CHAPTER 1

Islam - Ideology and Politics

Islam is both a religion and state...
(Muslehuddin: 1977:134)

Formulations like the above, implying the all-embracing character of Islam, can be found in most studies of Islam and Muslim societies. Islam is thus presented as an ideal type of an 'organic' religio-political system (Smith 1974) where religious and political functions are not differentiated but rest within a single structure and no distinctions can be made between the religious institution and the society. The social order is considered to be of divine origin, the ruler derives his authority from a spiritual force, and political leadership is exercised according to religious law and tradition.

While the theoretical distinction between God's domain and that of Caesar does not exist in Islamic theology, and sacred law incorporates the temporal within the spiritual, it is hardly justifiable, as has been characteristic of the Western Orientalist tradition and, albeit in a different way, of most Muslim scholars, to refer to 'Islam' as a 'substantial, stable, defined area (*in* Islam) where all kinds of categoric definitions, answers, rules, and practices are to be found at any time and in any society' (Arkoun 1988: 54). Although the word of God as revealed in the sacred scriptures remains unchanged, the understanding and interpretation of the revelation has changed over time according to the socio-political and cultural environment, the existential conditions of the *umma*, etc. The classic Orientalist tradition lacks this perspective of 'the ideological roots and functions of discourse produced by social groups in competition for power and, consequently the epistemological distance between ideation and ideology, and critical knowledge and controlled, offensive-defensive discourse' (Arkoun 1988: 55).

First of all, it is necessary to recognize the distinction between politico-theological dogmas and the actual political structure of Muslim societies throughout history. Discrepancies between 'ideal' and actual political realities were amply reflected in the al-Salafiyah movements of the last century and in the fundamentalist movements in this

century. However, it is also important to note that even these dogmas have varied and been interpreted variously over time. Arkoun (*ibid.*) approaches this problem by pointing out that, after the death of the Prophet, his integrated representation of live authority broke up in two processes: first, the collection, transmission, interpretation etc. of the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*; and second, the state for its own ends used this face of authority to exercise a political, cultural and concrete power, controlling more and more the first process, constituting the scriptural tradition. Throughout history, the state as a constraining and controlling power used authority as a necessary means of legitimizing a temporal power that lacked an intrinsic authority. We can thus speak of an official ideology imposing an image of legitimate power by misrepresenting the actual genesis of the state. Orthodoxy thus becomes no more than the official religion resulting from the collaboration of the majority of *ʿulamā* with the state (Arkoun 1988: 60). In his approach, Arkoun proceeds according to what he calls the regressive-progressive method: first going back into the past to reach the historical mechanisms and factors which produced given texts in the scriptural tradition and assigning them certain functions; and, since these texts are still alive and active as ideological systems of belief and knowledge shaping the future, the second step is to look at the process by which the initial contents and functions have been transformed into new ones.

It is exactly this temporality and contingency of Islamic interpretations and the way they are translated into political action that is of interest here, rather than reading some ultimate 'truth' about the Islamic polity out of the scriptures. Being concerned with the political use of Islam during a certain period in Afghan history, the focus is thus on certain dimensions of Islam; neither Islamic theology nor Islam as a religious experience or way of life is covered, although reference to both will be made when relevant to the discussion at hand.

Waardenburg (1978) suggests replacing the frequently claimed dichotomy between 'official' and 'popular' Islam with the distinction between 'normative' and 'practised' or 'lived' Islam in view of the absence of an 'official' institutional organization in Islam. The interaction between the normative/official Islam and the 'lived'/popular Islam can thus largely be understood as an interaction between the theoretical considerations of the religious scholars and the practical activities in the Muslim communities, where both employ religious concepts, symbols and interpretations in order to find guidance, sanctions and justification for all manner of activities. In terms of

political action this process can be called the 'operationalization of the concept of Islamic polity' (Ayoob 1979: 535-536).

It is the existence of Islam, not only as explicit ideology in society (in the form of the normative or official Islam of the *ᶜulamā*) but also as implicit ideology (a communal moral consciousness of Islamic culture in its widest sense), which is an absolute precondition for the successful operationalization of the concept of Islamic polity. The actual political use of Islam depends upon the creation of a synthesis of a given political discourse with the implicit ideology current in society. Anything running counter to this implicit ideology is likely to be rejected.

The Concept of Ideology

The concept of ideology has, since it was coined by the philosopher Destutt de Tracy at the time of the French Revolution, been subject to differing definitions and interpretations. On the one hand, 'ideology' can be taken in the narrow sense as meaning "the integrated assertions, theories, and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program" (Johnson 1968: 76). Associated with this definition of ideology has been the negative notion whereby ideology is seen as being essentially 'false' as compared to assumed 'actual, scientific or rational' conceptions. This has been typical not only in Marxist and Hegelian philosophy, where 'ideology' is taken as an expression of false consciousness, but also Weber and Mannheim used the term ideology to imply idea systems which were the outcome or expression of certain interests. Likewise, for Freud, ideologies were the unconscious rationalization of class interests. Within the Marxist tradition, the critical conception of ideology still has its strong protagonists (see, for example, Thompson 1984).

