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NEGOTIATING MORAL AUTHORITY FOR BODY REPATRIATION: THE CASE OF SENEGALESE MIGRATION

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"I will go to Touba dead or alive" is a well-known adage among Senegalese migrants that refers to believers' commitment to be buried in the holy city of Touba. Drawing on an ethnographic study undertaken in Belgium, Spain, and Senegal, this essay sheds light on the activities, mutual relations, and negotiations between transnational organizations in charge of body repatriation. The thanatic ethics, the moral code of conduct concerning death, is a source of moral authority, political leverage, and even occasionally, of financial profit for these organizations. This essay focuses on the "historical" actors in this field, namely, the Murid Muslim brotherhood and hometown organizations and how they had to cope with the coming of a new player, i.e. private companies offering repatriation insurance. We examine the functioning of these organizations and the ways in which they adapt to the transformations of Senegalese transnationalism. The essay starts with a theoretical account of the production, forms, and evolution of the thanatic ethics that underpins the transnational management of death. Shifting from Europe to Senegal it examines how the Murid authorities make use of the administration of the Touba

necropolis to buttress their moral authority. Meanwhile, new insurance products targeting Senegalese migrants are emerging that negotiate with both the Murid brotherhood and the Senegalese State. In conclusion, we argue that the interplay of both traditional and new moral authorities enables a co-construction of a contemporary thanatic authority. This co-construction transforms Senegalese transnationalism while reflecting social change dynamics in the Senegalese society.

Introduction

"I will go to Touba dead or alive" (in Wolof, "*xelu dem Tuuba walla xëlu dem Tuuba*") is a well-known adage among Senegalese emigrants. It refers to the moral obligation for Murid emigrants to visit and be buried in the holy city of Touba. It points to the burial choices of expatriate Senegalese and the organizing of body repatriation. These issues have received growing scholarly interest. The literature highlights the array of actors engaged in the management of death in migration: religious organizations, but also hometown organizations (Lacroix 2018, 2020), and a variety of private actors such as banks, insurance companies, or funeral businesses.

The theme remains surprisingly absent from the Murid[1] migration literature (Anta Babou 2021; Bava 2002; Copans 1980; Diop 1990). The few studies on the subject (Petit 2002; Solé Arrarás 2015) have mainly focused on rural contexts (the Senegal River and Casamance areas) and the redefinition of death rituals among communities and families. Apart from a study on internal migrants (Onoma 2018), no research has specifically analysed the role of Murid authorities in the management of death among their expatriate members. The aforementioned adage suggests this role is extremely important. The wish for burial in the city of Touba instead of the place of birth or settlement says something about the symbolic importance of the city in the Senegalese imaginary. This essay contends that body repatriation and burial practices are central to the reproduction of the moral authority that the brotherhood exerts on their members. Yet, the Murids are not the only players in this field. Research has documented the long-standing importance of hometown organizations, and their role as a moral and identity reference among Senegalese migrants (Gonin 1997). Moreover, in recent years, a range of profit-making actors emerged to offer insurance services to individuals. Migrant death has become a source of social and political influence and financial gains, leading to competition between private, religious, and public organizations.

How do community organizations, religious authorities, and businesses[2] strive to reap the symbolic and financial benefits of body repatriation? What are their mutual relations? How do they adjust to the evolution of

1 Murids form the second-largest Muslim brotherhood in Senegal.

2 The Senegalese state is outside the remit of this essay.

the needs and expectations in the Senegalese population abroad? This essay examines not only the relations they maintain with each other but also the ways in which they react to the mutations of the migrant population. Indeed, the commodification of body repatriation questions the communitarian values drawn upon by traditional actors. This essay examines how new alliances are formed to respond to this evolution.

This study builds on a 3-year-long multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995; Mazzucato 2009) in Senegal, Spain, and Belgium, "following the deceased" (Solé Arraràs 2017) and the way the management of death is undertaken and negotiated between these actors. It draws on interviews with Senegalese migrants, community leaders, state officials, and private transnational companies. The research is part of "Migration, Transnationalism, and Social Protection in (post-)Crisis Europe" (MiTSoPro), an ERC-funded project[3] directed by Dr. Jean-Michel Lafleur that investigates transnational policies and practices shaping migrants' access to social protection. Félicien de Heusch collected the material used in this essay through participant observation, semi-structured interviews (seventy-five), and document analysis.

The essay starts with a theoretical account of the production, forms, and evolution of the thanatic ethics that underpins the transnational "management" of death in migration. It then analyses the positioning of the two traditional actors in this area: hometown organizations and the Murid brotherhood. The essay ends with a presentation of a new generation of entrepreneurs and banks offering insurance contracts to individuals, thereby undermining the gift-giving principle that had prevailed so far.

