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fondazione **ignazio buttitta**

# ARCHIVIO ANTROPOLOGICO MEDITERRANEO on line

## ANNO XII/XIII (2009-2010), N. 12 (2)

# Indice

In copertina foto di Antonio Cusimano

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# *Moroccan Islam? On Geertz's Generalization**

Ragionare

Anthropological studies were first conducted on a universal scale (humanity), then local (tribal, peasant communities, etc.). Those favoring the scale of a country, a nation, have developed after the 1940s. The most famous of them dealt with the national character. This shift in scale implies new questions regarding the mode of generalization. From the beginning of the last century, anthropology has been associated to the fieldwork, the participant observation, the integration of the anthropologist within the group on which the study is undertaken, etc. The question is to know how some anthropologists, starting from their fieldwork or other methods (observation at a distance of a national culture initiated by Ruth Benedict in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, historical data), elaborate general propositions on the national scale.

We suggest to start from a study carried out by Geertz on the basis of two types of religious styles associated to "Moroccan Islam" and "Indonesian Islam". Our analysis will be chiefly based on Geertz' *Islam Observed*, written between 1966 and 1968 and published in 1968. His approach is succinctly and clearly exposed: «there is no route to general knowledge save through a dense thicket of particulars» (Geertz 1968: 22). To him, it is exaggerated to assume that the comprehensive understanding is only related to the particular. He also criticizes the mode of generalization that consists in reducing the diversity of religious phenomena into a limited number of general types such as animism, totemism, mysticism, etc. The bias of this mode of generalization is that it assumes that these general types cannot get more than one content. The word mysticism, which can be applied to the classical religious styles of Morocco and Indonesia, does not have the same significance

everywhere. Overcoming this difficulty might be achieved through defining it by underscoring resemblances and obscuring contrasts. This type of generalization is explicitly rejected by Geertz, for it moves away from the concrete details peculiar to both countries. He uses the concept of mysticism or the mystic or mystical

> not to formulate an underlying uniformity behind superficially diverse phenomena, but to analyze the nature of that diversity as we find it, then pursuing the different meanings the concept takes in different contexts (*ibidem*: 24).

Geertz departs from the intensive and microscopic analysis of special cases to construct his generalizations. The question is to know how these particular cases are identified and how the link is established, empirically and theoretically, between the particular case and the general interpretation.

## 1. *Cultural Homogeneity*

The postulate without which the link between the particular and the general would have no significance consists in the cultural homogeneity of the countries on which the analysis is conducted. This homogeneity goes back in the history of the country. Geertz sets the period of the forming of the Moroccan nation and the Moroccan Islam (*sic*) between 1050 and 1450. It is characterized by a process which is, according to him, genuine and which consists in the seizure of power by marginal tribes. Townsmen and countrymen do not live in culturally different worlds. Rural and urban societies are variations of the same cultural system. This homogenization

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is due to a continuous interaction between cities and tribes. The *Maroc disparu* was not as heterogeneous as it seemed to be.

The axial figures of society, both in town and countryside, were the saint and the strong man-politics King Idris II (IXth century), son of the founder of the Idrisid dynasty, «was at once a descendant of the Prophet, a vigorous military leader, and a dedicated religious purifier» (*ibidem*: 8). Next dynasties, Almoravid and Almohad, were founded by «visionary reformers returning from the Middle East determined not just to inveigh against error but to dismember its carriers» (*ibidem*: 8). Ever since, the history of Morocco is full of religious men who seized or attempted to seize political power. After 1911, such actors led the struggle against the French colonization. He then concludes this historical browsing saying:

> The critical feature of that Morocco so far as we are concerned is that its cultural center of gravity lay not, paradoxical as this may seem, in the great cities, but in the mobile, aggressive, now federated now fragmented tribes […]. It is out of the tribes that the forming impulses of Islamic civilization in Morocco came, and the stamp of their mentality remained on it […] Islam in Barbary was – and to a fair extent still is – basically the Islam of saint worship and moral severity, magical power and aggressive piety, and this was for all practical purposes as true in the alleys of Fez and Marrakech as in the expanses of the Atlas or the Sahara (*ibidem*: 8-9).

Indonesia is a peasant and not a tribal society. Its economy is based on intensive wet rice cultivation. The Hindu religion prevailed up to the XIVth century. Before the advent of Islam, Indonesia was dominated by a State centralized tradition. This political and cultural tradition (central State and universalistic religion) accounts for the features of the Indonesian Islam. It is remarkably malleable, tentative, syncretistic and multivoiced. It played a role of cultural diversification and crystallization of different notions. Unlike Morocco, where it has been «a powerful […] force for cultural homogenization and moral consensus, for the social standardization of fundamental beliefs and values» (*ibidem*: 12).

This is how Moroccans and Indonesians impregnated Islam according to their traits of character. These traits were established from the outset: «it is perhaps as true for civilizations as it is for men that, however much they may later change, the fundamental dimensions of their character, the structure of possibilities within which they will in some sense always move, are set in the plastic period when they first are forming» (*ibidem:* 11). Perhaps, this explains why Geertz lumps together what he is told by informants in the field and the XVIIth century historical facts.

