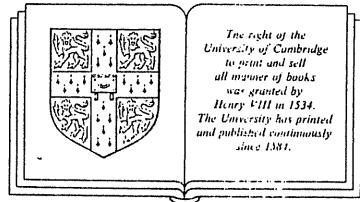


Mustafa SEN

# Muslim society

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Leadership exists only through superiority, and superiority only through group feeling.

Only tribes held together by group feeling can live in the desert.

. . . inhabitants of cities can have a 'house' [i.e. kin group] only in a metaphorical sense. The assumption that they possess one is a specious claim . . .

. . . while the Bedouin need the cities for the necessities of life, the urban population need the Bedouin [only] for conveniences and luxuries. Thus, as long as they live in the desert and have not acquired royal authority and control of the cities, the Bedouin need the townsmen . . .

Mutual aggression in the cities is averted . . . by government . . . the masses are thus prevented . . . from mutual injustice, save such as comes from the ruler himself.

. . . dynasty and government serve as the world's greatest market-place . . . if the ruler holds on to property and revenue . . . business slumps and commercial profits decline . . . the dynasty . . . suffers . . . because under these circumstances the property of the ruler decreases . . .

*Ibn Khaldun*

. . . the principles of religion have a kind of flux and reflux . . . and . . . men have a natural tendency to rise from idolatry to theism, and to sink again from theism to idolatry.

. . . superstition is favourable to priestly power, and enthusiasm . . . more contrary to it, than sound reason and philosophy . . .

*David Hume*

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forms of Protestantism), which is plausibly credited with fostering an admirable classical combination of civic morality and toleration. On the unqualified argument of the longer work, the enthusiasts should have remained the sworn enemies of liberty, as indeed they occasionally were. Hume can only invoke the routinisation of their zeal to explain why they did not persist in being its enemies:

When the first fire of enthusiasm is spent, men naturally, in all fanatical sects, sink into the greatest remissness and coolness in sacred matters; there being no body of men among them endowed with sufficient authority, whose interest is concerned to support the religious spirit; no rites, no ceremonies, no holy observances, which may enter into the common train of life, and preserve the sacred principles from oblivion . . . our sectaries, who were formerly such dangerous bigots, are now become very free reasoners . . .

This won't quite do. It was not just oblivion and remissness, but a deeper continuity, which led the non-conformists to help build the modern world. It was not the *absence* as such of a special 'body of men' amongst them, but on the contrary, the fact that the duties of the special body were shifted to the inner light of all members of the community, which made them what they were and continued to be. It was not the absence of priesthood, but its universalisation, which was significant, as Weber later noted.

On the more plausible Weberian account, it was precisely their persevering zeal, and not oblivion, which eventually turned them into friends of liberty. It was the effectiveness of the inner light which helped make American democracy possible, as Tocqueville noted. But their counterparts in Islam had too much cause to fear the tribes, and were in the main too identified with the central political authority, to endeavour to limit its powers. They might occasionally help rotate its personnel. The enthusiasts with whom Hume was concerned had fewer causes for such fears, especially after the failure of the '45 (an event much closer to the world of Ibn Khaldun than that of Hume, even though it occurred in Hume's own time and country).

These refinements may make sense of the exceptions, the 'singularities', which drove Hume into so contradicting himself. These elaborations will at the same time make his excessively psychological model more sensitive to social diversity. It is interesting to carry out the required elaboration in terms of Islamic material.

### **Ibn Khaldun**

Hume's model was psychologistic. Social factors tend only to be introduced *ad hoc*, when the system runs into difficulties. If we are to try it out in the context of Muslim societies, one may as well begin with the greatest sociologist of Islam – Ibn Khaldun.

One could never accuse Ibn Khaldun of being too psychologistic, of locating the key factors in the individual human heart. Crucial virtues and traits are

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forged, in his view, not in the psyche of individuals, but in communities and their social environment. Where Hume's sociology leads to the dilemma between intellectually meritorious monism on the one hand, and on the other the socially and morally meritorious pluralism (which is civic, this-worldly, non-enthusiastic and tolerant), Ibn Khaldun's basic dilemma is more deeply tragic, and also stands far more prominently at the centre of his thought. Hume could shrug his shoulders; he knew that monism was intellectually superior, but he also knew that when people embraced it, they did so for the wrong reasons, so that as far as the intellectual merit of their opinions went, they might just as well be pluralists — especially as pluralism, at least in favourable circumstances, also taught them to resist evil, to fight for their country and for liberty, and to be tolerant of the gods of others. Better civic-spirited idolators than craven unitarians, especially as the distant and hidden single deity was revered for quite the wrong reasons. It was not its elegance as an explanatory notion, and the force of the Argument from Design, which Hume respected, which led men to an exclusive God; it was fear, and the base idea that the powerful can best be placated by sycophancy — and absolute power by absolute sycophancy.

The dilemma faced by Ibn Khaldun's vision was more tragic but equally insoluble. Political, social, civic virtues were in his view fostered, not by religious pluralism as such, but by tribal life. (Tribal life may itself in turn favour religious pluralism, but that is another matter which he did not consider.) The virtues of civilisation and refinement, on the other hand, were fostered by urban life, which, however, was incompatible with civic virtues. You could have communal, civic spirit, or you could have civilisation — but not both. This is the tragic dilemma which is at the very base of social life.

Plato had once said something analogous:

We are to study not only the origins of society, but of a society which enjoys the luxuries of civilisation . . . We shall have to enlarge our state again . . . the territory which was previously sufficient will now be too small . . . we shall need a slice of our neighbour's . . . this means the addition of an army . . .<sup>23</sup>

For Plato, it is civilisation which makes modest self-sufficiency impossible, and hence requires the addition of a special military and governing class to the state for the defence of its inflated needs, and this generates or aggravates the problem of politics. Plato and Ibn Khaldun agree that the ordinary citizens of the civilised city will not normally fight — though for quite different reasons: Plato insists on specialisation and the division of labour — the cobbler to his last — whereas Ibn Khaldun holds urban life with its specialisation to be inherently incompatible with social cohesion and martial spirit. Plato supposes that the precivilised community did not need to fight — it does not covet, and is too poor to arouse the covetousness of others. Ibn Khaldun knows full well that, however poor, the tribesmen are objects of aggression and must fight to survive.

The contrast between the two thinkers is a contrast between their two

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worlds. The Ancient Greek city was a community, and it was, within its own world, the paradigm of a community. But within Islam the city is *both* the model *and* the antithesis of a community. It offers the preconditions of *piety* and contradicts those of *community*. So how is a community of the Faithful possible at all? It is certainly the antithesis of the *tribal* community, with its real or supposed links of blood and its strong cohesion. This opposition is central for Ibn Khaldun, though these are not his words.

For Plato the price of civilisation is the need to *defend* its own material pre-conditions by force of arms, and from one viewpoint, the *Republic* is a recipe for how best to pay this price – a blueprint for the political and educational arrangements which will ensure internal stability and external defence for the enriched, civilised city. It is designed to show how one can acquire the sheepdogs who will protect the flock from the wolves, without harassing the sheep. As in Marxism, domination is the consequence of a stratification which in turn has economic roots.

Ibn Khaldun is far less of a prescriptive political philosopher, and far more of a positive, descriptive sociologist; even if he does give advice on points of detail, in general he accepts society as he finds it. The political and military ineptitude of the city is simply a datum, whose implications he explores, but for which he does not expect a definitive remedy. He explains how sheepdogs emerge, but gives no recipe for their taming, and barely any even for saving them from quick degeneration.

Bedouin are closer to being good than sedentary people . . . are more disposed to courage than sedentary people . . . the reason for this is that sedentary people have become used to laziness and ease. They are sunk in well-being and luxury. They have entrusted the defence of their property and their lives to the governor and ruler who rules them, and to the militia which has the task of guarding them. They find full assurance of safety in the walls that surround them, and the fortifications which protect them . . . Successive generations have grown up in this way of life. They have become like women and children, who depend upon the master of the house. Eventually, this has come to be a quality of character . . .<sup>24</sup>

This is quite unlike the Europe in which peasants existed so as to be oppressed, whilst burghers were at least potentially free.

In the world which Ibn Khaldun knows, city dwellers do not really seem to be citizens at all; they abdicate responsibility to their rulers, who need to be recruited elsewhere. This is the solution. Urban living and political responsibility are antithetical. This is not fair to all townsmen perhaps, but it must have been the norm. For instance, 'The inhabitants of Spain especially have forgotten group feeling . . . since their country . . . is depleted of tribal groups.' Without tribes, no civic spirit. Without towns, no civilisation. The only solution, noted but not invented by Ibn Khaldun, is to bring the two together. He is not in the business of inventing social solutions, only analysing the ones which occur anyway.

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But it is not so easy to bring the two social elements together:

because of their savagery, the Bedouins are the least willing of nations to subordinate themselves to each other, as they are rude, proud, ambitious, and eager to be leaders. Their individual aspirations rarely coincide.

But there is a solution:

when there is religion among them through prophethood or priesthood, then they have some restraining influence in themselves . . . It is, then, easy for them to subordinate themselves and to unite . . .

. . . This is illustrated by the Arab dynasty in Islam. Religion cemented their leadership with the religious law . . .

Plato perhaps did not expect much more from the lower order of his city either, nor did he wish this artisan or commercial class to leave its specialisms and meddle in things which did not concern it, such as defence or politics; nonetheless, those whose business it was to attend to those things were, very much, part of the city itself. The striking thing about this passage from Ibn Khaldun is that the city-dwellers are contrasted with their rulers, who are not themselves *of* the city at all.

The tribesmen of the desert are held up in opposition to the urban folk:

The Bedouins . . . are alone in the country and remote from militias. They have no walls or gates . . . they provide their own defence and do not entrust it to . . . others . . . They always carry weapons . . . Fortitude has become a character quality of theirs, and courage their nature.

This passage is just as revealing. If in Ibn Khaldun's world the townsmen have abdicated from politics and defence and delegated these to their rulers, then by contrast the countryfolk, it appears, *all* carry arms. Is there no militia to take those arms from them and to keep the peace? Evidently not. Have they no nobles, who would reserve warfare for themselves, and teach humble shepherds and ploughmen not to have the impertinence and presumption to act as fighting men? Apparently not: if they do have nobles or chiefs, evidently these lack either the power or the desire to disarm their own people. (In fact, they lack both: they *need* the armed support of their followers, and they could not disarm them if they wished.) Tocqueville, looking at Ibn Khaldun's world some five centuries later, observed about the tribes

Each of these little societies elects its own chiefs whom they call *Sheiks* and they jointly discuss their own affairs.<sup>25</sup>

Ibn Khaldun tells us in so many words why their chiefs do not disarm them:

Their leader needs them mostly for the group spirit that is necessary for purposes of defence. He is, therefore, forced to rule them kindly and to avoid antagonising them. Otherwise, he would have trouble with the group spirit, resulting in his undoing and theirs.

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The ruler of the central state is quite a different species:

Royal leadership and government, on the other hand, require the leader to exercise a restraining influence by force. If not, his leadership would not last. These passages give us the really crucial traits of Ibn Khaldun's world: the state is too weak to control or disarm the countryside. Hence virtually all countrymen are armed and help assure their own defence; in other words, the maintenance of rural order, for what it is worth, is in the hands of local self-help communities (i.e. tribes), within which the majority of the adult male population takes part in war and politics.

Why did this 'tribal' solution prevail on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, whereas the 'feudal' alternative, which segregates warriors/rulers from peasants, prevailed in the north? The most obvious answer would invoke the relative weight of pastoralism and agriculture in the two societies. Flocks are mobile and fields are not: hence oppression of mobile pastoralists is far harder than of place-bound agriculturalists. (Those tied to both land and water, in the use of irrigation agriculture, are of course doubly vulnerable). Labour-intensive societies tend to be hierarchical; defence-intensive ones tend to be egalitarian. (Capital-intensive ones, a new species, seem to lead towards a widespread convergence in consumption-styles, giving an impression of equality, combined with great inequality in power; but the reality and/or illusion of social mobility normally prevents this power-inequality from ever congealing into a permanent, frozen hierarchy.)

Tribes, in the sense intended here, are defined by a near-universal male participation in organised violence, by a very high Military Participation Ratio, in S. Andreski's phrase. In other words, virtually everyone is a soldier. But what is the first precondition of military life? It is, obviously, the ability to run away. You can't win them all: and for any participant in this life-style who cannot run, any unsuccessful encounter — and chance must ensure that, for most of them, defeats occasionally occur — is the last one, destined to end in death or enslavement. Hence soldiering, as a tolerably attractive career, is open only to those who have the ability to escape.

