PAR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REVIEW

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In the Semi-Shadow of the Global West: Moroccan *zawāyā* as Good Public Administration

Research Article

Abstract: *The 2020 international protests addressing structural racism and colonial legacies have also questioned Western ascendancy on defining (good) governance. Non-Western traditional forms of governance surviving today, despite not receiving much academic attention, pose an obvious alternative. This study analyses key indigenous institutions in Morocco known as zawāyā, and in doing so, fills some of the lacunae on Islamic-African public administration. Drawing from novel data collected via ethnographic fieldwork across three domains of public service provision, the authors, apparently for the first time in such a context, present a public administration that is functional in its operation, delivering on its goals, and on both counts markedly different from the global-Western mainstream. Our results uncover a public administration that (1) coexists with a larger state, (2) delivers coproduced services, and (3) merits recognition.*

Evidence for Practice

- Decenters public administration models taken for granted by showing them to be global-Western, rather than universal, allowing for greater contextuality in analysis and reform.
- For development administration, justifies looking for and, if needed, improving indigenous models and truly listening to stakeholders.
- Displays how (very) alternative service providers can still work with, rather than against, the mainstream framework.

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In a world where Anglo-American public administration (PA) reigns supreme (Pollitt 2015), the history of "traditional" public administration in the corresponding mainstream literature only dates back to the late 1800s United States (Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg 2014). We argue for a different view of PA history, in this case beginning with Peters' notion of "governing in the shadows," which posits that governance and PA are carried out not only by the state, but also through alternatives such as the market, experts, and more generally social actors and institutions (Peters 2019). The fact that these alternatives can operate in the shadows of a (global-Western) state has allowed for them to be carriers of traditional public administration within their own contexts (Drechsler 2013; for Africa generally, Lund 2006).

However, these instances of non-Western PA have been largely overlooked in Western academic literature, although hopefully not for much longer. The protests of 2020 began in resistance against police brutality in the United States and then broadened to the global North, first via the United Kingdom, to oppose racial, ethnic, and even colonial disenfranchisement and marginalization—meaning, they started in Anglo-America (Dalton 2020). The likely result for PA (and many other fields) is a decentering of the Western approach and, in tandem, a consideration of previously neglected alternatives (Althaus 2020). This is especially significant in our field, given that PA is a central form of power and coercion in modern times (Weber 1922).

In particular, the Western neglect of, and ignorance about, Islamic governance institutions and their extant and evolving systems that have been operational for at least 800 years is problematic in many ways. At the level of public discourse, including some of the Muslim world, any non-state organization involved with governance that can be classified as Islamic would likely and, to state the obvious, falsely draw links to contemporary terrorist organizations. But administration emphasizes normalcy, and extremists generally, as well as in this specific case, abhor bureaucracy (Kadri 2011). The eminent legacy of maximally neutral, professional, realist, and highly sophisticated people-centric PA in Islamic countries, while a standard view for historians by now, is not a mainstay of contemporary mainstream PA knowledge

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(Drechsler 2018). This disengagement has deprived scholars, and not least students, from understanding instances of already functioning and robust PA in practice, which differ in many regards from Western standards. Those who wish to cover their own legacy risk serious alienation, especially from compatriots, perpetuating as it does the image of Northern-White supremacy and its (allegedly) objectively beneficial PA legacy.

But a fundamental question remains: can traditional Islamic PA institutions actually contribute any generally valid lessons or knowledge that can inform the larger field of PA today? Or are these institutions marginal cases that are far too specialized and therefore should be confined to religious and anthropological studies? After all, while it is obvious that non-global-Western, let alone Anglo-American, institutions led their regions and the world across the millennia, the challenge seems to be to find well-working systems or examples of Islamic PA today that corroborate contemporary relevance. This is not difficult as regards the second great non-Western tradition, Confucian PA, which is not only the original model for the functioning modern state, but also so successful today that to dismiss it off-hand would look merely bizarre—although how Confucian some Asian countries are is a matter of ongoing debate (Bice et al. 2018). For Islamic PA, however, the question must currently be addressed.

This article explores a working model of alternative service provision in Morocco and, in turn, contributes to the nascent scholarly work on Islamic PA from an African perspective. It is, therefore, not the argument that Moroccan PA is non-Western, but that within Moroccan PA, non-Western elements and indeed a non-Western structure exist. What is alternative is twofold: (1) the lack of strict regulation by the Moroccan state (i.e. governing in the shadows), which allows for (2) the unusual absence of international (i.e. Western) governance standards as a departure point, but rather, service provision that is designed and administered with respect to locally informed beliefs and practices. Due to its geostrategic location, political stability, and status as a spiritual leader in African Islam (Muedini 2015), Morocco is both important for and potentially indicative of Islamic PA.

