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Dolna 17, Warsaw,
Poland 00-773
+48 226 0 227 03
editorial_office@rsglobal.pl

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AL DJANAZA OR THE MODEL OF THE TRIPTYCH. FUNERAL ROUTES IN BEJAIA

Abderrahim Kebache

Senior Lecturer (MAA), Ph.D. Student, Mouloud Mammeri University, Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria

Laboratoire Villes & Santé, Salah Boubnider University, Constantine 3- Algeria

ORCID ID: 0009-0006-2279-5344

Siham Bestandji

Ph.D., (MCA), Salah Boubnider University Constantine 3, Constantine, Algeria.

Laboratoire Villes & Santé, Salah Boubnider University, Constantine 3- Algeria

ABSTRACT

The Al Djanaza route follows Islamic funerary customs. Technically, it involves transporting a body from one location to the cemetery. An anthropological study was conducted in Bejaia, Algeria, with a socio-spatial observation unit established. The research focused on the urban funeral route (UFR), including the Sidi Abderrahmane cemetery, the Sidi Soufi mosque, and the departure point of the body. This social and spatial whole encompasses both funerary practices and the locations where they occur. The aim was to establish a poetics of UFRs. To achieve this, we employed an anthropological approach, particularly through situational observation techniques. The results presented in this article highlight the emergence of a tripartite model -House-Mosque-Cemetery-structuring the sequences that constitute Al Djanaza, along with the dual conventional and differentiated dimensions of the UFR, and its characterization of a triple marking: chronological, gendered, and spatial.

KEYWORDS

Anthropology, Al Djanaza, Urban Funeral Route, Islam, Death

CITATION

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Introduction

The public space accommodates various uses and accepts different designations. It is sometimes plural, when referring to its physical form, and sometimes singular, when it represents a symbolic space (Paquot, 2009). This polysemy is extensively nourished by the various disciplines that engage with it, including political science (Arendt, 1989, 2020), philosophy (Habermas & Ratzinger, 2004), urban studies (Paquot, 2009), sociology, and anthropology (Sansot, 1986, 2003, 2004, 2017; Sansot et al., 2017; Torgue et al., 1979) ; across different regions, such as the Maghreb (Dris, 2016) or Asia (Sanjuan, 2015).

Among the possible approaches, this article focuses explicitly on the manifestation of religious phenomena in public space, as others have done for Christian (Quirion, 2011) or Jewish worship (Mancebo, 2002). Furthermore, it aims to observe the spatialization of the sacred in public space through urban funeral routes (UFR), also known as Al Djanaza. The observation takes place in Béjaia, Algeria. This will allow us to establish a poetics of urban funeral routes in Béjaia.

1. Methodology

The adopted methodology is based on an ethnographic approach, with in-situ observation serving as the primary tool. From 2018 to 2023, we were able to collect information related to UFRs. This corresponds to the inventory and description of the observed phenomenon (Kilani, 2012). Documenting, narrating, and

photographing the locations as well as the people who frequent them contribute to the qualification of these routes. The extended period, five years, and the prolonged presence through in-situ observation were two crucial guarantees of this work. During this journey, logbooks were kept for each field outing.

The technique of in-situ observation was also employed. A technique that makes anthropology the “social science of the observed” (Lévi-Strauss, 1958). The observations were conducted both during the day, the majority, and at night. Observations were made across all seasons, including during the COVID period. We also made it a point to observe UFRs on different days of the week.

1.1. Definition of the study context

The field of study has been built up, thus providing situated knowledge.

1.1.1. The Selection of Urban Funeral Routes for Al Djanaza

The study field serves as the guiding thread of this research, forming its foundation. It is from this field that the research problem emerged. Since Malinowski (Malinowski, 1922) to the present, the field has always held a central role in the production of ethnographic knowledge. Whether confirming theories or challenging existing perspectives, the fieldwork acts as a “rite of passage for both the anthropologist and anthropology” (Martin, 2001).

The observation of funeral routes is preceded by the process of identifying deaths. This information is gathered through two main channels: word of mouth and death notices: printed and digital.

1.1.2. The Al Djanaza Route and the Construction of a Socio-Spatial Unit

Al Djanaza is composed of sequences, some static and others dynamic, all connected by a route.

1.1.2.1. Constructing a Unit

The concept of “unit” here refers to a whole that we must define and construct. This unit emerges from the urban fieldwork and takes shape through our observations, marked by both our footsteps and those of the observed. The constructed unit is contextualized—historically, physically, socially, religiously, and symbolically embedded in a specific context that we must consider as a subject of reflection, to be questioned and critiqued, observed, and ultimately subjected to a process of distancing. Through this, situated knowledge will emerge.

The cemetery is the starting point for shaping this unit. It is a fitting place to discuss funeral routes. Initially, we selected only Muslim cemeteries, excluding the Christian and the Jewish cemetery nearby (Figure 1). The exclusion of these two cemeteries is due to their irrelevance to the research objective, which focuses on the visibility of Islamic religious practices in public spaces, and the fact that these cemeteries have not held burials for decades.