But escaping is not such a simple matter, and requires more than sound limbs. A single man running away without companions or resources cannot easily start again. This is where the mobility of shepherds comes in. Pastoralists can not only escape, they can do so with a substantial part of their wealth intact. (Pastoralism is not the only way of achieving this. When the Mamluks fought Napoleon's army, apparently many of them carried their jewellery on their bodies under their armour, as an insurance against the consequences of defeat, a form of liquid mobile capital which would enable the owner to restart in business somewhere else if he made good his escape.) Their inherent mobility makes it harder to oppress shepherds, which weakens the state in their territory, which in turn strengthens *them* and their mutual-help collectivities, and so on in a self-maintaining circle.

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The pastoral vocation to violence has a number of sources, over and above the mobility of shepherds and their herds. To seize the *land* of others is only an advantage when land is scarce, or when you can enslave the previous owners and compel them to work it for you. But this raises considerable problems of labour relations and management. Or, of course, you can seize the harvest; but that is a single-shot operation. Raiding for cattle is far more advantageous. If successful, you seize both capital and interest; your booty is self-propelling; and in so far as pastoralism is not labour-intensive, you can assimilate the increment in productive wealth without either over-stretching your own manpower resources or saddling yourself with a recalcitrant alien labour force. All these factors incline pastoralists not merely to dissidence *vis-à-vis* the state, but also towards a life-style which incorporates raiding, and of course the defence against raiding by others. This in turn provides the training which makes shepherd tribes state-resistant, and yet at the same time turns them into potential state-founders. Pastoralism is not labour-intensive but it is defence-intensive.

### **Pastoralism and literacy**

The world of Ibn Khaldun, of traditional Muslim civilisation, combines pastoralism and (often vicarious) scripturalism. It is a world in which pastoral ecology on the one hand, and reverence for the Book, have been pushed to their limits, and in a way fused. When the pastoral way of life predominates, it produces a kind of chain reaction, not only, as the Russian scholar Khazanov notes, by converting others to nomadism, but also by causing non-nomads to adopt a similar form of social organisation. Thus pastoralism leaves its mark even on communities which are partly or predominantly agricultural, but which are bound in self-defence to emulate the social organisation of nomads or semi-nomads, whether as protection against the pastoralists or against the tribally based state. For instance, writing about the Seksawa, one of the longest-established sedentary groups in North Africa, Jacques Berque writes:

Those old established sedentaries, those patient villagers are above all shepherds . . . the flock . . . occupies the major place in all that economy.<sup>26</sup>

The shepherd is the protector of flocks against raids (when he is not himself a raider); he must needs combine in the mutual-aid groups known as tribes; and his warlike role within them, and his own mobility and that of his flocks, make it difficult to dominate and oppress him excessively. It is certainly much harder to do this to him than it is to oppress an agriculturalist, whose normal task is to work rather than to fight, and whose worldly goods are immobile. Ibn Khaldun cites the tradition according to which the Prophet himself observed that the plough brings submission in its train. By contrast, pastoralism tends towards an at least relatively egalitarian society, which does not normally or seriously segregate a "specialised" stratum of warriors.<sup>27</sup> The distinction sometimes found in the Sahara, between tribes of the sword and tribes of the Book, is largely a social

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fiction. It may govern recruitment of religious personnel, but does not dominate the life of the entire collectivities so designated.

At the same time, however, this civilisation came at the end of a long cultural development in the arid zone, in the course of which both literacy and the enjoyment of the products of craftsmanship and trade became recognised parts of life. Only towns, concentrations of traders, craftsmen and scholars, could provide the cultural and technical equipment which had become habitual and normative. Ibn Khaldun stresses the interdependence of urban luxury and intellectual tastes, which encourage literacy and provide the social underpinning of Platonism, in the sense of worship of the uncreated Word. Reverence for the written Word, as expressing an independent authority, was a cultural possibility ever inherent in the very discovery of writing, in the separability of the word from the speaker, the context and the time — even if early scribes on occasion restricted themselves to tax-accountancy, as in Crete. The central social role of the written Word is not to convey a message, but to nail down a contract. The best way of making the crucial contract stick is to turn it into a divine Message. In its Platonic form proper, as the cult of the *concept*, the potential for reverence of the socially disembodied Word was never exploited very effectively in actual social practice, perhaps because our concepts are too loose and ill-defined to serve as real arbiters of conduct, and much too shadowy in outline to inspire awe in non-philosophers. (Ideal concrete *human* models seem to be more appealing and socially effective than pure abstract ideals.) But in its Koranic form, as the cult of a delimited and final set of propositions, uncreated, eternal and divine, this cultural possibility received its purest and most striking expression. Plato divinised the word; Islam attributes the Word to the deity. This has proved socially more effective. Presumably it both reinforced, and was sustained by, the need of the shepherds for urban products, made and distributed thanks to skills which formed a kind of matrix of literacy, and which were visibly continuous with it.<sup>28</sup> A clustering of such skills in a sense is a town. The town favours literacy as one further specialised skill and at the same time an endorsement and encouragement of all the others. Specialisms benefit from being recorded in writing, and require it more than an occupation which is the dominant and more or less universal employment of a tribal society, such as, for instance, pastoralism. Hence a scriptural religion comes more easily to an urban population, and has more scope within it. What mattered in the history of mankind was not the moment when the Word became flesh, but rather the instant when the Word *ceased* to be flesh, by being incarnated in writing in a social milieu which valued writing and came to revere it. It was then that the Word could sit in judgement on men and societies.

So the original Platonism Mark 1 divinised the isolated concept, whereas the socially more effective, Koranic Platonism Mark 2 attributed a carefully delimited set of normative propositions to the deity. The interpretation of propositions, though also contentious, is incomparably less so than that of an open class of

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undenumerated concepts: so in this version the Norm is not only transcendent, but it is also sustained by the ultimate Power, and it is at least relatively precise and bounded. A self-sustaining, undelimited class of normative *concepts* is less persuasive and clear-cut than a delimited set of divinely uttered propositions. Its authority is socially sustained by the social classes which have privileged access to it through literacy, and an interest in invoking its legitimacy against such groups as would threaten it, and which can elaborate and uphold a corpus of interpretations and applications of the initial set of revealed assertions.

Platonism Mark 2 was superior to the earlier prototype not merely in being propositional, underwritten by God, and finite; it also guaranteed its own completion. When Bertrand Russell discussed the doctrine of logical atomism, according to which both the world and our characterisation of it broke up into final atoms such that each member of the set of atomic propositions as it were captured, married, mirrored one atomic fact, he noted that nonetheless, the set of all atomic propositions would not *exhaust* truth and our knowledge of the world: we would need at least one further proposition, namely, that the set was *complete*, that these were all the propositions which were available. Islam, through the doctrine that the line of Prophets was completed, satisfies this logico-philosophical requirement. No further increments to the Normative Truth are either possible or allowed. The logical point does not perhaps matter much. But sociologically it is extremely important. By firmly closing the door, in principle, to further additions to the Revealed doctrine, it enormously strengthens the hand of those who have access to the delimited truth through literacy and who use it as a charter of legitimacy. They cannot be outflanked by new Revelations.

Anticipating the argument somewhat, one may observe that there was also Platonism Mark 3, improving the product yet further. This consisted of adding to the reification and deification of the Word, the Platonic doctrine that sustained education of a well-selected, individually recruited elite, trained in war, administration and the recognition of Norms, is, more than tribal life, the right recipe for social cohesion and a stable polity. The longevity and power of the Ottoman empire testified to the excellence of this recipe. But this recipe was only developed relatively late in the history of Islam, and is in my view a variant within it rather than of its essence. But if Muhammed implemented Platonism by teaching an entire society to revere the Word, the Mamluks and Turks carried the job further by systematically training and insulating Guardians from corrupting kin links, rather than relying on tribal life to produce a wild variety, which depends for its growth on those very kinship bonds which Plato distrusted.

Thus the discovery of writing contained the potential for an ideological device greatly favouring such social groups as are capable of literacy. But literacy flourishes best among specialists; it is itself a specialism, initially, but it also encourages and helps to codify, transmit and delimit other specialisms. Specialists of various kinds in turn are mutually interdependent and thus tend to congregate, thereby creating urban centres. Literacy appeals to them, suits and helps

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them, and becomes their shared badge. The present stress on this socially reinforced transcendence may obscure another very important feature of this Norm – its capacity to serve as the basis for a fairly minute regulation of the details of social life even among an anonymous and mobile urban population./Mark 2 is also, so to speak, a talmudic Platonism. Such codified regulation once again has an affinity with urban life. Regulation by *unwritten* tradition is only feasible amongst fairly stable, non-anonymous, non-urban populations.

Platonism Mark 1, which divinises the Word, is flattering to us intellectuals. We like to hear that the main tool of our trade should be sacred. The magic rubs off on us. But ordinary people prefer the personal touch, and even, or especially, in a monotheism, prefer that residual human warmth in the universe which it retains by the attribution of the Word to God, as taught by Platonism Mark 2.

The doctrine that the line of Prophets is closed firmly circumscribes the Sacred and thus saves it from devaluation. Plato himself was not sufficiently aware of the Quantity Theory of Ideas. The proscription of innovation protects a scriptural faith from inflation.

Thus scripturalism gave the townsmen and the tribesmen a common idiom, even if they used it differently, and made them into parts of what certainly was one continuous moral order. So the cult of the Word is pushed to an extreme point where it endows the carriers with great moral authority and, at the same time, pastoralism is developed to a limit at which it endows pastoral mutual-aid collectives ('tribes') with great cohesion, and fatally weakens any polity other than one based on some coalition of such tribal collectives. This fusion of scripturalism and pastoralism, the implication of each pushed *à outrance* in one continuous system, is the classical world of Islam.

The consequence of this is the difference between European and Muslim dynasty-founders. After the initial *Völkerwanderung*, European kings were recruited from leading barons rather than from tribal leaders; Muslim ones are either tribal chiefs or the men of religion who weld tribes together under a religious banner.

In some ways, tribalism is a far hardier plant than feudalism. In England, the Wars of the Roses could decimate a feudal class and help strengthen the monarchy. In Persia, by contrast, the complaint was heard that however many tribal *khangas* you killed, new ones always emerged from the chiefly lineage; the killing could not keep up with their proliferation so that try as you would you simply couldn't suppress tribes by liquidating their leaders. A more or less self-insulated feudal class can be massacred *en bloc* (as happened in nineteenth-century Nepal), or worn out by prolonged conflict, or corrupted by fun-and-games at some Versailles; but segmentary tribal leadership has a truly Dragon's Teeth quality.

This rural tribal wilderness in which no militias keep the peace is not at all a Hobbesian anarchy, a war of all against all. Long before modern social anthropology made the same discovery, Ibn Khaldun knew full well that the state of nature is not individualistic, but tribal. This courtier knew more about

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tribesmen than did the European political philosophers; in his society, it was rather difficult to ignore them. He was deeply imbued with the sense of pastoral/tribal life:

Those who have no one of their own lineage [to care for] rarely feel affection for their fellows. If danger is in the air ... such a man slinks away ... Such people, therefore, cannot live in the desert ...

So in the wilderness, the state of nature *is* a reality: the maintenance of order and the righting of wrongs is in the hands of an armed population itself, and not of a specialised law-enforcing agency, i.e. the state. But this statelessness is not individualistic. Those who partake in it feel affection for their fellows of the same lineage. Order is maintained, at least in some measure, by the mechanisms of stateless *tribal* organisation.

The weakness of the state — the militia is far away — both permits and obliges these rural units to be strong; and their strength, in turn, keeps the state weak. Once established, the system is self-perpetuating. Moreover, Ibn Khaldun's observations about the tribesmen and the townsmen are complementary: it is just because the townsmen have such good cause to fear the tribesmen that they cannot dispute with their rulers and share in the control of the city: they need the rulers too much to be able to afford such defiance, even if they had the stomach for it. And who are these rulers?

Plato gave the answer as to who the rulers should be, and how they should be trained so as to be good rulers, so that they should not need further rulers to check them in turn; how to make them be of such noble, incorruptible metal as to evade, at least for some time, the need to face the endlessly regressive political question — who guards the guardians?

Ibn Khaldun does not indulge in any such philosophical speculation or prescription. The corruptibility of rulers is a central datum and it is not contested. In the end, the only solution lies in the fact that there is an ever-ready supply of new ones. These are produced, not by philosophical training, by that judicious, Platonic blend of music and gymnastics, but by the natural conditions of tribal life, that ever-fruitful womb, not of philosopher-kings, but of tribesmen-kings.

He gives a straightforward, factual account, telling us who the rulers actually are, where they come from, and how they acquire the spirit which enables them to rule and defend the city:

Leadership exists only through superiority, and superiority only through group feeling.

