Toward Islamic Anthropology

by Akbar S. Ahmed

I. Introduction

A. The Science of Anthropology

This study is speculative and concerns a difficult and complex subject. Its task is made more difficult as it defends a metaphysical position, advances an ideological argument, and serves a moral cause. It will therefore remain an incomplete part of an on-going process in the debate on key issues in contemporary Muslim society.

The major task of anthropology[1] – the study of man – is to enable us to understand ourselves through understanding other cultures. Anthropology makes us aware of the essential oneness of man and therefore allows us to appreciate each other. It is only quite recently in history that it has come to be widely accepted that human beings are fundamentally alike; that they share basic interests, and so have certain common obligations to one another. This belief is either explicit or implicit in most of the great world religions, but it is by no means acceptable today to many people even in "advanced" societies, and it would make no sense at all in many of the less-developed cultures. Among some of the indigenous tribes of Australia, a stranger who cannot prove that he is a kinsman, far from being welcomed hospitably, is regarded as a dangerous outsider and may be speared without compunction. Members of the Lugbara tribe of northwestern Uganda used to think that all foreigners were witches, dangerous, and scarcely human creatures who walked about upside-down and killed people by magic. The ancient Greeks believed that all non-Hellenic peoples were barbarians and uncivilized savages whom it would be quite inappropriate to treat as real people. Many citizens of modern states today think of people of other races, nations, or cultures in ways not very different from these, especially if their skin is differently colored or if

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[1] From anthropos, Greek for man.

they hold other religious or political faiths.

An eminent British anthropologist has noted: "When I was an administrator in Tanzania, it was widely held that Europeans were cannibals, who kidnapped African children and others and processed them for sale as tinned meat. Some European stereotypes about Africans were no less absurd. I have heard Europeans who had lived for many years in Africa (but who had never bothered to learn an African language properly, or to get to know any Africans outside the master-servant relationship) assert that Africans are lacking in natural family affections, that they do not know the meaning of gratitude, and that their languages lack a word for "thank you."[2]

We will not here discuss in detail the historical development of social anthropology; full accounts are available elsewhere. But it will be easier to see why contemporary social anthropology is the kind of subject it is if we have some idea of what has led up to it. As a branch of empirical, observational science, it grew up in the context of a world-wide human interaction which has vastly increased in the past century. What is most familiar is often taken for granted, and the idea that the study of living human communities was of legitimate scientific interest in its own right became evident when detailed information began to be available about hitherto remote and unfamiliar human societies.

Initially, the reports of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century missionaries and travellers in Africa, North America, the Pacific and elsewhere provided the raw material upon which the first western anthropological works, written in the second half of the last century, were based. Before then there had been plenty of conjecturing about human institutions and their origins to say nothing of earlier times in the eighteenth century. Although their speculations were often brilliant, these thinkers were not empirical scientists; their conclusions were not based on testable evidence.

Modern social anthropology owes much to these nineteenth-century scholars, in spite of their misconceptions. Although they were mainly preoccupied with the reconstruction of a past that was lost forever, they, like their successors, were interested in social institutions and the interrelations between the cultural and social institutions of different societies.

By the end of the nineteenth century a considerable amount of miscellaneous ethnographic information had been assembled from all over the world. The most celebrated collection is that of James Frazer. His compilation of religious beliefs and practices was published in several editions around the turn of the century as *The Golden Bough*. In this work Frazer collected a vast body of information about "primitive" religious and magical

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[2] H. Beattie, *Other Cultures* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 273.

practices throughout the world. Like his predecessors, Frazer was mainly interested in origins, but he did claim that social anthropology (he was one of the first to apply the adjective "social" to the discipline) should seek regularities or general laws. Like most of his contemporaries, however, Frazer was still concerned with isolated "customs," reported from various parts of the world largely by people with little or no scientific training. These "customs" accordingly were considered apart from the living social contexts that could give them real meaning.

As the quantity of ethnographic information increased, and its quality gradually improved, it began to dawn on some scholars that this material was too important to be used merely to illustrate preconceived ideas about primitive peoples or about presumed earlier stages of human society. More and more this extensive ethnography was seen to demand some sort of comparative analysis in its own right. Practical concerns stimulated this interest. Colonial administrators and missionaries began increasingly to see that their work would benefit by an understanding of the social and cultural institutions of the populations they dealt with. Some of the best of the earlier monographs on the simple societies were written by serving missionaries and administrative officers and will be discussed below.

Aided by the colonial enterprise at the turn of the century, there began to develop a scientific concern for a systematic undertaking of first-hand field studies of human communities that had hitherto been known to scholars only through the piecemeal observations of non-professional observers. Individual field studies, a few of very high quality, had been made earlier. But it was in the early 1900's that the systematic collection of information in the field, covering a wide segment of the social and cultural life of particular peoples, came to be generally regarded as an essential part of the social anthropologist's task. An important stimulus in British anthropology was the Torres Straits expedition in 1898, in which a team of anthropologists led by A.C. Haddon undertook a comprehensive field survey of a part of Melanesia. Later, Radcliffe-Brown's study of the Andaman Islanders, undertaken before the first World War, and Malinowski's work in the Trobriand Islands of the western Pacific during World War I, became particularly important influences in modern social anthropology.

It was with the change of interest from the reconstruction of past societies to the investigation of contemporary societies that modern social anthropology began. "Primitive societies" had at last come into their own; they were no longer merely a vast storehouse from which all kinds of exotic materials could be drawn by the diligent researcher. It was now recognized that, however different they were from the familiar states of western Europe, they were, nonetheless, systematically organized and viable communities. So, for the first time, the question arose: how are these unfamiliar social and cultural systems

to be understood?

The answer was attempted by French sociological thought with its analytical, intellectualist tradition. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French writers about human society were much concerned with the "nature" of society and of human social institutions. Their interest lay in what human society essentially is rather than in the history of its development, either generally or in particular cases. Thus Comte, like his predecessor and teacher, Saint-Simon, was much concerned with stressing that societies are systems, not just aggregates of individuals. The French thinkers saw that if societies were systems, they must be made up of interrelated parts. They also thought that these parts must be related to one another and to the whole society of which they were parts in accordance with laws analogous to the laws of nature, which in principle at least, it should be possible to discover. So the understanding of societies, and of Society with a capital "S", like the understanding of the physical organisms with which they were either explicitly or implicitly being compared, was to be achieved by discovering the laws of social organization that operated to maintain the whole structure. This "organismic" approach to the study of human societies has some grave limitations and can be misleading. But it did point to the important truth that the customs and social institutions of human communities are somehow interconnected, and that changes in one part of the system may lead to changes in other parts. When this was understood it became possible to ask, and sometimes even to answer, questions about real human societies—questions which arose less readily so long as the "piecemeal" view of human cultures, which had hitherto been dominant, prevailed. This "organismic" approach reached its most sophisticated expression in the writings of the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, who is still one of the most important influences in social anthropology.

Our concern here is to stress that the two most important strains from which the fabric of modern social anthropology is woven are the factfinding, empirical, graphic tradition represented by British and by much German and American anthropology and the "holistic", analytical intellectualism of French social philosophy.

Can we then, at this point, give a preliminary statement of what modern social anthropology is about? Anthropology is by definition the study of man. But no one discipline can possibly study man in all his aspects, though some anthropologists have written as though it could. On the whole, social anthropologists have concentrated on the study of man in his social aspect, that is, in his relationships with other people in living communities. The multifarious dimensions of the social and cultural life of more complex, literate societies have for the most part been left to historians, economists, political scientists, sociologists, and a host of other specialist scholars.

Of course, the anthropologist is interested in people; they are the raw

material he works with. As a social anthropologist, however, his main concern is with what these people share with other people, the institutionalized aspects of their culture. For this reason social anthropoligists are not interested in every social relationship in the societies they study; they concentrate mainly on those which are habitual, relatively enduring features of the societies in which they occur.

The emphasis today is essentially empirical and functional. Contemporary social anthropology is centrally a study of relationships among different kinds of people, and at a higher level of abstraction, of relationships among relationships. Let us make this clear. The social anthropologist is not just interested in the relationship between, for example, a particular chief and a particular subject. He is, as we have just noted, interested in the kinds of relationships between chiefs and subjects that are characteristic of the society being studied, and of which the particular case is an example. Further, he is interested in the implications that the institutionalized chief-subject relationship has for other institutionalized relationships in the society, for example, the relationships between different kinds of kin or the system of land-holding.

B. Anthropology and Other Sciences of Man

Social anthropologists study people's customs, social institutions, and values, and the ways in which these are interrelated. They carry out their investigations mainly in the context of contemporary, small-scale communities, and their central, though not their only interest, is in systems of social relations. It is useful to say something about social anthropology's relationship to other branches of anthropology, and also to certain other social sciences. In Britain the term "anthropology" loosely designates a number of different branches of study which are more or less closely associated. Thus physical anthropology, prehistoric archaeology, primitive technology, ethnology, and ethnography are usually subsumed with social anthropology under the rubric, anthropology, which sociology is not, even though its problems and methods overlap to a considerabale degree with those of social anthropology. So, it is not a bit surprising that the word "anthroplogy" means different things to different people. Even when it is qualified by the adjective "social," anthropology still suggests to some people an interest in bones and head measurements, to others a concern with prehistoric man and his works, to yet others an obsessive interest in exotic, preferably sexual, customs.

Let us discuss briefly the present relationship between social anthropology, as the subject is understood in Britain and the Commonwealth, and some other kinds of anthropology, namely, physical anthropology, prehistoric archaeology or prehistory, ethnography and ethnology, and cultural anthropology. Then we will consider its relationship with history and psychology. Social an-

thropology has some concern with other branches of knowledge too, political science, economics, human geography, agronomy, even philosophy and theology, to name a few. This relationship is not surprising, since social anthropologists claim to take at least some account of the whole social and cultural lives of the peoples they study, and all of these disciplines are concerned with aspects of human culture. Although social anthropology often borrows from, and sometimes lends to these other studies, the borderline between them and anthropology is not a matter of ambiguity or disagreement. In the case of the subjects discussed in this section, however, the link with social anthropology is not only close, but it is also often confused and sometimes disputed.

On the European continent anthropology means physical anthropology. It deals with such topics as the classification of early forms of man, the physical differences between the races of the species, homo sapiens, human genetics, and the modes of physiological adaptation and reaction to different physical environments. This study is important and interesting, but it has little to do with the analysis of people's social institutions and beliefs.

It is now usual, at least in Britain, to distinguish ethnography from ethnology. The term "ethnography" refers to descriptive accounts of human societies, usually of those simpler, smaller-scale societies which anthropologists have frequently studied. In this sense ethnography may be said to be the raw material of social anthropology. The term "ethnology" was formerly used as a kind of blanket term to designate almost all of the anthropological studies, including physical anthropology and prehistory. It is still sometimes so used in America and on the Continent. But British social anthropologists have found it useful to restrict it to studies of the preliterate people and cultures which attempt to explain their present in terms of their remote past. In this sense, ethnology is the science that classifies people in terms of their racial and cultural characteristics, and attempts to explain these by reference to their history or to their prehistory.

Nowadays a distinction is often drawn, as I have already indicated, between social anthropology and cultural anthropology. Culture has been variously defined, since Sir Edward Tylor described it nearly a century ago, as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." In this broadest sense, "culture" refers to the whole range of human activities that are learned and not instinctive, and which are transmitted from generation to generation through various learning processes. Often the physical products of human activity are included under the term "material culture." Thus understood, cultural anthropology obviously covers an exceedingly broad field, including practically all the nonbiological aspects of human life. Men's social institutions and values, social anthropology's central concerns, occupy only a small part of this range.

To study this whole range of activity would be difficult and most British social anthropologists consider "culture" too extended a concept to be designated a specific field for systematic study. In fact, cultural anthropology has broken down into many specialist fields such as linguistics, acculturation and personality studies, ethnomusicology, and the study of primitive art. On the whole, American scholars have laid more stress on cultural than on social anthropology, which some of them have regarded as a more restricted interest concerned mainly with "social structure." Much American anthropology is nearer to ethnology, as defined above, than it is to social anthropology as it is understood in Britain.

In America the concern with items of culture rather than with social systems may be partly due to the nature of the ethnographic material most readily available to scholars in that country. Most British social anthropology is based on field studies of people whose societies are still "going concerns," such as island populations in the Pacific and tribal societies in Africa. Until recently American researchers have had much less access to such live material. Many (though by no means all) of the North American Indian groups among which American anthropologists worked had long ago ceased to exist as viable societies, although their members often preserved extensive knowledge of their traditional cultures. In America problems of social and political organization could not present themselves with the ame urgency as they did in the study of the still viable societies of Africa and the Pacific. Thus less work has been done in America than in Britain and the Commonwealth in the analysis of actual communities as working social systems, the field in which recent British social anthropology has made its main contribution.

In America cultural anthropologists emphasize the study of symbols and examine how such symbols explain individual and group behaviour in society. Clifford Geertz, one of the leading American anthropologists, writes of culture, "the concept of culture is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical."[3]

In contrast, British anthropology, terming itself social anthropology, looks at social structure and organization with a view to explaining society. Following is an example of how these different schools interpret the same society differently.

Clifford Geertz at Princeton and Ernest Gellner at London, two of the

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[3] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1973) p. 3.

most prominent Western anthropologists and both leading their distinct schools of anthropology on either side of the Atlantic, have studied Moroccan society. To the former, society is interpreted in his book, *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society,*[4] through the *suq* (market) and relationships that arise from transactions generated in buying and selling. The market becomes symbolic of relationships in society and helps explain larger societal behavior and society. In contrast, Ernest Gellner, who worked among the Berbers in the Atlas mountains, found social life is organized on the basis of principles characteristic of segmentary tribal society.[5]

However significant, these differences in approach and their importance can be exaggerated. It must be remembered that for the most part they imply only a difference in emphasis. They do not, or at least they should not, imply that social anthropologists and cultural anthropologists study different subject matter. Whether the observer's main interest is in society or in culture, the reality which he observes, that is, people in relation to one another, is one and not two.