The institutions in Morocco responsible for this kind of alternative service provision are known as *zawāyā* (singular: *zāwiya*), which are local organizations that were historically organized around professions (i.e. guilds), and which provided lodging all along the pilgrimage route from West Africa to Mecca (Eickelman 1981). The spiritual dynamics of *zawāyā* culminate in what are known as Sufi paths. Sufism is commonly understood to be the spiritual, non-legalistic current of Islam that outwardly manifests through routine supererogatory devotion and more generically, everyday social affairs and interactions (Lings 1975). Put simply, Sufism can be defined as the Islamic process of character refinement—and it is also a defining feature of both the informal practice and the state-sponsored version of Islam in Morocco (Muedini 2015).

However, there has been, and continues to be, another dimension to *zawāyā* apart from the strictly spiritual: the arrangement of (a) education systems, (b) public works (e.g. roads, schools, bakeries, mosques), and (c) social services (care of socially marginalized). These services were historically organized and implemented to varying degrees by local non-state institutions. In fact, all three were rarely seen as the responsibility of the government before the appearance of the modern welfare state, which subsequently reversed this perception on a global scale (Derlien and Guy Peters 2009). This reversal of perception may partially be due to the much wider range of services that fall under the responsibility of governments today as opposed to 100 years ago (Raadschelders 2003). But does this dimension of *zawāyā* constitute a body of PA knowledge and practice that is valuable to scholars and practitioners more broadly?

To answer, this article proceeds accordingly: We begin by exploring the theoretical foundations of Islamic PA, the origin and diverse institutional history of *zawāyā*, and the contemporary configuration of the Moroccan state—all necessary to situate the research question, especially as even basic knowledge of the context cannot be assumed. After discussing our methods, we then present the case studies themselves. The final section highlights three key contributions to the literature. First, how a system of traditional PA external to the state can exist alongside it, and deliver results that even strengthen it. Second, how the "citizen-centric" component of service delivery can materialize by understanding the context of citizens, rather than an expectation that they will, or should, eventually arrive at a global-Western understanding. Third, based on the preceding points, that institutions of traditional, Non-Western PA deserve recognition as valid alternatives—in the interest of both those who receive and those who give it (Drechsler 2013).

Background

Non-Western Public Administration

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a new unipolar era in world history, namely, one in which the Western (i.e. Anglo-American) economic and political paradigm stood unchallenged at the global level (Pollitt 2015). From the PA perspective, this resulted in an implicit and formulaic understanding (Drechsler 2013):

Western = global = good = modern.

One of the most problematic consequences of this approach is that in assuming ubiquitous and perpetual Western superiority, one is required to jettison any social values, cultural traditions, and institutions that are non-Western (Drechsler 2019). In addition, highly competitive non-Western models and the decline of Western PA's prima facie supremacy during the last quarter century have arguably made this approach factually somewhat quaint (Drechsler 2019). Eliminating existing institutions and lived traditions is particularly difficult in the case of majority Muslim countries, which generally—religiosity of people and theological differences aside—regard Islam as unambiguously important (Feldman 2012).

Instead of the standard, wholesale transfer of Western models of governance to the rest of the world that still characterizes mainstream PA approaches, Non-Western PA (NWPA) calls for recognizing aspects of governance that are universally applicable (and indeed there exists much overlap between paradigms), and others that are not (Drechsler 2013). In the case of the latter, non-universal, context-specific solutions, NWPA insists on working with what is already present and functioning and "good" in a particular paradigm. But what is "good" PA exactly? If we assume that PA can

be reduced to mechanics (implementation) and ethics (goals), then good PA could, for our purposes, be defined as having efficient mechanics without sacrificing ethics (Drechsler 2013, with further references). More generally, this reflects the idea that there must be multiple ways of understanding "good" and "modern" that are not Western (Matin-Asgari 2004).

To understand what is already present and good in Morocco, we now turn to the overall history of *zawāyā* and their status as organizations of Islamic PA in academic literature.

History of Zawāyā

Proto-*zawāyā* first appeared in Morocco in the late 12th century CE, and were known as "houses of generosity," which were essentially places of religious education, worship, and accommodation. Carrying over the same institutional qualities, the earliest known place in Morocco bearing the name of *zāwiya* was constructed by Shaykh Abi Mohamed Salih (d. 1,234) in Asfi (Al-Harraq 2015).

