Among the Pukhtun tribes of Pakistan the cognitive symbols of religion are as visible as they are seen to be important to their members in defining orthodox forms of religion, allocating status and measuring religiosity in society. I shall describe how sometimes trivial symbols like growing a beard indicate conformity with religious tradition and are interpreted as being of social significance. The symbols in society that I shall be describing constitute those perceived by members of society and therefore are seen through the actor's eyes. The symbols of religion are to be interpreted as both social and religious signposts in society, the former often overlapping with the latter. The role of religious groups as guardians and interpreters of Islamic mores and traditions will be discussed in the latter half of the paper.

My arguments will be supported by data gathered from field-work conducted in 1975-6 among the Mohmand tribe in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan (Ahmed 1980). The main arguments will be relevant to the sociology of religion in Islamic societies and particularly segmentary tribal groups. I will emphasize the sociological rather than the psychological forms of religion, i.e. the external, visible and explicit in society rather than the internal, atavistic and implicit in the minds of men. My explanation will thus be Weberian - 1962. A caveat regarding symbolism borrowed from a penetrating analysis of 'religion as a cultural system' is added:

To undertake the study of cultural activity - activity in which symbolism forms the positive content - is thus not to abandon social analysis for a Platonic cave of shadows, to enter into a mentalistic world of introspective psychology or, worse, speculative philosophy, and wander there forever in a haze of 'Cognitions', 'Affections', 'Conations', and other elusive entities (Geertz 1973: 5).

In my paper I shall thus heed Professor Geertz: 'Cultural acts, the construction, apprehension, and utilization of symbolic forms, are social events like any other; they are as public as marriage and as observable as agriculture' (ibid.).

The importance accorded to religious symbolism in society presupposes a connected and important point that Islamic tribes contain symbols that are universal within and common to the Islamic world. This raises important methodological and theoretical issues in the social sciences: Islamic tribes cannot be studied in isolation as have, for instance, certain segmentary tribes (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1970; Middleton and Tait 1970). Thus by an extension of the argument I am arguing that methodologically and theoretically to study an Islamic society in isolation is to remove an important dimension from it (Ahmed 1976, 1980).

The importance of the larger political framework of the Islamic world for Islamic societies, and their interconnection through universally accepted religious symbols, was one of the main points I wished to make in an earlier work (Ahmed 1976) and is a recognized social phenomenon (Coon 1952; Geil 1969a: 2; Hart 1976: 15-16; Tavakolian 1976). In this paper I will be concerned simply in stating how sociological roles and normative behaviour are explained within society by reference to what are locally understood and recognized as symbols derived from the main body of Islamic traditions. By the sociology of religion I will mean the location of cognitive and affective referents that determine, at least in part, social action among groups. The Pukhtun social world, its mores and norms, the symbols of its society, are embedded in and often identical to those of the wider world of Islam. Our concern with religion is not with its theology but as a cultural system that imposes social action that translates symbolic associations with the supernatural into material reality.

The methodology in this paper is based on an important assumption that the most obvious basis for religious behaviour is the one which any religious actor tells us about when we ask him - and, unlike some anthropologists, I believe him' (Spiro 1973: 112). I shall thus examine Islamic symbolism and its relevance in society through the eyes of the actors and accept their interpretation and apperception as a basis for analysis.

(A) RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM

In a sociological manner that almost echoes Durkheim, 'Islam is another name for Pukhtun society'. I wish to repeat my use of the word sociological. The Islamic symbols are clear and easily identified by the actors; perhaps their religious meaning in the ecclesiastical sense may not appear relevant or even comprehensible but their social significance is established by frequent recurrence. Religious groups ensure that these symbols are constantly activated partly to enhance their own social prestige and permit them a certain leverage in society. I am examining these symbols through the eyes of the actor and therefore what may appear superficial or even trivial ones remain significant in society. On one level I have heard in the mosque the sermon of the mullah of Bela Mohmand on Islamic symbolism in society. He talked of the keeping or not keeping of beards as a measure of religiosity, and as I did not have one it proved to be an
uncomfortable experience which would have been more so for any local man transgressing this norm. Shamshudin, a Bela elder, gravely confessed to me 'I am a sinner' (ze gonangar yam) in 1974 as he did not cultivate a beard. Shortly afterwards he began to make amends and now has one. Haji Hasan of Shati Khel, who has recently returned from the hajj (pilgrimage) and is basking in its glory, constantly turned beads in his hands, and asked me one favour only in our long friendship: for the love of God cut those English (kafir) side-burns'. When I obliged he was as pleased as a child and commented on this ceaselessly all the while blessing me. On another level religious leaders have repeatedly activated Islamic symbolism in their fight against the British. The Haji of Turangzai began his proclamation to the Mohmand for jihad (holy war) with quotations from the Holy Qur'an, as did his son Badshah Gul when he tried to prevent the British from constructing a road in the Gandab, in the Mohmand Agency, in the early 1930s. Badshah's pamphlets argued 'Anyone who friends with the British becomes the enemy of God and the Prophet' (Home Department, Tribal Research Cell, File 220: 203).

