

Some Observations on the Dynamics of Traditions*

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SOME INTRODUCTORY CONCEPTS

This paper is based on certain concepts about the nature of social and cultural order and traditions. We view social and cultural traditions, first, as the major ways of looking at the basic problems of social and cultural order, and of posing the major questions about them; second, as giving various possible answers to these problems; and, third, as the organization of institutional structures for implementing different types of solutions or answers to these problems.

We assume that the search for answers—symbolic and institutional alike—to some of the major problems about the nature of human destiny, of the nature of social, cosmic, and cultural orders, of the possibility of some ordered social life, is an important ingredient in man's universe of desiderata, although it is not necessarily the most important one. This entails a reformulation of certain of the basic assumptions of sociology regarding the nature of the individual's orientation to the social order. It also redefines the nature of institutional loci of this orientation and the relation of these loci to the political sphere. The focus of this reformation is the recognition of the fact that social order is not just given by certain external forces imposed in some way on individuals and on their own wishes. Nor is it just an outcome of rational premeditated selfish evaluation of their interests or of the exigencies of the social and economic division of labour engendered by these interests. Some quest for social order, not only in organizational but also in symbolic terms, is among people's basic egotistical wishes or orientations. In other words, the people seek the 'good society', they want to participate in such an order. Their quest is a basic component in the whole panorama of social and cultural activities, orientations and goals. But it calls for rather special types of response, which tend to be located in distinct parts or aspects of the social structure.

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This quest for some adequate symbolic or social order and for participation in it is very closely related to the quest for some relation or attachment to the charismatic, 'the "vital", ultimately serious event of which divinity is one of many forms'.¹ The crucial role of the charismatic dimension and symbols in social order was, of course, first fully explored by Weber. Recently it has been taken up again by Shils, who had pointed out that the charismatic is not only, as it is usually represented in sociological literature, something extraordinary, but also has specific continuous, institutional location within any social order, and in macro-societal order in particular. He has attempted to specify at least one of the institutional foci of the charismatic—in what he designates as the center of the society.² This tendency towards the institutional convergence of the charismatic in the center or centers of society is rooted in the fact that both the charismatic and the center are concerned with the provision and maintenance of some meaningful symbolic and institutional order.

But this close relation between the charismatic dimension and the centers does not imply their identity. It raises many new questions and problems. What is the structure of such centers and what are their structural relations to the periphery? How many centers embodying charismatic orientation are there in a society? Does it occur in other centers besides the political, cultural, religious, or ideological? What is the relation between the 'ordering' and 'meaning-giving' (i.e., charismatic) functions of such centers, on the one hand, and their more organizational and administrative activities, on the other? How can we distinguish between different types of centers? What are the paradigmatic premises of the symbolic frameworks of different types of centers?

It would be out of place to attempt here any extensive classification of social and cultural orders and centers, although some dimensions of such a classification will come out during our discussion. At this point it may only be worth while to point out one type of distinction—namely that between weak and strong centers.

A weak center is one which, while performing its own technical tasks (such as external political and administrative activities of the political center, or the ritual and theological activities of a religious center), has but few autonomous interrelationships with other centers or symbolic orders of social life, and little access to them or control over them. Such a center cannot derive strength and legitimation from the other centers or orders of social and cultural life, nor does it perform very adequately

¹ See E. Shils, 'Charisma, Order and Status', *American Sociological Review*, 30 (April, 1965), 199–213; and S. N. Eisenstadt, 'Charisma and Institution Building', in S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Heritage of Sociology Series, 1968), pp. iv–lvi.

² See E. Shils, 'Centre and Periphery', in *The Logic of Personal Knowledge, Essays Presented to Michael Polanyi* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), pp. 117–31.

some of its potential charismatic ordering and legitimizing functions. Hence it also commands only minimal commitment beyond the limited sphere of these functions. Its relations with other centers or with broader social groups and strata are mostly either purely adaptive relations (as, for instance, in the case of many nomad conquerors in relation to the religious organizations of the conquered people) or it may symbolically and perhaps even organizationally totally submerge in them—as was the case, for instance, in some of the Southeast Asian religious centers, which were almost entirely submerged in the political ones.

