

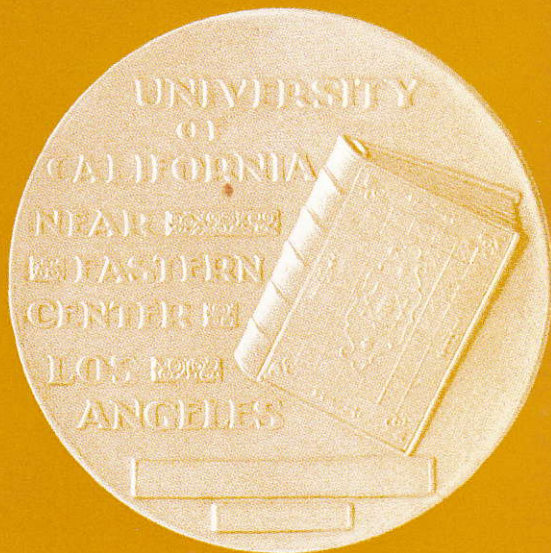
Amin Banani and Speros Vryonis, Jr., Editors

# INDIVIDUALISM AND CONFORMITY IN CLASSICAL ISLAM

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# CONVERSION AND CONFORMITY IN A SELF-CONSCIOUS ELITE

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The intent of this paper is to examine the theme of individualism and conformity in classical Islam from a particular and limited vantage. To explain the purpose and method of this examination it is unavoidable that a large number of fundamental and general issues be alluded to. The mere allusions should not, however, create the anticipation of comprehensive treatment. They may be taken as suggestions for raising of further questions.

Implied in the theme of this conference is the role Islam played in modifying the behavior of its converts. This is a valid subject for inquiry, fraught with dangers of conceptual and methodological nature. One must guard against projecting anachronistic and ill-posed criteria upon the phenomenon. The historical approach must be expanded to admit cross-disciplinary analysis. Even to a comparative historian the idea of mutual exclusiveness of individualism and conformity has a late eighteenth-century, that is, Romantic, European emphasis. It glosses over the evidence of Europe's own medieval experience as well as the behavioral patterns in other societies where coexistence, compatibility, and complementarity of the two tendencies can be viewed in a state of positive and dynamic tension that bespeaks the integrative force of their cultures.

To avoid the contrastive romantic view with its tacit value assignment, we may approach the question in terms of human nature and social relations within the structure of culture. Depending on our sources, several aspects of the structure of culture may provide a starting point for our analysis. The system of norms, folkways, institutions, laws, cultural traits and complexes, subcultures and countercultures, cultural integration, ethnocentrism, real and ideal culture, culture and individual adjustment, and culture and social adjustment are categories that suggest themselves and can be helpful. Inherent in all these categories is the concept of class not as an exclusive analytical tool but as an indispensable one. The validity of the use of class analysis need not rest on an inflexible ideological commitment to the principle of conflict as the motive force of society. Nor does it mean that we must necessarily view it as a manifestation of an equilibrium principle.

The varying scientific theorists of human nature—and of social relations—

insist not only on the reality and validity of *what is* vs. *what ought to be*, but also on the singularity and exclusivity of *what is*. They have no difficulty in making a reasonably empirical case for justification of their views, be it functionalist- or conflict-oriented. This may indicate that both premises are inherent in human nature and in social relations. Self-sacrificial parental love and infanticidal rage are equally observable. Cooperative social behavior and conflict-ridden relations are both documented. The Dobu and Zuni studies of Ruth Benedict give us the paradigms.

While the proponents of these opposing views insist on what *is*, they tacitly promote an ethic of what *ought to be*. We may be on the threshold of somewhat more objective reconsiderations of *what ought to be* as the effective and fundamental promise for social analysis and social planning. Historically, of course, this has been the goal of religions from their most primitive forms to their highest. The nature of religious values and institutions and their impact on individuals and groups, however, have rarely been examined by historians in terms of the resonance between **their** own dynamism and the dynamics of their context. Max Weber's helpful start has so far led to an as yet anemic trend in sociology of religion that suffers from insufficient communication with other branches of social science.

