NAṢĪḤA AND IDEOLOGY:
EVOLUTION IN RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY
IN POST-COLONIAL MOROCCO

by

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Abstract

The relationship between religious authority and political power has been continuously redefined in the tumultuous setting of post-Colonial Morocco. In this paper, I examine new and innovative trends in one traditional Moroccan formulation of this relationship—the letter of advise from religious scholar to ruler, or naṣīḥa—as one space where the historical balance of power has undergone radical transformation in modern times.

While this form of religio-political contestation is itself not new to Morocco’s dizzying history of competition over religious legitimacy, the contours of the modern challenge, I argue, have been significantly shaped by French colonial policy towards the long established authority of Morocco’s Islamic scholars. As we will see, this situation is brought into especial relief through an examination of the changing nature of religious scholarship and education in Morocco, as it developed in response to European colonial pressure in the pre-colonial period (roughly mid-19th century to the early 20th), as it was affected by the French Protectorate (1912-1956) and as it has emerged in the new era of Moroccan independence (1956 to the present).

As the popularly grounded conceptions of religious knowledge changed under the French Protectorate, so too did the limitations and scope of scholarly authority in Moroccan politics. The breakdown of the scholarly establishment—both the conceptual fixity of the traditional education system as well as the social functions of the scholars—contributed to a freeing-up or “liberalizing” of popular constructions of the interaction between religion and politics. While this created the space for the Pan-Islamist nationalist movement that played a critical role in achieving Moroccan independence from colonial power, it also freed up space for Islamic fundamentalism and a reinvention of the Moroccan tradition of naṣīḥa.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... iii
Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 1
Chapter 1. The Moroccan Context ................................................................................................... 3
  Morocco's Religious Landscape ........................................................................................................ 3
  Social Situatedness of Islamic Education in Morocco ........................................................................ 8
  Conceptual Situatedness of Valued Religious Knowledge in Morocco ........................................... 12
  Political Power in Moroccan Islam .................................................................................................. 15
Chapter 2. Radical Changes in Islamic Education .......................................................................... 18
  Pre-colonial and Colonial Transformations in Moroccan Education ........................................... 18
  Decline of the Qarawiyn after Independence ................................................................................. 26
  The Forms Define the Soul: The Fragmentation of Religious Sciences ........................................ 30
Chapter 3. Religious Authority Redefined ...................................................................................... 34
  Religious Authority and the King ..................................................................................................... 34
  The Religio-Political Challenger ...................................................................................................... 37
  The Righteous Scholar .................................................................................................................... 38
  The Role of Scripture and Tradition in Religious Authority .......................................................... 42
Chapter 4. Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 47
Appendix 1. Transliteration .............................................................................................................. 50
Appendix 2. Glossary of Arabic Terms .............................................................................................. 51
Appendix 3. Timeline ....................................................................................................................... 52
Appendix 4. References ................................................................................................................... 53
Introduction

In 1974, the reigning king of Morocco, Hassan II, received a surprising missive. One hundred and fourteen pages long, as if to represent the hundred and fourteen chapters of the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an, the epistle entitled "Islam or the Deluge" consisted in a staunch opprobrium of the new king’s rule. As the first monarch to start his reign in Morocco's tumultuous post-colonial period, Hassan must have been accustomed to political upheaval. In the previous three years alone, two attempted military coups had threatened the throne, with the king himself only narrowly escaping harm. In comparison, this recent admonishment was unique in that it drew specifically on religious sentiment to inveigh against the monarch’s reign. Yet, with no precedent for radical fundamentalism in Morocco, such a politically marginal critique should have seemed insignificant in comparison to the much more organized threat of political ideologues and military cabals. The king’s panicked response—he immediately jailed the author, a practically unknown scholar named Abdessalam Yassine—indicates the peculiar nature of claims to religious authority in Morocco, a country seen by many as becoming rapidly Western and modernized since the French Protectorate.

Since the 1974 missive, both Yassine and the reigning king (first Hassan II, now his succeeding son Mohammed VI) have continued to play key roles in the battle for religious authority over Morocco’s unique brand of Islam. While such a dispute is itself not new to Morocco’s dizzying history of competition over religious legitimacy, the contours of the modern challenge, I argue, have been significantly shaped by French colonial policy towards the long established authority of Morocco’s Islamic scholars (ʿālim, pl. ‘ulamāʾ). As we will see, this situation is brought into especial relief through an examination of the changing nature of religious scholarship and education in Morocco, as it developed in response to European colonial pressure in the pre-colonial period (roughly mid-19th century to the early 20th), as it was affected by the
French Protectorate (1912-1956) and as it has emerged in the new era of Moroccan independence (1956 to the present). Importantly, the question here is not merely “who has the right to claim religious authority in post-colonial Morocco,” but also “how have claims to religious authority changed” and “what role have the evolutions and revolutions in Islamic education played in this change?”

In the next sections, we will explore Morocco’s unique religious landscape, including the social and conceptual situatedness of Islamic education and the valued religious knowledge it produces. Then we will address religio-political power in pre-colonial Morocco, as well as the transformations Moroccan education underwent in the colonial period. Continuing into the post-colonial era, we will look at the King’s policy towards religious education and authority after independence. Finally, we will consider the religio-political challenge of Abdessalam Yassine, and a theoretical framework that will help us put the developments that allowed for his unique challenge into context.
Chapter 1
The Moroccan Context

Morocco’s Religious Landscape

Before proceeding, it is necessary to at least start to sketch the unique character of the Morocco’s religious landscape, what Edmund Burke calls the “Moroccan style of Islam.”\(^1\) Since first arriving in the region in the 7\(^{th}\) century, Islam has proven highly portable, and has been easily carried over into the myriad ethnic, political and cultural contexts of Morocco’s diverse traditions. In each case, forms of religious education and authority comported themselves to the demands of the setting, and when we speak of Islamic education, we must acknowledge Qur’an schools as well as rural madrasas, Sufi lodges (zāwīya, pl. zawāyā) as well as mosque-universities. Similarly, the concept of the historical Moroccan religious authority, typically identified simply as ‘ulamāʾ might be saints as well as scholars, prophetic descendents (sharīf, pl. ashrāf) as likely as shamans. As Burke suggests, these never represented discrete categories, but rather were loose definitions that, more often than not, overlapped and bled into one another in contingent and shifting ways. Unlike the rest of the Muslim world, of course, Moroccans rarely saw any contradiction in an esteemed scholar who also cultivated his status as a living saint and claimed the ability to wield curses or healing magic.\(^2\) For Burke, the interrelation of these different aspects of religious authority reveal highly entangled networks of patronage and interest, where the most diversified sage would rely on whatever aspect of his accumulated persona was most relevant to the immediate needs. It also shows, however, that Moroccans have seldom been


concerned with a very narrowly defined religious identity, although religion in general has remained the strongest enduring vehicle for social and political organization and expression. Critically, as we will see later on, any cohesion between these different formulations of ʿulamāʾ was only made possible by the socially and conceptually entrenched and conservational Moroccan religious education, from which most scholars derived their legitimacy.

Supporting these different interpretations of religious authority has always been the function of the educational institute,3 which in its myriad forms has also often become the nexus for countless different and varying forms of socio-political agency. The clearest example of this can be seen during the so-called Maraboutic crisis of the 15th to 17th centuries, where the zāwīya—simultaneously a lodge for an Islamic spiritual order and an academy of religious education—became the nexus for independent Sufi states that arose in the confusion of one of Morocco’s most drawn out inter-dynastic periods.4 5 In a different context, the urban mosque-universities, whether in Fez or Marrakesh, rose to heights of political prominence whenever the dynastic court had settled in that city. Not only would the scholars of these institutes serve as the chief judges and administrators for the resident sovereign, but for the upcoming class of graduates, these academies offered a relative safe haven for political dissent. The latter would continue on at least in ritual form—as a yearly play where one student would mockingly act the part of the sultan for admonishment by the other young scholars—until the tradition was eventually curtailed by the

3 Discounting, however, early Moroccan mystics. There was a period after the introduction of Islamic mysticism where the sufic models of master-disciple relationship, divine charisma and spiritual magic came into contact with Morocco’s pre-Islamic shaman tradition and afforded new life to the latter. In these cases, rural religious authority was not derived from Islamic scholarship so much as a thinly veiled continuation of older traditions.

4 A similar phenomenon, where Sufi orders rose to establish ad hoc frontier governments in the confused absence of normative rule can be also seen in the Northwestern territories of the early Qing Dynasty. For a fascinating account of this, see: Joseph Fletcher, "The Naqshbandiyya in Northwest China," ed. Jonathan N. Lipman, in Studies on Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia, ed. Beatrice Forbes Manz (Brookfield, Vermont: Variorum, 1995).

appalled government of the French Protectorate (1912-1956). Within this one performance alone, several important themes can be seen, including an assertion of these institutes as both educational and political spaces, the mutual dependency of the sultan and scholars, and an annual reestablishing of a particular concept of authority.

In a further and again very different example, it is worth noting the unique autonomy of the urban zawāyā, which were often attached to the tombs of Sufi ancestors, and thus could function as safe houses for all manner of political fugitives, whether petty criminals or those hunted by the monarch himself. That the monarch would often defer to the rites of these sacred sanctuaries—such levels of political agency must be understood within the context of Morocco’s historically severe and autocratic rulers, who in other situations rarely brooked any form of challenge—reveals the exceptional religio-political power of these academies. This is an important example of the political agency of the Sufi order (Ṭarīqah, pl. Ṭuruq), and is one formulation of authority that cannot be understood apart from its locatedness. This association of power and place would quickly disintegrate with the encroaching colonial powers, and indeed one of the earliest scandals of colonial-era Morocco would involve a sultan breaking these rites to appease foreign powers.6

Given this history, it may initially seem strange that Moroccan scholars rarely banded together into political forces in the face of the Sultan’s central government (makhzan, lit. “storehouse”). Burke attributes this to the diverse, contextually bound categories of religious authority, where flexibility and ad hoc coalition, not uniformity and incorporation, remained the most expedient route to political power and personal gain. This lack of unity in any particular circle of religious legitimacy (or between them) thus supposedly constrained the ability of the ‘ulamāʾ to transcend the bounds of mere liturgical authority and rise to popular power. Two

6 For the full history of this controversy, see: Henry Munson Jr., Religion and Power in Morocco (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 57.
arguments seem to be possible here. Perhaps these circles were effectively irreconcilable because they actually represented private, secular interests rather than concerns for religion (which was nevertheless the common grammar of dialogue). As we will see shortly, this argument does not fully address how scholars nevertheless remained fundamentally constrained when they did manage to rise to political power. Alternatively, the diffuse and contingent interpretations of religious legitimacy were, in fact, not viewed as universalizable by Moroccan society, meaning such a confederation of authorities from the ostensibly fractured religious landscape of Morocco would lack popular credibility. While the different spheres of religious authority—whether sharīf, saint, Sufi or scholar—are certainly integral to this story, we must not overestimate the extent to which the divisions of religious men in Morocco would have been perceptible as such to Moroccan society, and could thus be considered as limitations to confederation and popular power. The fact that these identities were contextually stratified, not disassociated, meant that religious authorities of all types were ultimately comparable, although not consistently commensurate, with one another.

