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## PART ONE

# Introduction

## 1

## Models and method

The contemporary disorders – or movements – in Muslim society remain largely unstudied and, on the surface, inexplicable. Contrary to common thinking, the movements have followed general economic improvement, not deprivation. Revolutionary in form and content, they are inevitably accompanied by death and destruction. Their complexity, and the diverse contexts within which they appear, defy easy analysis. Perceptible beneath the ferment are the shadowy figures of religious leaders – mullah,<sup>1</sup> mauvi, sheikh, or ayatullah – who explicitly challenge the ideological tenets of the modern age, emphasizing the central role of God and expressing revulsion from materialism as philosophy and code of life; their target is not the king or president as symbol of the state but the modern state apparatus itself. The concept of religious war, *jihad*, is invoked, and the mosque becomes the primary base and focus of the movements; highly charged religious and political points of reference are thus provided. Tensions resulting from ethnic conflict, recent colonial and national history, and the posing of philosophic and eschatological questions that are difficult to answer with conviction in this age add to the complexity of the problem.

Traditionally these movements have been analyzed as revolt against legitimate authority – translated from notions of state and nationhood, order and rebellion, the major themes of modern political discussion. A corollary of this type of analysis is the placing of such endeavors simplistically within an anti-Western framework. Muslim revolts and their leaders, from Sudan to Swat, have interested the West over the last centuries and have provided the prototype of the “Mad Mullah.” The implicitly hostile reaction of the West to the contemporary Muslim movements and their leaders may be partly explained as a historically conditioned response to this prototype.

The apprehensions that have revived as a result of these move-

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ments are expressed by one of the leading Western authorities on Islam:

The Iranian revolution and the already disquieting Muslim fundamentalist movements whose hopes it nurtured, changed [the traditional West–modern Muslim equation], helped by the rising price of that petroleum with which Allah endowed his followers in such ample quantities. Once again the Muslim world became an entity jealously guarding its uniqueness, its own culture, comprising much more than just spirituality. And might not this entity again become a threat, as it had only three centuries ago when the Ottoman armies laid siege to Vienna? Might the way of life so valued by the West be in serious danger? [Rodinson 1980: vlvii]

During the colonial phase of modern Islamic history the movements were explicitly anti-West and anticolonial. Today the movements are aimed primarily at enemies *within* society.

In the last few years the movements have taken place in widely different regions of the Muslim world, from Kano, in Nigeria, to Waziristan, in Pakistan.<sup>2</sup> The attack in 1979 on the mosque at Mecca – the very core of the Islamic world – illustrates the seriousness and significance of the contemporary Muslim mood. Recent events in Iran provide dramatic evidence of the revolutionary aspects of Islamic movements. Other similar upheavals may have taken place, perhaps unreported because of lesser scale or drama, and more will most probably take place in the coming years.

Questions of faith, leadership, and authority are as old as Muslim society. Although every incident is unique, it is at the same time similar to others in the past. Our case from Waziristan – a religious leader challenging the established state – is a familiar story in the Muslim world today; it is equally familiar in historical accounts. What is new is the widespread concern for these issues in the contemporary world.

Recent observers of traditional societies in the process of modernizing have generally assumed that the influence of religion is on the decline. Most scholars of Islam appeared to agree with this proposition, posing as reasons economic development, migration, increased employment opportunities, and education. In fact the opposite appears to be true, and at least some of the reasons for this are, paradoxically, the same.

The Waziristan study may not tell us much about Islam, but it has a great deal to say about Muslim society. The people respond to the call

of Islam regardless of their imperfect understanding of it. Islamic symbols are anchored in the society, and the realization of their affective and conative functions is of primary importance in its interpretation.

The extended case study that is the focus of this volume is based on traditional agnatic rivalry between two major tribes in a tribal agency in Pakistan, and the central actor is the Mullah of Waziristan.<sup>3</sup> The Mullah emerged as a political entity after building an impressive mosque – the biggest in South Waziristan, indeed in any Frontier Province agency. Operating from this base he soon gained control of the adjacent markets at Wana, the economic center of the agency. Having secured his economic base he proceeded to articulate political demands on behalf of the Wazir. In the name of Islam the Mullah mobilized the Wazirs to activate specific tribal ideology into a political movement against their cousins and rival tribe, the Mahsuds. Once his hold over the Wazirs was complete the Mullah set them on a collision course with the government administration, which he regarded as allied with the Mahsuds. The Mullah articulated Wazir animosity against the Mahsuds and damned the latter as *kafirs*, or nonbelievers. Employing religious idiom for tribal rivalry he declared jihad against the Mahsuds.