In contrast to this a 'strong' center is one which enjoys such access to other centers and can derive its legitimation from them, either by monopolizing and controlling them or by some more autonomous interdependence with them, and which can accordingly command some commitment both within and beyond their own specific spheres.

As has already been stressed above, the preceding emphasis on the charismatic dimension of social order does not necessarily mean that this is its only relevant dimension. But it is out of these indications that some of the distinctions between the charismatic and the ordinary can be brought out. Non-charismatic or ordinary activity seems to comprise those types of activity which are oriented to various discrete, segregated goals directed mainly towards adaptation to any given natural or human (social) environment, to persistence and survival within it, and not connected together in any great pattern or 'grand design'. A very large part of the daily activities of human beings in society is probably organized in such a way and oriented to such goals. The implementation of such goals calls for many specific organizations and structures which tend to coalesce into varied institutional patterns. In a sense, it is they that constitute the crux of the institutional nexus within any society. And yet, very often all these goals and patterns tend also to become somehow related to a broader, fundamental order, rooted in the charismatic and focused around the different situations and centers in which the charismatic is more fully embedded and symbolized. These interrelations between the non-charismatic and charismatic orientations of human activities, as well as the nature of these orientations and their structural implication, tend to vary greatly between one traditional society and another.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRADITIONAL SOCIETY AND PATTERNS AND PROBLEMS OF CHANGE IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES

However different they may be, traditional societies all share in common the acceptance of tradition, the givenness of some actual or symbolic past event, order, or figure as the major focus of their collective identity; as the delineator of the scope and nature of their social and cultural order, and as ultimate legitimator of change and of the limits of innovation.

Tradition not only serves as a symbol of continuity, it delineates the legitimate limits of creativity and innovation and is the major criterion of their legitimacy. It is no matter that the symbol of tradition may originally have been a great innovative creation which destroyed some earlier major symbol of the legitimate past.

While the content and scope of these past events or symbols naturally varied greatly from one traditional society to another—and the most dramatic processes of change within them were indeed focused on changing this very content and scope—yet in traditional societies always some past event remained the focal point and symbol of the social, political, and cultural orders. The essence of traditionality is in the cultural acceptance of these cultural definitions of tradition as a basic criterion of social activity, as the basic referent of collective identity, and as defining the societal and cultural orders and the degrees of variability among them.

These connotations of traditionality are not, however, confined to purely cultural or symbolic spheres only; they have definite structural implications. The most important of these is, first, that parts of the social structure and groups are, or attempt to become, designated as the legitimate upholders, guardians, and manifestations of those collective symbols, as their legitimate bearers and interpreters, and hence also as the legitimizers of any innovation or change. In the more differentiated traditional societies these functions tended to become crystallized into the central foci of the political and cultural orders as distinct from the periphery. It is in the symbolic and structural distinctiveness of the centers from the periphery that the basic structural and cultural implications of traditionality tend to meet together—and it is here that their implications for processes of change within traditional societies stand out most clearly.

The distinctiveness of the center in traditional societies is manifest in a threefold symbolic and institutional limitation: the content of these centers is limited by reference to some past event; access to positions as legitimate interpreters of the scope of the traditions is limited; and the right of broader groups to participate in the centers is limited.