Indeed, Burke is cognizant of the highly politically active and organized ‘ulamāʾ of early 20th century Morocco, a change of pace which he chalks up to a weakened makhzan and the final encroachment of Morocco’s problems on the personal prosperity of the scholars. In this reading, the intellectual elite of Morocco was eventually roused from its slumber by the rapid economic ruin brought by the pressures of contact with the aggressive Great Powers, just as the opportunity for a new paradigm of leadership and power was created by an incompetent government and a modernizing world. Yet, while Burke’s socio-economic approach to the drives of the ‘ulamāʾ of Morocco is certainly apt, it is an incomplete picture, and does not fully explain how the 20th century scholars that did rise to power remained somehow constrained in their power. The most notable example of these scholars, Sidi Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Kabīr al-Kattānī (1873-1909), was able to incite the ‘ulamāʾ and populace of Fez to reject the reigning sultan, Mulay ‘Abd al-
ʿAzīz, and elevate the deposed ruler’s brother, Mulay ʿAbd al-Ḥafīz to his place. Later, the young scholar sought to raise armed support against ʿAbd al-Ḥafīz when he failed to take rigorous action against the encroaching colonial powers. Yet, as Munson notes, there is no significant evidence that al-Kattānī ever intended to cross over from scholar to ruler and seize the throne, despite the weak makhzan and his own popular support and political stature.7 There is something important here which Burke’s model of politics and personal interest fails to accurately capture, a constraint that can also be seen in Morocco’s long pre-modern history of scholars who rose to individual power and prominence. This constraint, the conceptual situatedness of valued religious knowledge detailed later, I argue, is also critical to understanding how religious authority has developed since the era of the French Protectorate. It thus may not be significant that the Moroccan ʿulamāʾ failed to act corporately prior to the late 19th century, if indeed the power of religious authority in Morocco had been circumscribed by more fundamental limitations.

Justifiably, Burke examines the position of the ʿulamāʾ in Moroccan society to explore the scope and nature of their political authority. However, as suggested earlier, the wide spectrum of religious authorities in Morocco have always derived their legitimacy from the educational institute, which in myriad different ways has in turn been the foundation for remarkable levels of scholarly political agency. To proceed further, we must turn our attention from the position of the scholars in Moroccan society to the position of scholarship—of Islamic education—in Moroccan society, seeking to tease out the particular nature, extent and limitations on the political power of the ʿulamāʾ.

Social Situatedness of Islamic Education in Morocco

As we have suggested so far, the forms of religious authority and education in Morocco are diverse, as suits the country’s rich and varied cultures, history and traditions. Of the various spheres of religious authority—the sharīf, saint, Sufi and scholar—all have had historically different approaches to politics and power in society, to the extent that they were discrete. The scholars, here to be narrowly defined as those principally trained in Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) whenever contrasted with the other authorities, were the loose association of educators and graduates in Morocco’s mosque-universities, the advisors in the dynastic courts of Morocco’s capital cities and the judges (qāḍī, pl. quḍāh) across the countryside. Sufi masters, on the other hand, led highly hierarchical and esoteric Islamic brotherhoods, which cut across all levels of Moroccan society, binding adherents together with sworn allegiances to the spiritual teacher. Saints and ashrāf (prophetic descendents) represented two forms of Moroccan holy men who depended on their divine magical charisma (barakah), which they could gain, lose and even steal from other holy men, depending on how the public viewed the waxing and waning of their worldly success. Typically, saints and ashrāf also belonged to one or both of the previous two categories of educated scholars, thus critically supplementing their legitimacy as stable authorities on religion. The Sharifian descent alone, for example, cannot guarantee recognition, and it is not uncommon to find ashrāf in Morocco from all walks of life—from beggars to rich notables—who do not depend on this status. The sultans of the Alaouite Dynasty (1631 to the present) have consistently claimed a lineage leading back to the Prophet Muhammad but, often not considered part of the ‘ulamā’ themselves, have historically depended on the educated scholars to legitimate their rule religiously, as will be discussed below.8 In this way, education was ultimately critical to making

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8 Interestingly, the rulers of Morocco were often well educated in the Islamic tradition (eg. Mulay Sulaymān, d. 1822). Some even published works of law and theology typical of the ‘ulamā’, and technically had the requisite training needed to issue religious verdicts, or fatāwa. Yet, the sultan was conceptually bound to another area of authority, that of the imām or “leader,” which included an entirely different sphere of powers and responsibilities. This strong, if seemingly baseless, differentiation between
consistent claims to religious authority.

Just as the approaches to religious authority in Morocco are diverse, so too do the various types of academies have different societal purposes in the educations they produce. Moroccan educational institutes can be divided into roughly three general categories, from the ubiquitous Qur’an schools (msid in Moroccan Arabic, from a colloquial contraction of masjid, or “mosque”), to the Sufi zawāyā, to the higher levels of education in the mosque-universities (jāmiʿah, pl. jāmiʿāt). The humble msid could be found in every community across Morocco, and was responsible for educating young boys in the memorization and proper recitation of the Qur’an necessary to perform the everyday Muslim prayers, as well as very basic levels of Arabic literacy. The rare student that stayed on past the initial training could gain the qualifications to become a tutor (fqiḥ in Moroccan Arabic, although this term refers to Islamic jurists elsewhere in the Muslim world) or imam. Not only was the historical function of the msid to provide a popular education in Arabic language and Islamic liturgy, culture and identity, but also, as Eickelman argues, the “firm discipline in the course of learning the Quran [was] culturally regarded as an integral part of socialization,” a strict indoctrination in obedience and authority where the child learned “to be human and Muslim.” In modern times, the continuation of the msid system by the government as Islamic preschools is marketed as a preservation of Moroccan heritage and

the political ruler and the scholars suggests the deeply entrenched conceptual situatedness of religious authority in Moroccan Islam.

9 Until fairly recently, girls were only infrequent recipients of this education. The Malikite school of Islamic law that is dominant in Morocco holds the opinion that women may not lead any form of group prayer, which may have influenced popular attitudes that this knowledge was not necessary for young girls. Perhaps as a side effect, Morocco has a shockingly low female literacy rate, which continues to this day. In any case, Boyle suggests that the privilege to learn, preserve and convey Islamic knowledge is itself not significantly gendered in Moroccan society. For more information, see: Helen Boyle, Quranic Schools: Agents of Preservation and Change (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004).

10 Eickelman, Knowledge and Power in Morocco, 62-63.
character, although the style of instruction is noticeably less stern.\(^{11}\)

The zawāyā, run by the mystical Sufi brotherhoods, in turn produce a very different form of Islamic education. Not only does the zāwīya pedagogy focus significantly on the Islamic science of spirituality (\(t\)aṣawwuf), which came to be seen as at odds with the orthodox Islamic teachings by 18\(^{th}\) century reformers, but the particular dyadic relationship of charismatic master to apprentice, the presence of the sworn oath of loyalty (\(b\)ay\(ā\)h) and the deeply entrenched socio-political role of the Islamic brotherhoods in Moroccan society ensured that the Sufi lodges produced only the élite of the religious community. Still, this status would remain highly contextual, especially after the 19\(^{th}\) century advent of small but vocal trends of Islamic reformism in Morocco, a movement referred to variously in other scholarship as Wahhabism or Salafism.

The urban mosque-university, on the other hand, was far less organized and structured than the Islamic brotherhoods. At the Yusufiya University in Marrakesh,\(^{12}\) classes would gather rather informally, and the loose network of scholars this education would produce could occupy many different positions in society, from judges and government workers, to muftis and university professors.\(^{13}\) To this category also rightfully belong the rural tent-camps and urban madrasas that provided the liminal education between Qur’an school and university. Here, the students would memorize the basic grammars and introductory texts of Islamic jurisprudence, in preparation for studying at institutes of higher education. The product of this classical education was not a cohesive body of scholars, but rather civil servants bound to the jurisdictions and people they served (instead of the social networks that educated them, as in the case of the Sufi brotherhoods).


\(^{12}\) Also known as the Ben Youssef Madrasa.

\(^{13}\) Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*, 86-88.
In this way, the ‘ulamāʾ and educational institutes of Morocco served different segments of society, and fulfilled different social functions; realms that their authority would remain vested in and thereby delimited. One significant practical reason for this grounding is likely related to the concept of pious endowment (waqf) in Islam.\textsuperscript{14} In the Malikite school of Islamic jurisprudence that is dominant in Morocco, the founder of the waqf has no rights to personal control over the allocation of the endowment. Instead, the endowment is for the usufruct of the property (in this case, the madrasa) and subsistence of the scholar (for an endowment that could produce food or wealth), and thus the influence of the owner, whether wealthy notable or the monarch himself, would be minimal. This autonomy, itself a key part to the decentralization and lack of corporate influence on local scholars, proved something of a double-edged sword, as the endowment could not be altered after it had been established. Whenever the fortunes of the Sharifian dynasties shifted, scholars—especially in rural areas—came more to depend on local support to survive, further binding the educator to the community.\textsuperscript{15} To an extent, the zāwīya would be less affected by the weakened endowments. While these educational institutes were also generally supported under the waqf system, the Sufi brotherhoods would have other means of supplementing their upkeep, including the contributions of members, donations by pilgrims visiting Sufi tombs and even, in parts of rural Morocco, fees for performing blessings, curses and magic. Still, even the Sufi lodge would be thus connected to its local networks, which would then partially delineate authority.

These limitations—the highly situated nature of Islamic educational institutes in Moroccan society—would contribute to popular conceptions of the function and scope of religious authority

\textsuperscript{14} In Morocco, the term \textit{habūs} is commonly used instead of \textit{waqf}, although the latter is the more correct term. The \textit{waqf} refers to the legal act that sets up the \textit{habūs}, the object of the endowment.

in Morocco. Yet there is another important aspect of Moroccan Islamic education that defined and delimited both the function and scope of Islamic scholars and popular understandings of what constituted valued religious knowledge. This conceptual facet, the conservational nature and pedagogy of Moroccan Islamic education, compliments the sociological analysis and will help us sketch a clearer picture of how religious authority has evolved after the French Protectorate.