On the other hand, the notion of ideology has also been invested with a broader and neutral meaning, predominant for example within the discipline of social anthropology, where 'ideology' in the formulation of Clifford Geertz (1964) is 'a schematic image of the social order'. Whereas ideology in the narrow sense refers to a comparatively explicit 'theory' directed at the explanation and transformation/maintenance of the external world in its present social and political dimensions, the neutral and broad concept of ideology encompasses the outlook and *Weltanschauung* of a society/nation/group etc. Accordingly, ideology may here be seen as the product of man's eternal need to impose intellectual order on the

world (Shils 1968: 69). It is this neutral conception of ideology which will be employed — in Therborn's formulation, 'that aspect of the human condition under which human beings live their lives as conscious actors in a world that makes sense to them to varying degrees. Ideology is the medium through which this consciousness and meaningfulness operate' (Therborn 1980: 2).

With the operation of ideology defined in terms of the constitution of human subjectivity, it follows according to Therborn that the structure of the ideological universe is to be sought in the dimensions of human subjectivity. He concludes that the universe of ideologies is structured by the four main analytical categories of construing or 'interpellation' that constitute the four fundamental forms of subjectivity (*ibid:* 22-27):

a) Inclusive-Existential Interpellations, which provide meanings related to being a member of the world, i.e. the meaning of life, death, suffering, the cosmos, etc.

b) Inclusive-Historical Interpellations, which derive from human beings as conscious members of historical, social worlds. As an inclusive ideology it also draws a line of demarcation between membership and non-membership, i.e. it is also an ideology of exclusion.

c) Positional-Existential Interpellations, which qualify one for a particular position in the world of which one is a member, i.e. Self-Other, position of the two genders, life-cycle placement, etc.

d) Positional-Historical Interpellations, which define one's position in historical social worlds, i.e. placing the members of a family, inhabitants of a particular locality or occupation within a wider structure. Positions may be differentiated in terms of hierarchy, complementarity, competition.

The above distinctions are analytical, and do not represent actual types of ideologies, which may exhibit more than one of the four dimensions, either simultaneously or in different contexts (*ibid:* 25-26).

Several consequences flow from the above formulations. First, the broad, neutral concept of ideology has finally been given an analytical framework in which it can contain phenomena as diverse as religious beliefs and political '-isms'. Thus, within this framework, religion can be analysed on the same basis as other, secular and mundane ideologies.

While religion, in line with other ideological phenomena, can thus be seen as man's attempt to bring order into the universal experience of disorder, the distinguishing characteristics of religion may be found in the particular types of questions it addresses and purports to answer. Religious 'answers' may be of a more fundamental, general and eternal kind than those of political ideologies which tend to be specific, local and time-bound. Equally, while religious 'answers' generally acquire their legitimacy from sources outside the temporal, material world, political and other types of ideologies are basically centred on this world alone. However, this does not mean, that religion is necessarily excluded from addressing this-worldly questions any more that it precludes political ideologies from being founded upon or derived from religious notions.

Second, the ideological universe is never solely reducible to class ideologies, socio-political doctrines or to metaphysics. Even in the most class-polarized and class-conscious societies (for example), the other fundamental forms of human subjectivity coexist with class subjectivities. The definitions of the subject contained in the existential interpellations will never be wholly reducible to the relations of production, i.e. to class position, since 'man does not live by bread alone' — but cannot survive without it either! Individuals will thus always be the meeting places of various interpellations, making different and perhaps even contrasting claims on their subjectivity, which taken together define them in the world, give meaning to their existence and supply them with a world-view.

At the social level, different types of interpellations (religious, national etc.) may thus coexist and be integrative elements within a specific ideological discourse — and within widely different discourses. The possible political nature of an ideological discourse can therefore not be determined from its constituent elements but from the structure of the interpellation, i.e. from its specific articulating principle. A case in point is the varied use of Islamic concepts, symbolism and appeals to Muslim identity employed in the 'Islamic Socialism' of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in Pakistan; the 'Islamic Marxism' of the Mujahidin-i Khalq of Iran; and Islam as the ideology of the oppressed in Ali Shariati's formulations as opposed to its use in the fundamentalism of *Āyatullāh* Khomeini or *Mawlānā* Abu A'la Maududi. While the common feature is that the constituent elements are religious, the political nature of these respective discourses depends on their differing articulation of the religious elements. In societies where Islam forms the basis of the dominant explicit and implicit ideology, the political discourses will thus frequently consist of antagonistic

articulations in which each group or class presents itself as the Defenders of 'true' Islam, etc., trying to harness people's identification as Muslims into their respective discourses, i.e. claiming religious, 'other-worldly' legitimacy for their activities in 'this-worldly' matters.