Rapid propagation of *zawāyā* began throughout Morocco in the mid-15th century under the Maranid monarchy. By this time, another common trait of *zawāyā* was their autonomous financial creation and operation through an endowment (*waqf*), whose overall purpose, be it charity, education, or religious observation, should not be altered *ex post* (Barnes 1987) and which can be state or privately held. The *waqf* has recently been re-embraced, if not uncontested, as an alternative form of endowing, administering, and securing public services in light of administrative fashions geared toward cutting them down or even eliminating them (see only Deligöz 2014). As for the Maranids, they devised a novel administrative solution to allow these decentralized institutions to continue to exist: monarchs begin visiting even the most remote areas with troops and bureaucrats to personally receive an oath of allegiance (*bayʿa*) from tribe and *zawāyā* leadership to the sultan—the temporal and spiritual leader (Eickelman 1981). Along with tax collection, *bayʿa* therefore cemented the power of and loyalty to the central Moroccan state, while in tandem setting the stage to afford a degree of political autonomy to *zawāyā* for centuries to come (Miller 2013).

At the turn of the 17th century, although continuing to organize their core activities in Islamic education, worship, and hospitality, *zawāyā* debuted into the realm of full-fledged statesmanship. Most saliently, the Dila *Zāwiya* successfully launched military campaigns to establish themselves as the unchallenged rulers of Northern Morocco, and in 1637 a new Shaykh was appointed not only the leader of the Dila *Zāwiya*, but as the Sultan of Morocco (Al-Nasiri 2001).

By 1666, the Alawites defeated the Dila and, in so doing, united Morocco under one dynasty that continues to the present day. A strong, consolidated central Moroccan government meant the removal of any serious threats to the throne, in turn allowing loyal (i.e. *bayʿa* pledging) *zawāyā* to not only continue to exist but also be empowered to manage the affairs of their local constituents (Eickelman and Salvatore 2002).

Through the centuries, the Alawite dynasty openly supported *zawāyā* in their traditional core activities, and in parallel utilized them as local agents of administration. The 1870s overhaul of the Moroccan state bureaucracy was largely made possible by the recruitment of public servants from *zawāyā*, whose members brought forth qualities such as a strong command of Arabic, adherence to codes of conduct, dress, worship, and an overall sense of self-confidence (Miller 2013). The self-confidence of *zāwiya* educated bureaucrats in the face of encroaching Western culture and values certainly reflected a sense of obligation toward the preservation of tradition, which was (and still remains) one of the fundamental institutional goals of *zawāyā* (Al-Nasiri 2001).

This history highlights the versatile nature of *zawāyā* as historical institutions, ranging from guilds, lodges, repositories of theological knowledge and mystical practices, and even preparatory academies for state bureaucracies. However, studies on contemporary *zawāyā* have focused on their spiritual aspects (Diaz 2014; Eickelman 1981) and largely ignored the public service provision perspective of how *zawāyā* function as institutions of PA.

Moroccan Monarchy, Bifurcated PA, and Zawāyā *Today*

Today, two distinct but parallel systems of PA exist in Morocco. The first is a "modern" system—whose origin traces back to colonial French PA, however due to waves of sweeping reforms since the early 2000s, and in the case of France itself since the 1990s (Bezes 2008), is very much integrated into the Anglo-American mainstream (Zemrani 2014). Take for instance the multi-stage PA reform program in partnership with the World Bank, where Morocco received a loan in exchange for the successful implementation of NPM-inspired reforms e.g. introduction of performance measurements, a shift of focus from effectiveness to efficiency, etc. (World Bank 2010). Or the 2019 OECD-EU-led conference in Rabat, which assessed how the Moroccan state performed according to a set of principles designed for European Neighboring Policy countries to bring about good, democratic, governance that is based on "international standards" (SIGMA 2015). Finally, despite an ongoing process of Arabization since independence in 1956, there is the example of l'Ecole Nationale Superieure de l'Administration, the official body responsible for educating and training Moroccan civil servants, which offers bachelors, masters, and short-term continuing education opportunities (ENSA 2020) in French—the de facto second language that only 35% of the population are proficient in (OIF 2018). Unsurprisingly, the modern Moroccan PA system has proved unable to build partnerships with local community-based organizations (Bergh 2010).

The other system is that of traditional PA, which is based on traditional authority, namely elites and loyal subjects to the King (e.g. *zawāyā*) that operate under a set of largely informal rules (Naguib 2020). This bifurcated nature of Moroccan PA can be regarded as a consequence of The King's Dilemma, which according to Huntington is a problem faced by monarchies involving the relationship between the centralization of power (which brings social cohesion and stability), and the expansion of power to include other "modern" groups (which empowers popular consent via elections, parties, and legislatures) (Huntington 2006), at least in non-small countries (Corbett, Veenendaal, and Ugyel 2017), such as Morocco. Of the three classic responses to the dilemma—full transition to a ceremonial monarchy, continuation of the monarchy

as the sole authority, or coexistence of the traditional and modern—Morocco is a paragon of the latter.

