



**Ritual, Revolution and the Consecration of Symbols:**

**A Turner-Style Analysis of  
Ahmad Kamal's *The Sacred Journey***

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The principle of self-determination, a construction that is intragenic with the concept of the nation-state, rests on the idea that the individual should be able to find ideological expression in her chosen social collectivity. Nationalism is, on one level at least, informed by an individual's right to be recognized as unique and live under a government that embodies that uniqueness. Thus a claim by a disaffected group of people to exercise self-determination can only be politically viable if individuals can mobilize an ideologically cohesive society to think of itself as sufficiently unique enough to require its own sovereign central authority. Most scholars of national movements assert that nationalists create this feeling of national 'uniqueness' when they effectively tie the principle of self-determination to cultural symbols, or what Geertz calls "primordial attachments":

By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the 'givens'— or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed 'givens' — of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech,

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custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves.<sup>1</sup>

National movements manipulate the ‘assumed givens’ of a society by harnessing cultural symbols in a way that facilitates political goals. As Elie Kedourie put it, “Nationalists make use of the past in order to subvert the present.”<sup>2</sup> Kedourie further asserts that this method of creating a national movement is particularly effective when nationalists are able to integrate religious symbolism into their agenda: “This transformation of religion into nationalist ideology is all the more convenient in that nationalists can thereby utilize the powerful and tenacious loyalties which a faith held in common for centuries creates.”<sup>3</sup>

If it is in fact the case that nationalists consciously “utilize” the cultural symbols of a society for their own ends as Geertz and Kedourie suggest, how is it done? How might nationalists try to alter the meaning of cultural symbols in a way that supports a determination to legitimate a cohesive national movement? Victor Turner’s work on ritual action as a gateway to social change offers one possible explanation as to how and why the meaning of cultural symbols may be changed by individuals in a way that affects society. To determine if Victor Turner’s framework can support Geertz and Kedourie’s assumption that the power of reinvented cultural symbols fuels national movements, I will analyze an interpretation of the ritual of the Hajj, or the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, written by a member of Jama’at i-Islami (The Islamic Party) in the early 1950s. After briefly contextualizing the role of Jama’at i-Islami in the national aspirations that led to the creation of the state of Pakistan, I will explore Victor Turner’s theory of social change and apply his framework to Ahmad Kamal’s book *The Sacred Journey*, to determine to what extent, if any, Kamal’s politics influenced his interpretation of Islamic cultural symbols.

### **The National Aspirations of Jama’at i-Islami in Pakistan**

The collapse of the Indian Khalifat movement, a religio-political response to the abolition of the Caliphate (the symbolic religious leader of the Islamic world) by Ataturk in 1922, left a politically

awakened Muslim minority in India and rapidly escalating tensions between Muslims and Hindus. Mawlana Mawdudi, who founded Jama'at i-Islami in the late 1940s, was active in the Khalifat movement and was acutely aware of the increasingly difficult plight of his religious community. His work was informed by a desire to revive his community through a 'return' to a form of Islam untainted by what he perceived to be centuries of religious and political corruption caused by social forces both within and without the Islamic community. Hence, his early political focus was on the purification of contemporary Islamic practice, which included the reassertion of Islam in the political and social machinations of the state, and the establishment of an Islamic government in India. As it became more obvious that Muslims had little chance of reclaiming the whole of India, and as more secular forces began to advocate a separate state for the community, Mawdudi resolved that a completely new state should in fact be established for Muslims. His desire for an Islamic state, and a fear that the more secular Muslim League might rule that state if it came to fruition, prompted Mawdudi's decision to create Jama'at i-Islami in 1940 to propagate his ideology and attempt to discredit the idea of a secular Muslim state. Both Jama'at i-Islami and the Muslim League, according to a study on Mawdudi, manipulated cultural symbols to instigate and perpetuate a national movement:

The [Muslim] league was Mawdudi's bugbear and, as such, an important influence on his views. So was its leader, Muhammad 'Ali Jinnah (d. 1948), whom Mawdudi viewed as a rival in his drive to win over Muslims. He was drawn into politics by Jinnah's example. Mawdudi believed that Jinnah's popularity emanated from his appeal to Islamic symbols. If a secular Muslim could sway the masses in the name of Islam, surely Mawdudi could, and ought to, do better. Leadership in the Muslim community would be meaningful only if it was tied to the very roots of the community, Islam.<sup>4</sup>