**Conceptual Situatedness of Valued Religious Knowledge in Morocco**

While the forms and formats of religious authority and education in Morocco are represented through seemingly diverse political and social manifestations, the brand of valued religious knowledge, its content and form of transmission, has exhibited remarkable fixity throughout history. One major reason for this is the extent to which educational institutes had, from very early on, become established in the cultural landscape of the country. Not only does Morocco feature some of the oldest continuously operating educational institutes in the world, including the first Islamic university, the Qarawiyn in Fez (founded in 859 CE), but from early on different tiers of education had been dispersed throughout the country's geography. Whether in cities or hinterlands, Moroccans have been exposed to education ranging from the ubiquitous Qur'an schools to higher levels of education (whether in the form of urban mosque-universities or rural tent camps). As Eickelman argues, even the quality of education remained surprisingly consistent regardless of setting, and “often the level of learning at rural madrasas and zawyas compared favorably with the education obtainable in major urban centers.”\(^\text{16}\) Seen as a means of social mobility, the Moroccan educational institution would be patronized by both society’s notables as well as poor students from the country. This relatively high accessibility of Islamic education in Morocco was only furthered by the early dynasties of the Almoravids (1040-1147)

\(^{16}\) Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*, 68.
and Almohads (1121-1269), who strove to propagate “correct” knowledge in Islamic law and theology, respectively, and the Marinid dynasty (1215-1465), which sponsored an extensive madrasa system across Morocco.

The prevalence of educational opportunities for relatively large swaths of Moroccan society, regardless of differences in class and region, could have been the basis for highly fragmented religious educations. Instead, the particular pedagogical style of Moroccan Islamic education had actually contributed to the preservation of fixed conceptions of what constituted accepted, valued religious knowledge and, importantly, how it could be wielded. As Ibn Khaldun noted in his Muqaddimah, higher levels of Moroccan education have historically placed an exceptional emphasis on rote memorization of texts and the archival reproduction and transmission of knowledge, with significantly more years spent committing texts to memory than in neighboring Muslim lands.\(^\text{17}\) Even at lower levels, whether learning the Qur’an or the early principles of jurisprudence in the madrasa, rote memorization would long precede any education in actually analyzing or commenting on the text.\(^\text{18}\) An education that might seem to be mere stultifying verbalism to foreigners then was critical for both stifling juridical development and fostering a widespread and conservative image of the religious scholar, who was valued for not diverging from set formulae and rites rather than for any personal ability to expand or refine the legal system. In this way, the steady and highly determined nature of Islamic scholarship in Morocco has contributed to both the popular understanding of the religion and the role and power of those who conserve and convey it.

Thus, while the different tiers of education became embedded in specific, practical social

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\(^{17}\) Ibid, 58.

\(^{18}\) Ibid, 64.
functions, and therefore became inherently conservational, the consistent conceptual style of Moroccan education has also been critical to perpetuating popular understandings of the nature of legitimate scholars and scholarship. This particular depiction of valued religious knowledge has done as much to legitimate the long established community of scholars in the fabric of Moroccan society as it has to limit the scope of intellectual authority, causing the 'ulamāʾ to become ensconced in particular, finite jurisdictions. For the ever-shifting governments of the Alaouite dynasty (who reigned from 1631 on), taking advantage of the existing body of scholars would be a route to both administrative expediency and religious legitimacy. Lesser scholars could fulfill the necessary tasks of the community (officiating religious ceremonies, acting as judges and so on), while long-term academics, trained in Morocco's two mosque-universities (the Qarawiyin and the Yusufiya), could be employed in bureaucratic roles. This association with the well-established and highly respected scholars would in turn be the basis for the religious legitimacy of the monarch’s reign, which has always played into Moroccan politics, as we will see. In this way, each succeeding makhzan (government) would rely on the perennial and recognized ‘ulamāʾ to substantiate its claim to legitimacy and authority, as well as depend on the Islamic educational institutions to provide the expertise to operate and expand administrative operations. In turn, the capacity for scholars to exert influence on Moroccan politics would be important, if indirect and circumscribed by the social and conceptual situatedness of Islamic education. This reciprocal relationship, whereby a rising sultan could retain the administration (and religious sanction) of his deposed rival, while the relatively narrowly defined power of the scholars could be maintained despite the regular turmoil surrounding the crown, would be ritually enacted though the rite of the bay’ah (oath of allegiance) between the scholars and each new king. Importantly, this steady relationship helped to further define the role of valued religious knowledge in Moroccan society.

19 For a more thorough discussion of this effect regarding the Moroccan msid, see: Boyle, Quranic Schools.
Political Power in Moroccan Islam

As suggested earlier, religion and scholarship have remained enduring features of the socio-political organization of Moroccan society, and therefore an understanding of popular constructions of valued religious knowledge (and its normative content and transmission) is critical to understanding the power and limitations of the ʿulamāʿ. Indeed, despite Morocco's long history of political fragmentation, due especially to the frequent regime changes within the Alaouite dynasty, perhaps the one unifying feature that united the incredibly diverse social fabric of Morocco across the generations was a strong Islamic identity.20 The well-established ʿulamāʿ—whether legal scholars, saints or spiritual guides—were the natural inheritors for a popularly supported religious authority within this paradigm.

The relationship between the monarchy and the religious authorities has always been tenuous, however. The rulers of Morocco have long claimed the Sharifian genealogical heritage leading back to Idris, great-grandson of Ali ibn Abi Talib and Fatima (the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad), thus implying a sacral right to the position of caliph (successor to Muhammad’s sovereignty).21 Yet, while Moroccan rulers would continuously reassert this legacy, it was the unchanging ʿulamāʿ, well entrenched in society at nearly every level and region, who held the critical leverage on religiously sanctioned rule. Importantly, this was particularly true of the Alaouite Dynasty. In this case, the frequent turnover in leadership, regular infighting, and the fact that the Alaouites came from the fairly marginalized Tafilalt region of the country made this

20 Something that remains very relevant to this day. As a 2005 survey suggests, 70% of Moroccans identify primarily as Muslims rather than Moroccans. See: Dale Eickelman, “Madrasas in Morocco: Their Vanishing Public Role,” in Schooling Islam, ed. Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 146.

21 To this day, the current king of Morocco takes the title "Commander of the Believers," an honorific used by the first four "rightly guided" caliphs of Islam.
claim less consistently convincing to their Moroccan subjects.\textsuperscript{22}

The most explicit form of political intervention that the ‘ulamā’ of Morocco engaged in can be seen in the tradition of nāṣīḥa, or frank counsel, whereby the scholars could rebuke secular authority on the grounds of the religious legitimacy of the ruler’s actions.\textsuperscript{23} Rather than a strict ultimatum, nāṣīḥa takes the form of admonishment and advice. Typically, a single scholar would come forward with a public address to the ruler, urging the monarch to reconsider an action opposed by the scholars of the religion, or to generally return in recourse to the ‘ulamā’ for guidance. The implication, however, was that the scholar stood with the backing of all the established ‘ulamā’, and indeed the reprimand would have little weight without the popular recognition of the scholars. The outcomes of this implicit threat were diverse: occasionally the ruler would relent under such pressure, other times the advocate would be punished and the scholars repressed. Regardless, the scope of the intrusion on secular rule would always be limited by both the requisite of scholarly consensus and the traditional, constrained popular understanding of the roles of religion, education and the ‘ulamā’.

It is also important to recognize that, while nāṣīḥa was a critical method of interfacing intellectual authority with political authority, historically the tradition has not been exclusively an exercise of pure scholarly power. While nāṣīḥa can be understood as an expression of the strong stabilizing and conservative influence of the scholars during times of radical change, as the ‘ulamā’ of Morocco have variously represented the populace or the regime at different times, it

\textsuperscript{22} Munson, Religion and Power in Morocco, 41.

\textsuperscript{23} Although it is commonly translated as “advice”, the Arabic root for the word actually means “sincere concern for the good,” thus incorporating a notion of both the pure intentions of the advisor and an advisee who has implicitly lost track of the good.
has also occasionally taken on the eminently political objectives of their constituents or clients.\textsuperscript{24} Yet in this way, the established scholars of Morocco were occasionally able to exert their own political authority, albeit one heavily circumscribed by tradition, allowing them to take a more active part in addition to the more common passive role the \textit{'ulamāʾ} played in structures of power in Morocco.

As the popularly grounded conceptions of religious knowledge changed under the French Protectorate, so too did the limitations and scope of scholarly authority in Moroccan politics. The breakdown of the scholarly establishment—both the conceptual fixity of the traditional education system as well as the social functions of the \textit{'ulamāʾ}—contributed to a freeing-up or “liberalizing” of popular constructions of the interaction between religion and politics. While this created the space for the Pan-Islamist nationalist movement that played a critical role in achieving Moroccan independence from colonial power, it also freed up space for Islamic fundamentalism and a reinvented \textit{nasīḥa}. Before going further, we must examine how the Islamic educational system functioned prior to colonial influence, how it came to be altered under the French Protectorate and how it continues to function today.

\textsuperscript{24} For a more thorough account of the complicated political pressures on the scholarly community, see: Bettina Dennerlein, “Legitimate Bounds and Bound Legitimacy: The Act of Allegiance to the Ruler (Bai’a) in 19th Century Morocco,” \textit{Die Welt des Islams} Vol. 41 No. 3 (2001): 287-310.
Chapter 2
Radical Changes in Islamic Education

_Pre-colonial and Colonial Transformations in Moroccan Education_

As Eickelman argues, the nineteenth century was "a period of intellectual ferment for scholars and students at Morocco's mosque-universities." Education at the higher-level institutes was witnessing reform and growth, as subjects like mathematics and engineering were reintroduced to the curriculum. Although the derivative nature of the educational methodology did not change, something that would appear stultifying to Western educated observers, the madrasa education was the hopes of scholars and rulers alike to overcome the increasing foreign encroachment of this era. Eventually, the failures of the madrasa to do just this would give rise to strains of Salafi revivalism in early twentieth century Morocco.

Even prior to the final establishment of the Protectorate, the advancement of colonial powers had an influence on developments in Morocco’s structure of religious authority. Many of the late pre-colonial sultans became heavily invested in reforming Moroccan Islam and, as early as the turn of the 19th century, rulers like Muḥammad bin ʿAbdullah Al-Khaṭīb and his succeeding son Mulay Sulaymān were influential in introducing the Islamic reformism inspired by the Wahhābī movement of Arabia as part of a greater effort to consolidate their rule over Morocco.