So much for the relationship between social anthropology and other kinds of anthropology. Let us turn now to its relationship with some other social sciences, first of all with history.

Historians are chiefly interested in the past, whether remote or recent; their business is to discover what has happened and why. On the whole, they are more interested in particular sequences of past events and their conditions than they are in the general patterns, principles, or laws that these events exhibit.

Although the two disciplines are different, social anthropology has a very close relationship with history in two important ways. First, an anthropologist who aims to achieve as complete an understanding as possible of the present condition of the society can hardly fail to ask how it came to be as it is. In the twenties and thirties some social anthropologists, reacting against the pseudohistorical hypotheses of the preceding generation, went so far as to imply that history could never be relevant for social anthropologists, whose proper concern was with structural relations not with historical ones. Few social anthropologists today adopt so extreme an approach. Many of them have worked in relatively advanced communities that have documented histories. So, most modern social anthropologists do take account of the histories of the societies they study, where historical material is available and where it is relevant to the understanding of the present. Second, the study

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[4] Clifford Geertz and L. Rosen, *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society: Three Essays in Cultural Analysis* (Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[5] Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson; 1969); and *Muslim Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1981).

of social change is by definition a historical one, though it makes use of sociological categories as well. Though they are different, the aims and methods of social anthropologists and historians coincide in some degree. Historians use documentary evidence infrequently available to anthropologists, and anthropologists employ first-hand observation rarely possible for historians. Both anthropologists and historians attempt to represent unfamiliar social situations in terms not just of their own cultural categories, but, as far as possible, in terms of the categories of the actors themselves. The main difference between anthropology and history lies not so much in the subject matter (though generally this does differ) as in the degree of generality with which it is dealt.

Social anthropology is not psychology, although, like sciences which deal with human affairs, it constantly makes use of psychological terms and concepts. Psychology is concerned with the nature and functioning of individual human minds, and although it is generally accepted that human mentality is a product of social conditioning, the study of that mentality differs in important ways from the study of the social and cultural environment which is its context.

Rather, as in the study of history, a tendency to deny that psychology can have any relevance for social anthropology is now being replaced by a recognition of the important contributions it can make to the understanding of people's social behaviour. This recognition is associated with social anthropology's concern with what people think and with their systems of beliefs, symbols, and values. The impact of Freud on social anthropology, as on human thinking generally, has been considerable, though for the most part indirect. His one incursion into anthropology, his theory of the origin of totemism, is hardly convincing, but his massive demonstration of the primacy of symbolic, irrational elements in human thought has had far-reaching influence on the subject.

In fact, every field anthropologist must be to a considerable extent a practicing psychologist. An important part of his job is to discover what the people he is studying think, which is never a simple task. Ideas and values are not given as data; they must be inferred, and there are many difficulties and dangers in such inferences, particularly when they are made in the context of an unfamiliar culture. It may well be that there is much to be learned through the techniques of depth psychology about the less explicit values of other cultures (as well as about those of our own), especially about the symbolism involved in rituals and ceremonies. But a word of warning is necessary. The incautious application in unfamiliar cultures of concepts and assumptions derived from psychological research in Western society may lead – and indeed has led – to gross distortions. The Oedipus complex, for example, is something to be proved, not assumed, in other cultures.

Social anthropologists, more than other social scientists, need to have some acquaintance with the concepts and methods of a number of subjects. The simpler, small-scale societies which they usually study and many of the institutionalized social relationships and values in which they are interested are in fields that in more complex cultures are studied by specialist disciplines. Thus, for example, social anthropologists who study "primitive law" should know at least some of the vocabulary of law and jurisprudence; those who are concerned with relationships of political power and authority, should know some of the categories of political science; and those interested in production and exchange in the societies they study should know those of economics.

C. Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter

Modern anthropology is seen by its Marxist and Third World critics as a product of colonialism which is true to the extent that anthropology and anthropologists have aided the colonial enterprise sometimes overtly and sometimes indirectly.

Ethnographic investigation and colonial enterprise have gone hand in hand from the first. In Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt were 150 scientists including ethnographers with pen and notebook in hand. This first contact between colonizing Europe and colonized Asir or Africa laid the foundation of ethnographic methodology for these continents. The ethnographic interest in colonized people was to culminate in the exhaustive studies of African, Asian, and Oceanian society.

The Orientalist (the Western scholar of peoples and customs of the Orient) contributed to the image of the Oriental. During the colonial decades a cumulative picture of the Orient formed in Western minds. Let me cite the author of *Orientalism* for a description of the Oriental, "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'." In contrast, "the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'."[6]

The colonial period produced some of the most informative ethnographic material on "native" and "primitive" peoples. For instance, some of the most detailed and accurate ethnography on the Pukhtuns comes from the British colonial period. It begins with a colonial officer[7] and ends with one[8]. Similarly Robert Montagne, a French colonial administrator, is the author of the most rewarding work on the Berbers in Morocco. Not all colonial ethnography is defective, although its political assumptions are. Sometimes political officers

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[6] W. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 40.

[7] M. Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, Vol. I and II (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1972).

[8]. O. Caroe, *The Pathans* (London, Macmillan, 1965).

administering tribal groups were more sympathetic to their charges than some of the postcolonial native officials who succeeded them.

Deeper studies of the famous "Arab" scholar-travelers are now being written. Their relationship to Islam, for instance, obviously determined their attitudes to its adherents. We know that Doughty hated Islam, which to him symbolized everything decadent and corrupt. In contrast, Blunt almost became a Muslim, such was his fascination with Islam. Some officer-scholars were motivated by forces that lay deep in family psychology and childhood memory. The scholar-travelers wore native clothes and spoke the native language. In their flamboyant behavior and eccentric appearance, they imagined they found acceptance far from home (Burton's moustache which had provoked adverse comment at Oxford was appreciated by tribal chiefs). Rejected in some childhood memory, they would indulge every fantasy in the East. They were not adult men playing at boys, but boys playing at men. Kings and chiefs were made and unmade by them (from Edwardes to Lawrence they prided themselves on this power), and they created grand sounding titles from exotic places for their heroes: Edwardes of Bannu, Gordon of Khartoum, Roberts of Kandahar, and Lawrence of Arabia. They were not just Orientalist villains destroying native custom and trampling on native culture. The picture is more complex.

Orientalists were only partly racist; a number of them sought identity among and with tribal groups, and sometimes the former were subordinated to the latter. The romance, however, was one-way only.

European colonial scholarship was not politically innocent. Its aim was to understand the colonials better in order to dominate them more efficiently. This knowledge was translated into administrative policy. A crude example may be given from both the British and French colonies.

Determined attempts were made to separate the people of the hills from the people of the plains. Hill tribes were projected as proud, honest, hospitable, egalitarian people abiding by a traditional tribal code. In contrast, groups living in the plains were seen as servile, unreliable, and racially inferior. The former provided the prototype of the noble savage. To the French, the Berbers, and to the British, the Pukhtuns, fell in this group.

Similarly, and perhaps unconsciously, some modern anthropologists follow the imperial attempt to separate Muslim groups. One means is to distinguish "good" from "poor Moslems." Certain anthropologists go to great lengths to establish that nomad/tribal groups possess "a reputation for being poor Moslems".[9] Barth found the Basseri in Iran "poor Moslems".[10] There is, however,

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[9] R. Tapper, *Pasture and Politics: Economics, Conflict, and Ritual among Shahsevan Nomads of Northwestern Iran* (New York: Academic Press, 1979).

[10] F. Barth, *Nomads of South Persia & The Basseri Tribe of the Khamseh Confederacy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961).

general though scattered evidence to the contrary.[11]

The link between colonialism and academic anthropology continued even after the second World War when most Muslim countries were free or almost free of their colonial masters. It is not entirely a coincidence that some of the better known post-war British anthropologists were officers who had held colonial posts in the empire.

II. Anthropological Fieldwork

The work of the anthropologist is to study other cultures. Through them he learns to understand his own culture, and equally important, himself. He remains essentially a seeker. In the distant village and among strange people he comes face to face with himself—a chilling prospect. In that encounter is reflected his true self. His writing too reflects the encounter. The Pukhtuns say, "What we see in ourselves, we see in the world." Perhaps anthropologists would do well to keep the Pukhto proverb in mind.

Social anthropologists must test their hypotheses about social and cultural institutions and their interconnections in the course of fieldwork in societies and situations which they have no power to control. Their tools are observation, interpretation, and comparison rather than experiment. This does not mean that anthropologists can do without any theory. It is as essential to anthropology as it is to other scientific disciplines.

Whether we like it or not, social anthropology has become a specialist subject. It has its own theoretical equipment, some account of which has been given in preceding sections, and it has by now a considerable body of comparative material to draw upon. No one who writes about the social institutions of a small-scale community without knowledge of contemporary theory in social anthropology, and without some knowledge of the social and cultural institutions of comparable societies elsewhere, can hope to produce a scientifically adequate account. Without specialist training he cannot know the most important things to look for, the most useful questions to ask, or the best techniques for obtaining answers.

Living in a hut or tent within the village, the anthropologist gradually begins to understand what is happening around him. As his knowledge of the language and his acquaintance with the community advance, things begin

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[11] Akbar S. Ahmed, *Pukhtun Economy and Society: Traditional Structure and Economic Development in a Tribal Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980); "Order and Conflict in Muslim Society: A Case Study from Pakistan," *Middle East Journal*, Spring 1982, pp. 184-204; and Akbar S. Ahmed and D. M. Hart, *Islam in Tribal Societies: From the Atlas to the Indus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983); and I. M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 1961).

to make sense. An overheard conversation is understood; a pattern of behavior is fitted to a learned social relationship. With luck he now has a few friends in the community, people who are willing to take time and trouble to explain things to him, to take him around the neighborhood, and to introduce him to others. From this point onward, the pace accelerates. The anthropologist gets to know most of the members of the community as separate individuals, differing in temperament and in social status. He learns their often intricate ties of kinship and marriage; he comes to understand what they think about one another, about the world they live in, and about him. He learns not only what are the appropriate questions to ask, but of whom to ask them. He begins to feel "at home" in the community. He now knows it in some respect more thoroughly than he has ever known any community, even the one he grew up in. He has made the breakthrough into another culture: as a field anthropologist, he has arrived. He has accomplished the major characteristic of anthropological "participant observation."

To a Western anthropologist, probably born and brought up in an urban culture, this can be a vivid, almost traumatic, experience. The field worker who spends a year or more of his life as a member of a group of hunters and gatherers in Borneo, or of a tribe of African peasants or pastoralists, lives in more intimate contact with the basic conditions of human existence than has been possible for generations in the modern world. Birth, illness, and death, the daily effort to win food from the environment with the simplest equipment, the smell of the hot earth, the wind and the rain, the urgent, first-hand awareness of these things is something new and yet familiar to the visitor from a city culture.

III. Theoretical Frames in Western Anthropology

If it is virtually nonexistent in the Muslim world, anthropology in the West is in a state of general theoretical stagnation. Alarmist titles such as "Crisis of British Anthropology"[12] and "The Future of Social Anthropology: Disintegration or Metamorphosis?"[13] reflect this. Apart from extending or varying the classical theoretical themes, contemporary anthropology has produced no major recent work. In addition, an acute sense of crisis accentuated by real problems – the shrinking job market, disappearing "primitive" groups, the emergence of "native anthropologists" – troubles the discipline. In par-

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[12] J. Banaji, "Crisis of British Anthropology," *New Life Review*, No. 64, 1970, pp. 71-85.
[13] R. Needham, "The Future of Social Anthropology: Disintegration or Metamorphosis?," *Anniversary Contributions to Anthropology: Twelve Essays* (Leiden, 1970).

ticular the confidence of Western anthropology appears to be shaken by the emergence of the "native anthropologist."

It may be said that the anthropologist's first task is descriptive. In any empirical inquiry, we must know what the facts are before we can analyze them. Although the distinction between description and analysis is indispensable, it can be misleading, especially in the social sciences. The difference is not simply between studies that imply abstraction and those that do not. Even the most minimal descriptions include abstractions, generally unanalyzed and implicit. Description does more than describe, it also explains. Theories are involved in even the simplest descriptions. Not only do they determine the kinds of facts selected for attention, but they dictate the ways in which these facts shall be ordered and put together. The important question is not whether an account of a social institution (or of anything else) implies generalization and abstraction, for this it does. The critical questions are: What is the level of abstraction, and what are the kinds of theories involved? It is especially necessary to be explicit in social anthropology, for the social situations it deals with are often unfamiliar ones. Anthropologists have thus devised different models to explain society which combine theory and empirical inquiry.

A. Social Structure

Until very recently most social anthropologists, especially in Britain, stressed the analysis of social systems as systems of action, that is, in causal terms. The most celebrated contributions of the past half-century (derived through Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski from Durkheim and his predecessors) have been made at this level. The key that opened the door to the systematic understanding of the simpler, "primitive" societies was the organic analogy, which derived from French sociology. And the functioning of organisms, like the working of machines, makes sense without any reference to the states of mind of their constituent parts. Scholars on the Continent and in America, and a few social anthropologists in Britain, have throughout sustained an interest in people's thoughts and ideas, both on their own account and as effective elements in systems of action. The theoretical models most characteristic of modern social anthropology have been those that take societies as systems of action, and which either explicitly or implicitly invoke the organic analogy. It is only in the last few years that the study of social and cultural institutions as systems of meanings has become of primary concern.