When the state of Pakistan was realized in 1948, Jama'at I-

Islami became a major force in its political and ideological development as a sovereign body, although Mawdudi's ideals were not fully integrated into the process of institutionalization. Thus, Jama'at i-Islami's political platform in the early 1950s, when Ahmad Kamal wrote *The Sacred Journey*, was defined by its struggle against secular tendencies in the Pakistani government, as well as its desire to 'free' *all* Muslims from corrupt, non-Islamic rule and fully integrate all individual Muslims into an Islamic state. Seyyed Nasr noted that "Mawdudi's discourse on the *din* [religion] and the Islamic state produced an image of society that blended the individual Muslim into a collective unit in which social interactions were rationalized and turned into contractual arrangements as determined by the *din*."<sup>5</sup>

If it is true that individual appeals to cultural symbols instigate and legitimate national movements in society, it seems imperative that this process of symbolic redefinition be evident in the writing of Ahmad Kamal's work, as he was an active member of Jama'at I-Islami during an intense time of struggle. With this assumption in mind I will proceed to explicating Victor Turner's theory of social change.

### **Turner's Theory of Social Change**

The dominant thinking on the role of ritual in society before Turner, championed by scholars such as Durkheim, Malinowski, and Radcliffe-Brown, was that ritual was a mechanism by which a society could maintain and reinforce the status quo. This school of thought is known as structural functionalism. Adherents to the structural-functionalist school posit that ritual action is a social mechanism which reinforces the status quo by inundating the practitioner with a feeling of moral obligation to adhere to societal sentiments that stress the importance of maintaining social structure. Radcliffe-Brown, for example, wrote that ritual "regulates, maintains, and transmits from one generation to another the sentiments on which the constitution of the society depends."<sup>6</sup> Society, according to the structural-functionalists, creates religion for the purpose of survival and security: it creates a feeling of dependency in individuals that reinforces the need for the group. This learned dependency facilitates the development of religious institutions which bring security to both the individual and society. Radcliffe-Brown concludes: "As a general

formula (for whatever such a formula may be worth) it is suggested that what is expressed in all religions is what I have called the sense of dependence in its double aspect, and it is by constantly maintaining this sense of dependence that religions perform their social function”<sup>7</sup> From this perspective, the purpose of the Hajj, and the symbolism within it, would be that it reaffirms the normative Islamic tradition and functions to weaken the legitimacy of dissention while it reinforces social conformity.

Turner’s response to this school of thought is that it trivializes the role of ritual or symbolic action, by reducing it to a formulaic reiteration of already existing social norms. On this sort of view, only the norms, not the symbolic actions themselves, have real meaning:

What I have been doing in all this, perhaps, is trying to provide an alternative notion to that of those anthropologists who still work, despite explicit denials, with the paradigm of Radcliffe-Brown and regard religious symbols as reflecting or expressing social structure and promoting social integration. My view would also differ from that of certain anthropologists who would regard religion as akin to neurotic symptom or a cultural defense mechanism. Both these approaches treat symbolic behavior, symbolic actions, as an “epiphenomenon,” while I try to give it “ontological” status.<sup>8</sup>

According to Turner, ‘symbolic action’ is a result of conscious human struggle to understand the ontological meaning of cultural symbols, and the practitioners’ understanding of the symbols’ meaning reflects this struggle, for the symbol only *has* meaning inasmuch as the ritual practitioner can interpret the symbol. The symbol, then, will be interpreted at any given time in a way that is relevant to the practitioner’s understanding of the ontological value of the symbol, and her social experience, like all human interpretation, colors her understanding of the ontological status of the symbol: hence the symbol takes on different shades of meaning depending on the life experience of the one who is doing the interpreting.

If the social experience of the practitioner colors her interpretation of cultural symbols, the contemporary situation of society will have an important effect on the way in which the practitioner experiences a ritual. For this reason Turner posits that the overarching forces which are at play within a society must be understood for a ritual action to be understood: “social actions of various kinds acquire form through the metaphors and paradigms in their actors’ heads (put there by explicit teaching and implicit generalization from social experience), and, in certain intensive circumstances, generate unprecedented forms that bequeath history new metaphors and paradigms.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, one must understand the forces that play on an individual within a society to understand how and why symbolic action manifests itself the way it does in any given situation.

In contrast to the structural-functionalists, who presume a basically static model of society and its norms, Turner suggests that the most powerful force informing the meaning of cultural symbols at any given time is the constant, dialectical process of social change. For Turner, society proceeds through periods of what he terms “social dramas”, which he defines as “aharmonic or disharmonic processes,” which the anthropologist will find through “systematic analysis of processural units and temporal structures, by looking at phases as well as atemporal systems.”<sup>10</sup> There are four main phases of the social drama cycle. First, there is a breach within the norm-governed social structure caused by dissident individuals reacting against the increasingly normalized social structure. This breach leads to the second stage, which is characterized by crisis. During this period, there is a dramatic increase in the tensions between the dissident and those who regulate the normative social structure. Eventually, this crisis escalates to the point that it touches some dominant cleavage in the society, and the crisis is resolved in the third stage, which Turner labels the ‘redressive action’ stage. It is in this stage that Turner feels that we may glean the most information about the process of social change: “It is in the redressive phase that both pragmatic techniques and symbolic action reach their fullest expression. For the society, group, community, association, or whatever may be the social unit, is here at its most “self-conscious” and may attain the clarity of someone fighting in a corner for his life.”<sup>11</sup> It is in this phase that the liminal