His next move was to order a general civil disobedience movement, at the climax of which he imposed a physical boycott on the Wana camp. Major clashes involving many deaths took place between the Wazirs on one side and the Mahsuds and the administration on the other. The entire South Waziristan Agency was in flames, and on the Durand line such a situation has international ramifications.<sup>4</sup> After obtaining clearance from the highest authority in the land, the administration acted in May 1976. In a predawn strike, the government forces destroyed the Wana markets. The Mullah's key followers were arrested and so, after a while, was he. The Mullah was tried, found guilty and jailed. The action, possibly the most severe of its kind in the recent history of the tribal areas, became and remains the center of controversy.

The Wazir Mullah defined and identified boundaries within society. His objective was explicit: the transformation of the structure and organization of society. His method was ambiguous as he alternated between a secular political paradigm and a religious–charismatic paradigm. The ambiguity allowed him large areas in which to maneuver and partly explains his social and political success among the Wazirs. Recent Waziristan history may be viewed as a function of

the Mullah's emergence and politics. No Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark and no Waziristan without the Mullah. But the Mullah is only one of the main actors in the drama.

The attempt to understand the main characters in the drama within the context of their position in the social structure is fundamental to a study of Muslim society. The anthropological method may provide useful tools for the analysis of leadership operating in traditional Muslim groups confronting change and conflict. I suggest also that certain specific methodological adjustments be made in the approach to traditional Islamic studies.

The study of power, authority, and religious status, the central issues of Muslim society, by political scientists, sociologists, and historians has rested largely on traditional method and holistic analysis. These studies have tended to concern themselves with problems of rulers, dynasties, legitimacy, succession, control of armies, and finances, on the one hand, and those of orthodoxy and legality on the other. Conceptually, the canvas and the configurations are large; the ranges in area and time are also large. In this study I suggest that it may be heuristically useful to look also beneath the surface of the large configurations of Muslim society and away from their main centers of power when examining social structure and process, especially with reference to Pakistan. However, rather than the typical anthropological village, I have chosen to focus on a level of society so far neglected by scholars – the critical intermediary level, the district, or agency.<sup>5</sup>

Three broad but distinct categories of leadership interact at the district, or agency, level of society: traditional leaders, usually elders, government officials, and religious functionaries. The last group is the least defined and hence its locus and its role are ambiguous. Each group is symbolically defined in society by their bases, which are situated in uneasy juxtaposition at the district headquarters and, respectively, are the house or houses of the chief or elders, district headquarters (flying the government flag), and the central mosque.

Personnel from the three categories of leadership vie for power, status, and legitimacy in society. The competition is further exacerbated by the fact that the major participants are Muslims; there are no simple Muslim versus non-Muslim categories to fall back on as in the recent colonial past. Some form of alliance and collaboration between traditional leaders and district officials is characteristic of district history; it is the religious leader who must clash with the other two if he is to expand his space in society.

Once I have identified certain features in society at the district level

I shall proceed to construct what may be tentatively termed the Islamic district, or agency, paradigm of sociocultural process; from this conceptually precise and empirically based paradigm we can then predict future developments.<sup>6</sup> At the core of the Islamic district paradigm I shall place ethnographic analysis; it is not only most relevant but, perhaps, allows me, as a social anthropologist, to make some contribution.

I refer to the paradigm as Islamic not in a theological but in a sociological context; my study is of Muslim actors operating in Muslim society, and I emphasize that Muslim society is being examined here, not Islam. The three major categories of leadership and the society they represent are self-consciously Muslim. Questions are thereby raised, which this study proposes to examine. Which group speaks for Muslim society? How do the groups perceive society?

