

Sunni Islam's Internal Ethnic Conflict

THE COGNITIVE DISSONANCE
BETWEEN UNIVERSAL FAITH AND
ETHNIC ORIGINATION

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Few major religions tie the ethnic and historical identity of their first messengers and adherents to their central tenets as effectively as Islam. My awareness of this aspect of Islam began during time spent living within the contested divide between Arab and African versions of the Muslim *ummah*. Night after night, the Muslims conversing would argue their respective positions in circular logic with each position seeming to be rooted in a particular ethno-cultural perspective. Their clashing approaches appeared to conflict with attempts made by the Prophet Mohammed to raise his newly revealed message above the thick boundaries of the ties of blood and marriage. An enduring ethno-cultural divide in Muslim identity seemed to be evidenced by the ongoing dissonance of Islamic application in this non-Arab setting.

I identify two separate conceptual psychological “dissonances” within the Islamic identity as it emanates outward from its origins at Mecca and Medina—dissonances that are central to conflict discourse within the multi-ethnic Muslim *ummah*. These cleavages involve points of conflict in and of themselves and increase the conflict effect when combined. The first is the historical dissonance *within* the pre-Islamic Arab identity, involving psychological and cognitive imprinting of geography, geology, spirituality, and nomadic-sociocentric constructions of society. The second dissonance is *between* the pre-Islamic Arab identity and the new Islamic identity promulgated by Qur’anic revelations and the life of the Prophet.

The former suggests a society that was already internally conflicted prior to the Qur’anic revelations and the latter suggests that this conflict was deepened and then promulgated across vast spaces and into thousands of non-Arab cultures. The spread of a cultural religion that masquerades as a universal faith would create conditions for extended psychological and sociological conflict as each affected culture works to sort out the difference between (unwanted) foreign culture and (wanted) universal faith.

The foregoing is not intended as a pejorative conceptualization of Islam. Rather, a careful reading of the Islamic faith suggests a divide between what Mohammed intended and what eventually emerged from the Arabian Peninsula.¹ I suggest that most, if not all, religious faiths begin deeply imbedded within the culture from which they emanated. Some, like the

Christian faith, become so acculturated across sociological psychological states of being that their central progenitors change ethnicity, race, language, or even gender depending on the needs of their adherents. The Islamic faith, on the other hand, never moved beyond its Arab roots. The faith is inseparable from the linguistic constructions found in the Arabic language of the Qur’an, and from the cultural context of the testified example (*sunnah*) and speech (*hadith*) of the Prophet Mohammed.

The comparison of the conflicted Arab identity against the image of a trans-tribal, universalistic Islam provides the basis of research for this paper. The hypothesis is that the Islamic identity that emanated from the Arabian Desert consisted and consists of primary archetypes that are in constant states of cognitive dissonance, a condition exacerbated by interaction with non-Arab ethnicities. With this paper, I suggest that the Islamic archetype remains in perpetual dissonance with the original Bedouin spirituality and the Arab ethnicity of historical origination and that collectively the two halves continue to create even greater dissonance as they cross the Arab-to-other ethnic cultural boundary.

As a religious text, the Qur’an engaged both the metaphysical hereafter and the physical present of individual, family and society. This contrasted with Christianity, a faith that surrendered the physical present in favor of the metaphysical hereafter and with Judaism, which focused on the earthly ordering of Jewish society. Unlike the Christian Gospels, the

“The revelations of the Qur’an served a dual purpose: change to the existing social order and change to the existing spiritual order. Had these two objectives been realized, they would have negated the central archetypes of Arab ethnic identity.”



A Bedouin family in a traditional tent, 2005. Tanenhaus, Creative Commons.

Qur'an does not rely on earlier texts for its context, but is self-contained in describing the past, the present and the metaphysical future.² The importance of these points is that the revelations of the Qur'an served a dual purpose: change to the existing social order and change to the existing spiritual order. The combination of these two objectives, had they been realized in their fullest form, would have conceivably negated the central archetypes of Arab ethnic identity in much the same manner that the spread of the new Christian identity negated the originating Jewish ethnic identity of its new adherents. This leaves a question of the fulfillment of original Qur'anic intent—an intent that I argue was ultimately subverted by the pressures of ethnic identity and historical origination.