experience, or the almost complete exit from social structure into a symbolic perception of reality, is experienced by the community *through the medium of ritual*. As a result of this liminal attempt at redressive action, the cycle moves on to the fourth stage, in which the dissident behavior either is reintegrated into the normative social structure or the cleavage between the two parties is deemed to be irreparable for the time being. At this point the changes in the normative structure caused by the first three stages should be apparent to the social scientist: “the nature and intensity of the relations between parts, and the structure of the total field, will have changed.”<sup>12</sup>

To understand why Turner feels that society is constantly changing due to this cycle, we must examine the way Turner perceives society. He posits that within any society there is a dialectical and dynamic relationship between what he terms ‘structure’ and ‘anti-structure’. ‘Structure’ is the normative, regulative aspect of a society. ‘Anti-structure’, on the other hand, is what resists the process of normative regulation. The units of analysis at this level are “statuses and roles, not concrete human individuals” — this is the *institutional* structure of a society.<sup>13</sup> The unit of analysis at the ‘anti-structural’ level, however, is the individual, and the egalitarian extension of the individual, the whole:

Implicitly or explicitly, in societies of all levels of complexity, a contrast is posited between the notion of society as a differentiated, segregated system of structural positions (which may or may not be arranged in a hierarchy) and society as a homogenous, undifferentiated whole.<sup>14</sup>

Anti-structure is characterized by its immediacy as well as its lack of institutionalized status or roles, which together create within those who experience anti-structure a desire for all in society to be freed from an overly-regulated normative social structure. Anti-structure has two parts, *communitas* and *liminality*, which reinforce each other’s existence, and function to address the tension between egalitarian ideals and hierarchal realities of social existence. *Liminality* is the point in ritual in which normative statuses and roles reverse,

causing the ritual experience to be “betwixt and between the categories of ordinary social life.”<sup>15</sup> Liminality is the key to social change, for it is in this stage, when one is outside of all of the institutional aspects of structure and is surrounded by the symbolic values of the society, that the practitioner may look objectively at the structural aspect of her society and evaluate it. As the practitioner will return to the institutionalized structure, the idea is that she will bring back with her a critique of the current structure, which will consequently change the nature of the structure in some meaningful way.

Communitas “tends to characterize relationships between those jointly undergoing ritual transition. These bonds of communitas are anti-structural in the sense that they are undifferentiated, egalitarian, direct, extant, non-rational, existential, I-Thou (in Feuerbach’s and Buber’s sense) relationships.”<sup>16</sup> Ritual, then, is a social tool designed to keep the institutionalized social structure from becoming too stagnant and repressive; on the flip side, the nature of institutionalized structure keeps society functional and checks the anti-hierarchal thrust of communitas.<sup>17</sup> Hence the dialectical and processural nature of society: “Maximization of communitas provokes maximization of structure, which in turn produces revolutionary strivings for renewed communitas.”<sup>18</sup>

Communitas, as a relationship among individuals who dance in the liminal, is thus integral to the very existence of a society, for it is in communitas that breaches in the social system are treated and society has an opportunity to heal itself from the increasingly impersonal, hierarchal structure of everyday life. It is in communitas, which “breaks in through interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority” that the notion of humanity as a universal whole is maintained.<sup>19</sup>

Liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art. These cultural forms provide men with a set of templates or models which are, at one level, periodic reclassifications of reality and men’s relationship to



society, nature, and culture.<sup>20</sup>

However, *communitas* is not in itself unstructured; otherwise the values of the society could not be transmitted in such a way. The kind of structure that is characteristic of *communitas* and liminality is, Turner posits, quite different and performs a very different role in the social unit: “it is not a social structure in the Radcliffe-Brownian sense but one of symbols and ideas, an *instructional* structure.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, ritual serves as an ‘escape’ from institutional structure into instructional structure in order for individuals to reenter institutional structure both revitalized and revitalizing.