Islamic Polity

The operationalization of the concept of Islamic polity accordingly denotes the process whereby religious doctrines, concepts, symbols etc., i.e. interpellations in the widest sense which are constituent elements of a religious discourse, are turned into integral elements in a political discourse. As stated above, the 'political' content cannot be determined *a priori* but is acquired from the articulative structure of the political discourse.

Islam is all-encompassing in its scope, placing people both in the universe and in society, providing answers to existential and historical questions, defining both their (inclusive) membership of the *umma* as well as their (positional) interrelationships to fellow humans. In most, if not all Muslim societies, the Islamic heritage constitutes the main shared cultural identity, both at the philosophical level and in the popular traditions. As such, it has a relative historical continuity which stands in contrast to the historical discontinuities characteristic of class-based discourses.

On this basis, any political discourse aiming at reaching the majority of the people will have to articulate and integrate precisely those most common and shared ideological elements which are the very building blocks of any political discourse. Moreover, one particular political discourse becomes dominant to the extent that people can identify with it and recognize themselves in it. Ideological hegemony of a certain social class or group thus does not so much depend on its ability to impose a uniform conception of the world on the rest of society, but more on the extent to which it can articulate different visions of the world in such a way that potential antagonism is neutralized (Laclau 1977: 161). This is the reason why non-class interpellations are the main battlefield for competing ideological discourses in their struggle for hegemony (*ibid:* 107-109).[1] (Here 'popular traditions' are understood in Laclau's sense: the complex of interpellations which express the opposition between 'the people' and 'the power bloc', reflecting the continuity of the individual's impotence vis-à-vis the powers that be, as distinct from the transience of class contradictions). As far as 'popular traditions' represent the

ideological crystallization of resistance to oppression in general, that is, to the very form of the state, they will be more durable than class ideologies and will constitute a structural frame of reference of greater stability. In view of this, it is obvious that divergent political movements may utilize the same ideological symbols in order to mobilize popular support (*ibid:* 167).

The above point links closely with Arkoun's observations on what he calls 'the popularized model of authority' as contrasted with the official, state-promoted model of authority. The popularized model, couched in the social imagery and transmitted through the sermons, narrations of the prophets, Companions etc., and via popular story-tellers, presents authority as an articulated system of ideal, positive images of ethical-spiritual thinking and acting. As such, the model has a wider currency and longer durability than any 'official' model (Arkoun 1988: 61). The social imagery can easily be mobilized for an Islamic revolution, restoring the central themes of the model rooted through centuries in the collective soul and using the common Islamic imagery. The Islamic Revolution in Iran gives an excellent example of this process of translating Islamic popular traditions into a new, revolutionary political discourse, where the Battle of Karbala, Hussain's martyrdom and the host of legends and symbols of Shi'a Islam were articulated within both the revolutionary discourse and competing ideological discourses.[2] Anderson (1983) also touches upon this issue in his discussion of the dialectics of Pashtun (Ghilzai) tribalism, where he sees three cognate distinctions at work: *qaumwāli* (kinship, tribalism) versus *gundi* (factionalism), *aṭrāp* (countryside, i.e. tribal domain) versus *shahr* (city); and *yāghīstān* (the lands of freedom and unrestraint) versus *ḥukūmat* (the activity and seat of government). They articulate thematic tensions at work in the tribal society and also reveal that Islam is not the only source of social imagery but coexists with other sources, rooted in the tribal structure of society, which can be even more fundamental.

The articulation of religious elements within secular political ideologies has been the subject of many discussions. Above, it is argued that it is erroneous to deduce the actual political content from the religious elements entailed or from Islam in general. Another view, mainly represented by political opponents to 'Islamic' regimes, or by Marxist-inspired writers, tends to see the invocation of religious elements in political discourses as simply a manipulative gesture:

> But I do not think that Islam is an autonomous *political* ideology at present. The Muslim faithful are often enough apolitical,

> whether their faith encourages them in such an attitude or not... But the options in question can in no way be explained in terms of religious dogma. They remain aspects of these essentially secular ideologies ... and simply provide these secular ideologies with a religious garb and a religious justification. (Rodinson 1979: 199-200)

While the situation of religious elements being used as window-dressing can and does occur, it is hardly justifiable to consider all political articulation of religious elements as merely this, since that neglects the fact that in order to be successful a political discourse has to articulate the various 'non-political' and 'non-class' elements.