Thanatic ethics and the transnational management of death

The wish for burial in culturally and/or religiously adequate conditions is a universal concern among migrants. Around the world, migrants create associations whose primary aim is to send the bodies of the dead back to their sending area and/or to ensure decent burial conditions in the place of arrival. The few scholars who have studied this hint at the historical depth of the phenomenon. In Catholic European states, the question of heterodox cemeteries emerges with the building of modern states and development of religious pluralism (Kaplan 2009). The repatriation of bodies becomes a viable option from the nineteenth century onward with the progress made in transportation and body conservation techniques (Carnevale 2017, 77). During the same period, the development of mutual aid societies in Europe and in North and Latin America provided an institutional basis for the provision of burial and repatriation services among immigrant workers (Moya 2005, 842). Hometown associations are the other key institutions taking

charge of such needs. The formation of collective funds for body repatriation purposes has been documented among Pakistanis (Joly 1987) and Cameroonians (Page 2007) in the UK, Turks in Germany (Balkan 2015), North Africans in France (Chaïb 2000; Cuzol 2017), Tajiks in Russia (Cleuziou 2021), Sudanese and Eritreans in Israel (Anteby-Yemini 2018), Mexicans in the United States (Félix 2011; Lestage 2018), and so on. Scholars have shed light on the forms and functioning of such collectives, from small informal groups raising money when needed, to large institutions gathering members from a common region of origin. These "burial committees", whose existence has been attested in most areas of the world, form the elementary foundation of a place-based (as opposed to faith- or nationality-based) immigrant associational life. Body repatriation is therefore a widespread practice which is a matter of concern far beyond the family sphere.

The scholarship shows how customary and religious practices evolve to adapt to the migratory context. Agathe Petit (2005), for example, describes Western African Manjaks sending "mortuary suitcases" containing belongings of the deceased to the homeland when the repatriation of the body itself is unaffordable. Claire Mercer and colleagues (2008) show how the introduction of refrigerators by immigrants for the conservation of repatriated bodies has affected the customary timeframe regulating burials in rural Cameroon. Adaptation is also legible in the changes affecting tombs and cemeteries in the host land. The cemetery of Algerian convicts deported during the colonial period to New Caledonia displays the features of traditional North African cemeteries: the dome-covered mausoleum of a respected community leader, the lines of palm trees and the westward orientation of tombs towards Mecca, but also creole ornaments and pictures (Oulahal, Guerraoui, and Denoux 2018). Likewise, Decomps (2017) notes the inclusion of local designs and symbols in Jewish cemeteries.

The choice of the place of burial is another matter of scholarly interest. Burial in the place of origin is a moral obligation underpinned by religious and cultural beliefs. The Murid saying mentioned in the introduction heralds this deeply entrenched concern in the migrants' lifeworld. Homeland burial is widely regarded as a prerequisite for "a good death" (Thomas 1975), as the accomplishment of a migration project or the reparation of the absence of those who have left (Grenet 2017). These anthropological fundamentals are often reinforced by religious prescriptions. This is particularly the case for Muslims who are to be buried in Islamic earth, or Hindus for whom the return to the homeland guarantees the purity of cremation. The choice of the place of burial is therefore the outcome of various regimes of norms, an interplay between religious belief, cultural expectations, and sense of belonging. These different normative layers may conflict with each other. As shown by Onoma (2018) with the case of Murids who scattered in the Senegalese hinterland, some decide to be buried in the place they settled in

and have called "home" rather than in Touba, the religious capital of Muridism. This is all the more so when migrants long established abroad have to decide between burial in the land of their fathers or that of their children. It is tempting to see in the choice of the place of burial the expression of integration, a sense of belonging to the host land and the adoption of its cultural norms (or the absence thereof) (Decomps 2017). However, Cuzol has shown that "repatriation remains the norm, even for descendants, even for families settled for a long time and even if there is a Muslim square in the cemetery" (Cuzol 2017, 118). Others prefer to interpret the persistence of body repatriation as a symptom of entrenched racism and rejection of foreign communities. The accommodation of religious diversity in public cemeteries (Ahaddour and Broeckaert 2017; Hunter 2016; Nordh et al. 2021) is a long process subject to negotiations. The scarcity of Muslim squares in European cemeteries became obvious during the pandemic as the closing of borders left little alternative options for the burial of immigrants. In some instances, this urged Islamic communities to negotiate the expansion of existing Muslim plots. This has been the case in the French harbour of Le Havre, leading some to consider the possibility of burial in the place where they live rather than in the place of their ancestors (Afiouni 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic and the additional challenges it brought reinforced this concern for burial in the country of residence.