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27 In addition to early pressure by European powers, this effort to secure control must also be understood in light of the turbulent internecine feuds of the 18th century Alaouite rulers, where the leadership of the country was constantly changing hands and the makhzan had been severely weakened.
The strict, textualist approach of the new Islamic reformers quickly came into direct conflict with the various networks of religious authority and influence in Morocco by disputing the authenticity of Sufi organization and teachings, practices such as saint veneration and other aspects common to Moroccan Islam.\(^{28}\) Still, despite the direct challenge to the orthodoxy of the traditional ‘ulamā’ by revival philosophies from the heart of the Muslim world marketed as “primordial Islam” and even endorsed by the political ruler of Morocco, this early reformism had little effect on popular conceptions of valued religious knowledge, and the well-established scholars that protected it remained well entrenched in their habitual roles.

The late 19\(^{th}\) century sultan, Mulay Ḥassan I (d. 1894), was instrumental in further reforming the education system, this time encouraging new Salafi ideologies that were similar to the reformist philosophies of his predecessors.\(^{29}\) To this end, Ḥassan brought in the scholar ʿAbdullah ibn ʿIdris al-Sanūsī to teach the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, a famous collection of prophetic sayings that are arguably of greater importance to Islamic jurisprudence than theology.\(^{30}\) Like his predecessors, the sultan saw his concern for higher Islamic education as being “integrally linked to his efforts to strengthen and expand the Makhzan.”\(^{31}\) Nevertheless, madrasa education continued mostly as it had in previous centuries and, despite efforts to reform curriculum, the

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\(^{28}\) Munson, Religion and Power in Morocco, 85-86.

\(^{29}\) The taxonomy of comparison between Wahhābī and Salafi reform movements is often fraught with the perils of valorized or normative statements in Moroccan religious discourse. For our purposes, a very rough distinction can be made. The Wahhābī movement developed out of the strict Unitarian theology of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, a late 18\(^{th}\) century scholar, and is enmeshed in the specific historical context of the unification of Arabia under the al-Saud dynasty. The Salafi reform movement of the late 19\(^{th}\) century adopts or shares many of the theological arguments of the Wahhābī movement, but extends greatly into areas of Islamic jurisprudence, while also lacking the specific political context of the former movement.

\(^{30}\) Typically, the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī is the core source of legal precedents and proofs for the most literalist strains of the Salafi movement. In contrast to resorting to a simple and straightforward reading of the prophetic injunctions for guidance, the Malikite school predominant in Morocco advocates a large array of extra-textual methods to qualify prophetic sayings. The conflict between the two schools of thought would have been significant.

\(^{31}\) Eickelman, “Madrasas in Morocco,” 133.
pedagogy and placement of scholarship and scholars in Moroccan society remained conservative.

During the early twentieth century, under the administration of the French Protectorate (1912-1956), the productivity of Moroccan educational institutes was severely curtailed. Colonial authorities had become acutely aware of the entrenched social-political role Islamic scholarship had adopted in Morocco, and as early as 1914 the Protectorate moved to “bring order” to religious education. As with the other French colonial endeavors in North Africa (as well as British colonialism in Egypt and India), manipulating the educational system represented a way of reining in the authority of the indigenous educated elite and, at the same time, making the next generations of colonial subjects more amenable to European administration (a process generally put under the rubric of civilizing and modernizing the colonized). As they had done less than a century earlier in Algeria, by the 1930's the Protectorate government began the process of taking over the historically autonomous and private endowments that funded the madrasas of Morocco, and subsequently reining in curriculum and faculty. At the same time, the French authorities would vigorously promote Western-style education in the form of colonial schools.

Yet, for at least the first half of the colonial period, the intention of the French reform of Moroccan education was not to dismantle and abandon the old systems of scholars and scholarship. Under Hubert Lyautey, the Resident-General of Morocco until 1925, the Protectorate sought at least ostensibly to retain the old structures of power, albeit now under the sway of French influence. Here, the administration of the French Protectorate recognized (as previous pre-colonial sultans had) a source of expediency and legitimacy in the preexisting educational infrastructure. Even more so, however, Lyautey’s vision was one of true


collaboration between colonizer and colonized, where the former would permit the latter an
education in Moroccan culture and religion while also providing an edifying instruction in
European knowledge, all with the ultimate goal of building “modern” Moroccans. This program
was also in contrast to the approach the French had tried in other colonial projects, particularly in
Algeria, where attempts to dismantle local networks of influence had only invited resistance and
difficulty for the colonizers.

While the ethnological implications of the French reforms remain a fascinating aspect of
this story, it is important to note that the ambitions of the colonial administration remained largely
unrealized. In the 1914 reform of the Qarawiyin, like the British reform of the Azhar in Egypt,
the government attempted to bring transparency and accountability to the loosely organized
university by reorganizing the teaching faculty and standardizing appointments and salaries. In
addition to modernizing traditional academic infrastructure, this reform would provide a clearer
mechanism to control the education and educators of the madrasa–variables that could otherwise
develop into dangerous spaces of dissent in the colonial setting. The side effect, however, would
have been not only to undermine the loose networks of scholars and graduates which depended
on the fluidity of the scholarly body, but to tarnish the high standing of the ʿulamāʾ in Moroccan
society with the image of dependence on income from the Christian occupiers. The scholars of
the Qarawiyin protested and, not wanting to offend the ʿulamāʾ, who still retained strong public
support and comprised the majority of the makhzan bureaucracy, the French backed off
temporarily. Significantly, this opposition would mark the beginning of a concerted resistance on
the part of scholars against colonial reform of the Islamic educational system, which is a critical
part of this story. The Protectorate would attempt a similar program after World War I but, after
running into similar problems, would drop further attempts to directly influence traditional

34 Spencer Segalla, The Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance,
1912-1956 (University of Nebraska, 2009), 37-38.
educators and curriculum until the early 1930’s.

The colonial government was far more successful, comparatively, in its colonial schools program. By 1915, plans were underway to create a system of European-style educational institutes that taught in both Arabic and French. Eventually, the system would be fully elaborated with fee-based primary schools and higher-level institutes, mostly marketed to the indigenous elite of Morocco as a means of securing social advancement for Morocco’s rapidly developing future. In the écoles des fils notables (primary schools for the sons of the elite started in 1916) and the collèges musulmans (Muslim colleges, designed as secondary schools, started in 1914), the young elect were to receive a dual education in both Arab culture and Islam (in Arabic, by a traditional Moroccan instructor) on the one hand and European culture and sciences (in French, by a French-educated teacher) on the other. This approach appealed to wealthy Moroccan families, who saw the compromise as a means of retaining Moroccan culture and identity while gaining access to the European education that would provide future security. The dual educational project also fit within Lyautey’s larger vision of modern Moroccans, a new generation that was au fait with European civilization but remained wholly indigenous—something which intentionally or not would reinforce the hierarchical conceptual boundaries between edifying colonizer and dependent colonized. Conceptually, however, traditional religious erudition remained significant for Moroccan society, even though it no longer represented the access to preferment and status that European secular knowledge did.

Colonial authorities had hoped the collèges would create an incoming class of Qarawiyin


36 In 1917, the vast majority of Moroccan students lobbied for the inclusion of Islamic education, from traditional instructors, in the curriculum of the colonial schools. For more information, see: Segalla, The Moroccan Soul, 43.
entrants that were more acclimated to Western thinking, but had perhaps not fully anticipated the reaction of the scholarly community to an Islamic instruction proffered in a colonial space. While religious scholars generally welcomed the inclusion of European sciences in Moroccan education, and even made requests for the collège diploma to be equivalent to the French baccalaureate in order to open avenues to French higher education, the ‘ulamā’ balked at the instruction of traditional Islamic knowledge in settings that were out of their control, such as the colonial schools. Like Sayed Ahmed Khan had realized a half-century earlier in India with the establishment of the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College, colonial Muslim subjects were shut out of avenues to power and influence when they completely closed the door on Western knowledge. The fine balance of simultaneously maintaining the relevance of—and control over—indigenous forms of valued knowledge, while carefully adopting the European scholarship that was rapidly changing the prospects for power and advancement in Moroccan society, continued to be a thorny problem.

Attempts by the ‘ulamā’ to insulate the madrasa educational system from the colonial education programs, primarily by refusing access to collège graduates to the madrasas and by barring Islamic education for the ascendant colonial schools, had in turn made religious education increasingly isolated and negligible. In order to provide a new exit to the Muslim colleges, the Protectorate established the Institute des Hautes Études in Rabat in 1921. What was previously a university for Arab and Berber language and literature founded by the French in 1912, the institute was reorganized following the failures to reform the Qarawiyin after World

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38 Ibid, 44.
39 This would later become the Aligarh Muslim University.
40 Ibid, 180.
War I in order to provide a higher level education and compete with the Qarawiyin as a source of makhzan placements. The new Institute provided diplomas in judicial and administrative studies, Arabic and Berber language and interpretation, and Moroccan studies, with a focus on training a new generation of modern bureaucrats. Under the heading of “Moroccan studies,” senior students received a relatively anemic instruction in Islamic law—so constrained by concessions to the ʿulamāʾ—taught by means of a European pedagogy, in contrast to the traditional, laborious mnemonic methods found in the madrasa system. Here, the Islamic training attained by the next generation of makhzan authorities was conspicuously lacking the traditional disciplines once considered fundamental to the valued religious knowledge of the Moroccan ʿulamāʾ, including theology, Qur’anic exegesis, first principles of jurisprudence, the prophetic tradition and mysticism.

Although they were never really on a par with the French schooling system for secular knowledge and were even largely constrained in their Islamic instruction, the colonial schools quickly proved highly popular with the Moroccan elite. By the 1940’s, the colonial schools were producing the Western educated graduates that would fill the positions in the makhzan once occupied by those with traditional educations. The traditional Islamic institutes, on the other hand, fell into even sharper decline after Lyautey. The 1930’s saw the colonial administration finally assuming control of the major endowments for the shrinking mosque-universities, an initiative prompted by a series of major anti-French protests for which the madrasas had been a partial staging ground. The financial takeover of the mosque-universities would cause many students and teachers alike to retreat to the urban madrasas’ “ill-prepared rural counterparts;” students and scholars who remained in the French controlled mosque-universities would lose

42 Eickelman, “Madrasas in Morocco,” 141.
much of their credibility in the eyes of Moroccan society.\textsuperscript{43}

The effect was that religious knowledge and education disappeared from its social and conceptual place in Moroccan society, just as the social position of the ‘ulamā’ was diminished by other policies. The 1930 Berber decree, for instance, threatened to dislodge rural Islamic judges by officially implementing non-religious Berber tribal customs as the normative law in the countryside.\textsuperscript{44} This particular instance was itself probably part of a larger colonial ethnology that saw the Berber and Arab Moroccans as fundamentally different, and was a key feature in French policy in Algeria and other colonies.\textsuperscript{45} Nevertheless, the Berber decree met with significant resistance, as Moroccans gathered at mosques like the Qarawiyin in Fez to protest what they saw as colonial attempts to divide and rule the country. While this surprising solidarity did much to challenge French perceptions of a Morocco divided between Arab \textit{bilād al-makhzan} (land of government) and Berber \textit{bilād as-sībah} (land of dissidence),\textsuperscript{46} and even paved the way for the later nationalist movement, the Berber decree had irrevocably called into question the place of traditionally educated Islamic judges in modern and future Morocco. By the 1940’s, religious education was no longer perceived as a means of social mobility, and only poor, rural students would attend the once prestigious mosque-universities.

