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Author(s): Abdul Hamid el-Zein

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BEYOND IDEOLOGY AND THEOLOGY: THE SEARCH FOR THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF ISLAM

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Abdul Hamid el-Zein

Department of Anthropology, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19122

In the course of our intellectual history, Islam came to be understood as a unified religious tradition and, in common with other institutional religions, taken as a guide to its own understanding (25). The concept of Islam thus defined the nature of the subject matter and its appropriate modes of interpretation or explanation, but discoveries emergent within this framework have begun to contradict these premises.

In order to reveal the significance and complexity of this problem, this review first examines two apparently opposed positions on Islam: the "anthropological" and the "theological." These perspectives emerge from different assumptions concerning the nature of Man, God, and the World, use different languages of analysis, and produce different descriptions of religious life. Five anthropological studies are taken here to represent the internal variation within the anthropological perspective, while a general commentary suffices to describe the more standardized theological paradigm. Of course, the works discussed here do not exhaust the relevant studies of Islam, but they exemplify certain major approaches well enough to allow discussion of the interaction of theoretical views and ethnographic description. In all approaches, the meaning of religion as a universal form of human experience and of Islam as a particular instance is presupposed, invariable, and incontestable. Consequently, all claim to uncover a universal essence, the real Islam. Ironically, the diversity of experience and understanding revealed in these studies challenges the often subtle premise of the unity of religious meaning. It then becomes possible to ask if a single true Islam exists at all.

By virtue of its scope and sophistication, the work of Clifford Geertz offers a suitable point from which to begin the investigation. Although he proceeds by assuming a single form of religious experience and a unity of meaning within Islamic tradition, Geertz simultaneously accentuates the diversity in the actual content of religious experience as lived in the everyday world. Although they are intricately

imbedded in his most recent study on Islam (17), the theoretical notions which permit the eventual integration of this diversity are never systematically stated or elaborated. These crucial assumptions emerge clearly only through reconstructing implicit relationships between statements presented in other works.

For Geertz, human phenomena are simultaneously organic, psychological, social, and cultural. Certain universal problems and qualities of being human arise from the reality of man's biological condition and in necessary social and psychological processes. Yet when grasped by man's immediate consciousness, these existential problems and conditions appear plastic and elusive. It is through the dimension of culture, which is man's unique capacity, that these problems and processes are given meaning, organized and controlled (14, pp. 52–63; 15, p. 51; 16, p. 5; 17, pp. 16, 100; 18, p. 5). These four dimensions of human reality are mutually determinative, and therefore must ultimately be integrated within a single analytic framework. But because culture particularly is the means of interpretation of all experience, it becomes the central concept in Geertz's understanding of human existence. Culture lends both order and significance to man's direct and matter-of-fact apprehension of the reality of nature and existence. In this sense, culture does not refer to a set of institutions, traditions, or customs, but involves the conceptualization of life: an intersubjective process of the interpretation of immediate experience (17, pp. 93–94).

The cultural processes of giving meaning to the world are rooted in the human capacity for symbolic thought. All men impose thought or meaning upon the objects of their experience (events, images, sounds, gestures, sensations) which, when defined, become attached to symbols or the material vehicles of meaning (16, p.5). In turn, meaning arranges these objects in intelligible forms. This expressive capacity results in the creation of cultural systems understood as patterns of symbols which must possess a certain degree of coherence in order to establish for man the structure of his own existence (18, p. 17).

For Geertz, symbols and the meanings they carry are culturally defined and socially shared. An individual is born into an already meaningful world. He inherits cultural interpretations from his predecessors, shares them with his contemporaries, and passes them on to the following generations. Therefore, symbolic thought is always social, intersubjective, and public. It cannot escape into a mysterious and inaccessible domain of private subjective meaning.

So while man creates his own symbols, these symbols define for him the nature of his own reality. For Geertz, the analysis of culture consists of the study of these social, intersubjective, and culturally relative worlds. It is a positive science in the sense that it deals with symbols as empirical expressions of thought. And it is cast in phenomenological terms: his intention is to develop "a method of describing and analyzing the meaningful structure of experience. . . in a word, a scientific phenomenology of culture" (16, p. 7). The emphasis of this approach is on "meaning." Because it is impossible to discover directly the ontological status of events, actions, institutions, or objects, the problem lies in grasping their meaning when brought to consciousness.

The formation of different forms of cultural systems corresponds to certain levels of the organization of thought. Geertz refers informally to the variety of possible

cultural systems throughout his studies: religion, art, common sense, philosophy, history, science, aesthetics, ideology (14, p. 62; 17, p. 94). In his study of Islam, common sense, religion, and science become the most essential symbolic forms in his analysis.

Common sense constitutes a primary dimension through which man gives meaning to his immediate experience (19). Common sense is not the mere matter-of-fact apprehension of reality but the judgments, assessments, or colloquial wisdom which structure a practical reality. This set of shared notions is not the outcome of deliberations or reflection, but emerges in the experiential engagement with reality. Common sense notions involve such basic aspects of survival that they are invariably taken for granted.

However, the relation between common sense notions, matter-of-fact reality, and human creativity is never stable. The nature of man's engagement with the world changes through time with increasing awareness and differs from place to place. Therefore, common sense notions differ and change accordingly—or when common sense simply fails to account for experience, its authority dwindles, and religion as a higher and more general interpretive order emerges (17, pp. 94–95). Religion, in Geertz's view, offers a wider interpretation of the world and serves as a correction of common sense. In this sense, religion and common sense enter into a continued dialectic and must be studied as reciprocal traits of man's experiential reality.

Geertz refers to religion as the synthesis of two dimensions of human experience: "world view" and "ethos." In any culture, the collective notions, images, and concepts of the world view establish the essential reality of nature, self, and society. They define the sheer actuality of existence (13, p. 421; 17, p. 97). Ethos constitutes the evaluative aspect of existence; it expresses the desired character, tone, style, and quality of social and cultural life. It concerns the way in which things are properly done (17, pp. 97–98). Ethos and world view, or values and the general order of existence, continually reaffirm each other. Their interrelationship is powerfully and concretely expressed in the form of sacred symbols which not only objectify but condense multiple rays of the universe of meaning and focus them in tangible and perceptible forms. Any culture will require only a limited number of synthesizing symbols due to their immense power to enforce this integration of fact and value (13, pp. 421–22).

Systems of religious symbols continually respond to the inevitable force of historical change. Geertz regards history as the continual process of formation and sedimentation of meaning. No laws or processes of history exist but the creation of meaning which, because meaning is intersubjective, constitutes a process of social transformation as well. To arrive at any general explanation, history is studied in reverse for there are no predictive and necessary sequences of meaning. Yet in spite of his rejection of grand-scale historical necessity, Geertz does impose the constraint of the concept of tradition. For most civilizations, the structure of possibilities of change is set in formative years (17, p. 11). Thus, traditions, such as Islam, emerge with the continuity of culturally shared meanings.

Yet the concept of history in Geertz's work contains an internal tension. On the one hand, historical change is the necessary field for man's continual creation of

meaning through which he realizes himself as a human and cultural being. On the other hand, change is continually denied by man, whose very creation of symbols reflects the intention to fix and stabilize meanings in objectified forms. Religion reflects this struggle. In situations of extreme change such as foreign intrusion or conquest, religious symbols and beliefs may weaken in the face of upheaval and contradiction in previously coincident social conditions. Yet it is equally possible that by virtue of the commitment of faith, these symbols may persist by denying other forms of experience such as moral, aesthetic, scientific, or even practical considerations. In this sense, faith is the true counterpart of change. While belief may stabilize reality momentarily and partially, faith attempts to fix it absolutely.

It is through yet another mode of experience, science, that these other cultural systems may be understood. Because science is itself a cultural system, it too becomes a process of interpretation. Yet it constitutes a privileged mode of understanding in the sense that it grasps the reality of the entire process of human existence, unlike common sense and religion which remain limited to particular forms of experience. As a scientist, the anthropologist must not merely observe and report, he must interpret the native's interpretation of reality, or give a "thick" description (18). This thick description is achieved when the scientific imagination succeeds in suspending its own cultural attitudes in order to comprehend the essential nature of human experience. Scientific explanation in Geertz's view is a matter of discovering the intricacies of expression. To explain is to reorganize and clarify the complexity of meaning by revealing its order in symbolic forms (15, p. 47; 18, p. 16).