The Cognitive Dissonance of Arab Identity in a Pre-Islamic Context

By the time of Mohammed's first revelation in 610 C.E. during the month of Ramadan, the tribes of

the Arabian Peninsula constituted two distinctive sociological structures that were nonetheless linked together by common historical origination and a symbiotic relationship.

The first was that of the *badawah* (Bedouin), which was generally acknowledged to be, if not the ideal, then at least the original Arab culture. The second was that of the *hadarah* (sedentary society) consisting of tribes settled in established towns and cities, supported by farming, trading and support of the cross desert caravans. It is the *hadarah* that figures most prominently in the Qur'an and the hadith, as Mohammed and his family were of the sedentary Quraysh tribe of the city of Mecca. But it is the *badawah* that ultimately transmitted the Qur'an throughout

the Arabian Peninsula and extended the geography of Arab-Islam north into the Levant and south into the Maghreb and the Horn of Africa.

The evolution of nomadic herder, trader, and hunter-gatherer to the collectivism of agro-pastoralism is not unique to Arab society. Within the normal evolution of societies across this developmental spectrum, the archetypes of individual and family identity change as part of normal construction and reconstruction – albeit in many cases, violently. Two underlying sociological issues continuously surface as part of the explanations for the ethno-religious interplay in the conflicted Islamic identity. The first issue involves the effects of cognitive imprinting on nomadic society that can be found in all such sociological structures regardless of ethnicity or religious tradition.³ The second issue involves the encapsulation of a communal identity in the early stages of evolution from nomadic to sedentary into a religious faith promulgated as trans-tribal and universal in application.

The Geographic, Geologic, and Climatologic Effects of Sociological Development

The popular historical narrative of the Arab peoples placed their origins in Ishmael, the first-born son of Abraham, descendent of Noah of the Jewish book of Genesis. Ishmael and his mother Hagar are cast out from the house of Abraham by his first wife Sarah after the unexpected birth of Abraham's second son, Isaac, father of the Israelites. So the story describes an ancient journey by mother and son into the Arabian wilderness to a place near Jiddah, on the Red Sea coast, where they are saved from the desert by a miraculous well at a place that will be known as Mecca.⁴ Missing from most accounts is the physical context of geography, geology, and climate, and their effects on human cognition, identity formation, and cultural expression.

The Arabian Peninsula is covered by vast deserts, lava flows, and semi-arid grazing lands that grow and die with the semi-circular annual rainfalls. The geography and climate (then and now) supported the development of pastoral forms of socioeconomic life combined with servicing the established trade routes that crisscrossed the Arabian Peninsula. Oases, well-springs, and constructed cisterns allowed for some measures of agro-pastoralism and a slow evolvement of sedentary communities into a few city-state structures. These sovereign, autonomous civil communities were usually dominated by one or more clans adhering to hereditary structures of hierarchy for both family and tribe. This was the case in Mecca, controlled by the tribe of Quraysh and to its north, and in the city-state town of Yathrib, controlled by sons of Aws and Khazraj, two feuding Arab tribes whose attempts at power sharing often resulted in open violence.⁵ Over time, those tribes whose basis of existence included ownership of one or more city-states flourished economically relative to those tribes and clans whose entire life-cycle was bound up in pastoralism and trade caravans. Fixed agro-pastoralism was possible only in relative proximity to the

sources of water, although camel livestock (but not horses or other domesticated animals) could exist for long stretches of time on the small amounts of growth found naturally in the arid plains between desert sands. This, plus their ability to store weeks' worth of water and nutrients, transformed them into a family and a tribe's capital wealth investment.