The unity of Pukhtunwali (code of the Pukhtuns) and Islam are symbolized and expressed in village social life by the physical juxtaposition of the mosque and the hujra (village guest-house). These two institutions are the focus of life in every settlement and village. They are built simultaneously and usually share a wall and/or courtyard. The Pukhtun accepts religion without doubts or questions, for there is no conflict between his Code and Islam. Indeed he sees the code as embedded in Islam, and where there is contradiction, as in the taking of interest for loans or not allowing women their rights, he accepts his guilt frankly. The reluctance to give property to women may well be tied up with the importance of geographical areas inhabited and associated with fixed sections and clans, parts of which run the risk of alienation through the marriage of women if they inherited property. In both cases the percentage who accepted the fact that they were indulging in un-Islamic practice was 100 per cent of the respondents answering my Formal Questionnaires. The problem for the Pukhtun is not one of accepting colonial law or tribal law but one of bringing Pukhtun custom into focus with accepted Islamic law. Deviances from Islamic law are partly legitimized in the eyes of society by a frank recognition of deviance and explained as Pukhto riwaj (custom) as if by such an explanation the guilt would be extenuated or even excused. 'Yes, there is a contradiction, we are wrong, but can a Pukhtun be anything but a Muslim?' His attitude to the Almighty is that of a favourite. Native exegesis rests on the assumption that the Pukhtuns were a favoured Islamic group. The Pukhtun carries no stigma of forcible conversion. His Islam reaches back to the origins of the religion. Like the bedouin with whom his tribal structure and sociological environment are so similar, he sees and feels close affinity to God that needs no translation and interpretation: 'The Beduin could not look for God within him; he was too sure that he was within God' (Lawrence 1962: 39). Obedience and submission; total loyalty of his will to the infinite power of the Almighty, that is all that is required of him and that is what he gives willingly. He is unburdened with religious dialectics and polemics, that, he says disparagingly, is for the religious men, the mullahs and Mians. He is by definition a Muslim just as by birth he obtains the inalienable right to Pukhtunness. His place in society as a Muslim and a Pukhtun are thus secure and defined from the moment of birth. However famous or infamous, high or low, good or bad he cannot be ousted from this niche. Islam, with Pukhtunwali and patrilineal descent, is seen as an attribute associated with Pukhtun identity (Barth 1970).

The Pukhtun defines himself as a Muslim and as this definition is intrinsically unequivocal it poses him no dilemmas. In any case, the absence of larger non-Muslim groups neither threaten his Muslimness nor prompt him to emphasize it. He may not have come to this conclusion after philosophic debate but to him there is no disjunction in being Muslim and being Pukhtun. This inherent belief in his Muslimness supported by the putative genealogical links to the Prophet through his apical ancestor, Qais ibn c Abd al-Rashid, assure him of his special relationship to God which, in turn, has two social consequences. First, the Pukhtun brand of Islam is as sociologically all-pervasive as it is tolerant. This partly explains why non-Muslim groups like Hindus and Sikhs live in security and freedom to worship in Tirah, an area which even non-Pukhtun Muslim groups would find inaccessible. Second, the complete confidence in his Muslimness constricts the role of religious groups and explains the continuation of Pukhto custom which contains non-Islamic elements such as the taking of usury and the denial of certain rights to women.

Pukhtunness and Muslimness do not have to coalesce, they are within each other, the interiority of the former is assumed in the latter. The Pukhtun defines and assesses Islam in terms of two fundamental sets of precepts: the first raises no problem to him and is intrinsic to his Pukhtunness, the belief in the foremost of the five pillars of Islam, the acceptance of the omnipotence and monism of God expressed in the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad (kalima). The second has social ramifications and may be defined as the other four pillars of Islam:

1. Prayers (munz) five times a day which most Pukhtuns, particularly after middle age, attempt to fulfill. For instance my local field assistants, although young men ranging from 21 to 27 years, would say their prayers five times a day, often interrupting a questionnaire.

2. Fasting (rojaj) from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan. Ramadan is universally respected and during this month almost every adult male or female fasts. To be seen eating
Religious presence and symbolism in Pukhtun society

women. For instance, the story of how the bee makes honey and the fly beats its head in a gesture of despair; the fly is said to have refused to collect the tear from the Prophet's face which the bee promptly gathered. The fly realizing its mistake now beats its head and rubs its forefoot in a gesture of eternal sorrow while the bee, being rewarded, is able to produce honey.

Personal names such as the Prophet's, Muhammad, and his agnatic descendants, Hasan and Husain, or those of his companions, Umar and Ali are very common among male Pukhtuns just as the names of his female kin like Ruqaya, his daughter, are common among females. For instance Shamsudin's daughter is called Ruqaya.