The scientific understanding of religious experience is perhaps the most difficult. These moments of subjective spiritual experience demand complete involvement, and therefore are never directly communicated between subjects. Rather, the immediate religious experience usually becomes translated into common sense terms. But science, as a privileged mode of interpretation, recognizes and accounts for this process of "secondary revision" and is capable of an indirect understanding of religious symbols. Furthermore, this very rephrasing into common sense reveals to the scientific mind the relevance of religion to social action.

In *Islam Observed* (17), it is this scientific phenomenology of culture which Geertz applies to the analysis of the diverse cultural expressions of Islam in Morocco and Indonesia. Geertz examines the interrelationship of sacred symbols with world view, ethos, faith, common sense, and social context which constitutes the total religious experience. The precise contents of the religious system and the social order vary through time and from culture to culture. In this study, the detailed and intricate variations in the meaning of the religious experience result from both the pressure of history and the already-given distinctions in cultural or social traditions. However, the complex diversity of meaning which emerges from the comparison of Indonesian and Moroccan Islam is always intended to reveal similarities at a higher analytic level which embrace the diverse processes of formation and transformation of cultural expressions or styles of a core tradition.

The first factor of variation is simply the accidental sequence of historical events. In Morocco, Islam was introduced as early as the seventh century by Arabic

warriors who espoused the loosely defined concepts of a newly established religious community. The Indonesians, however, received a far more developed and well-ordered Islamic doctrine from traders who arrived in the fourteenth century. During these initial periods when Islam first put its roots into foreign lands, certain conditions in each society set the limits within which Islamic meaning might develop and change (17, p. 11). These constraints created the boundaries of possible variation which are the basis of the development of distinct "traditions" of meaning. Perhaps the most significant constraint in Geertz's analysis is the nature of the social order into which religious symbols and ideas must naturally fit in order to seem authentic (17, p. 20).

In the case of Morocco, the relevant social context consisted of an unstable pattern of settlement and continuous feuding. Religious symbols both defined and interpreted this social reality. In coincidence with a fragmented social structure, Moroccan Islam lacked a religious order or hierarchy which would determine who could and could not aspire to leadership and sainthood. Instead, personal charisma, which any man might possess regardless of social or religious status, became the sole criterion of authority and power. The symbol of authority, the saint, took on the image of the warrior zealously enforcing his own doctrine, continually striving to enhance his charisma by producing miracles, and demanding the blind obedience of as many followers as possible.

The Indonesian setting differed entirely. The population was quietly settled in towns or outlying agricultural villages, and their social relations were built upon a sense of order and cooperation. Their version of Islam involved a strict, hierarchical order of graded spirituality and corresponding rules determining who was to attain the highest stages. The saint became a symbol of self-contained order, inward reflection, and self-reform. His power lay not in the brute force of his authority but in the rewards of internal insight through years of meditation.

Geertz sees these saints as metaphors or cultural constructions in which society objectifies its values, norms, ideals, and notions defining significant actions. Each embraces and condenses thousands of meanings and is able to create a symbolic unity between otherwise discordant elements (14, pp. 58-59). Through the selection and comparison of these key synthesizing symbols, and through the investigation of particular historical and social dimensions of their expression, Geertz builds up the diverse patterns of existential meaning in these local *islams*. With precision, he locates the uniqueness which distinguishes one culture's experience of Islam from another's. While the saints of Morocco and the saints of Indonesia might play a similar role as condensing metaphors, their meanings will never be the same.

Despite his emphasis on the particularity and historicity of these religious experiences, Geertz continues to refer to them collectively as "Islamic" and to speak of "Islamic consciousness" and "Islamic reform." The unity which he thus imputes to the religious phenomena emerges as a consequence of his presupposed notions of human existence. For Geertz, human reality at its most fundamental level is unified. It involves the universal conditions of being. For all men, the lived-in world is an experienced world constituted through symbolically expressed meanings which are intersubjectively or socially shared. Geertz establishes not only the reality of

shared experience but also the forms in which it is expressed. His work on Islam emphasizes the primacy of common sense, religion, and science. Although they vary according to the content of particular cultural expressions, the forms themselves and their interrelationships remain fixed and universal. The dynamics of these forms and the expression of their content yield the dimension of existence called history; and the continuity of meaning in time and space leads to the formation of historical traditions of meaning.

Thus all expressions of Islam find unity of meaning through two dimensions of these universal conditions: first as expressions of a particular form of experience, religion, with certain defined characteristics such as the integration of world view and ethos; and second as an historically continuous tradition of meaning in which the original expression and all those following it in time and space do not exist as complete distinct realities but as delicately related developments of an initial symbolic base linked by the social process of shared meaning. Islam is seen in terms of Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances. Striking similarities seem to appear over many generations, yet a careful look shows that no one characteristic is held in common. Rather, features overlap and crisscross. There is less order than in a trend within a single tradition. Continuities arise in oblique connections and glancing contrasts (20). This unity of Islam established at the level of his philosophical premises allows Geertz to speak legitimately of an "Islamic" consciousness at the level of actual experience as well. Each individual experience contains the universal characteristics assigned to the religious form of experience and those particular shared meanings which recall an entire tradition of Islam.

It is this notion that the diverse expressions of Islam may be unified at the level of a universal meaning of human reality that links Geertz with otherwise opposed anthropological analyses. Crapanzano (8) in discussing the *Hamadsha* sect in Moroccan Islam addresses culture not as the intersubjective interpretation of experience but as the expression of a Freudian unconscious. From this psychological perspective all the consciously known and accepted meanings which make up culture become arbitrary and illusory. Their only reality lies in the fact that they repress and socially control the universal instincts and conflicts of the psyche. Therefore, Islam taken as a cultural and, in this case, religious expression constitutes an historical representation of these underlying tensions. At the level of conscious meaning, the diverse expressions of Islam are not considered as different cultural realities but as historically related ideologies or illusions built upon a single reality. This absolute truth which unifies all Islam, and all religion in general, lies in the unconscious and in the universal conditions of the human psyche.

Crapanzano's analysis focuses on a single Islamic order in Morocco, the *Hamadsha*. He intends to reveal how their expression of Islam is constructed in a way which resolves certain universal psychic conflicts manifest in the interrelationship of their social structure, values, and role expectations. The followers of the *Hamadsha* consist mainly of Arabs. In their traditional family structure, males claim complete authority while women remain passive and submissive. However, the Arab father requests this same feminine submission from his sons, who wish to satisfy their father by complying with these demands and at the same time aspire to the ideal dominant behavior of the male. So the tension becomes apparent. A son is raised

as a female and expected to behave as a male. If he realizes his male ideal, then he loses it by defying his father. In Crapanzano's view, these conflicts which arise from sexual instincts rooted in the Freudian psyche create the need for release achieved through the *Hamadsha's* religious expression.

Both legend and ritual are interpreted in order to uncover these hidden psychic meanings. The *Hamadsha* myths of the two dominant saints, *Sidi °Ali bin Ham-dūsh* and *Sidi Ahmed Dghughi* recreate the contradiction of dominance and submission, male and female. The saint's relationship mimics the bond between father and son. *Sidi Ali* takes an active, dominant role, while *Sidi Ahmed* affirms his manhood through passive submission to the orders of the other. The true meaning of rituals lies in the mediation of these conflicts. In the ritual of the *hadra*, the she-demon °*Aisha* functions as an externalized superego who enforces the position of the feminized male and at the same time reinforces his manhood. In this way she assists male participants in passing through the psychological trauma of the feminine role in order to recognize their ideal.

The above interpretations rest totally on two premises, one theoretical and the other ethnographic. First, Crapanzano assumes the Freudian hypothesis of the sexual tensions of the psyche. And secondly, he attributes a simplistic and clear-cut opposition of dominance and submission to the relationship between the Arab male and female which then confirms his theoretical position. Like Freud, Crapanzano forces extreme limitations on his material through seeking a single predetermined meaning. Because all consciously expressed cultural meanings are condemned as pure illusion, they must be reduced to the same underlying hidden reality. His Freudian assumptions restrict the universe of meaning to a limited and totally fixed vocabulary of symbols—the instincts—which determine the experience of all human beings regardless of their cultural background.

For this reason, Crapanzano's analysis never requires an interpretation of the many versions of the *Hamadsha* myths. He need examine only one, for all will ultimately reveal the same human truth. Yet these variations present significant questions. In one legend, *Sidi Ali* dies before *Sidi Ahmed* brings back the she-demon, and in another he dies after *Sidi Ahmed* returns. Such slight differences in the sequence of events may entail interpretations of the relationship of the saints or of the power of the she-demon which do not conform to the interpretation of reality given by Crapanzano.