Even the greatest and most far-reaching cultural and religious innovations in traditional societies—the rise of the Great Universal Religions, which greatly changed the general level of rationality of the basic cultural symbols, their contents, and scope—did not change the basic threefold structural limitations. This is true even though in their initial charismatic phases they sometimes attempted to reduce them. It does not follow, however, that these societies were stationary or changeless. On the contrary they were continuously changing, either from one form of traditional society to another or in the direction of modernity. All of these processes of change impinged on existing patterns of social life and cultural traditions, undermining them and threatening their members' social and psycho-

logical security. At the same time they opened up new social and cultural horizons, vistas of participation in new institutional and cultural orders. But the degree to which existing patterns of social life and of cultural traditions were undermined, as well as the scope and nature of the new vistas, naturally varied greatly in different situations of change in these societies, as did also the 'reactions' to these changes and the ways of solving the concomitant problems that the elites and the members of the society faced.

On the structural, institutional level we may roughly distinguish three degrees or types of change: small-scale or micro-societal changes; partial institutional changes; and over-all changes in the contours and frameworks of the society, especially in the structure and content of the centers. Small-scale changes concern only details of organization, roles, and membership in social groups and communities. Their effect is relatively slight even within the institutional field in which they occur. Partial institutional changes occur only in a limited institutional sphere, such as the economic or administrative, but they create new opportunities and new frameworks for certain groups. They are either isolated from the central institutional core of a society or constitute accepted secondary variations within this central sphere. The incorporation of new urban groups, such as merchants or administrative groups in patrimonial or imperial systems, often through immigration or colonization, or of various sects within universal religions, are among the commonest examples of partial institutional change within the range of traditional societies. Changes in the central institutional core affect the total society. Important illustrations are the establishment of city-states out of tribal federations or of great imperial centers in the place of city-states or patrimonial states. This far-reaching type of change in traditional societies was usually connected with the creation of new and broader political or religious frameworks, with the development of new levels of differentiation and social complexity, with the establishment of new societal centers and of new relations between these centers and the periphery, the broader strata of society.

Propensities to all three types of change have been inherent in all traditional societies but have varied greatly in strength. There has also been great variation in the extent to which the more 'local' or partial processes and movements of change impinged on central institutional cores. Often such propensities to change were manifest mainly in momentary outbursts of protest, as for example in peasant rebellions, or were confined to religious sectarian movements that had few lasting or even short-time structural effects. Yet other movements of the kind could become foci of far-reaching structural changes creating new levels of differentiation or new political centers and centers of new Great Tradi-

tions. Change was more likely to be far-reaching when it was either initiated or taken over by secondary elites in fairly central positions. Successful far-reaching changes were also very often related to economic or political international forces. All such processes of structural change created possibilities of disorganization and for the elites and members of these groups posed the problem of how to organize new role-patterns, organizational structures, and institutional frameworks, and of how to find and to regulate access to new institutional links to the broader frameworks and centers.

These different structural aspects of change were usually very closely connected to patterns of change and of reaction to it in the sphere of cultural tradition, symbols, usages, and ways of life. Such processes of change in traditional ways of life could be of at least two types. One has been gradual, piecemeal replacement of one custom by another, in an almost imperceptible but cumulative process of change which could result in crystallization of different patterns and symbols in what have been called 'Little Traditions'. These types of cultural change were probably usually connected with the 'small', and with some partial institutional structural changes, and much less with changes within the central institutional cores of a society. The other type was the more dramatic change of the central pattern of a society's cultural tradition. This usually entailed the creation of wider and more complex cultural units and of new cultural symbols. The result would be the elaboration of new symbols and centers of Great Traditions. Frequently these developments were connected with growing rationalization of the major traditional symbolic order. A primarily religious symbolic order would become more separate from the concrete details of daily life. Its relation to the secular society would cease to be unexamined and would become more and more distant and problematic, more logically coherent and abstract. All this tended to undermine many of the existing traditional usages, customs, ways of life, and symbols. Members of the society faced many problems on the cultural level that were similar to those they faced on the structural level, but were often more complex.