Yet, as suggested, religious academies remained spaces for political dissent throughout the colonial period. The Qarawiyin, in particular, became a hot bed of Salafi reformists that had taken up the cause of nationalism. Yet the ‘ulamā’ remained divided, and the French found those

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 134.

\textsuperscript{44} For more on the Berber decree, and reactions, see: William A. Hoisington, Jr., “Cities in Revolt: The Berber Dahir (1930) and France’s Urban Strategy in Morocco,” \textit{Journal of Contemporary History} Vol. 13 No. 3 (July 1978): 433-448.

\textsuperscript{45} Segalla, \textit{The Moroccan Soul}, 47.

\textsuperscript{46} These names were given to the supposed pre-colonial territories that fell under the control of the sultan (predominantly Arab, developed regions) and those that regularly defied the monarch’s taxation (predominantly Berber, rural regions), respectively.
scholars who belonged to Sufi ṭuruq to be particularly useful to combat the voice of Salafi nationalism—something which may be more revealing of the general antipathy between Sufi and Salafi scholars in modern Morocco than anything else.\(^{47}\) Ironically, as the networks and prominence of traditional scholars were diminished with the declining madrasa system, so too was this avenue for checking the spread of nationalism.

The full effect of colonial interference on Islamic education and its perceived role in Moroccan society is difficult to measure. While Qur'an schools have in many ways remained to this day the largely unaffected loci of Moroccan tradition,\(^{48}\) madrasa education had all but collapsed by 1940. Previously, these Moroccan madrasas had "produced religious leaders capable of playing major roles in sustaining—and constraining—the authority and legitimacy of rulers,"\(^{49}\) but by the mid twentieth century such structures had been largely dismantled by foreign involvement while conceptions of traditional valued religious knowledge had become neglected through the isolationist attitudes of the older scholarly community. By the 1970's, the "social networks of influence and patronage" formed by the old guard of traditionally educated scholars, those who graduated prior to the 1930's, had waned. Increasingly in this era, Islamic knowledge was more and more susceptible to reform.\(^{50}\)

**Decline of the Qarawiyn after Independence**

After Morocco gained its independence in 1956, the returning Sultan Muhammad V took

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\(^{48}\) For more detailed account of Qur'an schools in modern Morocco, see: Boyle, *Quranic Schools*.

\(^{49}\) Eickelman, “Madrasas in Morocco,” 131.

\(^{50}\) Ibid, 134.
an approach to Moroccan traditional education that in many ways complimented the tactics of the colonial administration. While decades of Protectorate development of secular education had displaced the outward value and relevance of religious education as a means of social advancement, madrasas had become subject to internal constraints as well, with the reform of the waqf and the direct control of the government, leading to a crisis where educators were afraid the withering traditional education would disappear entirely. Under the new independent government, the madrasa system was kept in a state of dependence on the makhzan, although Muhammad V never attempted to abolish the subordinated schools. Careful to allow the ʿulamāʾ neither a platform on the one hand nor a rallying point on the other for political rebellion, the Qarawiyin became the greatest example of this policy, as the troubled mosque-university was allowed to languish through a program of deliberate neglect.

By the 1960’s, the student body of the Qarawiyin had dwindled to around 500. Whereas the rival Azhar university remained popular and thriving with 10,000 students, the Qarawiyin struggled to find placements for its few graduates, a trend which began in the era of the French Protectorate with the competition of colonial schools. The leading nationalist party, Istiqlal (meaning “independence”), itself profoundly influenced by Salafi reformist ideology, gave both voice and shape to student concerns, and was quick to relocate the blame for the deteriorated state of the mosque-university on a lack of internal reform. In addition to lacking the renovated facilities and resources of modernizing institutes like the Azhar in Egypt, students came to see the program of study at the Qarawiyin, predominately old pre-colonial Malikite legal

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51 Morocco officially gained its independence in the winter of 1955 to 1956, although it would be a few years before the returning Muhammad V and his makhzan could effectively consolidate power.


53 In 1938, there were nearly twice as many students, around 900, at the Qarawiyin. See: Eickelman, “Madrasas in Morocco,” 141.

54 Zeghal, *Islamism in Morocco*, 36-38.
texts, as the reason for lack of employment. The most vocal students, given a platform in the Istiqlal party paper *Al Alam*, would complain that this curriculum was outdated and that the archaic traditional pedagogy needed to be modernized. With this overhaul in content and conveyance, students further hoped that the madrasa degree would be given equivalence with those of the secular schools. In this frustration with the old, the rapidly changing perceptions of valued religious knowledge–here having to keep pace with modern brands of scholarship–are evident.

Another Salafī group, the Association of Scholars of Morocco, further supported the drive for reform and was similarly successful in rallying students to this cause. Previously, under the French Protectorate and in the pre-colonial era, traditional scholars had been able to bar these reformists from lecturing in the madrasas, forcing them to offer their lessons at insignificant times and venues. The support for educational modernization by Istiqlal, who were politically prominent for their association with the independence movement, was probably more significant than the Association of Scholars. Yet the former gave the latter a critical forum in the Moroccan political scene, allowing them the disproportionately loud voice that traditional *ʿulamāʾ* were, until recently, able to deny these still minority scholars.

When the newly ascended Hassan II (r. 1961-1999) finally addressed the status of the Qarawiyin in 1963, an official statement simply confirmed the mosque-university’s continuation and ordered a reorganization of the institute to shut down the practically defunct doctoral

55 Ibid, 38.

56 These efforts to modernize Islamic education were supported by the Salafi group, the Association of *ʿUlama of Morocco*. In general, Salafi reformism in other countries was very critical of entrenched and established scholars and scholarship, and saw reform as a means of keeping Islamic countries on par with the West.


58 Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*, 98.
program.\textsuperscript{59} In effect, the university would no longer offer the level studies required to train a certified member of the ‘ulamā’, putting a final end to the reproduction of the scholarly community—a process that had essentially begun under the French Protectorate. With this lack of positive action, the King’s position remained (perhaps purposefully) ambiguous to the desires of the reformers and traditionalists alike, while the institute was merely further reduced.

The lack of protest against this move is perhaps surprising. Malika Zeghal suggests that the cause of Arabization of the greater educational system was seen as more fundamental in this era of nationalism, and thus the already weakened scholars of the Qarawiyin perhaps opted to preserve the status quo with regard to religious education to promote this project. While it is certainly relevant, this answer understates the delicacy and intricacy of the situation surrounding valued religious knowledge in Morocco during this time. After all, religious education—the domain of traditional scholars—had never been changed over to Francophone instruction, and the traditional ‘ulamā’ had never united either in support or in opposition to secular education, remaining largely apathetic about its fate.\textsuperscript{60} Rather, the cause of Arabization was more properly the special preserve of the Salafi nationalist movement, which included the few Salafi reformist ‘ulamā’. For these minority reformist scholars, who were well articulated on the political stage and popular with the students, the Qarawiyin had only been a hurdle to importing the new, putatively originary Islamic core being developed elsewhere in the Middle East. These reformists had, in turn, learned to foster their movement outside of the traditional madrasas that were so resistant to change, and had little to lose with the decline of the mosque-university. Traditional scholars, with no such access to media, would have been relegated to silently witnessing the

\textsuperscript{59} The doctoral program, the highest level of study that would produce the new generations of scholars, had languished ever since the latter years of the French Protectorate, as fewer and fewer students continued their education to this level.

\textsuperscript{60} Limited levels of French were eventually offered at the Qarawiyin (never at the Yusufiya), although even then the language was taught with the same classical mnemonic methodology of the religious instruction. See: Eickelman, Knowledge and Power in Morocco, 96.
effective end of an era for the Qarawiyin.

**The Forms Define the Soul: The Fragmentation of Religious Sciences**

In addition to ending the accreditation of ʿulamāʾ, the 1963 decree also split the Qarawiyin into several disparate departments scattered across Morocco, with separate faculties for theology in Tetouan, Arabic language in Marrakesh and Islamic law in Fez.61 As Zeghal argues, this decentralization of the Qarawiyin may have been part of an attempt by the government to fragment the spaces that could harbor both political dissent and contestation of religious authority on the eve of the monarch’s attempts to reemploy religious legitimization of his sovereignty.62 Indeed, a year after this decree, King Hassan II established the Dar al-Hadith al-Hassaniya (1964), a modern Islamic institute of higher learning that focused on the prophetic traditions. Not only did this appeal to the reformist scholars,63 but in this new university the King found a useful tool to promote his own claims to religious legitimacy; the Sharifian genealogical heritage of the Alaouite dynasty.

Both the creation of the Hassaniya and the dividing up of the departments of the Qarawiyin reveal new, important trends in the development of valued religious knowledge in Morocco. Here, the previous conceptual unity of Islamic sciences that once facilitated a common dialogue between Moroccan scholars of diverse educational backgrounds were finally fragmented and compartmentalized, with some disciplines being conceived of as explicitly more important

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61 Zeghal, *Islamism in Morocco*, 47.

62 Regarding the possible political goals of the fragmentation, see: Zeghal, *Islamism in Morocco*, 50. Regarding the efforts of Hassan II to consolidate religious authority to legitimate sovereignty, see (Combs-Schilling, *Sacred Performances*) and (Hammoudi, “The Reinvention of Dar al-mulk”).