From the beginning, Moroccan Islam was one of uncompromising rigorism, moral perfectionism, aggressive fundamentalism and a determination to establish purified and uniform beliefs for the entirety of the population. And from the beginning, Indonesian Islam was adaptive and pragmatic. It did not pretend to purity, nor did it pretend to intensity but rather to largeness of spirit. In a word, the utopian fervor of the Moroccan Islam contrasts with the moderation of the Indonesian Islam (*ibidem*: 16).

## 2. *From the Particular to the General*

The fundamental features of Moroccan Islam are developed from historical facts. According to the method of exposition adopted by Geertz, and which we have respected in our analysis, general proposals precede the analysis of special cases. This makes the approach a bit blurred, as we do not know exactly whether it is the reading of the religious history of a country that influenced the analysis of the chosen particular cases or the opposite. If the interpretation of the features of Moroccan Islam can be induced from a comprehensive historical processes, we then wonder about the usefulness of the analysis of these particular cases and therefore the reference to the fieldwork. In the best cases, these would help confirm and illustrate features already observed on a general scale. Yet, we can also assume that the process of writing differs from that of research, and that it is the intimate understanding of particular cases that suggested to Geertz his comprehensive historical reading. We will favor this hypothesis that converges with his explicit approach which consists in departing from the particular in order to construct the general.

Following the example of the majority of anthropologists, Geertz builds his researches on first hand findings. His field of study is Sefrou (a small town) and its suburbs where he studied

the socio-cultural aspects of the *souk*, the collective identity and the organization of irrigation. His originality in *Islam Observed* lies, as the title connotes, in attempting to depart from an intimate understanding of the local based on observation to achieve a comprehensive understanding (impossible to be observed, according to the significance that field anthropology gives to this word). Therefore, the main materials do not stem from a field research. To him, in this case, the field is a source of inspiration (hypotheses, tracks of reflection, interpretations, etc.) rather than a source of data. Specifying the role of fieldwork, in a study that sketches out interpretations on a general scale, helps better understand what Geertz means by generalization.

For him, generalizing does not mean reading off the contours of a whole civilization on the basis of a miniature social system, it does not mean making a city or a village typical of a country as a whole, it does not mean reducing Morocco to Sefrou, taking the part for the whole, it does not mean attempting to substitute parochial understandings for comprehensive ones. He is not trying to apply to a given country as a whole an interpretation which is valid only for a local, restricted society, however intimately and intensively known. What he is trying to do is to «discover what contributions parochial understandings can make to comprehensive ones, what leads to general, broad-stroke interpretations particular, intimate findings can produce» (*ibidem*: VII). That is to apply to facts observed on a global scale approaches and analyses similar to those applied to facts observed in the field. His aim is to rely on his field experience so as to account for the religious history of a country altogether. He is attempting to answer grand questions while turning toward the concrete, the particular, the microscopic: «we are the miniaturists of the social sciences, painting on lilliputian canvas with what we take to be delicate strokes. We hope to find in the little what eludes us in the large, to stumble upon general truths while sorting through special cases» (*ibidem*: 4).

This leads us to another aspect of the issue of generalization. If this latter is not an exploration of the findings of a field study on a general scale, then, what particular case to choose, to analyze in details, in order to reach a comprehensive interpretation valid on a general scale?

## 3. *Particular Cases*

Geertz analyzes the legends of two religious figures. The first is Sunan Kalidjaga (Sahid), a XVIth century Javanese prince regarded to have been instrumental to the islamization of his country. He is the symbol of the link between two great religions, Indic Java and Muslim Java. Geertz stresses the story of his conversion to Islam as related by Javanese people. The young lord has become an accomplished ne'er-do-well, a thief, a highwayman. One day, he attacked a passing by Muslim, Sunan Bonang, and attempted to dispossess him of his jewels, clothes and golden cane. Bonang, showed him the futility of desiring worldly goods by miraculously turning a tree into gold hung with jewels. The highwayman then realized that the desire of riches is trivial; he repented and wished to convert into a pious man. He asked Bonang to introduce him to spiritual knowledge. Bonang asked him to wait by the side of a river:

> Sahid waited there by the side of the river for years – some say ten, some say twenty, others even thirty or forty – lost in thought. Trees grew up around him, floods came and covered him with water and then receded, crowds passed him by, jostling him as they went, buildings were built and torn down, but he remained unmoved in his trance. At length Bonang returned and saw that Sahid (he had some difficulty locating him amid the trees) had indeed been steadfast. But instead of teaching him the doctrines of Islam he merely said, 'You have been a good pupil, and as a result of our long meditation you now know more than I do', and he began to ask him questions, advanced questions, on religious matters, which the instructed pupil answered immediately and correctly. Bonang then gave him his new name, Kalidjaga – 'he who guards the river' – and told him to go forth and spread the doctrine of Islam, which he then did with unsurpassed effectiveness (*ibidem*: 28-29).

