RE-FORMING THE KNOT—ʿABDULLĀH AL-GHUMĀRĪʾS ICONOCLASTIC SUNNĪ NEO-TRADITIONALISM[1]

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ABSTRACT: This article studies the life and thought of ʿAbdullāh al-Ghumārī (d. 1413/1993), an accomplished, yet uncelebrated, Muslim scholar from Morocco. After a brief biographical sketch, I present an overview of his thought (including numerous nonconformist views he held) in the fields of theology, law and Sufism. I proceed to analyze his methodology and what it tells us about his interaction with modernity and the Islamic scholarly tradition. Finally, I draw some more general conclusions about Islam in modernity, in light of the views of contemporary French sociologist Hervieu-Léger. I infer that Ghumārī was a nonconformist thinker who leveraged a broad understanding of tradition to remold or revive the tradition from within. The early-modern milieu may have contributed to and facilitated his attempts to restore dynamism to a religious scholarly tradition that had (in some ways at least) become static or stagnant.

Keywords: Ghumārī, Late-Sunnī, Traditionalism, Modernity, Ijtihād, Tradition, Reform

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الشيخ عبد الله الغماري: آراؤه وتعامله مع التراث والحداثة

سهيل إسماعيل لاهير

مدرس أول في معهد فواكه للغة العربية الفصحى – أمريكا

ملخص البحث: تعالج هذه المقالة حياة وفكر أحد كبار علماء المغرب، في القرن العشرين: أبو الفضل عبد الله الغماري (رحمه الله). بعد عرض موجز لسيرته، اشرح آراءه (بما في ذلك من انفراداته واجتهاداته المخالفة لغيره بل تكون أحيانا مخالفة آراء جمهور علماء اهل السنة) في ثلاثة مجالات: العقيدة، والفقه، والتصوف. واختم بتحليل موجز لمنهجه وماذا يفيدنا ذلك المنهج عن كيفية تعامله مع الحداثة والتراث الإسلامي معا وذلك في ضوء كلام بعض علماء الاجتماع المعاصرين الغربيين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الغماري، مفهوم أهل السنة، التراث، الحداثة، الاجتهاد، الإصلاح.

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[1] A preliminary version of this paper was presented at a by-invitation academic conference, "The Contours of Late Sunni Traditionalism" at Duke University in 2010.

"It is no longer tradition if it is servilely copied, without change, the token of life."[1]

Introduction

By the 8th/14th century, the dominant and majority of Sunnī voices defined the Sunnī tradition[2] as an identity composed of a three-fold knot: law (through adherence to one of the four *madhhabs*, with *taqlīd* being the norm), theology (typically through one of the *kalām* schools) and membership in one of the Sufi brotherhoods.[3] Tradition is characterized by continuity, and institutionalization typically leads to greater rigidity of boundaries. However, tradition is rarely static, being remolded and adapted, even if it be in subtle ways, in response to changing milieux and circumstances.[4] Sometimes, more striking metamorphoses are precipitated by more singularly profound events, and in this light, there has been considerable inquiry into the nature of religious tradition in the modern world.

"The need for meaning proliferates in modernity"[5], perhaps nowhere more so than in the Muslim world. The ravages of colonialism, with the ensuing collapse of the caliphate[6]—a nadir akin to the destruction of the Jewish temple—led to a crisis of meaning arguably more threatening to religion than the onslaught of secularization in the West. These circumstances heightened the sense that something had gone drastically wrong[7] and added fervor to the calls (already raised by Islamic reformers prior to colonialism) for a return to a pristine Islam, stripped of alien accretions and distortions. However, how were the challenges of modernity faced by those Sunnī traditionalists[8] who did not break away to form a new movement? This paper presents an individual, late-traditionalist[9] response to modernity through the study of the life and

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(1) *William Morris, Hopes and Fears for Art: Five Lectures, Delivered in Birmingham, London and Nottingham*, (Ellis & White, 1883), 158

(2) For a brief overview of the historical emergence, institutionalization and tensions of the pre-modern Sunnī scholarly tradition, see: Lindholm, Charles. *The Islamic middle east: tradition and change*. (John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 151-166. An important source on the concept of "traditionalism" is Graham's essay: William A. Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 23, No. 3, Religion and History (Winter, 1993), 495-522.

(3) Hodgson, Marshall GS. "The Venture of Islam" (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1974). Aaron Spevack uses the term 'Gabrielian paradigm' to describe the conception of Islam as comprising the three dimensions of theology, law and spirituality. Aaron Spevack, *The Archetypal Sunni Scholar: Law, Theology, and Mysticism in the Synthesis of al-Bajuri,* (SUNY Press, 2014).

(4) Glassie, Henry. "Tradition." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 108, no. 430, 1995, pp. 395–412. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/541653.

(5) See, generally: Hervieu-Léger, Danièle. Religion as a Chain of Memory. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

(6) On the significance of the caliphate to Muslims and reactions to its fall, see especially: Hassan, Mona. *Longing for the lost caliphate*: *A transregional history*. Princeton University Press, 2017.

(7) As W.C. Smith observed, "The fundamental malaise of modern Islam is a sense that something has gone wrong with Islamic history." W.C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 41.

(8) "(Late-Sunnī) Traditionalism" is used in this paper to refer to the broad contours of the scholarly tradition that emerged from the formative period of Islamic history as representative of the dominant and majoritarian voices and institutions in Sunni Islam, with the acknowledgement that this tradition is not uniform or monolithic. The term was proposed at a panel at the 2008 AAR conference (Makers of "Traditional Islam": Identifying a Phenomenon Through its Architects) as a descriptive category for the ‹background› or majority Sunnī orthodoxy from which various Sunnī reformists occasionally split. This Late-Sunnī Traditionalism is not to be confused with the "traditionalism" used to describe the 20th-century perennialist philosophical school associated with René Guenon.

(9) Cornell provides a useful introduction to the concepts of primitivism and traditionalism and how they inform the identities of traditionalists and modernists today: Vincent Cornell, "Tradition and History in Islam: Primitivism in Islamic Thought and Scripture " in David Marshall (ed.), *Tradition and Modernity: Christian and Muslim Perspectives* (Georgetown University Press, 2013): 7-23. The same collected volume also contains other useful inquiries into tradition and modernity.

thought of Shaykh ʿAbdullāh al-Ghumārī (1328/1910 – 1413/1993), an accomplished, yet uncelebrated, Muslim scholar from Tangier, Morocco.[1] I show how he was, in many respects, a nonconformist thinker who leveraged a broad understanding of tradition in order to remold (and/or revive) the tradition from within and to engage with modernity. I opine that the early-modern milieu may have contributed to and facilitated his attempts to restore dynamism to a religious scholarly tradition that had (in some ways at least) become static or stagnant.