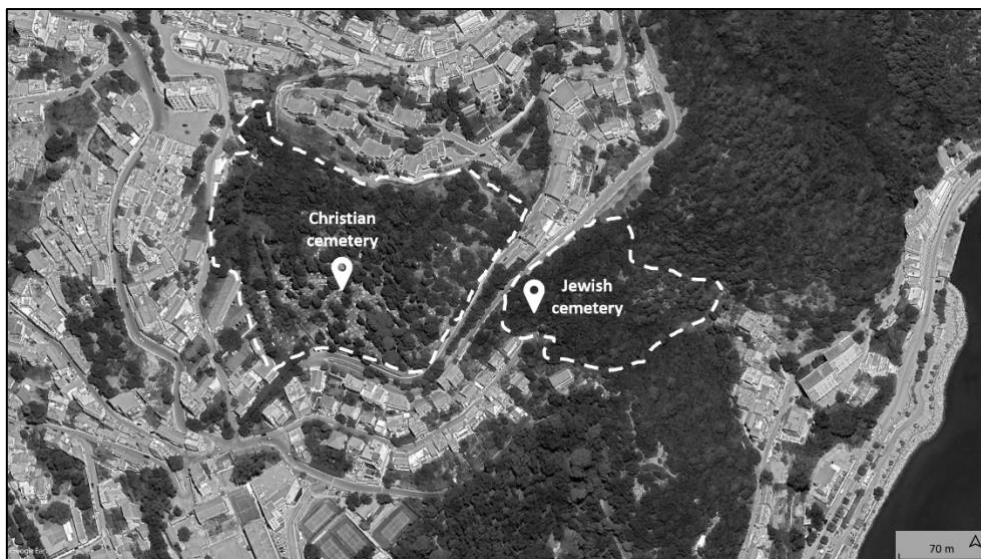


Fig. 1. The two non-Muslim cemeteries of Bejaïa. Satellite image taken in 2023. Author

Among the Muslim cemeteries, an initial selection was made by focusing on the public cemeteries of the commune of Bejaia (Figure 2). This selection alone was not sufficient, as no fewer than seven cemeteries were identified within the commune, in addition to private cemeteries belonging to families, also known as Arch. After this selection process, two cemeteries were retained: Sidi Abderrahmane and Sidi M'hand Amkrane.

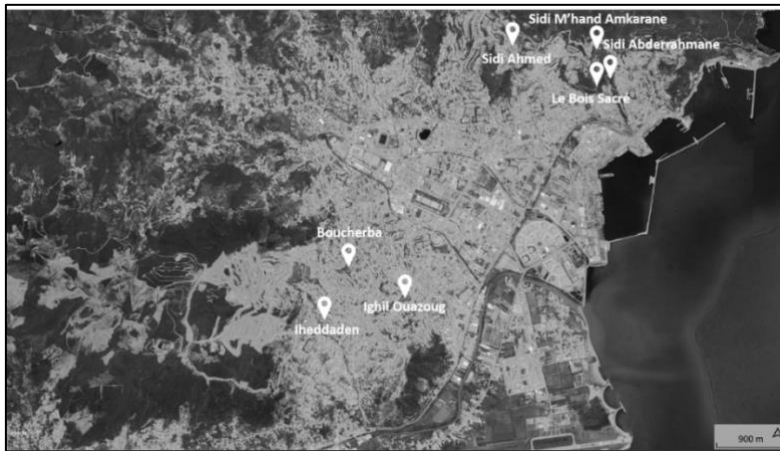


Fig. 2. The public Muslim cemeteries of the city of Bejaia. Satellite image taken in 2023. Author

1.1.2.2. A reverse journey

In order to differentiate between the two cemeteries located in the historic city of Bejaia, we undertook a reverse analysis of the funeral procession leading to them. As cemeteries represent the final point of each procession and serve as places of convergence, it is possible, starting from them, to define the Al Djanaza route to be analyzed, thus determining the observation unit.

From these cemeteries, we traced the path backward, identifying pairs along the way. These pairs consistently consist of a cemetery-mosque duo. In other words, the Al Djanaza prayer offered in a mosque is always associated with a specific cemetery, thereby creating an UFR.

The first pair consists of Sidi Abderrahmane Cemetery and Sidi Soufi Mosque, while Sidi M'hand Amkrane Cemetery is connected to Sidi Ouali Mosque (Figure 3).

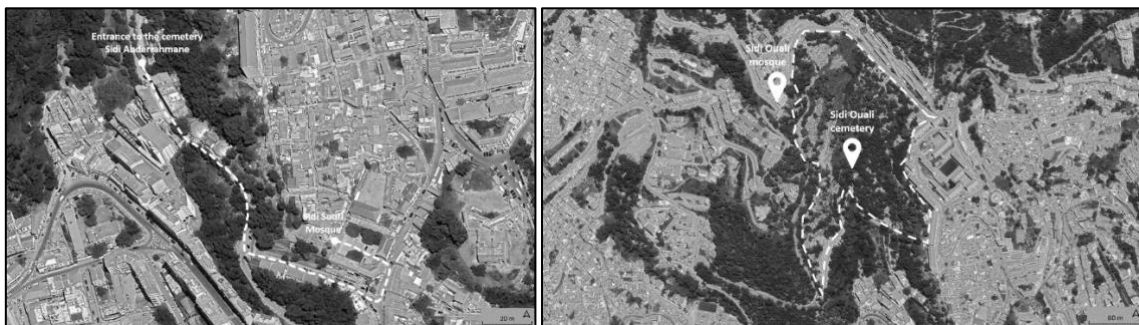


Fig. 3. Sidi Abderrahmane Cemetery and Sidi Soufi Mosque and Sidi Ouali Cemetery and Mosque. Satellite image taken in 2023. Author

These pairs of locations are primarily connected by their proximity. For instance, Sidi M'hand Amkrane Cemetery is also known as Sidi Ouali Cemetery, named after the mosque adjacent to it. Besides proximity, other factors come into play when choosing a cemetery, such as the presence of the deceased's family members who are already buried there.