### A Critique of Turner’s Theory

Before applying Turner’s framework to Kamal’s interpretation of the Hajj, a flaw in Turner’s theory must be addressed. The concept of liminality as an ‘escape’ has drawn notable objections from other scholars. A critique of Turner’s theory by Caroline Walker-Bynum, for example, points out that there may be something missing from Turner’s conception of social drama: an accurate explanation of the ritual experience of those in society who are involuntarily marginalized. To make her point that the concept of escape or ‘role reversal’ does not always accurately characterize ritual experience, Walker-Bynum points to what she perceives to be the involuntary marginalization of Christian woman in medieval Europe. In that society, Walker-Bynum asserts, women do not seem to have much of a role in Turner’s theory of social drama — in fact, the paradigm seems to only really apply to men.<sup>22</sup> Walker-Bynum suggests that although Turner’s theory of social drama illuminates much about the experience of ‘men’ (or the structural elite), it does not fare as well when looking at the experiences of those who are already marginalized in society. Walker-Bynum understands Turner’s framework as one that accounts for the structural-elite experience of ritual and *communitas*, rather than a framework that can be applied universally, as Turner claims:

all Turner’s ideas involve in some way the insight that, in explaining human experience, one is explaining process or drama rather than structure, and that

liminality or suspension of social and normative structures is a critical moment in the process. But the very fact that periods of liminality provide escape from roles and critiques of structures (in a functionalist sense of “structure”) indicates that Turner has in certain ways never left the functionalist anthropology in which he was trained...Turner’s ideas describe the stories and symbols of men better than those of women. Women’s stories insofar as they can be discerned behind the tales told by male biographers are in fact less processural than men’s; *they don’t have turning points.*<sup>23</sup>

In understanding why this would be so, Walker-Bynum points to her example of Christian women in the middle ages and the way that they experience ritual. Women, Walker-Bynum suggests, are trying to integrate themselves *into* structure at the same time that men desire to escape *out* of it, for “the dichotomy of structure and chaos, from which liminality or communitas is a release, is a special issue for elites, for those who in a special sense *are* the structure.”<sup>24</sup> Women, in her example, are not the structure; therefore there is no need for “release” in the escapist sense Turner assumes. Rather, ritual provides the marginalized with an opportunity to find meaning through symbols and apply this meaning to the experience of everyday life. Turner’s fallacy, in Walker-Bynum’s eyes, is the fact that Turner, as a male, stands with males who *are* the social structure, but when he looks *at* the marginalized, he “assumes symmetry — that is, he assumes that the inferior are exactly the reverse of the superior. If the superior generate images of lowliness in liminality, the inferior will generate images of power.”<sup>25</sup> Walker-Bynum, standing *with* women instead of looking *at* them, questions the validity of this assumption. In discussing man’s and women’s different liminal experiences in medieval Christianity, she notes that “it is the powerful who express imitation of Christ as (voluntary) poverty, (voluntary) nudity and (voluntary) weakness. But the involuntary poor usually express their *imitation Christi* not as wealth and exploitation but as struggle.”<sup>26</sup>

Although Turner’s framework does not seem to address the experience of the marginalized as much as it explains the experience

of the structural elite, this is not an inherent flaw in the framework, Walker-Bynum points out. It is rather a fallacy of methodology: Turner made assumptions about the marginalized because he wasn't empathizing with them. As I will show in the case study of the Hajj as seen through the eyes of Ahmad Kamal, *The Sacred Journey* functions as a picture of both the male elite experience of liminality and, interestingly and relevantly, the male *marginalized* experience, something that may be overlooked without Walker-Bynum's distinction in mind. It is most interesting that men take on the role of the marginalized in the Hajj at the same time that they continue to marginalize women, as I will point out below in the example of *Ihram*. It deepens our understanding of the symbolic paradigms in the *Sacred Journey* to look at Ahmad Kamal as both a regulator of social structure and perceiving himself to be a victim of it. Walker-Bynum does not seem to look at this kind of situation — specifically, of a man who *feels* like he is involuntarily marginalized in the social structure even as he takes on a voluntarily 'marginal' role within the ritual. It seems that women could theoretically take on this role as well. But the paradigm of marginalization is fundamentally important in understanding national aspirations, as it is the perception of marginalization within a society that legitimates a claim to self-determination in the first place.

The social insight (or lack thereof) of the practitioner seems to be the defining factor in the way the liminal will be experienced. To make a clean distinction along gender lines (Walker-Bynum) or class lines (Turner) both seem to be problematic methodological assumptions. For example, as we will see, Ahmad Kamal is speaking from a position of (at least perceived) oppression as well: throughout his work his interpretations of symbols of unity are contrasted with his views on the reality of the Muslim world. He perceives himself as part of a brotherhood under repression; as he stated simply and poignantly, "If there is one of us who is a slave, none of us are free."<sup>27</sup> What Walker-Bynum points out that is important to our study is that, although the experience of liminality may be, on many levels, almost completely different for different facets of society (but not *completely* different- Turner points out that the symbols will retain some aspects of the cultures' "core" values), all individuals come away from a liminal experience changed in a way that reflects their perceived social needs.