Ghumārī's Life and Career

Family Background

Ghumārī came from a well-established and prestigious Ḥasanid Sharīfian family. His father, Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣiddīq, an ʿālim renowned as far afield as the Hijaz, was founder of the Ṣiddīqiyyah suborder of the Shādhilīyah, an outspoken opponent of the French colonial presence, and committed to a simple and frugal lifestyle. Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣiddīq accorded primacy to the texts of the Qurʾān and sunnah, even at the expense of contradicting some prevalent views of the Mālikī madhhab. ʿAbdullāh's mother died in his youth. He therefore grew especially close to his father, who instilled in him both Islamic knowledge and Islamic values and was probably the single greatest influence on his development and scholarly career.

Education

Born in Tangier in 1328/1910, Ghumārī memorized the Qurʾan and studied with local scholars during his childhood. He continued his studies at Fez's renowned Qarawiyyin University, and it was during this time that he began to take what would become a life-long interest in ḥadīth. Under the intimate tutelage of his father, he was trained in issuing *fatwās* (*iftāʾ*) and other fields and benefitted from protracted, one-on-one discussions that developed the breadth and depth of his knowledge.

In 1349/1931, Ghumārī achieved his long-held goal of traveling to Egypt for further study. At al-Azhar, he continued his study of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and Mālikī fiqh, but, following the advice of his father, he also undertook studies of Shāfiʿī texts. He went on to pass the comprehensive *ʿĀlimīyah* exams[2] for foreigners and then the comprehensive exams for al-Azhar's terminal degree.[3]

In Egypt

He remained in Egypt, earning a living through offering private tutoring and became a prolific scholarly writer across the Islamic disciplines. At the same time, he continued to sustain and enhance his own knowledge and distinction by acquiring books, visiting the Egyptian Archives, and pursuing private studies and *ijāzas* from numerous scholars in Egypt and beyond. Ghumārī also interacted with various Islamic movements of

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(1) Other in-depth studies of individual scholars from within the late Sunnī tradition include: Aaron Spevack, *op. cit.*; Ron Shaham, "An Egyptian Judge in a Period of Change: Qadi Ahmad Muhammad Shakir", 1892-1958, *Journal of the American Oriental Society Vol. 119, No. 3 (Jul., 1999), 440-455*. The following also deal with individual Muslim scholars in the modern period, even though they may identify with and appeal to the tradition to varying extents: Vincent Cornell's "Muhammad Abduh : A Sufi-Inspired Modernist?", Abdullah Saeed's "Mawdudi and the Challenges of Modernity," Joseph Lumbard's "Seyyed Hossein Nasr on Tradition and Modernity," and Sajjad Rizvi's "Tariq Ramadan's Tryst with Modernity" (all in David Marshall, *op.cit.*) and Kate Zebiri's *Mahmūd Shaltūt and Islamic Modernism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

(2) These were in eleven fields: Arabic grammar, morphology, the three fields of rhetoric, *uṣūl*, theology, fiqh, Qurʾanic exegesis, ḥadīth and ḥadīth terminology.

(3) This involved being examined in the same eleven subjects mentioned before, as well as in four more: *al-waḍʿ*, prosody, rhyme and ethics.

the time. He enjoyed a close friendship with Ḥasan al-Bannā, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, and his father, Aḥmad al-Bannā. He visited and occasionally delivered speeches at the Islamic Guidance Society (headed by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Khiḍr Ḥusayn) and various women's societies, including one established by Zaynab al-Ghazzālī. Such were Ghumārī's activities for much of the forty-odd years he spent in Egypt, with only two significant interruptions. The first was an eight-month visit back to Tangier in 1354/1936 following his father's death. The second was his eleven-year imprisonment (1378/1959–1388/1969) under Gamal ʿAbdel-Nasser's rule, ostensibly under charges of spying for the French. Ever the scholar, Ghumārī managed to author several books during his incarceration.

Back to Morocco

Finally free again, he returned to Tangier in 1970, along with his Egyptian wife. At the end of Ghumārī's first Ramaḍān back home, the governor of Tangier had him imprisoned for two weeks for having followed moon-sighting reports from Egypt to break his fast a day earlier than the Tangerines.When his elder brother Aḥmad died in 1380/1960, it fell to ʿAbdullāh to take over leadership of the family *zāwiyah*. He would fearlessly deliver politically outspoken Friday sermons and give lessons on *Nayl al-Awṭār*, *Tafsīr al-Nasafī*, Tirmidhī's *Shamā'il*, the *Muwaṭṭa'* and *Jamʿ al-Jawāmiʿ*. He also made a number of trips back to Egypt, where he taught the *Shamā'il*, the *Muwaṭṭa'* and Shīrazī's *Lumaʿ*.

Scholarly Interactions

Among Ghumārī's writings were heated refutations of two of his high-ranking contemporaries, Maḥmūd Shaltūt (erstwhile Shaykh al-Azhar), and Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, (chair of Sharīʿah at Cairo University). Nevertheless, Ghumārī was not a fractious person and did not allow the conflicts to adversely tinge his personal interactions. It is quite remarkable to read Ghumārī's scathing censures of Shaykh Shaltūt, only to then read that the two had amicable social interactions.[1] We also note that, despite his strong attacks on the Wahhābīs, he would meet amiably with them on a personal level and even had lunch with Shaykh Ibn Bāz, the erstwhile grand-Muftī of Saudi Arabia. Salafīs would come to him to study ḥadīth, and Dr. Bakr Abu Zayd is perhaps the most prominent example of a Salafī to whom Ghumārī issued his *ijāzah*.[2]

While Ghumārī clearly had disagreements with the Imāmī Shīʿites, he does appear to have also been on cordial terms with them. His compilation of (Sunnī) ḥadīths, *al-Kanz al-Thamīn*, was published with funding from a Shīʿite admirer. He also exchanged *ijāzahs* with Shīʿite clerics, both Twelver and Zaydī, and arguably had sympathies for the latter school.[3] Perhaps, like the medieval Ḥanbalī al-Ṭūfī, Ghumārī was, "someone who is pained by the rifts in the Muslim community and tries to 'rethink' Islamic history in order to rectify, at least mentally, the mistakes that were made in the past."[4]

Intellectual Context

By the early twentieth century, the Maghreb had long had a markedly conventional Ashʿarī-Mālikī-Sufi identity. The Mālikī school of law had entered the Maghrib in the second half of the second Hijrī

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(1) Ghumārī, *Sabīl al-Tawfīq*, 42.

