

Symbol and Sentiment in Motivated Action

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A problem: The relation of culture to human motivation

Human action is by definition motivated -- but how are the forms of culture engaged in human motivated action? *1 Whatever our view of human motivation we cannot talk about it without referring to the symbolic forms that enable human experience and action, for humans exist by dependence on symbols. As Richard Wilks says, issues of motive [lurk] beneath every modern social science theory of practice and decision making (Wilks 1993:191). Consider the debate between Obeyesekere (1992) and Sahlins (1995 and earlier works) over how to interpret the Hawaiians' response to Captain Cook. Obeyesekere takes the Hawaiians to be pragmatic, calculating, and rational; Sahlins takes them to be informed by a total cultural system of human action. The debate is essentially over how to describe the relation of motivated action to culture. Obeyesekere accuses Sahlins of reifying culture and so making the Hawaiians into mere irrational primitives, overdetermined by signs. Sahlins accuses Obeyesekere of imputing to the Hawaiians the utilitarian rationality of modern bourgeois society. So they make contrary assumptions about how the forms of culture work in actual practice: from one point of view culture serves as a "tool" of reflective, calculating actors (Obeyesekere); from another it is an authoritative source of understanding, an orientation to an axiomatic reality (Sahlins). It is a familiar clash exemplified in many debates in the past (Andrew Lang versus Max Müller, Malinowski versus Radcliffe-Brown, Harris versus Sahlins, and so on).

This is an essay about the relation of human motivations to culture. It aims essentially to articulate certain assumptions already implicit in anthropological practice but not generally recognized, specifically to formulate the nature of motivated behavior, especially sacrificial behavior. I begin with a brief reference to the problem of the assiduous religious practice of the peoples of Afghanistan, and then offer an explanation for their practice and propose a way to understand religious motivations generally, especially acts of self-immolation. The presentation is programmatic in the interest of brevity, offered as a kind of etic exercise in the sense intended by the late Kenneth L. Pike, who introduced the term *etics* to indicate the attempt of a discipline to formulate frames of reference, concepts and priorities, ways of seeing, by which to examine its object (Headland, Pike, Harris 1990). In this case I propose an analytical scaffolding composed of concepts about human motives and sentiments as they relate to the forms of culture.

The problem of assiduous religious practice in Afghanistan

I was led into the question of how to describe motives for human action by the evident religiosity of the Afghanistan peoples among whom I lived off and on in the 1950s and 1960s. I was struck, as were other visitors to the country including Muslims from elsewhere, by the assiduous religious practice of the Afghan people. Limitations of space prohibit specific elaboration of their religious behavior here -- and anyway the anti-Soviet mujahedin fighters displayed a religious zeal that is now considered typical of Afghanistan in the West. So I ask you to accept without further evidence my claim that the Afghan people in the pre-war period (before 1978) were relatively more faithful in their ritual observances than Muslims elsewhere. But I must add three codicils. First, Afghanistan, unlike almost any other place in Asia, was never subjugated by Western powers, so that its inhabitants practiced their faith as a common sense way of life, with a naturalness quite different from the aggressive tone of the now notorious extremists who deploy Islamic idioms to legitimize their causes. Second, the Soviet-mujahedin conflict heightened among many Afghans the importance of Islamic practice as a public statement of national solidarity. Third, the religion of the Taliban who dominated most of the country between 1996 and the end of 2001 bore little resemblance to that of most Afghans before the war (Rashid 2000).

My solution: three answers that taken together seem to provide a necessary and sufficient explanation

How can we explain the predominant assiduity of religious practice among the Muslims in Afghanistan in the 1950s and 1960s? Three answers, taken together, seem to provide a necessary and sufficient explanation.