The district paradigm, by definition, suggests the perpetuation of one aspect of the colonial encounter. The district structure and personnel, with its official head, the district commissioner – or the political agent in the agency – were imposed by the British. Since colonial times, status and authority in the district have rested largely in district officials as representatives of an omnipotent central government. District officers were the *mai-baap* (“mother–father”) of South Asian rural peasantry. The continuing importance of the district and its personnel after independence in 1947, in spite of its clear association with the colonial past, heightens tensions. Although “native,” officials reflect ambivalence in their dealings with the other groups, which sometimes view them as distant and unsympathetic.<sup>7</sup> The power and importance of district officials are further exaggerated when normal political activities are suspended, for example, during periods of martial law. In any case the democratic process is poorly developed; elections mean that the traditional leaders, government officials, and, recently, religious figures of our paradigm masquerade as politicians.<sup>8</sup>

Studies in the social sciences describing models of society tend to emphasize their stability, their perpetuation through generations, and their contemporary validity. Change is analyzed as a response to external or technical stimuli. The important questions of how and why a model may be invalidated or partly fail as a result of internal stimulus are seldom asked. The present study will focus on just such questions. Let us briefly examine the Pukhtun models of society relevant to our study.

Pukhtun society may be divided into two categories: (1) acephalous,

egalitarian groups, living in low-production zones and (2) those with a ranked society living on irrigated lands, usually within larger state systems. *Nang* ("honor") is the foremost symbol of the former society, as *qalang* ("taxes," "rents") is of the latter (Ahmed 1976, 1977, 1980a). Certain features of nang society correspond to those in Group B rather than Group A tribal societies familiar in the literature (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1970, Middleton and Tait 1970). Group B societies are acephalous and organized along the principle of the segmentary lineage system; in contrast, Group A societies contain organized, centralized states backed by force and led by powerful chiefs. Most of the nang groups live in the tribal areas. In addition, two categories of nang Pukhtun society have been identified with the Mohmand tribe (Ahmed 1980a). One may be called the tribal area Mohmand (TAM), a prototype ideal nang model, and the other may be termed the settled area Mohmand (SAM), consisting of those who settled in Peshawar District. The Waziristan tribes living in South Waziristan Agency may be identified as either TAM or nang society.

A study of Waziristan is different from a study of the Mohmands because in it we examine a nang society in crisis. The crisis itself has been generated by Muslim actors as a result of internal tensions in society. The definition of central Islamic terms therefore becomes important because the perception of such universally recognized social phenomena (*jihad* and *kafir*, for instance) differs considerably according to whether they are viewed from within society (by the actors) or from outside (by the analysts).

Because nang society is acephalous and egalitarian, the questions arise as to how and why the Wazir abandoned egalitarian organization for centralized authority, and iconoclasm for hagiolatry. The answers to the questions will enable us to examine a case where deviance from the nang model occurs *within the tribal areas* as a result of the emergence of a mullah and direct interaction with political administration. What we will witness is not the metastatic transformation of TAM to SAM but an intrinsic breakdown of TAM. The reintegration of traditional structure is made possible only by severe military action. The failure of the nang model raises a number of important theoretical questions regarding human behavior. What circumstances, what flow of incentives, material and nonmaterial, are necessary for perpetuation of ideal-type behavior? More important, why do people stop behaving according to their own notions of ideal behavior? May the failure be understood as a short- or long-term phenomenon?

The individual in Muslim society, whether official or tribesman,

confronts differentiated and valid models of behavior, which allow him a wide variety of strategies and choices. He may shift social response and action to approximate one or other model. The ideal-type model does not, as indeed it cannot, monopolize the Waziristan universe. Deviation from the ideal-type, or indeed emergent alternative models especially in the articulation of political action, is evident in society. The problem is that of a multiplicity of models; their identification, where possible, will assist us in comprehending Waziristan society.

In this study we will see how social life and behavior involve a complex combination of culture, religion, politics, and indeed, the psychology of individuals as locally understood and interpreted. When questions of “morality,” “honor,” and “pride,” and larger ones of “ideology,” arise in society, man responds primarily to those symbols internal to his society, whether they originated there or were borrowed. This is especially true in short-term perspective. Such a response can clearly override rational economic and political consideration. In Waziristan, noneconomic and nonrational choices are deliberately made in spite of being seen to lead to confrontation, conflict, and disaster. In the end, the Wazirs sacrifice the material symbols of prosperity, market and trade, in an attempt to uphold group honor, unity, and loyalty.

