

The ambiguity of religious teachings allows people to craft narratives that justify inherited local burial patterns that they hold dear.

Should Christians and Muslims Cohabit after Death? *Diverging Views in a Senegalese Commune*

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In Senegal, some people are open to burial in cemeteries used for the departed of all faiths, while others wish to be buried only in cemeteries used exclusively for people of their own religion. Research in Fadiouth, which has a mixed cemetery, and Joal, which has segregated cemeteries, indicates that most people, regardless of their faith, embrace the dominant burial practice in their community. I argue that the ambiguity of religious doctrines through which people look at interment explains the legitimacy of local burial arrangements. Because people consume these teachings through interpretive exercises, even exposure to the same doctrines may not always help us understand the choices they make. This article sheds light on interfaith relations and the explanatory potential of religious teachings.

Introduction

In 2014, Abdou Diouf, the former president of Senegal, came under attack by some people in his hometown of Louga. He was accused of being a bad citizen of his place of origin. Specific offenses included not visiting Louga for ten years, not acquiring land there, and not developing the area during his presidency (Leral.net 2014). Beyond these preoccupations was an other-worldly transgression, which had driven some in Louga over the edge. Abdou Diouf had publicly expressed a wish to be buried in the faraway southern Senegalese city of Ziguinchor instead of Louga. Ziguinchor is one of the few Senegalese cities with a mixed cemetery, where people of all faiths can be buried. Diouf reasoned that in Ziguinchor, unlike most places in Senegal, where each cemetery is reserved for people of one faith, he as a Muslim and

his wife, a Roman Catholic, would be able to rest side by side in the hereafter (Senego.com 2014; Xibar.net 2015).

Some Senegalese will join Abdou Diouf in preferring or being open to interment in a cemetery where people of all faiths can be buried, but many strongly prefer burial in cemeteries where only people of their own faith are inhumed. A 2016 survey of 594 people that I conducted in the Commune of Joal-Fadiouth, in Senegal's Thies Region, revealed that 47 percent of respondents were open to being buried in a mixed cemetery, but 53 percent wanted to be interred in cemeteries reserved only for people of their own faith. The preference for interment in faith-based segregated cemeteries is held even by some who, like Diouf, are in marriages involving people of different faiths. Some of these couples may live together for a lifetime, have and raise children, and so on, but when they die, each prefers to go their own way. A middle-aged woman in one such marriage was clear on the point:

When we die, we will be buried in different cemeteries. When I die, I want to be buried in Cimetière Belair, which is only for Catholics. My spouse can be buried in a Muslim cemetery somewhere. The fact that we have lived together in marriage throughout our lives does not mean we also have to go to the next world together. (Interview 25)

Why do some individuals prefer to be buried in cemeteries reserved only for those of their own faith, while others are open to interment in cemeteries where people of all faiths can be buried? I explore this question by studying the preferences of people in the Commune of Joal-Fadiouth. I find that in the neighboring communities of Joal and Fadiouth, the preferences of the majority of residents in each locality coincide in significant ways with the dominant interment practice in their area. Most people in Fadiouth, which has a mixed cemetery, regardless of the faith community to which they belong, prefer or are open to interment in mixed cemeteries. The majority in Joal, which operates segregated Muslim and Christian cemeteries across religious lines, wish to be buried in segregated cemeteries. Given that some people commonly detest and even struggle against dominant structures and practices in their societies, the legitimacy of these contrasting practices in these neighboring communities is puzzling.

I argue that the ambiguity of religious teachings allows people to craft narratives that justify inherited local burial patterns that they hold dear. Thus, people of different faiths in each community tend to hold similar views on the legitimacy of mixed or segregated burials, while people of the same faith across communities often hold contrasting views on the matter. The argument reflects critically on literature that regards religious teachings as independent variables that can be used to explain outlooks, preferences, and behavior (Masoud, Jamal, and Nugent 2016; McClendon and Riedl 2015). I do not argue that these teachings do not influence behavior; instead, I posit that their ambiguity permits the exercise of significant agency by individuals

in their reception. Because people consume these teachings through interpretive exercises, even exposure to the same teachings may not always help us understand the choices they make. People subjected to similar teachings can end up arriving at different conclusions on what constitutes proper outlooks, preferences, and behavior within their faith. These teachings on their own may, thus, not always be useful for explaining broad patterns in behavior.

A body of literature demonstrates the insights into intergroup relations that the exploration of funerary practices can provide (Dississa 2009; Jua 2005; Vangu Ngimbi 1997). This article joins this literature in using an exploration of attitudes on interment practices to shed light on individuals' attitudes toward interactions of people of different faiths. These relations are the source of tension in some societies around the world, and the importance of cemeteries sometimes puts them at the center of such conflicts (The Globe and Mail 2017; Ma'an News Agency 2008; Myjoyonline.com 2016).