The importance of this explanation of Arab socio-economic structural life is that despite the divergence of Arab life into separate states of sociological structures of life (*hadarah*-sedentary and *badawah*-Bedouin) the focal points of both structures remained the desert, survival, and tribal affiliation. Nearly all tribes and even clans straddled both *hadarah*-city and *badawah*-desert sociological life, with the wealthier clans in the city and poorer clans in the Bedouin camp. Like life rafts in the endless sea of sand, the water sources and city-states around them were focal points for both *hadarah* and *badawah* communities, with tribal ties determining the mode and rationality for watering rights distribution and grazing. This description of life in the desert underlies the pre-Islamic crises of identity that were to serve as a vehicle for Islamic evangelization. On the one hand, the nomadic Bedouin (*badawah*) looked inward to the lights of the city, seeing in them a reflection of wealth and safety that they might never attain. On the other hand, the settled elites (*hadarah*) of the clan and tribe looked outward to the desert, seeing in it the freedom and nobility that their security and comfort had forfeited:

The ancestors' way of life had been the nobler one, the life of tent-dwellers, often on the move. Nobility and freedom were inseparable, and the nomad was free. In the desert a man was conscious of being the lord of space, and in virtue of that lordship he escaped in a sense from the domination of time. But the townsman was a prisoner; and to be fixed in one place – yesterday, today, tomorrow – was to be a target for time, the ruiner of all things.⁶



A Bedouin caravan crossing the desert in Central Arabia. Wikimedia Commons.

The cognitive dissonance for the Arabs involved a complex failure of identity archetype transformation from the specific ordering of life in the desert (*badawah*) to the specific ordering of life in communal sedentary social clusters. The former ordering is based wholly on the natural circumstance of a defined geographical and climatic environment that cannot be adapted at will. The latter ordering is socially constructed by communities with standards of success that are artificially constructed outside of individual competition with nature. Cognitive dissonance refers to a painful and potentially debilitating psychological state of mind that occurs when an individual or group holds belief ideations that are either in direct conflict with each other or with reality.⁷ Such people and groups “find themselves doing things that don’t fit with what they know, or having opinions that do not fit with other opinions they hold.”⁸ *Hadarah* members of Arab tribes split between the freedom of the desert and the comfort of the city were a transitory society perpetually conflicted by their identity as desert dwellers and the direction of their sociological evolution towards constructed society. Their conflict can be observed in their socio-cultural practices, especially as they relate to generational transmission of archetypal

identity. Male children of *hadarah* city dwellers placed their children with *badawah* clansmen to be raised in Bedouin fashion for the formative years of their development:

It was the custom of all the great families of Arab towns to send their sons, soon after their birth, into the desert, to be suckled and weaned and spend part of their childhood amongst one of the Bedouin tribes.⁹

Mohammad’s own Bedouin foster family

transmitted enough *badawah* heritage and identity that, as a young man, he was already accomplished at guiding caravans across vast desert spaces without loss or incident.

Sociological structures go to great lengths to reduce the effects of identity dissonance and discontinuity of primal archetypes. Social leaders and entrepreneurs reduce dissonance effects by altering existing sociological conditions and creating bridging belief systems that allow them to continue holding onto outmoded identity archetypes that are not grounded in present reality. For example, *hadarah* society in the 7th century created complex explanations of the spiritual and physical benefits of sending their infant male children to be suckled and raised by poor Bedouin relatives:

This interchange of benefits between townsman and nomad was in the nature of things, for each was poor where the other was rich, and rich where the other was poor. The nomad had the age-old God-given way of life to offer, the way of Abel. The sons of Cain—for it was Cain who built the first villages—had possessions and power.¹⁰

In such explanations, the uncertainty of the rightness of their departure from the desert to the traditionally corrupted nature of constructed settled life was ever present in the minds of the *hadarah* families and encouraged them to respect their poorer brethren who chose to remain in the traditional ways of Abel. Even in modern Arab societies, settled urban families and professionals often look to the archetype of the Bedouin as a central tenet of their ethnic and cultural identity. In the 7th century then, it was settled *hadarah* city life that would have been the abnormal social construction, and its early architects would have endeavored to ensure that all possible *badawah* identity archetypes would have been incorporated into any new identity constructions regardless of cost or consequence.¹¹ This is the reason that then and now, Bedouins matter: not their physical presence, but the

lingering emanations of who they were and what they believed that have been subsequently knit into the tenets of Islam and into the deepest reaches of Arab ethnic identity.