Most studies of tribal societies ignore the presence of their administrative structure (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1970; Gluckman 1971; Middleton and Tait 1970). This has raised criticism in the literature and has even identified anthropology as a tool of imperialism (Asad 1973). I will illustrate how an understanding of the complex and close interaction between administration and tribal groups is fundamental to the Islamic district paradigm. Indeed, for purposes of this study the administrative organization may be conceptualized as the third “tribe” of the agency, possessing its own sets of symbols, ritualized behavior, and esoteric language – English – not generally understood by the other tribes. The political agent may be seen as the “chief” of the tribe and the South Waziristan Scouts – a paramilitary force – as its “warriors.” Although a useful metaphor for purposes of analysis, the comparison must not be taken too literally. The resources that the larger state, which the third tribe represents, can muster are far greater than those available to the other two tribes.

The question of the personality of the main actors – the Mullah, the colonel, the PA – is raised as an important governing factor in the Waziristan drama. The personal makeup, the social–psychological



and even physical attributes, of the actors is therefore important in understanding their relations with one another and with the tribes. Perhaps one needs to reexamine the idea of “personality” in the social sciences. Why do we oppose the question of personal factors to structural and categorical ones? If persons are the loci through which opposed forces flow then the person is also one of those forces, as I hope to illustrate in this study.

The Waziristan data will illustrate the importance of rapport between administrators and the tribes in determining policy and helping shape events. PAs often appeared to sympathize with one tribe more than another. As we will see in Parts Two and Three, obvious leaning toward the Wazirs or Mahsuds in the 1970s added to the complexity of the problem. Some PAs worsened matters for themselves by failing to establish relations with other officials, such as the commandant of the Scouts and their own direct superior, the commissioner in Dera Ismail Khan (DIK) and with nonofficials, such as the Mullah.

The Waziristan study reinforces the need to refer to the larger regional political framework when studying Pukhtun tribes, which I have emphasized elsewhere (Ahmed 1976, 1981c).<sup>9</sup> Life in Waziristan has been affected by larger political developments in Pakistan – indeed Afghanistan – that interacted with more local events. The Mullah clearly reflected political actions elsewhere in Pakistan. The tribes themselves were adept at recognizing and manipulating the larger framework, and the ability of the Mahsuds to identify and manipulate official networks in Pakistan partly explains their superiority over the Wazirs.

*Changing politics in the province, indeed in Pakistan, and the rapid turnover of PAs suggests that the tribal agencies in the North-West Frontier Province may be in danger of, or are, pulling in different directions. On what may be viewed as the critical level of tribal administration, and the PA continues to wield immense power to influence events in his area, different policies may be followed in the tribal agencies at the same time, one PA implementing his version of the “close border policy” and another the “forward policy.” A holistic plan and a long-term strategy for political administration are needed, especially in the context of the emergent politics of the region after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.<sup>10</sup> The multiplicity of models, both tribal and administrative, with specific reference to the Islamic district paradigm, must be identified and interpreted. Failure to do so may result in the mismanagement of models and lead to conflict in society, as the Waziristan cases point out.*

## 2

## Waziristan: land, lineage, and culture

### *Waziristan*

Ahmedzai Wazirs and Mahsuds are the two major tribes of the South Waziristan Agency (Maps 1 and 2). Three other smaller tribal groups share the agency with them. The Suleman Khel and Dottani, representing larger nomadic tribes, are in the process of sedentarization and live in the Zarmelan plain and along the Gomal River.<sup>1</sup> The Urmar, or Burkis, is a small tribe noted for learning and lives entirely in Kaniguram.<sup>2</sup> Utmanzai Wazirs, cousins of the Ahmedzai, live in and dominate North Waziristan Agency and have also settled in large numbers in Bannu District. These two agencies were named after the Wazir tribe in the last years of the nineteenth century. In name and in fact, this is the land of the Wazirs. Other agencies in the tribal areas, like Malakand, Khyber, and Kurram (Map 3), are named after geographical features. The area is large and together the two agencies are almost the size of Wales.

The Pakistan census of 1972, based on what is officially acknowledged as “estimates,” gives the total population of the agency as 307,514, of which approximately 247,040 are Mahsuds and 59,025 are Wazirs.<sup>3</sup> Census figures show evidence of high fertility trends in the agency.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Agency population</i>
1951	135,784
1961	235,442
1972	307,514

From 1951 to 1972 the total population more than doubled. Mahsud figures, in particular, indicate a population explosion, which partly explains their need for more land.<sup>4</sup>