In the month when the Prophet was dying, his wives are said to have cooked chori (a mixture of flour, sugar or jaggery - gur - and oil) to distribute to the poor and this tradition is still kept alive. Chori is cooked and distributed in Mohmand villages during this month. Daily diet and items are affected by the dietary habits of the Prophet. He was said to prefer the simplest of foods and especially onions. Perhaps making a virtue out of necessity, mashars (elders) would explain the simplicity of their daily diet with reference to the Prophet's life.

Elders note the evil eye (nazar) stories from the life of the Prophet. Therefore, they argue, nazar has social meaning and is effective. Certain traditional measures are taken to avoid nazar. For instance a cow's skull or a black flag is placed on a new house so the nazar may shift to it and is negated. A black spot made of kohl powder is placed on a child's face to divert nazar.

A great deal of veneration and symbolism is attached to the objects associated with the two holy cities of Islam in Arabia, Makkah Sharif and Madina Sharif, that hajjis bring from the hajj and distribute in small quantities to their near and dear. 'Holy' water from the spring used by the Prophet (abayzamam) is stored safely to be sprinkled ritually on the coffin; dates (khorma); prayer-mats and rosaries; a simple white sheet called kappan, for coffin, to be wrapped around the corpse; and Makkay-Madinay khwra) is brought as an object of veneration. Makkay-Madinay khwra) is brought as an object of veneration. Such Arabic objects have a symbolic value far beyond their actual value in terms of money, especially as there is a continuing mystical and emotional attachment to them and they are commonly believed to act as cures for various diseases. Hajjis I interviewed talked of feeling spiritually uplifted (roshant).

Hajji Abdullah is said to be the first hajji among the Mohmand and Halimzai and Tarakzai when he performed the hajj in 1937. Since then he performed the hajj five times more. This contrasts with his arch-rivals and cousins Anmir and Shahzada who could afford to perform the hajj but refuse to do so for reasons discussed below. Recently more Shati Khel Malkis have been on the hajj. Before then Hajji Hasan, the non-Mohmand elder of Shati Khel, succinctly summed up, playing on the nuances of the Islamic
framework in society, that the dominant lineages 'were simply Pukhtuns' (Pukhtana woo).

Locally the newly achieved status of the hajji is balanced by the status of the Pukhtun mashar. I heard Shahzada and other mashars in both areas cynical about the entire business of hajj: 'they go to smuggle watches and cloth'. They would quote a saying attributed to the Prophet - 'the hajj decides a man's course for the rest of his life: he either returns very holy or very wicked' - and agree that the hajjis they know fall into the latter category. Shahzada would pointedly refer to his rivals. It is for this reason, they argue, that they would not go for the hajj. Nonetheless, and according to both formal and informal interviews, the hajj remains the main ambition of most people including women. The general economic situation of Bela is reflected in the fact that not one person has performed the hajj from the village. Hajji Gul, the Bela barber, has been given the name as he was born on Friday.

Shamshudin's wife, as indeed other Mohmand women, would discuss their hajj plans with my wife endlessly. They were clear in their minds, and their husbands had agreed that as soon as they had enough money they would perform the hajj rather than buy land or spend it on the education of their children. Though Shahzada and other Malik may deride hajjis, they are present at the 'seeing off' and 'receiving of' the hajjis. The receptions include a series of feasts and celebrations as participation is considered sawab (good deed). During this period hostilities are tacitly suspended to permit cross-factional visiting. Large Mohmand crowds gather at the railway station or airport in Peshawar with garlands, to see off and receive their kin, arriving in hired buses or cars decorated with buntings and coloured-paper otherwise used for marriages.

Pukhto names of days in the week and months in the year are said to contain Islamic symbolism: Pinzama (Tuesday), the fifth day, is dedicated to one of the greatest Sunni Saints, Hazrat Jilani of Baghdad. Shoro (Wednesday) is so called as God is said to have begun working on the world on this day. Ziarat (Thursday) and Jum'a (Friday) are recognized as the two holy days of the week when good Muslims should attend congregational prayers in the mosque. Thursday is considered auspicious for laying the foundation of a new building or starting cultivation, just as Friday is not. Friday is meant exclusively for prayers (du munz warz) and designated in Pukhto as such.

Certain Pukhto months of the year are associated directly with events from early Islamic social history centring around the life of the Prophet; native local exegesis reinforces larger Islamic culture and tradition. For instance there are the months of Muharram, generally called Ashan among the Mohmand after the two grandsons of the Prophet, Hasan and Husain, who were martyred; Rabii'al-Awwal in which the Prophet died and Roja, the month of Ramadan and fasting when the Holy Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet. No marriages or celebrations are held in these months. Warokay Akhtar (small CID) celebrating the end of Ramadan and the other month of Akhtar are months of happiness (khushali). Lowey Akhtar (big CID) derives from the incident when Abrah, the ancestor of the Prophet, almost sacrificed his son Ismail to appease God. Every home is expected to and does sacrifice (qurbani) which is then divided into three shares: the first is given to the poor, the second to poor kin and the third is kept for the house. Three, five or seven people, traditionally Islamic numbers, may join to sacrifice one cow. In the Mohmand Agency usually seven males pool together to sacrifice a cow costing about rupees 1,100. (3) Alternatively one sheep may be sacrificed by one man. The skin (sarman) of the cow, worth about Rs. 100, is for the mullah (de mullah shay day).