63 Salafi reformist doctrine generally puts a greater emphasis on recourse to original texts like the Qur’an or the reputed sayings of the Prophet Muhammad than on the post-classical Islamic legal tradition.
than others according to either Salafi doctrine or the political interests of the sponsoring King. In some ways, the changing focus towards academic specialization did more to displace the cultural concept of the ʿālim, the high-ranking scholar conversant in a wide number of fields, than the discontinuation of the ʿalamiyya, the certification of graduating scholars at the Qarawiyin. A young scholar graduating from the new system could no longer demonstrate the broad knowledge that earned his predecessors respect as ḥāfiẓ (“keeper”) of the religion.\(^6^4\)

While this loss of prestige was certainly true to the older body of scholars, the narrow expertise must have also been a sensible change to Moroccan society generally.\(^6^5\) While the splintering of the content of religious scholarship fit more within a Western paradigm for education, the post-colonial production of religious authority would effectively reorder the constraints that had been specific to an earlier holistic understanding of the tradition. The overspecialized scholars, no longer acquainted with the earlier correspondence of religious sciences, would exercise their education in new and liberated ways, creating new spaces for religious authority. As Eickelman notes, previously understanding of religious texts was not measured by any ability to explicitly “explain” particular verses. Explanation was considered a science in itself to be acquired only through years in the advanced study of exegetical literature (tafsīr). Any informal attempt to explain meaning was considered blasphemy and simply did not occur.\(^6^6\)

The fragmentation of disciplines in the 1963 reform could only diminish such earlier constraints, and scholars were freed to become experts in the now discrete sciences without this

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\(^6^4\) Although the term can be used popularly to mean merely one who has memorized the entire Qur’an by heart, it can also be used to indicate those exceptional scholars who have a comprehensive knowledge of the Islamic sciences.

\(^6^5\) Regarding the loss of prestige among older scholars, see: Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*, 167-8.

\(^6^6\) Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*, 64.
knowledge being qualified by further education in other fields. While pre-colonial Islamic knowledge in Morocco had been transmitted as highly entangled sciences, and had consequently remained rarefied and aloof from change as well as the demands of temporal politics, the newly liberated sciences proved much more amenable to practical, worldly application.

If the apparent complacency of traditionalists is partly a product of a lack of representation in the media, this is then the second context in which the quietude of the scholars must be understood. Zeghal supposes the indifference of the ‘ulamā’, preserved even to this day, over the monumental 1963 change to the status of the Qarawiyin can be attributed to the attention that was being given at that time to nationalization and Arabization efforts. Although the modern education system had overtaken religious education as a source of social advancement, traditional forms of scholarship remained conceptually powerful and popular indicators of valued religious knowledge throughout the 20th century. 67 While this cultural paradigm continued in popular conceptions—and legitimization—of religious authority, however, the truth is that the education systems had long since ceased to be able to produce such scholars, something which came to be felt first among the existing ‘ulamā’. 68 In a remarkably indifferent statement, when asked why he had not encouraged his own children to pursue religious studies, one lifelong scholar—educated at the Yusufiya just prior to the French takeover of the endowments—responded simply, “times change.” 69

Along with the disappearance of traditional scholars from their once integral place in

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67 Ibid, 164.

68 Jabre complains bitterly of this decline in the Qarawiyin as early as 1938, the origins of which he locates in the 1924 attempt by the French to institute tanzīm (“reorganization”) of the university that ended the traditional emphasis given on long-format lectures that covered essential legal texts like the Mukhtasir al-Khalil. See: F. Jabre, “Dans le Maroc nouveau: le rôle d’une université islamique,” Annales d’histoire économique et sociale Vol. 10 No. 51 (1938).

69 Eickelman, Knowledge and Power in Morocco, 172.
Moroccan society, popular perceptions of valued religious knowledge have nevertheless begun to slowly change. As Eickelman argues, "the advent of mass education in Morocco has displaced the principle of fixed and memorizable religious knowledge as the dominant cognitive style for valued knowledge... [which] now takes the form of cassettes, short pamphlets, or new media sources including (in urban regions) Internet sites that respond to ‘objective’ questions such as ‘What is Islam?’ ‘What difference should Islam make in my daily life?’ and ‘How can I be a Muslim in the modern world?’" It is in this context that political activists and masters of media like Nadia Yassine, daughter of Abdessalam Yassine, have become renowned among young Moroccans as the authorities of an Islamic ideology branded as embattled by modern secularism.

70 Eickelman, “Madrasas in Morocco,” 144.
Chapter 3
Religious Authority Redefined

Religious Authority and the King

The declining capacity of the traditional institutes to produce a community of scholars, and the disentangling of religious knowledge, complimented clear efforts by Hassan II, and his successor Mohammed VI, to consolidate religious authority in the figure of the king. As mentioned earlier, Moroccan sultans have long claimed the Sharifian heritage to substantiate their sacred right to rule, yet in many ways the unprecedented state of the traditional religious authorities, the ‘ulamā’, allowed the post-colonial monarch even more avenues to sacral legitimacy. To this end, Hassan was notable for working to establish himself as the head of Moroccan Islam and to carefully oversee and administer the official religious discourse.

The full spectrum of these efforts is better represented in other scholarship, and for our purposes we will merely explore how the most recent monarchs have taken advantage of the post-colonial terrain of religious scholarship. As already suggested, King Hassan developed the policy of neglect started by his father, Mohammed V, by fragmenting and narrowing the traditional spaces for religious education, with the dual effect of undermining the cohesion of the scholarly community while freeing up traditional constraints on the political application of religious knowledge. Hassan was also more generally a sponsor of a revived, and government administered, Islamic education in Morocco, and was responsible for bringing Qur’anic schools into the public education system in 1968, enforcing prayer in secondary schools, mandating Islamic studies in public schools in the late 1970’s, promoting carefully monitored religious

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71 For a thorough discussion of Hassan’s attempts to employ ritual in framing the position of the sacred king, see (Combs-Schilling, Sacred Performances, 1989). For an exploration of the King’s redeployment of Moroccan Sufic “Master-Disciple” relationships to underpin authoritarianism, see: Hammoudi, “The Reinvention of Dar al-mulk”.

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lectures and publications and so on.

More explicitly, the Hassan established the *durūs al-hassaniyah* (Hassan’s lessons), yearly lessons that take place every Ramadan. Here, the King would invite the ‘ulamā’ to the royal palace to present a public lesson that had been carefully reviewed by the government. On occasion, the monarch would even offer his own opinion or interpretation, firmly demonstrating his political and religious position as preeminent leader of the scholars.

When he ascended to the throne in 1999, the new King Mohammed VI continued the tradition of the yearly lessons started by his father. In the political realm however, Mohammed was less obviously autocratic than Hassan II, and worked towards democratization and liberalization in Morocco, something that Zeghal argues undermines the previous dynasty’s efforts to consolidate sacral authoritarianism. It was not until after the 2003 terrorist attack in Casablanca, apparently by the radical Islamist group Salafia Jihadia, that the young monarch started to define his own role in the discourse of Moroccan religious authority.

Mohammed VI took the window of opportunity after the 2003 attacks to push forward a reform of the *Mudawwana*, the traditional staple Malikite text for family law. The new document featured many improvements for women’s rights and other adjustments that had been increasingly demanded by liberal reformers. Although the symbolism of this act is significant—demonstrating who has the authority to reinterpret Islamic law in Morocco—it was also an important step in establishing a canon Moroccan Islam that had never concerned King’s predecessors. In the next few years, Mohammed would strive to reinforce a normative religious

\[\text{\textsuperscript{72}}\text{Zeghal, *Islamism in Morocco*, 254-270.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{73}}\text{Ibid, 245-247.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{74}}\text{During Ramadan that year, King Mohammed also invited a female faqīh, Dr. Rajaa Najī el-Mekkaoui, to lecture at “Hassan’s Lessons,” a first for the tradition. In 2004, the government instituted the training of Murshidāt, female religious leaders, at the Hassaniya.}\]
sphere, one that would eventually become more clearly delineated in the 2006 publication of an official “Manual for Imams and Preachers.” Here, the King took up the reins of the content of Islamic knowledge, declaring the highly enmeshed Malike school of religious law and the highly formulaic and meticulous Asharite school of theology to be the only acceptable forms of Moroccan religious knowledge.

In one sense, these schools of thought are both highly articulated and well defined, making them very conservative bases for canon religious interpretation that directly repeals the unhinging of religious knowledge achieved under King Hassan II. Yet, Mohammed VI has been careful to not limit his own maneuverability by too carefully defining the Malike and Asharite school, allowing this arsenal to remain somewhat undetermined as it waits to be deployed in whatever politically expedient role the crown sees fit. Interestingly, however, the young King has perhaps correctly identified theology in particular as a critical space for political and religious contestation. The Asharite school follows a highly conservative philosophy for theological speculation, which discourages any but the most rarefied interpretation as blasphemous. The ability to freely press this theology into service for worldly, political ends is then highly constrained, making the Asharite school relatively predictable and sedate. In comparison, the more literalist theology typically followed by Islamists uses a more reified interpretation, and thus the science of Qur’anic exegesis has become the core of fundamentalist religio-political teachings. Standardization of an official, permitted theology under the former school means constraining religious authority in ways that are reminiscent of the pre-colonial Moroccan order.

\[75\] Zeghal, *Islamism in Morocco*, 252-253.

\[76\] The manual also vaguely promotes an official Sufism, here used as little more than an aphorism for peace, love and social harmony.
The Religio-Political Challenger

If the advent of the French Protectorate had shattered the pre-colonial balance of power between makhzan and ʿulamāʾ, and enabled religio-political authority to be concentrated in the single figure of the King, then the same developments enabled a similarly concentrated challenge to the throne after independence. In his 1974 censure of King Hassan II, Abdessalam Yassine was able to invoke what Munson calls "the myth of the righteous man of God."\(^{77}\) This long tradition, recalling famous Moroccan scholar-saints like al-Yusi and Sidi Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Kabīr al-Kattānī, is better detailed in other works.\(^ {78}\) To this day, as Munson argues, Yassine derives much of his popular support from the image of the saintly scholar willing to stand up defiantly against the corrupt sultan.

Yet Yassine’s indictment of the King proved innovative in many ways. As religious and political authority became truly consolidated in post-colonial Morocco for the first time in the country’s history, appropriately so too did Yassine’s offer of advice represent an unprecedented merger of the political and the religious realms, albeit in the figure of the ʿālim. Despite the efforts of the colonial government after Lyautey to marginalize the scholarly community, at the back of Moroccan social consciousness, perhaps the memory of scholarly authority remained resilient, and Yassine gathered modern appeal in his endeavor.