The rest of this article is divided into five parts. Immediately below, I briefly discuss methods and case selection. This is followed by a theoretical segment that lays out my main argument. An empirical section that explores dynamics in Joal-Fadiouth follows. A fourth section assesses a competing explanation, focusing on extremism. The conclusion considers the broader implications of this article for scholarship and policy.

Methods and Case Selection

This article draws on eleven months of ethnographic research in the Commune of Joal-Fadiouth in 2016. I interviewed sixty-seven purposefully selected participants and held informal conversations with many more in the commune and in Dakar, the Senegalese capital. Interviewees included thirty-six men and thirty-one women. Among these were religious and political leaders, local notables and sages, people involved in cemetery work, and ordinary townfolks. I visited cemeteries, churches, mosques, and other sites of traditional religious significance. Further, I draw on an original survey of 594 people that I conducted in the commune in 2016.

Joal-Fadiouth is famous in Senegal for being the birthplace of Léopold Sedar Senghor, the first president of the country. Mainland Joal, with a population of around 40,000, is by far the largest town in the commune. The island village of Fadiouth, connected to Joal by a 760-meter footbridge, has around 5,000 residents. The third locality in the commune, Ngazobil, was excluded from this study because it has fewer than 500 residents, all of them being Roman Catholic Church officials or relatives of these church personnel.

The choice of Joal and Fadiouth for this study was influenced by many factors. The commune has a significant Christian population (more than 90 percent of the population of Senegal is Muslim), with Fadiouth being over 85 percent Roman Catholic and Joal having many Catholics, though they constitute a much smaller share of the population than in Fadiouth. The

presence of significant populations of Muslims and Christians in the area makes a test of the explanatory power of religious affiliation possible.

The presence of significant communities of Christians and Muslims means that burial places for both faiths exist in the commune, but the spatial organization of cemeteries differs: Dioty cemetery in Fadiouth is used for the burial of people of all faiths, while Joal has separate cemeteries for Muslims and Christians.

Fadiouth and Joal share commonalities that constitute controls, facilitating causal analysis. Christianity in the form of Roman Catholicism, and Islam in the form of Sufism, are the predominant faiths in the two communities. Both Joal and Fadiouth are known in Senegal for their rather moderate approaches to world religions. Further, those who claim to be indigenes of both communities are members of the Serere ethnic group, who have similar cultures and burial rites. Also, the physical proximity of the two communities facilitates the flow of religious doctrines between them, making diverging views on interments even more surprising.

Institutions, Religious Teachings, and Burial Practices

Burials are often immersed, and spoken of, in terms of religious teachings for multiple reasons. First, like other important events in life—birth, marriage, and so on—religious practices and beliefs play a major role in giving meaning to death (Malinowski 2004, 21). Second, the nature of religious rites performed during funerals are believed to influence what happens to the dead in the afterlife, as well as the relations that the dead come to have with the living (Gravrand 1990, 253–60; Jindra 2011, 122–23; Thomas and Luneau 1980, 100). Finally, cemeteries and other burial places sometimes act as spaces for the performance of religious rituals (Onoma 2018).

The religious teachings in which burials are immersed can be understood as “the rules of the game in a society” (North 1990, 3), or “the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic[,] and social interaction” (North 1991, 97). They legitimize and facilitate certain causes of action while delegitimizing and impeding others. They reward certain forms of behavior while punishing others. They influence the capacity of actors, strengthening some, while weakening others. They shape actors’ interests and norms. It is on account of these things that many see institutions as significantly shaping economic, political, and social outcomes (Lust and Rakner 2018; North 1990).

Like other institutions, religious teachings provide broad frames for understanding what reality is and how it works. They espouse norms of appropriateness by proffering rules, regulations, and counsel, touching on many aspects of conduct and interactions. They sometimes dispose of sanctions and reward systems, leading to the view that religious teachings influence their adherents’ outlooks, preferences, and behavior in definite ways (Glazier 2015; Grzymala-Busse 2012; Guth et al. 2006). The use of religious

teachings to explain socioeconomic and political outcomes has a long history. Weber's (1998) work on the effects of the protestant ethic stands out as a leading example. Today, religious teachings are used to explain many social phenomena, including terrorism (Loza 2007; Pratt 2010), political participation (McClendon and Riedl 2015), and attitudes toward the rights of women (Masoud, Jamal, and Nugent 2016). This outlook on religious teachings forms part of the broader category of cultural arguments (Harrison and Huntington 2000; Inglehart and Welzel 2005).

If religious teachings, like other institutions, influence behavior in definite ways, we should expect convergence in orientations and behavior within their ambits. People operating within the same religious tradition should tend to behave in a similar manner and have similar outlooks. The behavior of individuals across spheres of religious teachings that are marked by significant divergence should tend to vary. Given the potential influence of religious teachings, it is unsurprising that what constitutes proper doxa for a faith community has long been the subject of contestation, sometimes causing religious groups to splinter. Such conflicts reflect the broader struggles over institutions that Knight (1992, 19), Moe (2005, 217–26), and others have written about.

