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MIGRATION, WAR, AND THE MAKING
OF A TRANSNATIONAL LEBANESE SHI‘I
COMMUNITY IN SENEGAL

This article investigates links between religious and political transnationalisms through analyzing responses to the 2006 Lebanon war from the diaspora. I examine the role of a shaykh in bringing Lebanese Shi‘a in Senegal “back to Islam” as well as (spiritually if not physically) back to Lebanon. I explore his efforts to institute formal religious education through a Friday sermon, encourage public expressions of piety, and introduce new religious rituals in commemorations of ‘Ashura’ and Ramadan. This ethnographic study adds a diaspora component to debates about Lebanese nationalism and suggests that the ideology of the *umma* does not hold for a marginalized Muslim minority community in a Muslim majority country, which instead defines itself along reformulated ethnic, religious, and national boundaries. The paper contributes to newly emerging scholarship on transnational Shi‘i linkages by demonstrating how the African example adds another dimension to our understanding of the relationship between religion and nationalism in the Middle East.