On the "action" level, two different though associated kinds of questions can be asked about social institutions, both concerned with causes. The first relates to the problem of how things came to be as they are, and so is esentially historical. It it can be shown (as it very often cannot) that a certain social

institution is as it is because of certain historical happenings, social anthropologists take (or should take) note of these happenings, provided that there is sufficient evidence for them. The happenings need not themselves be physical events on the "action" plane of social reality; we know that ideas and values may play an important part in history. The second relates to the anthropologist's understanding of the current working of social attitudes and relations. History is not only important for sociology as a chain of causes and effects running back into the past. It is also important as a body of contemporary beliefs about those events.

The two most celebrated protagonists of functionalism in British social anthropology have been Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. Malinowski held that human society and culture are best understood as an assemblage of contrivances for satisfying the biological and psychological needs of the human organisms that make up the society. He found it necessary to supplement his list of needs with "derived" and "integrative" needs (not themselves strictly biological), but his central thesis was that anthropologists may best study human cultures as machines for satisfying men's organic needs.

Although the classification of human institutions in terms of the needs they serve (such as the provision of food, the propagation of the species, and the maintenance of physical security) provides convenient categories for fieldworkers to use, few if any anthropologists today find this approach satisfactory. Basic physical needs must be at least partly satisfied if human beings are to survive, and there can be no society without people. It is not illuminating to analyze social institutions solely in terms of such needs. Their satisfaction is a condition of the maintenance of any life, not only of social life, so they can hardly throw any distinctive light on the latter. The sociologist is interested in the conditions of living together, not merely of living. Since fundamental human needs are presumably much the same everywhere, differences between social and cultural institutions can never be explained by them.

The second type of "total" functionalism, which Radcliffe-Brown derived largely from Durkheim, has been more influential. It asserts that the function of any social institution is the correspondence between it and some general need or, in Radcliffe-Brown's phrase, some "necessary condition of existence" of the society. Radcliffe-Brown wrote of society as if it were some kind of real existence, and he thought that the ultimate value for any society is its continued survival. This, so his argument goes, can be achieved only through the maintenance of social solidarity or cohesion among its members. Social solidarity is the end to which social institutions must contribute, and this contribution is their function. Radcliffe-Brown does say that functionalism is a hypothesis, not a dogma; his thesis is that social institutions may contribute to the maintenance of the whole society. He does not claim that they must

invariably do so. Radcliffe-Brown thought of social function in the context of what he sometimes called "the total social system," and he asserted that functional unity is achieved when "all parts of the social system work together with a sufficient degree of harmony or internal consistency; that is without producing persistent conflicts which can neither be resolved nor regulated."

The first thing to observe is how heavily this formulation depends on the organic analogy; it seems to imply that a "total social system" is an empirical entity to which definite attributes can be ascribed. In recent years, it has become clear that the "holistic" view of society that it implies is of little value in actual research. How, for example, could the lack of "a sufficient degree of harmony" be proved except by the physical destruction of the whole community? In any case "society" is not something given in experience. It is an intellectual construct or model, built up on the basis of experience, but not itself a datum.

The organic analogy has led to error in one further respect. It implies not only that societies are empirically given systems, but also that they are harmoniously integrated ones, or should be if they are "healthy." These systems are then thought of as being in a state of equilibrium or "homeostasis" by a set of smoothly interacting and somehow self-adjusting social institutions.

To summarize, the notions of social function and social structure have been the most important forces in British social anthropology during the past half-century. By the study of social function, anthropologists have generally meant the study of the causal implications of social institutions for other social institutions and systems of institutions in the same society. By the study of social structure they have generally meant the definition of those enduring aspects of social institutions that have appeared to be most important in terms of their interest in them. Modern British social anthropology has sometimes been identified with what has been called the "structural-functional approach." Although there is much more to British social anthropology than this, these concepts have provided the operational framework for many field studies of high quality.

It may be said that despite the great advances in our understanding of the working of small-scale societies as revealed by the development of functional and structural theory, this development has tended to distract attention from the equally important problem of how to understand other people's systems of beliefs and values. Systems of beliefs and values were of interest to anthropologists long before the intensive development of structural-functional theory, but it is only quite recently that the interests of a significant number of British anthropologists have returned to them. There has been a tendency to regard ideas and values as "cultural" data, and for many years "culture" has been regarded at best as a peripheral interest of structurally oriented social

anthropologists. It is now more generally recognized that the social anthropologist is directly and legitimately concerned with both dimensions.

A larger argument envelops and partly overlaps these schools. I refer to Marxist anthropology. Anthropologists calling themselves Marxist employ traditional Marxist tools to analyze social structure, organization, and relationships. Talal Asad's analysis of the Swat Pukhtuns, for example, is a straightforward and successful class analysis.[14] The usefulness of Marxist theory is somewhat curtailed in the overenthusiasm of Marxist scholars wishing to apply their theoretical framework irrespective of ecology or ethnography. For instance Marxist analyses of segmentary societies living in low production zones[15] remain unsatisfactory and have been termed by Godelier, himself a Marxist, "vulgar Marxisms."[16]

B. Kinship and Political Organization

According to the dictionary, kinship has to do with relationships by blood, or consanguinity, whereas affinity has to do with relationships brought about by marriage. In social anthropology the two topics are very closely connected. All cultures distinguish various categories of kin and affines, and these categories with their associated patterns of rights and obligations make up what social anthropologists call kinship systems.

Social anthropologists are accused of concerning themselves overmuch with the refinements and complexities of kinship terminologies, of indulging in what Malinowski called "kinship algebra," and there are good reasons for this concern. Very few of the interpersonal relationships that make up a Western European's social world are kinship ones. Kinship plays little or no part in his relations with his friends, his employers, his teachers, his colleagues, or in the complex network of political, economic, and religious associations in which he is involved. But in many smaller-scale societies, kinship's social importance is paramount. Where a person lives, his group and community

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[14] T. Asad, "Market Model, Class Structure, and Consent: A Reconsideration of Swat Political Organization," *MAN*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1972. For uneven Marxist analyses of Punjab villages, see S. Ahmad, "Class and Power in a Punjabi Village," *Monthly Review Press*, 1977; and H. Alavi, "The Politics of Dependence: A Village in West Pubjab," *South Asian Review*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1971, and "Kinship in West Punjab Villages," *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, New Series, No. 6, 1972.

[15] P. P. Rey, "The Lineage Mode of Production," *Critique of Anthropology*, London, No. 3, Spring 1975; and E. Terray, "Marxism and Primitive Societies: Two Studies," *Monthly Review Press*, New York, 1972; "Technology, Tradition, and the State," *Critique of Anthropology*, London, No. 3, Spring, 1975, and "Classes and Class Consciousness in the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman," in M. Bloch, ed., *Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology* (London: Malaby Press, 1975).

[16] M. Godelier, *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology* Cambridge University Press, 1977).

membership, whom he should obey and by whom be obeyed, who his friends are and who his enemies are, whom he may and may not marry, from whom he may hope to inherit and to whom pass on his own status and property—all these matters and many more may be determined by his status in a kinship system.

Why is kinship so important in small-scale societies? The short answer is that in all human communities, even the most technologically simple ones, the basic categories of biological relationship are available as a means of identifying and ordering social relations. This is true even though some of these categories may be differently defined in different cultures. Everywhere people are begotten of men and born of women, and in most societies the fact of parenthood and the bonds of mutual dependency and support that it implies are acknowledged. It also leads to the recognition of other links, such as those among siblings (children of the same parents), and between grandparents and their grandchildren.

The question of social relationships among kin brings us to the broader issue of political organization. Radcliffe-Brown's formulation, based on the classical definitions used by Max Weber and others, is more useful, though we shall see that it is not quite adequate either. In the Preface to *African Political Systems* he wrote that political organization is concerned with "the maintenance or establishment of social order, within a territorial framework, by the organized exercise of coercive authority through the use, or the possibility of use, of physical force." This definition employs two different criteria. First, reference is made to the end to which political activity is directed, namely, the regulation and control of the social order within a certain territory. And secondly, the means whereby this is achieved is brought in, namely, the organized exercise of authority backed by force. Social anthropologists can make good use of the first of these criteria, for some degree of social order is attained in every society, and social anthropologists are interested in finding out how this is done. They are concerned in identifying and analyzing the social institutions through which order is maintained on a territorial or tribal basis and through which relationships with other territorial or tribal groups are created and maintained. It is not disconcerting that some institutions, like the blood feud in certain societies, are not what we ordinarily think of as "political." Our interest is in the realities of social life, not primarily in the names we use to identify these realities. We do, however, have to use words with care, lest the reality be obscured. When we are discussing political phenomena in small-scale societies, there is much to be said for speaking of the political aspect of certain social institutions, rather than of specifically political institutions. Often institutions that have political importance are socially significant in a number of other contexts as well.

The second of Radcliffe-Brown's criteria, the organized exercise of authori-

ty backed by force, leads to difficulty when it is applied to some of the societies anthropologists study. Anthropologists can certainly speak of authority and force when they are considering centralized states like those with which most of us are familiar in the Western world, with their kings, parliaments, courts, judges, and police forces. Many of the smaller-scale societies are of this type, though usually their political organization is less elaborate. But some of them are not. In such tribes as the Nuer, or the Tallensi of modern Ghana, there are (or were) no specialized political functionaries, and there is no organized structure of authority backed by physical force. This is not to say that physical force is not exercised in such societies. Nonetheless, these societies do possess order and structural continuity; they may even be shown to have a political structure. The fact that political authority may be widely diffused, for example, among grades of elders or lineage heads, and that it may be backed by religious or magical sanctions rather than by organized physical force, does not mean that such authority is lacking, though it may be relatively unspecialized and very hard to identify.

Even where no political authorities at all can be found, as in some segmentary societies, the ends, which I have defined as political, may be brought about through the interplay of other institutions not overly political. We shall see later how this happens. Here, as elsewhere, the classical conceptual apparatus of Western culture does not quite fit much of the unfamiliar social material.

To the question, how political order is thought of and maintained (so far as it is maintained) in segmentary, lineage-based societies where there are no political authorities to make and enforce political decisions, there is no short and simple answer. The maintenance of some degree of territorial order is a function of several different social institutions. Where lineal descent provides the principle upon which corporate local groups are established, it provides also the idiom through which inter-group, even inter-tribal, relations operate, as can see in the case of the blood feud. Where, as among the Nuer, lineal membership or nonmembership is a relevant aspect of practically all social relationships, then lineal attachments and loyalties provide a framework for territorial relations also, and territorial grouping and lineal structure tend to show a rough-and-ready correlation. Even where other factors besides lineal membership play a significant part in many social situations, as among the Tallensi, the lineal organization is still of great importance. Once again, the matter is very much one of degree. The question is not so much whether such and such people "have" lineages. The important questions are these: What kind of social and political importance, if any, does lineal descent have in the society concerned? If groups are formed on this basis, how large are they and of how many generations do they take account? What patterns of social behavior and value are associated with membership in these groups?

Lineal descent, and the accompanying social behaviour implied and imposed through the social code, acts as an indicator distinguishing those on the genealogical charter from those not on it. There is thus an exaggerated social awareness of lineal descent in many societies. Ideally, identical segments are arranged symmetrically on the genealogical chart and the ascendant or descendant levels structurally reflect one another. Segmentary structure and the principle of lineal descent pervade the whole system and contribute to social cohesion. The political superstructure of segmentary tribes tracing descent from a common apical ancestor is an extension of this segmentary lineal organization. The descent chart defines a hierarchy of homologous groups which can direct fusion or fission of social and political interests within a merging or diverging series of such groups. Ideally such tribal genealogy "is a conceptualization of a hierarchy of ordered territorial segments."[17]

When we turn to consider "centralized" societies, we are faced with similar problems of identification and of degree. As Lucy Mair has recently pointed out, we cannot simply divide societies into those with chiefs and those without. It we could, the classification of small-scale political systems would be much simpler. Two factors contribute to the difficulty of classification. The first is that lineal organization may still be of major political importance even in societies that have a titular head or king and that may therefore be characterized as centralized. If, for example, the segmentary Nuer were to acknowledge one man, or one lineage, as ritually pre-eminent, while retaining their present segmentary social organization, should we say that they had a centralized political system? We would, rightly, hesitate to do so, and yet a common loyalty to a central head, however tenuous and however restricted the authority allotted to him, certainly has political implications. When we are considering so-called centralized societies, we have to look very closely at the nature and scope of the political authority, if there is any, that is centralized in such societies.

The second, more taxonomic factor was touched on earlier. It is that there are many societies or social aggregates, possessing a common language and culture and more or less conscious of their tribal identity, that have no central head but consist of congeries of small, relatively independent units. These units may be based neither on lineal kin groups nor on age sets. They may themselves be politically centralized statelets or chiefdoms, each centered on its own chief and politically independent of all the others. The important Sukuma and Nyamwezi peoples of Tanzania form such groups. Whether we regard them as centralized or as segmentary societies depends upon whether

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[17] E. Peters, "The Proliferation of Segments in the Lineage of the Bedouin of Cyrenaica, *JRAI*, Vol. 90, 1960, pp. 29-53.

we regard them from the point of view of their component units, or from the point of view of the whole social aggregate. We shall do well to bear in mind, first, that centralization is very much a matter of degree, and depends on the point of view from which the social situation is regarded, and second, that centralization, however we define it, is only one of a number of criteria useful in classifying small-scale social systems.

In conclusion, *African Political Systems* by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard,[18] distinguishes three types of tribal social organization: the Bushmen, where political relations equal kin relations (*ibid:* 6-7); a second type, called Group A, which are unitary states with kings or paramount chiefs ruling centralized states with societies that are ranked; a third type, Group B, which are segmentary lineage systems, characterized by: (1) segmentation of tribal groups; (2) lineal descent from a common eponymous ancestor (patrilineal descent is of primary importance as against matrilineal descent in other societies),[19] (3) monadism wherein "the small group is the embryo tribe, and the tribe is the smaller group writ large";[20] and finally, (4) egalitarianism or an acephalous form of political organization. To these categories of tribal systems may be added another classification, that of the "segmentary state".[21]

C. Beliefs, Magic, and Religion

Social anthropologists have always had to take some account of the beliefs and values of the peoples they study. Although functional theory has tended to distract attention from this field, it has greatly advanced our understanding of other peoples' ways of thought. This understanding implies reference to what people think, as no human social institutions or relationships can be adequately understood unless account is taken of the expectations, beliefs, and values that they involve. Nevertheless, with a few notable exceptions, systematic field studies of peoples' modes of thought, and their values and beliefs, have only recently begun to be made.