It is therefore worth while to analyze, in somewhat greater detail, some of the processes connected with the elaboration of such Great Traditions. Cultural traditions, symbols, artifacts, and organizations became, in the new situation, more elaborate and articulated, more rationally organized, more formalized, and different groups and individuals in a society acquired a greater awareness of them. Concomitantly there was a tendency for tradition to become differentiated in layers. Simple 'given' usages or patterns of behavior could become quite distinct from more articulate and formalized symbols of cultural order such as great ritual centers and

offices, theological codices, or special architectural edifices. These layers of tradition tended to vary also in the degree and nature of their prescriptive validity and in their relevance to different spheres of life. As most of these changes in elaboration of Great Traditions were usually connected with growing structural differentiation between the various spheres of social life, these spheres, economic, administrative, or political, could be associated in different ways with both old and new traditions. To put it the other way round, the old and new traditions and symbols could be perceived as more or less relevant to these spheres in terms of prescribing the proper modes of behavior within them, in defining their goals and in providing their over-all 'meaning'.

These processes were often related to a growing 'partialization' and privatization of various traditions, especially of the older existing traditions. Even if the given, existing 'old' customs and symbols did not become negated or 'thrown out' they underwent far-reaching changes. What had been the 'total' sanctioned pattern of life of any given community, society, or individual tended to become only a partial one, in several respects. It could persist as binding for only some members of a given society, or only in some spheres, and even the validity of its prescriptive power or of its use as the guiding symbolic templates in these spheres of life become greatly changed and differentiated.

Hence there always arose in such situations the problem, first, whether the old or the new traditions or symbols of traditions represented the true tradition of the new social political or religious community, and second, how far any given existing tradition could become incorporated into the new central patterns of culture and 'tradition'. In such situations, the validity of the traditional (existing) sanctions for the new symbols and organizations, of the scope and nature of the traditional sources of legitimacy of the new social, political or cultural order, and the extent to which it was possible to legitimize this order in terms of the existing traditions became uncertain.

In consequence, the several layers of tradition could differ in the extent to which they became foci of awareness and 'problems' for different parts of the society. Sometimes, in such situations the very traditionality of the given social and cultural order tended to become a 'problem', and in some cases these processes might give rise to the erosion of any traditional commitments and to concomitant tendencies of social and cultural disorganization. For people especially sensitive to such problems of symbolic templates, all these problems could become crucial from the point of view of their personal identity and its relation to the collective identity of their respective social and cultural orders. Both on the personal level and on the level of the more central symbols of tradition, there could arise, often as a reaction to the possibilities of erosion, the tendency known

as traditionalism; there could then be a potential dichotomy between 'tradition' and 'traditionalism'. Traditionalism is not to be confused with a 'simple' or 'natural' upkeep of a given tradition. It denotes an ideological mode and stance, a mode oriented against the new symbols, making some parts of the older tradition into the only legitimate symbols of the traditional order and upholding them as against 'new' trends. It is especially opposed to the potentially rationalizing tendencies in the new Great Traditions. Through opposing these trends the 'traditionalist' attitudes tend towards formalization, on both the symbolic and organizational levels.

THE MAJOR TYPES OF RESPONSE TO CHANGE AND THE MAJOR MODES OF PERSISTENCE, CHANGE, AND TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS AND STRUCTURES

Given the ubiquity of change in traditional societies there arise at least two major problems for analysis: which types of traditions tend to generate different types of change, and what are the directions of change inherent within such traditions; what are the different possible reactions to change that may develop within them? We shall deal mainly with the second question, touching only indirectly, in the latter part of the paper, on the first. In a sense we shall be taking for granted the existence of some change, without inquiring into its causes, but concentrating on the analysis of different reactions to change.

We may first distinguish between a generally positive as against a negative attitude to change, that is, between tendencies to accept or to resist it. A second question of great importance is whether or not a given society or sector thereof possesses the organizational and institutional capacity to deal with the problems created by changing situations.