Answer 1. Social and political conditions

The first answer refers to the social and political conditions within the country. For generations Islam has been the dominant religion and has provided the idioms of moral obligation. Islam was characteristically invoked to legitimate authority and public causes. The "founder" of the country, Ahmad Shah Abdali, took a religious title after he was "crowned" Amir by a notable religious authority, and every other ruler after him similarly claimed a special Islamic title (at least until 1973). Furthermore, among the ordinary populations religious practice was considered a form of communal solidarity. Also, sectarian loyalties were important idioms of social definition; the sectarian groups sometimes clashed so that dogmatic differences became important indicators of social and political identity. In addition to these internal sociopolitical relations international conflicts with non-Muslim imperial powers in the past -- notably the British and Russians in the nineteenth century -- helped to strengthen the conviction among the local inhabitants that they stood as Muslims against a threatening non-Muslim world. So a commitment to the religion of the community was taken to be a sign of solidarity.

Thus, briefly, the political and social conditions inside the country and in the wider international scene generally fostered a sense of religious identity; religious practice was a kind of public statement. Since the overwhelming demands of the social and political situation supported Islam as the public idiom of virtue, the residents of the country had good social and political inducements for observing Islamic rituals to express their communal loyalty.

Answer 2. Islamic rituals of many sorts are a resource for coping with life.

Among the Afghan people I knew, who generally had little access to biomedical

resources, definitions of disease and misfortune were informed by a tradition associated with Islam. For most people, especially the rural populations but also many educated urbanites who otherwise had secular inclinations, the conceptions of what caused disease and misfortune were informed by a "folk" understanding of Islam, so that certain rituals were considered means of efficacy. Attendance to shrines, wearing of amulets, the recitation of prayers and incantations were presumed helpful in curing, divining, and maintaining well-being.

Thus, another reason for the assiduous religious practice of many Afghan Muslims was their belief that it was profitable or beneficial for their personal and social welfare.

Answer 3. Islamic practice expresses and shows deference to virtual truths.

Now, while many of the people I knew would accept that these two considerations were reasons for religious practice, none of them would have offered them as reasons for their own religious observance. If I asked them why they prayed or kept the fast during Ramadan or sacrificed a sheepon the Id-i Qurban festival, or why they chose to pay a costly visit to a shrine to fulfill a vow (as some of our American-educated friends did), they would tell me that their acts of worship were only what was right to do before God. Their behavior was an acknowledgement of a moral universe to which good people should submit. Indeed, an honorable person was, in common speech, a "musulmân âdam." Such a person seeks to relate to spiritual things for what they are; and God's requirements, whatever they are, enjoin compliance.

Certainly the pietistic tradition of Afghanistan Islam takes this view. Its literature is replete with stories about the heroes of religion whose devotion reveals a commitment to God's will. In *Qasas-ul-Anbiya*, "Stories of the Prophets," 2* there is a story about Job (according to Islam he was tormented by worms) who, when a worm fell from his body, picked it up and returned it to its place, lest in any way he should seem not to accept God's will. He would never, so the story goes, act for his personal comfort. In the abstract and ideal sense action for selfish or practical interest is unseemly, unworthy of authentic obedience to God. Of course the Afghan people I knew believed it was permissible to use means to get relief from distress, and those means could include religious activities. Practical motives for religious behavior was acceptable when necessary, but they also took it for granted that obedience to God was after all axiomatic.

So another reason for the assiduous religious practice of at least some Afghans at least some of the time was their deference to the higher moral values entailed in the Islamic revelation.

Summary and review of the scope of these answers

These explanations for the assiduous religious practice of the Afghans point to the distinctive sociocultural contexts of such practice. Answer 1 (the political and social context of religious practice) directs attention to the specific social and political conditions of life among those people. Because the whole moral ambiance of social life was framed in Islamic terms, moral discourse and the rituals of collective loyalty were explicitly Islamic. Islamic practice was a mark of public loyalty. This answer explains, I think, why people *in Afghanistan* appeared to be so assiduous in their religious practice, at least in public circumstances. Answer 2 (the presumed advantages for health and well-being of religious observance) directs attention to the benefits of religious practice for the individual. Like all human beings, the Afghanistan peoples were under stress, and their

religion offered them efficacious means for dealing with their distresses, either to cure them, avoid them, or relieve them. This explanation suggests reasons why *Muslims generally* believe it is good to practice their faith. The rituals are beneficial, profitable. Answer 3 directs our attention to reasons for religious practice that transcend practical or beneficial interests. People deferred to the enduring, pervasive qualities of the cosmos that gave meaning to their existence and constrained them to behave morally, to do things that on other grounds might seem unduly costly and unprofitable. This explanation directs our attention to why *devoted people generally* practice their faith: that is, because they recognize and defer to entities taken to be transcendent, morally compelling.