In his CID sermon the mullah talks of the unity of Islam and honour and shame (hayy), the general themes in Pukhto. I attended CID prayers in Shati and Bela; both occasions reflected social structure. In Bela, I sat quietly and unnoticed in one of the back rows where I felt I would observe better. Khan Muhammad (son of Husain), on leave from the Mohmand Rifles, was prominent in the front row, usually reserved for mashars, wearing his new clothes, leather-jacket, and karakuli cap. In the mosque of Shahzada I tried to stand in the back row but was called to the front by Shahzada to stand alongside him. He did not wish that the hierarchy which was based on age and lineage status be disturbed. In their selection of the CID day the two areas reflected their geographical and political situations. Bela celebrated the official government CID, and Shati, following Khorat, celebrated CID a day earlier. Shahzada celebrated both. The confusion invariably arises annually from different sightings of the new moon.

Hujras and rooms in the houses have bare walls except perhaps a calendar with the name of 'Allah' or 'Muhammad' calligraphied in colour or one depicting Islamic rulers. A popular poster displays the late King Faisal of Arabia being assassinated, signifying martyrdom (shahdat) and immortality in the next world. Symbolism of the transitory nature of human life and the permanence of God, a constant theme of the mullah, is physically present in the Bela mosque. There is a wooden plank (takhta) hanging in the mosque visible to all as a reminder of death in the midst of life, for on it males and females of Bela are placed after death as part of the funeral rites and taken to their graves.

In deference to general religious sentiments no radios or tape-recorders are allowed to be played in Mian Mandi, the market owned and controlled by the Mians and the main market of the Mohmands near Shati Khel. This tradition is not restricted to mere lip service and on various occasions while being driven by kashars (young), restive of tradition, through the Mandi I have seen them respecting the ban by promptly switching the car radio off. As a symbol of his Islamic post-hajj stance Hajji Hasan will not allow a radio in his house although his sons are
explained that the Muslims of today had forgotten God perhaps he had no reply. 

able alternative to orthodox Islam but in the Mohmand areas it is possible for religious emotion and ecstasy through religious emotion and ecstasy by the Pukhtun. The mumbo-jumbo and hocus-pocus of medicine men or priests have no place in his world. Religion is direct, monistic and personal. Not surprisingly there are no Sufi orders in Mohmand life: itinerant religious mendicants or temporary religious leaders, yes, but institutionalized Sufi or extra-worldly orders, no. There are no mystic or Sufi cults in the Tribal Areas except among the Shi'as of the Orakzai. (4) The difference in cognition was illustrated by an interesting confrontation between Ihsanullah, son of Shamshudin, and some other Mohmands, who were visiting me when I was Political Agent, Orakzai Agency, in 1977, and the Orakzai Shi'as when I took them to a dinner the latter had given for me. The Shi'as had promised to allow me to witness their special rites near Hangu, in the settled Kohat District, a privilege rarely afforded to non-Shi'as and given as a gesture of appreciation for my role in helping to solve the long-standing Shi'a-Sunni problem regarding the Shi'a Mian Ziafar dispute in Tirah. After dinner, the Shi'as, wearing no shoes, danced themselves into an ecstatic frenzy on an area covered with live and burning coal which they picked from time to time and put in their mouths. The interesting question raised in the discussion that subsequently followed was: what was the emic view of such ecstatic behaviour that transcended human physical pain? The Mohmands had never seen anything like it before and simply had no explanation for it. To them the entire performance was sheer mumbo-jumbo and so much magic (jado). The Shi'as explained their transcendence over physical pain through religious emotion and ecstasy (jazba). Like the Mohmand I confess I had never witnessed anything like this before. Was it jado or jazba?

In an illustrative conversation between Shamshudin and Husain Khan, a Bela elder known for his materialism, on mysticism in Islam, Shamshudin often thought of the meaning of Sufism and was attracted to the simple Sufi way of life. When I asked them to define Sufism Husain Khan replied 'It is nothing but a state of religious lunacy, madness (maligna)' . Shamshudin then turned to me and said 'Husain Khan is only interested in making money' to which Husain Khan replied 'God will give me money. This is God's work (da de Allah kar day)'. Husain then explained that the Muslims of today had forgotten God but that the people of old were saints (zargh) and martyrs (shahid). 'Today', he said, 'money counts'. Shamshudin did not answer; perhaps he had no reply.