All return to the mundane revitalized by the experience, armed with a new understanding of the symbolism that surrounds cultural life.<sup>28</sup> With our understanding of Turner's theory in the light of Walker-Bynum's critique, let us turn to Ahmad Kamal's experience of the Hajj.

### **The Hajj as a Liminal Phenomenon: Ahmad Kamal's Experience**

The Hajj, within the framework of the Turnerian methodology, fits into the third stage of the process of social drama, in which whatever cleavages have occurred within society have an opportunity to come to a resolution. It is an opportunity for ontological reorientation on a symbolic level for both the individual and the collective; it is within this act of reorientation that individuals create new symbols which 'embody' the resolution of the redressive action inherent in liminality and allows for social change. New or 'renewed' symbols that arise from liminality may become emblems of groups, such as Jama'at I-Islami, that work to promote whatever 'solution' came from their experience in the period of redressive action, from their perspective, but was not universally adopted by the institutional structure. Liminality, in this sense, can legitimate subversive action against the normative structure by 'consecrating' symbols: for example, the star-and-crescent insignia of Jama'at i-Islami, which appears on the front cover of *The Sacred Journey*.

The Hajj is the Fifth Pillar of Islam and an obligatory rite of passage for all Muslims who are capable of performing it.<sup>29</sup> It is, however, a rite that is not to be performed until the individual is spiritually prepared, as Ahmad Kamal points out to his fellow Muslims:

And yet Makkah is not so much a geographic location; or pilgrimage a ritual, as it is a frame of mind. Pilgrims will discover in Makkah only what they take to Makkah. We are not to come here in search of inspiration, but because we are inspired. Pilgrimage is a declaration of belief, not a search for it.<sup>30</sup>

The Hajj in itself has great symbolic function in the Muslim world. All Five Pillars of Islam have a unifying function, and the

Hajj, as the Fifth, embodies this expressed unity in a fundamentally egalitarian manner:

The Hajj is an immense congress of Faithful from all the corners of the earth, that Muslims of every race and complexion may worship in unison and care to know the power which springs from unified belief and concerted action. In our being called together in the holy places we have been granted an unparalleled opportunity to discover our potential might, spiritual and physical...No other people are privileged to know such oneness of being, such singleness of purpose.<sup>31</sup>

The symbolism within the Hajj — and even the symbol *of* the Hajj — in the Muslim world is multivocal and varied, although the unity inherent in the rite pervades into all levels of the symbolism. In other words, the concept of unity always manifests itself in the symbolism, but what the symbol of unity is contrasted *against*, although it is always some form of institutional structure, will vary according to historical context and accounts for the multivocality of these symbols; consequently both the symbols and society change somewhat throughout time because they ‘speak’ to different people in different situations. For the purpose of understanding the forces of change advocated by Jama’at i-Islami, The *Sacred Journey* is extremely interesting in that it is officially approved by leaders of all four Sunni Law Schools as well as by both Shi’ah schools. The author’s note on this in the English edition is worth quoting:

For a Sunni Muslim author to be sponsored and published by leading Shi’ah Muslims was something of a precedent and an omen. The *Sacred Journey* was circulated widely in the Arab world and was successful. The book was accepted by Hanafi and Maliki, Shafe’i and Hanbali — by Shi’ah and Sunni — and was very well received in Makkah, the Sacred City, where it was made available to arriving pilgrims as a guide to the rites before them and as an admonition against disunity,

which pleased and honored me.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, it seems safe to hypothesize that the *Sacred Journey* reflects a somewhat dominant ideological thrust of his time and place, mid-twentieth century Central Asia and the Middle East.<sup>33</sup> The cleavage between ideal and reality in the Muslim world in the 1950s was obviously on the mind of more people undergoing the ritual of the Hajj than just Kamal.

The first ritual of the Hajj is the act of donning the ceremonial garment, called *Ihram*, a simple white article of clothing that replaces conventional clothing and “distinguishes pilgrims from all others but permits no distinction one from another.”<sup>34</sup> The purpose of the act, Kamal asserts, is to symbolize the way that God views humanity: “All, high-born and humble, wear identical robes and are reminded that in the eyes of God all men are created equal—and that on the Day of Judgment all will be accountable.”<sup>35</sup> There are several rules that accompany the state of wearing *Ihram*, including abstention from violence, sex, and personal material gratification. These regulations reinforce the fact that the individual is about to leave the normative aspects of regulative life and embark on the path to what Turner would call anti-structure. The state of *Ihram* signifies in its simplicity and conformity a shift in orientation: the intellectual focus of the pilgrim is symbolically switched from the self to orientation as an individual defined as part of a community. The regulations and state of *Ihram* does not end until all of the rites of the Hajj are complete; the state is one of constant meditation on the concept of unity:

*Ihram* is a time of forbearance and patience. Ihram is an experience in brotherhood, an admonition of past disunity, and a demonstration of what we can become when we are unified. *And Ihram is a warning of the privation and humiliation and destruction before us, before Islam itself, unless Muslims learn to think, act, and strive together in tolerance and self-denial- and even, if we must, self sacrifice-for the glory of God and the betterment of all men.*<sup>36</sup>

The dominant cleavage — the crisis of Turners’ process of social drama — becomes apparent here. The crisis is of course

disunity; this manifests itself not only in the Sunni-Shi'ah divide and general selfishness but also other divides caused by external factors such as "alien leadership," as Kamal observes:

Islam has been divided by trifles, by age-old political arguments which our predecessors in their ignorance allowed to become articles of faith. They and we have behaved like madman — and have been punished. Most of the peoples of Islam are under foreign rule or suffering from the after effects of alien domination. In Soviet territory alone more than thirty-four million Turkic Muslims and forty million Chinese Muslims fear to worship openly; these figures do not include the lesser nations under the same rule.<sup>37</sup>

The act of *Ibram*, then, is not simply a gesture of unity. For Kamal, and many other generations who have perceived their society to have a corrupt and disunified social structure, it became a conscious attempt to redress the cleavages in Islamic society. It is with the act of *Ibram* that pilgrims enter into a state of liminality. Standing apart from the normative structure, pilgrims have a unique opportunity to reflect on that structure and critique it. In the state of *Ibram*, the problems of society can be intellectually addressed while the overarching message of unity as fundamental to Islam is constantly reaffirmed and meditated upon.

*Ibram* begins during the journey to Mecca; as the pilgrims move closer to their destination, they perform rituals that reinforce liminal experience. Once the pilgrims are but a short distance from the city, several prayers are to be recited; these consist primarily of verses from the Qur'an, such as Surah 17:18:

My Lord! Let my entrance be  
By the Gate of Truth —  
And let my exit be  
By the Gate of Truth —  
And grant me from Thy Presence  
A helping power.

The entrance into Mecca — the Gate of Truth on both a metaphoric and a physical level — is charged with symbolic power. Kamal's work reminds the pilgrim to reflect on the ancient authority of the rites which they are undertaking; the Ka'ba, the symbolic center of the Hajj, was built by Abraham and Ishmael and has been worshipped, correctly or incorrectly, ever since.<sup>38</sup> There is symbolism here of profound ultimate authority, rooted in time as well as the timeless. Kamal reflects, "Men know not why they gather before ancient things rather than the new. Perhaps it is because that which is ancient has proved its quality, and that which is new, like ourselves, has not."<sup>39</sup> It is in this ancient authority that the power of the symbols of the Hajj is manifest, for they reflect for the practitioner the fundamental values of Islam. An interpretation of these symbols that integrates the core values of the symbols with a call to change makes that call seem far more legitimate to other ritual practitioners, as the idea of change is consecrated by the power of the symbols and the symbols itself changes in meaning. Again, symbols only have meaning inasmuch as that meaning is understood by those interpreting the symbols.

Within this liminal experience, the pilgrims reflect upon the rifts within the contemporary social structure. The symbolism of the Hajj, with its message of unity and oneness under God, takes on individual meaning as it is contrasted with the crisis and cleavages within society, and pilgrims must reflect on ways to reconcile the inherent conflict in identity between the *communitas* experience and that of mundane life. While Kamal was writing *The Sacred Journey* one of the major challenges to unity came from outside Islam:

Today, again, there are pilgrims for whom Makkah and the holy places are a haven after savage trials and relentless persecution -- pilgrims escaped from Muslim lands under foreign, atheistic rule. Countless devout Muslims trapped in nations now Soviet, forbidden by the communists to worship God or perform the pilgrimage, have perished attempting to cross closed frontiers and come here. A few thousand, survivors, have made Jeddah and Makkah their house of exile,



taking some solace from their nearness to the holy places.<sup>40</sup>

Kamal poignantly appeals to the pilgrims to reflect on the fact that there are many fellow Muslims who are undergoing severe oppression; some Muslims have even perished in the process of getting to the place the pilgrims are currently at. The survivors, as well as those who died, become new symbols integrated into the symbolism of the Hajj, which function to demand of the pilgrims that what they are experiencing must not be taken for granted or forgotten after the end of the pilgrimage, for the normative world does not meet the standards of Islam. The paradigm of resistance to oppression and disunity, so fundamental to the platform of Jama'at I-Islami, is very apparent here, and becomes fully integrated into Kamal's interpretation of the Hajj. These symbols derive their legitimacy — or are 'consecrated' — by the power of the unity and 'oneness' of the Hajj, and they draw attention to another fundamental aspect of Islam, which is the concept of striving for social justice in the normative, structural world. The pilgrims may interpret the symbols as a reminder of their obligation to jihad, or struggle for Islam. The repercussions of this call (or *dawah*) for Muslims to struggle to realize these goals of unity and social justice may be found in an examination of the impact of Jama'at i-Islami and like-minded groups on the Muslim world and beyond.<sup>41</sup>