The supposed influence of institutional arrangements raises the question of why certain societies possess structures that lead to desired social, economic, and political outcomes while others do not. The theory of punctuated equilibrium provided an influential response to this question in positing that some institutions display positive feedback effects. Actors may have significant room for choice among multiple institutions at a certain point in time, but once a choice is made, resorting to possibilities that existed at the initial stage becomes increasingly more difficult over time (Mahoney 2000, 510; Pierson 2015, 133). Pierson has contributed significantly to exploring the mechanisms that ensure continuity along chosen institutional paths (1992, 363–65; 2000, 254; 2015, 134–41). These equilibria or periods of continuity, it is said, are shattered only by big, exogenous shocks, which create critical junctures when paths are switched, unleashing new equilibria (Mahoney 2000, 1; Pempel 1998, 1–3).

The Reception of Ambiguous Religious Teachings

The emphasis on structure and its constricting effects has not gone unchallenged in the new institutionalism, with scholars exploring the ways in which actors create room to maneuver within the constraints imposed by institutions. Uneven enforcement has long been cited as an explanation of why institutions do not always structure behavior in expected ways (Mahoney and Thelen 2010, 10–11). Scholars have also focused on the ambiguity of institutions (Hacker, Pierson, and Thelen 2015, 189). Mahoney and Thelen view ambiguity in institutions as the quality of being “subject to varying interpretations and levels of enforcement” (2010, xi). It is difficult for institutions to deal with all possible situations that could fall under

their ambit because of the width and evolution of the phenomena that they govern (Mahoney and Thelen 2010, 11). This character of institutions does not have to be understood as a lack, and it may sometimes even occur by design (Onoma 2013, 128–29). Even some of what is stipulated by institutions is often rather equivocal (Jackson 2005, 229; Thelen 2000, 105). The situations to which one can apply a rule may not be entirely clear. What a word, sentence, or passage means is not always obvious. Often, the meaning of a word or passage in a text can be deciphered only with reference to other passages in the same text. Multiple sources of rules may exist, and all known provisions may not constitute a coherent set.

The haziness of institutions creates room for individuals to innovate by interpreting rules in ways that may diverge and by extending stated rules to new situations (Mahoney and Thelen 2010, 11). The multiplicity of sources lets people cherry pick—a process widely studied by scholars of legal pluralism, involving actors in an environment with multiple regulatory systems strategically choosing arrangements that accord with their interests and norms (Constable 2013, 1007).

Ambiguity and the coexistence of multiple and sometimes divergent interpretations have been cited in the study of world religions (Asad 2001, 213; Smith 1991, 66). These characteristics of religious teachings partly ground Asad’s skepticism over whether it makes sense to speak of religion as a noun at all (Asad 2011, 38; Smith 1991, 5). Masoud, Jamal, and Nugent (2016) recognize and explore the effect of divergent versions of religious teachings on outlooks and behavior. Fall, advocating the elaboration of “a contextualized *fiqh*” appropriate for Muslims in a minority migratory context in Quebec, recognizes the importance of interpretation in the elaboration of religious teachings (2011, 18).

While drawing inspiration from such works, I depart from them by emphasizing the need to problematize the links between religious teachings on the one hand and belief and practice on the other. I stress the element of agency in how teachings are received, transforming them into beliefs that may influence behavior. It is better to think of this process more in terms of acquiring ingredients that can be used to prepare a meal, rather than as the reception of an already prepared dish. Multiple recipients of these ingredients may well end up preparing a similar dish, but they also may end up preparing different dishes with significantly different tastes, affecting consumers and the pertinent body politic in different ways. The possibly diverse beliefs that may result from receipt of the same teachings should give us pause for thought in deploying religious teachings as causal variables. Further, it is not unheard of for people to refuse to put into practice teachings that they know and accept. Finally, there is the phenomenon of “practice without belief” (Asad 2001, 220): many members of faith communities routinely engage in behavior that accords with religious doxa without believing in such teachings.

These reflections should dampen the expectation of convergence within institutional spheres. People operating within an institutional

sphere can sometimes have diverse preferences, outlooks, and practices that all draw inspiration from this institution. Also, people adhering to diverging institutions may well exhibit behavior and preferences that coincide. Asad may be right in noting that in some instances, “unless you knew someone well, you could not tell whether she was a believer or not merely from the way she lived” (Asad 2011, 49). These reflections call for a rethink of how we understand convergence within institutional realms that we often attribute to the constricting effects of institutions. Continued adherence to an institution may not always be a sign of the constricting effects of institutions: it may well be that agents are willing to stay within the ambits of institutions only because the ambiguity of these structures allow these actors significant freedom to pursue their interests and adhere to norms they hold dear (Onoma 2013, 124).