In more complex social systems mysticism may be an acceptable alternative to orthodox Islam but in the Mohmand areas it is seen as surrogate for it and therefore consciously rejected. Hence the explanation of the Mohmand to Shi'a ecstatic trance as mere 'magic'. Just as the Pukhtun is politically iconoclastic he cannot be religiously hagiolatrous. Both conditions are defined by his social code and descent structure. It is significant that teachings of great scholars or saints or their shrines but is part of everyday tribal lore and common descent memory; this partly explains the lack of hagiolatry or anthropolatry among Mohmand tribes as among other Islamic societies (Ahmad 1964; Evans-Pritchard 1973; Gellner 1969a and b; Gilsenan 1973; Tringham 1973). The Islam of the Mohmands is puritanical, not syncretic or eclectic.

Sociologically it may be relevant to point out that Islam is over-emphasized by non-Mohmand groups perhaps to even out or obliteratethe elitism of the Pukhtun; similarly junior lineages peace heavy emphasis on Islam to perform a similar levelling operation against the elitism of the senior lineages. The maximum number of Hajjis are often among junior lineages. Hajji Hasan, and Hajji Qum, an elder of a junior lineage, would constantly use 'if God wills' (insha'Allah) or 'by the Grace of God' (masha'Allah) in their sentences. Hajji Qum would speak of the Mians with a reverence unimaginable among the senior lineage: 'They are pure, they stand for prayers and godliness'. Hajji Hasan repeatedly quoted the Prophet's maxim, 'to respect a haji means you respect me'. He would start sentences with a self-conscious 'I cannot speak lies (dorogh nasham waylay)'.

There is no correlation between economic development and lack of religiosity, as is apparent by a superficial visit to the Tribal Areas. Although the older generation, like Hajji Hasan and Shamshudin, may talk of the young as being less religious than themselves the fact is that almost the first investment that the younger Pukhtuns, earning money specially from the Gulf States, make is in a new cement mosque.

Perhaps the social bonds of religion within an extra-tribal framework may best be explained by two personal examples. On my tour of the Mullah Khel area, Badaon, as Political Agent of the Orakzai, there was considerable tenison. I was the first political officer ever to have come as far as Badaon, virtually overlooking the Afridi border of Tirah (and the most anacessible part of the Tribal Area), and to spend a night in the local hajra. It was no coincidence that this tension, which my junior officers felt so keenly, evaporated after I joined my Mullah Khel hosts at prayer in their mosque by the hajra. In another example, I was in an informal meeting in the evening with the Governor of the Province, when he asked some Mohmand Malik to join us just as the call to prayer (azan) was heard. To the Mohmand the equality in the prayer formation symbolized the sociological importance of a common religious system between those representing encapsulating systems and those in the process of encapsulation. Earlier, when he was Inspector-
General Frontier Corps, the Governor deliberately selected 'Islamic' days, such as Fridays, for special occasions like the raising of the Mohmand Rifles or the crossing of the Nahakk1 Pass.

Right is clean in Islam just as left is unclean and a certain amount of symbolism attaches to right and left and higher and lower in society. Food is eaten with the right hand while the left hand is used for blowing the nose or washing after defecation. The child is first suckled with the right breast. When a child is born the *azan*, the call to prayer, is said in his right ear. In prayer the right hand covers the left hand in the orthodox position. Charity is in the *khanqah*, while the angels are said to have been made by God himself and contains the holy Qur'anic verses. Qur'anic verses repeat the equality of believers before the omnipotence of God and that of man in relation to man in society. Qur'anic verses repeat the equality of man. However, the political sociology of Islam indicates the unique importance of descent in legitimizing or succeeding in political activity. The descendants of the Prophet, the Sayyids, provide the basis for social stratification in Islamic society and are generally considered a superior group. Ideally there is no social division within a Muslim community but a hierarchy is conceptualized and partly explained as indeed is social mobility, through economic differentiation. A common Pakistani proverb states: 'Last year I was a jolaha (weaver), this year I am a Shaikh (disciple of the Prophet) and next year if the prices rise I will be a Sayyid.' The saying is reflected in societies with forms of stratification (Beteille 1977: 143) and embodies the concept of upward mobility and 'Sanskritization' (Srinivas 1966).

There are no Sayyids among the Mohmand. Nonetheless Mohmand religious groups generally assume the name, and with it the status, of the next senior ranked group in the idealized Islamic hierarchy. For instance, the ignorance among Mohmands in differentiating a Sayyid from a Mian presumes two facts: a general ignorance of fine and fundamental religious matters and the limited importance attached to religious status. Apart from some mashars like Shazada and Shamshudin few people in Shati and Bela could distinguish a Sayyid from a Mian. Mians therefore get away by describing themselves as Sayyids and unless pressed for a specific definition, when he is uncertain, the tribesman describes them thus. A member of the religious group is generally defined by the Pukhtun as 'a Mian or *mullah man* (Mian *mullah saray*). It is as much a definition of a role as it is the delineating of status groups and social boundaries.
of action. Religious groups may also be called stanadar and respected for a negative reason.