However, from the perspective of the Freudian paradigm adopted by Crapanzano, these variations in cultural meaning add no new knowledge to the understanding of human experiences. Diverse cultural expressions do not distinguish different human realities, but merely provide an imaginary mode by which man escapes a single and universal reality: the unresolvable situation, the traumatic archaic experience where desires can neither be suppressed nor satisfied. So all apparently unique and diverse institutions, thoughts, and events merely repeat what man has always done before, and their variation through time or history is reduced to an endless sequence of recreations with no accidents and no surprises.

Reading Freud in this way gives the analyst the privileged power of seeing through illusion to a hidden reality. As Ricoeur puts it, "this can be understood as reduction pure and simple" (30, p. 192). However, Freud might be read in a

different way—for instance, as Ricoeur reads him. Interpretation does not have to return to a single meaning. For if it is accepted that a symbol has one meaning, then all varying meanings at the level of consciousness are distortions hiding the real meaning which is *secret*, which cannot be grasped by those who actually live these meanings but only through the insight of the analyst. But if the symbol is left open, its real meaning is no longer a secret but an *enigma* to be restated by continual interpretation. Without these cultural interpretations the fixed content of the psyche is mute, and the symbolic relations are not yet in existence (29, pp. 91–98). Meaning then is not to be interpreted once, and correctly, but continually reinterpreted, as in Geertz's position, in order to reveal the significance of human life.

It is clear that Crapanzano's paradigm includes, beside the location of meaning in the primordial experience, definite assumptions about man, consciousness, and history. Man is imprisoned in a world which he did not create, and all his efforts to escape from it are doomed. In this view, history and change are mere illusions. Conscious meaning, or culture, which includes the religious expression of Islam, is a mechanism to cover and avoid the essential reality of the primordial experience (31, pp. 114–131).

This pessimistic view of life, history, and consciousness can be contrasted with the human reality addressed by Geertz. For Geertz, man's dialectical relation with the world transforms—through reflection and intention—the given, meaningless perceptions into a meaningfully lived human world. The mode of reflection and its intensity varies from the passive reflection on the socially given world to an active and critical reflection in which the world is not taken for granted but questioned, reinterpreted, and sometimes uprooted. But this critical and doubtful mood does not eliminate meaning or consciousness; rather, it expands both. There are no limits to man's abilities and creativity; progress itself is one of these meaningful concepts created by man in the course of his own history.

However, it is essential for man, in order to continue to produce meaning, to reflect upon his taken-for-granted reality, to modify it, transform it, and even deny it. In order to do this, he must view reality not as fixed and finished but as open to novel and new articulations. Social systems which hinder this openness will end in fossilizing man, history, and consciousness. Geertz alludes to the force of such restrictions when he describes stability in the Islamic societies which he studied: it will be a long time before someone in Morocco or Indonesia might declare that God is dead. In both societies, systems of meaning are socially and religiously imposed upon the members of the society to an extent which prohibits them from questioning or criticizing their reality.

Due to more frequent and more politically significant encounters with Western ideology and science, however, certain Islamic societies have begun to reflect critically upon the religious assumptions at the base of their understanding of the world. The two monographs to be considered now both deal with the impact of social change on religious structure and with the changing shape of traditional society as a whole. Bujra's (7) contribution deals with the politics of social stratification in the southern Arabian town of Hureidah (in Hadramut). Gilsenan's (21) monograph investigates the formation of a mystical order and its relation to social and political

change in twentieth century Egypt. Both analyze the response of religious systems to the dwindling of the social arrangements which once supported them. Although the ecology, social structure, and even the history of Islam in these two societies are different, both were characterized by well-defined, stable, and closed systems of traditional religious symbols and meanings which social upheaval now challenges.

In the case of Southern Arabia, it is the *Sadah*, or descendants of the Prophet Mohammed, who traditionally stand as the religious elite. The *Sadah* define themselves as a group according to their genealogical descent from the Prophet. Through claiming a necessary correspondence between religious knowledge and the concept of privileged descent, they possess the authority both to create the content of religious ideology and to enforce this ideology among the people.

According to the *Sadah*, descent from the Prophet passes on to them a superior knowledge with which they create the content of a system of religious symbols. They believe that their Islam is not a mere interpretation of the *Quran* or sacred tradition of the Prophet but rather that it is the real Islam inherited from their ancestor, Muhammed. They claim to be not only the mediators between man and God but the direct representation of God's reality on earth, restoring order to the world and defining the meaning of both nature and ordinary man according to the Word of God. Access to this knowledge is further controlled in a closed system of religious education. Although theoretically such training is open to all social groups by tradition, it is available only to the *Sadah* or to those whom they consider capable of religious knowledge, the *Mashaikh*.

The *Sadah* then enforce their own dominating position and perpetuate the religious ideology which they have constructed by means of certain social and political controls over the other groups within their society, and they legitimize these powers in terms of religious authority. They arbitrate continuous tribal feuds and establish sanctuary towns in which tribes may meet peacefully. In this way they also protect the rest of the population—the peasants and artisans known as *Masakin* (the poor) and *Du'fa* (the weak)—from the tribesmen's attacks. Although the *Sadah* are a unified group by virtue of the sacred symbol of descent, they have dispersed and settled over a large area in order to set up an extensive network of political relations with the many different tribes and segments of the *Masakin* stratum. They further infiltrate and control the other social groups through religious justification of the *Kafa'ah* marriage system which allows marriage only within the same social group or with women of a lower social stratum, in which case the children take the status of their father. No woman, however, may marry into a lower social group and diminish the social status of her children. By following this system, the *Sadah* create the delicate balance of being able to establish the controls of kinship within all social groups of lower birth and yet maintain their own higher status by claiming the children from such marriages as their own. By means of these controls based ultimately on religious ideology, the *Sadah* accumulated political power, social prestige, and economic superiority.

In a society constructed in this fashion, social change is completely curbed by the religious elite. If mobility is possible at all, it is downward and not upward (7, p.112). Bujra finds only two courses of potential change within this framework: first, the

migration of the lower status groups to areas with a different social system and associated opportunities, and secondly, political intervention. Neither has totally erased the pre-established hierarchy, however; migrants often arrive in towns where the *Sadah* also settle and maintain economic advantages due to reputation. And although the British occupation disarmed and pacified the tribesmen, thus depriving the *Sadah* of a source of political power, the *Sadah* still dominate economic relations. Bujra assumes that real change will come only when this economic infrastructure is transformed by whatever means possible.

In his study, Bujra understands Islam as a set of ideas created by an elite and accepted by the masses, which enables its producers to enforce and manipulate social, economic, and political hierarchies. Islam is thus reduced to an instrumental ideology. According to his own understanding, Bujra interprets religious symbols as conscious means of achieving political and economic goals. The masses' reverence of the *Sadah* becomes a sign of submission which perpetuates the superior position of the *Sadah*. And the *Kafa'ah* marriage rules are understood only as a mechanism which allows the *Sadah* to marry into all groups and prohibits other groups from exercising the same right. Bujra, like Crapanzano, closes the system of meaning and interpretation. Crapanzano uses the idiom of the unconscious; Bujra uses the idiom of politics and domination. Bujra, who questions the significance of religious phenomena in the creation of a meaningful world in favor of a social and economic explanation of changing historical conditions, ends by interpreting the position of the *Sadah* and the meaning of their religious symbols within an analytic frame of reference which is imposed upon their cultural system rather than cast in the system's own terms.

To some extent, Gilsenan's analysis (21) of an expression of Islam in a changing society avoids this problem. He studies the emergence of a saint and his vision of God and human existence during a period of social upheaval in Egypt. He defines the saint as a charismatic leader, who, as Weber would have it, has a unique and personal power to shape the meaning of existence during a time of social crisis and to convince a group of people to commit themselves to his vision. Weber emphasizes, although Gilsenan does not, the revolutionary nature of the charismatic leadership and belief which "revolutionizes men 'from within' and shapes material and social conditions according to its revolutionary will" (40, p. 1116). Charisma starts as a conflict with the rational-legal norms: "Hence, its attitude is revolutionary and transvalues everything: it makes a sovereign break with the traditional or rational norms: 'It has been written, but I say unto you'" (40, p. 1115). The system of meaning which the charismatic leader creates must be clothed in novel, personal, and emotional insights which continuously capture the imagination of the believers and convince them to follow him without question. The essence of charisma arises in its spontaneity and dies as soon as it becomes routinized and depersonalized. Therefore, in its pure form, charisma opposes bureaucracy which represents formal, impersonal, and fixed systems of rules and meanings.