Doubts over the utility of religion as a cause that explains social realities have a rich heritage. Marx did not see religion as a mover of history (1978), and Durkheim treated it as a manifestation of social practice and power, instead of their explanation (Durkheim 1915).

Fashioning Legitimizing Narratives for Burial Patterns

The ambiguity of religious teachings allows people of diverse and sometimes contrasting interests and norms to create room under their ambit. This character of religious teachings is particularly conducive to people attached to practices and outlooks that are sticky. These actors can craft interpretations compatible with their practices and beliefs. Local interment systems often demonstrate such stickiness due to mechanisms that are akin to the “lock-in effects” that Pierson speaks of (1992, 363–65). First, the long history of regulating cemeteries and burials that is partially rooted in public health concerns (Murray 2003, 130; Santarsiero 2000, 142) makes reworking cemeteries at will difficult. Second, people’s desire to be buried near their dead relatives acts as a significant barrier to change in the spatial arrangement of cemeteries. This wish sheds light on the pervasiveness of family plots in many cemeteries around the world. The desire to be buried next to one’s forebears is only one aspect of an attachment to ancestors, which has been noted in some parts of Africa (Gravrand 1990, 267–69; Roberts 2011, 214; Thomas and Luneau 1980, 103–06). This veneration of ancestors and the centrality of burial sites to its practice have evolved over time as societies in Africa have interacted with world religions (de Witte 2011, 180; Gravrand 1990, 253; Jindra 2005, 357). Not discarding the burial practices of the ancestors without significant cause can be thought of as part of the process of venerating forebearers and their ways of doing things.

Inheriting such sticky institutions, people find the ambiguity of the religious teachings in which these burials are immersed handy because it lets them craft interpretations of religious doctrines that accord with their inherited interment practices, obviating a need to undertake the exercise of

changing burial patterns or disobey the teachings of the faiths to which they fervently adhere.

In Joal-Fadiouth, people inherit burial practices that are not easy to change, but the stickiness of these practices only goes so far in explaining preferences concerning the faith-based segregation of interments. The stickiness of institutions does not tell us which among a broad set of responses toward these arrangements people adopt. These options include warmly embracing burial arrangements, reconciling themselves to living with what they may consider odious practices, quietly subverting these measures, and fleeing or loudly protesting and struggling against these structures. These are all paths that scholars have noted in response to dominant practices and policies around the world (Hirschman 1970; Scott 1990, 2009).

A complete understanding of dynamics in the commune requires a contemplation of Christianity and Islam, which individuals always reference in speaking of interments. In both communities, people have perfected the art of elaborating interpretations of religious doxa that legitimize their inherited burial patterns. It is on account of this that the majority of Muslims and Christians in Joal tend to see segregated burial spaces as what is required by their faiths, while the majority of their neighbors in Fadiouth see mixed burials as entirely legitimate under the teachings of the same faiths.

Divergent Discourses on Interments in Joal and Fadiouth

The finding that the dominant local modes of arranging burials in the community in which individuals live sheds light on the type of cemetery that they are open to being buried in is not obvious or banal. People commonly detest the dominant practices in their community and long for and pursue practices and frameworks that are prevalent elsewhere. The frequent transportation of African corpses within Africa and between continents (Dime and Fall 2011, 128–31; Geschiere 2005, 46; Nyamnjoh 2013, 188) attests to the fact that some Africans aspire to and pursue possibilities and practices elsewhere when it comes to interments.

People's embrace of the dominant burial practice in their community is partly linked to the stickiness of cemeteries and the ambiguity of the religious doctrines in which burial practices are immersed. People in Joal and Fadiouth have inherited burial practices that are not entirely easy to change. The use of cemeteries in these communities is at least several hundred years old. What became the Christian cemetery of Joal is mentioned by Doctor Armand Corre as early as 1876, when he visited the area to conduct research on sleeping sickness, human African trypanosomiasis (Debien 1964, 20, 59). It was also mentioned by L'Abbé David Boilat in reference to a burial that took place there in 1784 (Boilat 1984, 139, 148–50). A long-time male community leader in the area was one of the people that indicated that the Muslim cemetery of Joal dates back to the early 1900s (Interview 1). These cemeteries were preceded by that of Fadiouth, as well as a previous

cemetery in what is today the neighborhood of Moulonga in Joal (Onoma 2018). Before the advent of Christianity and Islam, special places existed for burying those regarded as great people, spaces used for traditional religious rites today (Onoma 2018).

The wish to be buried near the bodies of relatives already interred in the commune is widespread in the area. Some express this desire in terms of just being buried in the area, but many wish to lie in the same cemetery or right next to the grave of certain relatives. A male community leader from Fadiouth (Interview 1), a female public official in Fadiouth (Interview 3), and a female community leader from Joal (Interview 15) all indicated that some secure cemetery plots to make this possible.