1.1.2.3. A pair to lead the procession

Our choice focused on the Sidi Soufi-Sidi Abderrahmane pair for both formal and substantive reasons. The primary reason is a favorable morphological arrangement. The route from Sidi Ouali Mosque to Sidi M'hand Amkrane Cemetery does not allow for the funeral procession to unfold, limiting our ability to observe

and absorb its practices. In contrast, the Sidi Soufi-Sidi Abderrahmane pair provides a more accommodating setting. In this case, it is not merely a matter of distance, but rather of morphology.

The distance between Sidi Ouali Mosque and Sidi M'hand Amkrane Cemetery varies depending on the chosen entrance to the cemetery. The closest entrance, situated below the mosque, is approximately 210 meters away, while the main and oldest entrance is about 550 meters distant (Figure 4).

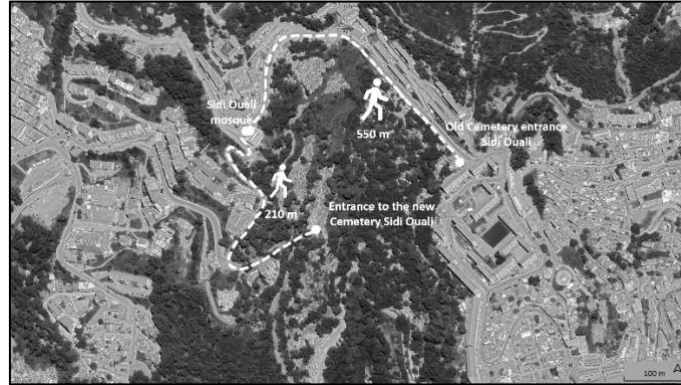


Fig. 4. The nearest entrance to Sidi Ouali Mosque is located 210 meters away. Satellite image taken in 2023. Author

As for Sidi Soufi Mosque and Sidi Abderrahmane Cemetery, they are separated by nearly 450 meters (Figure 5). In other words, this distance is shorter than that between Sidi Ouali Mosque and the main entrance of the cemetery. However, the configuration of the Sidi Soufi route offers a diverse morphological and urban landscape that invites exploration from various perspectives.

A diversity of locations contributes significantly, on one hand, to the unfolding of the Al Djanaza funeral procession that we aim to analyze, and on the other hand, to a multifaceted observation.

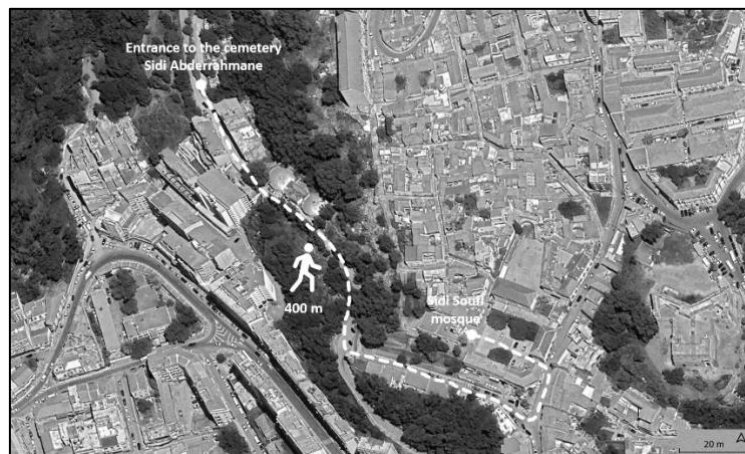


Fig. 5. The entrance to Sidi Abderrahmane Cemetery is approximately 400 meters away from Sidi Soufi Mosque. Satellite image taken in 2023. Author

1.1.2.4. A spatial triptych and a (non)variable

At this stage of the exploration, two significant moments are already distinguished: the cemetery and the mosque. As we continue to trace the path backward, a third moment emerges: the location from which the deceased is brought out. This **triptych**—Home (or another place), Mosque, and Cemetery—constitutes the structure of Al Djanaza (Figure 6).

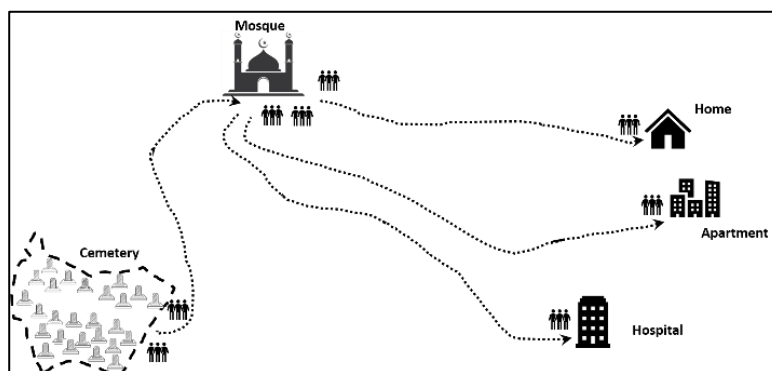


Fig. 6. The triptych constituting the urban funeral route: Home-Mosque-Cemetery. Author

The location from which the deceased is brought out is not merely a point on a route; it is where the vigil takes place, from which the *Al Djanaza* procession begins, and serves as a gathering place for offering condolences. This third location is therefore fundamentally important for the progression of the procession as well as for the grieving process.

This moment can take various forms, typically the deceased's home, often the family home, or the hospital.