This is perhaps the most important single sentence in Ibn Khaldun's sociology: domination, authority, are the rewards of social cohesion. Everyone aspires to authority and its rewards, very few can attain it, and they are selected from among the cohesive. Government is by tribe, and only the cohesive deserve to rule. Government is the gift of the tribe to the city. In a sense, the state *is* a tribe, which has moved from the desert to the citadel, and milks the town

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instead of its herds, and protects the mosque; the market—citadel—mosque trio constitutes the political system. The Soviet anthropologist Khazanov has put forward the hypothesis that nomads become less egalitarian in proportion to their involvement with the state (whether as its agents, victims, or both). The capture of the political citadel by a tribe or group of tribes then constitutes the extreme position along this spectrum: the tribe becomes extremely stratified in so far as one of its number becomes the sultan, and his clan his ministers, who also constitute the pool of his potential successors. At the same time, its political institutions, having been intermittent or ‘dispositional’ in their natural habitat – only activated into being by the need arising from conflict – acquire a state-like permanence and continuity.

It is not, as Plato thought or recommended, a sound philosophical education which fits one for authority. Quite the reverse: education emasculates one politically.

those who rely on laws and are dominated by them from the very beginning of their education and instruction in the crafts, sciences, and religious matters, are thereby deprived of much of their own fortitude. They can scarcely defend themselves at all against hostile acts. This is the case with students, whose occupation it is to study and learn from teachers and religious leaders . . .

Education and law-abidingness are politically debilitating; they undermine that social cohesion which alone confers authority. This is slightly embarrassing for Ibn Khaldun as a Muslim, and he has to indulge in a little special pleading:

It is no argument that the men around Muhammad observed the religious laws, and yet did not experience any diminution of their fortitude . . . When the Muslims got their religion from Muhammad, the restraining influence came from themselves . . . It was not the result of technical instruction or scientific education. The laws were the laws and precepts of religion which they received orally . . . Their fortitude remained unabated, and it was not corroded by education or authority.

In this way, his view that education and authority are politically and materially corrosive is squared with the pieties, with an acknowledgement of the fact that the Companions of the Prophet were cohesive, yet received the law from him.

If only cohesion is the basis of authority and alone constitutes qualification for leadership, and if it is not to be had from education – quite the reverse – then from where is it to be had? The answer is clear:

Only tribes held together by group feeling can live in the desert.

and

Group feeling results only from blood relationship or something corresponding to it.

In other words: cohesion is engendered in groups living in a rough natural environment, far from the law-enforcing militias of the state, and in groups

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which are bound to each other by *ideas* of consanguinity; or, more briefly still, it arises only amongst tribesmen. Although Ibn Khaldun seems on occasion to take seriously the terminology of ‘blood’ — ‘respect for blood ties is something natural among men’ — he really knows better than this. ‘Blood’ is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of cohesion: it is merely a way of *talking* about it. It is not necessary:

Clients and allies belong in the same category. The affection everyone has for his clients and allies results from the feeling of shame that comes to a person when one of his neighbours, relatives, or a blood relation is in any degree humiliated.

Nor are kin links sufficient, when the social preconditions of their effectiveness — survival in a rough, ungoverned or ill-governed environment — are absent:

Isolated inhabitants of cities can have a ‘house’ [i.e. kin group] only in a metaphorical sense. The assumption that they possess one is a specious claim ... Many inhabitants of cities who had their origins in noble Arab or non-Arab ‘house’ share such delusions.

The Israelites are most firmly misled in this delusion. They originally had one of the greatest ‘houses’ in the world ... because of their group feeling and the royal authority which God promised them and granted them by means of that group feeling. Then, they were divested of all that ... Still, the delusion ... has not left them. They can be found saying: ‘He is an Aaronite’ ... ‘He is a descendant of Joshua’; ‘He is one of Caleb’s progeny’ ... Many other inhabitants of cities who hold [noble] pedigrees but no longer share in any group feelings are inclined to similar nonsense.

It is obvious that Ibn Khaldun considers the invocation of genealogies, and claims to the membership of kin groups by townsmen, to be a kind of sociological fraud, *nonsense* to speak bluntly, not because the genealogies themselves are necessarily false — which is neither here nor there — but because they no longer correspond to the social reality which they were meant to express, i.e. effective group cohesion, engendered by self-reliance in rude and lawless circumstances.<sup>29</sup> He who allows order to be maintained for him by a ruler may not truly claim to be part of a ‘house’. A *real* ‘house’ looks after its own defence. Genealogies without a real ‘house’ are just verbiage. Submission to law is political emasculation. He makes this very plain:

A tribe paying imposts did not do that until it became resigned to meek submission with respect to paying. Imposts and taxes are a sign of oppression and meekness that proud souls do not tolerate ... In such a case, group feeling is too weak for its own defence and protection ... When one sees a tribe humiliated by the payment of imposts, one cannot hope that it will ever achieve royal authority ...

The motto of a proud soul, evidently, is not so much ‘No taxation without representation’, but rather, ‘No taxation *at all*’. And indeed, well into this century, there were tribes which took great pride in never having submitted to the humiliation of taxation. But those tribes who submit to authority and taxation

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thereby join the townsmen and belong to the number of those unfit to rule. Only those who refuse to be governed are themselves fit to rule: political education is to be had in the wilderness alone. If you wish to command you must not learn to obey. And if prophetic status also requires a period in the wilderness, this way the two elements of political renovation – tribe and prophet – may meet.

Thus an urban civilisation depends for the provision of its own rulers precisely on those whom it cannot itself rule, and who acquire the toughness and cohesion required for government in the wild lands beyond the pale. Thus, politically, the civilised are dependent on the barbarians, and not only in politics:

When sedentary people mix with the Bedouin in the desert or associate with them on a journey, they depend on them. They cannot do anything for themselves without them. This is an observed fact.

But economically, the dependence is reversed.

while the Bedouin need the cities for their necessities of life, the urban population needs the Bedouin [only] for conveniences and luxuries. Thus, as long as they live in the desert and have not acquired royal authority and control of the cities, the Bedouin need the townsmen . . .

The economic dependence of pastoral tribesmen on urban artisans and commercial specialists, eventually symbolised by their religious dependence on the crucial specialism of literacy, spring from their conspicuous non-autarchy: they are not windowless nomads. This is the reverse of what one would expect, or of what is taken for granted in Plato's world, in which the rude rural population is economically so self-sufficient, and only the desire for luxury and civilisation brings in its train the need for acquisition and defence of territory, and thereby the problem of politics. Here, this is reversed: the townsmen seem economically self-sufficient and only need the tribesmen of the wilderness for luxuries, and more significantly, for political and military services, whereas the opposite holds in economic matters. Speaking of traditional Algeria in 1840, Tocqueville noted the same:

Virtually all manufacturing industry was enclosed within the towns.<sup>30</sup>

The article on *Algeria* in the *New American Encyclopedia* of 1858 modifies this picture only slightly, making a partial exception of the Berbers:

The Kabyles are a hardworking people who live in real villages; excellent agriculturalists, they also work mines, smelt metals and have workshops in which they weave wool and cotton. They make gunpowder and soap . . . Faithful to the customs of their ancestors, the Arabs lead a nomadic existence, moving their camps for pasture and other reasons.

The author of the entry was Friedrich Engels.<sup>31</sup>

Ibn Khaldun might have added that much the same is true in what could be called religious ecology: when the tribesmen adhere to a religion of the Book,

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they are dependent, in the end, not only on urban artisans and traders but also on literate religious specialists.

The division of labour is the essence of urban life. It is the key to the capacity to supply those services, economic and cultural, which the tribesmen are unable to provide for themselves. The tribal ethos spurns specialisation: the economic specialist is despised, the ritual and political specialist viewed with suspicion, ambivalence and irony, even if he is respected, feared and revered.<sup>32</sup> Under European feudalism, only a relatively small upper stratum spurned trade or economic activity. In Muslim tribal society, it is the very broad middle stratum of ordinary tribesmen, above craftsmen and below the religious nobility, which is the carrier of a specialism-spurning ethos. But if this fact were to be invoked for explaining a relative lack of economic development, it should also be remembered that, notwithstanding the ethos, tribesmen take to trade with alacrity and without compunction the moment political circumstances permit it — and sometimes even sooner.

The economic and religious-cultural need by the tribesmen of the towns, in the traditional social order, is profoundly significant, and constitutes presumably the second most important fact in Ibn Khaldun's world, alongside the *political* dependence of towns on tribes. This mutual dependence holds the overall society together in its peculiar form, and helps explain what may be the greatest puzzle of all: why a society so fragile politically should be so very coherent and homogeneous culturally.

### A type of society

The society brilliantly sketched out by Ibn Khaldun could also be summarised in other terms, which would highlight the contrast between it and other social forms. Ibn Khaldun's own perceptiveness is all the more remarkable in so far as he evidently thought he was describing the only kind of human society, society *as such*, anywhere. His analysis is evidently meant to follow from basic human or social traits, and not to be dependent on any cultural idiosyncrasies. In this he was mistaken: it is all the more noteworthy that he should have seen that which, within his own horizon, lacked any contrast. His perceptiveness refutes the view that to exist is to differ, and that only what is differentiated from other objects within one's horizon can ever be perceived.

It is worth sketching, in terms other than his own, the outlines of this world. It is a tribal world, or rather, one in which much or most of rural life is tribal. What does this mean? It means that the maintenance of order in the countryside, in the desert and in the mountains, is in the hands of local groups defined in terms of real or supposed kinship, or of kinship-surrogates such as clientship. It means that these local groups are relatively unstratified politically: they do have leaders, but these leaders depend on the support of their armed followers, and hence cannot tyrannise them.

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The tribes are of three kinds: in Platonic terms, the wolves, the sheep and the sheepdogs. There are the tribes strong enough to defy authority and resist taxation, and thereby maintain their cohesion and spirit, and they retain what Ibn Khaldun calls their fitness for royal authority, though this can generally be attained only when religion confers cohesion on a whole group. These are the wolves. There are also those, originally drawn from amongst the wolves, who have been successful enough to *attain* royal authority, by conquering the areas in which it can be exercised – the town and sedentary regions. These are the sheepdogs.<sup>33</sup> And finally, there are the sheep who have submitted to authority, thereby betraying a loss of that moral fibre which might make them royal, and losing it ever more completely through the habits of submission.<sup>34</sup>

Implicit in this classification of tribes there is also a political sociology, which Ibn Khaldun spells out. Government is by cohesive tribes, by sheepdogs, erstwhile wolves, wolves-turned-sheepdogs, and it is exercised over cities and over sheep. Government by the people of the people and for the people is poppycock. When modern conditions lead to the fusion of democratic jargon with the spirit of Ibn Khaldun, we get a distinctive species of ‘totalitarian democracy’, in which populist verbiage covers kin-patronage politics. Under modern conditions, it is often noted that government is by patronage network, which in turn has a communal or territorial base. This is no longer an instance of an Ibn-Khaldunian regime proper, in which a whole conquering kin group share as of right in the benefits of the acquisition of royal authority. (Perhaps such a system never did exist in an absolutely pure form. Reciprocal services must always have counted for something. It is unlikely that privileges were ever accorded quite mechanically by virtue of men’s position on a genealogy, without the intrusion of other considerations.) But this system does have something in common with the old pattern. The links of patronage are not created arbitrarily and freely, in a so to speak, open market of corruption. Their formation is weighted in favour of pre-existing group links. Such systems, which are now common, should perhaps be considered a mixed or intermediate political form, a neo-Ibn-Khaldunian type of government.

It is remarkable how very much Ibn Khaldun is a positive sociologist rather than a normative political philosopher. He wastes little time on moralising. He tells us what political authority is, gives its natural history, and there’s the end of it. It is the rule of some cohesive groups over others which are less so, or which are less fortunate, *and* over the towns and detribalised peasantry, if any is available. Amongst free tribes there is little justice or law other than such as the group ensures for itself; in governed territory there is the rule of law, which simply means that the governors have the monopoly of large-scale injustice (though not, interestingly, of legitimate violence):

Mutual aggression of people in towns and cities is averted by the authorities and government, which hold back the masses under their control from attacks and

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aggression upon each other. They are thus prevented . . . from mutual injustice, save such injustice as comes from the ruler himself.

The problem which Plato and modern liberals share, and which they solve so very differently (by seeking perfection in rulers, or by pluralist mitigation of inevitable imperfection) -- how can one prevent injustice *by* authority itself, as well as that which is perpetrated *between* its subjects -- does not seem to pre-occupy Ibn Khaldun very much. Morally speaking, there is little to choose between wolves and sheepdogs. They differ only in their position, good fortune, or cohesion. This too would seem to be a fact about the society of which he was part and which he was describing. In his argument one does find prudential rules and advice to monarchs -- for example, great harshness is counter-productive, and not in the king's own interest -- but no more.