(2) Later, there was a dispute between the two. See: ʿAbdullāh Ghumārī, *Bayni wa-Bayn al-Shaykh Bakr* published with *Fatḥ al-Muʿīn bi-Naqd Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn* (ʿAmmān: Maktabat al-Imām al-Nawawī, 1410/1990).

(3) See: Ghumārī, Sabīl al-Tawfīq, 142; al-Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā al-Ḥusaynī al-Jalālī, *Thabat al-Asānid al-ʿAwālī*, March 26 2007, <http://al-jalali.net/books/033/thabat.htm>, accessed 2007, p. 67.

(4) Heinrichs, *Al-Ṭufī* in EI2.

century, and, after an interlude of opposition to the school (as well as to Sufism) under the Almohads, came to achieve "undisputed supremacy by the thirteenth century." From the fourteenth century, madrasahs in Fez were bastions of Mālikī law.[1] The Ashʿarī school of theology was given a boost in North Africa by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386/996) and was actively popularized by Ibn Tūmart.[2] Sufi teachings entered the Maghreb at the hands of Abu Midyan Shuʿayb (d. 592-4/1126-98), and the region later produced the renowned masters Abu'l-Hasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258) and al-Jazūlī (d. 870/1465), both of whom continue to exert enduring influence. At Qarawiyyīn, still the major center of religious learning in Morocco, instruction continued[3] in the traditional manner,[4] faithfully preserving and transmitting the Ashʿarī-Mālikī-Ṣūfī knot that represented late Sunnī traditionalism in the region. In the larger picture,[5] the tri-fold homogeneity of this intellectual milieu[6] was punctuated only by different responses to colonialism,[7] and later by the Salafiyya ideology, which entered Morocco before World War II in the hands of ʿAbdullāh ibn Idrīs al-Sanūsī.

Ghumārī, after spending the first 21 years of his life in this milieu, proceeded to Egypt, where, by contrast, a more eclectic and modernist atmosphere prevailed. While the texts and setting of al-Azhar's education remained traditional, the institution had beenimpacted by educational reform,[8] and the country itself was in the early grip of a wave of reformist thought.[9] Ghumārī did not adopt the reformist attitude of being more skeptical of ḥadīths, but nevertheless displayed an autonomous spirit constrained only by faithfulness to the sacred texts. His traditionalism (judged within the context of the rigid, institutionalized identities characterizing the later Sunnī tradition) was therefore an unconventional, eclectic, and even iconoclastic one, strongly grounded in traditional sources and methods, yet often leading him to differ radically from prevailing mainstream positions. In Egypt, he taught conventional texts, since he was preparing students for the al-Azhar examinations. Upon his return to Tangier, however, we observe that the texts he taught included an extra-madhhab *fiqh* / ḥadīth book and a Ḥanafī *tafsīr*. In what follows, I present a selection

(1)   Abun-Nasr, 58, 4, 20-21, 80, 134.

(2)   Joseph Schacht, "New Sources for The History of Muhammadan Theology", *Studia Islamica* No. 1 (1953), 40. El-Nasser traces the introduction of Ashʿarism in the Maghreb to "Abū ʿAbd Allāh ibn Mujāhid al-Mālikī." Rachid ʿAbdullah El-Nasser, *Morocco, from Khārijism to Wahhābism: The Quest for Religious Purity*, (Ph.D.Thesis., University of Michigan, 1983), p.48.

(3)   Mawlāy Sulayman introduced educational reforms in 1931, but this does not concern us for our current purposes, for Abdullāh had already graduated from Qarawiyyin by this time.

(4)   Learning was strongly text-centered (with texts, especially the Qurʾān, and ḥadīth often memorized, especially in Morocco), and characterized by "freedom…of the professor…and student" See: Eickelman, Dale F. "The art of memory: Islamic education and its social reproduction." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20.4 (1978): 485-516; George Makdisi, "Institutionalized Learning as a Self-Image of Islam", *Islam's Understanding of Itself*, ed. Speros Vryonis, Jr., Eighth Giorgio Levi Della Vida Biennial Conference, (Los Angeles: UCLA Press, 1983), p. 82.

(5)   Excluding individuals who may have pursued varying degrees of non-conformism, among whom we may count ʿAbdullāh's father, as we discuss later.

(6)   As opposed to the social manifestations, which might well have included aberrations. For example, early twentieth-century Moroccan Sufism was rife with the sort of superstitious accretions typically associated with popular religion.

(7)   The majority of Moroccan Sufi zāwiyahs colluded with the French, but there were also instances of active resistance.

(8)   1896 saw the stipulation of certain entrance qualifications for incoming students, the introduction of modern subjects, and restrictions on the teaching of glosses.

(9)   An Azharite graduate, Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwi (1801-1873) was a prominent figure in the importation and translation of Western knowledge and, along with Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, was at the forefront of attempts to reform al-Azhar. See: Māḍī, Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh et. al., *al-Azhar fī 12 ʿAman*, (al-Qāhirah: al-Dār al-Qawmiyyah, n.d.), 19-26 and Jomier, *al- Azhar, EI2,*

of examples—grouped under the three threads of the knot of late-Sunni traditionalism—that illustrate this remolding of traditionalism from within.

Ghumārī's Theological Views

Ghumārī wrote a brief treatise on the six articles of faith[1] that is devoid of technical *kalām* terminology and avoids (at least overtly) mentioning most of the intra-Muslim polemical issues that became enshrined in many later creedal statements. The result is a text to which Ashʿarites and Ḥanbalites, indeed even Shīʿites and Ibāḍites, would have little objection. In other writings, he defends central Islamic beliefs: he denounces the Bahāʾīs and Aḥmadīs as heresies outside the pale of Islam[2] and he lambasts Shaltūt for dismissing the Second Coming of Jesus and "an Azharite" (probably Shaltūt again) for denying the expected coming of the Mahdī.[3]

There are only arguable traces of Ashʿarite views in his creed, and indeed, in other writings, Ghumārī took up several positions at odds with the Ashʿarites and other established theological schools. He was adamant that angels are protected from sin (*maʿṣūm*), just as the prophets are,[4] and that angels are better than all humans, with the exception of some of the Prophets.[5] He condemned the Ashʿarite definition of justice ("acting without restriction in someone else's possessions") and sided with the Maturīdīs and Ḥanbalīs, who define injustice as "giving something to someone who does not deserve it,"[6] holding that injustice is therefore hypothetically possible for God, except that out of his beneficence, he has undertaken not to practice it. Regarding the uṣūlī possibility of some Qurʾānic verses having been abrogated from recitation, he diverged from the entirety of Sunnī scholarship and adopted a marginal position previously attributed only to "an aberrant group of the Muʿtazilites."[7] His engagement with nonconformist thinkers within the tradition was not always characterized by acceptance; Ibn Ḥazm and the Sufi Ibn al-ʿArabī al-Ṭāʾī drew his ire for their suggestion that the rationally impossible could conceivably occur in a different world, and he censured Ibn Taymiyyah for what he perceived as anthropomorphic tendencies.[8]