Were we to view religion and society in dynamic terms we might discern from the ethical imperatives of the religious impulse that during those periods when that impulse is fresh and vital, when it is influencing society more than it is influenced by it, a viable integration of opposite human tendencies may occur. Conformity and individuality may coexist, which our post-Romantic vision takes for hypocrisy. Viewed in this light, it becomes clear that it was not the intention of Muhammad to transform the Dobu of Jāhiliyya to the Zuni of Umma Muḥammadiyya. Rather it was an attempt to redefine individuality and character in an integrative, expansive, and coherent manner. The pre-Islamic Arab character and personality, shaped by conflict, was forced to reflect on inner and outer peace.

This integrative force of culture is not an abstraction and should not be viewed in abstract terms. It is a process of adjustment of those areas of group interaction that tend to produce creative tension and a certain viable, if precarious, balance. It should be studied, therefore, with close scrutiny of the structure of society and the relationships of its strata.

As a prime example the interaction of the Zoroastrian Persian culture and the Muslim Arab culture displays a remarkable integrative force. In the crucial period of their interaction, however, they were not in a state of comparable dynamism. It was, in fact, the rampantly confident values and motivations of the Muslim Arabs that acted as the catalyst of this interaction. But at various times and various levels of interaction the forces and counterforces were not reciprocal. A variable mutual accommodation on different planes rather than a dialectical synthesis was taking place, leaving room for cultural pluralism and ambivalence. Nowhere is this process more discernible than in the area of class

structure of the two societies, and nowhere in that structure is it more dramatic than at the top. Here, for example, the Shu'ūbiyya debate can be viewed in terms of cultural ethnocentricity. It reveals to us the values of the competing self-conscious elite classes of the two cultures—where Islam becomes a secondary bulwark of self-identity, conveniently used for purposes of rationalization by both sides.

It may be that by focusing on the top our judgment is influenced by the slant of our sources. But we have no course but to extract what the anthropologists call the primary cultural decisions from the self-testimony of representatives of different cultures. From these self-descriptive utterances we can deduce the degrees of existential satisfaction available to the individuals and the groups who were the bearers of those cultures. Since the bulk of these self-statements come from the elite of past cultures, we are on firmer ground in making direct or indirect deductions about them. The rest of the society is seen through their eyes and we cannot always compensate for that with certainty.

A remarkable vista into the world of a princely Persian house in the eleventh century is afforded us by the testament of Kaikāvūs written for his son Gilānshāh. Badly translated by Reuben Levy under the title *A Mirror for Princes*, the *Qābūs-Nāma*\* by Kaikāvūs ibn Iskandar ibn Qābūs ibn Vushmgīr ibn Ziyār is a rich vein for the study of motives of conversion, and polarities of individuality and conformity among the ruling elite of a lately Islamized region of Persia. The Caspian provinces of Gilān, Ṭabaristān, and Gurgān were not completely brought within the pale of Islam until the tenth century. By the second half of the eleventh century—the life-span of Kaikāvūs—the cultural identity of this very self-conscious elite was not only not effaced, it was highly evident. By his own testimony Kaikāvūs could read the Pahlavi script and was familiar with Zoroastrian texts (*QN*, p. 101). There is no reason to doubt the claim of the house of Ziyār in tracing their lineage to the Sasanian kings. More significant is their acute awareness and intense pride in that descent. “Then take counsel and accept the advice of kings and sages . . .,” the author tells his son, “and of these words some sayings of Naushiravān the Just, the King of Kings of Persia, come to mind. I record them in this book for you to read and apply, as it is more incumbent upon us to heed the advice of that King, as we are of his lineage” (*QN*, pp. 49–50).