Ibn Khaldun's model is not static. Its dynamics, the theory of a kind of tribal circulation of elites, is its best known part. This theory is of course already implicit in the classification of tribes, and in the view that sheepdogs are erstwhile wolves, and are destined to end as sheep.

Political authority and the privileges which go with it corrode that very cohesion which had bestowed authority on a group and its leaders in the first place. As cohesion is whittled away, the ruler comes to rely on mercenaries rather than kinsmen. As his authority and territory dwindle, even severe taxation brings in less revenue than mild taxation once had done, in the halcyon days of expansion; and so the ruler's demands alienate his subjects at the same time as the quality of his support declines. Eventually some new grouping of cohesive, warlike wolves, well suited for authority by their qualities, replaces the exhausted sheepdogs -- only to suffer a similar fate some four generations later.

The rotation-within-an-immobile-structure is perhaps inherent in a certain general ecology, or mode of production and reproduction if you prefer. It is an ecology in which extensive nomadic and/or mountain pastoralism co-exists with trade and urban centres of artisan production, and within which cohesion and mobility confer dominance on those nested groupings of mutual-aid associations, which we call tribes. At the same time the general level of cultural and technical equipment confers a different kind of centrality or legitimacy on the towns. They are economically indispensable; scripturalism confirms and reinforces their standing. The consequence is the kind of rotation of leadership, and the kind of symbiosis between rude tribal cohesion and urban sophistication, which Ibn Khaldun described.<sup>35</sup> Tribes provide rulers and some luxuries, towns provide essential tools and moral legitimization.

The pattern as such is not necessarily Islamic: it seems inherent in this kind of ecology. It was found in the arid zone before Islam, and it is significant that this circular or 'reversible' pattern has also been noted by scholars who, as Marxists, might be expected to seek basic structural transformations, rather than the mere perpetuation of a fundamentally identical pattern. Apparently arid zone nomad-

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ism does not support any such expectations of profound change. A.M. Khazanov, a Soviet authority on the Scythians and on nomadism generally, who suggests that the Scythians may have been among the first to initiate the pattern by creating a nomad conquest state,<sup>36</sup> observes:

In the course of nearly three thousand years, within the nomadic world of Eurasian steppes, circular developments clearly predominated over cumulative ones, and if the latter nevertheless had their place, this was largely due to stimuli emerging from the agrarian world.<sup>37</sup>

Another Soviet specialist on nomadism, G.E. Markov, spells out this conclusion as firmly:

agrarian government is an irreversible phenomenon. It changes its type, but cannot disappear, as long as antagonistic class contradictions remain.

But when we come to nomads, the facts bear this testimony: the transition in social organisation from 'communal-nomadic' to the 'military-nomadic' and vice-versa are reversible phenomena. After the disintegration of nomad empires, new governments appear in the agrarian regions subject to them; with the mobile pastoralists, the communal-nomadic organisation reappeared in one form or another.<sup>38</sup>

By 'communal-nomadic' the author evidently means a social form corresponding to tribal-segmentary, and by 'military-nomadic' the assumption, by such a grouping, of a politically dominant role in wider society including townsmen and agriculturalists. Thus, though Ibn Khaldun is not quoted, his views seem fully vindicated.

But if this is so, what is the significance of Islam as such? Its diffusion in the arid zone has meant that this cyclical or 'reversible' process was henceforth carried out by partners who spoke the same moral language, who could leave visiting cards with each other, which was not possible when Scythian steppe nomads traded or fought with Greek townsmen in the Crimea or Iranian agriculturalists in Transcaucasia. Henceforth, the barbarians could arrive by invitation; a dissident cleric from the town could lead them to the city to replace a morally exhausted dynasty. And when the new rulers were installed, they could promptly be provided with secretarial, clerical and administrative assistance, and in some measure with moral guidance or even constitutional limitation, by a class of scholars who spoke an idiom which the newly arriving tribal rulers already understood or at any rate respected. So one might say that Islam provided a common language and thus a certain kind of smoothness for a process which, in a more mute and brutalistic form, had been taking place anyway.

In Eastern Asia, nomads also notoriously on occasion acted as conquerors and formed states. But the areas which they ruled would have been politically centralised anyway: the nomads were, from the viewpoint of state-formation, redundant. Their political role was superfluous. The state, well-established anyway, was not a tribal gift. This differentiates them from the world of Ibn

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Khaldun, in which they were indispensable and ever-recurring. There they did not, in Markov's terms, create an irreversible agrarian state. So the gift of the state had to be periodically renewed. East Asian nomads are contingent, Muslim ones are necessary.

An argument exists in the work of Germaine Tillion which attempts to explain the well-known traits of these tribal communities, of these 'republics of cousins', traits such as the relative egalitarianism, diffusion of civic and military responsibility, and possessiveness towards womenfolk of the lineage, in terms of the discovery and diffusion of agriculture and the need for manpower it implies.<sup>39</sup> It is strange to find an authoress attributing to early Mediterranean man such a mercantilist and anti-free-trade attitude towards women and their exchange. On this theory, it would seem that, in defiance of C. Lévi-Strauss, they preferred to define their groups by the retention rather than the exchange of women. Why should they assume that exchange cannot be beneficial, that the boarding of parallel cousins inside the group leads to a quicker accumulation of a labour force, than a judicious exchange of manpower-generating brides? But above all, if this were the explanation, why do non-Muslim peasant societies seldom display a similar structure?

It seems to me more plausible to credit the republic of cousins to pastoralism, the need to combine for the defence of pasture and the difficulty of oppressing shepherds, and the chain-reaction which obliges adjoining communities to organise in a similar way. I cannot pretend to solve the problem of parallel-cousin marriage, but there is no doubt but that it aids clan cohesion. For a tribesman, the clan means not only access to pasture, but also to brides. Without your clan, where could you graze your flocks and whom could your son marry?

It would be an exaggeration to say that pastoralists are predestined for a 'segmentary' form of social organisation, and pastoral societies do exist which do not display this form; but it seems that they are strongly predisposed towards it. A single shepherd is at the mercy of any group of other shepherds, or even of an ambush by another single shepherd. His most natural insurance against such danger is to form or join a mutual-aid association, which can jointly defend pasture, watering-place and so forth, and avenge him should he be killed. But such a small group is, once again, at the mercy of larger associations of such groups: in other words, the argument is repeated at each level at which a shared interest or danger can arise. At the same time, the mobility of both shepherds and their wealth inhibits centralisation and a politico-military division of labour inside these groups: it is normally difficult to extract much surplus from such populations, for as their members retain their arms for external defence these arms are also available for their internal defence against oppression. But without surplus, there are no specialised military-political agencies. The circle is complete. The result of all this is that characteristic superimposition of 'nested' groups of various sizes, fairly egalitarian and uncentralised internally, and with

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no one level of size being clearly more important than others. There is no privileged level for the articulation of political units.

This also helps explain the predilection of nomadic or semi-nomadic populations for genealogical self-definition. For sedentary segmentary populations, genealogy, though often used, is optional. People who have a clearly defined address can be identified in terms of it. But nomads, people of no fixed abode, cannot be defined, or have their nested social units defined, in terms of their locality. They need genealogy. Genealogy or group membership is their only address. In so far as their mobility is regulated, as generally it is, territory is defined in terms of social group rather than vice versa. A pasture is the pasture of such and such a people (membership of which grants access to the pasture), rather than people being defined by the locality.

### **Trade cycle and dynastic tribal cycle**

It is interesting that in the course of his account of the decline of dynasties, Ibn Khaldun also elaborates a Keynesian theory of economics, clearly containing the concept of the multiplier. There is a crucial difference: where for Keynes it is the middle class, with its greater propensity to save, which receives blame for inadequate effective demand and thus for economic depression, in Ibn Khaldun's world it is the court and government, which constitutes not merely the possible remedy, but also the initial cause of the down-swing of the trade cycle. It is *governmental* propensity to save at times when investment opportunities do not take up the slack, which leads to that defective aggregate demand which in the Keynesian version is blamed on the middle class:

Curtailment of allowances [expenditure] . . . by the ruler implies curtailment of tax revenue. The reason for this is that dynasty and government serve as the world's greatest market-place . . . if the ruler holds on to property and revenue . . . the property in the possession of the ruler's entourage will be small. The gifts which they, in . . . turn, had been used to give to their entourage . . . stop, and all their expenditure is cut down. They constitute the greatest number of people [who make expenditure], and their expenditure provides more of the substance of trade than that of any other [group]. [When they stop spending], business slumps and commercial profits decline because of the shortage of capital. Revenues . . . decrease, because . . . taxation depends on cultural activity, commercial transactions, business prosperity . . . the dynasty . . . suffers . . . because under these circumstances the property of the ruler decreases . . . The dynasty is the greatest market, the mother and base of all trade, the substance of income and expenditure. If government business slumps and the volume of trade is small, the dependent markets will naturally show the same symptoms, and to a greater degree. Furthermore, money circulates between ruler and subject, moving back and forth . . . if the ruler keeps it to himself, it is lost to the subjects.

This must be one of the most eloquent inflationary, expansionist, anti-Milton-

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Friedman pleads ever made. But although Ibn Khaldun was an expansionist, clearly he was no lefty. He was unambiguously opposed to state enterprise:

Commercial activity in the part of the ruler is harmful to his subjects and ruinous to tax revenue.

Nor did he hold with any kind of price control or tinkering with the market: the ruler . . . will be able to force the seller to lower his price . . . he forces the merchants or farmers . . . to buy from him. He will be satisfied only with the highest prices or more. The merchants and farmers . . . will exhaust their liquid capital . . . an oft-repeated process. The trouble and financial difficulties and the loss of profit . . . take away . . . all incentives to effort, thus ruining the fiscal structure.

Evidently, Ibn Khaldun held that government should restrict itself to a Keynesian propping up of aggregate demand, but leave the rest to the market, without itself dabbling in enterprise.

But to return to the main theme: partly through this depression, the economic consequence of political decline, and mainly through the political weakening itself, the ruling personnel rotate, though the structure itself remains the same. To say that Ibn Khaldun is a pessimistic thinker would be to give the wrong impression, to suggest that a sense of sadness pervades his political sociology, that he was seized by a yearning for some total consummation in which the merits of civilisation and those of cohesion and authority were fused, and endowed with stability to boot. Neither the platonic aspiration for arresting decay, nor the modern idea of continuous improvement culminating in some radical transformation of the human condition for the better – i.e. 'progress' – seems to be present. He accepts the socio-political world as he finds it, and tells it like it is.

### A convergence

The model which is here offered of traditional Muslim civilisation is basically an attempt to fuse Ibn Khaldun's political sociology with David Hume's oscillation theory of religion. Hume's theory will not do on its own and as it stands: it is far too psychologicistic and not wholly coherent. It describes the phenomena with elegance, precision and insight, but it is too narrow when it specifies their roots. These are not to be sought exclusively in the human heart, in its tendency towards competitive sycophancy of the powerful and the timid use of brokers—intermediaries when soliciting favours from the unapproachably great. These traits are indisputably present in us and no doubt they play their part in generating both the idea of an ineffably distant and hidden God, and conversely in producing the spiritual patronage-networks which mediate between Him and humanity. But these are not the only considerations which impel men towards one end or the other of the religious spectrum which Hume sketched out. There

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are also social factors, the requirements of the types of social organisation within which men find themselves. Social organisation is not indifferent to religious style. One kind of organisation needs and favours one style, and another, a different style again. These social aspects must be added to Hume's account before it becomes adequate. In other words: what is the natural religious bent of towns-men and of tribal wolves?

As indicated, the characteristic form of social organisation of Muslim tribal peoples of the arid zone is what social anthropologists call 'segmentary'. Muslim tribesmen, in the largely arid zone stretching roughly from the Hindu Kush to the Atlantic and the Niger bend, are generally segmentary, though this form of organisation is also found elsewhere and amongst non-Muslim peoples. To describe a tribal grouping as segmentary is not merely to classify it — it is also in large measure to explain its organisation. More than most classificatory terms, perhaps, *segmentation* contains a theory. The theory is simple, elegant, and, in my estimation, to a very large extent correct.

A characteristic Marxist-style criticism of the theory occurs in R. Gallisot and G. Badia's *Marxisme et Algérie* (Paris, 1976, p. 238):

the approach through segmentarity . . . remains purely descriptive, and causes societies to hang in thin air, through neglecting the analysis of their productive activities . . .