The curses (khayray) of the stanadar are said to be effective. Mohmands often explain the fall of the Ranra lineage and the rise of their cousins the Musa lineage in Shati by the cursing of the former when they incurred the displeasure of the Mians almost a hundred years ago. So while Pukhtuns may not show Mians undue deference they will also not molest or insult them. Although there are no Sayyids in Bela Mohmandan the Mian of Bela calls himself and is called a Sayyid. For this reason I am wary of accepting Sayyid category among the Mohmand as most Mians prefer to be called badshah (king), a title given to Sayyids among Pukhtuns. Over the generations the descendants of Mians have assumed Sayyid status. The 'saint' defined as of their ownership and organization of the only and most central

jealousy are not a monopoly of the Pukhtuns. The present rise of their cousins the Musa lineage in Shati by the cursing of the former when they incurred the displeasure of the Mians almost a hundred years ago. So while Pukhtuns may not show Mians undue deference they will also not molest or insult them. Although there are no Sayyids in Bela Mohmandan the Mian of Bela calls himself and is called a Sayyid. For this reason I am wary of accepting Sayyid category among the Mohmand as most Mians prefer to be called badshah (king), a title given to Sayyids among Pukhtuns. Over the generations the descendants of Mians have assumed Sayyid status. The 'saint' defined as of their ownership and organization of the only and most central society clearly raise interesting questions. The Mian is aware that he is of superior social status to a member of the occupational group (qasabgar). In private he would even argue that as he bears the torch of faith and because of his putative
genealogical links with the Prophet (as a Sayyid) he is the equal, if not the superior, of the Pukhtun. Mian Jalil would say: 'we think we are socially higher, they think they are higher'.

The Mians, a community of about a hundred people in the Gandab, are the main religious group among the Mohmand and live in three small hamlets which have split from the main Mian village of Mian Kassai. Segmentary fissures and agnatic jealousy are not a monopoly of the Pukhtuns. The present respected social position of the Mians is largely a consequence of their ownership and organization of the only and most central market among the Mohmand, Mian Mandi. They are a self-contained social unit and do not keep hamsayas (tenants) or qasabgars. There are some recent examples, beginning in the 1960s, of Mians giving to and taking daughters from Pukhtuns, the latter being from junior lineages. Previously Mians were an entirely endogamous group often going to Afghanistan to their kin in Laghman to arrange marriages. Mians are generally educated in the Holy Qur'an and Islamic learning. Compared to Mohmand elders they appear softer, plumper, darker and physically better groomed.

The senior Mian of Kassai, universally called Mian Kassai, has had five wives and innumerable descendants. His eldest son, Mian Abdul Hakim, has nineteen sons, and traces his descent to Arabia and not, as do almost all Pukhtuns, to Kabul. Mian Jalil, a cousin of Mian Hakim, is a fine example of Mian virtues. He explained ideal Mian role behaviour among Pukhtun society. The Mian is soft-spoken, does not lose his temper, never quarrels, never takes sides in Pukhtun factions and under no condition does he carry a gun. The primary characteristic of the Mian is his pacifism: he is an almost ideal prototype Christian figure. The Mian normally dresses in white, the colour of peace, and comports himself with deliberate dignity. He is acutely aware of the predicament imposed on him by his position in society. If he deviates from the expected ideal by repeated quarrelsome behaviour or is seen to be drinking and debauching or manipulating people for political power, his neutrality and status are compromised and the respect and privileges withdrawn. For all their putative social influence the Mians remain uncomfortable in Pukhtun areas and whenever they accompanied me to Shati Khel they did so most reluctantly and with a dozen excuses. They repeated that they had no business to be there and did not wish to run the risk of being insulted. The Mian provides the ideal-type model of correct social behaviour, moral propriety and studied disinterest in political matters.

The Mian cannot compete in an arena and game into which he is not allowed by the rules or participants of that game. In spite of their social airs the Mians do not receive any of the privileges of the Pukhtuns in the Tribal Areas such as allowances, lungis (individual allowances), muajibs (sectional allowances), rations etc. which has always been a sore point with them. The local sub-section or section would resent the thought of including even the handful of eminent Mians among lungi-holders or muqib-takers. If the Mians are given political allowances this is done secretly and the clan is assured that in no way are their interests diverted or diminished. Fourteen Mians who belong to Gandab are on the Mohmand Agency electoral list (pp. 46–7) of a total of about 6,000 voters. The inclusion of the Mians is a deviance in the Tribal Areas for usually they are not included on such voting lists as they do not share Pukhtun rights or duties. For instance, Akhundzada Safid, son of the legendary Akhundzada Mahmud involved in the Miss Ellis kidnapping case of 1923, could not stand for elections in 1977 in the Orakzai Agency because his name was not on the electoral list being categorized as an Akhundzada, an eminent religious leader. This was in spite of the fact that he was the recipient of various secret government favours originating from the role of his father in the recovery of the girl.