2. Results

The first lesson drawn from our observations is the emergence of a model through which *Al Djanaza* operates the model of the triptych. This consists of a stable pair: the cemetery, here **Sidi Abderrahmane**, and a mosque, here **Sidi Soufi**, along with a variable starting point, namely the place where the body is lifted. This model aligns with each practice to a specific location.

The second lesson is the establishment of the **UFR** as a differentiated conventional journey. It is conventional because it is governed by a series of dogmas common to all. These are of a religious nature, social, and urban. Based on this common foundation, different individual or collective practices emerge, varying from family to family or region to region, depending on sensitivities.

The third important lesson is that the **UFR** is characterized by a triple marking: chronological, gendered, and spatial.

3. Discussion. The Sequences of the Urban Funeral Route: An Ethnography of *Al Djanaza*

Here, we will focus on tracing the spatialization of the Muslim funerary religious practice through the sequences of the Funeral Procession Units surrounding the triptych: Sidi Soufi Mosque, Sidi Abderrahmane Cemetery, and the location from which the deceased is brought out.

3.1. The Gathering

As soon as the death of an individual becomes known, people begin to flock to the deceased's home (Figure 8).

3.1.1. The Triple Marking of *Al Djanaza*

Initially, those closest to the deceased gather, followed by others. The various timeframes short-term (one day), medium-term (three days), and long-term (forty days) allow the largest number of people to attend. However, it is preferable to do so within the first three days.

The time separating death from burial is a crucial factor in understanding the funerary rite and the relationship a society has with death. This timeframe varies according to different societies and circumstances surrounding the death. It can range from a few minutes during a war, one day for Muslims under normal conditions, a few days for Western societies where the act is performed exclusively by professionals, several months for the Fali of Cameroon or the Hurons of Canada, to several years for the Toradja group in Indonesia or during *Famadihana* in Madagascar. This timeline contributes to the triple marking of this sequence, which is chronological, gendered, and spatial.

Gendered aspects represent the second characteristic of the gathering. Men and women occupy only narrow and regulated spaces defined by the concept of **Muhrim**, illicit or forbidden. This concept refers to the men that a woman cannot marry and, consequently, can interact with, such as her father, brothers, uncles (both

paternal and maternal), sons, and grandsons. The same applies to men. Therefore, these individuals are the only ones permitted to carry the coffin or conduct the burial.

The concept of gender impacts space in a dichotomous manner: what is acceptable for men is not for women, and vice versa. Thus, the male exterior space complements the female interior space without ever merging. The same distinction applies to the tasks inherent to each space and, consequently, to each gender. For the ritual washing of the deceased, women handle a deceased female and men attend to a deceased of the same sex.

The responsibilities of welcoming guests, preparing the home, cooking, serving, and managing shopping lists fall to women. Meanwhile, the organization of the outdoor space, welcoming male visitors, handling purchases, and managing the administrative tasks related to burial, as well as the transport of the deceased from the hospital, are primarily the domain of men.

3.1.2. The Condolences

The gathering is also the place where people come to offer their condolences (Figure 7). While this practice is not exclusive to this location, it is the preferred setting for this purpose. It is where the members of the deceased's family are gathered.



Fig. 7. Close family members are always present to welcome those coming to offer their condolences. Photograph taken in 2023. Author.

While condolences can be offered at any time, it is strongly recommended to do so within the framework of the three timeframes (see above). The preferred order extends from three days after the death to the fortieth day, especially for women, if this latter is observed. Adhering to this timeline is a sign of respect for the mourning of the deceased's family and demonstrates empathy. Furthermore, it allows those coming to offer their condolences to find the family and the necessary logistical support to address the various needs of the visitors during this period.

3.2. The Home-Mosque Route

Once the house has been chosen, the influx of people can begin. This will build gradually for both men and women until it reaches its peak at the time of departure for the procession to the mosque, where the space adjacent to the house is made available for Al Djanaza, accompanied by the closure of shops, silence in the music, and so forth.

3.2.1. Spatial Mourning

A few minutes before the body is brought out, a palpable sense of anxiety sets in. A murmur can be heard among the crowd, which becomes less talkative. In fact, as soon as the death is announced, the soundscape of the neighborhood transforms to align with Al Djanaza. If a celebration were to take place, music is strictly prohibited. Al Djanaza imposes its mourning on the public space.

The usual gatherings of young people in the neighborhood also align with Al Djanaza, taking place quietly or integrating into the funeral gathering, positioning themselves with the others but away from the original point of assembly (Figure 9). They are often the first to lend a helping hand when the need arises.

Thus, the public space is enveloped in a sense of reverence for the deceased and their memory, for the family and their mourning, and for the living, reminding them of the inevitability of death.

3.2.2. Diplomacy, Blood Ties, and Spatial Amenity

When the time for the body's departure arrives, the selection of the men always men who enter the house to carry out this task is a sensitive matter. Many candidates, but few chosen. In the case of a woman, the **Muhrim** (permissible relatives) are given preference. The blood connection remains significant. The leaders must exercise diplomacy in their choices.

Meanwhile, space is made for the vehicle that will transport the body, which is parked directly in front of the house entrance. This is facilitated by those present. Some rise from their chairs, others move closer to the entrance to see the body or assist in carrying the **Mah'mel** (Figure 8).



Fig. 8. The standing men wait for the departure of the Meh'mel. Photograph taken in 2022. Author.

For those wishing to participate in the procession, three meeting points are available (Figure 6). The first is to start from the deceased's home and follow the procession to the mosque, or go directly to the cemetery for those who do not wish to pray or pass by the mosque. The second option is to begin the journey from the mosque, and the third option is to wait for the arrival of the procession directly at the cemetery.