As suggested earlier, in pre-colonial times, the denunciatory power of the naṣīḥa (scholarly frank counsel) would be equally empowered and circumscribed by established tradition and scholarly consensus. With the modern collapse of the scholarly community, as well as the unhinging of the forms and contents of valued religious knowledge, a unique space was created


\(^{78}\) See: Munson, *Religion and Power in Morocco*, and Sater, *Civil Society and Political Change in Morocco*. 
for a highly radicalized and ideological formulation of the *naṣīḥa*. Thus, modern fundamentalist polemics have been able to harness a unique rhetorical device, one that carries special significance in the political history of Morocco, but has become effectively extinct in modern times. Without the traditional restraints, the *naṣīḥa* has been resurrected as an ideal tool for Moroccan fundamentalism. To develop this point, however, we should first examine Abdessalam Yassine and his movement.

**The Righteous Scholar**

Born in 1928 of poor Berber descent in Marrakech, Morocco, Yassine was educated in the Yusufiya University. By the time he received his education, the Yusufiya (like other madrasas) had greatly declined under colonial interference, and the university that once tutored the children of Morocco's elite now held classes predominantly for students of poor, rural background. By the 1950's, Yassine held a government position as an inspector of Arabic language in the ministry of education, an occupation that afforded him travel opportunities to France and the United States for training. In 1965, Yassine went through what he terms a "spiritual crisis," which led him to join the Būdshīshiyah Ṭarīqah, a prominent Moroccan Sufi order developed from the Qādiriyah school of Islamic mysticism. It was here that the forty-year old civil servant became heavily involved in the Islamic spirituality that would remain part of his thinking from then on. When the master of the order passed away in 1972, Yassine attempted to turn the brotherhood into a political movement to fit his developing Islamist ideology. Unable to transform the Sufi order, he


left the Būdshīshiyah Ṭarīqah, claiming it had become corrupted by materialism (a theme that would appear again in his rhetoric against the Moroccan throne).

It was in this context that Abdessalam Yassine penned the 1974 missive, Islam or the Deluge. As Munson notes, Yassine's *naṣīḥa* text exhibits remarkable similarities to an earlier *naṣīḥa* from Morocco's pre-colonial period, the 1908 indictment by Sidi Muhammad bin Jaʿfar al-Kattānī against the enfeebled ruler Mulay ʾAbd al-ʿAzīz for allowing increasing European encroachment. Yet Yassine's diatribe features critical differences that show a distinct ideologization of the *naṣīḥa*, a direct response to the depredations of a projected modernity and a call to return to the simple and all-encompassing true religion to solve all problems.

The formula for Yassine's attack on the crown is methodical, and it is not surprising that the epistle caught the attention of King Hassan II. Within the first few pages, Yassine announced his Sharifian ancestry—the lineage alleged to go back to the Prophet Muhammad himself, and commonly claimed by Moroccan rulers to legitimate their sacred right to the throne. By placing himself on the same level, Yassine removed this advantage, allowing him to address the monarch with the kind of familiarity unheard of when speaking to the king ("oh brother" and "oh dearest"). At the same time, the text slips freely between gentle admonition and explicit threat, often in the same breath. In these ways, the 1974 letter is remarkably effective in destabilizing the perceived inviolable status of the king.

Among the key signs of an ideologized and evolved *naṣīḥa* is particularly this flattening of roles paired with the volatility in the message. By conflating the nature of the ruler's authority and the scholar's authority, Yassine betrays a marked liberalization from the traditional ways power had been understood in Morocco. Other elements of the language in the letter indicate ideologization as well. Aside from frequent tirades against Zionism and Israel (for which Yassine blames many of the ills of his projected concept of "modernity"), he also borrows notably from
the lexicons of contemporary political ideologies, especially communism (which he, of course, makes a point to renounce). Much of this terminology is evident in the 5-point comprehensive plan Yassine offers up for the "frightened and confused king", itself a major shift in the scope of naṣīḥa:

1. Announce publicly and clearly your repentance [tawbaka] and your intention to renovate Islam.

2. Reform what you have corrupted and all that has corrupted you, especially the wealth and honor you have unjustly taken... Bring your fortune back to Morocco. Sell your palaces.

3. Swear allegiance to a council elected in an Islamic manner that will be guided by men of the call to God [rijal al-da'wa] after you have banned the political parties.

4. Gradually discard both liberalism and the illusory socialism that enriches [those] around it and create an Islamic economy based on these three principles: the [equitable] distribution of rights and duties... government use of wealth with freedom and courage for the sake of general prosperity... and the elimination of social injustice and the poverty of the umma.

5. A general repentance... Islamic kindness [al-rifq] is the only alternative to the class violence and civil war that threatens us... and general repentance can occur only under a repentant ruler and under a renovated form of reciprocal allegiance [mubaya'a mujadadda].

While he seeks to alleviate the plight of the "oppressed masses (al-mustad'afin)," Yassine has a longer vision of reforming the entire society, which he sees as steeped in the ignorance (jahil) and evils of corrupting, non-Islamic forces.


82 Ibid, 166.
Most importantly, Yassine’s program locates theʿulamāʾ in a position of political authority, no less one situated above the monarch. Not only must the King abase himself, but also he must submit to the rule of the scholars in a relationship that was radically different from previous Moroccan religious authorities. Indeed, in a previous era, Abdessalam Yassine's naṣīḥa would have had little purchase. Both the need for scholarly solidarity and the well established jurisdiction of the scholar had restrained the scope of the traditional naṣīḥa. As mentioned earlier, even when perfectly posed to take control, intellectuals like al-Kattānī never crossed the conceptual boundaries between ruler and ʿālim. Whereas the highly conservative conceptual and social situatedness of earlier scholarship had precluded such agency, the breakdown of these constraints in post-colonial Morocco had made the newly liberated naṣīḥa tradition ripe for such exploitation.

With changing popular conceptions of knowledge, broken down and liberalized through colonial and post-colonial policy, Yassine was able to evoke the tradition of the Moroccan activist-scholar with a message radical enough to prompt a response from the ruling regime. It was not the unanimous support of the ʿulamāʾ that worried King Hassan II, something that may have caused concern for previous rulers who depended on the entrenched scholarly community. Indeed, Yassine did not have support from contemporary Moroccan scholars: as his official biography reads, after his release, Yassine's attempt to rally scholarly support for his position merely "met with a chilly reception, indifference, and sometimes even total refusal." Rather, Yassine's message gained traction with small sections of the society, particularly underemployed Moroccan youth. Called "Sheikh," "Imam" and "al-Murshid" by his followers (indicating scholarly, political and spiritual authority, respectively), the former civil servant was able to sublimate diverse conceptions of authority without reference to their previously limited

jurisdictions. In a way, the formulation of this challenge came to be a uniquely appropriate, perhaps even necessary, reaction to the King. While pre-colonial order had maintained a distinction between the political authority of the ruler and the religious authority of the ‘ulamā’, colonial policy had elevated the sultan to the nominal figurehead of both Moroccan politics and religion. In the post-colonial period, King Hassan was quick to further mobilize Moroccan religious identity as a source of legitimacy, all while marginalizing the religious authority of scholars through a neglect of their educational networks. Yet, this unprecedented union of political and religious spheres in the figure of the King left room for a like response—one which came in the form of Abdessalam Yassine’s fusion of religious authority with political authority. The relative lack of stability in Moroccan religious authority, only made more precarious by the rise of the scholarly king, contributed to the success of Yassine’s movement.

**The Role of Scripture and Tradition in Religious Authority**

In his theory, Paul Gifford examines how religious authority is derived from, and constrained by, scripture and tradition. For Gifford, these elements are not timeless or autonomous sources of authority in themselves. Rather, scripture and tradition are better understood as spaces where authority is continually formulated and renewed. To understand how authority is balanced, perceived and experienced through these spaces, Gifford argues, it is more important to understand the ongoing relationship between the entire community and the scripture and tradition than it is to understand the content, authorship or nature of the scripture and tradition. Because the particular formulation of authority and jurisdiction of text and tradition is the product of an unfinished activity, a continual engagement by a historically bound community,

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the kind of authority that is exercised on behalf of the scripture or tradition is itself subject to the historical developments of the community.

For our discussion, we must not limit ourselves to an arbitrarily narrow understanding of scripture. As Gifford argues, secondary texts that are not explicitly considered to be sacred are often more authoritative to a religious community than the central holy scripture.85 Here, we can consider the Hadith literature, which is not traditionally accorded any hallowed status, but in some cases is taken to be a more canonical source of authority, with precedence over even the Qur’an.86 In an even broader sense, the entire corpus of Islamic sciences can be understood as scripture, particularly in the Moroccan context. As suggested earlier, demonstrating mnemonic mastery of any of these diverse disciplines was sufficient to establish one’s authority as scholar of the religion, albeit in contextually limited ways.

Similarly, we must not understand community in an overdetermined or narrow way. As discussed earlier, different sections of society engaged with valued religious knowledge in different ways. Although this was most explicitly the province of the ‘ulamā’, the laity participated in the Qur’anic schools across the country, just as the Sufi zawāyā cut across all levels of Moroccan society. The true diversity in educational institutes, not limited to merely the legalistic madrasas, meant that wide swathes of Morocco would have access to spaces where the relationship between scripture, tradition and community would be constantly reestablished. Nevertheless, each space produced a different lived-in phenomenon, and while it is critical to account for the role of the laity in the conceptual fixity and jurisdiction of pre-colonial valued religious knowledge, our focus must be on the ‘ulamā’ and how their spaces for engaging the

85 Ibid, 403-404.

Islamic tradition were cut up and isolated by colonial and post-colonial policy towards education.

Interestingly, Gifford locates one of the most significant changes undergone by modern societies in the development of historical consciousness. Here, the emergence of an “awareness that everything is relative” and a new view of truth that projects verity as “out there ahead, to be discovered by hypothesis, experiment and verification” rather than “back there and enshrined in a text to which those coming after must continually refer” has radically altered our attitude towards past authorities and received wisdom.87 This much can be seen in the changing attitudes of Moroccan students, who early on in the era of the French Protectorate demanded traditional, mnemonic scholarship, while later generations of students protested to receive their Islamic education through a renovated, Western pedagogy.

For Gifford, this major shift—the development of historical consciousness—has “disclosed the complexity” of the community’s involvement in formulating the authority of scripture and tradition, making apparent how the historical change in a society directly affects how the religious authority and jurisdiction is perceived and experienced.88 Yet, these changes in how the text and living history is engaged are not just side effects of historical upheaval. New ways of engaging the scripture and tradition can often be explicitly wrapped up in social change. As Gifford argues, "continuity through change is a problem for any religion, and scripture is often one of the key things enabling the community to negotiate major transformations, providing the means of rendering changes explicable and manageable, thus ensuring some experience of identity over time."89 This is clearly evident in the Moroccan independence movement, which associated itself closely with Salafi reformism and new ideas of Islamic nationalism.