For the earler anthropologists, problems about the modes of thought of so-called "primitives" scarcely arose with any complexity. It was easy for the Victorians to assume that such thinking as primitives did was simple and "childish" (one of their favorite adjectives), an inferior version of their own. The intensive fieldwork that was to provide an intimate understanding of

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[18] M. Fortes and E. E. Pritchard, eds., *African Political Systems* (Oxford University Press, 1970).

[19] E. R. Leach, *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon, and Northwest Pakistan* (Cambridge University Press, 1971).

[20] Gellner, *op.cit*, p. 48.

[21] A. W. Southall, *Alur Society* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1953).

"simpler" peoples' way of life and thought, and was so to demonstrate the superficiality and inadequacy of such views, had not begun.

In France, in the early ears of this century, the famous sociologist, Emile Durkheim, founded a school of social anthropologists called the *Annee Sociologique* group, after the journal they founded. These writers devoted much attention to the study of the ideas, their *representations collectives*, which so-called "primitive" peoples held about themselves and about the world around them. Like their predecessors, these scholars did little or no fieldwork, so they were dependent for their information mostly on the reports of travelers and missionaries, which varied a good deal in quality.

We must stress that only the development of intensive fieldwork permitted the subtlety, complexity, and, often, profundity of the ways of thought of preliterate or only recently literate peoples to be at all adequately understood. As soon as anthropologists began to live for periods of months and even years among the people they studied, communicating with them in their own tongue and sharing in their daily activities, it began to become plain that the old Western stereotypes about primitive modes of thought were quite inadequate and often misleading. A landmark in the growth of this recognition is Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande.*[22] In this study the beliefs of this highly intelligent people of the southern Sudan are shown, not as a set of weird and irrational delusions about occult forces, but rather as embodying a mode of adjustment to the strains and frustrations of everyday life, which in the whole context of Zande culture is eminently practical and sensible. The Zande system of beliefs, and others like it, provide both an explanation of misfortune (why did this have to happen to me?) and a way of dealing with it. In a pre-scientific, culture there may be no other means of coping with such situations.

Radcliffe-Brown's theory of ritual purposes that one of the functions of ritual is to express and so to reinforce certain sentiments or value adherence on which the smooth running of the society depends. The important truth in this view is now plain. Ritual, magic, and taboo are essentially symbolic and so are expressive, and they are often thought to be instrumental as well. Certainly they may have important social consequences for the people who have them. The difficulty with Radcliffe-Brown's account of ritual is that it is too general to be of much practical use in investigating real human cultures. To say, as he does, that the communal performance of ritual may express, and so sustain, values that contribute to the maintenance of social solidarity may be true. But it is not always so. Communal ritual may be divisive as

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[22] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937).

well as cohesive, and notions other than social solidarity may be symbolically expressed by it. Some of the rites involved in sorcery, for example, can hardly be said to sustain patterns of behavior conducive to social cohesion. Further, Radcliffe-Brown's hypothesis, as he states it, affords no room for testing. Social cohesion itself is taken to be exhibited by the communal performances that are supposed to sustain it. There is circularity in the argument that dancing together contributes to the kind of situation in which people like to dance together. The thesis could be disproved only by finding a society that failed to carry out the necessary ritual and therefore perished. To Radcliffe-Brown's great merit, however, (following Durkheim) he made the point that ritual is an essentially expressive activity, and that it can and does have important social implications. Society is the indispensable condition of human life as we know it. In worshipping God, he contends, man is really worshipping his own social system.

Durkheim's theory of religion has been subjected to a good deal of criticism. It is rather less naive than it appears to be, when we realize (and Durkheim sometimes failed to make this clear) that society is not a "thing," but rather a system of relationships, in some sense a construct. Social relationships, involving beliefs, expectations, and values as well as human interactions in space and time, are not "given" empirically, in the same sense that the data of the natural sciences are. It is one thing to say that totemism, or religion, means that a man worships the actual groups of people of which he is a member. It is quite a different thing to say that what he is revering is a complex system of moral imperatives, rights, and obligations. Most modern students of religion would hold, as against Durkheim, that religious belief and practice are more than merely a system of social and moral symbolism. Group symbolism can be very important, in secular as well as in religious contexts, and it was to Durkheim's great merit that he pointed this out.

As a theory of totemism, it is not quite adequate, although it makes the important point that totems, like flags and old school ties in Western societies, are symbols of group unity. It is worth mentioning in passing what the great psychologist, Sigmund Freud, contributed to the study of totemism. Like Durkheim, he based his hypothesis on the Australian material. He surmised that the origin of the institution lay in the Oedipus complex, which he held to be universal. In the primeval family, he said, the sons covet their father's wives, and in order to acquire them they kill and eat their father. Afterwards they are smitten with remorse, and the totemic feast (which occurred in Australia but is found nowhere else) is really a symbolic re-enacting of that first patricidal crime. Freud does not make clear at what point in human history he thinks that this happened, or whether it happened only once or on many occasions. His theory is not taken seriously by social anthropologists, who in any case are not greatly interested in the undiscoverable origins of human

institutions. What Freud does is to translate what may be a scientific insight of profound importance (at least in Western cultures) from psychological into socio-historical terms. But this turns it into an undemonstrable and therefore valueless hypothesis, significant only as a mythical expression of psycho-analytic value.[23]

The term totemism covers a multitude of phenomena. As it is generally used, however, it refers to situations where each one of a number of discrete social groups into which a society is divided maintains a particular regard—though not necessarily one of worship or reverence—for a particular object in the natural or cultural spheres.

This leads to a final point. What is symbolized in religious behavior? Durkheim said that in totemism (for him the elementary form of religion) society is worshipping itself. Radcliffe-Brown argued that ritual expresses symbolically certain sentiments or values, upon the acceptance of which the smooth running of society itself depends. This view is essentially a restatement of Durkheim's position, and like it, it obscures the important fact that conflict and opposition may be important components of social systems as well as harmony, and may also become focuses of ritual. Radcliffe-Brown argued also that ritual sometimes expresses more than man's need of society; it expresses his fundamental dependence on the natural world which he occupies and of which he is a part.

We have seen that much ritual and religious behavior translates uncontrollable natural forces into symbolic entities which, through the performance of ritual, can be manipulated and dealt with. Ritual is a language for saying things which are felt to be true and important but which are not susceptible to statement in scientific terms. Even if sophisticated modern man is less inclined to attach instrumental efficacy to the symbols which he has created to express his apprehension of the universe and of its ultimate meaning, he still feels the need to express this awareness. In the areas beyond science, there is no way of expressing it except symbolically. To say that religious symbols are man-made is not to decry the validity of religion, for ritual is a statement about something, not just about itself. But the comparative study of the religious beliefs and practices of other cultures may suggest that in religion, no less than in other forms of symbolic behavior, reality is misrepresented if the symbol, and not the often indefinable thing that it symbolizes, is taken to be the ultimate truth.

D. Economic Anthropology

This section may be introduced by briefly mentioning the two main

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[23] Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (London, 1950).

theoretical positions in economic anthropology, Substantivist versus Formalist. Polanyi sums up the respective positions in his statement[24] that the Substantivist economic approach: (1) derives from fact, (2) implies neither choice nor insufficiency of means, (3) implies power of gravity, and (4) implies laws of nature.[25] The Formalist approach: (1) derives from logic, (2) has sets of rules referring to choices between alternative uses of insufficient means, (3) has the power of syllogism, and (4) derives from the laws of the mind.[26] The title of Cancian's paper "Maximization as Norm, Strategy, and Theory" clearly states the Formalist position. Volumes containing both viewpoints are standard academic fare.[27]

Without wishing to become involved in a Substantivist versus Formalist

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[24] K. Polanyi, "The Economy as Instituted Process," in E. E. LeClair and H. K. Schneider, eds., *Economic Anthropology* (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 122.

[25] P. Bohannan, "The Impact of Money on an African Subsistence Economy," *Journal of Economic History*, No. 19, 1959, pp. 491-503; P. Bohannan and L. bohannan, *Tiv Economy* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968); P. Bohannan and G. Dalton, eds., *Markets in Africa (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1962); and G. Dalton, "Economic Theory and Primitive Society," American Anthropologist*, Vol. 63, No. 1, 1961; "Traditional Production in Primitive African Economies," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 76, 1962, pp. 360-78; "Primitive Money," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 67, 1965, pp. 44-65; ed., *Tribal and Peasant Economies: Readings in Economic Anthropology* (N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1968); "Theoretical Issues in Economic Anthropology," *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 10, 1969, pp. 63-101; and C. Meillasoux, *Anthropologie economique des Gouro de Cote d'Ivoire* (Paris: Mouton, 1964); "From Reproduction to Production: A Marxist Approach to Economic Anthropology," *Economic Society*, Vol. I, 1972, pp. 93-105; and K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (N.Y.: Rinehart, 1944); *Dahomey and the Slave Trade* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966); *op.cit*, footnote 25, *Essays by Polanyi*, ed. g. Dalton, 1968: *op.cit*, footnote 24; with C. M. Arnsebert and H. W. Pearson, eds., *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economics in History and Theory* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957); and M. D. Sahlins, *Tribesmen* (Prentice Hall for University of Michigan, 1968); "On the Sociology of Primitive Exchange," in M. Banton, ed., *The Relevance of Models for Social Anthropology*, ASA, Monograph No. 1 (London: Tavistock, 1969).

[26] R. Burling, "Maximization Theories and the Study of Economic Anthropology," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 64, 1962, pp. 802-21; and F. Cancian, "Maximization as Norm, Strategy, and Theory: A Comment on Programmatic Statements in Economic Anthropology," *American Anthropologist* Vol. 68, 1966, pp. 465-70; and P. Deane, *Colonial Social Accounting* (Cambridge University Press, 1953); and T. S. Epstein, *Economic Development and Social Change in South India* (Manchester University Press, 1962); and R. Firth, "Capital, Saving, and Credit in Peasant Societies: A Viewpoint From Economic Anthropology," in R. Firth and B. Yamey, eds., *Capital, Saving, and Credit in Peasant Societies* (Chicago, Aldine, 1964); *Malay Fishermen: The Peasant Economy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966); ed., *Themes in Economic Anthropology*, ASA Monograph No. 6 (London: Tavistock, 1970); and P. Hill, "Markets in Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1963; *A Plea for Indigenous Economics: The West African Example* (University of Ibadan, Economic Development Institute, 1965); and E. E. LeClair, "Economic Theory and 1962, pp. 1, 179-201, 203.

[27] Firth, *op.cit*, footnote 26, 1970; and LeClair and H. K. Schneider, eds., *Economic Anthropology: Readings in Theory and Analysis* (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968).

debate in economic anthropology, on which there is a flourishing and sophisticated literature, few anthropologists or economists would deny that there exists the closest possible relationship between social groups and their economic environment and those activities that determine social organization in society.

The study of the economics of simpler societies falls into two main divisions, which will be dealt with separately. First, there is the question how people manage to extract the physical necessities of life from their environment; here we are concerned with the means by which resources are exploited and the kinds of social activities involved in production. Second, there is the question, what is done with the goods after they are produced? In the end, of course, they are (mostly) consumed, but often quite complex mechanisms of distribution and exchange are involved, and not all of these can be understood simply in economic terms.

A first and most essential requirement for any human community is to feed itself, and in some of the very simple societies this is everybody's main preoccupation from childhood to death. It is a truism that everything we eat, whether animal, vegetable, or (occasionally) mineral, comes either directly or indirectly from the earth. This is much less obvious to the modern man, who lives in a world of processed foods and supermarkets, than it is to a member of a peasant community, living at or near a bare subsistence level. As well as food, the environment also produces shelter, clothing, and essential tools. Anthropologists have usually distinguished three main methods by which these necessities have been secured, and in the eighteenth century and later it was usual to rank the communities that practised them in an evolutionary order of "progress." The very simplest communities subsist entirely, as it were, by raiding the environment; these are the hunter, collectors, and sometimes fishermen. The Eskimo are such a people and have achieved a remarkable command over a very harsh environment. Tropical forest peoples like the pygmies of equatorial Africa and South East Asia have a far simpler technology and a less rigorous environment to cope with. Dwellers in arid regions like the territory of the South African bushmen and the Australian aborigines have developed delicate adjustments to their sparse environment. In consequence, material goods are few and easily portable, and often there is no tribal organization over and above the level of the small family groups which compose the effective economic units. It is natural that in such conditions the very highest value is usually attached to the solidarity of these small groups, for every one is dependent on the support and cooperation of his fellows.

At some time in the unrecorded past, men began to domesticate wild animals. With the domestication of such important species as cattle, goats, and sheep, it became possible for human communities to sustain life on the

produce of their flocks and herds. Though many societies, including the most "advanced," have a mixed pastoral and agricultural economy, the emphasis differs widely from society to society, and there are still many people who subsist wholly, or almost wholly, on their herds. Some nomadic peoples of the Asian steepe fall, or fell, into this category, as do the Nilo-Hamitic Masai of East Africa. Traditionally the Masai lived exclusively on the meat, milk, and blood provided by their cattle; they rejected vegetable foods and despised those who dug the earth to produce them. This way of life also imposes certain restrictions on those who practice it. They must have adequate supplies of grazing and water for their stock, and often this means that they cannot stay for very long in the same place. Sometimes they are transhumant, which means that they make seasonal movements from their base in search of water and grass. Sometimes they are strictly nomadic, that is, they are forever on the move to new pastures. A pastoral way of life also imposes limits on possible population density; a herding population is more thinly scattered on the ground (though usually not so thinly as hunters and collectors), and this precludes intensive or highly centralized administration. It is often said of pastoral people that they are independent and resentful of authority. It is easy to see why this should be so. It is easy to see, too, why their social systems are so often adapted to raiding and warfare. Unlike some other forms of property, livestock are easily stolen and transported, and raiding is a common diversion in many such societies.