The departure time is aligned with the prayer time. Efforts are made to coincide the arrival at the mosque with the time of the call to prayer, **Al Adhan**, for **Dhor** or **El Asr**. It is rare for this to happen during **El Maghreb** and **Al Icha'a**, and never during **El Fedjr**. **Al Dhor**, the second prayer of the day, is favored as it corresponds to midday, a common break time. Practical considerations take precedence here.

The procession begins to move. A scout on a motorcycle can position himself at the front of the procession to clear the way. With a tacit agreement, the choreography of **Al Djanaza** unfolds along the route.

The itinerary of the procession is discussed and decided upon in advance by the **Leaders**, except on rare occasions when the route may be confronted with practices contrary to those of **Al Djanaza**. **Al Djanaza** does not share the stage; it either imposes its atmosphere and rules or passes by as an exception.

Regarding the layout of the funeral route, and contrary to initial assumptions, it does not always adhere to the principle of the shortest path. Other parameters come into play in the choice and design of the PUF. As K. Lynche (1993) and later P. Sansot (2004) have shown, there are facilitations and **amenities** in public space that influence our choices.

3.2.3. The Al Djanaza Route or the Triptych as a Model

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when strict health protocols were implemented, one of the restrictions mandated a direct route to the cemetery from the hospital, without detours or stops, following the shortest path. However, the relatives of the deceased opposed this, leading to what turned out to be a three-act strategy of appropriation.

Initially, people accepted the health protocol without question, and the urban funeral route (UFR) was reduced to its most basic form: an ambulance, a police car, and one or two family members, following a direct route from the hospital to the cemetery. This was the time of **acceptance** (Figure 9).

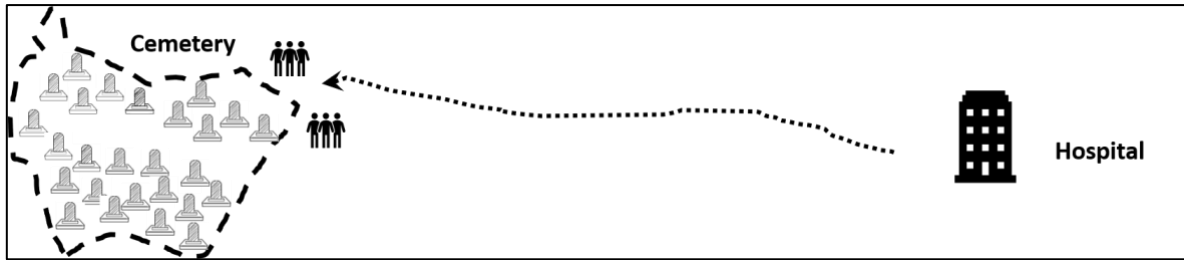


Fig. 9. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the body is transported directly from the hospital to the cemetery. Author.

However, very quickly, a second moment emerged: that of **negotiation**. This negotiation was conducted with the health officials and the police brigade accompanying the ambulance. The discussions primarily focused on the possibility of redesigning the route to pay a final tribute to their loved one and to restore the triptych that had been disrupted by the pandemic. In this context, two locations consistently emerged in the negotiations for these detours: passing by the deceased's home and the mosque (Figure 10).

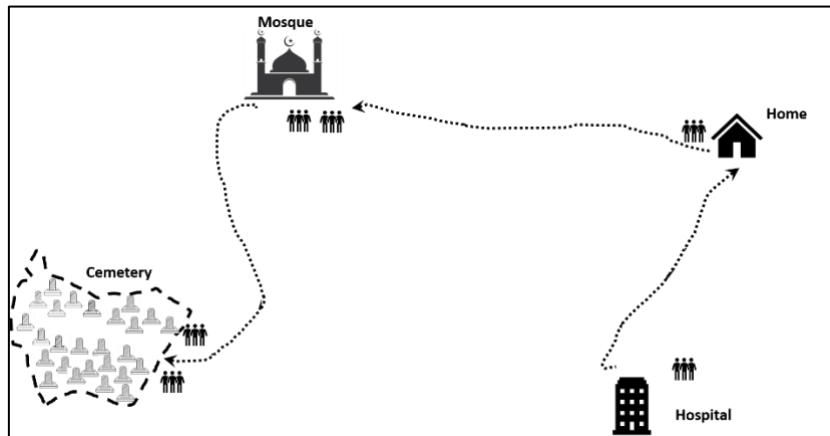


Fig. 10. Reintroduction of the home and mosque into the Al Djanaza route. Author.

Over the weeks, what had initially been an exception resulting from negotiations became increasingly common until it became a ritual.

Thus, COVID-19 and its accompanying restrictions allowed for a complete abstraction of the Al Djanaza route. This simplification helped to reveal the model by which it operates, with essential elements shaping its path. The model is built around the triptych of Cemetery-Mosque-Home, or more precisely, **Home-Mosque-Cemetery**.

The pandemic thus demonstrated the existence of a model that guides the Al Djanaza route. This route coincides with a location for each significant action: at the time of the body being lifted, the home; for the prayer, the mosque; and finally, the cemetery for the burial.

The same was observed for the Al Djanaza prayer, where the location could change, but the practice itself retained its place in the route.

3.3. Sidi Soufi Mosque: The Prayer for the Deceased

Sidi Soufi Mosque, built in 1904, holds significant importance in the lives of the residents of the city of Béjaïa. It serves as an economic hub, social center, and a cultural and religious center (Álvarez Dopico, 2018; Dr. Triki Yamani, 2019).