Indeed, Morocco is home to a constitutional, albeit executive, monarchy that has been in power since 1666, making it the oldest in the Arab world. The nature of the Alawite monarchy's legitimacy is inherently Islamic: due to this unbroken dynastic chain of sharifan (i.e. descendancy from the Prophet) genealogy, all kings of Morocco carry the title "Commander of the Believers" (Joffe 1988). The Alawites therefore hold a legitimate claim to the Prophet's temporal and spiritual authority, which is reinforced by shared core beliefs, by sovereignty codified in the constitution—and by traditional institutions such as *zawāyā* (Naguib 2020). Up to the present day, Moroccan sharifan rule employs soft-power-building strategies directly (e.g. patronage of the countryside and the poor via *zawāyā*) or symbolically (e.g. pledges of *bayʿa* to the King). This ritualization of soft power ultimately bolsters the sacred status of the Monarchy in the popular mind and allows it to yield tremendous "religious and charismatic capital" (Daadaoui 2011, 141).

The current King, Mohammed VI, fully embraces Sufi Islam, and its institutional representation in *zawāyā*, as a moderate and authentic understanding of Islam that facilitates social and political stability, and directly challenges Islamist extremism (Muedini 2015). This dynamic enables *zawāyā* to provide successful public service provision, and do so with fervent support and approval from their constituents, without being perceived as a threat by the central state—as oftentimes non-state peripheral success is perceived to be, especially regionally (Bekkaoui and Larémont 2011).

In this way, the Alawites have carried forward the historical legacy of "relaxed centralization," i.e., a firmly established central government that can subsequently be comfortable enough to allow traditional institutions in the Moroccan periphery room to play and persevere. In contrast to the *Ersatzvornahme* model, which is the resurgence of alternative service provision in light of a larger state failure, which Urinboyev has impressively demonstrated regarding *mahalla* (traditional Islamic local governance in parallel to the "official" one) in Uzbekistan (Urinboyev 2014), the Moroccan monarchy has purposefully allowed the *continuation* of centuries-old public service provision autonomously led by overtly loyal ex-state institutions.

The Moroccan variant of the coexistence solution to The King's Dilemma can therefore be summarized as (1) a modern system that represents urban elites and reflects global-Western standards or at least objectives, alongside (2) a traditional, indigenous Islamic PA system embodied by *zawāyā* that operates throughout municipal areas in the semi-shadow of the Moroccan state (to adapt Peters' concept). Put differently, the latter system is simultaneously supported and left to be, but relied upon as a source of sacred soft power. The next section outlines the methodological strategy of our fieldwork aimed at capturing how *zawāyā* autonomously craft and implement alternative service delivery for and with their constituents.

Research Design

We studied traditional *zawāyā* in Morocco through a multi-site case design, researching their historical and contemporary status as institutions generally, and in particular the dynamics that pertain to their provision of services for constituents—which to our knowledge is the first such study of its kind. Three *zawāyā* were chosen based on geography and language to represent the regional diversity across Morocco, as well as the ability to coordinate in-person data-collection trips. Although each *zāwiya* provides multiple services, we selected one unique service domain that each of the three *zawāyā* is renowned for. Our approach to public administration field research was discursive (Zittoun 2009), in that we focused on the subjective role and perspective of embedded actors to understand a social phenomenon.

As a result, our research design accommodated two different sources of evidence. First, we collected data through systematic participant observation of *zawāyā* rituals and activities during and outside of their annual festivals. Our approach was informed by the well-established "go-along method" of ethnographic research (Kusenbach 2003), which allows fieldworkers to "actively explore their subjects' stream of experiences and practices as they move through, and interact with, their physical and social environment" (Kusenbach 2016, 154), and aided by one of the authors' intimate knowledge of the local language and decorum. This allowed us to capture and reflect upon idiosyncratic communication such as body language, deferential silence or gestures, and other social cues. Second, we conducted in-person interviews with *zāwiya* leadership and veteran members that we semi-structured around the service provision activities of that particular *zāwiya*. Allowing narratives to emerge around the "what" and "how" instead of the "why" (Zittoun 2021) meant interviewees were not justifying, but rather feeling at ease to relay their perspectives as *zāwiya* bureaucrats.

In total, we conducted 12 focused interviews, each lasting at least 1 hour, over the course of a year. They were held in a mix of Classical Arabic and Moroccan dialect, and all quotations of interviewees are the authors' own translation. Setting up the interviews required establishing trust through referrals and personal rapport, part of which was seeking and receiving informed consent for participation and sharing generic details such as approximate age, gender, and relation to the *zāwiya*. Drawing from established guidelines of ethnographic fieldwork (Sangasubana 2011), we identified and specifically sought to interview *zāwiya* leadership and senior members as they are the individuals responsible for planning, organizing, and often even implementing service provision activities. Therefore, their thoughts and perspectives were paramount in the gathering of the data—they are, and were treated as, the experts. The limitations that such an approach and focus may have are, in our view, clearly outweighed by the advantages of gathering new (or forgotten or neglected), and newly-frameable, insights and even approaches to PA knowledge within the global discourse, especially at the current, more exploratory stage.