Assumptions about human experience, motives and culture in this explanation

This argument assumes a relation of human experience to human motivations that bears on the concept of culture, specifically on the broadly accepted notion that the dispositions of human beings are realized in and sublimated in cultural (that is, symbolic) forms. As culture is the human mode of apprehending reality, it constitutes the distinctive human niche. Everything real -- bales of hay, yokes of oxen, the calendar, justice, God, jinns, fear, love -- is by definition identified and understood by means of symbolic forms. From this broadly accepted concept of culture I draw three implications not widely appreciated: (1) that the shared experience of a communicating public is reflected in the repertoire of symbolic forms that characterize their social life; (2) that the more nuanced, complex symbols of the repertoire are the symbolic devices through which sacrificial or altruistic behavior is motivated; and (3) that explanations of human action in terms of utilitarian rationality or determining signs are not necessarily contradictory, as they focus on different ways the spectrum of symbols in the cultural repertoire are entailed in human action. The latter distinction enables us to identify some critical ways cultural forms are enlisted in social and political action, especially to note a difference between the way they are used for social or political purposes and the way they function in actions that seem altruistic or self-sacrificial.

The complexities of human sentiment are traced in the elements of culture

I assume that human beings live in "a world of essential ambiguity and multivalence" (Wikan 1993:13), that their "'imaginative' and 'emotional' life is always and everywhere rich and complex" (Turner 1969:3), and in concert with this circumstance, the multiplicity of human sentiments is mirrored in the symbolic forms that make thought, word, and action possible. Symbols accomplish this seeming correspondence by acquiring meanings as they are deployed in practice, as people attempt to make their lives more comfortable, secure, predictable, and understandable. As human beings interact with their social and existential "reality" the symbolic forms through which they apprehend it take on an apparent likeness to it and an image of their experience of it, conforming to that reality according to symbolic schemes that are never the only ones possible. 3*

Symbols have a semantically simple or denotative sense, in which case they refer to the surface levels of human experience, those aspects of human experience and understanding that are concerned with the conscious attempt to deal with issues of life and social affairs. Symbols in this sense refer to or correspond with "surface level"

feelings and stand for entities presumed to exist substantively and to operate mechanistically. But in the repertoire of a communicating public some symbols are semantically more complex than others and bear a range of other nuances associated variously with more subtle levels of human experience, some of which are emotionally "deep." The more diverse in meaning symbols are, the more emotional complexity they may represent. The "milk tree" among the Ndembu people of Africa, for example, stands for many things: women's breasts, breast milk, the tie of nurturing between mother and child, domestic social ties, the matrilineal bonds of the Ndembu community, the principles and values of Ndembu social organization, tribal custom, the unity and continuity of the community, even "powerful unconscious wishes" (Turner 1967: 20 ff.). Such meanings are enacted -- and therefore taught, internalized, and reproduced -- through the rituals associated with the milk tree, notably those celebrating the arrival of puberty.

Multivocalic symbols like the milk tree among the Ndembu can represent emotional struggles and may become the terms for deep psychic turbulence. They may stand for moral entities in the sense that they objectify feelings of anchorage into a world whose principles and values are of enduring and general significance. While symbolic forms taken in their matter of fact sense index only specific things and mechanistic processes, those symbols that also carry additional nuances may represent entities that are moral, transcendent and emotionally engaging. In this sense multivocalic symbols can represent much that is important to the self -- not only the overarching cosmology of higher values but also the more visceral of human sensibilities, deeply felt worries and anxieties. Turner says such symbols anchor not only "up" in the rarified stratosphere of ultimate values but also "down" in the inexpressible depths of bodily pain (Turner 1967:27 ff.). So they are more than a storehouse of ideas that sort the world into usable categories; they are also a "powerhouse," representing ideals deeply longed for and profoundly sensed (Turner 1968:2). Such symbols can be metaphors for the ideals, hopes, and fears of individual subjectivities.