The Classic Islamic Model of Legitimacy of Power

Political discourses and ideologies are largely concerned with providing a coherent explanation for the maintenance or transformation of the distribution of political power in society, in such a way that its 'model' gains the widest acceptability. Popular acceptability is essential for the sustained exercise of political power which would otherwise be exclusively dependent upon the use of coercion. In contrast, authority is the recognized right to exercise power. Authority thus represents the set of rites, procedures, traditions, and norms that are regarded as binding when they are applied within a given social framework. The rules that establish and allocate authority also serve to limit the authority that they institutionalize. Thus in contrast to power, authority enjoins observance on obligatory and normative grounds rather than instrumental ones and power *without* authority will remain uninstitutionalized, labile and relative (Smith 1968: 193). Popular acceptability and authority for the exercise of governmental power are thus ultimately dependent upon to what extent the sources of *legitimacy* of power are generally recognized, whether they be divine right, popular sovereignty or something else.[3] The political ideology of a given regime and type of government will thus contain a more or less coherent 'model of legitimacy' with the aim of generating popular support and acceptability for the exercise of power.

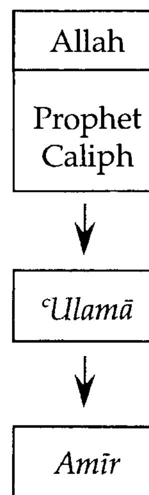
As pointed out by Arkoun (1988), after the death of the Prophet, the Muslim state used the authority vested in the interpretations of the Qur'ān as well as the transmitted *ḥadīth* to claim and exercise political power. This in turn increasingly shaped the development of the scriptural tradition, whereby orthodoxy became synonymous with

'official religion' (*ibid:* 60). Because Islam draws no distinction between the religious and the temporal spheres of life, the Muslim state is by definition religious, with the ultimate source of legitimacy of power and of the ruler being derived from Allah and the Prophet. However, through the centuries, Sunni political theory has also been shaped by the acknowledgement that stability has precedence over ideal rule in the interests of the religious community. Such a *post hoc* rationalization of historical developments is illustrated in the saying, 'One day of lawlessness is worse than thirty years of tyrannical rule'. While the primary function of the office of the Caliph (*khalīfa*) had been only that of implementing the sacred law, the Sultans who replaced the Caliphs as actual rulers were declared to be 'Shadow of God on Earth' and dynastic rule gained currency from the time and onwards of the Umayyads (the first great Muslim dynasty to rule the empire of the Caliphate, A.D. 661-750). The final articulation of 'classic' Sunni political theory, by Ibn Taymiyah (A.D. 1263-1328), recognized the legitimacy of the first four Caliphs, but rejected the necessity of having a single Caliphate and allowed for the existence of many emirates and sultanates, provided that the ruler applied the religious law strictly and relied on it for his legal opinion. The ruler's subjects were, for their part, obliged to obey the established authority except where it required disobedience to God, every Muslim being required to 'will the good and forbid the evil' for the benefit of the common welfare. In spite of this development of granting religious legitimacy to 'pious sultans', the ruler could not become absolute because a basic restraint was placed upon him by the Sharīᶜa under which he held his authority and which he was duty-bound to follow and defend. The *ᶜulamā* as the keepers of the scriptural tradition jealously upheld the sovereign position of the Sharīᶜa against the political authority, and 'the Pious Sultan theory' may be equated with a concordat between ruler and *ᶜulamā* in which the implementation of Sharīᶜa was acknowledged in exchange for legitimacy (Schleifer 1983b: 185, see also Arkoun 1988). Hence, the 'classic' Islamic model for the transmission of the legitimacy of power may be sketched as follows overleaf.

Inherent in Islam is the concept of a closely-knit community of the faithful (*umma*), the brotherhood of believers, which is 'the best community produced for mankind', whose function it is 'to enjoin good and forbid evil' so that 'there is no mischief and corruption' on earth. In view of the constitution of the community as the power base, the doctrine of *jihād* was the logical outcome. The object of *jihād* is not the conversion of individuals to Islam but rather the gaining of political control over the collective affairs of societies to run them in

accordance with the principles of Islam (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1985, vol. 22: 8). While the Muslim ruler, as illustrated above, ruled with the divine sanction of Allah (and *not* with the divine right which justified European monarchies for centuries) this sanction could be removed in cases where the ruler was held to be violating Islam or going against the will of Allah. Then it became a religious *duty* for the believers to choose a just Muslim ruler: 'These are they who have bartered the guidance for error; their trade had not turned out profitable and they have not been rightly guided' (Qurʾān 3:87).

Figure 1: The classic model of the legitimation of power



The inspiration for this and the subsequent models of the transmission of the legitimacy of power has been Mozaffari's discussion of authority in Islam (Mozaffari 1987).

With the crystallization of Islamic jurisprudence during the course of the first centuries, based on its four sources — the Qurʾān, the *sunna* ('traditions'), *ijmā* ('consensus'), and *ijtihād* ('reasoning') — the religious scholars (*ᶜulamā*) consolidated their position as keepers of the scriptural tradition, i.e. as interpreters of Sharīᶜa, whereby they also came to occupy a central position as the *mediators* of the transmission of legitimate power to the actual rulers. Equally so, they became key persons in determining the legitimacy (i.e. the religious sanction) of rebellion against oppressive rule. The notion of the divine sanction of power thus leads to the legitimation of the state as well as to legitimation of rebellion, under certain conditions, and to the centrality of the concept of *jihād*.