Body repatriation is a sign neither of failed integration nor of societal rejection, but the outcome of a transnational thanatic ethics underwriting the relations between emigrants worldwide and those who stayed behind. Thanatic ethics can primarily be understood as the moral code of conduct regulating death-related issues and regulated by an elite of thanatocrats (see the Introduction to this volume). It refers not only to the definition of what a "good death" is, but also the adequate rituals and grieving, with whom, when, and where they are to be implemented. What is of interest in this essay is not so much this set of practices in itself, nor what is regarded as moral and immoral in death matters, but rather the interactions between actors competing for the capacity to define what these practices are. The power to define thanatic ethics is also the power to decide who is grievable and who is not, that is, who deserves a good death (Butler 2009). It, therefore, affects the conduct of the living. In the first place, thanatic ethics regulate the power relations between migrants and non-migrants. The prospect of burial in the homeland erects the latter as a place of moral authenticity, where the conditions of a good death are secured. By contrast, immigration areas are associated with inappropriate burial practices such as cremation. By extension, they are considered as imbued with foreign values corrupting the life and death of those who reside there. This spatial hierarchy characterizes a moral geography of migration, that is, the set of moral representations informing the places of departure and settlement and pervading the relations

between emigrants and non-migrants. This moral geography underlays body repatriation and, by extension, other transnational practices. In daily interactions and popular representations, emigrants are perceived as individualistic, oblivious of their origin, and changed by western values and habits (Carling 2008). Migration comes with a duty that needs to be constantly fulfilled with remittances, gifts, development projects, housing, and other forms of investments (Lacroix 2018). It underpins everyday transnational contacts with family members abroad, with migrants: "You have become a European, an individualist. […] So, with all the money you earn now, if you weren't selfish, you would have paid me the ticket, you would have made me come to your place," writes the Senegalese novelist Fatou Diome in *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003). The billions of remittances sent by emigrants every year are embedded in this moral geography of migration.

In the second place, the regulation of the thanatic ethics is a strategic matter for key political, economic, and religious institutions. Driving the choice for the place of burial and funerary practices is a symbolic stake with far-reaching political and financial implications. It comes as no surprise that a range of political, community, private, and religious organizations seek to reap the benefits of such resources. Hometown associations and the burial fund they maintain function as an authority relay for village communities to exert control over migrants (Lacroix 2016). Hometown organizations provide leverage for community pressure far beyond death-related issues. Likewise, if certain sending states support the body repatriation of their citizens abroad, it is also because they see in it a source of symbolic power, a moral economy resource (De Heusch, Wenger, and Lafleur 2022). Each body repatriation represents "An opportunity […] to canonize its deceased repatriates like fallen soldiers into its ghostly national imaginary" (Félix 2011). In the United States, half of the Mexican consular budget is dedicated to repatriation (Félix 2011). After the independence war, the Algerian state organized national ceremonies for the return of the remains of the *Chahids* (freedom fighters) dead in France during the conflict, and yet again for immigrant victims of racist crimes in the 1970s (Scagnetti 2014). Today's repatriation insurance offered by consular authorities to Algerians abroad is underpinned by the state will to control this transnational symbolic space. As shown by Verdery (1999) in her work on reburial in the former Soviet Union, political authorities can use the bodies of the dead as a form of political capital. Religious authorities are yet another key player. We examine the case of Murid leaders below but they are not the only ones showing interest in this transnational moral geography. This can be seen in the case of Hindus or churches organizing purification rituals that cleanse migrants of the sins committed abroad (see, for instance, Fitzgerald 2008, 92). The stake is of primary importance: expatriates and their hometown associations largely take charge of the refurbishment of religious buildings in emigration areas. This overview

would not be complete without the private corporations who have thrived on the economy of body circulation. Banks, insurance companies, funeral companies, lawyers … body repatriation has generated a rich ecosystem of various profit-making companies. Françoise Lestage has shown the existence of an entrepreneurial chain of migrants' death between the USA and Mexico (Lestage 2012). These private, public, and community organizations form a "social field" (in Bourdieu's [2019] sense), in other words, a set of actors whose relations, respective positions, competition, and alliances are regulated by specific social rules tacitly accepted by these actors. From a different perspective, the notions of "transnational social field" (Levitt and Schiller 2004) and "transnational social spaces" (Faist 2000) help to frame the transnational dimension embedded in the field of death management. The specificity of this field is made tangible in its cross-border spatial extension, including actors from both the countries of departure and settlement. All of these actors are competing and/or collaborating for the symbolic and financial benefits of migrant death. The case study of Senegalese migrants residing in Belgium and Spain presented below illustrates the competition, adaptation strategies, and negotiations at play between four types of actors: hometown associations, Murid organizations, insurance companies, and the Senegalese state.

Village-based moral authority and body repatriation in Europe

Population movements since precolonial times have affected the Senegal River area (the natural border between the current states of Mauritania, Mali, and Senegal). Since the 1950s, migration flows to Europe (and mostly to France) have mainly constituted migrant workers from this area. They were mostly unskilled workers employed in French industry. Between the 1980s and the 2000s, the flows gradually were redirected to Italy and Spain, first as sailors and then in agriculture and industry. Senegal River migrants were mostly Fulani[4] people of Tijani[5] religious orientation who organized associations on a regional or hometown basis. During the 2000s, visa restrictions spurred a rise of "irregular" migration to Southern Europe. The economic crisis of 2008 and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic urged many Senegalese migrants to make the journey to Europe and others already residing in Spain and Italy to move to Western Europe (the UK, Germany, and Belgium). In parallel, one observes a diversification of migration destinations to other African countries, North and South America, Middle East, and Eastern Asia. Over the last decades, a change in emigration settings has affected Senegalese migration from the Senegal River to the rest of the country, from rural areas to urban ones. Wolof

migration comprised a significant proportion of Senegalese migration world-wide during this time. Among them, Murids developed a strong transnational religious and commercial network (Bava 2002). They organized on a religious basis through *këur Serigne Touba* (a room, department or house) where believers gather and host newcomers. The *këur* is the local branch of the brotherhood and the spiritual, ethical, social, and economic basis of Muridism in the migration context.