This relationship of symbolic repertoires to the subtleties of experience can be graphically indicated in a diagram (Figure 1) on which the cultural elements (such as the lexicon) of a communicating public are arranged according to their relative semantic weight or vocality, those bearing the heaviest semantic load clustered at one end of the scale and those bearing a relatively light semantic load at the other. 4* The scale represents the collective life of a people, their emotional ontology, as it were, as it is manifest in the repertoire of symbols available to them. 5* That is, all the forms in a cultural repertoire, since they objectify thought and feeling, are alike in having a denotative sense, but the symbolic forms that bear a variety of meanings have more emotional value in that they are forms through which individuals conceptually and emotionally engage with entities believed to have significance beyond their quotidian affairs (Lewis 1961). Such imagined realities are in this sense taken by individuals as ready-made, as representations of things and processes of general significance. In Lewis's terms they are received. Through the semantically complex forms of culture people acknowledge some entities as transcendent and axiomatic -- receiving the kingdom of God like a child, granting certain axioms the power to enchant, accepting some principles as solutions to the great questions. Also, through such heavily-nuanced symbols people come to visualize themselves, identify with certain entities of enduring

importance, place themselves in meaningful "worlds," on stages of cosmological significance.

The more nuanced, multivocalic symbols in a cultural repertoire are the symbolic devices through which sacrificial behavior may be induced.

The whole semantic repertoire is of course available for use, that is, for practical ends, but the effect of multivocalic symbols representing transcendent values is to objectify moral constraints on behavior. The most extreme behavioral manifestations of internalized notions of transcendent values is self-immolation. When people sacrifice themselves -- Irish separatists hunger-striking in Belfast, Tamilese assassins blowing themselves up along with targeted Sri Lankan officials, al Qaeda assailants bombing an American warship -- they appear to be acting out of a commitment to causes whose importance they believe supersedes their own interests, even their own lives. Motivation of this sort seems to challenge our usual assumptions about human motivations. If a Palestinian youngster courts death in a clash with Israeli troops (New York Times, Oct 8, 2000), is it not necessary to identify the special sense in which his semantic world not only informs but also induces action? Behavior of this sort reveals that some conceptions of the world are not only received as axiomatic but as compelling.

It seems crucial that a human science worthy of its name recognize the particular way that this sort of self-sacrificial action is symbolically driven as well as symbolically informed. Let us call this kind of inducement to action "deference motives" to distinguish such intentions from the "instrumental motives" that are generally assumed in social science discourse. By *instrumental motives* we mean, of course, practical or gainful inducements to human action. Instrumentally driven behavior pursues interests, establishes cultural practices, conventionalizes and legitimizes behavior as people seek sustenance, security, and comfort (Harris 1979: 55 ff.). The "reality" driven by instrumental concerns is a reality apprehended for use; if it is not easily apprehended there is the presumption that eventually it could be specified, identified, and so its mechanisms could be predicted and modified or otherwise tooled for use. From the instrumentalist point of view humans are driven by practical quests so that even relations that appear altruistic, without interest, are taken to be at base driven by a search for gain: kinship, neighborhood, and cooperative enterprises, says Bourdieu, are inevitably interested ; and [g]iving is a way of possessing (Bourdieu 1977:171; 1991:24). So the conventions of social life turn out to be devices for seeking gain. They are (a la Malinowski, Marvin Harris, and other materialists, of course) tools.

By *deference motives* for action, I mean inducements that arise out of the human propensity to internalize and visualize transcendence, to grasp "the order and natural structure of the universe" (Bateson 1972 [1949]: 119). Deference motives for human action are linked to symbols that "refer to values that are regarded as ends in themselves, that is, to axiomatic values" (Turner 1967: 20). Turner believes such symbols enshrine "... the crucial values of the believing community, ... whose ultimate unity resides in its orientation towards transcendental and invisible powers" (Turner 1968:2). Symbols of this sort "instigate social actions. ... [T]hey may even be described as 'forces,' in that they are determinable influences inclining persons and groups to action" (1967: 36; Kafperer 1988; Hollon 2000). In so far as they do so, they engage deeply sensitive levels of experience, feelings that are visceral, sometimes expressed subconsciously as in dreams. There are instrumental uses for all symbols, but multivocalic symbols can