The Concept of *Jihād*

Throughout the Muslim era the concept of *jihād* has been one of the most forceful concepts of mediation between the spiritual and the political realm. Thus, the religious discourse on dogmas has in this respect been closely interlinked with the political discourse, with consequences for both spiritual and mundane authority as well as the identity of the *umma* (the Islamic community) as a political community. The case of Afghanistan during the last one hundred years will amply illustrate this.

The word *jihād* as it is generally used today refers to actual fighting or, as the Western media normally translate it, 'holy war'. However, the word in itself has a much wider semantic catchment, as it can broadly refer to exerting oneself for some praiseworthy aim (Peters 1979, chap. 4).[4] Schleifer, focusing on the exoteric and esoteric aspects of *jihād*, points to the classic tradition where *jihād* means variously: struggle against a visible enemy; struggle against the Devil; and struggle against the *nafs* (the lower or passionate soul or self). The concept of *jihād* thus contains a movement from the outward, most visible and 'occasional' in time and space back to the inward and 'continuous'—or, as Schleifer also formulates it, *jihād* is the instrument of sacralization of the social-political order in Islam (Schleifer 1983a: 120-122). The goal of this inner or 'greater' *jihād* is thus to purify the spiritual heart (the way of *tarīqat*, of Sufism, is thus essentially that of the greater *jihād*) while the goal of the outward or 'lesser' *jihād*, is to purify the social order of disbelief. It is in this its most outward form that *jihād* came to be used by Muslims to signify generally the sacralization of combat, of holy war (*ibid:* 123). *Jihād* in the sense of fighting is restricted by the phrase, *fi sabil Allah* ('in the way of Allah') which implies that *jihād* is not just ordinary war, but must be connected with religion and the interests of the believers; it is thus declared as an instrument for the establishment of an Islamic social order. And *jihād* is not just the fighting itself, but everything that is conducive to victory.

One theory of *jihād* that developed in modern Islam concentrates upon the causes of warfare waged by the Muslims, and these fall into two categories: those connected with the propagation of Islam and those connected with the idea of defence. The causes connected with the latter concern:

(a) Repelling aggression from an actual or expected attack by enemy forces on Muslim lives and property. This is founded on the

following *Sūra* from the Qurʾān (2:190): 'Fight in the Way of Allah those who fight you, but do not provoke hostility'.

(b) Preventing oppression and persecution of Muslims outside the Territory of Islam (*dār al-Islām*, i.e. territory in which the edicts of Islam are fully promulgated).

(c) Retaliating against the breaking of a pledge by the enemy. This is supported by the following *Sūra* (9:21): 'But if they violate their oaths after they have made a covenant and attack your religion, fight the leaders of unbelief; no oath will hold in their case; mayhap they will refrain' (Peters 1977).

In the intermediate field between the armed struggle of the lesser *jihād* and the contemplative practice of the greater or spiritual *jihād*, the concept of *jihād* relates to the everyday life of the believers and to the injunctions of Sharīʿa. In this respect, the concept mediates rather than juxtaposes *sharīʿat* and *tarīqat*: The fundamental encounter in Islam is between Man and his Creator, but the 'rights' of the individual believer in Islamic society are acquired by submitting to the obligatory practice and ethical norms of Sharīʿa — in other words, by entering into a divinely governed community.[5] It is exactly within this area, covering broadly-speaking the socio-political order of Muslim society, that the all too obvious contrast between the ideal and the actual appeared (at least after the era of the *Rāshidūn* Caliphs, i.e. the four immediate successors of the Prophet, referred to by Sunnis as 'the rightly guided caliphs'). Such a contrast has been reflected through the centuries in the continuing controversy regarding the application and interpretation of the concept of *jihād* and other dogmas. On the basis of the sacred texts, the jurists of the four schools of orthodox Sunni Islam identified a number of 'combat zones' where forces of disequilibrium were at work with detrimental effects to the faith, the community of believers and the just social order and where (external) *jihād* thus would be lawful: *jihād* against unbelievers and *jihād* against sedition and subversion inside the religious community.

The internal forces of disturbance could here take the form of tyranny, crime, vice, corruption, heresy and rebellion. Clearly, the concept of *jihād* hereby came to occupy a central position in the internal power struggles within the Muslim community with the question of who had authority to declare *jihād* being crucial (Schleifer 1983a: 126-127, see also Schleifer 1983b).