The book is not an autobiography, and perhaps because of that it is a more transparent window into the character and personality of the author. Only through a close examination of the intellectual, social, political, and cultural

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\* The difficulties of the Levy translation (London: Cresset Press, 1961) stem from two causes: (1) his arbitrary and unmethodical “reconstruction” of the basic text and (2) errors in translation. Nevertheless, where his version corresponds with the original text of Kaikāvūs’s *Qābūs-Nāma* as edited by Gholām Hosein Yusefi in *The Collection of Persian Texts* no. 34, published by Bongāh-e Tarjome va Nashr-e Ketāb, no. 264 (Tehran, 1345s/1966), I have made liberal use of it. All translations and page references are to the latter edition, abbreviated *QN*.

position of Kaikāvūs are we able to assess the impact of Islamization on his character and personality. He is not an intellectual giant, but for a man of affairs he is remarkably well read and fond of learning. Like so many of his compatriots he is troubled by the dilemma of evil in the universe and the role of divinity in it—which is to say, by the extent of man's choice. The internalization of evil and mystification of man's choice which are the consequences of moving from Zoroastrianism to Islam involve a basic psychological and philosophical adjustment that is not entirely completed in him. In full ripeness of age he can say, "I deem it fitting, before the letter of my dismissal arrives, to record my views on showing disdain for destiny's decrees—and on the advantages to be gained from possessing a good repute" (*QN*, p. 3).

He displays an omnivorous zest for the practical sciences of his time. He sprinkles his speech with Arabic sayings much as a nineteenth-century Persian or Ottoman cosmopolitan gentleman would with French. He is very much in the mold of the Renaissance dilettante and the eighteenth-century aristocratic amateur scholar.

His sense of social position is firm and secure, although political changes have inured him to the loss of his autonomous power. The quintessential dynastic urge to amass, and to pass on property, is his primary motivation. "And know my son that the nature of man is such that he fervidly strives to leave for the dearest kin to him that which the world has allotted to him . . ." (*QN*, p. 4). Expectation of privilege is natural for him and his sense of noblesse oblige is highly developed. Yet the greed and anxiety that beset the waning periods of power are not deep beneath the surface.

Although he is still the nominal prince of his realm, all real power has shifted first to the Ghaznavids and then to the Seljūqs. Kaikāvūs is free and unburdened enough to afford long absences from his domain. A long and calamitous pilgrimage to Mecca, seven years as a boon companion to Sultan Maudūd in Ghazna, four years as a guest of the Prince of Ganja, interspersed with a little holy war in India and Asia Minor help to fill the sixty-three years of his remarkable life and tell us the truth about the state of his political power. His son, Gilānshāh, for whom the *Qābūs-Nāma* was composed, was the last ruling member of the Ziyārid line. After a reign of seven years he was overthrown by Ḥasan-i Sabbāh, the Old Man of the Mountain, in 1091.

It is the rich evidence of cultural traditions and traits exhibited in the *Qābūs-Nāma* that gives us the best clues to the personality of Kaikāvūs and enables us to comment on the nature of his Islamization. We must remember that by the time Islam penetrated the Caspian provinces it had already been profoundly affected by Persian and Greek cultures. The encounter with Persian culture, particularly, was decisive in the ruling system of the Muslim Empire, and pervasive in the life-style of its ruling classes. As the essential role of the ruling class was preserved, the conversion of the elite at the existential level was probably an exchange of ritual and practice. Even here the continuation of superficial cultural traits left the rulers' sense of identity intact. Flagrant

transgressions against the *shari'a* are sanctioned in the *Qābūs-Nāma* by tacit consensus of behavior among all the ruling classes in Islam. The chapters on attitudes and etiquette, manners and morals, are among the most revealing of this existential aspect of Muslim Persian elite life. The amalgam rather than the synthesis is worth noting. The subtle nuances of Arab and Persian attitudes modify one another and seldom result in insoluble conflict.