Results

In this section, we present our empirical field research on *zawāyā* across three areas of public administration that are today, as previously mentioned, considered to fall under the purview and responsibility of the state. We begin with the foundational aspects of *zawāyā* that are shared across our three cases. In terms of infrastructure, all *zawāyā* have what can be described as a headquarters, which is the actual (adobe) brick and mortar space erected in the hometown of the *zāwiya*'s founding Shaykh, which

can be a male or female. *Zawāyā* with a larger number of followers have branch locations operating in every major urban center in Morocco, while those with provincial followings suffice with one main location (i.e. headquarters) (W2, S2).

Administratively, *zawāyā* inherited their historical system of management: a leader in the form of a charismatic Shaykh and numerous prominent members (*mqadam*) who together form the *zāwiya*'s administrative body. A *mqadam* can either be chosen by a Shaykh, or by a council of *mqadam* who operate with the Shaykh's blessing. Although the unequivocal final decision-maker, a Shaykh will consult on decisions with one or many *mqadam*, following the normative Islamic injunction to do so (W4). All *zawāyā* are required to ceremoniously pledge their *bayʿa* to the King and in return are recognized and given the right to exist, as well as the right to receive monetary gifts given by the monarchy. This gift is one of three sources of income, the other two being member contributions and land/business owned partially or fully by a *zāwiya* (D1, W3, W4, S1).

Infrastructure—Darqawi* Zāwiya*, High Atlas

Since its inception in the late 18th century, the Darqawi *Zāwiya* has been and still remains one of the largest and most prominent in Morocco. This is in large part due to the *zāwiya*'s unambiguous praise of asceticism and focus on reliably delivering the essentials of (a modest) life and the subsequent traction this has with working-class Moroccans (Al-Nasiri 2001).

Public service provision in the form of infrastructure began early in the Darqawi *Zāwiya*'s history, with the construction of a well and basin in the main *zāwiya* for public use. Still functional today, the construction of the well was overseen by the founder's son, but carried out with the help of senior and everyday members of the *zāwiya* (D3). As his great grandson explained, this communal approach to public works is a common feature of all *zawāyā*, as it is an opportunity to take part in a *khidma*, i.e., a menial service or task for the public good (D2). Apart from inducing humility and promoting social cohesion, participants in *khidma* are undergoing a spiritual exercise in that they perceive it as an opportunity to tip the scales of divine accounting toward the good (D1).

Within the Darqawi network of *zawāyā*, the authors conducted research on a branch that was established in the late 19th century as one of the earliest structures in the then village of Beni Mellal (D1). Today, the Darqawi *Zāwiya* sits at the epicenter of the city of Beni Mellal, at the head of the main street adjacent to a public bathhouse (hammam) and bakery. This triumvirate of *zāwiya*/hammam/bakery is characteristic of *zāwiya* public works. The basic idea is that the heat of the ovens used for bread making in the bakery is harnessed to heat the water of hammam, as well as the water in the ritual washing area of the *zāwiya*. All three spaces are considered essential parts of any civilized place (i.e. of the daily public lives of locals), and therefore seen by the *zāwiya* as an important responsibility (D2).

The local building tradition throughout Morocco is one that involves adobe brick, stone, and rammed earth construction, although the Darqawi *Zāwiya* in Beni Mellal is now a hybrid of the traditional construction method along with cement bricks and metal (D3). The local tradition of construction requires annual renovation, usually nothing foundational, just a re-plastering of the external walls or roof repair. As a female member of the Darqawi *Zāwiya* for over 50 years explained, these renovations were historically communal in nature, bringing together locals in another instance of *khidma* (D1).

A Shaykh explained that the nature of this type of construction is also symbolic of the *zāwiya*'s relationship with human beings. That is, it is the role of the *zāwiya* to build up people with a solid foundation of knowledge and character that will only require regular communal renovation or polishing (D2). Altering the construction process in a way that suspends renovation, explained a *mqadam*, results from the assumption that one can in a single instance build something that will remain solid forever (D3). He was referring to both the rapid and expansive influx of cement and metal architecture that had become the default even for *zawāyā*, as well as the prevalence of the view that one can construct an enduring spiritual and ethical foundation by and for themselves. Both of these perspectives are foreign and mutually exclusive to that of the *zāwiya*.

Education—Sidi Waggag* Zāwiya*, Anti-Atlas Foothills

In much of the rural Maghreb and West Africa, *zawāyā* have historically served and still remain the nooks (last bastions) and pillars (backbone) of literacy and Islamic knowledge transmission (El Hamel 1999). All *zawāyā* more or less share a common pedagogy, rooted in a set of sequential texts in the form of prose and poetry known as the Timbuktu Syllabus (W2). After memorizing the Qur'an, a student continues their intellectual formation with the first part of the classical trivium (i.e. grammar/morphology). This is followed by theology, jurisprudence, and a completion of the trivium (i.e. logic and rhetoric) (El Hamel 1999).