Despite his emphasis on the catholicity of a broader orthodoxy, as conveyed by his creedal statement mentioned earlier, he nevertheless also affirmed the more exclusivist notion of a Sunnī orthodoxy. This corresponds to Ibn Taymiyyah's description of orthodoxy as successive concentric circles, even though the two probably differ on some details on what constitutes pure orthodoxy. We observe, for instance, that Ghumārī regarded ʿAlī as the best of the companions,[9] and Muʿāwiyah as a sinful rebel for having

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(1) The fact that he had no access to any references other than *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* during this time serves as testimony to what must have been a remarkable memory and command of material, as shown in various parts of the book.

(2) The former for denying the resurrection and the latter for denying the finality of prophethood, the authority of the sunnah and various eschatological events such as the return of Jesus. See, among others: Ghumārī, *Khawāṭir Dīniyyah*, 2 vols. In 1 , (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-Qahirah, 1425/2004), 1/78; Ghumārī, *Iqāmat al-Burhān ʿalā Nuzūl ʿĪsā fī Ākhir al-Zamān*, (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1410/1990) 14-20.

(3) Ghumārī, *Iqāmat al-Burhān*; *ʿAqīdat Ahl al-Islām fī Nuzūl ʿĪsā ʿalayhiʾs-salām*, (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1419/1999); *al-Mahdī al-Muntaẓar*, (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1427/2006).

(4) Ghumārī, A*dam ʿalayhiʾs-salām*, (*Series: Qisas al-Anbiyā*ʾ). Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1427/2006),17.

(5) ʿAbdullāh Ghumārī, *al-Naqd al-Mubram li-Risālat al-Sharaf al-Muḥattam* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhirah, 1419/1998) 29, and also *Faḍaʾil al-Nabiyy fi al-Qurʾān* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhirah, n.d.) 7.

(6) See: Muḥammad al-Saffārīnī, *Lawāmiʿ al-Anwār al-Bahiyyah* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1405/1985) 1/288-291.

(7) See: ʿAbdullāh Ghumārī, *Dhawq al-Ḥalāwah bi-Bayān Imtināʿ Naskh al-Tilāwah* (Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1402/1981) 8. He also presents a brief overview in his autobiography in the course of mentioning original inferences he made, *Sabīl al-Tawfīq,* 113-4.

(8) See, generally, Ghumārī, *Rafʿ al-Ishkāl* (Cairo: Hajr, 1407/1987).

(9) ʿAbdullāh Ghumārī, *al-Ḥujaj al-Bayyināt fī Ithbāt al-Karāmāt* (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1410/1990), 107. Dr. G. F. Haddad, a prominent traditionalist scholar, has criticized the Ghumārīs on this count, leading to a defense from Shaykh

fought against ʿAlī.[1] Ghumārī did not consider these Shīʿite tendencies to be alien to Sunnism, while Ibn Taymiyyah would probably regard those specific positions as aberrant.[2]

Ghumārī's Legal Opinions

Ghumārī declared that the gate of absolute ijtihād can never close, notwithstanding the assertion of most later Sunnī scholars to the contrary. In addition to allowing fresh ijtihād outside of the four schools, he also suggested that the non-Sunnī schools are valid expressions of Islamic praxis and that the layman is not required to adhere to a single legal school.[3] Prominent among Ghumārī's own nonconformist positions, we may mention that he differed with the prevalent Mālikī view endorsing *sadl* (leaving the hands by the side in prayer), declaring it to be unsubstantiated both in its evidence and its ascription to Imam Mālik. He endorsed 8 *rakʿah* of *tarāwīḥ*, rather than the twenty generally advocated within the 4 Sunni *madhhabs*. He not only insisted that recitation of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah by a follower in the congregational prayer is obligatory (as the Shafiʿīs say) but also differed from all four *madhhabs* by asserting that even joining the imām in bowing (*rukūʿ*) does not waive this recitation from the follower[4]

Ghumārī believed that a woman has the right to choose her spouse, rejecting the standard position of the Mālikī school, which gives the father the right to compel his virgin daughter into marrying someone of his choice. He also differed from the Mālikīs by affirming that a woman may lead other women in ṣalāh. He mentioned that female circumcision should not reach the level of mutilation and that, in fact, the whole practice does not appear to have a clear religious basis. On the whole, however, Ghumārī appears to have held to traditional conceptions of gender roles. He was aware of the impact of Western and feminist thought on the Muslim world and decried women unveiling in public as "discarding their Islamic protection, modesty and dignity."[5] In spite of Ghumārī's disapproval for some of Muḥammad ʿAbduh's liberal reformist views, he appeared to see the movement as an ally, albeit an uncomfortable one, against the greater danger of ideologies wholly external to Islam.[6]

Ghumārī clearly believed in the supremacy of sharīʿah[7] as an integral part of Muslim identity and

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Muḥammad al-Nīnowy. See: Gibril F. Haddad, *The Ghumārī School*, July 14 2007, https://www.abc.se/home/m9783/ir/f/The%20Ghumari%20School.htm, accessed 9/20/2018 ; Muḥammad al-Nīnowy, *al-ʿAtb al-Jamīl ʿalā al-Duktūr Jibrīl* (unpublished manuscript).

(1) See the correspondence between them in: ʿAbdullāh Ghumārī, *Nihāyat al-Āmāl bi-Ṣiḥḥat wa-Sharḥ Ḥadīth ʿArḍ al-Aʿmāl* (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1427/2006), 5-8. For reiteration and some additional details of Ghumārī's view, see: ʿAbdullāh Ghumārī, *al-Qawl al-Jazl fīmā lā yuʿadhdhar fīhi bi'l-Jahl* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1410/1990), 5.

(2) Shāṭibī has stated a criterion for sectarianism which is useful to keep in mind here. He says that disagreement on a major issue or principle, or an abundance of more minor disagreements, should be regarded as the dividing line between a school of thought and a sect. See: Shāṭibī, *al-Iʿtiṣām* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.).

(3) Ghumārī, *al-Naqd al-Mubram*, 73.