On the relative merits of noble descent and acquired virtues we are told:

It is true that men of lofty descent and noble origin, even if deficient in accomplishments, do not remain without a measure of respect from other men . . . Yet there is need to exert oneself, for even though it happens that your birth and quality are noble, you possess a certain quality in your own person. Such individual nobility [*tan gohar*] is better than nobility of descent, as the Arabic proverb points out "Honor is by the mind and manners by descent" . . . Be not self-satisfied with the name that your parents give you, for that name is a mere indicator. True name is what you acquire by your own virtue, so that to the proper name Ja'far, Zaid, 'Amr, 'Uthmān and 'Alī you may attach the title Learned Master, Scholar, or Perfect Sage. If the man of noble birth be not endowed with virtue, he is worthy of no man's company; and if you find a man with both these qualities, cling to him and do not let him go, for he will be of value in everything . . . [Lest my advice seems to deal in platitudes] much as you would not be parsimonious with kindly words . . . do not begrudge your material largesse; men are more quickly beguiled by money than by words. [*QN*, pp. 27-29]

Later he adds:

As for modesty, although the Arabs say "Modesty is part of Faith," yet it may frequently happen that bashfulness is a misfortune to men. Do not therefore be so shamefaced as to cause failure or injury to your own interests. There are many occasions when boldness must be exercised to ensure that your purposes may be achieved. Be ashamed of vulgarity, of ignoble and improper conduct and of falsehood, but do not be ashamed of righteous speech and conduct. Just as modesty is a product of faith, shiftlessness and indigence are products of modesty. The place for shame and for unashamedness must be recognized, and that which is nearest to good must be done. [*QN*, pp. 35-36]

The sense of order and its practical benefits are inseparably merged in the *Qābūs-Nāma*.

You must be aware, my son, that the common run of men observe neither seasons nor order in their occupations and pay no regard to what is timely or untimely. The great and the wise, on the other hand, clearly indicate times for what they do and allot the twenty-four hours of the night and day to their various occupations. For each task they appoint

a limit and for each period a measure, so that their different affairs are not confused. It is understood by their servants also in what task they are to be employed at each hour, and thus all their tasks have a due system. [*QN*, p. 64]

It is in the area of forbidden delights that Kaikāvūs is most revealing of the peculiar piety of the ruling elite. It is as if they wish for all the blessings of religion and hope to be spared its moral judgment.

As for wine-drinking, I neither urge you to drink wine nor can I tell you not to drink since young men never refrain from anything at anyone's bidding. Many persons admonished me and I did not listen, until, after fifty years God's mercy granted me repentance. Should it happen that you do not drink, you will not only earn rewards in both worlds and win divine favor but also you will be saved public censure, the company of witless companions and senseless conduct. Moreover, there will be great saving to your economy. For these several reasons I should prefer you not to drink. But you are young and your friends will not let you go without drinking . . . Be that as it may, if you indulge in wine, you must know how to drink . . . Begin your drinking after your recitation of the afternoon prayers, so that by the time that you are intoxicated the night will have fallen and nobody will perceive your drunken condition . . . Then again, however much you may indulge in wine, make it a rule never to drink on the night preceding Friday . . . because of the assembly for worship. And if you refrain from drinking wine on Friday, you will reconcile men to your drinking all the rest of the week . . . [*QN*, pp. 67-70]

The zest and brio of life is conveyed in a remarkable passage that seems to suggest a doctrine of aesthetic justification of sin. He tells us:

Furthermore, wine-drinking is a sin; if you wish to commit a sin it should at least not be a flavorless one. If you drink wine, let it be the finest; if you listen to music let it be the most pleasing and if you commit a forbidden act, let it be with a beautiful partner, so that even though you may be convicted of sin in the next world, you will at any rate not be branded a fool in this. [*QN*, p. 73]

There is not the least trace of moral compunction, however, in the matter of bisexuality. "As between women and youth," Kaikāvūs tells his son, "do not confine your inclinations to either sex; thus you may find enjoyment from both kinds without either of the two becoming your enemy" (*QN*, p. 86).

On choosing a wife (a short chapter after a very long one on how to buy a horse) we are told: ". . . look well to her character, refusing to be enslaved by beauty of face—for prettiness, men take a mistress" (*QN*, p. 129).

The leisurely pace of patrician life is made plain in the chapter on hunting. "Be well aware, my son, that riding and hunting are the occupation for gentlemen, particularly in youth. Yet there must be bounds . . . and one cannot hunt



every day. In the week of seven days, go hunting for two days, spend two or three days in drinking of wine, and a day or two in management of your affairs" (*QN*, p. 94).