Although al-Qarawiyyin in Fes is the oldest continually operating university in the world, the Sidi Waggag *Zāwiya* in the Sous region of Morocco has its own distinction: it is the oldest continually operating madrasa in the country (W1). The *zāwiya* still provides approximately 100 students with a traditional Islamic education that lasts around 12 years (W2). The *zāwiya* is the only madrasa in Morocco whose students are given a tertiary level degree (undergraduate equivalent) upon graduation (W2).

The doors of the *zāwiya* are open to students, regardless of age, to study and receive free room and board. Historically, *zawāyā* throughout Morocco provided a place to live, food, and a monthly stipend to support their students, all of which was regarded as a sense of pride for the local population. Today, Sidi Waggag is one of the last educational *zawāyā* still in operation, with others having declined due to the formal, French-based education system (W4).

The success of *zawāyā*'s traditional education system is in no small part due to the dynamic role of women: as students, teachers (as the first providers of early education to children), and savants/Shaykh, such as Khadijatu bint al-'Aqil, who was famous for her commentary on the most widely studied treatise on logic in the Muslim world (El Hamel 1999). The largest contemporary *zāwiya* festival in Morocco in terms of attendees, Ta'lat, is named after the woman who founded a small *zāwiya* focused on education (W2).

In terms of pedagogy, core instruction is done by a handful of teachers and a Shaykh who offer brief but daily 1:1 time with

students—much more along the lines of mentorship (W3). Students use their time with teachers to summarize and present their understanding and ask any questions they may have. The rest of the day is for student review, reading, teaching, and memorization—all of which are done both individually and with fellow students across cohorts (W4).

Much of the learning in the *zāwiya* is tacit in nature, through the observation of teachers and especially the Shaykh, and focused on how students should carry themselves in the world—one senior student summarized the experience as: "learning more from what they do than what they say" (W5). This character development is also taught through infrequent 1:1 consultation of students, which is unlike daily lessons, as well as ritual practice made up of a daily group litany (above and beyond the required minimum for all Muslims).

> *The practice of dhikr (litany recitation) grants a sincere person respite and resoluteness in the face of worldly agitations and challenges. It also grants them an intimacy with the Divine – the ultimate goal of an education* (W1).

This practice links back to the traditional architecture notion encountered in Beni Mellal with regards to consistently refining a structure (or one's character) in a group manner and also highlights the importance of communal engagement. One *mqadam* boiled down the *zāwiya* educational emphasis to be "your relations and how you treat others" and the desired outcome to be individuals who "are a mercy upon others" (W3). Seemingly, *zawāyā* are not in the enterprise of producing recluse scholars.

Social Services—Shaquri* Zāwiya*, Rif Foothills

The Shaquri *Zāwiya* is an offshoot of the Darqawi *Zāwiya* and, similarly, focuses on minimalism, providing basic essentials for its constituents and neighbors, and continually welcoming guests by day. Today, the disadvantaged of Chefchaouen surrounding the Shaquri *Zāwiya* are able to expect regular support in the form of food or money (S1). Charity in the form of money is mostly stipends that are earmarked for the needy and widows. As for food, once a week, the *zāwiya* offers a free meal and additional takeaway snacks for anyone who attends—in older times it used to be three times a week (S4). There is a large kitchen on the roof of the *zāwiya* where both men and women were observed preparing food, and ultimately serving it in gender-segregated areas.

Before the meal is served, members recite the Quran as well as traditional poems in characteristically Islamic Andalusian melodic scales (S1). One middle-aged female member of the *zāwiya*, who since her childhood was trained in this tradition of recitation, explained:

> *These poems are a joint expression of gratitude to God and a joint expression of love for the Prophet as much as they are a protection against gossiping and other unscrupulous social behavior when we gather together at the zāwiya. This is why it is so important to preserve them* (S3).

At the time of writing, the Shaquri *Zāwiya* is led by a Shaykh who is a direct descendant of the original founder. He is a visibly charismatic leader who operates with immense trust and admiration of his followers: they attempt to observe him and emulate his character (S2). The observation is not one-way, however, as the Shaykh sees it as his responsibility to observe and know the state and challenges of individuals so that he can provide appropriate guidance:

> *Just as a father or mother cannot always advise, teach, or guide all of their children in a uniform way, the Shaykh gives every person precisely what they can understand, act upon, and succeed – with proper intention and perseverance* (S4).