(4) See, among others: Ghumārī, *Kashf Anwāʿ al-Jahl ʿammā Qīla fī Nuṣrat al-Sadl* (Tangier: Maṭabiʿ al-Būghāz, n.d.); *Itqān al-Ṣunʿah fī Taḥqīq Maʿnā al-Bidʿah*, (Cairo: Maktabah al-Qāhirah, 1426/2005), 30-31; *al-Adillah al-Rājiḥah ʿalā Farḍiyyat Qirāʾat al-Fātiḥah* (Beirut, ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1427/2006). For an opposing discussion on sadl, see: Yasin Dutton, "ʿAmal and Ḥadīth in Islamic Law – the Case of Sadl al-Yadayn", *Islamic Law and Society* vol. 3 no. 1 (1996), 13-40.

(5) For the right of choice in marriage, see: *Khawāṭir Dīniyyah*, 1/136-7. On female imāmate, see: Dah al-Shinqīṭī, *Fayḍ al-Ghaffar min Aḥādīth al-Nabiyy al-Mukhtār,* ed. ʿAbdullāh Ghumārī, (Cairo: Maktabah al-Qāhirah, 1969), 1/69. On female circumcision, see: Ghumārī, *al-Ḥāwī fī Fatāwī al-Ḥāfiz Abi'l-Faḍl ʿAbd-Allāh al-Ṣiddīq al-Ghumārī*, (Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1402/1982), 24-5, as well as the marginal notes on Dah Shinqīṭī, *Fayḍ*, 2/13. On feminism, see: Ghumārī, *Al-Qawl al-Jazl*, 15.

(6) Indeed, elsewhere, Ghumārī praised ʿAbduh for defending Islam against Orientalists' attacks. *Ghumārī, Khawāṭir Dīniyyah*, 2/106.

(7) Hallaq has proffered that sharīʿah, in the sense of a dynamic and vibrant system of law, can only exist with the backing

declared that it is apostasy to believe that Islam is not equipped for the needs of modern life. Acquiring European citizenship is sinful, he wrote, for a Muslim may not ascribe himself to anything other than the religion, and especially not to systems of law that contradict it. Political parties are an objectionable heresy, a relic of the colonialists, who initiated them as a means for dividing the Muslims and often use religion to serve their own agendas. He was apparently disenchanted with contemporary independence movements, remarking that they had all ended up instituting European codes of law, which blindly imitated the West both in the beneficial and the harmful. Nevertheless, he felt more favorable towards religiously based movements, and we have mentioned that he enjoyed a close friendship with the al-Bannā family. Sayyid Quṭb, he remarked, displayed a zeal for holding fast to the religion and implementing its rulings, although his *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* contains some errors.[1]

Ghumārī's political stance appears to strike a middle ground between pacifism and overt militantism. He believed in the validity of armed struggle against colonialism and injustice[2] and viewed the production of weapons to ward off aggression as a communal obligation, but he upheld spiritual striving and self-discipline as the greater *jihād*.[3] He also realized the value of nonmilitary measures, commenting that if only the Muslim governments had imposed an oil embargo during the Palestine-Israel war, the US would have been forced to withdraw their support for Israel.[4] His *al-Arbaʿīn Ḥadīthan al-Ṣiddīqīyyah*, a collection of 46 ḥadīths, addresses the social ills and calamities of his time, suggesting that overall, he took a holistic reformist approach to the political and social turmoil that characterized his time.

Ghumārī and Sufism

Ghumārī grew up in the overwhelmingly Sufi environment of Morocco and was nurtured in his father's *zāwiyah*. These factors appear to have had a lasting and positive impression on him[5] in that he remained committed to the spiritual, even mystic dimension of religion throughout his life,[6] eventually becoming a Sufi shaykh with followers in multiple countries. This is noteworthy in light of the fact that he observed widespread aberrations among many Sufis and lived in an age when Wahhābīs[7] and modernists were attacking Sufism. He cited a *fatwā* from his father,[8] which asserts that Sufism and the *ṭarīqah* were established in general terms by revelation and that the *ṭarīqahs* are merely the fruit of the effort to record and systematize the spiritual realities lived by the early Muslims, in the same way that the schools of

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of a state, and as such, has died out with the onset of secular nations. Even the remaining "veneer" has been "uprooted from [its] indigenous context." Wael Hallaq, "Can The Sharīʿah be Restored?", *Islamic Law and the Challenges of Modernity ed*. Yvonne Haddad and Barbara Stowasser (Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2004) 21-53.

(1) Ghumārī, *Ḥāwī,* 43; *al-Qawl al-Jazl*, 17; Ḥāwī, 52; a*l-Qawl al-Jazl*, 6, respectively.

(2) See, for example: ʿAbdullāh Ghumārī, *al-Arbaʿīn Ḥadīthan al-Siddīqiyyah* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhirah, 1373/1954), Ḥadīths #4 and #10.

(3) Ghumārī, *Khawāṭir Dīniyyah*, 1/65-6; 1/106.

(4) Ghumārī, *Khawāṭir Dīniyyah*, 1/112. These words were written during Ghumārī's imprisonment, and so the war being referred to is likely that of 1967, but could conceivably be that of 1948.

(5) Ghumārī mentions various anecdotes about his father's being a positive role model, then remarks, "These are the ethics of the Sufis….anyone different is an imposter." Ghumārī, *al-Iʿlām bi-anna al-Taṣawwuf min sharīʿat al-Islām*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhirah, 1419/1998), 35.

(6) In particular, it must have been a source of solace for him during his long imprisonment, and indeed, he produced a number of spiritual writings during this period.

(7) El-Nasser tells us that the Wahhābīs "had a mortal aversion to any forms of Sufism, regardless of its traditionalist mainstay; they downgraded the *shurafā'*, burned various mystico-theological Sufi books, waged an assault on shrines, and to cap it all, executed the grand Qāḍī of Makkah." el-Nasser, 239 ff.