The supposition that the 'segmentary' account of certain tribal societies is 'purely descriptive' presumably springs from the assumption that genuine explanation *must* be in terms of the mode of production. In fact, segmentation is an explanatory model, and one elaborated in answer to the question: how is order maintained in the absence of a central law-and-order-enforcing agency? The assumption is, indeed, that the basic problem is *political*, and moreover political in a sense which does not necessarily involve exploitation by one 'class' of another: the problem is that of attaining co-operation, in pasture utilisation, trade, etc., without recourse to an effective sovereign, who is generally neither necessary nor possible. The manner in which this political problem is analysed does not in the least ignore the productive activities and economic needs of the segmentary units, but on the contrary stresses and highlights them: transhumant pastoralism, for instance, requires complex regulation of pasture use at diverse seasons; ecological diversification presupposes trade and markets. Hence there must be organisation — the agreement of complex arrangements and their implementation and enforcement, and the protection of trade, but without centralisation, without concentration of authority and power. This is precisely what segmentation achieves.

The whole idea that a system of political organisation is not explanatory but descriptive presupposes not merely some kind of economic determinism, but the logically deeper, far more contentious idea that the economic and political spheres can in general be distinguished. (The contrary view is, precisely, that this

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ability to distinguish these two spheres is the distinctive trait of one kind of society. In other words, the separability of these spheres is a specific and not a generic trait.) In acephalous or near-acephalous segmentary society, what you own and what you can effectively defend can hardly be distinguished. The productive and the property-defending groups are largely congruent. The producer is himself the nightwatchman and does not delegate to a nightwatchman state. The 'nested' units which are the carriers of ownership rights, which are in turn 'nested' and do not preclude specific individual family rights within this context, are also the agents of order-maintenance and enforcement. (The individual family owns a field but cannot dispose of it outside the segmentary group without the consent of the members of the group, and the same applies to disposal of women.) Contested ownership claims do, of course, occur; but the legal procedures for settling such conflict are virtually indistinguishable from the procedures and rituals governing inter-group diplomatic relations generally.

The view that the notion of segmentation is purely descriptive also presumably springs from the fact that the notion itself happens to be borrowed from indigenous self-conceptualisation. This in itself makes it neither true nor false as an explanation: false consciousness is not the universal human condition, it is merely a common one. Not all local beliefs are false. The criticism that 'segmentation' is not explanatory at all must be distinguished from the view that, though explanatory, it is false.

What are the features of segmentary societies, and how does the implied or stated theory explain them? Perhaps it is best to use the words of the man who is, above all other, responsible for elaborating the theory of segmentation, the late Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard:

Each section of a tribe, from the smallest to the largest, has its Shaikh or Shaikhs. The tribal system, typical of segmentary structures everywhere, is a system of balanced opposition between tribes and tribal sections from the largest to the smallest divisions, and there cannot therefore be any single authority in a tribe. Authority is distributed at every point of the tribal structure and political leadership is limited to situations in which a tribe or a segment of it acts corporately. With a tribe this only happens in war or in dealings with outside authority ... There cannot, obviously, be any absolute authority vested in a single Shaikh of a tribe when the fundamental principle of tribal structure is opposition between its segments, and in such segmentary systems there is no state and no government as we understand these institutions.<sup>40</sup>

In segmentary society, power — and other advantages — are fairly evenly diffused. Generally speaking, the entire adult male population, or a very high proportion of it, bears arms and is legitimately involved in the maintenance of order and in group defence. The *feud* is a characteristic institution: it means that the group of kinsmen are co-responsible for the conduct of any one of their number, sharing in the risk of becoming objects of retaliation, or of contributing to blood-money as an alternative to feud if any one in the group commits an act of

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aggression against a member of another group, and similarly, being morally bound to avenge aggression against any fellow member, and standing to benefit from compensation. It is this risk and this obligation which sustain the cohesion which, in Ibn Khaldun's estimation, made such groups fit to become rulers, and endowed them with the ability to acquire royal authority when conditions were propitious.

The division of the male population into warriors and agricultural producers, so characteristic of feudalism, is alien to such a society. The European discovery and exploration of Muslim tribal society occurred in the main after the French Revolution, and was often carried out by men — long before T.E. Lawrence — who were possessed by a nostalgia for a Europe as it was prior to the diffusion of the egalitarian ideal. General Daumas, French consul to Amir Abd el Kader, or Charles Henry Churchill, his English biographer, were among the first to prepare the Valentino image of Arab society. They sought, not the noble savage, but the savage noble. But whether or not he possessed the traits they required, he was not really an aristocrat in the proper feudal sense, that of belonging to a legally distinct, jealously insulated warrior stratum. Rather, he was a Big Man of the tribe, or one of them, linked to fellow tribesmen both by kinship and status, needing their military support as much as, or more than, their surplus product.<sup>41</sup> But the romantics who sought a military nobility because they longed for it are now followed and quoted over a century later by leftists, wishing to find the same thing because they do *not* like it or because their theory requires its existence. *Les féodaux* is now a term of political abuse.

Segmentary society is of course not normally perfectly symmetrical and egalitarian, with power neatly diffused over all segments and all heads of households within segments. Big Men do arise, and sometimes reach such heights that it makes sense to speak of tyrannies. Robert Montagne's theory of an oscillation between tribal republics governed by assemblies of elders and temporary despoticisms, inspired by southern Morocco early in this century, no doubt sometimes applies. Elsewhere, there is a more gradual spectrum from rule by assemblies with elective chiefs, to relatively small Big Men, to really powerful Big Men and to eventual subjection to a state. At one extreme, the tribe is a mechanism both for resisting the central state and for avoiding having a mini-state internally; elsewhere, it indulges in partial centralisation 'at home' so as better to resist the state, or to benefit from being its agent; one and the same chief may pursue either strategy at diverse times, or use one to complement or hide the other. Characteristically, the tribe is both an alternative to the state and also its image, its limitation and the seed of a new state. These transformations and ambiguities are of the essence of the socio-political history of Muslim lands. Nevertheless, decentralisation, diffusion of power, generalised participation in violence and order-enforcement, mutual opposition of groups similar in scale and occupation, and occurring simultaneously at a number of levels of size, the

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absence of a specialised and more or less permanent class of warrior-rulers — all this is what predominates, and justifies the ‘segmentary’ picture.

The concept of segmentation has an interesting history which antedates the work of Evans-Pritchard, in which it found its best expression. Leaving aside the folk formulations of the theory which abound within the very societies in which it flourishes, segmentation made its big entry into social theory with Emile Durkheim. Durkheim was in fact inspired in part by North African material, and Phillippe Lucas and Jean-Claude Vatin argue that probably the same is true of Marx and Engels, through M.M. Kovalevsky.<sup>42</sup> From the viewpoint of one who accepts the Evans-Pritchard notion of segmentation, Durkheim’s version is incomplete in one important respect. It is basically, so to speak, *lateral*: Durkheim has a strong sense of the similarity of *adjoining* groups, and also of the similarity of individuals within the group to each other. For him, segmentary society is endowed with the cohesion of likeness, which is contrasted with ‘organic solidarity’, i.e. with cohesion based on *dissimilarity* and mutual complementarity. But what he did not stress sufficiently in segmentary societies was the *vertical* likeness: groups resemble, not only their co-ordinate neighbouring groups, but also the super-ordinate groups of which they are parts, and the sub-ordinate groups which compose it. The clan resembles the tribe of which it is a clan. It also resembles the minor class and lineages of which it is itself composed. Groups are ‘nested’; but the various levels of size or nesting resemble each other in function, ethos, terminology, and internal organisation.

This is an enormously important point, and one without which the idea of segmentary social organisation could not perform its explanatory role. Segmentary theory explains the cohesion and co-operation of groups, notwithstanding the fact that they are devoid of strong leadership or effective central institutions; it explains this cohesion by invoking the threat of other, similar and rival groups. The unifying effect of external threat is something which of course operates in all societies; what distinguishes ‘segmentary’ ones is not just that it is present, but that it is proportionately far stronger and becomes, if not the only principle in operation, at least the main and dominant one — or very nearly the only one. Segmentary groups are internally divided into smaller segments still (and so on), but they cohere at any given level (if and when they do) only through the threat of similar neighbouring groups of comparable size.

But this principle can only operate if indeed there are (at least latent) groups available at each and every level at which conflict is liable to arise. If there were only groups at *one* level of size, then what could contain conflicts arising between adversaries larger or smaller than the units at that one level? If this system is to work, groups are required at each level at which conflict may arise. And this is precisely what in fact we do find. The ‘nesting’ of groups is fairly dense. The jumps in size between various levels are not very great. A group subdivides into *n* segments — where *n* is a fairly small number, very seldom in double figures —

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in fact seldom over seven, and usually less. The village will be a unit, capable of co-operating in the defence of its field and pasture; but it will also be internally segmented into groups capable of acting in defence of their share of, say, the water flowing through the village's irrigation ditches. But the village will also be part of a larger segment, collectively defending pasture areas, and so on.

Actual reality is seldom if ever quite as neat as the tree-like pattern of social organisation displayed by an ideal-typical segmentary society. Inequalities of wealth and power indisputably occur, and these of course can become particularly acute if the big man of the tribe also doubles up as agent of an encroaching central state; or again, kin and territorial criteria of segmentation often cut across each other, complicating the system further. Nevertheless, despite all such and similar qualification, the segmentary system does function, sometimes astonishingly well. The major and conclusive proof of this, to my mind, is the fact that very complex tasks, involving extensive territory and large numbers of people, such as an intricate pattern of seasonal pasture utilisation, or conflict containment or even resolution, can be performed by such tribal troupes, without yet either producing or presupposing any kind of strong political centralisation or permanent social stratification, or any overt and stable hierarchy of authority.

What matters here is not so much segmentary organisation as such but rather, granting that it exists and is or was pervasive, the religious style which it engenders or which at least it favours, and which in turn aids it in the performance of its tasks. The system works, without the benefit of political centralisation, through the cohesion-prompting presence of violence at all levels: it is society and all its groups, and not the state (which is absent or distant or weak), which possess the 'monopoly of legitimate violence'. This threat can only be effective if it is at least sometimes actualised. This is of course what in fact occurs: observers are generally struck or appalled by the pervasiveness of violence, the threat of which is actualised often, perhaps too often. Nevertheless, the system does not disintegrate into total chaos. How is this attained?

The most characteristic religious institution of rural, tribal Islam is the living saint (naturalised in the English and French languages as the dervish and the marabout). But once again, a European background is liable to mislead one. Within Christianity, sanctity is an individual virtuoso performance. Sanctity, like genius, is unpredictable in its appearance. The notion of charisma, popularised in and by sociology, transmits this idea: the saint is the possessor of charisma, which is, precisely, the kind of aura and authority which knows no rules, which appears unpredictably, and which is contrasted with authority bound by precedent or regulation. Of course charisma does get routinised, but it is thereby tarnished and diminished. Routinised charisma is shop-soiled and has lost its glamour.

All such associations must be eliminated when dealing with Muslim sanctity. Of course, full-blown unroutinised charisma can also occur within Islam. But the typical saint is routinised, and is in no way tarnished thereby: it is the justification of his charisma (and *not* its diminution) that it is hereditary, and explained

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in terms of descent, notably from the Prophet. The saint is such in virtue of being part of a saintly lineage. Freelance, *ab initio* sanctity is proportionately much rarer, and when it succeeds in establishing itself, tends then to create its own lineage *ex post*, and thus it actually emulates and aspires to routinisation. As in other societies, the invented genealogy is the compliment of talent to privilege.

All this neatly dovetails with segmentary tribal society, which is a compromise between the state and anarchy. At all its many fissures it has a great need for arbitrators and mediators, and these can only function well if they are in it but not of it. Saintly status and, very often, obligatory pacifism, makes the mediators both viable and authoritative, standing as they do outside the web of alliance and feud; and selection by birth endows them with the same continuity and stability as that which is possessed by the segmentary groups. The roles performed by such saints include:

Supervising the political process in segmentary groups, e.g. election or selection of chiefs.

Supervising and sanctioning their legal process, notably by collective oath. Facilitating economic relations, by guaranteeing caravans and visits to the markets of neighbouring tribes; trade and pilgrimage routes may converge.

Providing spatial markers for frontiers: a saintly settlement may be on the border between lay groups.

Providing temporal markers; in a pastoral society, many pasture rights may be bounded by seasons and require rituals for their ratification. What better than a saintly festival for such a purpose?

Supplying the means for the Islamic identification of the tribesmen. The tribesmen are no scholars. Not to put too fine a point on it, they are illiterate. They have neither the taste nor the equipment for the scholarly piety of a scripturalist urban faith. The reunions which mark the high points of agricultural pastoral and tribal life need to be *occasions*, with a heightening of consciousness if not ecstasy; not extramural theology classes of some tribal W.E.A.