Agriculture makes possible a more settled way of life. Although in many parts of the world cultivation is of the shifting "slash and burn" type, whereby new ground is cleared for planting every few years and old gardens allowed to revert to bush, this mode of subsistence does permit long residence in the same area. It also entails a different attitude toward land from that commonly held by hunters and herders. Whatever the system of land holding, cultivators, as individuals, families, or lineages have a very specific, if rarely exclusive, concern with the plots of land they cultivate and from which they hope to harvest. This is not the place to discuss the growth of the first great cilvilizations that orginated with the early cultivators in the great river valleys of the Middle East and elsewhere. Certain consequences of an agricultural way of life should be noted. First, the greater population density possible, combined with the relative stability of agricultural populations, enables the establishment of wider-scale political units than family or clan. In some fertile areas such as West Africa (to say nothing of the early riverine cilvilizations), agriculture has also made possible urban concentrations of considerable size, with all the administrative complexity that this implies. Another consequence of the adoption of agriculture has been the emergence of a leisure class and, often, of some form of aristocracy. With good growing conditions and suitable crops, a cultivator, unlike a hunter or a herder, need not give all his time

to food production. Also, a surplus may be produced which can be used to feed noncultivators, who may thus be freed for other forms of productive activity.

Polanyi made his major contribution to economic anthropology by distinguishing three main categories of economic relationships in society: reciprocity, redistribution, and exchange.[28] Reciprocity denotes movements between correlative points and symmetrical groupings, redistribution designates movements towards the center and out of it again, and exchange refers to vice versa movements taking place under a market system. Sahlins further analyzed reciprocity.[29] Although this theoretical categorization of economic relationships within tribal structure is an interesting starting point for a discussion on economic interaction within tribal groups, I cannnot sustain it with my own data. In its simple form reciprocity is a "between" relationship, the action and response of two parties, whereas redistribution is a "within" relationship, the collective action of a group with a defined socio-center where goods are concentrated and thence flow outward. "Redistribution is chieftainship said in economics."[30]

E. Processes of Social Change

Change is taking place in all human societies all the time. Sometimes it is sudden and catastrophic, as when a system of government is destroyed by revolution and replaced by a radically different ruling system. Sometimes it is so gradual and imperceptible that even the members of the society themselves scarcely notice it. But, it is always there, and social anthropologists who wish to understand the working of the societies they study must take account of it. Here they must be historians. Changes take place in time, and they can be understood only as causal sequences of events leading to new states of affairs. These new states of affairs are "the present," and that is what the social anthropologist is trying to understand. He is a historian, but only in a particular context and for a particular purpose.

Changes in people's social and cultural institutions through time can not be understood in terms of any single "blanket" principle. A multiplicity of social processes is involved, and these often operate concurrently. One of these is conflict within society.

Though there is conflict in all societies, it may differ considerably in kind and degree. It is a sadly common observation of anthropologists (and

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[28] Polany, *op. cit*, footnote 24.
[29] Sahlins, *op. cit*, footnote 25, 1969.
[30] Sahlins, *op. cit*, footnote 25, 1968, p. 95.

others) that under the stress of culture contact many of the societies have ceased to function as they once did, and in some cases have broken down altogether. Sometimes social systems, even people, have been totally or almost destroyed. The Tasmanian aborigines, the Tierra del Fuegians, and the North American Indians are examples. Often the damage has been more subtle, though hardly less radical. The functional, organic model seemed plausible enough when it was applied to those small-scale societies that were virtually unaffected by outside contact and had apparently not changed significantly in generations. When increasing contact with the West brought radical social change and new and more disruptive social conflicts, however, and when the more intensive fieldwork of modern times disclosed these changes and conflicts, then this approach, by itself, became plainly inadequate. There was no use plastering up the cracks in institutional functionalism with concepts like dysfunction (a notion better expressed by Durkheim in his concept of anomie or "lawlessness," a state of affairs in which hitherto accepted and acceptable standards are no longer meaningful). The functional model still implied the untenable assumption that there was an ideally harmonious, "functional" state of society, and that this had somehow been breached.

Social anthropologists have increasingly concerned themselves with situations of conflict and social stress, and they have done so mostly in the context of culture contact. But "conflict" is a vague term. Two problems, in particular, arise. We must ask, first, what are the things that are supposed to be in conflict, and second, what kind or degree of conflict is it that concerns us?

Anthropologists have accordingly distinguished between two kinds of social conflict, and so between two kinds of social change. First there are those conflicts and changes that are provided for in the existing social structure. The Nuer blood feud, or the succession struggles which occur in many states when the king dies, are examples of these. Obviously changes in personnel are a feature of every society, as all people grow old, die, and are replaced by others. But so long as the roles themselves continue more or less unchanged, these conflicts and replacements do not affect the structure of the social system itself. They operate within its existing framework, are resolvable in terms of shared systems of values, and offer no challenge to the existing institutions.

The second kind of change is more radical. It is change in the character of the social system itself: some of its constituent institutions are altered, so that they no longer "mesh" with other co-existing institutions as they once did. This is structural or "radical" change, and the conflicts to which it gives rise are not resolvable in terms of the existing values of the society. Structural changes engender new kinds of conflicts, and tradition provides neither precedents nor cures for them. They are expecially disturbing and involve confusion and strain. If the social system is to persist, sooner or later further radical modifications will have to be made in it, and so the society will become

something other than what it originally was. Here again, the ineptness of the organic analogy for the understanding of social change may be noted: organisms do not change from one species into completely different ones. Under the stress of social change, societies often do.

To these two types of change Firth has added a third one that he calls organizational change. Organizational changes are changes in ways of doing things, which themselves continue to be done, and in the extent and range of particular complexes of social relationships, which remain formally unaltered. This further distinction is useful, although in the last resort, structure and organization are rather two aspects of the same reality than two different things.

Having stated the major positions of Western anthropology let us now examine where and how Orientalist literature has influenced the perception of Muslim societies.

IV. The Orientalist Anthropologist

Edward Said's *Orientalism* is a powerful indictment of the subject and its practitioners. He states explicitly the prejudices and tendentious arguments of the Orientalists. It is altogether too passionate and angry an argument. Because of the power and passion, the more down-to-earth simpler weaknesses of Orientalist scholarship are left out. For instance, rather than accusing Bernard Lewis of mental exhaustion and moral bankruptcy, one would as an anthropologist point out some of the conceptual weaknesses in his study. His categories of tribe and peasant in society are seriously at fault.[31] The one is often employed for the other. This to an anthropologist is not a minor slip.

My quarrel is with some of the technical terms used by Lewis in describing social structure and organization in Arabia. "Arab society," he writes, "on the eve of Islam consisted of kings, feudalism, vassals, peasants, and tribes" (*ibid*:25) "Feudalism", "vassals", and "peasants" are the vocabulary of medieval Europe. Without doubt, the concept of feudalism was not applicable within the highly developed tribal structure in Arabia (before or after Islam). In any case the two would find it difficult to co-exist ("kings" and "feudalism" and segmentary tribal groups are at different ends of the social spectrum). Feudalism, as we know, is a discrete social category with associated characteristics. It is the wrong time, place, and people for such concepts. Lewis, a few pages later, contradicts himself when he—correctly this time—talks of

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[31] B. Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (Harper and Row, Harper Colophon Books, 1966); originally published in the History Division of Hutchison University Library, 1950.

the domination of "Bedouin tribalism." (*ibid*:29)

Even today Orientalists in a hangover from a past age continue to offend Muslims by the use of "Mohammedanism" for Muslims.[32] Such perception affects those who look to the Orientalists for guidance. The Oxford dictionary still uses the word "Mohammedanism" in spite of its obvious odium for Muslims.

Of the numerous derogatory references to Muslims in Orientalist literature, let me pick a few at random to illustrate the point.[33] In the last chapter, "Assessment," of the standard biography of the Prophet Watt speaks of his "neurotic" character.[34] He relates these to the "neurosis" of his followers. This is immediately followed by a discussion of the creative imagination of the Prophet: the point being made to a Western audience, just 16 years after the Second World War, is as explicit as it is crude.[35] Another social scientist sets out to demonstrate why and how Muslim society responds to the Fuehrer-type leader.[36] The Hitler motif is, once again, introduced.

The orientalists have neither tired nor relented. In a new work, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*, the authors, Crone and Cook, attack the very core of Islam (1980).[37] It is the traditional Orientalist attack on the authenticity of prophethood with a more sophisticated and academic approach.

Claiming to have discovered original contemporary documents, Crone and Cook put forward a thesis that the Prophethood of Islam belonged to Caliph 'Umar al Faruq (RAA,[38] d.24A.H. / 644A.C.). They argue that the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS)[39] was sent to preach the coming of Hazrat Umar but decided to appropriate the role for himself. The authors further challenge the historicity of the *hijrah* and its date 622.[40] Academic neutrality is abandoned in their dislike for Islam. In a discussion of comparative intellectual trends in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity the authors conclude: "The only

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[32] H. A. R. Gibb, *Muhammadanism* (Oxford University Press, 1980), first published in the Home University Library, 1949; and Gustave E. von Grunebaum, *Muhammadan Festivals* (N.Y.: Henry Schuman, Inc., 1951).

[33] For a recent—and exceedingly sharp—attack on Islam, see J. Laffin, *The Dagger of Islam* (N.Y.:, Bantam Books, 1981).

[34] W. M. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 239; first published by Clarendon Press, 1961.

[35] For a direct comparison of Hitler and Ayattullah Khomeini, see G. Carpozi, Jr., *Ayatollah Khomeini's mein Kampf: Islamic Government by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini* (N.Y.: Manor Books, 1979).

[36] R. Patai, *Society, Culture, and Change in the Middle East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969).

[37] P. Crone and M. Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge Press, 1980).

[38] Radiya Allahu 'Anhu (May Allah be pleased with him).

[39] Salla Allahu 'Alayhi wa Sallam (May Allah bless and favor him).

[40] *Ibid*, p. 9.

obverse to the *gravitas* of Muslims is the giggling of their womenfolk." (*ibid*:147) The authors themselves suggest the book will cause offense to Muslims: "This is a book written by infidels for infidels." (*ibid*:8) They do not wish for academic dialogue.

The Orientalists compare the Prophet's age of "violence" and "barbarism" to theirs of "gentleness" and "peace"! Montgomery Watt–suggesting the death of Kab ibn al Ashraf, an enemy of Islam, was instigated by the Prophet–observes, "In the gentler. . .age in which we live men look askance at such conduct, particularly in a religious leader."[41] He compares his own age with that of the Prophet's and concludes that "in Muhammad's age and country such behavior was quite normal."

What, Watt is saying, can we expect from people who had no "common decency"? (*ibid*:173) "We," as Edward Said has alerted the West, "are rational and virtuous and they–the people of the Orient–are irrational and depraved."

Taking this cue from Orientalists, certain anthropologists have employed the "Peace and War" distinction to classify "primitive" tribes and "civilized" nations.[42] Tribesmen are constantly killing each other or engaging in "war." Civilized nations, on the other hand, live in "peace." The comparison never fails to amuse me. It is made by members of the civilized nations who in this century alone have plunged the entire world into wars that lasted for years at a toll of millions of lives.

We are still paying for those years of global madness. The scale, organization, and savagery of the two World Wars has never been matched before in human history. And today we may be drifting to a Third War–a nuclear one this time–again fought by the advanced and civilized nations of the world.

Is the Orientalist really serious about the gentleness of our age? How do we explain the millions "gently" killed by Stalin, Hitler, Mao, and Pol Pot. Hitler is accused of having exterminated between five and six million Jews alone in the most savage and unprecedented manner, an event which has permanently scarred the consciousness of modern man. This from a "gentle" age characterized by "common decency." In contrast let me cite the example of "primitive" people at war.

When the Prophet (SAAS) finally reconquered Makkah–after suffering extreme personal humiliation from the city–he forgave all those who wished to live in peace. A general amnesty was declared and apart from a few criminals, no one was killed. The conquest of Makkah–a turning point in

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[41] W. M. Watt, *ibid.*, footnote 34, pp. 128-9.

[42] M. D. Sahlins, 1968, *ibid.*, footnote 25, p. 5: "In its broadest terms the contrast between tribe and civilization is between War and Peace. . .lacking these institutional means and guarantees, tribesmen live in a condition of War, and War limits the scale, complexity, and all-round richness of their culture, and accounts for some of their more 'curious' customs."

the history of Islam – involved the death of less than 30 people in combat (and during the march on the city the Prophet's humanity was undiminished and displayed itself when he ordered the protection of a bitch who had given birth to new puppies). During the Prophet's entire career and campaigns, only about a thousand men – Muslims and non-Muslims – died. Be that as it may, the myth of anarchy and instability among Muslim groups persisted and persists.