At the core of his affairs, as for any dynast, is the acquisition and holding of land. Here the acquisitive instincts are not dulled by undue sense of noblesse oblige. But the protection of *sharī'a* is welcome.

Understand, my son, that whenever you make a purchase, whether it be lands, houses or anything else you wish, you must observe the provisions of the law. Whatever you buy must be during slack market, and what you sell, when it is brisk. Look for profit and do not consider it a fault, for as it has been said "One must twist and turn if one wishes to graze well." And do not be careless over bargaining, for bargaining is the half of commerce . . . Make your home in large towns . . . and buy a house whose roof is higher than that of others . . . Do not purchase a house in the neighborhood of 'Alawīds or of scholars, nor in the neighborhood of your own retinue. Endeavor to buy your house in a street where you will be the richest. [*QN*, pp. 120-122]

There is an acute psychosociological insight into the outlook of the upper classes, and their perception of class attitudes. "You must realize that the common run of people all love the rich without expectation of any gain from them, and hate the poor without receiving any harm from them. The reason is that poverty is man's worst evil. The very qualities that are praised in the rich are condemned in the poor" (*QN*, p. 104). This angle is amplified in chapter four of the book, which is entitled "Acts of Piety to Be Increased with Increase of Wealth." Here is heard the voice of faith accented with nuances of privilege. Acceptance of added duties are justified and made desirable by assumption of special status. The brief chapter with its illustrative anecdote conveys more than any attempt at analysis.

Know, my son, that God created two religious duties for the men of wealth and the elite of His servants (*mun'imān va bandigān-i khāṣṣ*). They are: alms and the pilgrimage to Mecca . . . Surely you realize that in worldly matters also, those capable of undertaking the ceremonial duties of the royal courts are the wealthy . . .

If you have the means and fail to make the journey, you have not attained completely the happiness and pleasure of worldly riches; indeed, the perfection of pleasure lies in seeing what you have not already seen, eating what you have not hitherto eaten and experiencing what you have not yet experienced . . . You must understand, my son, that if the impecunious man undertakes the pilgrimage, he casts himself into peril; the pauper who apes the wealthy resembles the cripple who attempts tasks of the able-bodied, as the example of the following story. I have been told how a certain magnate of Bukhara once set out to make the pilgrimage. He was a man of great wealth; indeed nobody in the caravan was

better provided. More than a hundred camels were laden with his baggage, while he himself rode in a litter with stately luxury that would be rare even at most homes . . . As he was approaching the 'Arafāt, a beggar approached with bare, blistered feet, hungry and thirsty. Catching sight of the chief in all his luxury and ease, he looked up at him and said, "When the time for requittal comes, will my reward and yours be the same? You coming in such plentiful ease and I in such sore straits!" The chieftain replied, "God forbid that at the time of requitta! He should make my reward equal to yours. Had I thought that your position and mine would be the same, I should never have ventured into this wilderness." "Why so?" asked the beggar. The rich man replied, "I came by God's command, but you came in opposition to it. I came as an invited guest, but you have come as an intruder." . . .

Now, God had power to make all men rich; but in His wisdom He decreed that some should be rich and others poor, that rank and honor due to different men might be clearly shown and the more noble of them be distinguished. [QN, pp. 20-23]

(One may consider the implications of this attitude in the light of Weber's theory of Protestant ethics.)