Despite this increase and diversification of Senegalese migration over time, a constant remains, the moral centrality of the country of origin:

> The Senegalese, wherever he goes, he lives the same way, the values are rooted. Now, where there are three or four of us, we always have an association […] at least we always have our gaze towards the other side. (Ousseynou, associative leader, 25/06/21, Namur, Belgium)[6]

Among many migrant groups around the world, hometown organizations are a basic feature of Senegalese collective organizing in settlement countries (Lacroix 2016). These organizations frame Senegalese solidarity bounds in settlement countries and with the homeland. They form the building block of transnational moral territoriality (Lacroix 2020) regulating a moral economy between expatriate Senegalese, their families, and the villagers. Calling on the migrants' duty towards their home community, the people back home solicit the sending of remittances (Hoye 2021), or the undertaking of collective refurbishment projects (Tandian 2005). Reciprocally, migrants use their position to hold sway on the economic choices and other practices among hometowners. The cross-border circulation of spouses and children (Grysole 2018) and the frequent returns during religious celebrations (Bava 2002) are other expressions of this moral bond maintained between migrants and their hometown. Against this background, the choice of the country of origin as a place for burial is backed upon a moral imperative:

> For us, coming back to the homeland means burial in Senegal. Because, actually the saddest of the Senegalese is the one who dies and who is buried abroad, as if his soul would not come back home […] people want to go back to their homeland. That is the certainty … whatever the situation, immigrants want to return, that is a certainty, whether they are alive or dead, they want to return […] why do people organize themselves to repatriate the bodies? It is because they know that the dead person, if he could come two days before his death, he would come. Now, that's clear! (Modou, former migrant, 18/11/19, Touba, Senegal)

As stated by Mustafa, a community leader involved in the management of a body repatriation fund in Barcelona, "the first cause, the unique cause" (03/09/21, Barcelona, Spain) for the constitution of associations is body

repatriation. It generates large costs working-class emigrants cannot afford. The creation of hometown organizations enables its mutualization. As Lacroix puts it, "the fund for the repatriation of corpses is the 'mother' of solidarity funds" (2020, 10).

In countries such as Spain and Italy where there are a greater number of Wolof and Murids, body repatriation is financed by collective funds where the community is large enough, but also by calls for donation through religious and social networks. This enables providing support to individuals who are not part of a community organization. In this regard, Mustafa remarks that "no Murid has ever stayed here because of money problems" (05/09/21, Barcelona, Spain). Sometimes the amount collected (thousands of euros can be collected in a few days) surpasses actual needs. The surplus is redistributed to the bereaved family. The *këur Serigne Touba* is a relay used by the religious community for the repatriation of its followers to Touba. In addition to the use of social media, Murids practise door-to-door collections or organize meetings with street vendors to announce a death and collect the money needed. Sometimes, from Touba, the *sheick* (the religious guide to whom the deceased was attached) also supports the cost of the repatriation of his followers. However, as stated by Mustafa, "Murids are proud … we do it ourselves" (05/09/21, Barcelona, Spain). Aly, a migrant circulating between Spain and France, observes that "we must contribute […] If I don't give, who will give for me?" (17/03/19, Valencia, Spain). The gift is perceived as a moral duty warranting the possibility of a "counter-gift" (Mauss 1924) that the giver will receive after his death through the repatriation of his body. As highlighted elsewhere (Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Lafleur 2019), bottom-up social protection is at the core of community building. This explains why people give precedence to this informal gift-giving system over the contractual systems proposed by the private sector. When solidarity mechanisms are deployed, the frequent difficulty in collecting the money is also the reason why hometown associations have specialized in body repatriation funds with structured regimes of affiliation and legal personality.

The hometown moral economy of body repatriation in Belgium

The Senegalese migration in Belgium is a long-standing phenomenon (since the 1950s), though not as demographically significant (17,000 persons, according to an associative leader) as in France, Spain or Italy.[7] Nevertheless, several established body repatriation funds have existed for decades and mainly gather migrants from the Senegal River area.

There are three organizations specifically dedicated to body repatriation in Belgium. Two of them are located in Brussels, the other in Antwerp. According to Idrissa, a member of the Murid brotherhood, these organizations emerged "by necessity". Undocumented migrants initiated them to manage "welfare funds" supported by monthly contributions. Two were created between the 1980s and 1990s, first in Antwerp and then in Brussels, by Fulani Tijani migrants from the Senegal River area (including Mauritanians). Idrissa describes these organizations as driven by a "village mentality". The third structure is much more recent and gathers Senegalese migrants of any background but, in practice, is mainly composed of Wolof Murids. "They are fringes that do not mix," stresses Idrissa, highlighting the role of ethnicity in community organizing. In case of the death of anyone who is not a member of one of these associations, another organization of Senegalese migrants in Belgium and the Murids usually undertake the collection of money.