Geertz concluded that the Indic tradition informs and guides the way conversion to Islam is conceived. Kalidjaga has become a Muslim without having read Koran or having been to a mosque. It is thanks to a yoga-like inner discipline that he has become not only a Muslim, but also an exemplary hero, a versed man and a propagator of Islam.

The Moroccan figure compared to Kalidjaga is Sidi Lahcen Al-Yusi, a "*'alim*", a doctor in

religion (1631-1691). He was born in a Berber tribe of transhumant shepherds in the Middle Atlas Mountains. His era coincided with the rise of the Alawite dynasty. It was characterized by political instability, the proliferation of political powers guided by religious leaders. The two figures adopted completely opposite reactions vis-à-vis the changes that were taking place in their societies. When

> Kalidjaga attempted to direct that movement by representing it in his consciousness, creating in microcosm the harmony sought for in macrocosm, Al-Yusi attempted to direct it by struggling against it, by exposing in his teachings and his actions the internal contradictions it was seeking desperately to contain. The first approach is essentially aesthetic; it portrays its ideal. The second is essentially moral; it commands it (*ibidem*: 30).

According to the legend, Al-Yusi left his tribe when he was twelve to become first a pilgrim, then a rebel and finally a devoted saint. Unlike Kalidjaga who sought peace in immobility and calm in all states, he was constantly traveling. In one of his peregrinations, he met his teacher ben Nacir (the founder of the *Tamgrut zawiya* in the South-East of Morocco), who was suffering from a loathsome disease. This latter asked his students to wash his shirt. They all refused for they were afraid for their own health. Al-Yusi, who was not called by the teacher because he was unknown to him, volunteered to do it. By washing the shirt and drinking the water produced, he acquired the *baraka*, a kind of "supernatural

power" which is a quality and a sign of sainthood. Geerts ends up the interpretation of this stage as follows:

> The elements of his spiritual transformation […] are worth noting: extraordinary physical courage, absolute personal loyalty, ecstatic moral intensity, and the almost physical transmission of sanctity from one man to another. That, rather than social quietism, is what spirituality has, for the most part, meant in Morocco (*ibidem*: 33).

The second event recorded by the legend happened some thirty years later. It was a confrontation between the saint and Sultan Ismaïl. This latter received him as an honored guest in his palace. Some people who were participating in the building of the large walls came to the saint and complained of their bad treatment. He started by breaking all the dishes that the servants brought to his chambers. Once informed, the sultan called him in and blamed him for what he had done. Al-Yusi replied "*Well, which is better – the pottery of Allah or the pottery of clay?' i.e. I break plates, human creations, but you break people, God's creations*". The sultan blamed him for his ungratefulness and asked him to leave the city. When the saint refused, he set to chase him away himself, but he failed. Miraculously, his horse could not ride over a line drown by the saint on the ground. The sultan begged the pardon of the saint who asked for a royal decree (*dahir*) acknowledging that he is a *sherif* (descendant of the prophet) (*ibidem*: 31-35).

| Table: Features of Moroccan and Indonesian religious styles ||
|---|---|
| Al-Yusi | Kalidjaga |
| Rustic | Townsman |
| Ordinary tribesman | Displaced aristocrat |
| Fanatic, puritan | Yogi |
| Activism | Inwardness |
| Fervor | Imperturbability |
| Impetuosity | Patience |
| Nerve | Poise |
| Toughness | Sensitivity |
| Moralism | Aesthetism |
| Populism | Elitism |
| Self-assertion | Self-effacement |
| Radical intensification of individuality | Radical dissolution of individuality |
| Zealot | Quietist |
| Maraboutism | Illuminism |
| Physical transmission of the *baraka* | Spiritual transmission of sainthood |

Both figures have a common feature, their conservatism. Each attempted to establish tradition. The one Al-Yusi wanted to reinforce is maraboutism[1]. Apart from this common feature, divergences between the two men, seen as metaphors of the real spirituality, are apparent. They evoke that kind of binary oppositions which are so delimited that they seem to be artificial. The research of binary oppositions is likely to be a pernicious effect of a comparative approach which emphasizes contrasts. We have two figures who cannot but be defined negatively: one is immobile (nothing is said about his mobility to spread Islam), the other moves a lot; one is quietist and yogi, the other is rebellious and fanatic; one transmits sainthood spiritually, the other does it physically, etc. (see the table above).

The *marabout* is a man bound to God. The content of this bound is summed up by the notion of *baraka*. Literally, it means blessing, in the sense of a divine favor. It is associated to other notions such as material prosperity, physical well-being, luck, magical power. It is «a cultural gloss [according to which] the sacred appears most directly in the world as an endowment […] of particular individuals» (*ibidem*: 44). To answer the question of knowing who is endowed with it, Geertz distinguishes two conceptions: one refers to the miraculous (a *marabout* is the one who works wonders), while the other refers to the genealogical (the *marabout* is the one who justifies a lineal descent from the Prophet). The legend accounts for the confrontation between the saint who represents the miraculous conception and the sultan who represents the genealogical conception. By achieving the sultan's recognition of his status as a sherif, the saint reconciled, by incorporating them, two conceptions of the *baraka*, which are not *a priori* reconcilable. Charisma as an endowment and an individual effort and charisma as a family heritage are two principles that prevailed in the political history of Morocco. From the Idrissid to the Alawite, each dynasty favors a principle at the expense of the other (*ibidem*: 45-48).