All these factors clearly conspire to one end: the faith of the tribesmen needs to be mediated by special and distinct holy personnel, rather than to be egalitarian; it needs to be joyous and festival-worthy, not puritanical and scholarly; it requires hierarchy and incarnation in persons, not in script. Its ethic is one of loyalty, not of rule-observance.<sup>43</sup>

The urban scene is quite different. There is no need for mediators or arbitrators; for here the ruler assumes responsibility for justice, and appoints literate judges. No stable corporate groups face each other, such as would need both mediators and rituals for asserting their identities and boundaries. No such groups are allowed to persist. The well-heeled urban bourgeoisie, far from having a taste for public festivals, prefers the sober satisfactions of learned piety, a taste more consonant with its dignity and commercial calling. Its fastidiousness

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underscores its standing, distinguishing it both from rustics and the urban plebs. In brief, urban life provides a sound base for scripturalist unitarian puritanism. Islam expresses such a state of mind better perhaps than other religions. Thus the political micro-sociology of the world of Ibn Khaldun provides us with the social basis for the polar-oscillation theory of religion found in Hume.

A faith in which theology is scarcely distinguishable from law, and in which the central corpus of law is sacred, thereby also acquires a kind of built-in separation of powers. The legislature is distinct from the executive power, for the simple reason that legislation is in principle ready-made and in theory complete, and pertains to God alone. This also gives a certain measure of independence to the judiciary: though they may be appointed by the ruler, they apply a law which cannot be the ruler's. For if legislation is God's, it is not the sultan's. The entire corpus of the law, and not just the constitution (which is absent), stands above the ruler. As only the literates have access to this Law, this also automatically confers a certain authority on the literate clerical class in society. They have access to a set of norms which, in principle, the ruler cannot manipulate. Judges do not in theory make law, but a consensus of interpretation can in fact extend law.

Though physically defenceless *vis-à-vis* the ruler – indeed caught between him and the threat of tribal aggression, and needing the ruler's protection, and hardly inclined to defy him – yet the inherent hold of the literate class over the symbols and content of legitimacy, i.e. divine law, does give it, and the urban stratum from which its members are drawn, a position of some strength.<sup>44</sup> The social norms and ideals are in its keeping and outside the ruler's reach. They are available, in final and definitive form, to anyone who can *read*. The Norm is extra-ethnic and extra-social, and not too easily susceptible to political manipulation. This is of very great importance.

Within Shi'ism, there is a special nuance. On the one hand, through the martyrdom foundation-myth, vigorously internalised through the prominent and regular passion plays, the scholars are not merely jurists but also and above all experts in the founder-martyr's biography. But the fact that he was a victim of an at least putatively Muslim ruler makes it even easier for the religious leaders to de-legitimise political authority and mobilise opposition, in a way which must be the envy of more self-consciously revolutionary ideologies. The crime supplying the Foundation Martyrdom of Christianity was perpetrated by non-Christians, and consequently could only be used to justify persecution of a minority which was in any case politically disfranchised. The Shi'ite Martyrdom was perpetrated by Muslim rulers, and its symbolism can be used to de-legitimise Muslim rulers, and not just a powerless minority. The martyrdom was fiercely avenged, and revenge is also required when the politico-religious drama is re-enacted.<sup>45</sup> (Christianity, in any case not a peaceful civilisation, would presumably be less ambivalent about its own bellicosity if St Peter had organised a posse which in due course fearfully avenged the Crucifixion on Pontius Pilate

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and all those implicated in it, and if *this too* were remembered at Easter.) The Pahlevis, unlike the Romanoffs, were overthrown without prior defeat in war, with their military power intact and whilst endowed with enormous financial resources – an astonishing feat, and an impressive testimony to the capacity of Shi'ism for revolutionary mobilisation. The rioting crowds in Iran saw the Shah as Yazid, the murderer of Hussein.<sup>46</sup> Whether the religious scholars, when they have overturned the state, can run it themselves (as opposed to merely providing it with certain secretarial and bureaucratic services, at any rate in pre-modern conditions), is another question. Significantly, Iran even in the past had two different kinds of *ulama*, religious scholars: on the one hand, administrative-bureaucratic ones, and on the other, populist-mystical ones – the former serving religion and state, the latter catering to the religious needs of the masses.

The contrast between reverence for the Law and for the sacred person, which emerges in Sunni Islam as the opposition between scholar and Sufi, is within Shi'a Islam incorporated as an internal distinction into the scholar class itself. (Of course, even with Sunnism it is all a matter of stress and proportion: there are scholars among Sufis and Sufis among scholars.) But this inclusion of the distinction in the corpus of learned men in Shi'ism is perfectly logical, given that a cult of the martyred personality is at the very core of this sect. In our time, the complexity and technicality of the tasks facing a modern state and economy will no doubt affect the circumstances in which the two kinds of scholars, the Shi'ites with Ph.D.s and the populist mullahs, come to fight it out for the inheritance of the Iranian revolution.

It is interesting that in Iran modern conditions helped the urban *bazari* class, for once, actually to make a revolution without significant rural help; it is less likely that modern conditions will also help it actually to rule. In the past, in more traditional circumstances, the scholars did not always fully benefit from the revivalist, reformist revolutions which they helped bring about. In the Mahdia, for instance, it seems that they were displaced by the tribesmen when the state was established, though they were prominent when it was being erected by enthusiasm and conquest.<sup>47</sup>

The occultation of the Christian God was more conducive, one feels, to the civic training of the faithful than that of His Islamic counterpart. The Hidden God amongst the Christians was characteristically revered by groups such as the Nonconformists, amongst whom literacy was widespread: every man his own *alim*, you might say. Hence the occultation, jointly with the lack of provision of detailed divine regulation of social life, encouraged such communities of literates to attend to their own social arrangements, and thus to learn to manage them on their own, and to do it in a sober, scholarly and egalitarian manner. Religion thus provided civic-political training. This style then also came to be reflected in the polity, when they had the opportunity to form one, or to influence the organisation of an existing one. By contrast, the occultation of the Muslim God in Shi'ism does indeed, until the return of the Hidden Imam, push responsibility

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into the path of the *ulama*: but they are a minority elite amongst an unscholarly turbulent majority, and this makes it more likely that they would have to aid the ruler in his governing the rest, or alternatively rouse the masses against him, than that they should turn to democratic self-government. It can however lead to a kind of separation of State and Church, by depriving the ruler, in the absence of the Hidden Imam, of the right to invoke *religious* legitimization. So all this provides another contrast with Christianity, in which scholar-puritans often belonged to a dissident, urban, egalitarian, self-governing minority and their religious life provided them with civic training in preparation for the liberal law-abiding state. Their very religion habituated them to committee work. The clerics in Islam belong to the religious majority and are used to serving the state, rather than administering themselves or their little nonconformist community, except of course for those exceptional situations when they condemn the state. But on those even rarer occasions when they denounce it successfully, when it topples, they are not ready with some new and different technique of (liberal-democratic) government. They often serve the state, and sometimes lead the people; but they do not form self-governing communities.

Orthodox Islam does of course also have its permanently dissident sub-communities, but they are characteristically segmented, or consist of religious 'orders', which provide mediation with God whether or not brokerage is warranted by the strictest theology of *this* faith. These orders, or the holy lineages which provide religious services for tribes (and the two can of course be linked in single or overlapping networks), are notoriously *not* egalitarian, but make a cult of submission and authoritarianism (far beyond, in fact, their power of actually implementing it). They are not recruited from scholarly, sober, urban strata. The consequence is of course that this kind of dissident religion does not provide civic training either. Tribesmen do have a kind of training in their own lay communities, often egalitarian; but religion is for them a hierarchical *complement to* their community, rather than continuous with it or part of it. Submission to Saint is discontinuous from tribal custom agreed by equal elders. Where tribal custom is consensual, the authority of Saint is (ideally, if not in fact) absolute and validated by a higher extraneous source.

If one divides this overall society into its four components — rulers, un-governed tribesmen, townsmen, and governed semi-tribal rural population — one sees that the first two elements are politically active and the latter two passive. It is profoundly significant that, whereas many non-Muslim enclaves survive within the latter two categories, they are almost completely absent from amongst the first two. Islam is a precondition of active political participation. Non-Islamic status can of course be a positive advantage and enhance the usefulness of a group, notably amongst urban specialists: quite apart from the obvious feature of making it liable to special taxation, the political disfranchisement of a group makes it a more attractive partner for special purposes. A financier who cannot aspire to political power is less dangerous and hence more appealing than

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one who can. (The forging of a tribal confederation can sometimes be achieved by urban money and supply of arms, not just by piety – as happened in southern Iran.) It is their political harmlessness, not some theological niceties about the permissibility of usury; which causes rulers to use minorities for financial and commercial operation. The selection of the palace guard is liable to be governed by similar considerations. But whilst exclusion or abstention from Islam does open these special doors, it closes the main one: the hope of becoming the ruler or part of his dominant group, when a new dynasty is born of the overlie of religious fervour and tribal spirit.

What would happen normally in traditional conditions if the scholars inside the city found the ruler gravely wanting when judged by the Norm? Nothing at all, for they are powerless, unarmed and lacking in the habit of cohesion. What would happen if bellicose tribesmen outside the walls had designs on the city? Most often likewise nothing at all, for these tribal wolves are generally at each other's throats, and their endless mutual feuds, often fostered by the ruler, neutralise them. They lust after the city anyway, but their internal divisions prevent them from satisfying their desire.

But what would happen if *both* these conditions were satisfied simultaneously, and if some authoritative cleric, having with some show of plausibility denounced the impiety and immorality of the ruler, thereby also provided a banner, a focus, a measure of unitary leadership for the wolves? What if he went into the wilderness to ponder the corruption of the time, and there encountered, not only God, but also some armed tribesmen, who responded to his message? This ever-latent possibility hangs over the political order, and is perhaps the Islamic form of the Permanent Revolution. Thus the purer form of the faith suits some people all the time (i.e. upper urban strata), but all of them some of the time (i.e. during the revivalist movements when it crystallises an ephemeral unity amongst the rustics who sustain the movement).

Of course, such fusions of nomocratic legitimacy and tribal cohesion do not always succeed. In fact, it does not even succeed frequently. Life would be even more unstable than it is, if it did. Crystallisation does not occur easily, even if the required elements are present. When they fail, as so often they do, they are retrospectively seen as frauds. (Justified reform never fails, for when it does, no one will deign to call it such.) Ibn Khaldun noted all this:

revolutionaries from among the common people and . . . jurists . . . undertake to reform evil practices. Many religious people who follow the ways of religion come to revolt against unjust amirs . . . most of them actually do perish in consequence of their activities . . .

Rulers and dynasties are strongly entrenched. Their foundations can be undermined and destroyed only through strong efforts backed by the group feeling of tribes . . . Many deluded people took it upon themselves to establish the truth. They did not know that they would need group feeling for that.

For instance:

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At the beginning of this century, a man known as al-'Abbas appeared among the Ghumarah. The lowest among the stupid and imbecile members of those tribes followed his bletcherings . . . He was then killed, forty days after the start of his mission. He perished like those before him.

There are many similar cases. Their mistake is that they disregard the significance of group feeling . . .

*Both* truth and the support of tribal cohesion are required for success. And even if you have both, of course, you still can't be sure of success. Friedrich Engels, near the end of his life, summed it all up very well in an article published in 1894/5 in *Die Neue Zeit*:

Muslim risings, notably in Africa, make a remarkable contrast [with Christendom]. Islam suits Orientals, especially the Arabs, that is to say, on the one hand townsmen practising commerce and industry, on the other hand, nomadic Beduin. But there is in this the seed of a periodic collision. Townsmen, growing opulent and ostentatious, become lax in the observation of the 'Law'. The Beduin, poor and hence austere in their manners, contemplate the wealth and enjoyment with envy and lust. They unite under the direction of a prophet, a Mahdi, to punish the faithless, to re-establish the ceremonial law and true faith, and by way of recompense to appropriate the treasure of the faithless. A hundred years later, naturally, they find themselves at exactly the same point as their predecessors; a new purification is required; a new Mahdi emerges; the game re-starts. So it has come to pass since the wars of conquest of the Almoravides and the African Almohades in Spain till the latest Mahdi of Khartoum . . . It was the same, or very nearly, during the convulsions in Persia and other Muslim lands. These movements are born of economic causes even if they have a religious camouflage. But, even when they succeed, they leave the economic conditions intact. Thus nothing has changed, and the collision becomes periodic. By contrast, for the popular risings in the Christian West the religious camouflage is only the banner and mask for an attack on a crumbling social order: in the end, that order is overturned; a new one emerges; there is progress, the world moves on.