### Conclusion

Turner would understand the Hajj as a gateway to social change and even revolution. It is an experience in which the mundane reality of social structure is scrutinized and compared with the symbolism and ideas of *communitas*, ideas which change based on the problems of normative structure but at the same time embody what the practitioner perceives to be the fundamental values of Islam. In this manner Turner's framework informs us of *how* nationalists could theoretically attempt to legitimate their actions through the medium of socially-accepted cultural symbols.

The prescriptive account of the Hajj in the *Sacred Journey* certainly suggests that Kamal reinterpreted cultural symbols in a way

that would support Jama'at i-Islami's political aspirations. In the *Sacred Journey* Kamal integrated into the symbolism of the Hajj his perception of his society and his prescriptions of what he felt must change. The major question is whether Kamal's politics informed his understanding of the Hajj or whether it is in fact the other way around. Kedourie's idea — that nationalists make use of the past in order to subvert the present — assumes that nationalists project their aspirations onto cultural symbols. Turner's theory of social change assumes that symbols change in meaning as a result of re-examination of social structure in light of the cultural symbols, or that cultural symbols function to instruct at the same time they adapt, and that social change is a result of an attempt by some to realign symbolic cultural values with structural reality. The difference between these two ideas is rather profound when we take the 'legitimacy,' in our world defined by the concept of a nation-state, of national movements under scrutiny. Are national movements a manipulation of a society or an attempt by some within the society to reinvigorate it?

Kamal construes the Hajj as an experience designed by God to remind Muslims of their obligation to *Islam*, or, literally, to submission to God and His law. He perceives that it is not possible, given his current social structure, to fully realize this obligation, and he advocates change that would allow his community to better worship as they choose. This desire seems less a conscious manipulation of the past than an attempt to redress a perceived social cleavage. Kamal perceives his community to be marginalized within a series of states which do not govern in a way that lines up with the tenets of the faith that he chooses to define himself by. As a consequence, he desires that his community have the opportunity to rule itself. Kamal's understanding of the ritual of the Hajj and its cultural symbols, and his advocacy that changes must be made in the social structure, is informed simultaneously by his faith and the normative social structure. The normative structure in our world of nation states is informed by the concept of self-determination. Thus, the redressive action Kamal advocates takes both structure and faith into account and asserts what he perceives to be the best way to align ideal and reality.

Although Geertz and Kedourie may be correct in assuming that it is the power of reinterpreted symbols that fuel a national

movement, their top-down approach to understanding nationalism glosses over a process which is not as linear as they perceive it to be. If Kamal is any indication, nationalists do not understand nationalism as manipulation of cultural symbols as much as a solution to a cleavage between the values of their culture and the normative structure of nation-states. This 'solution' is a call to exercise the right of self-determination that supposedly legitimates the current world system. Kedourie and Geertz conveniently ignore this desire for social realignment and give national movements an air of illegitimacy, while Turner allows for a more individually-oriented, bottom-up analysis that sheds light on what nationalists may more accurately perceive themselves to be doing, and why. Kedourie and Geertz's assumption that national movements are simply a manipulation of cultural symbols is an oversimplification of a much more complicated process of identity formation, as Turner's work begins to suggest. More bottom-up analysis of national movements must be done for anthropologists to really understand what makes these movements so powerful and pervasive in the world today.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Primordial and Civic Ties," in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism* (Oxford University Press, 1994) p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Elie Kedourie, "Nationalism and Self-Determination," in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism* (Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> Kedourie "Nationalism and Self-Determination," p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Makings of Islamic Revivalism* (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> Nasr, *Mawdudi*, p. 80.

<sup>6</sup> A. R. Radcliffe-Brown., *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (1965), p. 157; quoted in Bobby Alexander, *Ritual as Social Change*. (American Academy of Religion, 1991), p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Carl Olson (ed.), *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*, (Wadsworth/Thomson, 2003), p. 264.

<sup>8</sup> Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* (Cornell University

Press, 1974), p. 56-57. He does not, however, completely deny the structural-functional premise. He notes instead that it is “true as far as it goes, but points to only one of many properties it [ritual] possesses. More important is its creative function — it actually creates, or re-creates, the categories through which men perceive reality—the axioms underlying the structure of society and the laws of natural and moral orders” (Victor Turner, *The Drums of Affliction: A Study of Religious Processes Among the Ndembu of Zambia* (Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 7.)