### 4. *Religious Change*

The change in the collective life affected the religious styles. The religious crisis lies in a tension, a confrontation between traditional forms of faith and the altered conditions of life (*ibidem*: 20-21). The religious traditional conceptions are no longer immediately convincing, they no longer embody their own authority. It is not the content of what is believed in that has changed but the way it is believed in. Reasons substitute for faith: «In Morocco this most frequently appears as a simple disjunction between the forms of religious life, particularly the more properly Islamic ones, and the substance of everyday life» (*ibidem*: 17). The common feature, in Morocco as well as in Indonesia, is that in a context of change (colonization, etc.) characterized by disillusion and skepticism, people, intellectuals and learned reformers are the ones who feel the obligation to defend some religious conceptions which can no longer resist thanks to the authority of habit and tradition. We hold religious views rather than being held by them (*ibidem*: 17).

Maraboutism, which sums up Moroccan Islam, appears in saints worship, the sufi doctrine spread through brotherhoods and the sherifian principle associated to *Al Makhzen* (*ibidem*: 49-54). Attacked by secularism and scripturalism, maraboutism lost its hegemony. For Geertz, the description of the religious evolution from the XIXth century is one of a bigger skepticism. The difference between the days of Al-Yusi and today is that the question changed from "What shall I believe?" to "How shall I believe it*?*" People do not doubt God, they doubt themselves. In a context of religious alteration, religious traditions are still accessible, but their symbolic power weakened; they no longer produce the same assertions. The process of the religious alteration in the country is characterized by the loss of spiritual self-confidence. It is within this mood of uncertainty that the religious symbols undergo an important change: «from imagistic revelations of the divine, evidences of God, to ideological assertions of the divine's importance» (*ibidem*: 62).

The Moroccan monarchy founds its legitimacy on two principals of religious organization. The first emphasizes the spiritual authority inherent in the ruler as ruler, the second stresses the relationships between the ruler and the community. The spiritual authority of the ruler (*baraka*, intrinsic legitimacy) stems from his prophetic ascendance. The political authority (contractual legitimacy) stems from a contract, *bai'a*, between the monarch and the community (or its representatives). For the population, the sultan was the chief *marabout* of the country. He was also the

ruler chosen in conformity with the rules of *al-bai'a* (*ibidem*: 76-77).

During the colonial period, the sultanate was a debatable issue between the nationalist elite and the sultan. The question was about the importance that needs to be attributed to the spiritual authority or to the political authority. In other word, the question consisted in choosing between a maraboutic monarchy and a representative monarchy. Some nationalists gave more importance to the notion of contract and considered the dynastic charisma as a local heresy. After his return from the exile (1953-1955), the sultan was received as a popular hero, his religious authority increased. Finally, it was the idea of the maraboutic king that prevailed (*ibidem*: 80-81).

However, internal tension between the religious role and the political one persisted. The willingness to modernize the State fueled this tension further: Mohammed V unveils his daughters but secludes his wives, wears Western clothes in private and Moroccan ones in public, etc. He fractioned his life between two separate domains: the spiritual and the practical. He then perfectly illustrates the radical disjunction between the religious life and the secular life which characterizes Moroccan Islam today (*ibidem*: 81). This is another illustration of the shift from a special case, a king's behavior, to a general trait characterizing Moroccan Islam as a whole. This has to do with Geertz' distinction between the "force" of a cultural model and its "scope". By "force" he means «the thoroughness with which such a pattern is internalized in the personalities of the individuals who adopt it, its centrality or marginality in their lives» (*ibidem*: 111). And by "scope" he means «the range of social contexts within which religious considerations are regarded as having more or less direct relevance» (*ibidem*: 112). In Morocco the scope of religion is narrower, ordinary life is secular, the force of religion is more important. In Indonesia, it is the opposite, religion is everywhere.

## 5. *From the Special Case to the General Model*

A criticism of the suggested generalizations is supposed to start from the bottom, special cases. Any deficiency in the ethnography of the special case would affect the interpretative edifice altogether. We can, therefore, wonder about the reliability of the sketched out portrait of Al-Yusi. We can, for instance, show that this latter did not use to travel as frequently as Geertz pretends, that he spent around twenty years in the zawiya of Tamgrut and that his subsequent mobility was not inherent to him as Moroccan but rather to the political context characterized, as Geertz himself puts it, by a political instability. Al-Yusi was usually undesirable and, as related in the legend, was usually pursued by political authorities (Munson 1993: 1-34). This is how a historical and biographical contingence might become a fundamental trait of a religious orientation. We assume that the comparative approach might influence the ethnography of the special cases. The immobilism of the Indian saint needed a Moroccan traveler.