A combination of these two major types of attitudes to change and of different levels of organizational capacity gives rise to various concrete types of response to change. Among these I would stress the following: (a) a totally passive, negative attitude often resulting in the disappearance or weakening of such resisting groups; (b) an active resistance to change through an organized 'traditionalistic' response aiming to impose some, at least, of the older values on the new setting; (c) different types of adaptability to change; (d) the appearance of what may be called transformative capacity. This last is the capacity not only to adapt to new conditions but also to forge new general institutional frameworks and new centers. Transformative capacity may vary according to the extent of coercion which it evolves.

These various types of response to change become manifest in the ways in which different groups tend to retain, arrange, replace or trans-

form existing traditional symbols and structures. The common denominator of all these processes of change in the pattern of tradition is, as we have seen above, the differentiation between layers of tradition, the privatization and particularization of various traditional symbols and usages and the tendency towards segregation between different symbols from the point of view of their relevance and validity for different spheres of life.

Hence the most general indicators for distinguishing between different types of response to change are first, the ways in which the people in question differentiate between layers of tradition and segregate various social spheres in their relevance for tradition; and second, the ways they attempt to find new common symbolic forms that may serve to link a given sphere with a given layer of tradition.

From these points of view it is possible to discern the most important differences in the mode of persistence of traditional symbols and frameworks between groups with high or low adaptability to change and those with high or low transformative capacities.

In groups or societies with a relatively high resistance to change (low adaptability) and/or with low transformative capacity, there may be a tendency to segregate 'traditional' (ritual, religious) and non-traditional spheres of life without, however, developing any appropriate connective symbolic and organizational bonds between the two. In other words, new precepts or symbolic orientations that might serve as guides to the ways in which these different layers of tradition could become connected in some meaningful patterns, especially in their relevance to different spheres of life, do not readily develop. At the same time, however, strong predisposition or demand for some clear unifying principle tends to persist, and there may be a relatively high degree of uneasiness and insecurity when it is lacking. A tendency toward 'ritualization' of symbols of traditional life, on personal and collective levels alike, may also appear. There may then be a continuous vacillation between withdrawal of these traditional symbols from the 'impure', new, secular world on the one hand, and increasing attempts to impose them on this world in a relatively rigid, militant way, on the other hand. This mode of persistence of traditional patterns is usually connected with the strengthening of ritual status images and of intolerance of ambiguity on both personal and collective levels and with growing possibilities of apathy and of erosion of any normative commitments because of such apathy.

These orientations also may have distinct repercussions on interrelations between the personal identity of the individual participants in these groups and the new collective identity that emerges in the centers of new traditions. This interrelation tends to be either tenuous and ambivalent or very restricted and ritualistic. The new emerging symbols of the

social or cultural order are perceived by the members of these groups as either negative or as external to their personal identity. They do not serve as their major collective referents, and they do not provide participation in the new social or cultural orders with adequate meaning; nor are they perceived by the members of those groups as able to regulate the new manifold organizational or institutional activities into which they are drawn.

A similar pattern tends to develop with regard to the relations between traditional symbols peculiar to 'partial' groups—regional groups, ethnic, and occupational groups, or status-groups—and the emerging new central symbols of Great Traditions. These groups do not normally incorporate their various 'primordial' symbols of local, ethnic caste or class groups into the new center of the society, and their reformulation on a new level of common identification does not take place. Rather, they constitute foci of separateness, of ritual traditionalism. A similar, but obverse, relation tends to develop between the more innovative groups or elites and a 'traditionalistic' center or setting. This has greater disruptive potential, and we shall analyze some of the structural implications later.