Located within the city, approximately 500 meters from Sidi Abderrahmane Cemetery, the mosque is frequently utilized for Al Djanaza prayers. It possesses several characteristics that facilitate the execution of the UFR under suitable conditions.

3.3.1. Sidi Soufi Mosque: A Privileged Space

When the procession arrives at the site, it encounters an opening in the form of a mid-height portal, always open (Figure 11), leading to a spacious forecourt divided into two levels.



Fig. 11. The hearse backs into the mosque grounds for maneuvering. Photograph taken on 2023. Author.

The first level, featuring trees, serves as a parking area for vehicles, while the second level, raised 18 cm behind it and surrounding the three facades of the mosque, is designated for pedestrians (Figure 12). These two forecourts facilitate the various aspects of the UFR to unfold, including waiting, praying, parking, among others.

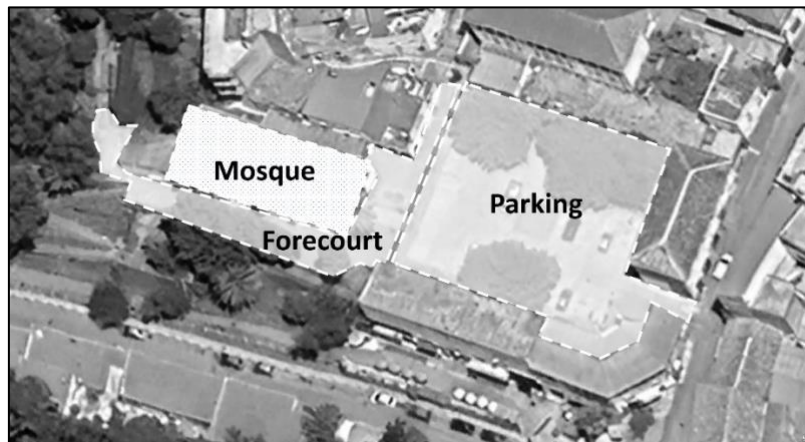


Fig. 12. The presence of a forecourt and a parking area makes Sidi Soufi Mosque a privileged location for urban Funeral route (UFR). Satellite image taken in 2023 Author.

(The four accesses) The number of access points and their locations ensure that Salat El Djanaza, the prayer for the deceased, can be performed under favorable conditions (Figure 13), making Sidi Soufi Mosque an essential stop when the burial takes place at Sidi Abderrahmane Cemetery. Therefore, beyond proximity, a series of characteristics impact the UFR.

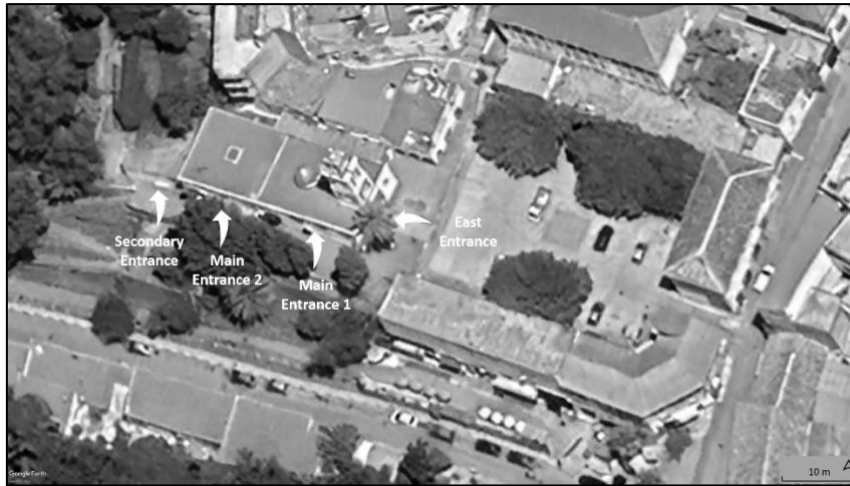


Fig. 13. The various access points of Sidi Soufi Mosque. Satellite image taken in 2023. Author.

3.3.2. The Place of In-Between

The procession arrives a few minutes before the call to prayer. Despite the static nature that the UFR takes upon reaching the mosque, an incessant rush characterizes this sequence from within. This **ordered chaos** dissipates when the time for prayer arrives, usually ten to fifteen minutes after Al Adhan.

Once the prayer is concluded, the imam exits through the porch and faces the Meh'mel. Men position themselves at the head, while women stand at the feet. The public space is once again activated, as expected.

Al Djanaza continues to impose its atmosphere throughout the route, including in the neighboring cafés, where everyone respects the prayer for the deceased, even if they do not participate. Those sitting rise, while others remove their hats as a sign of reverence for both the deceased and death itself.

The mosque stage marks a pivotal moment in the Al Djanaza route, a moment of in-between. It is neither the grave nor the home. The deceased leaves behind the city and life to move towards the cemetery through burial.

This transition signifies a change, or even a shift, especially for those present the living. It is as if the inevitability of death encompasses everyone, with no possibility of return. On both a physical and symbolic level, this journey affects the deceased as well as the living, as the funerary rite addresses both.

3.4. The Mosque-Cemetery Route: From Sidi Soufi to Sidi Abderrahmane

While multiple paths lead to the mosque, only one leads from there to Sidi Abderrahmane Cemetery. As soon as El Meh'mel takes its place in the hearse, the procession regains momentum. During this segment, vehicles are less present, often absent, as men prefer to complete the route on foot. The religious motive, which states that walking behind Al Djanaza grants a reward to those who undertake this task, is well suited to the reduced distance of 400 meters and the favorable morphology.