In addition, Geertz is not only interested in the saint's biography but also in the Moroccans lifestyle:

> Like his countrymen (for this contrast, too, is general, a characteristic not merely of our example figures but also of the people they are examples for) his natural mode of being was restlessness, his discipline mobility, and he sought to capture truth not by waiting patiently for it to manifest itself to his emptied consciousness, but by tirelessly and systematically tracking it down. He did not travel to find a new sanctuary because an old one has been breached; he travelled because, like his shepherd parents, he was a traveler (Geertz 1968: 31-32).

The general proposition is quickly deduced: Al-Yusi as well as his countrymen are travelers by nature. It would be easy to show that Moroccans were also and since a long time ago sedentary, that transhumant tribes were nor traveling but moving between summer and winter pasturelands, that many Moroccan dynasties are originated from sedentary tribes, etc. This kind of criticism on the empirical inadequacy is, nevertheless, not axial for our purpose. We can find in the history of Morocco saints for whom traveling is at the center of their religious activities, founders of dynasties who went till the Orient, who criss-crossed the Maghreb and Morocco in order to spread their puritan conceptions of religion and society. And for these people, the model suggested by Geertz is relevant and strongly evocative.

Let's forget about the question of the empirical inadequacy and move to other questions rather

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methodological. First, how relevant is the choice of exemplary cases (saints and political leaders, the king of Morocco and the president of Indonesia) to outline the spirituality of a whole people? What is questioned here is not the reliability of the special case, but its importance to the process of generalization. Al-Yusi represents an elite, doctors, much more than Moroccans altogether. Regardless of the degree of the cultural stratification of that era, it is much wiser not to confuse the life of students and doctors and the life of common people ("*al-awamm*"), the activity of a transhumant who pastures his cattle and the peregrinations of an "aspirant to science". Speaking about these years of learning, Berque who devoted a book to Al-Yusi, wrote:

> Al-Yusi will carry on these studious hikes all his life. He settles nowhere. Chance, but also without fail his independence, his concern, his instability take him away from prebends. For the time being, he is nothing but an "aspirant to science" *talib al'ilm* among many others. This model is constant in the country. The student sometimes coupled with an "aspirant in esoterism" murid, wanders from a shrine to another. He lives on good people's charity, or, whenever he can afford it, rely on his cousins and countrymen protection. This precariousness reveals that the quest for science "produces all kinds of men: from the parasite to the devout, from the saint to the ruffian (Berque 2001: 11).

For Al-Yusi, and for every rustic student, traveling was the unique means at that time that allowed him to have access to science. One needed to look for teachers wherever they were. Teachers also used to travel for many reasons: to improve their financial condition, to pursue prestige beside power-holders, to flee from the arbitrary decisions of a despot, etc. Up to now, teachers are accustomed to teaching away from their native groups. Accordingly, Moroccan's spirituality cannot be deduced on the basis of the segment of population that is the most mobile, the most frequently travelling. Al-Yusi is not a traveler by nature, he is so out of necessity. Traveling was much more an asset of the intellectual at that time, rather than an inner tendency shared by all Moroccans.

We think that we need to distinguish between the special case and the exemplary case. Sainthood is part of an exceptional spirituality, only few chosen people can have access to it. A given kind of sainthood can be a spiritual ideal for a given people, however, the hypothesis of a discontinuity between sainthood and religious orientation is also plausible. Departing from an experience of sainthood to know the religious style of a people, would be close to departing from poetry to discover the features of an ordinary spoken language. A case can become special to a general model only on certain conditions. The most important one is a continuity (which is not to be necessarily confused with representativeness) between the special case chosen and the general model. In our case, the shift from sainthood to the ordinary religion does not go without saying, for sainthood is an exemplary case. The tension between the exemplary and the ordinary needs to be taken into account. Not all what purist or fanatic reformers impose is accepted by the population in question. In his peregrinations, Ibn Tumart, the founder of the Almohade dynasty, used to constantly forbid collective dancing, mixing of men and women, etc. But Ibn Tumart's ideas and behavior informs on his conception of Islam not that of his countrymen who continued to dance.

To avoid that the relationship between the special case and the general model becomes arbitrary, anthropologists have no other solutions but to increase the number of the chosen cases. Geertz could have chosen any other Moroccan saint. But he did not, for, as he puts it with a disconcerting certitude, had any other saint been chosen, the interpretation would have been the same (Geertz 1968: 25). If it is true that the saints (their lives, their miracles, their legends, etc.) are similar, it is far fetched to affirm that all the saints of the same country are so. The hagiography of "Moroccan" saints is full of illiterate saints, "insane" saints, isolated, immobile saints, hermit saints who live well away from society and the political power. It is full of saints who are closer to the Indian saint than to Al-Yusi. Here is an example. Like Kalidjaga, Moulay Bou 'Azza (died in 572, very renowned in Morocco and very present in the hagiography) was a highwayman; his spiritual life changed radically when he witnessed a miracule performed by his teacher, the saint Moulay Bou ch'ayeb. Like him, he achieved sainthood by remaining immobile. The teacher

> took him next to a *daya* (a pond, a pool, a small lake) and asked him to wait for him there. Moulay

Bou 'Azza waited for one year and did not move to another place, to the extent that his shoulders became covered with foam, he used to eat the blades of grass that was growing by his feet. One year later, Moulay Bou Ch'ayeb came back, he was satisfied with his new disciple's obedience and took him (Doutté 1905: 120-121).