Bedouin Archetypes of Family Survival

Then and now, Arab cultural identity construction is based on ancient modes of austere socioeconomic life of Bedouin archetypes, a condition that was exaggerated by its incorporation into the Qur'an and Hadith of the Islamic faith. The centrality of the Bedouin archetype in Arab identity and its unavoidable incorporation into the Islamic faith are evidenced as much by Islamic conflict and violence as by normative Arab cultural expression. Even as the *hadarah* Arab tribes settled into villages and towns, creating economies, social structures and the moral basis necessary to support the evolution of a sedentary identity, the *badawah* Arab tribes resisted. Despite the change of parts of clan and tribe from *badawah* to *hadarah*, both desert dweller and townsman retained rituals and traditions formulated over millennia spent surviving in the desert. The sociological structures that allowed for life to develop without water, without agriculture, and without permanent abode required psychological conditions of fulfillment not found in other types of settled societies. The sociological structure of Bedouin life produced profound psychological emanations of ritual and tradition:

The theme of perpetual loss and ruin, as the 'substance' of this tradition resonated differently within Bedouin and sedentary societies. For the nomads, loss and dying were regular norms of nature; they needed no metaphysical camouflage, and the ode [spiritual poems of Arab Bedouin life] did not venture to offer any. Only the language of mourning itself mitigated the loss.¹²

Bedouin identity archetypes originated in the construction of a "society with no surplus production and no class distinctions, an economy of bare and uncertain survival reflecting itself directly in the



Christian argues that the universalistic message of the Qur'an was subverted by Bedouin tribal values. Wikimedia Commons.

“Then and now, Bedouins matter...the lingering emanations of who they were and what they believed [have been] knit into the tenets of Islam and into Arab ethnic identity.”

culture, a social equality of chances of fortune and misfortune and thus no hidden secrets of survival.”¹³ The violence of the open desert and the ever-present prospect of physical annihilation would unsurprisingly create sociological structures eminently durable and capable of filling tremendous psychological needs of self-denial, loss, and uncertainty. Over time, the collective memory of survival, love and loss that were stored in tribal poems would magnify into a desert spirituality that matched the ruthlessness of starvation, thirst, and endless foraging for survival. This ideation argues that *badawah* resistance to the *hadarah* sociological structure was more than mere adaptive preference against something they could not have. Rather, their resistance lay in their inability to abandon the defining characteristics of a spirituality that had nurtured, sustained and memorialized them for unknown millennia. And it was this same desert Bedouin spirituality that Mohammed’s revelations would unsuccessfully attempt to subdue in favor of Islam.

Given the sharing of the Bedouin archetypes by the *hadarah* townspeople as central tenets of their Arab identity, it is not surprising that in the construction of Islam, sufficient accommodations or compromises would be made to allow for (uneasy) coexistence between Islam’s central tenet of universal trans-tribalism and the tribal desert spirituality of its new Bedouin adherents and protectors. For the *badawah* tribes, acceptance of Islam changed little.¹⁴ Their agreement to recognize Mohammed as God’s final prophet was as much political as spiritual and the moral basis for their nomadic identity remains unchanged to this day; this is easily observable in the Bedouin tribes of Arabia, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa. As the core of Mohammed’s evangelizing army consisted of these same Bedouins, the case is

deepened that the Islam spread by Bedouin conquerors bore distinct differences from the universal model revealed in the Qur’an.

Bedouin Spirituality and Cognitive Imprinting of Desert Dwellers

It can be argued that mere survival in the open desert creates an accompanying spirituality that is necessary just to explain the improbability of one’s continued existence. The desert is not simply another environment of human habitat; “it is a sphere of absolute speechlessness. What is strange in the desert is speaking, thinking in words, dialogizing, communicating.”¹⁵ In the desert, time is an abstraction suited only to epochal events that punctuate poetic recitations of mythic historical narrative that serves as the foundation for spiritual gnosis. All existential identity, proof of past existence and present lives, lives on only within the oral history that binds the many tribes together. The austerity of the desert leaves little room for anything in the minds and hearts of men that is not central to the spirituality of existential survival. Spiritual life, like desert life, has little need for time, agendas, or appointments. One does not wait to meet someone in the desert, nor in the domain of spirituality. Neither single humans nor caravans perceive the utility in exact beginnings and exact endings, shrouded as they are by distance, heat, and dust. The magnitude of space and the emptiness within the desert obviate the possibilities of knowing; distance collapses and time expands to the point that maps of the immediate world become meaningless. This is the essence of spirituality of the desert and psychological imprinting of cognition from geological spaces too vast to comprehend in the absence of intermediary markers such as mountains, forests, rivers, lakes, and the diversity of human and natural terrain.