A notable example of this dynamic is the efficacy and reach of the Shaquri *Zāwiya*'s professional networking capacity. If a member is currently a job seeker, the Shaykh will take the time to learn about his or her qualifications, and either recommend they get more experience, education, or training, or personally contact someone in the public or private sector to hire them. Out of deference to the Shaykh, the people who are contacted to find a position for a Shaquri member do indeed follow through (S4). This is not perceived as corruption, because all parties involved start from the understanding that the Shaykh will not make a request arbitrarily (S2).

Another example of bold intervention in social affairs by the Shaquri Shaykh is that of communal reconciliation in the face of any large disputes (e.g. personal falling-outs, inheritance, debts, etc.). The Shaykh hears out the concerned parties and ultimately makes his own judgment call (S4).

Because all involved parties believe that the Shaykh is able to and will make the fair decision (i.e. cannot be corrupted), the Shaykh's assessment is invariably respected (S2). Citing a Quranic injunction, the Shaykh explained that because harmonious families are the building blocks of a harmonious *zāwiya* and community, it is the onus of the *zāwiya* to meticulously preserve kinship ties in both the pleasant and challenging aspects of family life (S3).

In informally speaking to many non-senior members of the Shaquri *Zāwiya* as part of our participant observation, nobody viewed any of these services as intrusive, but instead spoke proudly to us of what they regarded as their well-functioning and Islamic-observant *zāwiya*. This was telling of the underlying trust and respect members have for the *zāwiya*, as well as the fact that involvement is entirely voluntary. The Shaquri, nor any of the other *zawāyā* studied in our fieldwork, engage in any member recruitment activities nor do they approve of it.

In one sentence, the Shaquri Shaykh summarized both Sufism and the reality of *zawāyā* as "one working with one," highlighting the importance of cooperation and mutual help among peers for the commonweal. This sentence has a double meaning, however, and could also be understood as "The One working with one," emphasizing both everyone's reliance on God and, in the end, *zawāyā* amounting to vessels of God's tailor-made guidance and help (S4).

Discussion

We view this study as a timely extension of the scant literature on NWPA from an Islamic-African perspective. Our fieldwork gathered

evidence of Moroccan *zawāyā* crafting and delivering alternative service provision for their members and neighbors. These findings bring three important insights to the surface concerning PA more broadly.

State Coexistence

Our findings presented the workings of *zawāyā* not as mystical sanctuaries, but as indigenous institutions of traditional PA—a strategically sanctioned alternative to that of Morocco's modern system of PA. This bifurcation of Moroccan PA is due to the underlying mutually beneficial dynamic between *zawāyā* and the Alawites. From the perspective of the monarchy, the strong and unwavering allegiance of *zawāyā* affirms the throne's legitimacy via the ritualization of authority and thus provides it with an enduring solution to the issues suggested by The King's Dilemma.

Put differently, the monarchy can comfortably experiment with modernizing its formal PA system based on global-Western standards, because in reality it relies on the traditional PA system to provide legitimacy and stability. On the other hand, the Moroccan monarchy provides in-kind reciprocation to *zawāyā* via support and autonomy, which allows them to carry on governing in its semi-shadow without interruption. Ultimately, a *zāwiya* successfully delivering service provision translates into satisfied local constituents who are loyal to both the *zāwiya* and the state.

This dynamic has certain parallels, in theory, to the NPM-style privatization of public services typically seen in global-Western PA (e.g. Hood 1991; Peters 2001). In an ironic sense, like NPM, the *zawāyā* is akin to the government outsourcing some of its essential public services. However, in complete contrast to NPM, the goals and subsequent mechanics of *zawāyā*'s PA are not rooted in abstract principles of neoclassical economics aimed at promoting competition and maximizing efficiency (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017), but a lived tradition that forms a local understanding and practice of Islam maximizing cooperation and effectiveness—a fitting example of the self-governing capacity of indigenous institutions (see Ostrom 2010).

Coproduction as a Means of Service Provision

The second key insight our findings surface is that *zāwiya* bureaucrats—whether through periodic communal architectural renovation, individual education and mentorship of students, or various interventions in social life—are actively involved in generating and implementing service provision that is both centered on and requires input from local constituents. We therefore argue that *zāwiya* bureaucrats embody a core component of any public servants' craft, which is "the ability to learn from experience and alter the mix of skills to fit both the specific context in which they work and the person for whom they work" (Rhodes 2016, 645). These results complement the stream of PA research on coproduction, which focuses on the improvements to public service provision that arise when citizens are involved in its design and implementation (Bovaird 2007). Global-Western PA has seen a revived interest in coproduction, as Bovaird argues:

> *there is a need for a new type of public service professional: the coproduction development officer, who can help to overcome the reluctance of many professionals to share power with users and their communities and who can act internally in organizations (and partnerships) to broker new roles for coproduction between traditional service professionals, service managers, and the political decision makers who shape the strategic direction of the service system* (Bovaird 2007, 858).