Perhaps it was the Victorian emphasis on order and stability that was reflected in the perception of Muslim tribal groups. These tribal groups were seen as intrinsically turbulent and unstable "ordered anarchies." Violence was seen as characteristic of society. One may agree with Professor Abdullah Laroui, the Moroccan historian, that the colonial cliché describing hill tribes as "a scattering of tribes killing each other" was the aim not the cause of colonialism. Nonetheless the "anarchic" perception of tribal society is a legacy that persists in contemporary anthropology. Thus Meeker writes: "North Arabian Bedouin culture turned in large part upon the notion that violence lay at the center of political life. Men tended to think of themselves, their possessions, and their relationships in terms of this violence".[44] And "the Cyrenaican Bedouin often perceive the entire domain of political experience as a wild world of brutality and savagery." (*ibid.*:207) Similarly, Frederik Barth examining the Swat Pukhtuns found them ceaselessly and insatiably engaged in "attacking," "seizing," and "killing" each other.[45]

And the end is not yet in sight. The Orientalist scholars – Arberry, Gibb, Lewis, Von Gunebaum, Watt – have provided the academic base for most of anthropology. Also Richard Tapper's work leans heavily on that of the Orientalists such as Lambton.[46]

Younger anthropologists, who write with elegance[47] and sympathy[48] of their groups, nonetheless have not been able to entirely free themselves of the orientalist heritage.[49] For Meeker, who uses Musil's material extensively, the world of the Bedouin remains anarchic (see quotations from his work above). Eickelman's comprehensive summary of Middle East anthropology

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[43] A. Laroui, translated from the French by Ralph Manheim, *The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretative Essay* (N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977).

[44] M. E. Meeker, *Literature and Violence in North Arabia* (N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1979). p. 19.

[45] F. Barth, *Political Leadership Among Swat Pathans* (London: Athlone Press, 1972).

[46] R. Tapper, *ibid.*, footnote 9 above.

[47] M. E. Meeker, *ibid.*, footnote 44 above.

[48] D. F. Eickelman, *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981). Eickelman, in a gesture of affection for a departed colleage, dedicates his book to the Egyptian anthropologist Abdul Hamid el-Zein.

[49] For a recent historical study still not free of Orientalism, see M. G. S. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

relies heavily on Orientalist sources too.[50] Eickelman acknowledges this fact by calling his chapter on the Orientalists, no doubt, without being fully aware of its implication, "Intellectual Predecessors." But cite Doughty, whose hatred of Islam bordered on the pathological, with high regard.

Women studies—or more correctly—studies by Western women of Muslim women—are no exception to the traditional Orientalist image of Muslim society. A recent study of Muslim women in Delhi is called *Frogs in a Well.*[51] No women—Muslim or otherwise—would take kindly to the imagery of the metaphor. It reflects the ethnocentric arrogance of the scholar. For other studies of Muslim women see Beck, Fernea, and Keddie.

Even some of the work of the great Western scholars has recently been analyzed prejudiced against Islam. Bryan Turner's book, *Weber and Islam*, clearly pointed out Weber's personal prejudices which led him to certain conclusions regarding Islam and in particular the person of the Prophet (SAAS).[52]

It is little wonder that Professor Fazlur Rahman, himself once under attack from more right-wing Islamic scholars in Pakistan, doubts the impartiality of Western scholarship on Islam.[53]

Let us turn to a technical discussion in the discipline, as an example. Frederik Barth has been accused by me of reductionism in his portrayal of the Swat Pukhtuns.[54] Barth, responding to the criticism, revisited Swat. The visit did little to change his ideas.[55] He provides us with a lengthy example—"new" ethnography—purporting to explain his thesis. The driver of the bus he was on refused to give way to another van on the Nowshera bridge, an old pre-Independence one-lane railway bridge (*ibid.*:131-2, 163). Both held their ground and the situation, made tense by the arrival of a train, was diffused after considerable delay. Barth sees "deep structures" in the incident. This then, is serious anthropology explaining human behavior among Pukhtuns.

If I were to cite examples of bad drivers or more accurately—bad-mannered drivers—from England or the USA, would they support a more general thesis on Western society? I think not. The example is thus parody not science—and what does the construction of a new dual carriageway recently at Nowshera do to Barth's thesis?

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[50]. D. F. Eickelman, *ibid.*

[51] P. Jeffrey, *Frogs in a Well* (London: Zed Press, 1980).

[52] B. S. Turner, *Weber and Islam: A Critical STudy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974).

[53] F. Rahman, "The Academic Study of Islam: A Muslim Islamicist's Point of View," in R. C. Martin, ed., *Islam and the History of Religions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

[54] A. S. Ahmed, *Millenium and Charisma Among Pathan: A Critical Essay in Social Anthropology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976).

[55] F. Barth, *Selected Essays of Frederik Barth: Features of Person and Society in Swat: Collected Essays on Pathans*, Vol. II (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

For Pehrson and Barth the harsh desert fieldwork conditions (the former died in the field) among the Baluch were made worse by their perception of the Baluch as an unpleasant people. Baluch etiquette reflected "hollowness," and Baluch "intimate life" was one of "deceit."[56] They found the Baluch "suspicious"–a word which occurs frequently in the book.[57]

For Hobbes the condition of man "is a condition of war, of everyone against everyone." Barth's perception of Muslim society is Hobbesian: Muslim life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." The Hobbesian view of life is not unnaturally reflected in the work of Mrs. Frederik Barth–who was one of Professor Barth's students.

Mrs. Barth, on the basis of interviewing females–in this case the poor women of Cairo–concludes that Muslim women are exceedingly "suspicious." She also finds they spend their time in back-biting, intriguing, and squabbling.[58] In Cairo we are presented with a female mirror-image of the belligerent Pukhtun, who is forever "attacking," "seizing," and "killing." Man is merely the expression of the methodological individualist.

Are we being presented empirically observed social reality or simply the perception of a husband-wife team imposing their theoretical models at random on the Muslim world? On the basis of Barth's Swat material we would be justified in assuming the latter.

Surely Barth does not wish to suggest that all Swat Pukhtuns do with their time is "attack" and "kill." This is one aspect of their lives. Unfortunately his data convey this impression. Even the *hujra*, the guest house, the social center of hospitality, guests, and folk-song, is for Barth reduced simply to another political instrument and part of political strategy. It is the traditional Orientalist view of tribal Muslim groups forever absorbed in "war," their society forever "anarchic."

Frederik Bailey, following Barth, goes one step further. To him Pukhtun society resembles the Mafia.[59] An entire Code (the Pukhtunwali), and entire body of culture, folklore, and literature of a highly developed tribal society which has perpetuated itself for at least five centuries is reduced to a modern Western urban gangster civilization.

Serious doubts have been raised on the two occasions Muslim anthropologists have critically analyzed Western anthropologists on their home

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[56] Barth in Pehrson, footnote *infra* 57, p. vii.

[57] R. N. Pehrson, *The Social Organization of the Marri Baluch* (Chicago: Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, No. 43, 1966); compiled and analysed from his notes by Federik Barth.

[58] U. Wikan, "Mana Becomes Women: Transsexualism in Oman as a Key to Gender Roles", *Man*, Vol. 12 (N.S.), No. 2, August 1977.

[59] F. G. Bailey, *Strategems and Spoils* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970).

ground. Talal Asad[60] made telling criticism of Abner Cohen's work among Arab villages in Israel. Unfortunately, the criticism of "native" anthropologists is sometimes easily misunderstood. When I suggested we refer to the holistic Islamic framework (Islam as culture and politics) when examining Muslim tribal groups,[61] I was criticized for attacking Western anthropologists and colonialism.[62]

But not all non-Muslim writing is offensively critical. The work of other younger anthropologists is enhanced by sympathy for the people they write of, for example, Fischer's recent study of Iran, its religion and religious leaders[63] and *Singer's of the Pukhtuns*. The methodological direction indicated by the work of these anthropologists may break the impasse imposed on the discipline by Orientalism. Interestingly, the two main broad divisions in anthropology discussed above appear to be divided by the Atlantic: Fischer, the American professor at Harvard is a cultural anthropologist and Singer, the Oxford anthropologist, is a social anthropologist.

One cannot escape the conclusion arrived at by Edward Said that anthropologists to be included in the list of Orientalists are defined as "anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient."[64]

When the authors of Hagarism attack the Prophet (SAAS) and the very foundation of Islam or—less seriously—Western anthropologists equate entire Muslim societies to the Mafia, ought Muslims to bury their heads in the sand and pretend they do not hear these voices? Should they simply reject Western—or non-Muslim—scholarship by banning its entry into their countries? If so, do they build an intellectual iron curtain around their societies? Or ought they to assess, argue, synthesize, and then prepare and reply in terms of an "Islamic Anthropology." One aim of this paper is to illuminate the above questions.

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[60] Talal Asad, "Anthropological Texts and Ideological Problems: An Analysis of Cohen on Arab Villages in Israel," *Economy and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1975, pp. 251-82.

[61] A. S. Ahmed, *ibid.*, footnote 54 above.

[62] J. Anderson, "Review of Ahmed's *Pukhtun Economy, 1980,*" *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1981.

[63] M. M. J. Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980). Fischer dedicated his book "to the warm, courageous and complex people of Iran," at a time when the crisis of the hostages in America and, consequently, anti-Iranian feeling, was at its height.

[64] W. E. Said, *ibid.*, footnote 6 above, p. 2.

V. Islamic Anthropology

A. The Problem of Definition

It would appear from the previous section that anthropology is, if not a child, a creation of the West and more specifically Western imperialism. This is not so. The work of Ibn Khaldun is reflected—with theoretical frame and supporting data—in that of some of the most influenctial contemporary Western theorists including Karl Marx, Max Weber, Vilfredo Pareto, and Ernest Gellner. Weber's typology of leadership, Pareto's circulation of elites, and Gellner's pendulum swing theory of Muslim society betray the influence of Ibn Khaldun. It is indeed a tragedy that the science of sociology or anthropology did not develop after Ibn Khaldun. And Ibn Khaldun was not alone. There were al Biruni, Ibn Battuta, and al Mas'udi, to name a few.

Of these, perhaps al Biruni (973-1048) A.C. deserves the title of father of anthropology (see "Al Biruni: the First Anthropologist."[65] If anthroplogy is a science based on extended participant observation of (other) cultures using the data collected, for value-neutral, dispassionate analysis employing the comparative method, then al Biruni is indeed an anthropologist of the highest contemporary standards.[66] His work on (Hindu) India—*Kitab al Hind*—remains one of the most important source books for South Asia. The most perceptive of contemporary Hindu scholars, including mavericks like Nirad Chaudhari, quote him approvingly.[67] So, almost a thousand years before Malinowski and Geertz, al Biruni was establishing the science of anthropology. Therefore the study of society by Muslims developing Islamic sociology or anthropology is not a new or Western science.

We may define Islamic anthropology loosely as the study of Muslim groups by scholars committed to the universalistic principles of Islam, humanity, knowledge, and respectful tolerance, and relating micro village tribal studies in particular to the larger historical and ideological frames of Islam. Islam is here understood not as theology but sociology. The definition thus does not preclude non-Muslims.

Certain conceptual points must first be clarified. What is the world view of the Muslim anthropologist? In the ideal the Muslim orders his life according to the will of Allah. In actuality this may not be so. Does he see society as motivated by the desire to perform the will of Allah or not? If so,

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[65] A. S. Ahmed, "Al!-Biruni: the First Anthropologist," Royal Anthropological Institute News, London, Spring 1984.

[66] *Ibid*; and H. M. Said, ed., *Al-Beruni: Commemorative Volume, International Congress* (Karachi: Hamdard Academy, 1979); and H. M. Said and A. Zahid, *Al-Beruni: His Times, Life, and Work* (Karachi: Hamdard Academy, 1981).

[67] N. C. Chaudhri, *The Continent of Circe* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965).

the Muslim must strive to bring the actual into accord with the ideal.

Let us pose these questions in the context of the two major – sometimes overlapping – theoretical positions in the Western social sciences. These divisions are between the "methodological individualists" and the "methodological holists." Briefly, the individualists examine man in society as an actor maximizing and optimizing. Social interaction is seen as a series of transactions in which "value gained and lost" is recorded in individual "ledgers."[68]

The "holists," on the other hand, view man as motivated by configurations of economy and society that transcend the individual. These divisions are not rigid and are made more complex by the different schools of anthropology.

Such debates must be directed to scientific inquiry in order to discover the dynamics of society. For society is dynamic and studies of social phenomena not directed towards clarifying it are reduced to academic exercises.

Which framework is applicable when analyzing a Muslim social actor? Does he behave as an individualist recording units of value gained and lost in a personal ledger? Or does he respond to social configurations of which he is part? With Muslims, we may suggest the latter.

Islam teaches us to deal with the major concern of human beings, which is to relate to our environment. And our relationships with people – individuals and groups – are the main features of our environment. Islam, then is a social religion. The implications for the Muslim are clear. He is part of the *ummah*, the community, to which he gives loyalty and which provides him with social identity. In the ideal, he belongs in part to his immediate group, in part to the larger *ummah*.

For the Muslim, rules of marriage, inheritance, and an entire code – covering the most intimate details of human behavior – are laid down explicitly. The ideal organization of society and the behavior of its members are predetermined. For Muslims therefore the dilemmas of this world are reduced. Man's mission is to reconcile society with the instructions of Allah. Debates between one or another school of thought thus become merely academic exercises.

Life, Allah has repeated, has not been created in jest. It is a struggle to better humanity, that is, to improve the moral quality of our brief span on earth. The struggle to do so – the *jihad* – must be maintained.

The Muslim remains part of the *ummah*, the community. A too blatant expression of individual ambitious desire will provoke disapproval from the community, which is not to say individuals do not break rules or behave in an entirely non-Muslim manner. But we are concerned with Muslim groups and not individuals. This social ethos is in contrast to the West where man

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[68] Frederik Barth, *Models of Social Organization*, Occasional Paper No. 23 (London: Royal Anthropological Institute, 1966).

is an individual first and last. Politics, business, and even private life in the West are an expression of this individuality. It is this contrast that sometimes makes it difficult for the two civilizations to see eye to eye on certain key issues.