As stressed by Idrissa, body repatriation associations coalesced for pragmatic reasons. Amadou explains that the association he is a member of was founded in 1994 in a context where many migrants were undocumented and therefore could not access bank insurances. Amadou declares, "You contribute to be covered. If you are not up to date (you are not covered) … like insurance, right?" (07/06/19, Brussels, Belgium). Depending on the extent of the contribution, the fund functions as an individual or family (including spouses and children) community insurance. Contribution is compulsory, unlike collections undertaken on a voluntary basis for persons who are not members of any collective fund. Karim explains why bank insurances do not meet the favours of Senegalese migrants:

> […] take out insurance! In Belgium there is ground for that, there are insurances to get repatriated, it won't cost that much. But no! It doesn't work […] There's a need for confidence, to make sure it's actually going to happen, but the insurance issue, and all that, there's always distrust: is it going to work the day it happens? Won't the procedures be too complicated? […] So they made a fund like that, and there is a big membership. (Karim, 03/04/19, Brussels, Belgium)

Karim expresses a sense of distrust towards private insurance and its market-oriented, contractual logic (Lafleur and Lizin 2015) that excludes the solidarity logic of community arrangements. Even when interviewees are aware of the existence of body repatriation insurance, and can access it, most of them privilege community organizations. Collective funds and their gift-giving system secure a "good death" for the deceased and foster social cohesion among the living. Conversely, the private insurance framework, being individually based, "desocializes" and "deritualizes" death (Thomas 1975; Arriès 1975), transferring it to the private, discrete, and "cold" hands of market arrangements.

The difficulty in the accessibility and/or the distrust in private insurances is a motive expressed by migrants to explain their participation in body repatriation associations. Likewise, there is a similar distrust towards consular authorities. In the 2000s, Senegalese consulates and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs implemented a "relief and assistance" fund for "Senegalese abroad". Although this fund aims at tackling different emergency needs, it is mainly used to cover body repatriation. However, interviewed emigrants often ignored or were critical of the role played by authorities. The attribution of funds is limited and discretionary. In practice, authorities prefer to let community organizations manage body repatriation. Ndiaye, a civil officer of the Senegalese Embassy in Belgium, highlights: "Before the State, citizens have shown the example […] these associations do not need the embassy, but there are cases of lone wolves, for whom the embassy is obliged to mobilize" (6/7/21, Brussels, Belgium). These "lone wolves" are those migrants who are not members of any association. In these cases, informal fundraising such as described earlier and the request to consular authorities are simultaneously activated. Seydou, member of a body repatriation association, explains:

> It is often that we write a letter to the embassy, and often that the answer is either 200 euros, or 300, or "we have no budget", what can you do with 300 euros? […] We had a passing, I sent a letter, [they replied] "We don't have a budget … if you would please inform us of the date of the funeral prayer, so we can come" […] Why do I have to tell you? What are you going to do there? (Seydou, 11/07/19, Brussels, Belgium)

Interviewees argue that the interest of consular authorities is to bring nothing but a symbolic support by participating in the mortuary prayer. Félicien de Heusch once assisted in one of these prayers in Brussels, where the ambassador himself was present and prayed on the coffin. During this event, the community praised his participation. However, in other cases, consular authorities were not welcomed. Their presence was seen as motivated by political interest. As Félix puts it, the state seeks to build up its legitimacy by incorporating private mourning into a "ghostly national imaginary" (Félix 2011).

The need for providing a "good death" to Senegalese migrants, on the one hand, and the distrust towards and delegitimization of both consular authorities and private insurances on the other, underpin the raison d'être of body repatriation associations. These organizations were initially founded by small groups of migrants, often in "irregular situations" and tied by their moral obligations towards their kith and kin at home. The scope of their membership and activities soon widened. Thanks to the enlargement of their membership and their financial capacities (up to 1,500 members

and €100,000 in the case of the largest organization), these three associations became pillars of the Senegalese community in Belgium. Due to their expansion, community leaders decided to register their organizations as non-profit associations (NPA)[8]:

> People have understood, and this is quite Belgian as an approach. The institution or the tool non-profit association (NPA), they all want their NPA [laughs]. That has multiplied the number of associations [...] It is linked to their increasingly strong integration in the Belgian context, they adopt certain Belgian reflexes, but it is also linked to the prestige that local contexts could confer there, the fact of having a structure officially known by the state. (Karim, 15/03/19, Brussels, Belgium)

Registering an NPA with a legal status in Belgium is a practice that has an impact not only locally but also in the origin country where, according to Karim, very few associations benefit from institutional recognition. Formal registration allows them to stage their integration in Belgian society, have access to public subventions, while mustering some form of symbolic capital transnationally (Martiniello and Bousetta 2008). With the legal formalization of community funds, the latter adapted to their urban-western emigration context and specialized the scope of their activities. The migration context has transformed both the mode of migrant organizing and its ethical basis. We will see in the following section how another actor, the Murid authorities, also engages and redefines the transnational moral economy surrounding body repatriation.