John Kerry greets Jordan's King Abdullah II, whose family claims descent from Mohammad. Wikimedia Commons.

of nomadic life, but rejected or ignored those elements that did not fit within the existing psychological framework of life in the open desert. The struggle between the evangelizers of universal Islam and the Arab identity as expressed by its prototypical *badawah* society continues, finding its way into most conflicts where Arab identity and Islam vie for primary salience.

Interpreting Islam through Arab Historical Origination and Ethnic Ownership

Bedouin spirituality grew out of this geography, where base survival in an inescapable, unchanging climate was a spiritual act little related to the will of humans fortunate enough to still be amongst the living at the end of the day. The initial Bedouin spirituality that exalted the timeless ethics of survival in desert nomad life was reinforced as those tribes adapting to sedentary life created outgroup competition. As the alternative to nomadic life took root, Bedouin spirituality took on a moral dimension, condemning sedentary challenges to fatalistic acceptance of what *dahr* (epochal time) would bring with certainty.

Bedouin spiritual philosophy expresses itself most clearly in the “belief in the relative profanity of all subjective rearrangement of the norms of nature, norms from which the idea of a possibly different future is absent. This view is based in the feeling that unchosen frames of social existence possess a claim to timeless and superior stability that surpasses the claims to stability of frames of existence chosen during an individual lifespan.”¹⁶ It was not so much the advent of Islam that the Bedouin railed against as the fundamental change in moral responsibility for directing human life best left to the finitudes of *dahr*. The Bedouins did eventually accept Islam as a component of their tribal identity, subordinated and placed in the perspective

The final section of this paper suggests that the interpretation of Islam is itself conflicted and is a cause of conflict both within and without the Arab ethnic boundaries of the Muslim *ummah*. There are compelling historical arguments that Islam never fully subsumed the prototypical Arab tribal ethos that developed over millennia of severe deprivation—even though it tried mightily to do so.¹⁷ As Karen Armstrong writes, “from the very beginning, Mohammed’s religion was diametrically opposed to some of the [Bedouins’] essential principles.”¹⁸ The primary *jihad* or struggle of Islam was always against the Arab tribes’ attachment to their chivalric code, known in Arabic as *muruwah*. This code is a complex ideation of individual and group identity that evolved from generations of bitter subsistence survival in the open desert. It entails a stoic acceptance of suffering, and a rigid commitment to avenging wrongs and defying enemies.¹⁹ The survival and continued influence of *muruwah* results in identity dissonance, because the placement of Islam as a subordinate feature of the tribe’s Arab ethnicity has the effect of negating the universality of the Islamic social ordering force. This creates internal conflict because Islam claims not to be merely a personal spiritual faith but rather a complete reordering of social values, family hierarchy, and human relationships.

The social reorganization of Islam was to have begun at the foundation of Arab tribal life: the parents' relationship to the child. The ability of Islam, or other organized religion, to call individual members of a family outside of the thickly bounded sociocentric circle of life was and is to many, an existential threat to the archetype of family identity: absolute cohesion in the face of annihilation. The movement of children in love, marriage and family is perhaps the central socio-political function of segmented lineage forms of society (clans and tribes). Marriage arrangements between sons and daughters, nephews and nieces, were not issues of romance and individual happiness. These arrangements prevented or halted violent communal conflicts. They staved off and prevented starvation of families. Arrangements of marriage created dense, social, ethnic, family affiliations that would ensure survival and transmission of existential memory across generational inheritance. They were literally the mechanisms by which clans, tribes and segmented lineage were socially constructed back to time immemorial – the highest creations of tribal cultural expression. Mohammed's Islam threatened the continuation of the tribe, threatened the existential survival of family memory and patriarchic control. If God could command Ja'far and 'Ali to leave their father Abu Lahab, if Islam could separate Nawfal from his son Aswad, would then the Arab tribes be forced to choose between family, clan, and tribe versus an unknown, uncertain community of God?