represent deep sentiments and commitments that can be engaged in action. *6

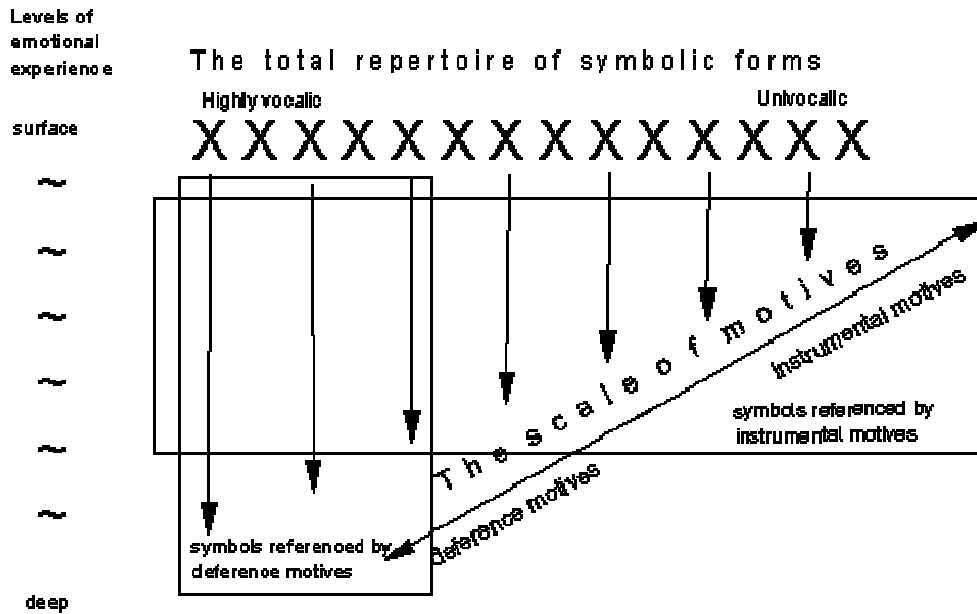
The "reality" that a person driven by deferential motives deals with (to describe them in stark terms) is informed by symbols bearing many nuances -- words like sincerity, justice, and purity, and objects like the Vietnam Memorial, the cross, the swastika, images of the Virgin of Guadalupe which evoke notions of universality, immutability. They imply entities worthy of respect, perhaps enchanted, even wild, untamable -- great truths to be accepted, taken for granted, too sublime for manipulation or exploitation. But having multiple meanings they are essentially ambiguous. They are the kinds of symbols invoked in politics and religion, representing values of a normative sort, to which a diverse public can attach various meanings (Wilner 1984). Because their nuances are diffuse they may be applied to a variety of contexts to represent significant notions, but always with a greater chance for confusion or disagreement as to the proper context of their use.

The term "deference motives" is intended to objectify the notion that human beings act (sometimes) as if their lives (to some degree) are framed by axiomatic principles. In such instances notions of transcendent significance connected to notions of a moral reality seem to have been internalized and so constituted as the moral context of life and behavior.

Recognizing that no behavior is driven by a single motive, we can put the matter in simple terms: behavior driven by "reason" or conscious intention entails the use of cultural forms for instrumental purposes; behavior driven by deep convictions of moral import entails the internalization of ideals enshrined in multivocalic symbols. We regard these two kinds of motivation as merely the two ends of a continuum, in between which there is a mixture of inducements to action, partly practical and partly deferential, in which both kinds of motives are to some degree involved (Wilks 1993). Just as human experience is a *mélange* of feelings, human action is normally impelled by several motives, some practical, some deferential. There can be several motives for a particular action, all of them symbolically constituted.

This is what Figure 2 (below) represents: In the abstract there are two kinds of motives for human action and they relate to the cultural repertoire in a different way: The whole repertoire can be deployed for instrumental purposes. At the same time some symbolic forms in the repertoire are the means of orientation to a moral, transcendent reality and so inform and shape behavior of the sort we call deferential.