Gilsenan's analysis of the saint as a charismatic leader is more in line with the interpretation of Weber associated with Edward Shils, who emphasizes the extraordinary quality of charisma but then links it with established orders of society (4, pp.

570–614). The saint described by Gilsenan did not contest the existing social order. Instead, he appears to be a leader with a personal vision, arising at a time of crisis, and trying to establish a mystical order according to the organizational requirements created by the government. He intended social readjustment rather than revolution.

In Egypt, at the time of the appearance of the Saint *Sidi Salama ar-Radi* (1867–1927), the British occupation and the influence of technological and economic success in Western societies disrupted traditional values, social structure, and religious order, particularly the significance of mystical orders shattered in the face of the rising importance of secular means of achievement. The °*Ulama*, the religious elite whose authority rested upon legalistic and formal theological interpretations of the *Quran*, joined with the government in an effort to revive the image of Islam by purifying its concepts and formalizing its structure. Therefore, by official decision in 1903, the mystical orders were organized as a bureaucratic system. However, in spite of this, their inherently fluid notions of affiliation allowed continuous changes in membership and segmentation of the orders themselves. The political disfavor which this incurred, combined with competition from secular education, political parties, and social clubs, brought the entire rationale of mystical orders and knowledge into question.

The Saint *Sidi Salama ar-Radi* intended to reestablish the preeminence of mysticism through the creation of a new order which would satisfy the needs of the rising middle class and offer the working class a personal expression of religion. He possessed the traditional mystic criterion of leadership: he received the teachings of an already established line of religious leaders, and claimed the gift of supernatural power of God. In this sense, the Egyptian saint strikes a compromise between the miraculous charisma which Geertz finds in Morocco and the genealogically based charisma of the *Sadah*. His power is determined both by revelation and by a sacred lineage of teachers. Yet in this period of rapid modernization, the legitimization of sainthood also required formal theological knowledge. Although in the past mysticism was ambivalent concerning the worth of studying theology, it now claimed to include it. Thus, *Sidi Salama ar-Radi* incorporated miraculously the currently valued tenets of formal theology into a mystical tradition in which knowledge comes directly from God.

The order he established, the *Hamidiya Shadhiliya*, was based upon a corpus of laws which he decreed in order to define a strict hierarchy of roles and functions. Each member was responsible to the saint or to his representative. The actions of the members had to be watched carefully, and the branches of the order were to be inspected from time to time to secure their obedience of the laws. A sacred oath, the °*Ahd*, that enforced an irrevocable and life-long commitment to the order was required. A structure of the saint's religious innovations then fell directly into the existing pattern of the formal bureaucratic rigidity that mysticism claimed to challenge.

Perhaps the most puzzling aspect of Gilsenan's analysis is the use of the framework of charisma to elucidate the sociological power of this saint. If the investigation is pursued, the mystic appears to lack the requirements of the concept. First, the

saint was originally a member of the *Qawigjiya-Shadhiliya* order, and from that group he drew the followers who constituted the core of his new order (27). Therefore, he did not found the order through the power of his personal charisma, but through systematic recruitment from members of a group already socially and politically predisposed to commitment. Secondly, the history of the *Shadhiliya* order in Egypt reveals a traditional compatibility between theological concepts and mystical knowledge (33, pp. 162–190). *Sidi Salama's* efforts to integrate theological formulations with mysticism were more a rephrasing of the content of an established pattern rather than a personal and revolutionary synthesis in line with Weber's definition of the charismatic leader.

And finally, the bureaucratic structure of the new order directly contradicts the nature of change which occurs through charisma. The saint, through his laws and through the sacred oath, abolished the vital process of continual reinterpretation that characterizes a charismatic message. Even Gilsenan admits that according to sociological criteria, the charisma of the saint failed to capture the nature, direction, and intensity of change in the social and political life of Egypt at that time. Instead his visions and organizations portrayed a static world which conformed to the traditional concept of formally structured religion.

Now the question of the proper role of religion in social processes arises. Unlike Bujra, who reduces religion and Islam to a political ideology which is used to manipulate a socioeconomic base, Gilsenan explores the power of religious meaning, through charisma, to create and define the nature and historical sense of social life. In this way, he brings out the cultural significance of religion which Geertz also has emphasized. Yet, as in Bujra's analysis, religion at base remains an ideological system designed to cover and justify a social reality. For Bujra, religion manipulates a social world; for Gilsenan, it merely defines and orders it. In the end, the role of the charismatic saint and of religion in general was to satisfy certain social and political conditions. The degree to which these demands were met determined the success of the saint and the legitimacy of the religious system. If religious means had failed to cope with changing social relations and attitudes, other institutions would have arisen as alternative solutions. So for both Bujra and Gilsenan the process of social change proceeds along a single path. And Islam constitutes a temporary ideological obstacle which will eventually be superseded by a more modern and rational form of society.

According to both Gilsenan and Bujra, religion constrains and stabilizes its social base. Islamic societies would have remained locked into a traditional form, determined by the rigidity of their religious world view, had it not been for the external forces of change arising through contact with the West. And even at that, the expressions of Islam in both Southern Arabia and in Egypt perpetrated their significance either by completely resisting change in other dimensions of society, as in the instance of the *Sadah*, or by readjustment to new social and political conditions with the foundation of a bureaucratic mystic order. In neither case did religion itself become an innovative force.

It is Eickelman's contribution to contest this notion of religion's inherently static form (9). He makes history the dominant theoretical perspective which views social

reality and all cultural or symbolic systems, including religion, as in a continuous state of change. He criticizes other models of change as mere comparisons of two static states, the before and the after, without accounting for the social processes which make the transition possible. Certainly Gilsenan and Bujra fall into this category. They compare traditional and stable Islamic societies with new social forms conceived as the aftereffects of Western influence. Yet they ignore the immanent dialectic within each society which constitutes the basis of that change.

In order to reveal the complexity of these processes, Eickelman insists that social reality must be analyzed in both its synchronic and diachronic dimensions. A diachronic view of society over time preserves a sense of the uniqueness and particularity of its characteristics; a synchronic study uncovers the interrelationships among its elements that hold at one point in time but which, by virtue of a necessary incongruity between the symbolic and the social, inevitably lead to change. Thus these two points of view become complementary rather than contradictory as in many other anthropological approaches (32, pp. 153-164). In this respect, Eickelman claims to follow in the footsteps of Max Weber. He tries to refute those who find a basic conflict between Weber's sociological and historical analyses (3, pp. 518-528).

In Weber's own work, the immediately given reality is an essentially undefined, chaotic, and irrational stream of experience (6, pp. 77-93). Man selects and imposes meaning on certain aspects of life which then constitute his actual historical and social world. The range of possible meanings which he may choose to impose remains inexhaustible. Therefore, the creation of historical relevancies is also unlimited and "in flux, ever subject to change in the dimly seen future of human culture" (39, p. 111). In order to grasp and organize the concrete social and historical phenomena defined by the subjective meanings held by the actors themselves, the sociologist uses the concept of the ideal type which simplifies the complexity of the historical data by typification of subjective meaning. The ideal type itself is formed by the selection and exaggeration of one or several viewpoints. It is a thought-picture designed by the analyst. "In its conceptual purity, this mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a utopia" (39, p. 90). History and sociology then are combined in the sense that phenomena which conceptually change through time, or diachronically, are the source of the synchronic idealization of sociological understanding.

Eickelman's analysis of Maraboutism in Morocco reinterprets rather than reproduces these Weberian concepts. If he were to build his model on perpetual change in the strict Weberian sense, then the meanings, interests, and relevancies of the matter he studies must change. However, he states that "From an analysis of Maraboutism in its contemporary context and an attempt to comprehend the fundamental assumptions which Moroccans now make about social reality, one develops a sense of expectation of what is crucial and often absent in evidence concerning earlier periods" (9, p. 63). This implies the use of the present to reconstruct the past, which in turn suggests a continuity of values and interests which violate Weber's notion of historical change. Eickelman further remarks that after considerable immersion in the contemporary aspects of Maraboutism, "it became

clear that something was missing, that what I saw were fragments of a pattern of beliefs, once solid, that was beginning to crumble" (9, p. 64). Again, a stable social and religious reality takes shape. Here the present is not conceived as a particular historical reality in its own right. Instead it is evaluated as incomplete against a reconstructed or presumed past totality.

Eickelman treats history as a real sequence of empirical events. He reconstructs historical facts according to documents, French travelogues, and observations of the present. These events are linked by an inherent continuum of meaning, values, and interests which reach from some point in the past into the present. This extension of historical meaning implies stability rather than change. The Moroccan cultural systems are not open to continual and unlimited variation but constrained by boundaries inherent in the notion of historical continuity.