The selective authority of the Murid brotherhood over body repatriation

Much more than any other religious organization in Senegal, Murids have been increasingly influential not only in the religious domain but also in politics and the economy. With millions of followers in Senegal and worldwide, the brotherhood has become a key moral authority which developed a multi-faceted portfolio of activities. The brotherhood has an influence on the voting behaviours of its followers, often relays government directives (e.g. COVID-19 restrictions or "irregular" emigration prevention), calls for fundraising, and innovates in market niches. Finally, it provides social protection infrastructure (mosques, hospitals, universities) and free services for the Touba population, such as access to water and plots for housing and burial.

Serigne Touba, the founder of the Murid brotherhood, founded Touba in 1888 (Cheikh Amadou Bamba). With more than a million inhabitants, the holy city has become the second largest in Senegal while millions of pilgrims converge there every year for religious celebrations such as the *grand magal* (Coulon 1999; Bava and Guèye 2001). Despite its rapid and continuous

urban growth, the administration continued to regard the city as a village until 2013, on a land concession inherited from colonial times, with a status of extraterritoriality (Guèye 2002, 15). Through the unification of diverse rural communities, Touba has transformed into a growing urban area but it still lies between both the rural and the urban. Touba developed from the peanut crop economy and is present today in global chains of circulation of people and goods while conserving a traditional status. It appears on the maps of Senegal as a rural community but exercises a strong political and economic influence on the Senegalese government. Village status and logic instituted through the territorial basis of the growing city of Touba characterize the moral authority of the Murid brotherhood. The dynasty of the descendants of Serigne Touba governs the city. The governing body has instituted strict religious prescriptions and a prohibition regime. Through a web of sister organizations established in major settlement countries around the world, the Muslim brotherhood has managed to set up a far-reaching system of diffusion of its authority.

 According to Guèye, while it has drawn on the dispersion of its members internally and internationally, the brotherhood has been effective in attracting believers wishing to build houses and to be buried in Touba:

> Building on Touba soil or being buried there are often perceived by the Murid disciples as signs of redemption. For Murid emigrants who could not come back to Touba during their living, their last return to the holy city is indeed a way to stress their allegiance to the brotherhood. Linked to this belief are the building fever and necropolis function of Touba. This strong representation associated with the city and its soil considered as sacred are elements of the ideological, practical and symbolic device, constituted, maintained and developed to control a given religious group. (Guèye 2002, 18–19, translated by the authors)

A former migrant met in Touba, Modou, highlights that:

> All the Murids want to be buried in Touba, all the Murids want to have a house in Touba. And in fact the house is the grave; that is the reality. *Këur* in Wolof is the house, but *këur* is also the grave […] Here we do not sell the land, we give the land for free, he [Serigne Abdul Ahad] was one of the promoters of Touba, those who made the plots of land and everything, he had insisted on that. Come and live, come, because it is your house that will testify for your grave! (Modou, former migrant, 18/11/19, Touba, Senegal)

According to Modou, during Serigne Abdul Ahad's government (1968–1989), the strategy of attraction of believers was reinforced. Through the call for building and burial in the necropolis, the regime strengthened the moral authority of Touba, converting its sacred soil into Murids' moral

capital. Burial close to Serigne Touba and his descendants' graves is a promise for paradise; that is why "all Murids want to be buried in Touba". According to Saliou, a spiritual guide in Belgium, Serigne Abdul Ahad is also the one who formulated the expression "I will go to Touba dead or alive" ("*xelu dem Tuuba walla xëlu dem Tuuba*"), which means "either you go with your conscious spirit to Touba, or once you are dead in a hurry". Modou describes this type of repatriation as "virtual" and "spiritual", specifying that "even those who are buried elsewhere will be brought back to Touba, but he [Serigne Falou Mbacké] speaks of those who deserve it. He said that those who do not deserve it and who are still buried in Touba will be sent back" (Modou, former migrant, 18/11/19, Touba, Senegal).

In 2014, the old cemetery located next to the big mosque and Serigne Touba's mausoleum reached its saturation point. Another cemetery in the periphery of Touba was converted by the brotherhood as the main necropolis of the city. According to the religious administration in charge, around 88,000 persons have been buried in this cemetery between 2014 and 2020, with a frequency of about forty burials per day. This volume of burial surpasses any other cemetery in the country, including the largest cemetery of Dakar (Yoff). It heralds the symbolic power of attraction exerted by the necropolis. This number of arrivals from all around Senegal and the globe requires effective logistics. For security reasons, the municipality has established a registry office in the cemetery for the control of death certificates. Nevertheless, the religious brotherhood is in charge of the administration of the cemetery: it has brought electricity to the cemetery, set up a database, and enrolled dedicated staff. These efforts allow the managers of the necropolis to offer free plots on the sacred soil of Touba to believers who "deserve it". Following Guèye (2002) the "building fever and necropolis function" of Touba is also a way of attracting and keeping control over the religious group.