The similarity between Kalidjaga, he who guards the river, and Moulay Bou 'Azza is apparent. This latter could have been called "he who guards the pond". I could have easily complicated the image by showing that through the legends and the hagiography relative to Moulay Bou 'Azza and other saints, different "world views" and "religious styles" emerge.

The problem is that, in Geertz, generalization is reduced to an abrupt extrapolation of the interpretations of a particular fact (a saint or a king's biography, the *souk* of Sefrou, cock's fight) onto society as a whole. This unexpected extrapolation of the particular onto the general is hardly justifiable. The theoretical questions that the choice of the special cases imply are hardly tackled. We can even say that, in this respect, we are far from the culturalist tradition which analyzes the character of a community (a tribe, a nation), its basic personality, on the basis of diverse social and cultural domains such as rites, dancing, magic, myths, etc. (Rachik 2003: 95-109; 2005: 353-365).

When generalization falls within a comparative approach, it is both homogenizing and discriminating. Generalization is oriented by two key concepts in Geertz: the world view and the ethos. To him, the world view is «the collection of notions a people has of how reality is at base put together». The ethos is their «style of life, the way they do things and like to see things done». Accordingly, religion includes two sides:

> The world view side of the religious perspective centers […] around the problem of belief, the ethos side around the problem of action" […] "Indonesian illuminationism portrays reality as an aesthetic hierarchy culminating in a void, and it projects a style of life celebrating mental poise. Moroccan maraboutism portrays reality as a field of spiritual energies nucleating in the persons of individual men, and it projects a style of life celebrating moral passion. Kalidjaga in classical Morocco would not be heroic but unmanly; Lyusi in classical Java would not be a saint but a boor (Geertz 1968: 98).

Some anthropologists who used the concept of the ethos in the study of primitive cultures stress the variation of the ethos in accordance with the sex (male ethos and female ethos) or in accordance with the social stratification (Bateson 1958: 128-163). Coherence and generalization might have limits depending on the social divisions of a given society. The criticism of "generalizing virtues" of the concepts of the ethos and the world view goes beyond the limits of this text.

It is noteworthy that Geertz' approach is innovative compared to the orientalist tradition which was prevailing at that time (Said 1979: 326). He does not talk about a Muslim ethos or an Islamic personality, etc. He, reversely, shows that Islam is not homogenous and that it varies according to the world views and the ethos of the peoples who adopted it. What we criticize Geertz for is the fact that he did not go to the very end in his approach. Why not applying the same principle to the study of Islam in Morocco and considering its different modalities? Why would Islam in general be heterogeneous and not the Islam of a country? Why differences are to be observed on the level of countries but not within the same country? I think that answering these questions requires going beyond the postulate of the cultural homogeneity of Morocco and that of his religious history in particular. We might understand the fact that in Morocco there is an ethos of sainthood, a religious style, characterized by fanaticism, aggressivity and moral severity. Yet, it is an ethos among others. For instance, that of the insane "saint" ("*majdub*" or "*bahlul*"), is characterized by extravagance, obscenity, freedom, sedentarity (Rachik 1999: 107-109).

## Notes

[1] "'Marabout' is a French rendering of the Arabic *murabit*, which in turn derives from a root meaning to tie, bind, fasten, attach, hitch, moor. A *murabit* is thus a man tied, bound, fastened to God, like a camel to a post, a ship to a pier, a prisoner to a wall" (Geertz 1968: 43).

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Razionare

# *Abstracts*

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*Memoria e oblio dei campi di concentramento dei Repubblicani spagnoli nel sud ovest della Francia*

Nel 1939, alla fine della Guerra Civile spagnola, migliaia di Repubblicani oppositori del Generale Franco finirono in esilio in Francia. Sin dal loro arrivo, essi furono internati nei campi e costretti a condizioni di vita molto dure. Sino agli anni Settanta del Novecento, questo inglorioso episodio della storia francese è rimasto praticamente nell'oblio. Oggi, almeno nel sud del Paese, non passa giorno in cui qualcuno non evochi la memoria dell'esilio e dell'internamento dei Repubblicani spagnoli in Francia. Questo contributo, basato sul caso del Campo di Le Vernet, mostra il processo che dall'oblio ha condotto alla memoria dei campi e ne analizza le caratteristiche.

Parole chiave: Memoria; Oblio; Campi di concentramento; Repubblicani spagnoli; Ebrei.

