in the world today. This work contributes to a growing literature on Islam in West Africa. It does so notably by including the voices and experiences of migrant women as much as those of migrant men. His work engages with scholarly debates about Islam in Senegal, including the nature of spiritual authority, and at the same time provides a much-needed focus on the everyday lives and struggles of ordinary Muslims.

In general, Kane's field-based research in the United States focuses on Muslim associations in New York City, including Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. Part 1 of the book focuses on the development of Sufi congregations in the colonial period and their relations with the state in the post-colonial period. Kane's analysis focuses for the most part on Murid and Tijani Sufi congregations. Part 1 provides an accessible introduction to Muslim thought and practice in West Africa and at the same time provides sufficient depth and complexity of argument to interest specialists on the subject.

As a classic case study in migration, part 2 of the book focuses on the integration of Senegalese Muslims into American society. This section is ethnographically rich and provides important, detailed studies of

Islamic Africa, VOL. 4, NO. 1, 2013. ISSN 2154-0993. Copyright © 2013 by Northwestern University Press. All rights reserved. www.islamicafricajournal.org.

individual lives and experiences. Part 3 of the book focuses on building networks with those at home, in Senegal. Here Kane focuses on the development of a transnational spiritual economy involving a circuit of shaykhs moving between Senegal and Senegalese migrants abroad.

Kane shows the fraught nature of “integration” as part of the mission of Senegalese associations in the United States. He demonstrates how they help migrants navigate legal, social, moral, and economic structures and strictures. Yet Kane does not question the dominant paradigm in migration studies, which is the assumption that integration is the ultimate goal. One wonders what his interlocutors think about the possibilities for integration given their experience in post-9/11 America. As Kane argues, integration into American society requires not only a desire on behalf of immigrants to integrate, but the reception of the host society. Here the ethnography could have included field-based research and policy analysis of the politics of immigration in the United States. Moreover, as the title of the book indicates, the homeland is the arena (as translated by Kane from the Wolof, *Lamb jaa nga Senegal*) in which Senegalese women and men seek to fashion their reputations and that of their families. Given the nature of circular migration between the United States and Senegal, and the continuing importance of relations with those at home, it is not clear that integration and settlement in the United States is the ultimate goal of many migrants. Kane describes in vivid detail debates between men and women concerning the allocation of family resources, the importance of the education and upbringing of children in the home country, and the changing nature of work and social support in and out of Senegal.

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Erin E. Stiles. *An Islamic Court in Context: An Ethnographic Study of Judicial Reasoning*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 221 pp.; glossary, bibliography, index, 1 map, 3 photographs, 5 tables. \$95.00.

Scholars of Islamic law face the challenge of explaining to readers and students the array of texts, reasoning processes, and interpretation that go into this thing that we call “Islamic law” in the first place. Law, as many argue, does not exist in a vacuum in the world of text; rather, it is applied and interpreted through judges, litigants, and scholars. This is the premise of *An Islamic Court in Context*, a study of one particular Zanzibari court,