These modes of persistence of traditional symbols and attitudes are closely connected with certain specific patterns of structural changes that may grow up among groups with a negative reaction to change. Internally, these groups generally display little readiness to undertake new tasks or roles, to reorganize their internal division of labor and structure of authority, or to encourage their members to participate in other, new groups and spheres of action. In their relations to other groups they tend to evince, and even to intensify, a very high degree of social and cultural 'closeness' and self-centeredness, however great their dependence on other groups may have become. A purely external-instrumental attitude to the wider setting will then predominate, with little active solidary orientation to it or identification with it. This attitude may take two seemingly opposed yet often coalescing forms. In one form it is a relatively passive attitude to the wider social setting. One may observe this in many 'traditional' rural and urban groups of lower and middle status. Closeness and passivity appear in the rigidity of their conception of the social order in general and of their own place within it in particular. There may be a clinging to very rigid, 'ritual' status images which allow little flexibility of orientations to the wider society. People may have few aspirations beyond the traditional scope of occupations and very little interest in participating in political or social leadership or organization.³ The second major way in which this external-instrumental attitude to the wider social setting can be

³ The great propensity for academic, professional, bureaucratic, white collar occupations as against more technical, business, occupations which is so widespread in many of the modernizing countries on all levels of the occupational scale is perhaps the clearest manifestation or indication of these trends.

manifest is in what may be called exaggerated, unlimited 'openness' and 'flexibility' of aspiration and status image. Attempts to obtain benefits, emoluments, and positions may be quite unrealistic.

Such resistance to change and the concomitant development of the external-instrumental attitudes may sometimes bring about the disappearance and obliteration of the groups in question. However, total disappearance of these groups, or their relegation to a very marginal place in the society, probably happens only in relatively rare cases. When it occurs it is most likely due to poor leadership or organizational ability; the leadership may be almost totally dissociated from the membership of the groups. Insofar as some leadership exists, and shares the attitudes of resistance to change with the membership of the group, then these groups tend to survive, but with rather specific relations to the broader social setting. They may become more or less segregated from the wider social setting, turning into what have been called 'delinquent communities', that is, communities not oriented to the attainment of their manifest goals, economic, professional, or cultural, but simply to the maintenance of their members' vested status position within the existing setting. But more often they may restructure their relation to the new wider settings, on both organizational and symbolic levels, according to more traditional and less differentiated patterns and criteria of social action. Even more far-reaching may be the attempts of such groups to control the broader frameworks of the society, in order to bolster their own power and positions and to minimize the attempts of the new central institutions to construct viable solidarities at a higher level.

The patterns of transformation of tradition that are likely to develop among groups with a relatively positive orientation to change are markedly different. We might expect to observe a differentiation between various layers of tradition, segregation between traditional and non-traditional (religious and non-religious) spheres of life and of the relevance of different symbols and traditions for different spheres of life. But this segregation is of a rather different order from that found among groups or elites with relatively high resistance to change. It is less total and rigid. There tends to be more continuity between the different spheres, with greater overflow and overlapping between them, though this continuity does not ordinarily become fully formalized or ritualized. There is not usually any strong predisposition towards rigid unifying principles, and in this way greater tolerance of ambiguity and of cognitive dissonance is built up. Because of this, there is no oscillation between a total withdrawal of the more 'traditional' or 'religious' symbols from the new spheres of life, on the one hand, and attempts to impose various rigid religious principles on

these spheres, on the other. Rather we find here a predisposition towards the growth of a more flexible or segregated new symbolic order, under which the various social spheres which have developed some degree of autonomy can be brought together and within which various previous symbols and traditions can be at least partially incorporated.

A predisposition toward a closer and more positive connection between the personal identity of the members of the group or society and symbols of the new political, social, and cultural order may develop. The members then accept the new symbols as the major collective referents of their personal identity. These symbols provide guiding templates for participation in the social and cultural order and lend meaning to many of the new types of institutional activity.

Closely related to those modes of persistence and transformation of traditional organizations and symbols are the characteristics of structural, organizational change which these groups often undergo. First, we find a much higher degree of internal differentiation and diversification of roles and tasks, a growing incorporation of such new roles into these groups, a greater readiness by their members to undertake new tasks outside their groups and to participate in various new groups. Second, these new roles, tasks, and patterns of participation tend to become interwoven in a variety of ways, according to more highly differentiated principles of integration, with a greater degree of what may be called 'openness' towards new structural possibilities and towards new goals and symbols of collective identification. Third, a process of incorporation of symbols of both more traditional and more innovative groups in the new central symbols of social, political, or cultural order, with new organizational exigencies, may take place.