(8) The same *fatwā* is cited by Ḥasan Ghumārī in his lecture on Sufism's service to Islam in Africa, published within: Ghumārī, *Khawāṭir Dīnīyyah*, 2/34-61.

jurisprudence and *kalām* undertook this effort in their respective fields.[1]

However, Ghumārī's approach to Sufism was, from the start, a principled approach that included critique. He condemned the popular *mawlids* for the *awliyā'* as being a reprehensible *bidʿah* because they often involve much that is unacceptable.[2] For celebration of the Mawlid Nabawī, he held (in agreement with the earlier Sunnī luminaries Suyūṭī and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī) that it is praiseworthy, as long as the celebration is restricted to licit expressions of joy and gratitude to God, such as philanthropy and acts of worship.[3]

Although Ghumārī accepted the concepts of sainthood and miracles in principle, he was critical of some specific claims thereto. He explained that *kalām* and *uṣūl* (including *isnād*-analysis) provide the tools for distinguishing fact from fable.[4] He contended that it is not intrinsically prohibited to build a mosque over the site of a grave but declared that, "Prostrating before a grave, and worshipping it, are blatant polytheism (*shirk*), [and this ruling is] necessarily known to be part of the religion, similar to [the ruling on] worshipping idols." The ubiquitous vows of slaughtering an animal for a particular *walī* are an evil reminiscent of Jāhiliyyah.[5]

Ghumārī and the Tradition

Through his writings, Ghumārī comes across as a deeply religious man who pursued a principled approach to theology, in which fidelity to the sacred texts was paramount. He both disagreed with and showed respect for figures as diverse as Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-ʿArabī. His theological methodology was decidedly rooted in the tradition (including, but not limited to, *kalām)*, yet his opinions displayed a bold originality that precludes pigeonholing him as a stereotypical member of a particular theological school within Sunnism. Indeed, even his Sunnism can be questioned in light of his Shīʿite tendencies.

His broad and deep knowledge and his independent spirit of inquiry manifested themselves in his eclectic views on Islamic laws of worship and other domains. His approach was (once again) rooted in a strict fidelity to the sacred texts, and this automatically ruled out a purely accommodationist response to modernity. In this sense, his stance was decidedly more towards the resistance end of the spectrum. However, it was not wholly an "opposition and withdrawal"[6] response, as evinced by his receptivity to certain aspects and concepts from the West (e.g., his ready use of medical and scientific data to help establish a ruling). Although he had many clashes with Shaltūt, the two appear to have shared, in principle, a belief in "the self-sufficiency of Islamic society and culture."[7] As Ghumārī was someone who neither held an official position nor belonged to any Islamic movement, his views can be seen as genuinely illustrative of one type of independent, individual response to modernity in traditional Islamic law.

It is difficult to imagine that Ghumārī, whose theological and juristic views displayed such an independent and critical attitude, could have found all aspects of his inherited Sufi order to be totally correct. Under the

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(1) ʿAbdullāh Ghumārī, *Iʿlām*, 10-12.

(2) Ghumāri, *al-Naqd al-Mubram*, 38. He intimates that, had the festivals been restricted to devotions and harmless activity, they would be permissible. This understanding also fits his concept of *bidʿah*. He further speculates that it is often unscrupulous custodians of the shrines that use these occasions as a means to their own material advancement.

(3) See also his *fatwā* on the Mawlid, in Ghumārī, *Ḥāwī*, 48-50.

(4) For examples of the guiding criteria he lays down, see al-Naqd al-Mubram, 44 ff.

(5) ʿAbdullāh Ghumāri, *Iʿlām al-Rākiʿ al-Sājid bi-Maʿnā Ittikhādh al-Qubūr Masājid, published with Aḥmad Ghumārī, Iḥyā' al-Maqbūr min Adillat Jawāz Bināʾ al-Masājid ʿalā al-Qubūr* (Cairo: Maktabat Al-Qāhirah, 1426/2005) 60, 65; Ghumārī, *al-Naqd al-Mubram*, 37, 48.

(6) Zebiri, 2.

(7) Zebiri, 5.

theory of *bidʿah* that he expounded in his writings,[1] various aspects of the institutionalization of Sufism could be classified as a "good *bidʿah*" even if they do not have a direct basis in the sacred texts. The fact that he eventually returned to supervise the family *zāwiyah* indicates that, at minimum, he felt that the institutionalization was overall more positive than negative.

Ghumārī and Modernity

Ghumārī's education was entirely traditional, his father having been opposed to the French schools—and, in fact, even to the eating of chocolate—as capitulations to the colonial enterprise.[2] Nevertheless, ʿAbdullāh's approach to modernity was not an "opposition and withdrawal"[3] response; he was aware of modern scientific developments and views and was accepting of them as long as they did not overtly conflict with Islamic beliefs or values. Thus, he considered it a communal obligation to produce newly invented devices and phenomena such as telephones, radios, televisions and electricity.[4] He accepted the use of the telegraph to convey news of moon-sightings for Islamic calendrical determinations and addressed some aspects of juristic rulings that might possibly be needed by space travelers.[5] Muslims are similarly religiously obligated to embrace agriculture, mining, medicine, engineering and other essential professions.[6]

His opinion on the medical field (of which he was generally accepting) also contained numerous examples of his resisting aspects of modernity due to their conflict with Islamic values. Muslim physicians, he wrote, should remember their own religion and customs and not succumb to total, blind imitation of the West. Europeans, who do not acknowledge the reality of demonic possession (*ṣarʿ*) and therefore treat such patients with narcotics and electric shock treatments, are making "a big mistake." He said that doctors can treat patients of the opposite sex, even though intermingling of the sexes is generally objectionable. Abortion he permitted only in case of the fetus being incompletely formed or in case of serious danger to the mother's life.[7] Birth control he discouraged, and more so when the spouses' health and finances are comfortable.[8]

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(1) See Ghumārī, *Itqān al-Ṣunʿah*.

(2) See: Aḥmad al-Ghumārī, *al-Taṣawwur wa al-Taṣdīq bi-Akhbār al-Shaykh Sayyidī Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣiddīq*, (Cairo: Dar al-Marjān lil-Ṭibāʿah,1980).

(3) Zebiri, op. cit.

(4) While it has been the norm rather than the exception for the ʿulamāʾ to be open to technological advances, they nevertheless often did have reservations about such advances, due to things that (in many people›s minds) were ‹packaged› with them (such as interest and birth control) and due to social changes (such as disruption of family structure) resulting from them. See: Usmani, Mufti M. Taqi. *Islam and Modernism*. (Adam Publishers, 2005), 15-20. Similarly, Skovgaard-Petersen observes that, "there was often a certain apprehension towards a new medium in religious circles, either because the media posed a challenge to established ways of doing things, or because it seemed to make ordinary Muslims more oblivious to their religion." Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, "New Media in the Muslim World", *Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam and Politics*, (Oxford & New York, 2014). It is also worth observing that there are groups in modernity who take a more restrictive view on the use of technology, such as the Amish, who "require that every technology they use not only conforms to, but reinforces their tradition, culture, and religion." Wetmore, Jameson M. "Amish technology: Reinforcing values and building community." IEEE Technology and Society Magazine 26.2 (2007): 10-21.

(5) Ghumārī, *Khawāṭir Dīniyyah*, 2/29-32.