Figure 2: Relation of motives to the symbolic complexity of the symbolic repertoire



Descriptions of culture as a resource utilized for practical ends and of culture as a system of determining signs are not contradictory but different ways of seeing how the spectrum of cultural forms is engaged in social practice.

Studies of cultural practice as impelled by instrumental concerns or as driven by deferential concerns produce different kinds of ethnographic reports, but they are not contradictory. They can be complementary. Each approach to human action provides a certain insight into the human condition. Compare for example two works on South Asian Culture. Steve Derné (1995: vii-viii) takes the action of North Indian Hindu men to be instrumentally driven. They are "motivated by social pressures" and their cultural context "constrains individuals and affects their emotions, social life, and social institutions." The central question is how people "manipulate cultural components to attribute meaning to action." Derné assumes that social life is carried on on a self-aware level of experience: People are vitally engaged with their circumstances, events are consciously perceived, the causes of sensations are presumed to be known, and thoughts are (or can be) rationally articulated. In that sense the cultural forms index "surface" experiences, as if human sentimental worlds were semantically simple.

Regula Qureshi (2000), on the other hand, describes how a musical instrument, the sarangi, has become iconic for some modern South Asians. Its timbre and melody have acquired a profusion of associations -- images of sensual feminine dancers amid the sumptuary elegance of bygone princely courts, pious jogis singing devotional ballads "to the unseen God" in which they express "profound sadness and detachment from the world," and (in the modern period) the convoluted tales of romantic Hindu films. Encoded in its sound and form are "pasts remembered, ... stories both detailed and dim ...," "layers of locally specific, historically situated, materially perceived musical practices ... that both cue nostalgia and sustain identification that is socially as well as

religiously, culturally, and politically referenced" (Qureshi 2000: 813, 829). The sounds of the sarangi have at times served as a medium for sharing deep emotions: it has been played on All India Radio upon the deaths of notable persons (Nehru, Indira Gandhi), enabling the individual feelings of a dispersed audience to become "public, shared, and exterior." In such moments "bonds of shared responses [become] as deep and intimate as they are broad and universal" (2000: 810). It is from such public wellsprings of collective sentiment that cooperative action is inspired.

Each of these studies presents the human condition in India in a certain light. People in India are no doubt motivated by practical concerns as Derrida so eloquently describes. At the same time people in India presumably live with anxieties about fundamental issues that are symbolically linked to various kinds of cultural forms, and Quraishi explicates how sarangi music in certain contexts objectifies shared feelings of nostalgia, sadness, and worldly detachment among the peoples of India. The two reports on social conventions in India are complementary, not contradictory.

Rhetoric, commitment, and sacrificial behavior

Our focus on variations in connotative complexity in the forms of a symbolic repertoire, it should be noted, contrasts with the variations in meaning recognized by de Saussure. For him the signs in symbolic systems map semantic relations by mutually determining each other's meanings, in which case the variance among them is denotative. We note here a different sense in which symbols vary, that is, in their connotative richness. Those symbols most pregnant with meaning and nuance have a particular importance for anthropologists because, as they enshrine deeply felt sentiments -- anxiety, dread, joy -- they may be enlisted for social and political purposes.

By noting a distinction between instrumental and deference motives for action we identify different ways that the cultural repertoire is engaged in political action. The forms of a culture function differently when they are deployed to define situations from when they are received as authentic characterizations of situations. The difference may be expressed with respect to the role of leadership versus that of followership. Those who would frame the nature of public situations ("leaders") so as to enlist the support of others ("followers") do so by appealing to "axiomatic values" of the sort enshrined in multivocalic symbols -- as when Franklin Roosevelt quoted the Bible in his fireside chats during the depression, when Ayatollah Khomeini appealed to the sacred authority of Hosain in his sermons to the Iranian people, or when Franjo Tudjman drew upon Catholic icons to legitimate his appeal for a separate Croatia (Wilner 1984:154-156; Mersipassi-Ashtiani 1994; Denich 1994). In so far as such appeals win broad support, they do so because, in their respective contexts, they infuse issues of immediate and broadly shared concern with locally accepted notions of ultimate truth. This kind of conjuncture of meanings is possible when the symbolic forms deployed to define situations successfully fuse two realities : that of immediate and practical concern and that of compelling moral significance. Behind every ideological claim stand axiomatic truths that resonate with deeply felt notions of value.