However, while the issue of *jihād* directed against an external enemy of Islam created political unity against the infidels, it did not

ensure internal unity. A case in point is the endemic power and succession struggles from which Afghanistan suffered during the nineteenth century in which the concept of *jihād* was repeatedly evoked. Any contender to the throne would seek to obtain a *fatwā* (religious pronouncement from a *muftī*) denouncing his opponent as an apostate of Islam, perhaps because of alleged cooperation with non-Muslims, an offence which would justify a *jihād* against him. The actual ruler, for his part, would declare *jihād* against sedition and subversion (*fitna*). While the ability to lead or direct *jihād* was the prerogative of the ruler, it could not be done without the sanctioning of the *ʿulamā*, who consequently became party to all internal political power struggles.

Barakat as a Political Factor

Religious authority has thus constituted and to a greater extent still constitutes a key factor in the credibility and reception of any ideological discourse in Muslim society, including acceptance of the exercise of power as being legitimate. Religious authority can, broadly speaking, be said to be based on scriptural knowledge (as in the case of *ʿulamā*), sacred descent, or on mystical association, on which basis individuals claim to represent God and to have rightful authority over others and over social institutions (Edwards 1986a: 273). Yet the position of the religious 'personnel' is *not* ideologically constituted by a state institution, however powerful, and the fact that they are servants of that other power, manifested in the Divine Message, means that they have a symbolic and ideological base. This base is, and can be seen to be, distinct from that of the rulers, even though these people may be subservient to and dependent upon the politically dominant group (Gilsenan 1982: 52). Thus, the religious 'personnel' constitute a potential threat to any state authority and have on numerous occasions throughout history actually challenged the existing ruler.

An important aspect of the religious authority of persons of holy descent and of mystical association, although *not* their exclusive prerogative, is the quality of *barakat* (blessing), with which in principle God can endow any Muslim. The outward sign of *barakat* is the manifestation of special positive powers (*karāmāt*, 'charisma') and abilities which can take on many different forms. These range from the demonstration of an extremely pious and ascetic lifestyle to the ability to issue a curative or protective *taʿwīz* (charm, amulet) and the performance of outright miracles, such as feeding an army on one loaf

of bread — or walking on water for that matter. A person's *barakat* in many cases has not been recognized until after his death, for example through miraculous events near his grave or curative powers connected to sacrifice and prayers at the grave which accordingly becomes a *zīyārat* (shrine or sacred tomb) . The claim on *barakat* can also have a more profane aspect as Pastner (1980) describes in relation to the 'competitive saints of the Baluch'. He states that although altruism and spiritual detachment are present in the exploits of many saints, more than half of all the cases he collected had as their dominant theme rivalry, either with other saints or with secular enemies, although such competition had been transmogrified to a supernatural plane (1980: 40). The outward manifestations of the sacred force, *karāmāt*, consequently can cross the boundary between the sacred and the profane, particularly in cases where the *pīr* (spiritual leader) utilizes his position in support of more mundane goals such as in the political field.

The display of *barakat* is matched by people's willingness to recognize *barakat*: 'Though the *pīr* himself does not fly, his followers would have him fly' (Ahmed 1975:15), and 'Though of straw, the *pīr* is still sufficient (in charismatic awe) for his disciple' as two Afghan proverbs express it. Whether or not the *pīr* actually performs his amazing deeds is ultimately irrelevant. His followers must believe that he does, and as stories about a particular *pīr* are embellished, so too grows the sense of security and optimism of the believers (Pastner 1980:42).[6] This responsiveness to the existence of *barakat* should be viewed in the context that perhaps the most vital function of the *pīr*s is that they serve as tangible reminders to their followers that divine forces are present in this world, that the sufferings and setbacks of man's life are but a prelude to the delights awaiting the devout in Paradise (*ibid*). In other words, miracles have a very general significance in the construction of the meaning of experience; in local understanding of the nature and working of power and knowledge; as a commentary and a challenge to the everyday world and its dominant orders (Gilsenan 1982: 76).

The intersection of the existential and the historical interpellations of the individual thus brings about the 'sacralization' of worldly pursuits and this particular quality means that the miracles of the holy men are always potentially dangerous. Anything that opposes the given order of things, that disrupts causality, and which by definition is not controlled but comes from an external, non-human, transcendent source is in essence subversive. A miracle thus destabilizes, puts into doubt and demonstrates that God has chosen other instruments,

whereby the ruler's claims are contradicted (Gilsenan 1982: 77). Against this background it is clear that, when a *pīr* identifies with the political and social dissatisfaction and aspirations of his followers and puts his whole spiritual reputation into the service of a political protest movement (for example by declaring *jihād*), he can become a formidable leader.