In anthropological literature the social role of the Mian might be structurally likened to the agurram among the Berbers (Gellner 1969a). This would be a mistake. The role of the igurram and the Mians are conceptually and empirically different. The Mians do not supervise the election of the Pukhtun chiefs nor do they provide leadership against outside aggression and nor can they claim to perform miracles (ibid.: 78). The single attribute the Mian and the igurram share is
as indeed... in feuds (ibid.: 74). This in the idea! is very much how the Il'lians mediating p'smsing clause that the latter are in no way pretenders to model. The Mian contrasts himself and his
in disputes as he has no force to back
categories. This too is why he is an impotent
rically opposed model of the Pukhtun and 'the gun he carries'.
generous and hospitable and one who does not
Swat (Barth 1972). To the saintly model of the
the spear or warriors (waranlah_) but 'in
condition and custom and the Pukhtuns, tribal custom, accommodate
men of the world (dunya), and esoteric Sufi figures who have
he is outside the Pukhtun social world.
The Mian consciously inflates and exaggerates Islamic symbols
renounced it for religion {din). Their primarr functions as
members of the gun, do not rub shoulders in lineages,
functions.

In

the

Mian, the men of God and the Pukhtuns. the

Mullahs they are neither paid in cash or kind by Pukhtun

mullahs often gather from neighbouring villages and items such
the village, and soap and a little money are distributed among them. The

man's car was used to convey and announce the news of

the wounded, the sick, the women and children. Mian

Jalil himself admitted the recent economic activities and involve­

ments of the Mians especially in their market, Alan Maud, have
not only decreased the Mians themselves more worldly and correspondingly
less spiritual. However, their role in effecting a ceasefire etc.

their role in effecting a ceasefire or an agreement is

limited as it is not backed by any political or coercive

force. They however, play a useful role in keeping the lines

of communication open between the warring factions and in

the event of peace, they are the first to be notified of the

end of hostilities. Many of them have been involved in

peacekeeping efforts on both sides, and their presence in

the area is often seen as a sign of relative calm. But as

Maud points out, the Mians have not only contributed to

peacekeeping efforts, but they have also helped to

build bridges between the warring factions. The

Mians are often seen as mediators between the

Mullahs and the Pukhtuns, helping to bridge

the gap between the two groups. They are

often seen as neutral parties who can

mediate between the warring factions.

The Mullahs themselves are

often involved in peacekeeping efforts,

and their presence in the area is

seen as a sign of relative calm.

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mullah then accompanies the body to the cemetery with the male members of the community, the females visiting the grave later. He performs the final funeral rites by praying on a handful of mud and spreading it on the grave.

Apart from rites the mullah also tends to the mosque and calls the azan five times a day and leads the congregation in prayer. Depending on his powers of persuasion and medicinal knowledge he distributes talismans (ta'cmiz) for curing diseases, specially of children and cattle or keeping the evil eye away from them, for which he charges one or two rupees. Mohmand mashars believe that ta'cmiz given by a religious person, like Mian Kassai or the Imam of Bela, can cure diseases specially in women, children and cattle. Bela elders assured me that the Bela Imam had been giving them talismans, which worked in removing worms from cattle and increasing the output of their milk. Fever and headaches are commonly believed to be cured by him. The Imam says a prayer and usually gives a talisman with some Arabic writing on it. His payment is called 'payment in thanks' (shukrana).

Just as the Mian upgrades himself to Sayyid status so the mullah in a similar self-imposed upgradation, and usually after migration to a new locality, calls himself a Mian. The ignorance and indifference of the Pukhtuns ratify the upward mobility and in time the new status is accepted, genealogical fiction being converted to social legitimation. The mullah, or Imam, of Bela prefers to be called a Mian.

In hujra conversations Pukhtun mashars would question the role of the mullah: 'He is illiterate. What does he know of Islam? Why should he intercede between us and God?' Pukhtun Islam may be perhaps equated to the 'muscular Christianity' of the Victorian era: it is a laic, uncomplicated, surface reaction to an inherited tradition that is suspicious of dogmas, debates and formalized priesthood. Mohmand mashars would express their opinion of the religious groups just as Khushal Khan Khattak did centuries ago, though perhaps with less eloquence:

I have observed the disposition Of present-day divines; An hour spent in their company And I'm filled with disgust (Mackenzie 1965: 79).

They would reflect equal cynicism regarding traditional claims to payment by the religious groups:

The plunder these shai'iks carry off While chanting God's great name (ibid.).

The duties of the mullah have been briefly enumerated. Primarily he attends to the demands in society regarding religious functions in the rites de passage. His behaviour and personality determine the respect he can command in the community.