If change takes place, it is within this bounded reality. For Eickelman the force of change in any society lies in the lack of fit between social conduct and symbolic systems which express the culturally defined universe of meaning. He feels that a tendency exists in anthropological analyses to place these two dimensions in perfect correspondence. Either the social structure is considered the essentially stable domain and the symbolic system becomes its reflection, or vice versa. In these cases, the problem of historical change is avoided. However, an interaction occurs between these two systems which indicates that they remain distinct and out of balance. This asymmetric relationship can be seen when the individual, Eickelman's basic unit of analysis, manipulates symbols in order to realize his social goals and interests, justify or acquire a social position, or accumulate power. Eickelman refers to the means of manipulation as ideologies which mediate the opposition of the symbolic and the social. Ideologies themselves must be conceived as social activities maintained through various forms of expression, including ritual action. In the process of expression and manipulation, ideologies change over time. In turn, they reshape and redefine the social order. Yet because ideology continually varies according to its historical moment of use, a social structure can never be in complete coincidence with its ideological counterpart.

All expressions of religion—in this case Islam—are dealt with in terms of the notion of "ideology" defined as an essentially instrumental and pragmatic function. Religious ideology works at two social levels: the explicit ideology articulated by intellectuals and the religious elite, and implicit ideology which consists of local and popular interpretations of religious tradition. Although they do share certain elements in common, these two dimensions continually come into conflict. With respect to a particular version of Moroccan Islam, Maraboutism, the local interpretations that Eickelman investigates are the outcome of a world view resting on five key concepts: God's will, reason, propriety, obligation, and compulsion. Although these concepts are not related to each other in any permanent pattern, they all serve to render social action both meaningful and coherent. For instance, God's will is considered to be the cause of all that happens in the world. Men of reason must continually modify their own course of action to accommodate that will (9, p. 126) in order to maximize their chances of worldly success. Those who are closer to God, as the Marabouts who are saints, will be able to decipher the acts

of God and claim a privileged access to this knowledge. Therefore, "closeness" to a saint becomes the ideology used by the people to realize and justify any form of social gain.

The saint, at least for those who follow him, defines the initially unordered stream of reality by imposing meaning and coherence on the lived world. The vision of the world which he perpetuates is one of a fixed and universal reality where "everything is written from the eternity." Change becomes an illusion for the Marabout. Within this system, a player may gain or lose, reach the status of saint or be disgraced as a sinner. But in spite of these possibilities, he must remain within a total framework of the universe which he cannot change.

In order to analyze this religious ideology, Eickelman has placed it within the explanatory framework of history. However, on two accounts the very content of his study raises certain questions concerning the nature of this theoretical perspective. First, although history, and consequently all religion and Islam, are said to involve continual change, their study is based upon assumptions which claim to be universal and invariable; the fact of history itself does not change. And while the content of actual religious symbols may vary, religion is always defined as an ideology and ideology is defined as instrumental. The significance of all cultural expressions of Islam can then be interpreted in terms of these premises. It appears that in order to analyze change, the concept of change itself must be fossilized by presuppositions which define its nature and subject matter in order to make the recognition and description of any significant historical moment possible. Religion as an ideology of God's will as understood by the Moroccans dissolves history with the premise of eternity. The opposite notion, the validity of history, for Eickelman is perhaps ideology as well. A certain paradox then emerges. The study of religion as ideology must be conducted from another ideological position (24, pp. 287-99).

Not only Eickelman's work but all anthropological monographs reviewed here begin from certain fundamental, theoretical premises concerning the nature of human reality, conscious or unconscious experience, history, and religion. Each set of interdependent assumptions implies a corresponding mode of interpretation which will reveal the real meaning of the diverse cultural expressions of Islam. Yet in spite of their differences, all positions approach Islam as an isolable and bounded domain of meaningful phenomena inherently distinct both from other cultural forms such as social relations or economic systems and from other religions. Within the domain of Islam, they also construct an internal dichotomy between local or folk Islam and the Islam of the elite, or *Ulama*. However, the criteria of distinction differ in order to serve each view of reality, history, and meaning.

For Geertz, different societies transform Islam to fit their own unique historical experience, and therefore at the local level there exist as many meanings and expressions of Islam as historical contexts. However, the elite, the *Ulama*, separate themselves from the local interpretations or the specifications of particular historical embodiments of Islam. They reflect upon the sacred tradition with its unique experience in order to grasp the eternal essence of Islam. Yet their superior position, by definition one of separation from popular knowledge, makes it impossible for them to relate this universalism to the level of common experience. The Islam of the

Ulama is highly abstract, formal, and legalistic. Theology in this sense is more reflective than popular systems of religious meaning. At the same time it is less ritualistic and less bound to common sense experience and social action.

The mode of expression differs as well. Most folk interpretations of Islam dwell upon the meaning of natural phenomena conceived as the reflection of God and the authority of the saints. The power of these religious elements does not reside in their physical manifestation. The saint, for instance, is not the white-washed shrine or the person buried inside, but the system of meanings which differs from one society to another according to historical tradition and current circumstances. The theological versions deny the authority of these symbols. Their notion of Islam centers upon the reading of the *Quran* and the prophetic traditions which yield meanings intended to transcend any particular cultural idiom. Formal religious education becomes a process of repetition in which meanings are already defined and stabilized in the pretense of universality (23). These unchanging formulations of the essence of Islam and the folk concepts which change continually according to social usage in any particular circumstance exist simultaneously in all Islamic societies.

The anthropologist taking a phenomenological approach focuses on the daily lived experience of the local *Islams* and leaves the study of theological interpretation to the Islamists. Therefore, he faces the problem of grasping meanings which are fluid and indeterminant. He must stabilize these meanings in order to understand them and communicate them to others. Symbols then become finite and well-bounded containers of thought, and at the moment of analysis the continuous production of meaning is stopped. Meaning becomes static through its objectification in the symbol (38, pp. 267–85). In order to isolate these objectifications of subjective meaning, the analyst must regard the symbol itself as an objective reality which he can describe without the influence of his own symbolic patterns. Science then requires a disinterest and detachment, a certain neutrality common to the scientific community. Although the scientist's understanding is still a mode of interpretation which can only guess at the meaning of another's experience rather than enter it directly, it retains its superior validity by recognizing the process and structure of interpretation itself.

This notion of science contains certain internal contradictions. Science is considered a mode of interpretation and reflection on experience just as any other cultural form; therefore, the suspension of cultural attitudes can never be complete—the criteria of true objectivity must be a higher cultural form of experience. Furthermore, in the scientific process of reflection, not only experience but the conscious subjects as well must become objects of reflection. In this way the very creators of symbols under study become passive carriers of meaning, while the scientific and supposedly disinterested consciousness takes over the active role.

The phenomenological position implies a certain hierarchy of experience based on the degree and intensity of different forms of reflection. The greater the reflection on experience, the greater the order in the systems of meaning. And objective understanding lies in the recognition of the order of the complexity of meaning. The local *islams* involve accepted, taken-for-granted experiences, and little directed reflectivity. Theological Islam entails more reflectivity and a more ordered system

of meanings. Finally, history, because it specifically requires reflection on the past, and science, in this case anthropological reflection on human experience, become the privileged mode of understanding due to their awareness of the nature of the processes of human experience. Yet within the total hierarchy, both theology and anthropology claim a higher degree of reflection than folk expressions of Islam. Therefore, they both regard these expressions as less ordered, less objective, and somehow less complete versions of the religious experience. Each, however, looks upon this diversity of experience in different ways. Theologians condemn it in order to enforce their view of the eternal meaning of Islam; anthropologists regard the various expressions as diluted forms, distorted by magic and superstition, and thus indirectly imply the existence of a pure and well-defined essence of Islam. Crapanzano, however, finds a different reality at the core of Islam. Instead of defining religious expression as an experiential form, he reduces it to the internal dynamics of the Freudian psyche. All religions, and thus all *islams*, become symbolic devices for the sublimation and expression of instinctual conflicts. Within this framework, both the Islam of the elite and the Islam of the folk serve the same existential function. However, the Islam of the *Ulama* provides the incontestable and formal explications, the norms of religious meaning, while folk expressions such as the *Hamadsha* act as particular therapeutic versions of real Islam which must disguise and legitimate their deviations from the "norm" by expressing certain elements of mythology and ritual in terms of formal Islam.