<sup>9</sup> Turner, *Dramas*, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Turner, *Dramas*, pp. 37, 43.

<sup>11</sup> Turner, *Dramas*, p. 41.

<sup>12</sup> Turner, *Dramas*, p. 43.

<sup>13</sup> Turner, *Dramas*, p. 238.

<sup>14</sup> Turner, *Dramas*, p. 237.

<sup>15</sup> Turner, *Dramas*, p. 273. The concept of “role reversal” in liminality is somewhat problematic: although the ‘structural elite’ ‘reverse’ their role from one of power to one of relative powerlessness more often than not in ritual experience, the powerless don’t necessarily take on a role of power, as I will discuss below.

<sup>16</sup> Turner, *Dramas*, p. 274

<sup>17</sup> The assumption that Turner makes here is that society cannot exist without some sort of hierarchal social structure that oversees the material needs of the society.

<sup>18</sup> Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Aldine de Gruyter, 1969), in Olson (ed.), *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*, p. 274.

<sup>19</sup> Turner, *Ritual Process*, in Olson, *Theory and Method*, p. 274.

<sup>20</sup> Turner, *Ritual Process*, in Olson, *Theory and Method*, p. 274.

<sup>21</sup> Turner, *Dramas*, p. 240.

<sup>22</sup> Caroline Walker-Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), in Olson, *Theory and Method*, pp. 277-284.

<sup>23</sup> Walker-Bynum, *Fragmentation*, in Olson, *Theory and Method*, pp. 278-279 (emphasis mine).

<sup>24</sup> Walker-Bynum, *Fragmentation*, in Olson, *Theory and Method*, p. 283.

<sup>25</sup> Walker-Bynum, *Fragmentation*, in Olson, *Theory and Method*, p.

280.

<sup>26</sup> Walker-Bynum, *Fragmentation*, in Olson, *Theory and Method*, p. 280.

<sup>27</sup> Ahmad Kamal, *The Sacred Journey* (Van Reeves Press, 1961), p. 11. It is rather ironic that Kamal does not see the repression of woman as inhibiting freedom, while he himself feels the negative consequences of just such repression.

<sup>28</sup> Olson, p. 284. Walker-Bynum notes that her criticism of Turner is one that “[Turner] might have given himself,” for he argues along with Walker-Bynum that “[i]f symbols are, in fact, multivocal, condensing, and lived, we will understand them only when we look with as well as over and beyond the participants who use them, feeling as well as knowing their dramas in their own context” (Olson, p. 284).

<sup>29</sup> The Hajj is not obligatory for those who cannot afford to go or will create economic for others by going, for example.

<sup>30</sup> Kamal, *Sacred Journey*, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Kamal, *Sacred Journey*, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Kamal, *Sacred Journey*, p. xvii

<sup>33</sup> Jama’at I-Islami began in the early 1940s in India; when Pakistan became a state in 1947, it became the central headquarters of the group, although Jama’at did not by any means limit itself to that area alone.

<sup>34</sup> Kamal, *Sacred Journey*, p. 14. Actually, women are not wearing the Ihram as Kamal describes it here. In fact, Kamal mentions woman very rarely in his work, and when he does it is to remind them of their subordinate role. For example, shortly after his assertion that the purpose of Ihram is to signify that all Muslims are the same under God, he points out that the rules of Ihram are different for woman: they “do not wear the Ihram garments which are worn by men,” but rather they wear their “customary dress, garbing themselves in clean, fresh clothing at the time of entering Ihram.” In addition, women must be accompanied by male relatives and consciously try to remain invisible: “During periods of prayer only male pilgrims may worship aloud or recite audibly. Female pilgrims may not lift their voices or conduct themselves in such a manner as to attract attention; *scrupulously they must avoid distracting males from their devotions*” (p. 17). It is evident from this statement that women do not play the same role as men do

in Kamal's perception of universal equality.

<sup>35</sup> Kamal, *Sacred Journey*, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Kamal, *Sacred Journey*, p. 20 (emphasis mine).

<sup>37</sup> Kamal, *Sacred Journey*, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> The Qur'an holds that after the time of Abraham and before Muhammad the Ka'ba was worshipped incorrectly during pre-Islamic times.

<sup>39</sup> Kamal, *Sacred Journey*, p. 35.

<sup>40</sup> Kamal, *Sacred Journey*, p. 36. The refuge is further symbolized by the fact that non-Muslims are not allowed past the gate of Hudaybiyah on the outskirts of Makkah.

<sup>41</sup> Jama'at i-Islami focuses on overcoming what they perceive to be oppression and domination on many levels, reflecting the multivocal character of the symbol of jihad; struggle against the status quo manifests itself anywhere from opening soup kitchens to hospitals to fighting against Soviet oppression of Afghans' right to worship.