(6) Ghumārī, *Khawāṭir Dīniyyah*, 1/108-9. The last two sentences indicate an awareness of the need to appeal to Muslims' sensibilities in the context of the enhanced sense of pluralism and scientific rationalism ushered in by globalization.

(7) See: Ghumārī, *Ajwibah Hāmmah fi al-Ṭibb*, 26-36. See also: Ghumārī, *Ḥāwī*, 57.

(8) Ghumārī, *Ḥāwī*, 27.

Ghumārī was clearly aware, to an extent, of scientific discoveries (such as the moon being barren) and realized that some of these corresponded to passages in the Qur'ān.[1] He rejected the theory of Darwinian human evolution as contrary to both reason and scripture.[2] We also sometimes find him reframing traditional concepts in modern terminology.[3] All of the above bespeak an overall acquaintance with modern science and technology, as well as an awareness that they are sometimes closely coupled with Western philosophies and values that might be inimical to Islam.

In her observations on modernity's impact on religion, French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger remarked that in this era of intellectual anomy and aimlessness, identifying with a tradition is a viable and necessary direction for religion to take.[4] She proffered that the drastic and wide-ranging social, ethical and economic changes in the modern world have fractured the concept of memory, which is so essential to tradition.[5] This, she suggested, opens the door to post-traditional religion, which hinges more on personal commitment that external imposition. She believed that in order to survive, traditional religions must become flexible on matters of belief and come to terms with individualism's syncretic approach to religious symbols.

Hervieu-Léger was, of course, writing from a Western perspective and in a slightly later context than Ghumārī's. Nevertheless, the general themes of modernity she addresses were already in play, albeit in somewhat different forms, in the early twentieth-century Middle East. The crises precipitated by colonialism fractured the authority of traditional Islamic scholars and their institutions, as Islam was removed, or at least sidelined, from the public spheres of government and law.[6] Thus, al-Azhar and Qarawiyyīn are still major centers, but their influence and prestige have diminished. The ʿulamā''s influence has also diminished as a combined result of this, along with the ubiquity of literacy and the appearance of popular political movements.[7] The collapse of the Caliphate and the consequently diminished official religious sanction can be seen as further contributing to individualism.[8] As Akbar Ahmad observed, "no one knows who speaks for Islam anymore."[9]

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(1) Ghumārī, *Khawāṭir Dīniyyah*, 1/45.

(2) Ghumārī, *Ādam ʿalayhi's-salām,* 72-80.

(3) e.g. He describes the Qur'ān as a constitution (*dustūr*) and finds parallels in the Qur'ān and ḥadith with the modern concepts of diplomatic immunity, governmental policy of rationing essential foodstuffs, and monitoring (*riqābah*) of news in times of war. Ghumārī, (*al-Radd al-Muḥkam al-Matīn ʿalā Kitāb al-Qawl al-Mubīn*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhirah, 1374/1955); *Khawāṭir Dīniyyah*, 1/88, 89, 129-30 respectively.

(4) Hervieu-Léger, *op.cit*. Tradition is also central to her definition of religion as comprising (1) the expression of believing, (2) a memory of continuity, and (3) a legitimizing reference to an authorized version of that memory.

(5) She explains how Europe's loss of memory of the 'idealized parish' leads to disruption of "organization of conventional forms of religious allegiance, particularly the traditional forms of involvement in religion at the parish level and the transmission of religion through the family." See: Hervieu- Léger, *op.cit*. and also her subsequent article: Danièle Hervieu-Léger,."The role of religion in establishing social cohesion." *Religion in the New Europe* (2006): 45-63.

(6) Philip Jenkins has opined that, "What we see in the 21st century is not the eclipse of religious authority, but rather its unmooring from traditional institutions, and its decentralization and radical democratization." Philip Jenkins, "Religious Authority and the Challenges of Modernity" in Marshall, *Tradition and Modernity*, 31-44.

(7) Şenturk has observed that in modern Islam, there are multiple forms of religious authority, with tensions between them. Recep Senturk, "Between Traditional and Modern Forms of Authority in Islam," *in Marshall, Tradition and Modernity*, 45-56.

(8) Ahmed, Akbar S. D*iscovering Islam*: *Making sense of Muslim history and society*. (Routledge, 2002). For a more recent take on this (well beyond the period being studied in this article), see: Esposito, John L., and Dalia Mogahed. *Who speaks for Islam?: What a billion Muslims really think*. (Simon and Schuster, 2007).

(9) There are parallels to Hervieu-Léger's observations about Europe as mentioned in footnote 70 above, but also differences. The appearance of colonialism and the end of the Caliphate played a role in shifting people's priorities by altering the

Ghumārī can certainly be seen as a case of personal commitment trumping the traditional norm of conformance to the Ashʿari-Māliki-Ṣūfī knot. As we have seen above, he was led by his convictions to reform the knot. He affirmed the basic elements of (1) *kalām*, (2) traditional *fiqh* methods, and (3) spirituality embodied in a Ṣūfī order. However, he adopted (1) some theological positions at odds with the Ashʿarīs (or even the Sunnīs at large), (2) legal views that were marginal in, or even repudiated by, the four Sunnī schools, and (3) attempted to restore a pristine Sufism founded on the sacred texts and purged of popular accretions.[1] For Ghumārī, it is *kalām* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* that provide what Hervieu-Léger described as 'a legitimizing reference to an authorized version of the memory (of continuity of the tradition).'

Such was his personal worldview, but he similarly advocated turning the clock back and reforming the knot in a more catholic way for the masses. We have seen, for example, how he penned a nondenominational creedal treatise and expanded the boundaries of acceptable praxis to include the non-Sunni schools of law. This, along with his shunning of the strictures of adherence to theological and legal schools and endorsement of the concept of good *bidʿah*, could be viewed as being in agreement with Hervieu-Léger's prediction that religion in modernity must be flexible on matters of belief and must also come to terms with individualism's syncretic approach to religious symbols. It remains unclear to me, despite having closely read Ghumārī's writings, to what extent his calls for flexibility and inclusiveness were overtly or subconsciously influenced by his awareness of greater literacy and individual autonomy in the modern era. Nevertheless, Ghumārī's theological and doctrinal stance remains conservative as far as the central beliefs and values that are clearly stated in reliable scriptural texts. Peter Berger's concept of the 'sacred cosmos' appears more integral to Ghumārī's view of the traditional than perhaps Hervieu-Léger allowed for in the Western context upon which secularization[2] has left its mark.