The sequence from the mosque to the cemetery benefits from a series of determinants that confer significant attributes to it. Thus, upon exiting the parking area of Sidi Soufi, the hearse carrying El Meh'mel begins its route by reversing for nearly 50 meters, assisted by a scout who stops traffic at the intersection (Figure 14). These elements contribute to the manifestation of the religious within the public space.



Fig. 14. The UFR begins its route by reversing for a distance of nearly 50 meters. Satellite image taken in 2023. Author.

The convoy then turns right to continue its journey down a narrow, descending roadway flanked by sidewalks no wider than 40 cm. This straight path leads to two large gates, those of Bab El Fouka, which were once city gates. After making one last right turn, the road leads Al Djanaza to Sidi Abderrahmane Cemetery (Figure 15).

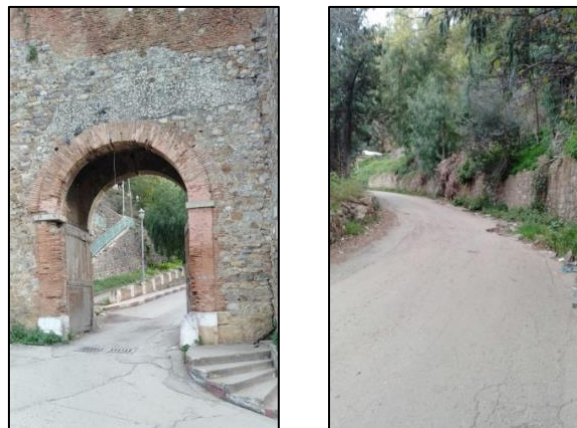


Fig. 15. The Bab El Bounoud gate, commonly referred to as Bab El Fouka, and the ascent leading to the cemetery. Photograph taken in 2023. Author.

Upon reaching the gates, a pause is made to allow latecomers to catch up with the procession. In fact, since the beginning of the route, short breaks have punctuated the UFR. These pauses prevent the procession from becoming disjointed, thus providing it with **formal coherence**.

3.4.1. The Rhythms of Al Djanaza

The narrowness of the road means that the procession occupies the entire width, effectively closing it to traffic. During the procession, two marchers continuously hold open the back doors of the hearse (Figure 16), which gives us significant insight into the slow rhythm of the procession. The rhythm of Al Djanaza is, in fact, a crucial aspect of the UFR. The **resilience** of the UFR is again evident as it adapts to the circumstances.

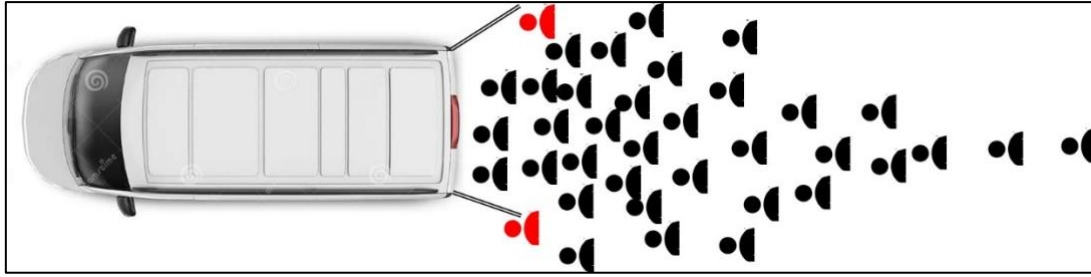


Fig. 16. A slow rhythm characterizes the procession during its Mosque-Cemetery segment. Author.

The question of rhythm highlights once again the various currents, both religious and social that flow through Al Djanaza. While many may prefer a gentler pace that allows them to follow the procession while engaging in conversation, others, adherents to a meticulous application of the Sunnah, advocate for a faster tempo.

3.4.2. The Droplet of Al Djanaza

Another characteristic of the procession is its morphology. The procession is denser at the front than at the back, taking on the shape of a droplet of water (Figure 17). This can be explained by the combination of two elements: the desire of the participants to position themselves just behind El Meh'mel in order to gain the most **H'assanat**, or good deeds, which are essential for entering paradise; and the rhythm of the procession, which filters out the walkers.

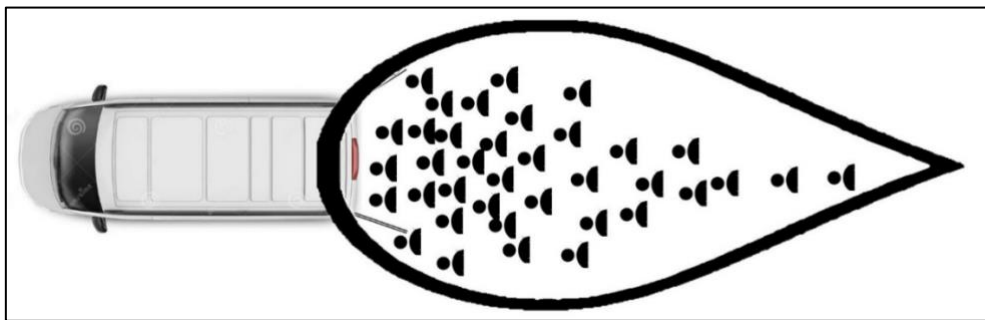


Fig. 17. The droplet configuration of an urban funeral procession route. Author.

Regarding the shape, the modeling of pedestrian flows has always intrigued scientists. In fact, two researchers have confirmed that a human crowd behaves like a fluid. This is derived from applying fluid mechanics theory to human gatherings, such as marathons (Bain & Bartolo, 2019). This understanding aids in crowd management during large events by simulating their movements, among other applications.