Attachment to the dead is deeply rooted in the cosmology of the Serere who call the commune their home. The veneration of their ancestors is an important part of a monotheistic Serere cosmology, which acknowledges Roog as the supreme god. But Roog is not thought to be particularly implicated in human lives. It is the ancestors, called *pangool*, that are more involved in human lives. They were people who achieved great things in life and are venerated and propitiated at death with prayers, sacrifices, libations, and so on. They are the ones that punish, protect, and reward humans (Gravrand 1990, 305–52). Their veneration is pervasive even today, and continuing with the burial patterns they established can be thought of as part of the process of following in their footsteps.

The difficulty of changing inherited burial practices helps us partly understand attitudes toward the faith-based segregation of interments in Joal-Fadiouth. A complete understanding of the phenomenon requires a contemplation of Christianity and Islam, which individuals always reference in speaking of local inhumations. In Joal-Fadiouth people always assert that their preferences concerning interments are in line with the teachings of their religion, leading one to expect that preferences will neatly map onto religious divisions. One would expect Christians across the two communities (who are almost all Roman Catholics) to tend to have similar preferences with regard to the faith-based segregation of burials, just as their Muslim neighbors (who are overwhelmingly Sufi). But contrary to this expectation, a survey I conducted in the commune in 2016 indicates that preferences do not neatly map onto religious orientations in this way. Instead, it revealed a strong overlap between where people lived and what their preferences were. The majority of both Christians (87.9 percent) and Muslims (76 percent) surveyed in Fadiouth are open to interment in mixed cemeteries. They insist that mixed cemeteries are in accordance with the teaching of their faiths. In Joal, the majority of Muslims (91.43 percent) and Christians (52 percent) wish to be buried only in segregated cemeteries, arguing that both Islam and Christianity require segregated cemeteries. Similarities in the variants of Islam and Christianity practiced in the two localities, the pervasiveness of joint religious activities, and the free flows between the neighboring communities have not led to convergence in preferences within faiths.

The lack of convergence along religious lines reflects the fact that the religious teachings that people cite are rather nebulous in important respects, making them susceptible to interpretation and stretching by clever and innovative agents. Respected religious teachings are often silent on important matters. Many clerics in Joal and Fadiouth, for instance, point out that the Quran neither condemns nor encourages the faith-based segregation of interments. Further, the counsel contained in the sources people cite are sometimes vague, leaving room for people to arrive at different conclusions on what is required by their faith. This ensures that even where many members of a faith community claim to believe in and comply with the teachings of their religion, their preferences and behavior may diverge because of differences in what they understand those teachings to be.

The task of working one's way through religious doctrines is made more interesting by the fact that there are multiple sources that people see as containing the teachings of these religions. In Joal-Fadiouth, Christians regularly refer to the Bible, but since the vast majority of them are Roman Catholic, it is not unusual for them to make recourse to Catholic canon law. People may refer to what various priests or catechists say. Muslim religious leaders often refer to the Quran and the hadiths, as well as secondary sources that often include Maliki Fiqh texts (the overwhelming majority of Muslims in Senegal are adherents of the Maliki School). Many of the ordinary Muslims I talked to mostly referenced the teachings of their neighborhood imams, religious guides, Quranic schoolteachers, and erudite acquaintances. Some simply referred to "what our religion teaches," without being specific on sources. The media through which these teachings circulate include mosques, sermons, religious conferences, radio and TV programs, MP3, and USB keys containing the teachings of various guides, social media platforms and websites, YouTube, and so on. The book *Khouratou Ayni: Lumière sur les Pratiques Islamiques*, written by Serigne Abo Madyana Shouhaibou Mbacké, a Mouride sage, is one of the few texts that ordinary members of the Mouride Sufi order with whom I talked said they consulted daily to get directions on proper conduct. People seeking guidelines have to undertake a process that includes sorting through a significant number of sources or settling on a few that they judge to be best.

Weaving Discourses

The creativity and ingenuity of individuals in the commune have become crucial to the task of determining proper conduct on the question of the spatial organization of the burial of people of different faiths. The ambiguity of Christian and Muslim teachings allows the majority in each community to weave discourses that assert the propriety of their dominant inherited burial practice. These discourses are passed on over generations and refined over time. It is through these processes that most people in each community have come to embrace their dominant local practice as their preference.