Therefore, the distinction between these two dimensions of Islam is based on the content of their expressions. Yet if both contents ultimately play the same role with regard to the reality of unconscious conflicts, if both attempt to normalize and socialize an otherwise neurotic tendency, then what exactly are the criteria used to distinguish the normal from abnormal or deviant content? According to Crapanzano's own premises, the content of both forms of Islam should be considered normal sublimations of abnormal tensions. This leads to the question of why the particularity of the *Hamadsha* order must be analyzed as "deviance." Crapanzano might have viewed the religious experience as a set of relations between the natural necessities imposed on man, his conflicting instincts, and the ideals developed on the superego. The uniqueness of any expression would be the result of the particular synthesis of these elements. But Crapanzano limits the real meaning of Islam both by reducing the function of religion to mediate conflicts of the unconscious psyche and by delineating an absolute standard of normal Islam. Indirectly, he rigidifies not only Islam, but the culture in which it exists and the symbols which express it. Moroccan society is portrayed in this paradigm as static and uninventive, constrained within a predetermined universe of meaning.

Like Crapanzano, Bujra regards the institutional expression of religious meaning as ideological illusion. The cause of its existence lies not in the tensions inherent in the human psyche but in conflicts rooted in the economic structure of society which embodies all essential human needs and values. Religion functions as the conscious reflection of social tension which results from material inequality and oppression. In the conservative and hierarchical society of Southern Arabia, the accepted form of Islam rationalizes and perpetuates the economic and political authority of the

Sadah. Here it is an ideology of domination. So religious meaning is not an experiential form as for Geertz, or a mask of the Freudian psyche, but the mode of legitimization of an existing social structure. Religious symbols are social signs which may be manipulated for purposes of power and therefore directly expressed in actual behavior. They are produced by the *Sadah* but passively taken for granted by the rest of the population who must accept the religious along with other forms of social control.

The distinction between elite and local Islam which must correspond with the notion of the meaning of religion takes a new turn. For Bujra, the elite version of the *Ulama* or *Sadah* does not constitute a privileged form of religious awareness as it does for Geertz, who insists that it is more reflective, or for Crapanzano, who refers to it as more "normal" than the local *islams*. Rather, he views the *Ulama's* Islam as merely another distorted ideology designed for the purposes of the manipulation of secular, social power, as are all other local expressions of Islam such as that of the *Sadah*. Both local and elite *islams* are compared to an ideal Islam which expresses the true and eternal principles of God found in the *Quran* and in the tradition of the Prophet which establish the reality of human freedom, equality, and justice. The problem becomes the recognition and actualization of this ideal Islam. Bujra optimistically predicts that the conflicts apparent in the current social order signal the inevitability of struggle and change towards this goal. Yet only the reorganization of the economic base will allow the complete overthrow of false ideology and realization of true Islam.

Gilsenan, in his analysis, reveals a distinction between elite and local Islam based not on opposition and domination, as in Bujra's definition of the role of the *Sadah*, but on complementarity. The formal and systematized laws of the *Ulama* differed in both content and style from the more mystical interpretation of the people. Yet both were traditionally opposed to the overriding authority of the ruling class. While the *Ulama* were considered a social minority with little claim to actual political power, the mystic orders (because they defined the popular notions and values of Islam) were capable of organizing a mass rebellion in response to any governmental threat. So in order to buttress their social power, the *Ulama* allied with the mystics. Even if these two approaches to Islam did not directly support each other's system of beliefs, they at least became noncontradictory. Both forms of Islam defined for society a stable and eternal vision of the world according to the all-pervasive order and meaning of God's will.

The breakdown of these two systems of belief came with the influence of Western technology, ideas, and values. The consequent drive for modernization allowed a situation in which the structure of secular bureaucracy, now considered to be the truly rational social order, challenged the traditional order built upon notions of a hierarchy designed by God which was inherent in all societies. Due to its own principles of formal and rigid order, the *Ulama* adjusted easily to the incoming social bureaucracy. However, they claimed the authority to redefine the spiritual premises on which that rational bureaucratic logic was based. Thus formal Islam is consonant with the new social order.

Along with the bureaucratic trend of modernization, the influence of other new systems of social relevance such as trade unions, political parties, and secular

education caused the mystical orders, as well as the *Ulama*, to reevaluate their own concepts of meaning and order. The saint who was the center of Gilsenan's analysis attempted to show both the *Ulama* and secular forces that these rational principles could be gained only through mystical experience. Yet his own solution, to formalize and bureaucratize the mystical order, contradicted his intention to reinstate the authority of the immediate spiritual encounter. According to Gilsenan's own criteria, the saint is considered a failure. He could not adjust the preexisting structure of mysticism to the changing social order. For Gilsenan, religion is idle; it does not define true reality, but functions instead to support the pre-given reality of the social order. Both the elite and local version of Islam are ideologies, not of an ideal Islam as in Bujra's case, but of the rational order of secular society. Therefore, there exist two systems of meaning, the religious system and social reality. If the two systems correspond, the society remains stable; if they do not, the ideological system of religion yields to fundamental social conditions. The conflict is essential for it constitutes society's drive to modernize itself. It leads to the creation of historical consciousness, rationality, and individualism. From this perspective, the rational order of modern bureaucracy, competition, and secular life will eventually destroy and leave behind those other systems of meaning which cannot adjust to it. If in traditional society Islam defines the meaning and order of social reality, in modern society, the actual empirical conditions of social life determine the meaning of Islam.

This relation between Islam and social change forms the core of Eickelman's study of Maraboutism. He too distinguishes the elite Islam from its local expressions according to his own notion of the formation of ideological systems. In contrast to Gilsenan, Eickelman believes that any social structure, even in so-called "traditional" and conservative ones, never remains stationary but changes at each moment. This change results from the lack of fit between social conduct and symbolic systems. Their dialectical interaction produces ideological systems as a means of social manipulation manifest in actual social activities defined by specific historical contexts. In this framework, the Islam of the *Ulama* is considered an "explicit" ideology transcending the influence of culturally relative values and beliefs and therefore may legitimately be referred to as "religion." Local versions of Islam, however, are understood as "implicit" ideologies as they adhere to and are intertwined with common sense notions, the untutored and accepted assumptions concerning the nature of reality specific to each social group. These interpretations then vary according to cultural background and historical moment. Systems of religious meaning thus retain their social and historical particularity. Because they never rise to a level of cross-cultural application, like the Islam of the elite which gives them the status of true ideology, local Islam is always a very culturally specific set of beliefs, rather than a fixed and wholly coherent institutionalized religion.

Both forms of Islam coexist in a state of tension. The elite continually contest the local traditions of Islam. People acknowledge the general concepts dictated by the *Ulama*, but they choose to live according to more particularistic notions of Islam, which conform with the patterns of their daily experience.

This particular anthropological distinction appears to reinforce the *Ulama's* claim to a superior religious position by treating the elite version as "religion," and reducing other interpretations to implicit ideology. These distinctions between elite

and popular Islam are obviously derived from the fundamental assumptions defining each anthropological paradigm. Although all positions argue the objectivity and universality of their own premises, the mere fact of a multiplicity of possible meanings at the fundamental level of the nature of Man, God, and the World challenges the notion of a single, absolute reality. Rather than being accepted as given truths, these anthropological premises might be treated as anthropologists themselves treat the tenets of Islam: as diverse, culturally relative expressions of a tradition—in this case, a “scientific” one. If versions of Islam must be called ideology, then perhaps these various anthropologies demand the same understanding (11, pp. 183–206). It is hardly a new insight that scholars’ own cultural ideas and values have molded the analysis of Islam. Even Weber, as Bryan Turner (35, p. 34) suggests, made “all the usual nineteenth century references to Mohammed’s sexuality as an important factor in the shaping of the *Quran* and Muslim-teaching of family and marriage.”

Recognition of the imposition of premises alien to the subject matter itself involves a reevaluation of the authority of scientific understanding. From this perspective, changes in the definition of the function or essence of Islam do not result from the accumulation of knowledge, but from the changing attitudes to religion in the West (37). The notion of the “disinterested observer” is, in fact, impregnated with the values of a scientific community. The self-declared superiority of such communities and their isolation from the common sense world promotes the development of a common reality, language, and system of values and interests labeled “scientific” and “objective.” The criteria of certain knowledge pertinent to this shared vision of the world delineate and define the theoretical approach and subject matter of studies (12, pp. 18–19).

In terms of this supposedly scientific distinction between folk and elite Islam, anthropology studies the former, yet its principles of analysis resemble the latter.