Safeguarding the moral authority of the holy city

The effort to attract believers is nevertheless selective. Some people are excluded from Touba as they are seen as deviants by the brotherhood. While drug addicts or other deviants may be forgiven for their sins if they seek redemption, this is not the case for homosexuals who are strictly excluded from the holy city, as was the case of a Senegalese homosexual migrant who died in Belgium, in tragic circumstances. Despite his wish for burial in the holy city, his case raised a polemic on social networks and the media. While the violent cause of his death mobilized migrants in Belgium, Senegalese (social) media and the religious authorities of Touba saw his

sexual orientation as incompatible with his burial preference and refused his body's admission in the cemetery. The body of the victim was considered undesirable. He was finally buried against his wishes in a cemetery in Belgium. "God forbid, he has not been buried as a Muslim," a friend remarks with deep sadness (Amina, 27/04/21, Liège, Belgium). Interviewed in the large mosque of Touba, a religious leader in charge of the management of the cemetery explains:

> We saw the news on social networks […] after investigation, conducted by people who live in Belgium, who moved to Liège to collect clear information, we were able to identify the person in question. In parallel, we conducted an investigation here in Touba since he [the deceased] comes from here. (Sidi, 06/11/20, Touba, Senegal)

For every corpse arriving or about to arrive in Touba, an investigation is carried out by the administration of the cemetery to verify the cause of death and decide whether the corpse may be buried or not. For corpses arriving from abroad, bereaved families usually inform the administration in advance and have to bring additional documentation (the consular mortuary *laissez-passer*). Investigations are undertaken in collaboration with the family of the deceased, and his religious guide. When a corpse is not admitted but present with the funeral convoy at the cemetery, brotherhood representatives escort the hearse in collaboration with the religious police as far as the exit door of the holy city and then inform the state police. When homosexuals are involved, the Touba authorities are wary of the media coverage:

> The press helps us a lot without knowing it, because in Touba, we refuse to bury homosexuals. It [the press] often thinks, "he is a wealthy guy, will the people of Touba give in to the temptation of money and camouflage his homosexuality to bury him here?" The press motivates us a lot in the sense that they scrutinize every move we make in these cases because they expect us to give in. (Sidi, 06/11/20, Touba, Senegal)

The brotherhood authorities are eager to expose their moral rigour and orthodoxy towards "deviants" in the media. This is particularly the case when the person involved is regarded as wealthy: the governing body is keen on avoiding any accusation of corruption: "They expect us to give in," says Sidi, "when we manage to deal with a case concerning a homosexual very quickly, we often avoid publicizing the information" (Sidi, 06/11/20, Touba, Senegal). A swift investigation about the deceased avoids media exposure and potential accusations. This example shows the extent to which the management of body repatriation is under public scrutiny. It is therefore central to the reproduction of Murids' moral authority.

The private sector: thanatic ethics as a source of profit

In the previous sections, we have seen that the village-based thanatic ethics evolved over time, with the legal formalization of community funds, and their specialization around death management. Meanwhile, the religious authorities of Touba, confronted by a growing demand for burials, adopted mechanisms of control and selective exclusion of bodies considered as undesirable. In parallel, a new emerging player, the private sector, led these two "historical" actors to adjust their positioning.

As shown in other works (Lafleur and Lizin 2015), market solutions exist to respond to a community management of immigrants' needs such as body repatriation. As seen above, Senegalese migration increased and diversified over time, with long trajectories in Europe, and consequent adaptations in the management of death. Most Senegalese migrants in Europe turn down insurance mechanisms. However, some Senegalese banks as well as Senegalese migrant brokers in France and Spain developed original products for body repatriation, targeting Senegalese and North African migrants. During their migration trajectory, these entrepreneurs, of Senegalese origin, generally entitled with a European citizenship, have garnered extensive social and economic capital that enables them to bridge private sector businesses and other institutions of the Senegalese diaspora.