The Islamic reorganization of society would, if unchecked, eventually include inter-family, inter-clan and inter-tribal connectivity based upon spiritually constructed ties rather than those of blood and marriage arrangements between patriarchic leaders. When physical, violent resistance by tribal-societal leadership of the clans and tribes failed and

Mohammed consolidated his control over most of the remaining tribes to include his native Quraysh, tribal leaders quickly found that from the inside, they could protect the tribal system in ways not possible from the outside. Once all of the tribes' members were safely inside the Islamic *ummah*, the patriarchic social management of family, clan and tribe replaced any emergence of individual self-governance under a new system of relationship between God and person. As new entrants into the Muslim *ummah*, family, clan and tribal leaders restored their paternal sociocentric control over bloodlines, pushing the Prophet Mohammed to incorporate sanctifications of blood and marriage relationship that would shift the Qur'an from its egalitarian roots back to sociocentric orientation of social life with a new Islamic flavor to augment, but not replace the old desert spirituality.

All new religions are constructed from the rubble of those spiritual structures they replace; and sometimes the rubble of past religious belief colors and modifies the new in unintended ways. Central to the desert spirituality of the Bedouin archetype was the concept of *Jahiliyyah*,²⁰ which is poorly translated to mean an Arab man's self-concept of his warrior-honor-machismo social identity. This identity trait was supposed to have been subsumed by the Islamic trait of *hilm* (forbearance), which laid the basis for more orderly and structured communities based less on force of arms and more on development of natural and human resources supported by developing infrastructure.²¹ The time that I spent studying and observing Arab tribes in Africa provided a comparison and contrast between historical accounts of early Arab life and society and the reality of Bedouin life in the Sahel. Like their ancient Arab prototypes, the spirituality of Africa's Bedouin tribes is rooted in their pride of survival, willingness to avenge any wrong committed

“Qurayshi tribal lineage is of paramount importance to the establishment of political legitimacy within the Islamic ummah, despite claims to universalist egalitarianism.”

upon their members and protection of their “chivalric code, which, by giving meaning to their lives and preventing them from succumbing to despair in ... harsh conditions, performed the essential function of religion.”²²

The Arab elites in power on the Arabian Peninsula have used their tribal lineage to accord themselves rights of interpreting the Qur’an and especially, the *hadith*, laden as they are with references to Arab culture and social structure. Their claims of lineage to the family of the Prophet provide a theoretical base of legality for ruling their particular political state, as God’s representatives over their tribes and lands. These claims to be physical descendants of the Prophet have provided them with a powerful weapon to maintain ruling authority over the Muslim *ummah*. Part of this authority is rooted in the expected arrival of a final savior of Islam, or *Mahdi*. Religious opinions emanating from the World Muslim League in Mecca have reaffirmed the belief in a *Mahdi* as central—even obligatory—to the Islamic faith. While not specifically mentioning the term, entries in the Qur’an provide a detailed description of the expected *Mahdi* in terms of genetic provenance of lineage to the original Prophet Mohammad:

He will be an Arab, from the clan of Banū Hāshim started by the great-grandfather of Mohammad (Hāshim), who was of the Quraysh Tribe, and of the Adnani Tribal Federation.²⁴ He will be from the descendants of the Prophet Mohammed through his daughter Fatima. He will be the descendant of Husayn, son of Fatima and ‘Ali.²⁵

This is just one illustration of the ways in which Qurayshi tribal lineage is important to the establishment of reverence within the Islamic *ummah*, despite claims to universalist egalitarianism. Every clan or tribe in the Muslim *ummah* has a constructed story within their historical narrative that (at times torturously) explains in complex detail, the bloodline relationship back to the tribe of the Prophet Mohammad. For example, two men from the tribe of Quraysh, possibly even of the clan of Banū Hāshim, made their way south as emigrants and after ending up near the town

of Berbera, took wives from one of the local clans. Their offspring became the two great northern clans of Somalia and through intermarriage, provided all of the important clans with a plausible linkage back to the line of the Prophet. This anecdote is endlessly repeated by sub-cultural identity groups within the Muslim *ummah* where the veracity of claims is most often hotly debated in sessions between Arab and non-Arab claimants. The hierarchical ownership of lineage purity has always been a central facet of Arab Muslim identity, and all claims by others only dilute their pride of placement in the global *ummah*. The belief that Islam was revealed expressly for them by one of their members is a powerful part of self-worth and natural leadership within Arabia and beyond. And in this way, the tribe-centric values of the *badawah* live on wherever Islam is found today. ♦