*Memory and oblivion of the internment camps of the Spanish Republicans in South-West France*

*In 1939, at the end of the Spanish Civil War, which set Republicans against General Franco partisans, tens of thousands of them flowed into exile in France. Upon their arrival, they were interned in camps where living conditions were very hard. Until the 1970s, this inglorious episode in the history of France had practically fallen into oblivion. Today, in the south at least, never a day passes but somebody evokes the memory of exile and internment of Spanish Republicans in France. This paper - based on the Camp of Le Vernet case - shows the process that leads from oblivion to recovery of the memory of the camps and analyses what characterizes this memory.*

*Key words: Memory; Oblivion; Internment camps; Spanish Republicans; Jews.*

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*Sensible men and serious women: order, disorder, and morality in an Italian village*

*For over a decade, anthropologists engaged in a vigorous debate regarding the utility, meaning, and explanation of honor and shame in Mediterranean communities. There are competing interpretations regarding these cultural constructions, but no consensus. Partly, this is a result of examining honor and shame as discrete domains deriving from more fundamental conditions.*
*In this paper, I examine, in detail, the ethnography of honor and shame in a central (Tuscany) Italian village. I use these data to contend honor and shame are not encapsulated domains, but are part of a wider and fundamental cognitive framework and world view involving the nature of inter-personal relations, understandings regarding the attributes of human nature and an agonistic perception of the human condition.*

*Keywords: Italy (Tuscany); Honor; Shame; World View; Inter-Personal Relations.*

*Uomini responsabili e donne serie: ordine, disordine e moralità in una comunità italiana*

Per più di un decennio gli antropologi si sono impegnati in un acceso dibattito sulla pertinenza, il significato e il senso dell'onore e della vergogna nell'area del Mediterraneo. Le interpretazioni fornite per queste costruzioni culturali sono state spesso contrastanti e non si è raggiunto un accordo. Ciò è dipeso, in parte, dal fatto che l'analisi ha riguardato l'onore e la vergogna intesi come ambiti separati derivanti da altre condizioni fondamentali.
In questo contributo, propongo, in particolare, un'etnografia dell'onore e della vergogna presso una comunità dell'Italia centrale (in Toscana). L'obiettivo è mostrare come queste due sfere, lungi dall'essere isolate, vadano invece inserite in un più ampio quadro cognitivo e in una visione del mondo che coinvolge le relazioni interpersonali, la comprensione degli aspetti della natura umana e del suo modo di percepire agonisticamente la propria condizione.

Parole-chiave: Italia (Toscana); Onore; Vergogna; Concezione del mondo; Relazioni interpersonali.

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## Pane al pane e vino al vino

È noto che il pane e il vino rappresentano due pilastri centrali delle basi alimentari dei popoli del Mediterraneo, essendo entrambi i frutti fecondi e millenari di due fondamentali piante di civiltà: il grano e la vite. In quanto segni eccellenti di riproduzione ciclica della terra e per ciò stesso di rifondazione del vivere e dell'esistere, pane e vino sono simboli paradigmatici dell'indissolubile simbiosi tra l'umano e il vegetale, tra l'umano e il sovraumano. Assicurando la transizione dalla natura alla cultura, il loro consumo ha contribuito a determinare status e gerarchie, a plasmare forme e pratiche rituali, a conferire identità e memoria, a dare ordine e significato al mondo. Per alcuni aspetti in opposizione dialettica, ponendosi il pane sul versante del cotto e il vino su quello del fermentato, l'uno e l'altro sono nella prassi e nella lingua popolare siciliana elementi complementari di un'endiadi formale e concettuale, di un binomio semantico irresistibile e inscindibile, significanti indiscutibilmente diversi ma – a livello delle strutture profonde – sostanzialmente riconducibili ad un comune orizzonte di senso.

Parole chiave: Relazioni pane-vino; Fermentazione; Simboli; Proverbi; Riti.

### "Pane al pane e vino al vino". Symbolical meanings of bread and wine in Mediterranean cultures

*It is known that bread and wine are two fundamental pillars of the basic diet of the peoples of the Mediterranean, being both thousand-year old and fruitful products of two key plants of civilization: wheat and vine. As excellent signs of the cyclical reproduction of the earth and thereby of the refoundation of life and existence, bread and wine are paradigmatic symbols of the indissoluble symbiosis between the human and the vegetable kingdom, between the human and the superhuman. By ensuring the transition from nature to culture, their consumption has contributed to determine status and hierarchy, shape ritual forms and practices, give identity and memory, give order and meaning to the world. Being in some respects in dialectical opposition, as bread is cooked and wine is fermented, they are both, in practice and in the Sicilian vernacular, complementary elements of a formal and conceptual hendiadys, of an irresistible and inseparable semantic pair, significants indisputably different, but – at the level of deep structures – essentially referable to a common horizon of meaning.*

*Key words: Bread-wine connection; Fermentation; Symbols; Proverbs; Rituals.*

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## Turisti a Sparta: il passato che non torna e l'invenzione della tradizione

Quando è nato il "turismo culturale"? Di solito il punto di partenza generalmente indicato e privilegiato è l'Europa del Settecento. Tuttavia è possibile esplorare altre culture, più distanti nel tempo, ma pur sempre strettamente collegati alla nostra, almeno nell'autorappresentazione dell'*identità* di cui si alimenta il nostro Occidente.