The Mian is not prepared to accept Pukhtun social superiority. In his own ideal-type model he approximates to the 'saintly' model among Mohmands, a definition that precludes political activity. Conceptually the highest point of his 'saintliness' coincides with the lowest point of political activity. The presence of the Mian and the mullah among Pukhtun society are a visible and self-conscious reminder of Islamic values. Their presence acts as a social mechanism to sustain Islamic symmetry in Pukhtun society and correct cases of asymmetry. However in the ideal-type Pukhtun situation in Shati Khel both groups are clearly seen as client through the eyes of the Pukhtun and subordinate to his political authority. The Pukhtun casts himself in the role and status of patron. The Pukhtun world is still largely undisturbed in its traditional symmetry in 1975-6. However the role and importance of the religious groups vis-à-vis administration has undergone a significant change since the departure of the British. From a position of hostility to an infidel government the Mians and mullahs are now generally favourable to what they consider a Muslim government (Ahmed 1977). For the case of a mullah who led a movement recently against government in Waziristan see Ahmed 1982).

Clear deviances emerge, however, in the tribal village of Bela Mohmand, owing to its situation in the District. The social importance of non-Mohmand groups grows in direct proportion to the diminishing importance of the Pukhtun lineage and its code. This new emerging relationship is further complicated for the Pukhtun by their shift from traditional occupations to agricultural livelihood. They are now irrevocably bound to the specialized and monopoly talents of non-Mohmand groups like the carpenters. The mullah is no longer client of the household head but a central and, because of his personal qualities, respected figure of the village community. In a sense he has risen above the status of client to the Pukhtun and become pivotal in the village rites de passage. The shifting relationships pose the dilemmas of encapsulation to Bela Pukhtuns within society. The Pukhtun is now confronted by the economic, not political, facts of his new situation and, because of the laws of settled districts, he is stripped of his own symbolic possession of Pukhtunness, his gun. As a small land-holding agriculturist he is increasingly at the mercy of traditionally client groups. The traditional patron and client roles may not have been reversed in Bela but they are now in the process of being redefined, and, apart from the fading mystique of Pukhtun lineage, non-Mohmand groups are asserting themselves.

In conclusion: I have illustrated above the importance of symbols in society that are locally perceived as carrying religious significance and through their association or usage conferring status and merit. Such symbols are not necessarily ritual or religious nor seen as such but signify continuing social tradition, particularly in their association with the life and person of the Prophet and early Islam. I am thus arguing that however laic or
religiously neutral a symbol, it acquires a religious significance by its repeated usage and invocation of its derivation from the times of the Prophet. These symbols maintain sanctity in the eyes of the social actor because of their association with the Prophet. Islamic symbolism is activated, interpreted and disseminated by religious groups living among Pukhtun tribes as I have described above. This ensures the potency and perpetuation within society of religious symbols. Such symbolism may often remain dormant in Islamic society, for long periods due to historical-cultural factors. (7) I have also attempted to show that it is not theoretically or methodologically possible to study an Islamic society in isolation as the symbols in society require a reference to the larger Islamic world outside the tribal or village universe.

NOTES

1 Data were collected from two areas, Bela Mohmandan, on the border of the Peshawar District and the Mohmand Agency but lying within the District, and Shati Khel deep in the Mohmand Agency. The regular civil and criminal laws of Pakistan do not extend to the Agencies in the Tribal Areas where problems are solved according to tribal law and custom.

2 The Mohmands in the Mohmand Agency in structure and organization are typical of segmentary, acephalous tribes believing in egalitarianism and basing their filiation on a tree-like genealogical charter with 'nesting attributes' (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1970; Middleton and Tait 1970). Rough population estimates of Mohmands who live in Afghanistan and Pakistan are about 400,000 to 500,000.

3 Approximately rupees 18-20 equal 1 pound sterling. Rs. is used as the abbreviation for rupees.

4 I will discuss the growth of saints among the Orakzai Shi'as in a separate paper, The Saints of Tirah: The Economic Base of Religious Leadership.

5 The Caliphs of the early dynasties of Islam, the 'Abbasids (A.D. 661-750, 929-1031), the 'Abbasids (A.D. 750-1258) and the Fatimids (A.D. 909-1171) were related to the Prophet on the genealogical charter and traced unilinear descent through agnatic descendants to their common apical ancestor, Quraysh, and his descendant 'Abd-Manaf (Hitti 1977).

6 Studies among Indian Muslims show the emergence of various castelike groups like the 'high' caste 'Ashraf', the Sayyids, Shaikhs, Mughals and Pukhtuns and the 'low' caste 'Ajla', mostly converts from low-caste Hindus (Ahmad 1973).

7 The social phenomenon of the late 1970s in the Islamic world commonly known as the 'resurgence/revival of Islam', which may take highly political forms such as in Iran and Pakistan, is yet another aspect of this argument.

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