3.5. Sidi Abderrahmane Cemetery

The cemetery constitutes the final sequence of the UFR and is also the most emotionally charged moment.

Entering a cemetery, or even just passing through it, is accompanied by the recitation of a prayer, a **Dou'a**. This prayer underscores the significant role of death in the life of a Muslim. Indeed, isn't this the ultimate purpose of Al Djanaza?

3.5.1. The Equalization of the Living Before Death

This objective, almost injunctive, aims to keep individuals within these societies in a necessary state of religiosity to hope for a happy life in the afterlife. The funerary rite serves as a reminder that all individuals are equal before Allah, God. These reminders are manifold. Thus, all rituals remain identical, regardless of the social status of the deceased or their financial resources, which is not the case in other societies.

The differences observed are of a minor nature and do not pertain to the core ritual, such as the **Çahra**, or the meals offered. It is the distinguishing feature of Al Djanaza.

3.5.2. The Burial: A One-Way Journey

The participants advance toward the hearse as it enters the cemetery. The opening of the back door merges the participants with those already present into a single group, an amorphous amalgamation, thereby abandoning the droplet arrangement (see above).

While many remain in their places, some follow El Meh'mel to the freshly dug grave. The pace quickens. Those unable to keep up due to the narrowness of the paths seek a vantage point that allows them to observe the burial from a distance. Leaving behind the hearse and the access road, the procession streams into narrow paths.

As the coffin, carried either at arm's length or on the shoulders of the bearers (Figure 18), moves forward, we inevitably distance ourselves from the city and from life.



Fig. 18. Exiting the hearse, El Meh'mel is carried toward the grave. Photograph taken from a video recorded in 2024. BSO, Facebook.

Meanwhile, two men have positioned themselves at the bottom of the grave to receive the body. It is laid on its right side, with the head facing **El Qibla**, the direction of Mecca. In the case of a woman, the burial ritual is conducted under a sheet (Figure 19) and preferably by her **Muhrem** (male relatives). The cemetery is considered a public space.



Fig. 19. The burial of a woman is conducted under cover. Photograph taken in 2022. Author.

The conclusion of this particular operation "the burial" is now at hand. Although there are alternative methods for concealing a body, such as cremation, burial is the only practice permitted in Islam, despite its existence before the religion itself.

Burial, through a series of characteristics, contributes to this battle against the invisibility of the deceased, which paradoxically begins with their interment. The first of these characteristics is the grave itself. The grave

serves as a geographically identifiable and socially situated place. The proximity or distance of the grave can thus reflect the deceased's closeness or estrangement from their living relatives during their lifetime.

Another characteristic is the date inscribed on the epitaph, which completes the individual's journey and triggers the funeral proceedings while structuring them. It is another distinctive, and therefore unconventional, act of Al Djanaza.

3.5.3. Witchcraft

When the body is placed at the bottom of the grave, the three ties are removed. These ties are buried to prevent them from being stolen. Indeed, Al Djanaza is sought after by charlatans and practitioners of witchcraft, who find in this ritual a fertile ground for their activities. The water used for the washing, the ties from the **Kfen** are carefully kept to prevent them from falling into the wrong hands.

A chain forms spontaneously, passing to the man remaining at the bottom of the grave everything he needs for the burial. This includes the concrete slabs that will cover the grave and mortar (Figure 20).



Fig. 20. A human chain forms to pass water, mortar, and concrete slabs necessary for the burial. Photograph taken from a video recorded in 2024. BSO, Facebook.

If this attention to waterproofing the graves was initially intended to protect the body from animals, it has gradually transformed into a measure against the desecrations committed by sorcerers. It is not uncommon for these individuals to profane graves for the purposes of **Sih'r** or **Sh'our**, which refer to witchcraft.

Profanations can go as far as the dismemberment of bodies. The limbs of children are particularly sought after, with arms sometimes used in the preparation of couscous. The theft of hair from deceased women to make wigs during the Middle Ages (Crubézy, 2019) may seem innocuous today.

To counter this, the men begin to replace the earth, ensuring that all the soil removed earlier is fully returned.

The burial often concludes with a sermon. This can be delivered by an Imam or by an individual who holds religious or moral authority within the crowd.

Conclusions.

The main lessons drawn from this research are as follows.

The first lesson drawn from our observations is the emergence of a model through which **Al Djanaza** operates the model of the triptych. This consists of a stable pair: the cemetery, here **Sidi Abderrahmane**, and a mosque, here **Sidi Soufi**, along with a variable starting point, namely the place where the body is lifted. This model aligns with each practice to a specific location: at the lifting of the body, the house; for prayer, the mosque; and finally, the cemetery for burial.

The second lesson is the establishment of the **UFR** as a **differentiated conventional** journey. It is conventional because it is governed by a series of **dogmas** common to all. These are of a religious nature,

social, and urban. Based on this common foundation, different individual or collective practices emerge, varying from family to family or region to region, depending on sensitivities.

The final significant lesson is that UFR (Urban Funerary Routes) are defined by a threefold marking: temporal, with time related both to the body's decomposition and the stages of mourning; gender-based, with a division between women's indoor rituals and men's outdoor practices; and spatial, as each stage involves specific spatial developments.

In conclusion, understanding funerary practices through the lens of UFR will greatly contribute to urban planning. It will help in identifying cemetery locations and anticipating funeral practices, crowd movements, and ensuring public safety.

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