One of the most common strategies for legitimizing burial practices in Joal-Fadiouth is that of cherry picking. The multiplicity of written and oral teachings within Islam and Christianity makes the adoption of cherry picking enticing, and some in the commune have developed it into a veritable art form. It is illustrated in what I eventually came to call the one-verse challenge during my field research. This challenge is often deployed to justify the preference for mixed cemeteries in Fadiouth. It involves defenders of mixed cemeteries asking those who insist on burial in segregated cemeteries to show a single verse in the Quran or the Bible that mandates segregation of the dead. A male senior member of the Muslim community in Fadiouth put the challenge forcefully:

Our practice [of burying in a mixed cemetery] conforms with the Holy Quran. The Quran states some rules on how to prepare the corpse and how to lay it in the grave. Once you follow these rules, that is the end. The Holy Quran says nothing about the place where the burial should take place. That is not at all important. If someone says a Muslim should be buried in a cemetery for only Muslims, tell the person to show you just one verse in the Holy Quran that says so. (Interview 18)

I was never able to find someone who could meet the one-verse challenge among the many who prefer segregated cemeteries, but a male Muslim cleric in Joal who insisted on using segregated cemeteries pointed out the cherry picking involved in the one-verse challenge:

Having separate cemeteries is important. Muslims have to be buried in a cemetery that is only for Muslims. According to the hadiths, the Prophet Mohammad (Peace be Upon Him) was buried in a cemetery like that. We Muslims use the Holy Quran, the word of God, to guide our behavior, but we also learn from the behavior and sayings of the Prophet Mohammad (Peace be Upon Him) as told in the hadiths. (Interview 22)

The innovative interpretation of texts is another strategy for wading through the wealth of religious teachings at people's disposal as they seek to structure and legitimize their views on interments. Christian and Muslim defenders of segregated cemeteries in Joal often focus on religious teachings on respect for all in defending their preference for segregated cemeteries. The argument, as enunciated separately by a male Muslim cleric in Joal (Interview 14) and a male leader in the Christian community there (Interview 9), went thus: Christianity and Islam both preach respect for all, and so each religion is to be respected. Respecting a religion includes giving it space to conduct its rites and rituals in privacy. Burials are core parts of the rites and rituals of each faith. Therefore, segregating cemeteries is

an important way of showing respect for each faith. Proper Christians and Muslims should, therefore, embrace cemeteries that are used only for the burial of members of their faith.

Another interpretive exercise undertaken by some Muslim residents of Joal in defense of segregated cemeteries compares the resting places of the dead to mosques. Cemeteries where Muslims are buried, the argument goes, are in many ways like mosques, because they are the sites of important religious rituals. This means that entering and staying in them require adherence to certain norms. It is possible for Muslims to understand and uphold these rules. Because of limited knowledge, it is impossible for Christians to respect these rules for entering and staying in Muslim cemeteries. It is therefore proper for cemeteries to be segregated. In enunciating this argument, a Muslim cleric pointed to the greetings proffered to and prayers said for the dead when one enters a cemetery where Muslims are buried (Interview 22). A female public servant from Joal was of the same opinion:

A cemetery where Muslims are buried is like a mosque, so we have to observe strict rules of decorum when entering and staying in such cemeteries. Those rules don't exist for Christians. That is why we should have separate cemeteries. (Interview 15)

Interpretation is deployed not only in support of the segregation of interments. In Fadiouth, imaginative readings are often used by Muslims to defend mixed cemeteries. The exigencies imposed by exceptional circumstances constitute one argument. A senior member of the Muslim community in Fadiouth made the argument thus: the Quran permits Muslims to stray from recommended practices in situations where exceptional circumstances make following rules impossible. Even if one agreed that in an ideal world, Muslims should be buried in cemeteries dedicated only to Muslims, exceptional circumstances make it legitimate for Muslims to be buried in mixed cemeteries (Interview 22). Because what constitutes exceptional circumstances is not always clear, room can occur for innovation and contestation.

The passion that many interviewees demonstrated gave a clear indication that discussions during these sessions were, for them, part of important debates over doxa in religions that they hold dear. This passion often transformed interviews into lengthy, combative, and highly informative discussions. No one spoke of their faith as ambiguous, but many admitted to as much in pointing to the silences in matters concerning interments in their holy texts and how this permitted multiple and sometimes divergent choices. During the months I spent in the field, I came to realize that cherry picking was always portrayed as what others did that one did not agree with. I did not encounter anyone who claimed to be cherry picking, but many were quick to accuse others of strategically ignoring certain sources in favor of those that were more in line with their choices.

As I conducted research, I noticed a tension between the tolerance of other ways of approaching burials and the urge to regard one's approach as the only proper way. The first approach coincides with the tolerance that Joal-Fadiouth is noted for in Senegal. The second tendency often seemed to result from elision of the assertion of one's position as right and the more troublesome installation of one's practice as the best way or the only approach that is in line with the dictates of a faith. Some would then excuse others for adopting the less than proper approaches on account of exceptional circumstances or explain such deviation as the result of ignorance, extremism, and so on.