Those who challenge the miracle or the *barakat* of the holy man, by the very fact of their doubt, risk showing that they are incapable of seeing the inner and 'true' world. Their attempt to discredit is thus taken as a triumphant demonstration of their own failure, and they are themselves discredited (*ibid:* 79-80). Entering politics, however, is for the *pīr* also like walking on a tightrope, as his reputation of spiritual power may become tainted and a political defeat will reflect negatively on the recognition of his *barakat.*[7] In fact, the Sufi attitude towards 'saints' miracles' (*karāmāt al-awliyā*) has general currency in the sense that while the existence of such miracles is recognized, the receiver of this gift of working miracles is supposed to display towards God all the more humility, submission, godly fear, abasement and self-contempt, and be all the more prompt in responding to God's claims on him. This humility and abasement on the saint's part are taken as a sign of the authenticity of the *karāmāt*, while the 'enemies of God' who work apparently similar deeds, become puffed up and attribute the merit to themselves alone.[8] The abstention from secular politics in the case of the *Ākhund* of Swat may be such an indication, and equally so the worldly pursuits of his descendants, who were unable to maintain the spiritual reputation of the *Ākhund*.

In the following chapters we shall see how religious dignitaries in Afghanistan have managed to utilize their spiritual authority in times of crisis to identify existing local grievances with the cause of Islam and under this ideological banner unite disparate groups in temporary alliances for a common cause. The channelling and formulation of *existing* dissatisfaction in society seem to be essential for the political role of the religious leaders - i.e. like a banner the mullah shows his beauty in a head wind.[9]

The Aesthetics of Reception

In the above, it has been pointed out that for a political ideology to come into existence and meet with some success, it requires 'a cultural tradition from which to deviate and from which to draw the elements which it intensifies and raises to centrality' (Shils 1968: 69). The

problem, however, remains how to determine what constitutes mere embellishment and what is real integration of religious, popular-democratic or other elements in a political discourse. For example, was the appeal to Islam and the tribal code by the PDPA regime in Afghanistan mere rhetoric and 'window-dressing' or did it represent a real attempt at integrating Islamic and tribal elements in the regime's ideological discourse?

The general issue of 'hypocrisy versus sincerity' has probably always been inherent in political discourses. In the Muslim world the issue gained particular prominence in relation to one of last century's great Muslims thinkers, *Sayyid* Jamal ud-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), who devoted his life to the propagation of pan-Islamism and anti-imperialism. The political expression of pan-Islamism was a response to the colonial expansion in the Muslim world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and constituted a search for a unifying ideology which could mobilize the believers to join forces and resist the colonial, infidel onslaught. The pan-Islamism of Jamal ud-Din al-Afghani and Mohammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) was its most prominent expression. They explained the success so far enjoyed by the colonial powers by pointing to the weakness inherent in Muslim societies, which had given the European powers a chance to intrude into the Islamic world. According to the pan-Islamists, the ultimate weakness was religious laxity and decay, and the abandonment of the principles of Islam. Hence, the solution to the problems was clear and simple: the purification of Islam by returning to its original principles and purging it of un-Islamic innovations and corruptions. The monotheistic character of Islam was stressed and all kinds of polytheism (*shirk*) and unbelief (*kufr*) condemned (Peters 1979: 153).

The recourse to Sharīᶜa was for al-Afghani and the pan-Islamists a means, rather than a goal in itself. The Sharīᶜa, and the universal caliphate that it was employed to justify, existed as a moral resource to be utilized for the sake of *jihād*, which for them was the exoteric and central form of resistance to imperialism, and for the sake of Muslim unity. This was 'a total reversion of the traditional Islamic order wherein the jihad exists to be employed by the Caliph (State) for the sake of its universal mission of implementing Shari'a...' (Schleifer 1984: 40-41). In contrast to modern apologetics, al-Afghani reaffirmed the combative nature of Islam, but it was a combativeness drained of spiritual content, deprived of any accompanying contemplative dimension; it was a combativeness for the sake of political dynamics (*ibid*). As a consequence, in spite of his undoubted devotion to engineering a Muslim renaissance, al-Afghani's religious credibility

has been strongly doubted, with accusations of him being a Freethinker and consequently hypocritical and manipulative in all his religious writings.[10]

Keddie has addressed this whole issue in terms of a discussion of 'symbols and sincerity in the Islamic discourse' (1963). She points out that the revealed nature of the Qurʾān has made belief in its divine character a prerequisite for membership in the Muslim community, and has thus forced all discourses to relate to, or at least not openly challenge, this position. Hence, even the most aberrant of sects, unorthodox mystical orders as well as the modernists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries formally claimed Islamic legitimacy for their ideas. This outward ideological conformity has probably always, even inevitably, gone hand in hand with a marked elitist attitude:

> One's own group — the theologians, the philosophers, a single sect or Sufi order — was often regarded as the only one whose members were capable of apprehending the full truth, while for the rest of the Muslims literalist belief in the law was accepted as the best goal. The idea of levels of teaching corresponding to the level of the hearer was present in orthodoxy as well as among the Sufis and the sects, and contradictory ideas directed to different audiences have been attributed to the theologians as well as the philosophers. (Keddie 1963: 33-34)

This standpoint had been expressed bluntly by the respected theologian, al-Ghazali (A.D. 1058-1111), who expressed the view that the *ʿulamā* should refrain from trying to explain difficult questions to the masses and from giving them the true symbolic meaning of texts. Only those for whom literal interpretations open up doubts and give rise to difficulties which cause them to lose faith should be exposed to any non-literal interpretation, and the truest interpretation should be reserved for those who devote themselves wholly to knowing God. There were thus held to be three levels of argument and the level of argument used must be adapted to the person (*ibid:* 44-45).