In the crucial passages of admonishment to piety and living a good Muslim life there are detectable three levels of argument on the bases of authority, reason, and practicality. One must be sensitive to the interplay of these arguments for they provide the best clues to the reasons for and the nature of conversion of this ruling class to Islam. The arguments on authority are, significantly, the least frequently invoked. Only on such topics as the elaborate rituals of pilgrimage which do not lend themselves to rationalization does Kaikāvūs resort to catechistic rhetoric. Otherwise, the arguments of rationality and practicality woven together predominate. One representative passage on the obligatory prayer illustrates this attitude:

Beware my son, that you do not entertain the vain thought that one may take the obligatory prayers lightly. If you cannot learn through religion, learn it through reason that the benefits of obligatory prayer are several: The first is that he who performs the obligatory prayers has body and garment clean, and cleanliness is ever preferable to defilement. Secondly, the worshiper is free from vainglory, for the reason that the principle of obligatory prayer is based upon humility, because human temperament (*tab'*) is tranquil in humility. If you accustom your temperament to humility, your body will also be accustomed. Furthermore, every man of understanding knows that anyone who wishes to be *ham-tab'* (acculturated? assimilated? fit in?) in a group must associate with that group . . . [And here comes the crucial passage.] And he who seeks happiness and fortune is submissive to the master of fortune (*daulat-khudā*). And by the collective judgment of all men of reason there is neither a fortune (*daulat*) stronger

(*qavīlar*) than the *daulat* of Islam, nor an authority (*amr*) more widespread than the authority of Islam . . . [*QN*, pp. 17–18]

Reasons of conscience and the activities of the missionaries of Islam should not be ignored but it seems clear that conversion of the Persian ruling classes of the Caspian region was—as had been true of the nobility of Khurāsān and Transoxiana two and a half centuries earlier—a prudent act of joining the dominant force. On a more fundamental level it can be said that this group waited until Zoroastrian institutions lacked the prestige, the stamina, and the stability to integrate their individual and class stability in the social system; and until Islamic institutions had become flexible vehicles for continuity of their roles. They opted for the more effective possibilities of preservation of their choice and privilege combined with the equilibrium that results from stable relationships to family, religion, and state.

The interactions of strong Persian cultural traditions, triumphant Islam, and political flux of the tenth and eleventh centuries produced a ruling class of remarkable resilience with a sense of balance and integration of identity that was highly functional. We see Kaikāvūs assuming his roles, moving with considered judgment and instinctive poise, belying no rending of personality. He might have achieved this integration by his ability to compartmentalize but not disjoin the different aspects of his personality and his social roles.

A clear picture of these roles and the author's views about them are depicted in the chapters of *Qābūs-Nāma* dealing with occupations and professions. Kaikāvūs's intention in these passages is not merely encyclopedic. Despite the gentleman amateur's disclaimers, he is keenly aware that given the political realities of his time, his son, if he is lucky enough to stay alive, may have to seek one of these careers. It is not merely ideal and theoretical descriptions that we have here, but highly pragmatic advice. The very order and manner in which the professions are described indicates the shrewd weighing of probabilities in a real situation. Thus kingship is far down the list, and described largely in traditional and ideal terms. Although here too practical advice for control of underlings is noteworthy (*QN*, pp. 227–239).

The rationale for preference of some professions over others is set out as follows:

You must realize, my son, that you may only enjoy the fruits of pure science in the next world. If you wish to reap mundane benefits from science, you must mix a practice with it that is not free of lies. Such as the science of law (*shar'*) that unless it is applied to the professions of judgeship, or divider of estates . . . or preaching, produces no worldly gain . . . Similarly with medicine, as long as there is no legerdemain and quackery and indiscriminate prescription of drugs, the physician is unable to earn a livelihood. [*QN*, p. 158]

The young prince is then advised to choose—if he has to—the professions of religious law, commerce, and medicine in that order. After that, a ranked

preference for other professions is not specified but a tacit order of probability is observed. The primary desirability of occupations in the religious institutions for the peripheral members of the ruling class is suggestive of comparisons with other aristocratic societies. In this fashion the religious institutions are made a part of the aristocratic ruling system organically as well as structurally.

In the field of law the contrast between requirements of judgeship and preaching are instructive. Whereas the judge is described in soberest terms, the profile of the preacher is pure satire without meaning to be. A good judge, we are told, is forever a student of law and friend of scholars. He is grave and reverent. He speaks little and thinks deep. He is never content with imitation (*taqlīd*), he is independent of mind and deliberate of action (*QN*, pp. 159-160). As for the preacher, it is better to let Kaikāvūs speak—the passage, though long, has its rewards.