When action is taken in response to such claims it is informed by two kinds of circumstance: a material one, in which practical interests are at stake; and a moral one, in which ultimate values seem to be entailed. It is in this latter sense that multivocalic symbols may be said to instigate social actions, to be forces that incline persons and groups to action. In so far as an action seems sacrificial, altruistic, or self-

immolative, it is driven by notions of a sublime and principled reality. 7*

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Notes

1. For an anthropologist to discuss human motives is to blunder as a novice into realms beyond his competence. For one thing there is the nether world of human motives claimed by psychoanalysts, a subject so fraught with pitfalls that Victor Turner once, having ventured into it, withdrew with a shudder. I persist however because, like it or not, human motivations are inescapably implicit in the work of anthropologists. Here I merely seek to identify the motivations already implied in anthropological writing, with the hope that I will avoid affronting the sophisticated tastes of the psychotherapists who consider motivation to be their particular preserve. The other realm beyond his competence that a cultural anthropologist enters when discussing human motives is that of evolutionary psychology (sociobiology), where the explicit quest is to dissolve all "altruistic" motives into the assumption that there must be a selective advantage for every human trait. Here I merely take as given the motivational patterns that we find in humans as constituted; how they ever came to be that way is the problem yet to be resolved.

2. It should not be assumed that this medieval text has no relevance to current religious thought among the Afghanistan peoples. A similar work on the Islamic saints has recently been translated into Pushtu by Professor Khushal Habibi (2000).

3. The number of works that address how meanings are constructed in social contexts is too numerous to mention. See for example, besides the ones cited here, the writings of such authors as Fredrik Barth, Clifford Geertz, Bruce Kapferer, Lisa Malkki, Marshall Sahlins, Katherine Verdery.

4. This diagram is roughly similar to Edmund Leach's chart of the various forms of symbolic representation (1976).

5. To keep the presentation simple I assume a view of culture that was once more generally accepted among anthropologists than it is now, namely that the members of a communicating public share a common culture, so that their "culture" is in some unspecific sense "shared" by individual members of the society. I realize that it is more common today to regard a society's culture as a repertoire of symbolic forms available for use by competing interests in the society; cultural forms are in this sense deployed to define situations according to people's respective interests; from this point of view the members of a communicating public may hold competing cultural orientations, are differentially positioned, and for these and other reasons may clash over how situations are defined. From either concept of culture -- whether as the name for a shared worldview among members of a society or as the name for a body of symbolic resources that may be used variously by competing elements within a society -- anthropologists' conceptions of how culture functions in social life recognize the different ways that the cultural repertoire functions, in some cases as a tool, in others' as a means of apprehending a world, as a source of information and orientation.

6. Rosaldo in his essay (1989) on his sense of grief at the loss of his wife, Michelle Rosaldo, draws attention to the intensity and complexity of human emotion but he stresses that they are manifest in diverse expressive forms, not only in ritual. He points out that rituals don't always represent much that is deeply personal or significant; they

can merely be conventions whose meaning is merely formal, not emotionally ("deeply") engaging. He appeals for more sensitive treatments of deep human experience, which is always expressed in local conventions of practice. And he calls for a recognition of the "cultural force" of human emotion, because deep feelings motivate action. Among the Ilongot, he says, it impels such extreme acts as the decapitation of human beings, which they say enables bereaved men to "cast away their life burdens, including the rage in their grief" (1989:16). The force of deep feelings, Rosaldo says, is not represented in the amount of words expressed, for in fact some of the most profound feelings may be unexpressed in words, but rather in other manifestations of feeling (1989:20).

7. This view of experience and culture is, I suppose, consistent with Maslow's concept of the "self-actualized" individual, who may have "peak experiences," which are difficult to describe but may involve a momentary loss of self and feelings of transcendence. "Maslow believed that everyone is capable of having peak experiences, but he believed that self-actualized persons have these experiences more often. (Britannica Online: "motivation: self-actualization.")

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