How do Muslims tackle the subject of an anthropology of Islam as Muslims—as believers. 'Ali Shari'ati has attempted an answer: "Religion is therefore a road or a path, leading from clay to God and conveying man from vileness, stagnation, and ignorance, from the lowly life of clay and satanic character, towards exaltation, motion, vision, the life of the spirit and divine character. If it succeeds in doing so, then it is religion in truth. But if it does not, then either you have chosen the wrong path, or you are making wrong use of the right path."[69]

Anthropology, I am arguing, can assist in illuminating "the right path." But the primary problem before us is not the balancing of options but finding out what they are.

The two myths pertaining to the Muslim social world that continue to provide material to attack Muslims are the status of women (their lack of rights, their suppression and, connected to this, polygamy in the society) and the continuing tyranny, anarchy, and despotism of Muslim politics (in 1981 the paperback version of Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism* displays a picture of a mosque on its cover).[70] We have seen how anthropologists often reflect the second in their depiction of Muslim political life. The first point is less well advertised, as the literature has been largely by male anthropologists who have had little access to Muslim women.

Minor religious injunctions or customs are exaggerated to ridicule Islam. For instance, Muslims are prohibited from eating pork as it is not considered *halal* or pure. Many other animals are also considered impure or *haram*. This is one of the features best known about Muslims by non-Muslims. A minor social injunction has become a major theological issue (pig taboo among Muslims was the theme of an academic controversy in *Current Anthropology* recently). The prohibition is a subject of caricature and satire. It has become one of the symbols dividing the Western (pork-eating) and Muslim (non-pork-eating) world.

What methodological position would Islamic anthropology adopt to tackle these issues? One answer—and perhaps the easiest way out—is to be eclectic. But eclecticism is self-defeating, not because there is only one direction in-which it is heuristically useful to move, but so many. We must choose—what Shari'ati calls—"the right path."

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[69] 'Ali Shari'ati, translated by Hamid Algar, *On the Sociology of Islam: Lectures by 'Ali Shari'ati* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1979), p. 94.

[70] Karl Wittvogel, *Oriental Dispotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (Yale University Press 1957; N.Y.: Vintage Books, paperback version, 1981).

There has been a suggestion by Muslim anthropologists that there is not one Islam but many Islams,[71] a suggestion taken up by Western anthropologists.[72] I disagree with this position. There is only one Islam, and there can be only one Islam, but there are many Muslim societies. We must then not look for numerous "Islams" but attempt to place the multitude of Muslim societies within the framework of one universal Islam.

In a paper written a few years ago, I had argued that the romantic view of the tribesman created as a result of the colonial encounter was false.[73] The view did not take into account the real hardships the tribesmen faced in militarily challenging the Imperial power. To the Pukhtuns in the Tribal Areas, for instance, there was no romance in fighting the British. Barbed wires and bombed civilian populations do not win friends. For the Pukhtuns, the encounter remained unceasing struggle for religion and freedom.

The debate between those examining tribal or nomad groups "romantically" versus those who see them realistically persists in modern anthropology. The Bedouins of Saudi Arabia provide a contemporary example. Lancaster, an Englishman, sees the Bedouins as "the noble savage", embodying the virtues of the desert,[74] in contrast to the American anthropologist Cole,[75] one of the few Western anthropologists allowed to do fieldwork in Saudi Arabia. Muslim intellectuals do not necessarily harbor romantic views of tribesmen. To them Islam – and Islamic culture – lie in the city.[76] The "romantic" image obfuscates the real problems of the tribesmen. The tribesman cannot ignore or reject the twentieth century; he cannot will away the state he is part of.

To understand better the segmentary tribal social structure and organization with reference to the Pukhtun, one may use a taxonomic exercise.[77] Pukhtun society may be divided into two discrete categories. Each category is symbolized by a key concept, *nang* (honour) in one and *qalang* (rents and taxes) in the other case. *Nang* and *qalang* are the major conative and affec-

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[71] A. H. M. El-Zein, *The Scred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974); "Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 6, 1977, pp. 227-254.

[72] D. F. Eickelman, *ibid*, footnote 48.

[73] A. S. Ahmed, "The Colonial Encounter on the Northwest Frontier Province: Myth and Mystification," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, Oxford, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1978.

[74] W. O. Lancaster, "Review of Ibrahim and Cole, 1978," *Nomadic Peoples*, Commission on Nomadic Peoples, IUAES, No. 5, 1980; *The Rawala Bedouin Today* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1981).

[75] D. Cole, *Nomads of the Nomads: The Al Murrah Bedouin of the Empty Quarter* (Chicago: Aldine, 1975).

[76] Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 103-4.

[77] A. S. Ahmed, 1976, *ibid.*, footnote 54 *above*; 1980, *ibid.*, footnote 11 *above*.

tive symbols in society. *Nang* society, based largely in the Tribal Areas, is acephalous, egalitarian, and placed in low production zones. *Qalang* society is ranked, literate, and dependent on large irrigated estates. *Qalang* creates superior and subordinate social roles. *Nang* and *qalang* are useful categories when looking at Muslim groups elsewhere.[78]

In a recent study I have suggested we examine not the macro level of society—dynasties, armies, finances—nor the typical anthropological village but an intermediate level—the district.[79] On this level three key and distinct categories of society interact: the representatives of central government (whether army or civil), traditional leaders (based on land or genealogy) and religious leaders (usually the *mullahs*). For this purpose we may construct the Islamic district paradigm (Islam here is understood in a sociological not theological sense). In particular, roles such as that of the *mullah*, one of the least understood and least studied, must be carefully researched. We have two distinct images of the *mullah*. One derives from the Western prototype, the "Mad Mullah," from Swat to Sudan. The image of the fanatic was fostered by the British as the *mullahs* stood against them when other groups in society had quietly acquiesced. The other image is that of saintly figures incapable of wrong, as suggested by Muslim writers. The truth is somewhere in between.[80] It is at this district level of society where we may predict and foretell the shape of things to come in Muslim society. The Islamic district paradigm will help us do so.

The anthropologist in some ways is an ambassador of his world to the village he is visiting. He not only interprets the native group to his world but his own world to them. If he is not conscious of his relationship he may create problems for future social scientists in that area or working with his group.

The question raises a related issue. Is good anthropology—from the point of view of the native, at least—sympathetic anthropology? Not necessarily. Anthropologists must record society as it *is* not as it *should be*. But I think it is imperative that anthropology be fair. More than the warts on the face of society need to be emphasized. It is for this reason we may today read *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*[81] and find it a fair account although it was written by a colonial offer a generation ago. some understanding of the virtues of a people especially as anthropologists see them, along with a scientific analysis,

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[78] A. S. Ahmed and D. M. Hart, 1983, *ibid.*, footnote 11 *above*.

[79] A. S. Ahmed, 1982, *ibid.*, footnote 11 *above*; *Religion and Politics in Muslim Society: Order and Conflict in Pakistan* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[80] For a contemporary political study of a mullah operating within traditional tribal networks in Waziristan, see my *Religion and Politics in Muslim Society: Order and Conflict in Pakistan* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[81] E. E. Evans Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (Oxford University Press, 1973).

are important to the discipline.[82]

It is worth noting that anthropology as a discipline is yet to grow in the Muslim world. Muslim anthropologists of stature are few and far between. The two outstanding examples are Nur Yalman of Turkey and Imtiaz Ahmed of India. Nur is almost unique in that his topic of study was a Buddhist village in Sri Lanka. He is unique in that for once in the contemporary world Islam was observing and not being observed. Imtiaz Ahmed, an Indian Muslim examines his own people. He reflects the major sociaological problems confronting Indian Muslims, in particular the continuing interaction with the larger Hindu cultural system. His work also discusses the growth of caste among Muslims.

The Muslim intellectual confronting the world today is sometimes moved to despair. He is ill-equipped to face it. His vulnerability diminishes him in his own eyes. He wanders between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born. His wounds are largely self-inflicted. At the root of his intellectual malaise lies his incapacity to come to terms with Islam in the twentieth century.

The aim of anthropology remains to move from the specific to the general, to draw universal conclusions from specific situations. If so, is "Islamic anthropology" only for Islam or Muslims? No. The lessons we may learn will

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[82] Members of the First World – anthropologists and others – are not the only ones guilty of lack of sympathy for the Third World. The colonial mentality was never a monopoly of the West. The kala sahib (black sahib), one feature of Empire in South Asia, still lives. A good example of a Third World writer living in and writing for the First World is V.S. Naipaul. His characteristic features – sharp powers of observation and brilliant skill at description combined with cynicism and contempt for his subject – are displayed to the full in his new book on Muslim society: V.S. Naipaul, *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981). His method is what I would call "First World contemporary colonial," that is, fly into the local Intercontinental Hotel, pick up a taxi and drive around for a few hours or days picking up trivia before moving to the next place.

In the course of his interviews, he uses the most objectionable methods, such as lying – as to Ayatullah Shirezi in Iran (Naipaul pp. 49-53) – and repeating private conversations confided by his hosts whether Indian housewives or petty officials in Pakistan. To him these people, whose lives are sunk in personal and public chaos and irreversible poverty, appear to do little more than hawk, fart, nose-pick, deceive (themselves), and despair. Despair – the word sounding like a death – knell – is repeated in his work. His people are caricatures of a caricature.

This is Naipaul's world view of the Third World. Muslims are no exception. Yet nowhere have I read an expression of personal gratitude for people who with such limited resources are so generously hospitable to him; no word of sympathy for their aspirations and struggle; no suggestion of hope for their goals. The "First World contemporary colonial" visits these people with a set objective in mind: he is extracting a new book from their lives. He cannot be distracted by humanity and its suffering. For a rebuttal of Naipaul by a Muslim scholar see Khushid Ahmad, "What An Islamic Journey, A Review of V. S. Naipaul, 1981," *Muslim World Book Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Spring, 1982.

be methodologically valid for other world religious systems specifically and Third World cultural systems generally.

B. Muslim Societies

Let me briefly attempt a taxonomy of Muslim society—providing models with associated characteristics—based on historical sequences and social structure and organization. The taxonomy of Muslim society will illustrate the variety of structures and therefore the complexity of the problem. The models generally provide a chronological sequence corresponding to broad periods in Muslim history. But the categories are neither complete nor incontrovertible. The taxonomy is merely a starting point for a sociological discussion of Islamic anthropology.

The first, primordial model, one which is associated with early Islam and continues until today, is "tribal segmentary Islam." This category may include the Bedouin, the Berber, and the Pukhtun. These tribes are spread from one end of North Africa to North West Pakistan, but the model is recognizable and in many ways similar. A sense of tribal identity and an understanding of the tribal code are highly developed and the world is seen in relationship to one's place on the genealogical charter. It was perhaps on account of his awareness of this form of social organization that the Prophet (SAAS) in his well known *hadith* warned that there were no genealogies in Islam. Islam, then, transcends tribal loyalties.

The second category provided a model which may be called the "Ottoman" or the "cantonment" model of Islam and this contrasts sharply with the previous model. Chronologically, this model evolved during the zenith of Islamic history. The Ottomans had hit upon a solution that rather nearly solved the tribal problem. They selected administrators from one part of their empire and give them charges in distant parts. Loyalties with tribal kin or land were therefore eliminated. The administrator served only the empire. To some extent the other great empires of Islam, such as the Safawis and the Mughals, also adopted the 'Uthmanli (Ottoman) model.

More lasting than the 'Uthamanli model were "the Great-River Islamic civilizations." These civilizations, also on the Indus, the Tigris, and the Nile, produced societies and dynasties with characteristic splendor, palaces, standing armies, and vast bureaucracies. Their rise and decline sometimes coincided with Islamic empires mentioned above, sometimes not. One aspect of these civilizations has been termed "Oriental Despotism."[83] With the slow process of decay, Islamic societies fell prey to expanding Western powers eager for colonies and markets.

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[83] Wittvogel, *ibid.*, footnote 70 *above*.

The fourth category (covering the last two centuries) may be termed "Islam under Western imperialism." The West conquered and colonized the Muslims. In this phase a determined attempt was made by the West to portray Islam as stagnant and decadent. Along with discrediting or smashing the centers of Islam, other more interesting attempts were made to create alternative societies.

The most famous examples of these were the canal colonies of the Punjab in the late last century. A model province was ordered for South Asia. Virgin land was provided to settlers but the village scheme reflected the South Asian caste and structure. The *choudhry*–or *lambardar*–headed the village. Beneath him were members of the dominant *bardari* or *qom* (tribe or lineage). At the bottom of the ladder were the *kammis*–the occupational groups–the barbers and carpenters. The *mullah*, the religious functionary, who symbolizes Islamic function in village society, was deliberately included among the *kammis* as a sign of humiliation. It was made explicit that Muslim rule was over. The *mullah*, the man who led the Muslim prayers in the mosque, was clearly subordinated to the *choudhry* or the *lambardar* of the village who was appointed by the British. Perhaps the harshness was due to British incapacity to deal with other altogether different category of *mullahs*, those among tribal groups who led revolts throughout the empire. The British dismissed the leaders of Islamic revolts against them as mere fanatics. The "Mad Mullah" was a handy imperial label to explain away Muslim leaders from Sudan to Swat. Until today the Mullah has not entirely shaken off his association with the *kammis* of the village (for instance in the revenue records such as the *jamabandi*).

"Re-emergent Islam" is the fifth and contemporary model of Islam. Re-emergent Islam in the contemporary Muslim world is perhaps best symbolized by Pakistan both in its moments of glory and its moments of pain. The very creation of Pakistan itself was a living symbol of a renascent Islam and its power to mobilize followers. The name of its capital further symbolizes its self-conscious destiny, Islamabad–the abode of Islam. The defeat, humiliation, and physical breaking of Pakistan in 1971 was symptomatic of the counter pressures that were generated by means of this form of force and vitality by the enemies of Islamic endeavor.

It is in this phase that the immediate past is sometimes renegotiated and sometimes rejected. For instance, Lyallpur, one of the major towns of the Punjab, named after the British Governor Lyall–who was referred to earlier–has been renamed Faisalabad after the popular King Faisal of Arabia.