Should you become a preacher, you must have the Qur'ān by heart and commit many other things as well to memory. In the pulpit do not engage in wrangling or debate unless you know that your adversary is weak. But you may make any claim that you wish from there, for there are many questioners around the pulpit but no one who listens to answers. Make your tongue eloquent and act as if the people in your audience are stupid brutes, to whom you may say anything you wish—only avoid being at a loss for words; and make sure your clothes are clean. Make sure that loud cheering disciples of yours are always seated among the audience who shall make a rousing noise and applaud at every point you make and keep the assembly warm. If some of your hearers weep, do you also shed a tear from time to time. Should you ever be at a loss for what to say, let it not trouble you; engage in prayer and recital of the creed. Never be sour-faced, otherwise your congregation may become as heavy of spirit and sour-faced as yourself . . . During your discourse be animated, and do not suddenly in the midst of a lively speech fall into listlessness. Study your audience constantly; if it demands wit, speak wittily; if stories, tell stories; in short let your discourse be anything for which there is popular demand. Once you have won success, fear nothing; offer the worst discourse as though it were the best of all things, for when you have the audience with you they will eagerly buy it. But when you are popular be careful for a preacher's enemies appear when he is popular. Do not remain in a place where you fail. When questions are launched at you in the pulpit, reply to those to which you know the answer; but where you do not know the answer, retort "Such questions are not suited for the pulpit; come to my house so that I can answer you." No one will ever come to the house. If men act with intent to bring about your downfall and write you frequent questions, tear up the papers and say, "This is the kind of question put by heretics and zindīqs; the questioner is a zindīq!" No one will have the audacity to ask you questions anymore. Bear in mind what utterances you make before

an audience so as not to repeat them. Your appearance should ever be new and unfamiliar; therefore do not dwell over-long in any one city; the livelihood of preachers and fortune-tellers depends on their legs, and their success upon the unfamiliarity of their faces . . . bid men do only those things which you do yourself; thereby you will show yourself a man of integrity as well as of religious knowledge . . . In your sermons let all that you say inspire both fear and hope. Do not allow people to despair completely of God's mercy, nor yet send everyone to paradise without good deeds. In general speak on those matters in which you are properly versed and of which you have a good knowledge, for the result of unsubstantiated pretense is disgrace. [*QN*, pp. 160-161]

The difference between the jurist and the preacher is not meant to be a caricature. It is a subtle sociological differentiation of roles of religion in different social contexts. What appears to be purely cynical advice has enough seriousness and sincerity in it to suggest that it is not the result of intellectual muddleheadedness, nor moral dissimulation and hypocrisy, but is a soundly functional view of an aspect of religion.

It is only fitting in a conference to honor a man who has done so much to expand our knowledge of commerce in classical Islam that I should sum up the evidence of *Qābūs-Nāma* on that subject. Trade is defined as an activity whose capital is folly (the risk to life and property) but which pays a reasonable interest (wealth). The merchant is advised not to deal with his superiors nor with those who are short on capital. The best commodities are those that are bought by the pound and sold by the ounce. One should not deal in grain with the hope of windfall profits. Grain merchants are always in ill-odor. The fundamentals of commerce are profit and fair dealing. Profits add to wealth and fair dealing to status. One should not invest his original capital in cost-heavy and perishable goods. No gamble should be taken with the capital unless the extent of probable loss is no more than half of the capital. One should never agree to deliver sealed letters. The capital of commerce is rectitude, religion, and quickness in buying and selling in large volume. Giving of credit should be avoided if possible; if not, one should certainly give no credit to the poor, the parvenu, the 'Alids, children, scholars, lawyers, jurists, and servants. A 50 percent profit by land is preferable to 110 percent gain by sea. A merchant must keep written records and go over them often, but he should not give written obligations in his own handwriting so that if he is forced to deny them, he can. Documents should not be exchanged until the goods are in hand. One should avoid deceitfulness and should always remember that the sharpest weapon in business is truth (*QN*, pp. 166-174). It is clear that an eleventh-century gentleman's view of trade and merchants is far from a confining one; nor does evidence of behavior of merchants as reflected abundantly in the literature of the time speak for excessive conformity.