One of these products was recently launched in Spain with the help of a Spanish insurance company. It offers a very competitive body repatriation insurance with inclusive rules: there is no cap on contribution related to age and even "undocumented" migrants can subscribe with their passport. The broker explains the raison d'être of his product as follows:

> Prevention, why? [...] Lots of people die here and are not insured or take part in any association, what happens then? We have to get into Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, everywhere, asking for money [...] How much time are we going to need to take a person back? (Abdoulaye, 30/08/21, Granada, Spain)

He, therefore, points out the advantages of the product over the uncertainty of community fundraising. Using face-to-face contacts and social network advertisements in Spanish, French, and Arabic, Abdoulaye mobilizes symbols of moral geography and authority: the figure of the family and in particular of the mother, the city of Dakar, and the Senegalese land. The example of the insurance also shows how market and commodification interpret the structures of transnational moral authority. The offer does not only function based on a collective moral code of conduct but also on its commodification. To overcome Senegalese migrants' general distrust towards private insurance (except for migrants long established in the country of settlement), the broker developed strategies to gain customers' confidence. The product is

presented as an alternative to the bank insurances that migrants subscribe to when opening a savings account in Spain (often with no real understanding of the insurance scope and rules). The broker relies on his insiders' comprehension of Senegalese economic ethics. Even though he was distributing flyers, Abdoulaye was aware that advertisement, and other "mainstream" marketing tools, were not enough to gain Senegalese trust:

> In Senegal they say that, "to buy a cow, you have to touch it", you know? So you have to see that personally, to convince them, you have to do some marketing, really explain it to them … the Senegalese are not easy to get into anything, you have to understand … They are going to ask you, what are you going to do if this happens to me? […] if I die in Senegal? (Abdoulaye, 30/08/21, Granada, Spain)

Meanwhile, the consulate of Senegal in Spain also advertised the new offer to its citizens in Spain. This is indeed both an opportunity for the state to withdraw its discretionary support to body repatriation and a way for the broker to get consular legitimacy and administrative support. This echoes with Lindquist's analysis of the role of brokers intersecting with civil society and the state in a neoliberal environment:

> The rise of NGOs, neoliberalization and the shifting relationship between the state and market are both creating the opportunity for new types of brokers – who engage both with local populations and bureaucracies – while reproducing an a priori ethical discourse. (Lindquist 2015, 873)

The entrepreneur is also in close touch with the Murid brotherhood representatives and consular authorities in Spain. The entrepreneur's brother is a representative of the Murid brotherhood of Barcelona and of a recent not-for-profit organization for body repatriation. This illustrates how some family "migratory careers" (Martiniello and Rea 2014) combine multifaceted associative and business trajectories, overlapping, in this case, in the field of death management. Moreover, a new Spanish Murid foundation was inaugurated in 2021 in Madrid, aiming to spread Muridism and cultural dialogue in Spain, while also proposing body repatriation insurance to its members. Involved in the new foundation, Abdoulaye was actively taking part in the organization of the event where he could promote the insurance. The Senegalese Ambassador and the General Consul in Spain were also present, as well as representatives of most of the Senegalese brotherhood branches in Spain, including Abdoulaye's brother and other associational leaders. The two brothers were therefore present in the same event and trying to reconcile their multiple status regarding the brotherhood, the body repatriation fund, and the insurance company, while reinforcing their legitimacy towards consular authorities. Understanding the benefit of a possible

collaboration with the private sector to avoid the difficulties of fundraising or withdraw their support to body repatriation, both the new foundation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have launched a "benchmarking" programme. This programme implies identifying and comparing the most convenient body repatriation products, negotiating the best deals with the companies, and then relaying the offer to Senegalese migrants. In the recent diversification and redefinition of private insurances in Senegal and abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sees an alternative to the "relief and assistance" fund provided by the consulate. It would allow them to disengage financially and replace this programme with a "consular package", which includes body repatriation insurance and other benefits.

Conclusions: towards a co-construction of thanatic authority

In a context of the evolution of Senegalese migration, this essay sheds light on the changing field of actors surrounding migrants' death management and the ensuing negotiations for thanatic authority. In the case of Touba, the management of the city and its new cemetery shows the way the brotherhood manifests its orthodoxy by excluding homosexuals. Hometown organizations register as formal organizations with a view to muster both financial and political support from Belgian and Senegalese authorities. New entrepreneurs seek the support of consular and religious authorities to circumvent embedded distrust against market-oriented arrangements. Behind each vignette, one can observe different signs of the transformations not only of Senegalese migration, but also of the Senegalese society at large. It points to the emergence of expatriate homosexual communities, represented as wealthy and willing to be buried in Senegal despite exile.[9] Homosexuals leave the country to move away from the prejudices they face in Senegalese society, but their death still questions traditional social norms. It also points towards the constitution of a new, secular actor: community entrepreneurs who strive to renew these social norms and reap the benefit of a brokering position between administrations, religious authorities, public NGOs or private corporations. The connection between Touba and the two aforementioned actors shows that, rather than a conservative position adverse to any change, religious authorities seek to maintain their prominence while acknowledging the emergence of these actors. Moreover, consular authorities engage with both private insurance companies and the religious brotherhood. Finally, the case of the two brothers shows that actors may combine distinct positions in the transnational social field of death management. Despite potential conflicts of interest related to these positions, the interplay of both traditional and new moral authorities enables a co-construction of a contemporary thanatic authority. This co-construction transforms Senegalese transnationalism while reflecting social change dynamics in the

Senegalese society. Their capacity to combine different forms of symbolic, financial, and technical resources provides the possibility to upscale institutional activities beyond the confines of community arrangements. In doing so, they change the very contours and modalities of thanatic ethics.

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