Like science, theological positions which are referred to as elite Islam, regardless of how anthropologists define them in their different paradigms, assume the same detached attitude. In both science and theology, understanding the real meaning of religious phenomena comes only through a presumed separation from common subjective assumptions and from immediate involvement with the object of study. Both positions agree on the existence of a “folk” Islam as opposed to a formal Islam which, in order to be known, demands a greater degree of reflection and systematization of principles than found in popular expressions of belief. Anthropology and theology differ merely in the particular aspects of these local interpretations selected for analysis.

However, the authority claimed by theological Islam is contested by the recognition that in any given cultural system, a folk theology may be found which rivals formal theology in its degree of abstraction, systematization, and cosmological implication. It is even possible to argue that this folk Islam constitutes the real Islam and that the traditions of the *Ulama* developed historically out of already established principles of the nature of spiritual reality entwined with the life of the Islamic community (10). In fact, these opposing theologies are complementary. Because each form both defines and necessitates the other, the problem of determining a real as opposed to an ideological Islam becomes an illusion.

On the most general level of abstraction, folk theology involves reflection on principles of ultimate reality, nature, God, man, and history which are formally expressed in traditional literature, folk tales, heroic stories, proverbs, and poetry. For instance, in the tale of *Seif bin dhi Yazan*, the reality of the world according to Islamic principles and the existence of the Prophet was known before the actual historical birth of Mohammed and his articulation of that doctrine. Therefore, in the folk conception, counter to the view of historians and Islamicists, direct reflection upon the order of the world, rather than the actual statements of the Prophet and *Quran*, leads the mind to the origin of that order.

The order of both the natural and human world rests upon a hierarchical principle which arranges each thing or person continually in an ascending order: fire to water; the segments of a tribe, to the tribal section, to the tribe as a whole. *Ibn Khaldun*, better known in the West than any of the numerous folk writers on genealogy, pharmacology, folk tales, myths, etc, elegantly describes this cosmological progression: "Each one of the elements is prepared to be transformed into the next higher or lower one, and sometimes is transformed. The higher one is always lower than the one preceding it" (23, p. 194). At the end this order arrives at the World of Spirituality which both creates and maintains these connections. Arabic, the sacred language taught to Adam by God, expresses this eternal structure and all names reveal the original nature of things, *tabi'a* or *fitra*. The entire world becomes an open text where God reveals his language and his will. The *Quran* too is read and interpreted within this paradigm.

Ideally, the human mind must submit itself to this natural logic. However, because man deviates from this density by imposing false and alien concepts upon the world, mind and nature are not initially in correspondence. The role of the Prophet and the saints is to bring these two dimensions together (22, pp. 6-15). Yet this tension persists and manifests itself in the events of human existence called history. In this sense, the study of history becomes a moral science in which explication of the ethical meaning of the world points out the mistakes and achievements of man in relation to the ideal of perfect existence. History shows that although Adam attained complete knowledge, the passage of time brought about the misinterpretation and degeneration of his heritage. Mohammed and the first Islamic community which he established regained all that the descendents of Adam had lost. Now man must continually attempt to re-enact this fixed moment in time. So history in this paradigm never refers to the everchanging creation of new meanings of human life but to the struggle to recapture and immobilize an eternal experience.

While nature is continuous and ordered, history remains discontinuous and chaotic. In folk theology, the remembrance of the Prophet, the actions of the saints and all rituals attempt to transform the discontinuities of history into the natural order by processes of ritual repetition which stops the passage of time.

Historically, in the Western sense, an institutionalized form of theology developed in reaction to Greek philosophy and Aristotelian logic which challenged the notion of the complete omnipotence of God. Internal dialogues between the conflicting positions resulted also in the establishment of the actual discipline of theology which countered the principles of rationality with the ultimate authority of the *Quran* (36).

While in the folk tradition the order of nature and the *Quran* were regarded as metaphors, the strict and formal theological interpretation gave complete authority to the sacred book to define the order of the world (1, pp. 76–105).

This total focus on the sacred text led to the development of a strong formalism and traditionalism, a common language and the construction of a bounded universe of meaning (26). The *Quran* and prophetic tradition prescribed an absolute reality expressed in a privileged language in which true meaning exists. There arose an interpretive tradition for understanding the different usages of the terms of the *Quran* and the distinctions between clear and equivocal verses (*mutashabihat*). This led to the development of the science of elucidation, *ilm al-Bayan*, designed to deal with the analysis of metaphor (*mjaz*) and metonymy (*kinaya*) as found in sacred texts (34, pp. 18–23). The construction of such devices is now thought to be governed simply by the relation of implication, whether the meaning of one word implies or is implied by another (28, pp. 184–98). These styles, used by God to express the final truth, allow the known to clarify and elucidate the unknown, and preserve both the known and unknown as real (2, pp. 251–412).

Therefore folk theology and formal theology developed from the same principle: that both nature and the *Quran* reflect the order and truth of God. Yet the two paradigms choose opposite priorities. While one locates meaning in nature and includes the *Quran* within that general order, the other finds truth first in the *Quran* and then extends that reality to the interpretation of the rest of nature. Their essential complementarity stems from a relation of mutual completion. Both seek to maintain the unity of God and the world, but both recognize processes which destroy that unity. Each position attempts to combat the other's point of dissolution. Formal theology begins from the unity of time and the word and combats the inevitable multiplicity of meaning in space—the fragmentation of local tradition (5, pp. 37–51). Folk theology begins from the acceptance of unity and order in space and combats the multiplicity of meaning created by the passage of time. Thus both attempt to contain the flux of experience: formal theology seeks to control space by fixing time, and the other to control time by fixing space.

In the end, there are no inherent differences in the content of either folk or formal theology to suggest that one is more objective, reflective, or systematic than the other. If Islamicists and theologians privilege the formal discipline, they do so only upon preconceived criteria of validity linked to their concept of truth. They claim an objectivity based upon systematic analysis of the *Quran* which is said to embody absolute truth. And they must therefore deny the legitimacy of an objectivity which bypasses the sacred text in favor of a direct insight into the order of the world. Actually, both forms of theology may be described as intricate systems of cosmological principles. They are complementary and equally “real.” They differ only as modes of expression: one exists as an institution and the other as literature.

What unifies both expressions of theology with anthropology is the structure of their means of understanding Islam. All begin from positive assumptions concerning the nature of man, God, history, consciousness, and meaning. Their interpretations of the meaning of Islam depend themselves upon already presupposed and fixed meanings which determine the universality of Islam, define and limit properly

“religious” and “Islamic” phenomena, and distinguish a folk from an elite, and a real from a false Islam. Only the specific content varies. Geertz begins from the reality of experience, Crapanzano from the psychic, Bujra and Gilsenan from the structure and function of social relations, Eickelman from a notion of history, and the theologies from God, nature, and the *Quran*.

Criteria of validity differ as well. The anthropological positions claim to be more objective than both the folk and the theological traditions. With respect to the folk expressions of Islam, they assume their scientific analyses to be more reflective and systematic. And although theology is recognized as highly reflective, it is not critical and therefore remains subordinate to the authority of anthropology which, being scientific, is critical as well. Anthropological analyses then establish their validity not only on the necessity of particular assumptions concerning the nature of reality but also on the epistemological criteria of scientific rationality. Theology, to the contrary, establishes truth on the incontestable basis of faith. So at the level of the content and form of knowledge, faith is opposed to science, theology and anthropology deny each other's capacity to grasp the final truth. Yet from the perspective of the structure of knowledge, their opposition is only apparent, for they both begin from and impose preconceived and positive meanings which necessarily frame their understanding of other experiences of Islam. Another form of contradiction emerges from this summary. All analyses are built upon the assumption of a single, absolute reality and seek to discover this reality in Islam. Yet when reviewed collectively, these studies reveal the incredible diversity of possible definitions and descriptions of Islam. This diversity is not due merely to differences in analytic perspective. Each paradigm, regardless of the nature of its premises, recognizes the uniqueness of religious expression at the level of the material it must analyze. Geertz works with different cultural and historical interpretations of experience; Crapanzano investigates the particularity of the *Hamadsha's* adjustment to their social relations; Bujra, Gilsenan and Eickelman deal with the inevitability of historical change in the expression of Islam. And all approaches, including the theological, stress a distinction in the content of elite and folk Islam. Finally, the significance of the initial problem becomes clear. In the midst of this diversity of meaning, is there a single, real Islam?