ENDNOTES

- 1 The reason that this is not intended as pejorative is that all faiths suffer faulty promulgation at the hands of imperfect humans; faulting human interpretation and practice of a perfect ideal does not diminish the ideal, but recognizes the limitations of those who would apply divine revelation.
- 2 The Qur’an does align its new adherents at children of Ishmael, son of Abraham, a tenet that lays claim to the Jewish God of the Israelites. The Qur’an however, extends Genesis to a deeper point in the lives of the Muslim *ummah* with the creation of the central physical object of both Arab (pre-Islamic) and Islamic religious faith; the construction of the Kab’ah by Abraham and his son Ishmael at the direction of God using a pure celestial stone of metaphysical origin. In this way, the Qur’an validates pre-existing belief even as it reorders that belief for the future.
- 3 The formerly nomadic hunter-gatherer First Nation peoples of Australia, the Arctic regions, and North America demonstrate the degree to which geographic, geologic, and climatologic cognitive imprinting reinforces central identity archetypes, complicating adaptation to the realities of sociological change.
- 4 Geography in Islamic idealization consists of the Holy sites of Mecca (burial site of Ishmael, son of Abraham, who links Arabs to God by right of paternal lineage). Also, the Haj or Journey, began as the circumambulation of the Holy Rock

of Mecca, which itself was related to the circumnavigation of the Arabian Peninsula on an annual basis by the pre-Islamic Muslim community. Geology in Islamic idealization refers to the desert and its life-giving oasis and well springs, such as the one at the Holy Rock in Mecca, reputedly placed there by God in order to save the life of Ishmael and his mother Hagar after Abraham's first wife Sarah forced them from the patriarch's camp.

5 Upon Mohammed's flight of Mecca to avoid persecution at the hands of his fellow tribesmen, his successful mediation of the conflict in Yathrib and subsequent conversion of the inhabitants to Islam would establish that city-state as the seat of the new religion with the humble name of 'the City' or al-Medina.

6 (Lings 2006, 23)

7 (Festinger 1957)

8 (Spencer and Meyers 2006)

9 (Lings 2006, 23)

10 (Lings 2006, 24)

11 This example can be seen in the unqualified sedentary Arab support to the al-Misriyah baggara (cattle herding) clans in northern Kordofan and the Rizeigat aballa (camel herding) tribes in northern Darfur against sedentary African tribes. Other current examples include the maintenance by wealthy Arab *hadarah* clans of their poorer relatives as modern-day *badawah* families whose primary occupation is the preservation of realistic Bedouin encampments complete with tents, generators, televisions, and herds of camels and other livestock.

12 (Bamyeh 1999, 84)

13 (Bamyeh 1999, 84)

14 (Izutsu 2002)

15 (Bamyeh 1999, 3)

16 (Bamyeh 1999, 62)

17 (Armstrong 2006) and (Bamyeh 1999)

18 (Armstrong 2006, 34)

19 (Izutsu 2002)

20 Jahiliyyah – Irascibility: an acute sensitivity to honor and

prestige; arrogance, excess and a chronic tendency to violence and retaliation. "Jahili people where too proud to make the surrender of Islam; why should a karim moderate his behavior and act like a slave (abd), praying with his nose on the ground and treating the base-born like equals?" (Armstrong 2006, 67).

21 (Bamyeh 1999)

22 (Armstrong 2006, 12)

23 (Khaldun 1969)

24 al-Kutub, al-Sittah. 2004

25 Narrated Umm Salamah, Ummul Mu'minin: "The Prophet [pbuh] said: The Mahdi will be of my family, of the descendants of Fatimah. Reference Sunan Abi Dawud 4284, Book 38, Hadith 6.