Migration, Dissenting "Minorities," and Other Interesting Dynamics

The commune exhibits a few patterns that I did not set out to deal with here but that are worth pointing out. One of these concerns the minorities deviating from dominant trends in each community. These constitute 20 percent of those interviewed in Joal and 14 percent in Fadiouth. Muslims overall tend to be more tied to the idea of segregated cemeteries in the commune, regardless of the locality. The difference in openness to burial in mixed cemeteries between Christians and Muslims is only 12 percent of those interviewed in Fadiouth but constitutes 39 percent in Joal. Further, there is an inverse trend in the tendency of faith communities to deviate from dominant trends in the two areas. Most of those defying the dominant practice of segregated interments in Joal are Christians, unlike in Fadiouth, where most of those going against the idea of mixed cemeteries are Muslims.

The history of migration in the two communities might begin to shed light on some of these dynamics. The two communities are contrasting with regard to migration. Joal is the recipient of large numbers of migrants from Senegal and beyond on account of its aquatic wealth, while Fadiouth is best known for emigration (Onoma 2018). Most of the immigrants are Muslims from other areas of Senegal, where segregated cemeteries are the norm and who are likely to prefer burial in such cemeteries. This may help explain why Muslims tend to be more insistent on interment in segregated cemeteries than Christians. It may help us understand why Muslims tend to be the majority of those deviating from the attachment to mixed cemeteries in Fadiouth, but Muslims are less likely than Christians to go against the dominant practice of segregating cemeteries in Joal.

A Question of Extremism and Moderation?

The phenomenon of religious extremism is a competing hypothesis invoked by some people in Joal-Fadiouth to explain why some individuals in the commune prefer to be buried in segregated cemeteries while others remain

open to inhumation in mixed cemeteries. It is argued that those who insist on segregated cemeteries are extremists, while people who are open to mixed cemeteries are moderates. A leader in the Christian community in Fadiouth who is a close observer of interfaith relations in the commune put it this way:

You have to praise the tolerance in Fadiouth. They live like that and also bury like that, next to each other. Their cemetery is mixed and belongs to all. Each faith has its part. But some people believe in separation rooted in intolerance. It applies to both Muslims and Christians in the commune. You see each trying to pull the blanket to their side. It manifests itself even in their not agreeing to bury people of different faiths next to each other. (Interview 26)

This argument coincides with the use of extremism to explain terrorism (Loza 2007, 142; Pratt 2010, 440). It refines the argument that focuses on religious affiliation, in recognizing that strains within faiths may be more important than religious affiliation as such. Field research did not uncover much support for this hypothesis. People in the two communities display similarly high levels of moderation on questions of interfaith interactions, making it impossible for these attitudes to explain the stark variations in preferences concerning place of interment across the two localities. Senegal is known for the tolerant form of Sufi Islam practiced by many of its inhabitants (Babou 2013; Cochrane 2013; Diouf 2013; Mbacké 2005; Stepan 2013; Villalon 1995). In the general environment of moderation, Joal-Fadiouth has the reputation of being particularly tolerant on questions of interfaith relations. Some of the practices there do not make sense to Senegalese living in many other parts of the country. A senior member of the Muslim community in Fadiouth indicated that Christians wishing to share the meat of their slaughtered animals with Muslim neighbors will allow these neighbors to kill the animals in line with Islamic teachings (Interview 18). I received a gift of a rosary and counsel to “be stronger in [my] Catholic faith” from a senior Muslim cleric in Joal with whom I held long discussions during fieldwork.

Residents of the commune are quick to proffer explanations for people’s moderate outlooks on religious differences. Some, like an old Muslim farmer that I spoke to in Fadiouth, suggest that people in the commune do not get carried away by differences in world religions because they are still united by strong adherence to traditional religious beliefs (Interview 11). Many in the commune readily attest to the persistence of traditional religious practices that bring Muslims and Christians together. A retired female teacher and farmer in Joal who is Christian emphasized this factor:

It is very hard to see people that call themselves animists these days, but the practices remain. It does not matter whether people are Christian or Muslim. They pour libations and do

sacrifices. They venerate the ancestors. We do it today. When rains delay, we go to pray at the Lomb, where the great people are buried, and even before we come back, the rain falls. ... The church preaches against these practices, and people listen attentively, but they continue with their practices. (Interview 7)

A female Muslim public servant from Fadiouth made similar observations:

Muslims left behind practices like drinking [alcohol] and eating pigs, but we still pour libations. Both Muslims and Christians from our lineage go to the sacred grove on a day each week to venerate and commune with the ancestors. (Interview 3)

These accounts attest to the environment of religious pluralism in the commune. This is a phenomenon that Langewiesche (2003) also noted in her study of Burkina Faso.