It is obvious that by then Engels had come across Ibn Khaldun's ideas. The availability of a translation dispensed him from the need to learn a Semitic language, for which, as he wrote to Marx, he had an aversion. In fact, Marx had annotated Kovalevsky, whose chapter on Algeria contained de Slane's translation of Ibn Khaldun in its bibliography.<sup>48</sup>

Engels's general picture is admirable. He is less than convincing on details, where he tends rather to jump to conclusions. Muslim burghers were unlikely to be ostentatious: who wishes to attract taxation or confiscation? It was the European bourgeoisie which could give itself such airs and get away with it. And the tribesmen, though possibly poor, did not generally practise moral austerity at home; this did not prevent them from invoking sinfulness and infidelity in the towns when coveting urban wealth, though the actual ostentation was probably governmental rather than bourgeois.

Thus, this state was not engendered by internal class conflict within either the

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conquering or the conquered society; and the theory that this is the origin of the state cannot be saved by the *Hilfshypothese* of the presence of ‘embryonic’ or ‘early’ class relationships among either conquerors or conquered. The conquerors were only stratified in the sense that, for once, for the duration of conquest and domination, they accept firm leadership, usually only engendered by success in this enterprise and growing in snowball fashion. The conquered urban and sedentary population may indeed be stratified and unequal, but this only indicates that it is well worth conquering, but it is not otherwise part of the preconditions of a conquest state, which arises, if anything, from lateral rather than horizontal strife.

It is interesting to see Engels subscribing so late to the thesis of the socially stagnant East – and an East embracing the Muslim West, and even paradigmatically exemplified in it. This throws some doubt on the argument<sup>49</sup> that Marx and Engels after 1881 overcame the European prejudice concerning Oriental stagnation (and, incidentally, the very notion of an Asiatic Mode of Production). Young Marxists<sup>50</sup> tend to see the idea of a stable or stagnant social structure in the Maghreb as a colonialist projection. If such it is, Engels appears to have shared it with great emphasis.

The stabilising, un-‘progressive’ role of religion, which Engels so deplored, is connected with its three more specific functions in this society, and its adaptation to them: it is the only available civic rights charter for the burghers, in some measure protecting them from arbitrary rule; it is the only social catalyst of unity on a sufficiently large scale for the pastoral tribes, in so far as the potential for the unification of local shrine and saint seems to have a ceiling not high enough to cover enough men to found a state, and they can unite only in the name of something Other and Better than their normal selves and piety; and its scholars provide secretarial services for the state when it is established. These roles are intertwined: the dynasty, owing its existence, power and authority to the faith, cannot disavow it and is vulnerable to criticism in its name, and its name only. Its agents naturally think in its idiom, for that is their only training. No other agents are available. Its subjects can only appeal to it if they want wrongs redressed or prevented. Thus, being linked to the natural bent of each of the participants, the system and the faith perpetuate and fortify themselves. Only by sinning against the faith, or by seeming to do so, can one provoke that urban/tribal alliance which can bring forth a new dynasty.

This helps to explain why the traditional Muslim state is simultaneously and without contradiction both a Robber State, run for the benefit of a dominant group, and a moralistic state, bound to promote good and proscribe evil. It is carried by and identified with a dominant group, yet it also has an inbuilt vocation towards the implementation of a sharply identified divine order on earth.

In the days of the Prophet, the rules of inheritance were said to constitute half of the Law. In pastoral or pastoral-dominated societies, based essentially on

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In family ownership of herds and collective tribal ownership of pasture, the central concern is no doubt — *who inherits what*. Industrial society is incomparably more complex, and claims on resources and advantages in it have more devious forms. But the urge to impose a severe moralistic rule on the distribution of advantages in industrial society is known as socialism. It may be for this reason that the moralistic tradition inherent in Islam, its vocation to uncompromising and implemented righteousness, has its curious elective affinity for modern social radicalism. It can still be combined with the presence of a dominant group. The totalism of both ideologies precludes institutionalised pluralistic politics and thus protects the rulers. So 'Islamic Marxism', which no doubt would have astonished Engels, is only superficially paradoxical.

### **Urban saints**

But the towns do not provide a base only for the scholarly, unitarian, puritanical faith of the bourgeoisie. Not everyone living in the city is comfortable, sober and contented; not everyone looks to religion for a ratification of his own cherished place in the world and the cautious, orderly life-style which goes with it. Some, on the contrary, look to it for an escape from an unsatisfactory or even intolerable condition. The city has its poor; they are uprooted, insecure, alienated, with little inclination towards the more abstract and arid branches of theology. What they require from religion is consolation or escape; their taste is for ecstasy, excitement, stimulation, an absorption in a religious condition which is also a forgetting. They crave the audio-visual aids of faith, whether in the form of music, dance, intoxication, trance or possession. Mystical states, with or without pharmaceutical aids, appeal to them more than scholarly precision or learned distinctions. So, like the tribesmen, but for other reasons altogether and in a different style, they need a religion externalised in ritual and personality. For the tribesmen, the festival is an externalisation and highlighting of their effective social groups, in true Durkheimian manner. For the urban poor folk, it is a compensation for the *absence* of such groups.<sup>51</sup>

Islam officially has no 'church'. The community of the faithful is not, in theory, internally differentiated into a lay society and the body of the extra-specially faithful. In practice, however, it does possess a multitude of mini-churches, variously characterised as religious orders or brotherhoods and centered upon their specific saints. They do not, however, fuse into one overall organisation, which could thereafter monopolise and rationalise sanctity and magic. These orders possess a fairly standard terminology for their constituent units (lodges) and for the hierarchy of their leadership.

This homogeneity of nomenclature is however profoundly misleading. The underlying social reality is in fact quite diversified. At one extreme, there may be urban lodges which are in effect religious clubs, recruited individually, by

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voluntary adherence and enthusiasm; at the other extreme, there may be a tribal holy settlement, whose members are recruited exclusively by birth. You can join a *lay* tribal group simply by placing a shame compulsion on it, by making a 'sacrifice to it' and thereby placing yourself under its protection; but it is not so easy to enter a lineage through which there flows a current of hereditary holiness, and if one does join it at all, it is not on terms of equality. The lay followers of such a holy settlement tend to adhere to it not as single converts but in tribal battalions.

Moreover, one and the same 'order' or 'brotherhood' will contain units of quite diverse kind, ranging from those approximating to a purely voluntary urban religious club or association to kin-selected hereditary tribal segments. Its diversity may be its strength. The leadership which unites the various units, territorially dispersed and spread out along this organisational spectrum, will tend to be hereditary; but spiritual lineages, in which the links are those of teacher and disciple, will also often be intertwined with the more literally genetic ones of father and son. Furthermore, these movements are of course not always stable. Either success or decline will affect their internal structure. An expanding movement with an urban base may be relatively 'bureaucratic' – i.e. the central leader, when nominating representatives at new centres, may be inclined to select talented disciples rather than sons. By contrast, a stabilised, so to speak routinised, movement is more likely to rely on well-tested links of family, and is in any case liable to be swayed by the need to place the offspring of the current leader or leaders.

The original nucleus of such a movement may be located at either end of the organisational spectrum. A successful tribal thaumaturge may acquire urban followers and then found urban clubs; or an influential urban saint may be successful in his missionary work among tribes, and establish centres amongst them which eventually become tribal units with a hereditary religious vocation – padre segments, so to speak.

Those who approach these phenomena through texts alone are liable to be misled in a variety of ways. As stated, homogeneity of nomenclature may hide a great diversity of structural forms. In so far as all these movements tend to seek filiation to prestigious points of origin, and in so far as all these spiritual filiations tend in the end to converge on great Middle Eastern saints/mystics, there is a tendency to class all the movements together as branches of 'Sufism'. This interpretation, based on their own internal view of origins, is further reinforced by the fact that the brand-differentiating, diacritical totems of these movements tend to be special, distinctive spiritual practices and techniques. No doubt the more serious ones amongst these movements are indeed schools of mysticism, perpetuating sophisticated and complex mystical techniques which, as such, may perhaps have a definite point of origin, and whose diffusion can be studied like that of an intellectual idea. Others amongst these movements are mystical only

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in the loose sense that their assemblies promote heightened excitement — and, to this end, they simply draw on the practices currently available in the local folk culture.

Another point at which the textual scholar may be misled concerns the authoritarianism of these movements. At the level of doctrine, there can be no doubt about their severe authoritarianism. The oft-quoted assertion about the relationship of leader to followers is: the disciple must be in the hands of his shaikh as the corpse in the hands of the washers of the dead. But, here as elsewhere, doctrine often compensates for the imperfections of reality, rather than reflecting it faithfully. These movements are inevitably loose associations, territorially discontinuous, and mostly devoid of any physical means of imposing their will on subordinates. The head of a minor lodge does of course owe his position and prestige to his endorsement by the more general leader at the central lodge, and to that extent, sanctions are indeed available to extract reverence and tithes from him for the centre: without the endorsement of the prestigious centre, he might receive neither respect nor donations from his own underlings in turn. But these sanctions are not absolute. There exist rival movements soliciting followers, and securing a defection from the clientele of another movement may constitute particular-choice demonstration or the superior sanctity of the leader . . . So, in practice, the reciprocal services and advantages of leaders and followers are reasonably well balanced, and do not encourage leaders to make excessive, peremptory or provocative demands.

The fundamental fact is that these movements, associations of ranked saint-worship and mystical practice, satisfy the various and often quite distinct needs for personal leadership, for incarnated holiness, for the cult of personality, as it arises in both tribal and urban contexts. But whilst this is the fundamental truth of the matter, even this calls for a certain qualification. Within the enormous mass of these movements, some are much nearer the ecstatic, non-scripturalist end of the spectrum than others. Some, on the other hand, are close to the sober urban—unitarian—puritan—scripturalist end, and these then constitute a kind of compromise between the egalitarianism of the scholarly puritan style — the idea that all believers have equal access to the Sacred through Holy Writ — and the requirements of a minimum of *organisation*. The orthodox solution of this problem, which relies on nothing more than loose guilds of scholars—jurists, on the Schools of Law, may not always be adequate. For instance, in the savannah belt of West Africa, the values of the puritan end of the spectrum are represented by some of the big religious orders, possibly because a minimal central organisation was required in missionary circumstances.<sup>52</sup> Or again, the work of the Sanusiya order in the Eastern and Central Sahara was primarily missionary in kind, and missionary on behalf of ‘proper’ learned Islam — but it was nevertheless carried out by an order, rather than under the banner of anti-Sufi, anti-saintly, anti-mediation puritanism. Conversely, one should remember the Palestinian story of the pious man who preached against shrine worship with such fervour that

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he became venerated, and on his death his tomb promptly became a revered shrine.

Tribal puritans

So, whilst the faith of the scholars sets the tone in the cities, reality is more complex. The same is also true in the tribal world. But in the towns, the complexity was introduced, first of all, by social stratification, by the differences in the religious taste of diverse urban strata. It would also be an exaggeration to say that the faith of the scholars and of the mystics is always in opposition. No doubt there are times when their opposition remains latent, and then the two styles permeate each other. The scholars too will have their shaikhs, spiritual mystics, leaders: 'He who has no shaikh has the devil for his shaikh', as they used to say in Morocco. Nevertheless, the latent opposition remains, ready to be activated.<sup>53</sup> The Wahabis, for instance, activated it in the eighteenth century:

Wahab's rebel brood who dared divest  
The Prophet's tomb of all its pious spoil . . .

Byron, *Childe Harold*, Canto II. LXXVII.

It is interesting to note that apparently the Wahabis saw their task in virtually the same terms as the Reformers of modern times:

When Muhammad ibn Sa'ud . . . decided in 1744 to champion the religious revival preached by . . . Muhammad ibn 'abd al-Wahhab . . . Orthodox Islam, especially among the bedouin of Najd, had degenerated into a multitude of superstitious practices, cults of tree and stone worship; tribal and customary law, for the most part, prevailed among the bedouin and sedentary population . . . and had eroded the influence and primacy of Islamic Law.<sup>54</sup>

The Wahabis were a little premature for the major wave of neo-puritanism, which was to receive its stimulus from the colonial impact of Europe. When the impetus came, in North Africa for instance, those who were sensitive to its appeal were nevertheless liable to repudiate the Wahabi connection, which had in the meantime acquired a bad name. Timing may be important. Beware of being a premature Reformer.