This distinction between different levels of expression and understanding in religious discourse also permeates Sufi thought in terms of a dualism between the 'apparent', 'exterior' (*ẓāhir*) and the 'real', 'interior' (*bāṭin*). The exoteric aspect of Islam, with its focus on adherence to Sharīʿa and the pillars of the faith, is essentially community-oriented, striving to establish the just society on earth. In contrast, Sufism, with its focus on the inner dimensions of the faith, is fundamentally individual-oriented in its search for the purity of the soul. And where in the exoteric aspects of faith the way to God (in

principle) is one, in the esoteric aspects, there are many ways (Nasr 1980). Sufism thus operates with the concept of the existence of a spiritual world beyond the temporal world, the spiritual world being the 'real' and 'true' world but veiled by the illusionary manifestations of the temporal world. Sufism has left a strong impact upon the spiritual life of the Muslim world and is, for example, reflected in most Persian poetry, describing the soul's longing for God, often symbolically expressed in the relationship between man and youth (Asmussen 1981: 367). Its metaphysical speculations and allegorical and symbolic expressions often balance on the verge of blasphemy and its *literal* expressions can even topple into heresy.

The whole tradition of discourse in Muslim societies has been characterized by an inevitable Islamic content while symbolic and allegorical interpretations of texts and speeches have flourished, giving at least the Arabic and Farsi languages their special qualities of double-entendre. This culturally defined pattern of discourse precludes too literal an interpretation and provides the field of exchange between the transmitter and receiver of a given ideological discourse with a fluidity and flexibility of meaning which, yet again, serves as a warning against a reductionist approach to the analysis of ideology.

Given the premises of the 'Muslim discourse', the ultimate judge of what is 'real' and 'fake' must necessarily be the 'recipient' of the discourse, the group who is addressed through this interpellation — as in the case of accepting the *pīr*'s claim of *barakat*. This would lead us to what can be called the aesthetics of reception: how a discourse (oral or written) is received by listeners and readers. As pointed out by Arkoun (1988: 58), this question can only be answered by reference to the conditions of perception fixed by each culture, or, more precisely, each level of culture corresponding to each social group in each phase of historical development. In other words, legitimacy, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder which means that the validity of any claim or challenge to legitimacy (or any ideological discourse for that matter) is determined by its reception in the wider population. Consequently, the struggle for legitimacy is a struggle over 'the thoughts and minds' of the recipients of the discourse.

In the following chapters, we shall try to show how different social groups at various times have attempted to integrate religious elements and appealed to religious authority in their competing ideological discourses in their struggle for state power in Afghanistan — as well as to look into the conditions for the comparative success and failure of these different attempts.

Notes

1 "To be able to speak of a popular-democratic interpellation, the subject addressed as 'the people' must be so in terms of an antagonistic relationship regarding the dominant bloc" (Laclau 1977: 107).

2 See Fischer (1980) for a fascinating study of the articulation of religious legends, symbols etc. within the political discourses leading up to the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

3 Legitimacy is the foundation of such governmental power as is exercised both with a consciousness on the government's part that it has a right to govern and with some recognition by the governed of that right. (D. Sternberger: 'Legitimacy', in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Macmillan, 1968, vol. 9: 244).

4 Peters (1979) discusses the concept of *jihād*, showing how it has changed from the early days of Islam, when any war against unbelievers was a *jihād* until today. See also Schleifer (1983b) for a discussion of the development of the doctrine of *jihād*.

5 This is based upon the Qur'ānic imperative *al-amru bil mar'uf wa'nahyn anil munkar* (to enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong).

6 See, for example, Edwards (1986a), referring to the miraculous deeds attributed to Afghan *pīrs*.

7 For further discussion of this aspect, see Edwards 1986a.

8 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 4: 615-616, Leiden, 1973.

9 Accounts of the more detailed personal history of 'activist' mullahs are unfortunately very scarce, so we are precluded from studying the details of the process of how they established themselves as politico-religious leaders. However Ahmed (1982) presents a case study of the activities in the early 1970s of the so-called Mullah Wazir in South Waziristan, which gives many indications of how a mullah in a closed community can shift the role of a lower religious functionary to a veritable and dangerous political activist.

10 For a thorough study of al-Afghani and his ideas, see Keddie (1968, 1972).