The occupations that place one in the close orbit of royal power are de-

scribed with profound psychological insight born of personal experience, and imbued with acute pragmatism. The sense of precarious fortune, rationalized self-interest, mental agility, moral opacity, situational ethics, and above all an acquired talent for survival permeate these chapters and give them a rational coherence. Those who are in the service of the king are advised to serve well, but never be secure in his service, nor get too close to him. They should not teach the king evil things for it surely will come back to them. They should sublimate in their status and not try to get too rich. They should avoid the service of a moribund master and a declining state. If they commit a wrong they should pretend that it was done from stupidity. They should never display their jealousy of anyone before the king, and should at all times beware his anger (*QN*, pp. 198–202).

The boon companions must be pleasing to look at, and be ready to please, yet should possess some manliness. They should know a smattering of all things (*QN*, pp. 203–206).

The Vazir is advised to be trustworthy and just, loyal and skillful in handling the revenues of the king. "If you 'eat' any of it," he is told, "do so with two fingers so that it does not stick in your throat. Do not hold back the hands of your tax agents too severely, for if you begrudge the fire a little fat your roast will remain uncooked." A good vazir has spies everywhere, and keeps very close to the king. He should send men of independent means as governors to the provinces (*QN*, pp. 216–222).

The detailed discussions of every aspect of statecraft from ceremonial of the court to structure of bureaucracy, external relations and gathering of intelligence, conduct of warfare and military organization, treatment of enemies and internal sedition all provide us with an actual model of the structure of power in the Perso-Islamic political tradition. Although the didactic tone and the platitudinous pronouncements in the *Qābūs-Nāma* are similar to several other works of the genre of popular ethics, they should not be read in the same vein of detachment of ideals from realities. They come from a man of affairs, caught in a time of vicissitudes and flux. The platitudes are merely a prelude to the most pragmatic advice which is the complementary and not the contradictory side of the same world view. It is in this sense that the *Qābūs-Nāma* has a close conceptual affinity with *The Prince* of Machiavelli, *The Courtier* of Castiglione and the *History* of Guiccardini. There is an important difference, however, in the social position of the respective authors. The latter works are written for the prince and *Qābūs-Nāma* is written by a prince. Any self-righteous condemnation of this blend of the ideal and the practical misses the complexity and objectivity of the conceptual frame of the work.

That complexity and objectivity in the case of Kaikāvūs is due to an integrated personality and sense of identity. The catalytic element in that integration is a tendency to conform to Islamic values—be it existential or ideal, or both—where those values reaffirm the position of the elite in the social structure.

If on the basis of primary religious self-statements—particularly those of Islam—we assume the essential purpose of religion to be twofold, modifying the behavior of individuals and aiding social control, then it can be seen that the elite of northern Persia were able to adopt Islam precisely because Islam proved adaptable to preservation of social strata and privilege. This is not to deny that a degree of humanization was also brought about in their character.

The importance of the angle of social class in the context of modalities of individualism and conformity is nowhere more evident than in the parts of *Qābūs-Nāma* where Kaikāvūs deals with marginal types, aberrant groups, sub-cultures, and countercultures. As the demand of the ruling establishments for conformity is not matched by their ability to provide security, autonomous institutions with strong countercultural individualistic tendencies fill the vacuum. The 'ayyār groups and the life-style of Javānmardī, the Sufi brotherhoods and their connection with the artisans and the 'ayyārs are the best examples of this phenomenon. Yet from the angle of view of the ruling elite the most laudable aspect of these groups is their discipline and their rigorous code of honor. The rampant individualism of their social behavior is glossed over.

At the top of the social structure of the tenth and eleventh centuries in north Persia we recognize a ruling elite as the main social force that combats discontinuities in culture. The ascribed status and ascribed roles of their pre-Islamic culture were more conformist than the demands of their conversion to Islam. In this relative sense the impact of Islam upon them may be seen as a force encouraging more individuality.