Foreign aggression, one might add, is liable to have a different impact according to the scale on which it comes. The first wave of Iberian aggression against North African Islam – before Iberian energies were diverted into the New World and the Indian ocean – is said to have provoked an upsurge of the marabouts, in the so-called ‘maraboutic crisis’. (The argument for this is not entirely conclusive, but is widely accepted. As Dr Magali Morsy has pointed out, the geographical distribution of the saints does not support the view that they arose as leaders of resistance at the frontier with the infidel.) Even the initial French aggression in the 1830s helped crystallise what was essentially a maraboutic state around Amir Abd el Kader.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, the qualitatively quite different and incom-

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parably greater impact of industrial society powerfully impelled Egyptian and North African Islam, as well as, for instance, the Islam of South-East Asia, towards the scripturalist end of the spectrum.<sup>56</sup> Pure scripturalism is thus caught between two enemies: lax pre-literate tribesmen, and modern townsmen, ultra-literate to the point of scepticism. Scripturalism flourishes nowadays in the area between the two, amongst partially urbanised ex-countrymen, not yet at home, secure and well placed in the modern city,<sup>57</sup> eager to disavow all at once both their own rustic past and those socially above them, who have gone too far and done too much too enviably well out of modernity.

Amongst the tribes, by contrast, it was normally the hereditary holy lineage which set the tone; but the nuances and complexities of the picture are not due to any differences in religious consumption between tribal shaikhs and humble tribesmen. Their tastes in this matter, as in others, do not differ significantly, if at all. Here the complexity enters in quite a different manner. Amongst the tribes, difference in religious taste is not a matter of class or status: it is a matter of time-scale and political occasion.

Religion in the tribe serves different purposes at different times and on different occasions. Perhaps, following the idea of Thomas Kuhn in the philosophy of science, one should distinguish between Normal religion, and Exceptional or Revolutionary religion. *Normal* religion is indeed that of the dervish or marabout. It is highly Durkheimian, concerned with the social punctuation of time and space, with season-making and group-boundary-marking festivals. The sacred makes these joyful, visible, conspicuous and authoritative, and not too much else is expected of it. In fact, were it to attempt *more*, it might not normally be tolerated.

But the sacred which performs these tasks is generally a rather petty form of it. This is entirely appropriate. The sanctioning of a village festival, the underwriting of a frontier between two petty tribal segments, is a job well suited for a little holy man whose settlement barely if at all exceeds in dignity those of the parishioners who call on his services. Corresponding to a proliferation of these little requirements, there is a similar multiplication of little shrines and holy personnel associated with them. These holy men are not only numerous, they are also inescapably and vigorously in competition with each other. There is a kind of second-level segmentation: tribal groups of diverse size keep each other in check by mutual competition, and, similarly, their spiritual shepherds balance or neutralise each other in turn in mutual rivalry. They may not fight (ideally), but they can and do compete for reverence.

What follows, however, is that they are most ill-equipped to provide inspiring leadership on a grand scale, should the occasion for it arise. They are too divided and mutually competitive. Under normal conditions, there is no call for such large-scale leadership; the petty local feud, the problem of co-ordinating pasture use, and so forth, can be and are dealt with by the little holy man, and normal religion prevails. But suppose there is some larger task, requiring concerted

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action by an entire region, transcending tribal boundaries? Such occasions do arise, when there is an alien invasion, or when the nominal overall ruler provides the opportunity and warrant, by his decline in authority and religious propriety, for an attempt to turn the political wheel of fortune, for a rotation of the tribal circulation of elites. Then a distinctively different and superior kind of leadership is required, and has its chance.

Thus we return to the question – what happens when a ruler's internal loss of moral authority (whose evaluation is in the hands of the students of the Law), and the crystallisation of external opposition by the tribal wolves, come to pass simultaneously? The manner in which demanding, puritan unitarianism *also* enters tribal life, and the manner in which tribes are induced on special occasions to accept overall leadership, are the *same*. The exceptional crisis in the tribal world provides the opening, the opportunity, for that 'purer' form of faith which normally remains latent, respected but not observed.

It is a curious but crucial fact about the social psychology of Muslim tribesmen that their normal religion is for them *at one level* a mere *pis aller*, and is tinged with irony, and with an ambivalent recognition that the real norms lie elsewhere. Thus the tribal holy man will claim, amongst his legitimating traits, the fact that *his ancestor was a great scholar* – though he himself makes no very serious efforts in this direction. Under normal circumstances, this recognition is ambivalent, ironical and ineffective. It would perhaps be good if the local marabout were also a scholar, but, between ourselves, who cares? The implications of this latent norm do indeed remain latent. But for all that, the norm does provide a hold, a *prise*, an entry-point, for that special appeal in an exceptional situation, when an unusual, outstanding, more general and demanding leadership, activating a wider unit, is possible and required. There is an underlying shared current of unitarian iconoclasm in the religions of the God of Abraham, but felt with special tension perhaps in Islam, which makes even the most uncouth, ignorant, heterodox, sybaritic, Dionysiac marabout look rather like a fastidious Quaker, when compared with the folk shamans or priests of non-iconoclastic religions such as, for instance, those of South-East Asia.

This latent recognition of a purer norm thus provides that major premiss for the exceptional preacher, who is needed for the special mission and the activation of a wider loyalty. It helps him who had come from town to denounce, all at once, the laxity and backsliding at the centre, the ignorance of the tribesmen, and the heterodoxy of the normal, petty, humdrum religious attendants. The tacit recognition of the more rigorous, exclusive, unitarian ideal provides such a personage with something to invoke, something already present and occasionally ready for activation in the hearts of his listeners. It is his scholarship and unitarianism which distinguish him from the normal and petty forms of the sacred, and allow him to supersede them for a time. Of course, there are many who try this. Mostly they fail. But some do succeed.

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### **Church and state**

It is in this manner that the polarity and oscillation found in Hume's sociology of religion can be welded to the political sociology of Ibn Khaldun, giving a composite but adequate picture of traditional Muslim society. The impulsion towards personalised, organised, hierarchical, ecstatic, unpuritanical, unscriptural religion comes in the first instance from the needs of tribal society, and, secondly, from the needs of the less privileged urban strata. Tribal society requires that the Word should become flesh; it needs human mediators, tribal frontier posts, spatial and temporary markets, masters of ceremonies; it recognises an ethic of loyalty rather than an ethic of rules; and the urban poor, on the other hand, need ecstatic consolation. Sufism is then the opium of the people.

But traditional Muslim civilisation is an urban one, in which towns dominate economically and culturally, but *not* politically. This urban ethos finds its expression in scholarship, sober unitarian piety, and aspires, not so much towards theocracy, as towards divine nomocracy, in Professor Montgomery Watt's suggestive expression.<sup>58</sup> It has a much smaller need of opiates. This reverence for an extra-ethnic, extra-historical Law becomes part of the power balance of the society:<sup>59</sup> it provides the burghers with an ideological sanction against authority, and one which can become seriously menacing if and when a puritan scholar succeeds in rousing and fusing some of the tribal wolves. It thus has a role in the tribal world, too — it provides it with Exceptional Religion, fit for special and literally revolutionary, wheel-of-political-fortune-moving tasks. It is thus that Ibn Khaldun's famous tribal version of the eternal circulation of elites, and David Hume's strangely neglected theory of flux and reflux in religion, are aspects of one and the same process.

This civilisation seems a kind of mirror-image of traditional Christendom. In Islam, it is the central tradition which is egalitarian, scripturalist, devoid of hierarchy or formal leadership or organisation, puritanical, and moralistic; whereas it is the marginal, questionably orthodox movements which are fragmented, ritualistic, hierarchical, ecstatic and deeply implicated in, if not compromised by, local political structures. In Europe, it was the big, national or trans-national religious organisations which were most deeply involved with one social order or another; whereas the small fragmented sects which were the least involved and most severely moralistic, theocratic or world-defying. Churches were disembodied states. *The Church* was a disembodied super-state. They monopolised, systematised and bureaucratised magic, or at any rate did their best to do so. At the same time, strong states, in the literal sense, pacified the countryside, and thus freed the townsman of the fear of baron or tribesman. So dissident burghers, finding the magical end of the religious spectrum already pre-empted by an international or national church, and having in the main only the central state to oppose, were inclined to turn to the scripturalist style of religion — which may in any case have been more to their taste — and to use it in efforts to wrest a

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share of power and political security. (Where towns were in any case independent, as in Italy, this tendency may have been correspondingly weaker.) In Islam, this is inverted. The hierarchical associations, which most resemble churches, were not shadow states but only disembodied *tribes*.<sup>60</sup>

Such spiritual dissidents were more prone to provide leadership for rural, tribal groupings, and less so for any urban attempts at civic resistance to government. Urban *frondes* looked more characteristically to scholars for legitimization and leadership. The towns, eager to distinguish themselves from the rustics, were more inclined to identify with the literate Great Tradition, which in this civilisation is central and not normally dissident. In any case towns, fearing tribal pillage, had less incentive to defy the central power which was their natural protector. This scripturalism could lead to some measure of egalitarianism — at least to the extent of a reluctance to endow social inequality with a religious stamp, terminology, authority, rigidity and depth, a reluctance partly modified in differing degree in various times and places, in favour of the alleged progeny of the Prophet. It also led very significantly to an attempt to impose moral criteria on government, but not to participatory politics or the demand for public accountability for policy. Instead, it contented itself with the requirement that the ruler should both fulfil and enforce moral norms. So the state was subject to Law, and the Law had its learned guardians, but there were no permanent, institutional arrangements for enforcing it against an evil ruler, still less for ensuring real or symbolic general participation in such sanctions. There was no impeachment machinery. For ultimate sanctions, the system had to rely on the occasional and exceptional alliance of inspired scholar with cohesive tribes.

This structure is also sharply contrasted with that once fashionable model of Eastern society, 'hydraulic' oriental despotism. That model assumed the existence of isolated and insulated rural communities, combining crafts and agriculture, all endowed with similar but competing interests, and supinely subject to a well-centralised, bureaucratic state. The traditional rural Muslim world did indeed contain mutually competitive rural communities; they were not supine, but on the contrary were addicted to violence amongst themselves, and did not delegate enforcement and politics to a central state. They did not combine crafts with agriculture or pastoralism; instead, they practised and valued the dominant agrarian or pastoral pursuit and delegated crafts to artisans whom they despised, whether they lived in towns or amongst the tribesmen. The central state did indeed exist, but the hold it had — for what it was worth — over tribesmen did not arise either from the maintenance of indispensable irrigation works, or from terror. Generally there were no such essential public works, and the state, though perfectly willing, was not able to apply so much terror. The hold which the central state did have was rather cultural/religious; it protected the towns, and the towns were the centres of both sacred learning and of trade and crafts, without which the tribesmen evidently could not manage.

A weak state and a strong culture — that seems to be the formula.<sup>61</sup> The cul-

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ture was in the keeping of a relatively open, non-hereditary and thus non-exclusive class, but without a central secretariat, general organisation, formal hierarchy, or any machinery for convening periodic councils. Its authority, though in part explicable by the need in such a society for urban services, the capacity of clerical faith to express the urban ethos, and by the ever-present threat of a reforming-preacher/tribal-fronde alliance, nonetheless remains a sociological mystery. *Because* this religious culture had such a hold over the people, *therefore* urban religious services were essential, and *therefore* also the spectre of a preacher leading the tribes had to be present to the mind of the ruler, enjoining *him* in turn to enforce the good and prohibit evil. But this theory explains the hold of culture by invoking it one step further back. Perhaps we cannot go beyond describing this self-perpetuating circle.

### **The unhinging of the pendulum**

With the coming of modernity, the stability of the structure and its internal rotation end. The picture ceases to be adequate, the swinging pendulum becomes unhinged, and finally flies off in one direction, perhaps for ever. This in itself does not undermine the usefulness of the model ... rather the reverse, for it illuminates the manner in which the pendulum does become unhinged under modern conditions.

Modernity means, first of all, effective centralisation and so the end or ✓ decline of tribalism. The traditional Muslim state may have been absolute more in pious aspiration than in fact.

The sovereign, who before found his power (despotic in name) circumscribed, because with all the will, he had not the real art of oppressing, by the aid of science finds himself a giant.<sup>62</sup>

The modern state (whether colonial or post-colonial) can, must and does monopolise legitimate violence. In other words, it undercuts those local military and political mutual-help associations which, whether self-conceived in terms of kinship, territory or compact, are known as tribes.<sup>63</sup> It thereby also removes the need for that religious unguent which oiled the friction in their joints and between them, in other words the revered saintly personnel who mediate between men by claiming to mediate with God. Moreover, keeping the peace, the state enables travel for purposes of trade to be carried out without let or hindrance, and thus frees it from the need of saintly protection, or of doubling up as a pilgrimage. The commercial traveller need no longer be a pilgrim.

One might almost say that the existence of a politically independent *zawiya* proves that in the place in question, tribalism has bested the authority of officials (*caids*).<sup>64</sup>

When this happens, the petty saints, like French nobles, in the late stages of the *ancien régime*, are seen to retain some of their perks but to perform little or no