W. Graham has presented the *isnād* culture (in ḥadīth, Sufism and Shīʿism) as central to the concept of Islamic traditionalism.[3] I proffer that the diverse and tolerant nature of the early ḥadīth traditionalism[4] is illustrative of an earlier, more ecumenical vision of Islam. Non-Sunnī narrators of ḥadīth are not uncommon,

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landscapes of wealth, prestige and education, which could be construed as a fracture or disruption of the lived experience dimension of memory. However, it would also be simplistic to attribute the above changes solely to colonialism. As Hassan points out, "the termination of the Caliphate.... was the unpredictable culmination of several different intellectual and socio-political trends." Hassan, *op. cit.*, p. 10. 'Religious memory' is a sociological term derived from Halbwach's concept of 'collective memory' as a lived experience belonging to a specific group and contributing to an identity. For a useful overview of Halbwaich's term, see: Russell, Nicolas. "Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs." *The French Review* (2006): 792-804.

(1) Ghumārī's ‹juridical› approach to Sufism, while non-conformist, nevertheless has many "Neo-Sufi" precedents in the early-modern era. Gellner's pendulum model (of alternating periods of Sufi reform and popularist stagnation) proffers that the advent of modernity causes a final, irreversible swing towards scripturalist rigorism. See: Van Bruinessen, Martin. "Sufism,'Popular'Islam and the Encounter with Modernity." *Islam and modernity: key issues and debates* (2009): 125-157.

(2) Secularization theory, initially formulated by Peter Berger and other Western sociologists in the mid-20th century, had predicted the demise of religion in the face of modernity. Berger himself later repudiated the thesis, in light of undeniable empirical evidence of the resurgence of religion. Nevertheless, it can reasonably be argued that religion has (arguably even before modernity) been less closely coupled to Western society than it has in most Muslim societies of the Middle East.

(3) Graham, *op.cit*. For more on the culture of ḥadīth transmission, see: Davidson, Garrett. *Carrying on the tradition: An intellectual and social history of post-canonical ḥadīth transmission*. Ph.D. Thesis, The University of Chicago, 2014, and his forthcoming book, *Carrying On the Tradition: A Social and Intellectual History of ḥadīth Transmission Across a Thousand Years* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

(4) See: Fueck, *The Role of Tradiitionalism in Islam* and Goldziher, *Catholic Tendencies and Particularism in Islam*, respectively, both in *Studies on Islam*. tr., ed. Swartz, (New York: Oxford, 1981).

even in the six 'canonical' Sunnī books. Ghumārī not only revived the interaction in *riwāyah* between the two camps[1] and challenged the unquestioning acceptance of all 'canonical' ḥadīths,[2] but, further, his Shīʿite-tending Sunnī beliefs were arguably an attempt to revive a more open, preorthodoxy form of Islam. The global and inclusive culture of early ḥadīth traditionalism provides a resource that might increasingly be drawn upon (as Ghumārī has been) in the modern globalized context—of individualism and decreased religious legitimation—in which "every syncretism is possible." While diverse syncretism has always been possible in Islam,[3] it is clear that the modern milieu has facilitated it to a greater degree, both due to the erosion of traditional structures of authority and through the easier dissemination of information through printing. Thus, we might conceivably see the revival of strands of orthodoxy (and heresy) that were hitherto extinct.

Traditionalism, to varying extents and in different manifestations and contexts, still dominates the Muslim landscape today. Even widespread and popular political-activist reform movements such as the Ikhwān arguably need to identify with traditionalism on an intellectual level for legitimation.[4] We have seen how Ghumārī exemplified a traditionalist methodology and approach that included reformist elements without overtly spawning a group, school or movement. His overt identification with institutional Sufism, along with his rationalist tendency, sets him apart from the neo-Ḥanbalites/Ẓāhirites,[5] reminding us that neo-traditionalism itself is not monolithic.

Conclusion

W. C. Smith remarked that "Islam has yet to define, let alone take up its place, in the modern world." Traditionalism must thus articulate a coherent and unified approach in the face of modern and postmodern skepticism and secular human values if it is to survive. Given the lingering effects of the aftermath of colonialism, this can be expected to be a slow endeavor. Living, as Ghumārī did, on the mere threshold of modernity, with a pedagogical rearing largely isolated from substantial engagement with modern ideologies, his appeal is largely restricted to those already convinced of the value of the tradition. Nevertheless, many Muslims see him as embodying what Smith called the "dignity and nobility of tradition," which many would consider an essential ingredient to the credible reconstruction of Muslim intellectuality in modernity. Time and further research may help to gauge and better understand the reception and feasibility of survival of Ghumari's approach within a larger context. Perhaps what is most distinctive in his life and thought is his having demonstrated that a Muslim scholar can leverage central tools and values of the tradition to boldly engage in independent critical thought, even disagreeing on some majoritarian beliefs and practices, and yet retain respect as a scholar within the tradition. While Ghumārī's maverick views find different degrees of acceptance and disapproval among other Muslims, he remained faithful to the broad outlines of the Gabrielian paradigm, within which theology is central. In the ḥadīth that sketches this paradigm, the angel

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(1) Shaykh al-Taskhīrī, a contemporary Shīʿite cleric, has presented ḥadīth as a field of commonality between Sunnis and Shīʿites, which offers potential for further, joint study with a view to rapprochement. See his comments on Dr. M.S.R. al-Būṭi, "*Qawāʿid Tafsīr al-Nuṣūṣ*", *Risālat al-Taqrīb* Vol. 4 No. 14 (Dhu'l-Ḥijjah 1417/1997), 88-9.

(2) Ghumārī compiled *al-Fawāʾid al-Maqṣūdah fī-Bayān al-Aḥādīth al-Shādhdhah waʾl-Mardūdah* (a compilation of ḥadīths with ostensibly *saḥīḥ isnāds* yet objectionable content), and *al-Kanz al-Thamīn*, a compilation of ḥadīths intended to be relevant to the Muslim public today.

(3) In a somewhat different sense, Waugh remarks that "Islamic traditions have always been modern." Waugh, Earle H. "Dispatches from Memory: Genealogies of tradition." *Historicizing "Tradition" in the Study of Religion*(2005): 245-266.

(4) In this sense, these movements are perhaps examples of (or at least akin to) Hervieu-Léger's notion of "elective fraternities" that arise from "shared interests, experience and hardships" in modernity, and either come into conflict with traditional institutions, or draw on them for legitimation.

(5) Aside from Sufism and Ashʿarite rationalism, neo-Ẓāhirites might also take issue with Ghumārī's use of *qiyās*.

Gabriel was sent by God to pose questions to the Prophet Muḥammad because his companions did not do enough questioning. In the Ghumārian iteration of the paradigm, it was the modern milieu, rather than an angel, that prompted (or at least helped facilitate) a fresh, critical engagement with the tradition, as well as with modernity.

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