Both the anthropological and theological approaches outlined here assume that there is a reality of Islam which may be derived from principles of an encompassing universal reality of the nature of man or God. The importance of diversity is then overridden at the level of both the religious and the total human experience which take on absolute, fixed, and positive meanings. Because they begin from such assumptions, actual interpretations of any particular cultural situation, symbol, or passage of the *Quran* will reflect pre-given meaning in two ways. First, although particular content may vary, it must always contain the characteristic of meaning specific to a form of experience. For Geertz the symbol of the saint in Morocco implies charisma and authority, while the Javanese is defined as meditative and withdrawn. However, according to his own paradigm, both symbols condense and synthesize world view and ethos. For Crapanzano, the different myths, legends, rituals, and orders of Islam all essentially serve to express psychobiological drives.

Therefore, the bounds and limits of such premises give each symbol, action or institution certain inherent and fixed characteristics. Further, even the culturally and historically relative dimensions of meaning which are said to change, change only in accordance with unchanging criteria of meaningfulness. For example, Eickelman is able to anticipate changes in ideological meaning only due to the continuous, perpetual state of imbalance in the relationship between the social and symbolic systems. So while diversity and fluidity of meaning are recognized at the level of actual cultural expression, synthesis is still the final purpose of analysis. When the essential and real principle governing this diversity is revealed, a web of frozen points of meaning is thrown over the subject's fluid meanings. It is impossible with such a rigid framework to suggest that each expression of Islam creates its own real world of meaning.

As the previously discussed positions would all agree, man does order his world through systems of meaning. Anthropologically, the problem now is to find a means of understanding that order which reaches the desired level of universality without diluting or destroying the significance of this diversity and the richness of meaning in human experience. The nature of the problem is exemplified in the various treatments of the Islamic saint. In the work considered here, the saint is alternatively viewed as a metaphor, a political man, an economic man, a survival, a fragment of ideology, or even an incoherence simply to be discarded. One thing emerges from the diversity of interpretation: each treated the saint as a thing and artificially added to it different dimensions of meaning which varied according to the investigator's interest. Each investigator selects from the multitude of possibly identifiable features and functions of the saint one or two which are deemed distinctive and which, in the subsequent analysis, are taken *as* the saint. Analysis based on such highly selective reading of ethnographic data artificially collapses the complexity of the "saint" to a single dimension, leaving unexplained many possible questions about the undeniable multiplicity of the cultural construct "saint."

Much of the behavior associated with the saint and his worshippers, along with the range of meaning signifiable through the saint, may appear to be spurious, idiosyncratic, and irrelevant. At the tomb of Egypt's most important saint, for example, Gilsenan observed what appeared to be wildly inappropriate behavior amongst the worshippers. Singing, dancing, shouting, joking, even cursing, accompanied the ritual of worship on the Saint's Day—behavior unexplainable either as piety of believers or as the intelligible actions of politically and/or economically rational actors. Indeed, the actions and modes described seem defiling in this religious context. It is not only in this Egyptian case where "defilement" makes an incongruous appearance. Westermarck observed an equally puzzling development in Morocco (41, pp. 177–78), where the tomb of the saint was periodically ritually smeared with blood, a consciously recognized mark of defilement. I observed similar procedures in Nubia and in the East African town of Lamu, where visitors to the saint's tomb smear the blood of sacrificed animals on the tomb walls. The analyst confronted with such material must either demonstrate its rational "fit" with what he has identified as the real significance of the saint, expand his definition of the "saint" to accommodate dimensions of meaning beyond simple political or economic

manipulation or metaphoric condensation, or, as too often happens, he may find these data irrational and/or irrelevant accompaniments to the "essential" nature of the saint. It would seem most desirable to reexamine our original positive notion of "saint."

Elsewhere I have shown that the saint may be profitably viewed as a symbol, not in the sense of being a vehicle for meaning, but as a relational construct in which the dimension of purity/impurity, defilement and sacralization are articulated with a broad and variable range of content, including political, economic, and otherwise pragmatic aspects of life (10). The saint thus symbolically embodies fundamental properties of a system of classification in the matrix of which all institutions (politics, economics, etc) and institutionally related behavior (manipulation of power, disposition of resources, etc) are necessarily framed. The precise opposition embodied by the saint at this level may, of course, vary from place to place, just as the content apprehended therein varies. But it is only by going beyond institutions and functions, actors, and positive meanings to the relatively simpler complexity of categorical opposition that the richness of the saint or any other "religious symbol" emerges along with its position in the logic of culture.

The positions reviewed here all accept in some way the principle of objectivity based on a separation of realities in which the subject occupies the privileged position of being able to encompass within his consciousness the reality of the object. The object in each case is a thing or set of things whose order or ultimate meaning is to be discovered through techniques which identify systematic *connections* between *things*. The things may be symbols constructed as vehicles for otherwise disembodied but contained "meanings," institutions, domains, or any other entities whose existence as entities is unquestioned. That is, we have been treating analyses of Islam which accept as fundamental the existence of "Islam," "religion," "economy," "politics," and even "saints," whose relation to each other within a given culture may vary, but whose existential "truth" is not subject to question. The goal of such analysis then becomes one of finding the "essence" of things at hand and the kind of connection which seems best to explain how these things work in a "cultural system." The exact kind of relation (conceived as a connection) which emerges as dominant varies with the nature of things studied.

Thus for Geertz, symbols condense and convey meaning, while for Crapanzano they create and sustain an illusory relationship between history, culture, and the psyche. Bujra, Gilsenan, and Eickelman are concerned with demonstrating the role of "Islam" in directing the behaviorally realized interaction between political and economic institutions and in mediating the disjuncture between the reality of history and the deceit of ideology.

But what if each analysis of Islam treated here were to begin from the assumption that "Islam," "economy," "history," "religion" and so on do not exist as things or entities with meaning inherent in them, but rather as articulations of structural relations, and are the outcome of these relations and not simply a set of positive terms from which we start our studies? In this case, we have to start from the "native's" model of "Islam" and analyze the relations which produce its meaning. Beginning from this assumption, the system can be entered and explored in depth

from any point, for there are no absolute discontinuities anywhere within it—there are no autonomous entities and each point within the system is ultimately accessible from every other point. In this view there can be no fixed and wholly isolable function of meaning attributed to any basic unit of analysis, be it symbol, institution, or process, which does not impose an artificial order on the system from outside. That is, the orders of the system and the nature of its entities are the same—the logic of the system is the content of the system in the sense that each term, each entity within the system, is the result of structural relations between others, and so on, neither beginning nor ending in any fixed, absolute point. The logic of such a system, the logic of culture, is immanent within the content and does not exist without it. But while the “content” might differ from one culture to another, the logic embedded in these various contents are the same. In this sense, both the anthropologist and the native share a logic which is beyond their conscious control. It is a logic which is embedded in both nature and culture, and which can be uncovered through the intricate analysis of content. Here the problem of objectivity which haunted all the studies discussed above disappears, and since it was a problem created by a notion of the transcendence of consciousness and subjectivity of the investigator, it will vanish as a phantom, leaving in its place a logic which is shared by both the subject and the object. Islam as an expression of this logic can exist only as a facet within a fluid yet coherent system; it cannot be viewed as an available entity for cultural systems to select and put to various uses. “Islam,” without referring it to the facets of a system of which it is part, does not exist. Put another way, the utility of the concept “Islam” as a predefined religion with its supreme “truth” is extremely limited in anthropological analysis. Even the dichotomy of folk Islam/elite Islam is infertile and fruitless. As I have tried to show, the apparent dichotomy can be analytically reduced to the logic governing it.

The works we have discussed here seemed not to offer a means for uncovering the logic of culture or the principles which are immanent in culture and which order and articulate the thoughts and actions of culture bearers. In this sense we have not yet been led to the structure of “Islam,” nor can we be, for it is a contradiction in terms to speak of the systemic “fit”—the structure—of an autonomous entity. The fact of structure can never be shown in an isolated state and is reached only by unfolding patterns of both actual and potential diversity of cultural content. In its totality, this variability reveals the absence of any positive, universal content. Working from this perspective, from which meaning is strictly relational, the analyst cannot select relevant material according to some standard of truth, but must consider systems in their entirety. In this way, the multiplicity of cultural meanings is explored and developed. There are no privileged expressions of truth. “Objectivity” must be bound to the shared structures of both the analyst and the subject regardless of the content of their respective cultural systems.

This logic of relations implies that neither Islam nor the notion of religion exists as a fixed and autonomous form referring to positive content which can be reduced to universal and unchanging characteristics. Religion becomes an arbitrary category which as a unified and bounded form has no necessary existence. “Islam” as an analytical category dissolves as well.

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