Based on our findings, the operational heart of *zawāyā* are its temporal and spiritual leaders, namely a Shaykh and various *mqadam*. Both are directly and heavily involved in individual member engagement, counsel, support, relationship management, and education, which results in personalized service delivery. In this way, although their official title is not "coproduction development officer," it is apparent that the role of a Shaykh or *mqadam* in the context of *zawāyā* fits Bovaird's concept quite neatly.

Call for Recognition

There are outstanding calls to recover both the traditional skills of bureaucrats, such as counseling, stewardship, practical wisdom (Rhodes 2016), and the inherent, though forgotten, moral perspectives present within all PA (Lynn Jr 2002). Therefore, the third contribution of this study is a potential non-Western response to these calls. Although they span diverse geographies and ethno-linguistic groups, our three case studies point to shared elements between *zawāyā* in terms of real and functioning traditional administrative structure, values, and practices that, accordingly, merit recognition.

After all, "public administration reflects the political and social values and practices of a country … The public sector is an essential element in *maintaining a society's cohesion and prosperity*; the way in which it serves the state and wider society may be seen as a manifestation of its social and political '*conscience*'" (Massey 2010, 196, emphasis our own). Our findings therefore further substantiate the need for diversity within the PA discourse for two reasons.

- First, as institutions of indigenous and traditional PA, *zawāyā* are surely more qualified to understand and represent the "conscience" of their Moroccan constituents than a Western counterpart or Westernizer (i.e. Morocco's formal PA system), which would naturally be "grounded in Western values … Western Public Administration has been accused of being ethnocentric, especially when its concepts, theories, and models are used as a blueprint for reform in non-Western countries" (Raadschelders 2003, 4).
- Second, in terms of experience and knowledge, an uncontroversial place to start would be institutions who have, for 800 years without interruption, worked within the grain (Booth 2011) of, and helped maintain, Moroccan society's "cohesion and prosperity."

Only a first attempt in studying *zawāyā* as instances of NWPA in the Maghreb region, our findings contain certain limitations. Most salient is the scope of the study in terms of the number of *zawāyā* studied, confining only one domain of public service provision per *zāwiya*, and the lack of long-term observation, leaving the possibility that our data could be intermittent. Much of this could (and we hope will) be remedied and addressed by further research on *zawāyā* in their capacity as public administrators within Morocco and regionally.

In terms of policy implications, from the perspective of security and combating extremism, attempting to create new or hybrid PA institutions and values has a track record of failure, and creating more pockets of failed or failing states is not in anyone's interest (on Afghanistan, see already Barfield and Nojumi 2010). Our findings support the notion that "allowing" cases of genuine Islamic PA to not only survive, but to evolve and strengthen, may pose a serious threat to extremist ideology, just as has been argued by some of the most distinguished contemporary ulema about Islam as such as well (Al-Yaqoubi 2015; Murad 2020). But this also requires—and may also pose a serious hurdle for some in—the global West to accept Islamic PA as a valid alternative in the first place.

Conclusion

This article theoretically situates, historically contextualizes, and carefully examines the contemporary service provision activities of indigenous, community-based Islamic institutions in an African context. We suggest, and the results from our novel field research on Moroccan *zawāyā* demonstrate, that a traditional PA system can (1) strengthen the larger state by providing soft power in exchange for governing in its semi-shadow (i.e. be concurrently supported and uninterrupted), (2) reliably deliver essential services that are coproduced by and for local constituents, and accordingly (3) legitimately be regarded as valid by scholars and practitioners despite having markedly different objectives and mechanics from Anglo-American PA. It is our hope that further research will continue to empirically ground the NWPA approach, both for its own sake and as it decenters the Western paradigm. After 2020, this would be an important step in the ongoing development of public administration both in scholarship and practice.

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Field Data Bibliography (all in Morocco)

Darqawi *Zāwiya*:

D1: 1 February 2019—next-door neighbor and 50-year member, F, ca. 70s
D2: 14 June 2019—Shaykh, M, ca. 40s, university professor
D3: 14 June 2019—*mqadam*, M, ca. 60s

Sidi Waggag *Zāwiya*:

W1: 9 July 2019—Shaykh's son, M, early 30s, Arabic instructor
W2: 9 July 2019—Shaykh's son, M, early 20s, graduate student
W3: 10 July 2019—*mqadam*, M, ca. 70s
W4: 11 July 2019—teacher, M, ca. 40s
W5: 11 July 2019—senior student, M, ca. 18

Shaquri *Zāwiya*:

S1: 11 October 2019—Shaykh's grandchild, M, early 20s, graduate student
S2: 9 November 2019—*mqadam*, M, ca. 40s
S3: 9 November 2019—40-year member, F, early 50s, seamstress
S4: 16 November 2019—Shaykh and other senior members, M, ca. 70s

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