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*The Homeland is the Arena* focuses on the emergence of a Senegalese Muslim migrant diaspora in the U.S.A. and its impact on the Senegalese “homeland”. Kane discusses the history of Senegalese immigration to the U.S., the formation of three Senegalese immigrant “enclaves”, the social and religious organization of these enclaves as well as gender and generational dynamics that have come to inform these immigrant communities. Another central theme is the economic and social impact of the Senegalese diaspora on the “homeland” which continues to be the focus of the migrants’ aspirations, hopes and endeavours. Kane’s text is based on many years of fieldwork in Senegal and New York. As a member of a family of religious scholars linked with the Tijāniyya Sufi order as well as a professor at Columbia University living only five minutes from “Little Senegal” in Harlem, Kane had good access to both “milieus”.

Although Kane’s introductory chapter on religion, state and society in modern Senegal may be viewed as a repetition of what has been said by previous authors and does not go beyond the 1990s in its historical and analytical reach, it is a good starter for those who are not familiar with the context, i.e. Senegal’s history in the 20th century as well as the social role of Senegal’s religious leaders in Senegalese politics. Also, this chapter highlights the importance of the “modou-modou”, Senegalese migrants from distant rural regions, oftentimes linked with one of the two major Senegalese Sufi orders, Tijāniyya and Muridiyya. Apart from students, the “modou-modou” were the pioneers of the Senegalese emigration to Europe and the U.S.A. since the 1980s.

In a second section, Kane presents the Senegalese enclaves in New York, in particular, “Little Senegal” in Harlem and “Fuuta Town” in Brooklyn. While “Little Senegal” is dominated by Wolof speaking migrants from coastal and central Senegal, often affiliated with the Muridiyya, “Fuuta Town” has become home to Pulaar speaking migrants from the Senegal River Valley, from Mauritania, Guinea and Mali. A third group of Senegalese migrants from the Saloum region, often associated with the Tijāniyya has settled in the Bronx but has not yet consolidated into a “proper” enclave. While students and “modou-modou” working as street vendors of “African art” (produced in New York’s China Town) formed the bulk of the Senegalese immigration to New York in the 1980s and 1990s, the array of professions has expanded considerably since the mid-1990s. Today, migrants work in restaurants, as drivers of “gypsy” taxi cabs, as security
guards, mechanics, hair braiders, barbers and tailors. Women have come to form an increasingly important section of the migrant community which has grown to about 30–50,000 persons, living mostly in New York and some neighbouring New England cities, although only 10,000 migrants were “documented” immigrants in 2003 (p. 77). In spatial terms, the consolidation of the Senegalese enclaves since the mid-1990s was linked with the establishment of mosques as well as community radio stations. Important was also the need to organize remittances and phone calls to the “homeland”. Due to the high fees charged by “Western Union”, the “Banque de l’Habitat du Sénégal” as well as ḥawāla credit and money transfer networks became important actors in this economic field.

Senegalese migrants also joined religious associations linked with either Murīdiyya or Tijāniyya, or linked with “all-Muslim” associations that focussed on the organization of the ḥajj. In addition, a plethora of other associations organized migrants from a region or even a specific village.

A major asset of Kane’s book is his focus on the effects of migration on the Senegalese homeland. The dilemma of growing older in a country where one never wanted to stay (and die) has caused massive investment in the homeland, which is also the place where the migrants’ children continue to be sent for “proper” (private) education. Senegalese remittances have in fact transformed Senegal in massive ways since 1994, the year in which the Senegalese currency, the “Franc CFA”, suffered 100% devaluation against the Franc, the Deutsche Mark and the Dollar. At the same time, dollar remittances doubled value and were quickly invested in the homeland in the form of housing, tap water, electricity and education as well as a flood of Western consumer goods. In 2003 alone, remittances amounted to a sum of 500 million dollars. In some villages, remittances represented up to 90% of village income (p. 224). In general, remittances have contributed decisively to Senegal’s sustained economic growth since the economic crisis of the mid-1990s. The economic importance of the Senegalese diaspora in the U.S.A. was quickly appreciated by both Senegalese politicians as well as religious leaders who have started to visit New York on a regular basis. However, the success of the Senegalese diaspora has also fired emigration from Senegal since the 1990s on a number of different and often risky “roads” that are controlled and organized by criminal organizations.

In a further thrilling section of his book, Kane shows how migration has informed gender and generational dynamics. Taking a number of well documented case studies (pp. 170–200), Kane shows how migration and life in the U.S.A. has brought about a crisis in gender relations that has led to the emergence of stereotypical representations of Senegalese men as “ungodly husbands” by Senegalese women and Senegalese women as “ungrateful wives” by