The crosscutting character of important cleavages in the commune gets mentioned often in the effort to explain moderation in the area. The role of crosscutting cleavages in mitigating conflicts is the subject of a considerable body of literature (Dunning and Harrison 2010; Goodin 1975). A leader in the Christian community in Fadiouth noted that many families have both Muslim and Christian members, allowing family ties and processes to assuage differences based on religious affiliation (Interview 26). A community leader from Fadiouth suggested that the maternal lineages, which are important among the Serere of the commune, unite both Muslim and Christian members, again attenuating the tensions that differences in religious affiliation might instigate (Interview 1). A middle-aged man involved in cemetery work in the commune noted:

I am Catholic. My older sister is Muslim. She married a Muslim husband. We have kept our relationship. I drink beer in their glass when I visit them. Here she prays with a mat I give her. We have the same mother and father and one blood. This Islamo-Christian dialogue thing people talk about does not exist here. In Joal-Fadiouth, we have a dialogue of blood. (Interview 34)

The thoughts of an old man who is a leader in the Muslim community in Fadiouth went in the same direction.

Family relations preceded religion. I have an uncle who is Christian. When I was a kid, he used to buy me clothes for Tabaski (Eid al-Adha) so I could go and pray. Now what can I say to him about religion? When I was going to Mecca, my Catholic relatives gave me 50,000 francs to help pay for the trip. (Interview 13)

Conclusion

This article sheds light on why local modes of spatially arranging the burial of people of different faiths are so warmly embraced by majorities across religious divides in Joal and Fadiouth. It speaks to important debates about religious ideologies frequently invoked to justify violence, which has a destabilizing influence in Africa (Adesoji 2011; Maiangwa et al. 2012). Such violence mirrors, and is sometimes connected to, conflicts in other parts of the world. It is in this context that observers have concern over the spread of extreme religious ideologies, which are thought to motivate violent behavior. This outlook has led to the spread of deradicalization and counter-radicalization programs, which seek to change individuals' behavior by altering their religious views and to prevent the spread of extreme religious ideologies, respectively (Horgan and Altier 2012; Stern 2010). The portrayal of individuals as being extremists or moderates, instead of actors holding extreme or moderate views on certain issues, points to the tendency to see these ideologies as uniformly influencing all aspects of their adherents' lives.

This study suggests that the influence of religious ideologies on individuals' behavior is segmented, instead of being wholly uniform: it is accordingly better to portray individuals as holding extreme or moderate views on specific issues than to portray them as extremists or moderates. Individuals who may hold extreme views on one issue may have moderate views on others. In Joal-Fadiouth, individuals who may have no problem marrying and living their entire lives alongside people of other faiths may scream "God forbid!" or "*Astaghfirullah!*" when it is suggested to them that their bodies should be buried in a cemetery containing the bodies of people of other faiths. The declaration of a female retired public official with whom I spoke in Joal shows this dynamic:

I don't want to be buried in a cemetery with Muslims! I want separate cemeteries as they are done here in Joal. Living together is not a problem, but when people die, they want to be returned to their religion. Even with mixed couples, each is buried according to their religion and in the place reserved for their faith. (Interview 8)

This study raises questions about the extent to which these religious ideologies can explain broad patterns of behavior. Because the ambiguity of ideologies provides room for interpretation, the question inevitably arises of why people interpret religious teachings differently. Why do some settle on more extreme versions, while others arrive at more moderate ones? The need to explain the versions of religious teachings that people settle on opens up space for extraneous factors that go beyond these ideologies. A wide range of issues, including poverty, economic marginalization, and political oppression, have been cited in the literature in this regard (Loza 2007; Pech and Slade 2006). This article suggests that attention to pluralism holds some promise for understanding the

versions of world religions that people adopt. It follows Langewiesche (2003) in suggesting that in environments marked by religious pluralism, attachment to elements of one religious orientation can influence how people make sense of and relate to other religious doxa to which they adhere. In this study, persisting elements of traditional religious beliefs around attachment to the ancestors and their ways influence how people interpret ambiguous teachings of world religions on interments. As noted in the literature, these traditional practices and beliefs have in their turn not been immune to the influences of these world religions (Gravrand 1990, 253; Jindra 2005, 357).

The role of interpretation in how people receive religious teachings reinforces an insight from recent work on historical institutionalism. Structure and its ability to determine behavior tends to get highlighted in explanations of institutional continuity (Arthur 1994; Thelen 1999), but the inability of institutions to structure behavior because of their ambiguity can contribute to their legitimation and persistence by allowing people to embrace versions of these institutions that they find convenient (Onoma 2013, 124).

The coexistence of such sharply differing preferences in these proximate communities suggests the importance of understanding the ways in which broad global visions are received, transformed, and deployed in local contexts. The focus on the encounter between the global and the local is important because it helps us make sense of the panoply of manifestations and effects of what are ostensibly the same global flows. Why do the same religious teachings provoke less tolerant attitudes toward people of other faiths, certain genders, and various minority groups in some contexts while eliciting more openness to these populations in other situations? The exploration of local dynamics as undertaken in this article stands to shed light on this puzzle.

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