Si focalizzerà l'attenzione sul mondo greco, con alcune osservazioni generali sul viaggio culturale che è alla radice stessa della storiografia: destinato a divenire in seguito un *topos* obbligato nelle dichiarazioni proemiali degli storici, il viaggio, anzi i viaggi, del *pater historiae* Erodoto introducono ad un'esplorazione sottile e ambigua dell'identità greca. Tuttavia, è il "turismo" culturale a Sparta, divenuto rapidamente tappa obbligata della classe dirigente greco-romana, a fornire il caso più interessante.

Parole chiave: Turismo culturale; Memoria; Passato; Origini; Sparta.

### Tourists in Sparta: the past that does not come back and the invention of tradition

*When the "cultural Tourism" is born? The point of departure is generally identified in the European culture of XVIII century. Nevertheless it's possible to examine other cultures, which are historically more remote, but at the same time strictly connected with our, in accordance with the status of "identity" that characterizes Occidental world. The attention will be focalised on the ancient Greece. This paper will reserve some reflections to the cultural travel and his relevance among the Greeks. A meaningful example is the travel of the historians: since Herodotus, it has been considered an element necessary and topical, as we can observe in the proemial declarations. The travels of Herodotus, the* pater historiae, *enable a penetrating and ambiguous exploration of the Greek identity. In the second part of the paper the focus of attention will be on Sparta, a celebrate destination of the cultural travels of the Greek and Roman elite. This town, for many reasons, provides the most attractive case-study.*

*Key words: Cultural Tourism; Memory; Past; Origins; Sparta.*

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*Peasant and Others in Rural Spain. The Relevance of Models*

*Since the days of Eric Wolf, most social scientists have routinely depicted peasants as oppressed and exploited, as the bottom rung of society. But are peasants always downtrodden and despised? Can peasants enjoy a high status, be respected, even admired in their society? This paper offers a modest corrective to the prevalent Marxist view from Andalusia (southern Spain). There, peasants – even the poorest – so long as they had a piece of land, represented a solid middle class in local terms, enjoying a relatively prized status. I try to explain the structural context of this glaring exception to the generic paradigm of peasant subjugation by describing the status of peasants relative to other agrarian social classes.*

*Key words: Peasants; Stratification; Social class; Spain; Andalusia.*

*I contadini e gli Altri nella Spagna rurale. L'importanza dei modelli*

Dai tempi di Eric Wolf, la maggior parte degli studiosi di scienze sociali ha rappresentato i contadini come oppressi, sfruttati e collocati al rango più basso della società. Ma i contadini sono davvero così disprezzati e oppressi? Possono invece apprezzare la loro condizione, essere rispettati e diventare persino oggetto di ammirazione? Questo articolo offre un modesto correttivo alla prevalente visione marxista dell'Andalusia (Sud della Spagna). In questa regione i contadini – anche i più poveri – in quanto proprietari di un terreno, rappresentavano un solido ceto medio locale, tenuto in una certa considerazione. Cerco di illustrare il contesto strutturale di questo caso di studio, che costituisce un'eccezione al generico paradigma del contadino assoggettato, descrivendo la sua condizione in rapporto alle altre classi sociali del mondo agrario.

Parole chiave: Contadini; Stratificazione; Classe sociale; Spagna; Andalusia.

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*Diritti Umani egemoni: il caso della circoncisione femminile. Un appello a considerare seriamente il multiculturalismo*

L'articolo si interroga sulle differenze che intercorrono fra la circoncisione femminile e le altre pratiche modificatrici degli organi sessuali, in particolare la circoncisione maschile e la mastoplastica additiva, e spezza una lancia a favore dell'applicazione di uno standard unico di valutazione delle diverse pratiche modificatrici. Solo un approccio inclusivo, che tratti "noi" al pari degli "altri", può infatti restituire credibilità all'idea di diritti umani "universali", che altrimenti rischiano di diventare meri strumenti di egemonia culturale. Per prendere sul serio il multiculturalismo occorre, insomma, secondo l'autrice, utilizzare un approccio integrativo, che metta davvero tutte le pratiche culturali sullo stesso piano.

Parole chiave: Multiculturalismo, Egemonia culturale; Diritti Umani; Circoncisione maschile e femminile; Mastoplastica additiva.

*Hegemonic Human Rights: the Case of Female Circumcision. A call for taking multiculturalism seriously*

*In addressing the issue of female circumcision, the paper suggests that only a comprehensive approach towards all modifications of sexual organs, using a single, not a double, standard will make the human rights discourse on sexual organs' modifications less imperialistic, more effective and less assimilating. A more inclusive notion of human rights, a notion that includes "us" – the Westerners – as well as "them" – the "Others" – serves, it is argued, to give credibility to the "human rights spirit". What makes female circumcision a human rights' violation while male circumcision and breast augmentation are considered acceptable and even respectable cultural practices? Trying to find out the reason for singling-out female circumcision, the author will briefly address a number of issues, including health concerns, patient's consent (choice), sexual fulfillment limitation, and beauty requirements in different cultures. Taking multiculturalism seriously, it is argued, calls for an integrative approach towards the plurality of cultures and practices.*

*Key words: Multiculturalism; Cultural Hegemony; Human Rights; Female/Male Circumcision; Breast Augmentation.*