But perhaps Iran has surpassed Pakistan as a living symbol of Islam. It is too early, however, to comment on the situation in Iran. The 1970s were–and it is predicted the 1980s and 1990s will be–decades of "re-emergent Islam." This model is as dynamic and as exciting with possibilities as it is unpredictable.

But Muslim social history is not all defeat and conquest, and societies

not all dynasties and tribes. Muslim society is also characterized by towns and trade (which accounts for the spread of Islam in the distant parts of Southeast Asia) and the presence of vigorous minority groups living in Thailand, China, Russia, and India.

It is no coincidence that in the Western world Islam remains weak. There are only small Islamic groups in Western Europe, North and South America, Australia and South Africa. Islam remains confined in the main to Asia and Africa.

Over the last centuries, the world of Islam has rarely been tranquil. Internally it has constantly challenged and renewed itself. Religious leaders have emerged in the heart of Arabia, such as Muhammad ibn 'Abd al Wahab and Sidi al Hasan Lyusi in Morocco. Apart from these leaders who strove to reform the Muslims from within were those whose first task was to challenge the enemies of Islam. Through the ages Muslim leaders have emerged to challenge and engage those forces hostile to Islam. In the last century in South Asia, Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi, in what is now Pakistan, and Hajj Shari'at Allah in Bengal, emerged to conduct *jihad*. Later in the century, the Mahdi emerged in Sudan, the Sanusi in Cyrenaica, and the Akhund in Swat to organize Muslims according to Islam and fight to maintain their religious and cultural boundaries against imperial forces.

Today Muslim society is again moving. Tribes and peasant groups in the Muslim world today are changing and will continue to change rapidly.

Weber has underlined the role of the Protestant ethic in the success story of modern capitalism. Work, for its own sake, thrift, and austerity have combined to lay the foundations of capitalist society. But in parts of the Muslim world, the discovery of oil has brought new and untold riches abruptly. Wealth has been generated by forces that are not internal to the structure of society. Society is being changed as a result of economic changes which remain external. Unless anthropologists analyze the social situation and then the leaders of society utilize this knowledge, the tensions can be severe. Here, too, anthropological studies can assist in our understanding of the process of change.

C. Society During the Time of the Prophet (SAAS)

When Muslim leaders talk about creating a perfect contemporary Muslim society, what do they mean? To assist us in building this society we may refer to the original ideal Muslim society at the time of the Prophet. But have we a clear understanding or even picture of that model? Do we know the various inter-connected parts of the structure of that society? We must clearly—and through sociological models—know about the household, the *rites de passage*, the genealogical charters related to questions of exogamy and endogamy, the role of elders, and the general code of behavior permeating society.

There are some speculative anthropological papers on the subject.[84] But we need a thorough study. It is fundamental to those talking of creating a contemporary Muslim society on the basis of an early Islamic model first to create a model of the original. To the best of my knowledge no such task has been attempted.[85] Related to the question of writing on early Islam is the life of the Prophet himself (SAAS).

The life of the Prophet (SAAS) needs to be produced in simple and clear terms for the contemporary generation of Muslims. As his life and example remain the primary paradigm of Islamic behavior, the exercise is vital to an understanding of Islam–both for Muslims and non-Muslims. His social roles–father, husband, friend, and so on–illuminate some key principles of Islamic social behavior. How these roles relate to fathers, husbands, and friends in our world needs to be discussed and elaborated.

The traditional Islamic scholar needs to shift the personality of the Prophet (SAAS) to where it belongs–the forefront of the Islamic argument. We need to know more of him as a social person; his humility (his doubts to Hazrat Khadijah–RAA–when he received the first revelations); his humor (rebuking his closest companion Abu Bakr–RAA–who had lost his temper and was beating a man for letting a camel stray during a pilgrimage, with a smile, "Look at this pilgrim"); his humanity (forgiving Hind, who in her hatred of him ate the liver of his uncle Hamzah, the lion of Allah); his gentleness (he could not contain his tears when he told the children and wife of Ja'far ibn Abu Talib of his death); his love of children (the Madinah boy with whom he joked, and whom he comforted, when the boy's pet nightingale died); and his kindness to animals (posting a man to guard the puppies of a bitch who had given birth on the way to the conquest of Makkah). These examples speak of a man of extraordinary perception, goodness, and gentleness.

A biography written by Muslims for Muslims is needed. And in spite of the need for such a biography those worthy of the subject are few and far

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[84] B. C. Aswad, "Social and Ecological Aspects in the Formation of Islam," in Louise E. Sweet, ed., for Natural History Press, *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1970) Vol. I, pp. 53-73; and D. F. Eickelman, "Musaylima: An Approach to the Social Anthropology of Seventh-Century Arabia," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of th Orient*. Vol. 10, 1967, pp. 17-52, and R. O. Legace, "The Formation of the Muslim State," *Anthropology Tomorrow*, The University of Chicago, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1957, pp. 141-155; and E. Wolf, "The Social Organization of Mecca and the Origins of Islam," *South-Western Journal of Anthropology*, No. 7, Winter 1951, pp. 329-56.

[85] This is an exercise I hope to conduct in the near future in *The Social Structure and Organization of Early Muslim Society* (Ahmed forthcoming).

between; of these al Faruqi's translation of Haykal[86] and Lings,[87] may be mentioned. A notable—if somewhat apologetic—attempt was made a century ago by Sayyid Amir Ali.

Some Muslim biographers have rarely risen over simple hagiography. For our purposes what is needed is sociology not hagiography. On the other hand, the standard Western biographies—and some of the material is based on extensive research—are for the most part a generation old or older, and reflect some of the traditional animosity to their subject.[88] Watt's biographies still remain the standard Western work on the subject. There are a few "modern" biographies, such as Rodinson,[89] which relies on psychological analysis.[90] Recent Western scholarship appears undecided on how to treat the life of the Prophet.

VI. Conclusion

A. Recommendations

Muslims cannot dismiss Western—or more correctly non-Muslim—scholarship out of hand. They must come to terms with it. For instance, anyone reading about the Pukhtun will probably come to them through Caroe. The inaccuracies will thus be perpetuated. If Muslims are to object to such scholarship, they can do so only by creating their own alternative scholarship rather than by verbally berating Western scholarship.

Anthropology is important to the study of Muslim society. It has much to offer in helping to understand and solve contemporary social problems. For instance, I have argued that the distribution of aid to the Afghan refugees in Pakistan would benefit if anthropological expertise were available.[91]

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[86] M. H. Haykal, translated by I. R. al Faruqi, *The Life of Muhammad* (Indianapolis; North American Trust Publicatons, 1976).

[87] Martin Lings, *Muhammad* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983).

[88] T. Andrae, English translation, *Muhammad: the Man and His Faith* (London, 1936); and J. D. Archer, *Mystical Elements in Muhammad* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924); and R. Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment* (London, 1926); and H. A. R. Gibb, 1980, *ibid.*, footnote 32 abovel and W. Muir, *Life of Mahomet*, four volumes (London: 1858-1861); and M. Rodinson, translated by Anne Carter, *Muhammad* (N.Y.; Pantheon Books, 1980); and W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953); *Muhammad at Medina* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956); 1978, *ibid.*, footnote 34 above.

[89] Rodinson, *ibid.*, footnote 88 above.

[90] M. Rodinson, translated by A. Goldhammer, *The Arabs* (The University of Chicago and Croom Helm, Ltd., 1981). Here Rodinson uses anthropological arguments in his discussion of "the Arabs."

[91] Akbar S. Ahmed, "Afghan Refugees, Aid, and Anthropologists," *International Asian Forum (International Quarterly for Asian Studies)*, Vol. 23, April 1981; originally published as, "How to Aid Afghan Refugees," in *Royal Anthropologial Institute News*, No. 39 August, 1980.

Sometimes the lacuna between the "actual" and the "ideal in Muslim society is wide. A good example is the actual status of Muslim women among certain groups, which contrasts with the ideal.[92] Anthropological studies can help to compare the two positions in the hope of attempting a bridge. As another example, ethnic tensions which are often read as expressions of political secession in most nation states, may be minimized by a national understanding of different local cultures and their social characteristics.

Muslims are not living in a social vacuum. They are living in a world sometimes operating on different levels within their own society, and outside their society on levels that are sometimes hostile, sometimes neutral. They have to meet the challenge on every one of these levels. For better or for worse, Muslims are being "observed." And the observations indicate lack of understanding and are usually hostile.[93]

Keeping the above in mind, it is therefore recommended that:

1) A simple, lucid sociological account of the life of the Prophet (SAAS) be prepared by a Muslim. The book should address a wide audience – both Muslim and non-Muslim – and, as indicated above, be too academic nor too abstruse.[94]

2) One major standard anthropological textbook of high standard should be produced and then translated into the major languages of the Muslim world. It should be used at the B.A. level and include sections on each major cultural zone.

3) Anthropological monographs on each major Islamic region be produced for distribution in the Muslim world.[95] Initially, Morocco for the Maghrib, Pakistan for South Asia, and Indonesia for Southeast Asia as distinct cultural-geographical types might be selected. These monographs should be simple, lucid, with attractive photographs, and used in colleges and universities.

4) Visits of Muslim anthropologists within Muslim countries should be arranged and encouraged and joint projects initiated. For instance, the study of the Berbers and the Puktuns is a logical and exciting study.

5) Long-term studies should be conducted comparing the major social

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[92] Akbar S. Ahmed and Z. Ahmed, "Tor and Mor: Binary and Opposing Models of Pukhtun Femalehood," in T. s. Epstein and S. P. F. Senaratne, eds., *Rural Women: Asian Case-Studies* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, forthcoming).

[93] H. M. Said and a. Zahid, 1981, *op. cit*, footnote 66 above.

[94] For example, as a model, see Professor I. al Faruqi's translation of Haykal's *The Life of Muhammad* (1976). For interesting work along these lines, see some of the recent publications of the newly formed Islamic associations like: The Islamic Foundation, Leicester; the Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad, and the International Institute of Islamic Thought, Washington.

[95] For an attempt at bringing together the Islamic tribes under one cover in anthropology, see Ahmed and Hart, 1983, *op.cit*, footnote 11, above.

categories, which would help us better understand and reach conclusions regarding Muslim society and its immediate contemporary problems.

The social categories to be examined could be peasants, tribes, and cities. For the first, I recommend a village in Pakistan (preferably the most populous Province, Punjab) and an Egyptian village typically dependent on irrigated networks. For the tribes, the Berbers and the Puktuns would be a natural study, and for the cities, Cairo, Madinah, and Lahore.

6) Practical and development-oriented social studies should be framed in order to enable us to better plan for Muslim society in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

7) The ethnographic and anthropological content from the writings of the great Muslim writers be extracted and compiled in a discrete set of volumes.[96] In this exercise classical Islamic scholars will have to assist the anthropologist.

A great store of anthropology exists in the writing of the classic Muslim scholars. It is disguised as history in one text, as memoirs in another, and straightforward ethnography in the third.

B. Conclusion

By failing to predict the contemporary Islamic re-emergence or assess its importance, Western scholars of Islam and its peoples were encouraged to make one of their most spectacular mistakes in recent times. They assumed secular trends in Muslim society as a logical development after the Second World War. Such was the direction pointed out by the Orientalists a generation ago.[97] The scholars of modern times, however, seem to follow blindly in the footpaths of their predecessors and fall into the same errors. A Western scholar of Iran, for example, wrote recently that "although it is difficult to be certain, the trend seems to be away from physical resistance movements such as those during Muharram of 1963, and more towards ideological resistance through involvement and participation in the decision-making apparatus of the government." His paper concluded thus: "Religiously oriented individuals, who may oppose the government, nevertheless join its ranks in the hope that they will have the opportunity to implement policies that will be more in accord with their view that Islam is an all-encompassing system of beliefs."[98] And this from an Iran expert on the eve of the religious revolu-

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[96] For one such attempt in this direction, see Akbar S. Ahmed, *Muslim Society: Readings in Thought, Development, and Structure* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).

[97] H. A. R. Gibb, 1980, *op.cit.*, footnote 32 above.

[98] G. Thaiss, "Religious Symbolism and Social Change: The Drama of Husain," in N. R. Keddie, ed., *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 366.

tion that brought down the Shah.

Muslim scholars trained in the West commit the same mistake. 'Aziz Ahmad concluded a paper on Islam in Pakistan thus: "The *ulema* having suffered a setback in 1970, Islamic socialism, in which Islam is largely decorative and diplomatic, has for the time being at least gained a complete victory over the religious parties."[99] The vigor of the Islamic revival has repudiated the predictions of, and surprised, Islamic scholars. To his credit Clifford Geertz was one of the few Western writers who saw differently.[100]

Having conceded the vigor of the Islamic revival, Muslims must now plan directions for it in order to best utilize its finer and dynamic impulses. They must, as Shari'ati suggests, prepare to discover what "the right path" means today and should mean in the future.

The anthropologist would do well to remember Socrates' statement, "I am not an Athenian or a Greek, but a citizen of the world." In the end the anthropologist must transcend himself, his culture, his universe, to a position where he is able to speak to and understand those around him in terms of his special humanity, irrespective of color, caste, or creed.

This sentiment is a poor echo of the Prophet (SAAS)—who in his last great address spoke to mankind: "Allah has made you brethren one to another, so be not divided . . . An Arab has no preference over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab; nor is a white one to be preferred to a dark one, nor a dark one to a white one, except in righteousness."

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[99] Aziz Ahmad, "Activism of the 'Ulama in Pakistan," in N. R. Keddie, ed, *Scholars, Saints and Sufis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 272.

[100] Sarcastically, Clifford Geertz writes for the benefit of his overhasty Western colleagues: "We have a while to wait yet, I think, even in Tunisia or Egypt, before we see an explicit movement for a 'religionless Islam' advancing under the banner, 'Allah is dead'." See Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 115.