88 Ibid, 399.
89 Ibid, 399.
Importantly, the way to this reimagining of religious authority was torn open by the crippling of traditional spaces—both physical and conceptual—where the religious scripture and tradition would in previous eras be engaged.

What Gifford’s theory indicates to us are principally two things. Firstly, that the typical sources of religious authority—scripture and tradition—are actually spaces of ongoing activity involving the entire community. These are relational terms, and cannot be understood apart from the historical community that is constantly engaging with them. Thus, how religious authority is formulated, its scope and jurisdiction, is not merely at the whim of the most powerful scholars, as Edmund Burke might suggest, but rather constrained in different ways by formulations of valued religious knowledge at different levels of engagement, from *msid* to madrasa. Secondly, as the product of the unfinished activity of a historical community, formulations of religious authority are subject to change over time, something that is most sharply evident during great historical upheavals such as establishment of the French Protectorate. This change can be either explicit, such as in the Salafi nationalist movement, or much more subtle and indirect, such as the quietism of the traditionalists to the declining status of the Qarawiyin. And while we cannot discount the remarkable fixity of valued religious knowledge in Morocco—itself a product of the well established, widely accessible and particularly conservative mnemonic style of scholarship—it was the final collapse of the scholarly community by the end of the French Protectorate that freed space for new formulations of the authority and jurisdiction of the scholar.

Leading the most visible transformation of scholarly jurisdiction is the charismatic Abdessalam Yassine. In the final part of his theoretical discussion, Gifford notes that charismatic authorities and tradition “tend to tug in different directions; charisma and tradition inevitably enjoy a somewhat conflictual relationship.” Here, the routinization and standardization that

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90 Ibid, 407.
delimits traditional conceptions of authority is the obverse to the breakaway ideologue, who would engage the text independently of communal precedents. Yet, Yassine was able to harness the popular paradigm of the *naṣīḥa*, tradition at the level of the laity, without reference to its limitations, the preserve of the departed *ʿulamāʾ*. In many ways, the religious landscape in post-independence Morocco was ideally suited for Yassine’s particular challenge to the King.
Chapter 4

Conclusion

As Gifford argues, even charismatic authority “must become routinised into standardized procedures and structures if the group is to persist beyond the life of the figure who triggered it.” For Yassine, this standardization came in the form of the Justice and Spirituality Movement (Jamāʿat al-ʿAdl wa al-ʿIhsān), an Islamist socio-political organization for his particular brand of fundamentalist ideology. Despite many previous ventures, including attempting to hijack a Sufi order, coerce the government and rally support in the political sphere, the Justice and Spirituality Movement would prove to be the source of Yassine's lasting influence in the Moroccan political landscape.

Yet, the Justice and Spirituality Movement retains the basic model of the charismatic Sufi leader, and thus remains highly centralized. Yassine’s popularity still largely relies on downturns in the economy and his use of naṣīḥa for a continual criticism of the regime. In this way, the influence of the movement depends on how much Abdessalam Yassine himself is perceived to be a legitimate authority, which in turn depends on the current climates and popular understandings of religious knowledge in post-colonial Morocco.

As Tozy argues, the cult of veneration around the 81-year-old Yassine as nearly a living saint is both a source of momentum for the Justice and Spirituality Movement as well as an indication of its life expectancy. For the moment, Yassine's strategy of co-opting and revising of the naṣīḥa tradition has also limited him, since working within this paradigm requires that he operate alone, with only the ever-shifting popular understandings of scholarly authority to derive

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91 Ibid, 407.

legitimacy from. Set against the state, Yassine is forced to explore new avenues of influence, which is particularly evident in the popularity of his daughter Nadia (who leads the feminist branch of the Justice and Spirituality Movement, and is well known for her public debates, media presence and well marketed activism). This is also evident in his renewed naṣīḥa to the new King Mohammed VI, published on a brand new website for the movement in early 2000 after the young monarch had ascended the throne:

Much shorter and less polished, it is written in French and is practically devoid of religious content and symbolism. Its tone is ‘youthful,’ using an up-to-date vocabulary in which it is possible to recognize something of the style of Yassine’s daughter Nadia. The situation had changed from that of a mimeographed letter to one sent through the internet, made available for everyone to read in an open public forum.

It is, of course, difficult to predict what the future of Moroccan religious authority will look like. After some hesitation, it is clear that the new King is quite interested in continuing his father’s role as the canonical voice of Morocco’s unique brand of Islam. The fact that Mohammed VI is taking firm steps to establish a definite Moroccan orthodoxy, in his standardization of official theology and religious law, indicates a potential settling that was impossible under his father’s program of ambiguous neglect. Yet, as technology and the globalization of ideology continue to stir the still unsettled terrain of post-colonial religious authority, it is not clear how the voices of dissidence will adapt. The rise of Nadia Yassine, who in certain contexts overshadows the importance of her father to the Justice and Spirituality Movement, is in direct proportion to the popularization of the internet and other new forms of media to convey and engage valued religious knowledge. It will be interesting to see how relevant Abdessalam Yassine himself will remain to the movement as this model of influence changes.

93 Zeghal, Islamism in Morocco, 134.
To truly understand these events, it is critical to trace the long arc of historical developments in early modern Morocco, and particularly the transformation of the religious educational institute. Yet, this story is not one of inexorable evolution. Although the changes in the place of Islamic education and educators in Moroccan society might be seen as a necessary outcome of an era of colonialism—and indeed there are similar histories in other countries—there is a protean human element that must be considered. While the physical space of Moroccan education shifted under the political demands of the period, so too did the conceptual space of valued religious knowledge specific to the Moroccan style of Islam, in ways that were more unpredictable and inadvertent but no less significant. Rather than being the special preserve of a few political leaders or lofty scholars, these evolutions and revolutions both effected and were affected by popular constructions of valued religious knowledge to increasing degrees in a process of engagement that Gifford describes in his theory. Today, these new and liberated spaces for religious authority are still not under any one actor's power. The recent attempt of Mohammed VI to establish some sort of official orthodoxy may ultimately suppress some of the power of dissident voices, yet this notably politicized theology is far removed from the highly entangled and aloof Islamic sciences of pre-colonial Moroccan religious authority. It remains to be seen what footprint this new orthodoxy will leave.
Appendix 1: Transliteration

I adopted a simple transliteration system based on the ALA-LC Library of Congress standard to rendering Arabic terminology into the Roman alphabet. All non-common vocabulary is transcribed with this system (whereas established loanwords, like Qur’an, imam, madrasa, Qarawiyin and so on are not transliterated).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ﱡ</td>
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<td>ف</td>
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<tr>
<td>ﱢ</td>
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<td>ﱧ</td>
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<tr>
<td>ﱨ</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>ه</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﱩ</td>
<td>w (ū as a vowel)</td>
<td>و</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﱪ</td>
<td>y (ī as a vowel)</td>
<td>ي</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Diacritic Marks

- (Doubles letter)
- a
- i
- u
Appendix 2: Glossary of Arabic Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Term</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘ālim, pl. ‘ulamā‘</td>
<td>Religious scholar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṣalamiyya</td>
<td>The graduate degree that authorizes a scholar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barakah</td>
<td>Divine magical charisma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bay‘ah</td>
<td>Islamic oath of fealty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bilād al-makhzan</td>
<td>Land of government, see footnote 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bilād as-sībah</td>
<td>Land of dissidence, see footnote 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fiqh</td>
<td>Islamic jurisprudence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṣqīh</td>
<td>Moroccan colloquial term for religious instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḥabūs</td>
<td>The legal process that establishes a waqf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḥāfiẓ</td>
<td>Keeper, or guardian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jahl</td>
<td>Ignorance, specifically invoking pre-Islamic society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jāmi‘ah, pl. jāmi‘āt</td>
<td>Islamic university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>madrasa</td>
<td>Religious school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makhzan</td>
<td>The sultan or king’s government, lit. “storehouse”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masjid</td>
<td>Mosque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>msid</td>
<td>Moroccan colloquial term for Qur’an school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nasīha</td>
<td>Scholarly tradition of offering frank council to ruler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qāḍī, pl. quḍāh</td>
<td>Islamic judge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sharīf, pl. ashrāf</td>
<td>Descendent of Muhammad, lit. “noble”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ṭarīqah, pl. Ṭuruq</td>
<td>Sufi order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taṣawwuf</td>
<td>Islamic science of spirituality, based on mysticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waqf</td>
<td>Religious charitable endowment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zāwīya, pl. zawāyā</td>
<td>Sufi lodge and academy, lit. “corner”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 3: Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Sidi Muḥammad ibn Ṭabd al-Kabīr al-Kattānī is born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Mulay Hassan I, sultan of Morocco and religious reformist, dies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Sidi Muhammad bin Jaʿfar al-Kattānī writes his <em>naṣīḥa</em> against the enfeebled ruler Mulay Ṭabd al-ʿAzīz for allowing increasing European encroachment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Sidi Muḥammad ibn Ṭabd al-Kabīr al-Kattānī is killed by Mulay Ṭabd al-Ḥafīẓ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Agadir Crisis clears the way for colonial control of Morocco.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>French Protectorate established in Morocco.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Reform of Qarawiyin meets with resistance from the ‘ulamāʾ and is abandoned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>The <em>collèges musulmans</em> (Muslim colleges) are founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>The <em>écoles des fils notables</em> (primary schools for the elite) are established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>The <em>Institute des Hautes Études</em> is founded in Rabat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Hubert Lyautey, the first Resident-General of Morocco, steps down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Abdessalam Yassine born in Marrakech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>The Berber decree declares rural, Berber regions of Morocco are not subject to Islamic law. Mass protests ensue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Sultan Mohammed V is exiled to Madagascar by the French authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Mohammed V returns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Moroccans achieve independence, ending the era of the French Protectorate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Hassan II ascends the throne.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Hassan II issues a royal decree to reorganize and fragment the Qarawiyin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Hassan II founds the Dar al-Hadith al-Hassaniya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Yassine goes through a &quot;spiritual crisis.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Yassine addresses his <em>naṣīḥa</em>, &quot;Islam or the Deluge,&quot; to Hassan II.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Mohammed VI ascends the throne.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Yassine renews his <em>naṣīḥa</em> to the reigning king.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Radical Islamist group Salafia Jihadia carries out a terrorist attack in Casablanca.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Mohammed VI pushes forward a reform of the <em>Mudawwana</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Mohammed VI standardizes an official orthodoxy with the publication of the &quot;Manual for Imams and Preachers.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


The School of Imam Abdessalam Yassine, Short Biography of Imam Abdessalam Yassine.