Elites with different orientations to change tend to develop organizational policies parallel to the structural consequences of different orientations to change formed in broader groups. Elites with a high resistance to change and with strong traditionalistic orientation were likely to develop, in the spheres of their influence, a ritualism, rigidity, and possible militancy parallel to that found among broader groups resisting change. The potential effects of this orientation among the elites were, however, much more far-reaching. In the more central institutional cores of a society such elites have tended to define the central symbols of their social, political, and cultural order, even though they may have been obliged to adapt to some changes at this level, in a way that de-emphasizes or negates innovation. They define them in a traditionalistic manner that minimizes the chance of integrating within them the new symbols or orientations favored by the more innovative groups. These ritualistic tendencies narrow the possibility of integrating central symbols as referents or ingredients in

the personal identity of members of the more innovative groups. The less innovative groups themselves prefer a rather fixed, non-flexible relation between personal identity and the traditionalistic centers. In the organizational sphere these elites have preferred a strongly monolithic orientation. They attempt to control other groups and elites, to maintain them within traditional confines, to segregate them from one another, to minimize and control channels of mobility among them, and to limit their access to the cultural and political centers. Insofar as such elites have adapted to change, they have usually tried to segment the innovations, segregating them in fields they perceived as technical or 'external'. But they have not done so consistently. Rather, they have oscillated between repressive policies and *ad-hoc* submission to group pressures of various groups. Although they have not been guided by any clear principle in this, they yield more readily to pressure from traditionalistic groups.

On a macro-societal level their responses can lean in two general, often overlapping 'ideal-typic' directions. One is that of a militant 'traditionalism' on the central levels of the new societies, characterized mainly by conservative ideologies, coercive orientations and policies, and by an active ideological or symbolic closure of the new centers, with a strong traditionalistic emphasis on older symbols. The other may be called pure patrimonialism. The aim is simply to establish, or to preserve, new political and administrative central frameworks. Such symbolic orientation of a cultural and religious nature as exists is weak and non-committal, concerned mostly with the maintenance of the existing régime and of its *modus vivendi* with the major sub-elites and groups in the society. We might describe this as an external traditionalism, lacking any deep commitment to the tradition it purports to symbolize. Elites with a fairly positive 'adaptive' orientation to change are those that have largely accepted new institutional goals and have favored participation in new cultural, social, and political orders. Elites of this kind, when they have appeared in the less central and more instrumental institutional spheres, such as the economic and the administrative spheres, have shown considerable ability in creating new *ad-hoc* organizations and new institutional patterns. Often, however, these are only at the same level of differentiation as existing structures, and the aim is mainly to optimize the position of the elites in the new situation.

In other cases, the new organizations may be more differentiated than the old and the new frameworks wider. Activity may be oriented to new socio-cultural goals. But the extent to which these tendencies come to be actualized throughout the whole symbolic and institutional organization of any social sphere, especially in any central institutional sphere, has depended on the extent to which the groups and elites concerned are able to develop transformative as well as adaptive capacities.

Truly enough, given certain favorable international and internal conditions, conditions that have probably existed many times in human history, a society or polity can adjust itself to various changing situations and maintain its boundaries with the help of adaptive elites quite weak in over-all transformative capacity. Centers built up by such elites may be strong in coalition-building, but tend to be weak in producing any binding, common attributes of identity or in crystallizing collective goals.

Full realization of all the possibilities of developing new institutional frameworks and centers, of changing the patterns of participation in them, of incorporating new groups within them, of developing new symbolic orders and new efficient central institutions and symbols has been relatively rare in human history. It calls for a high level of transformative capacity within all the elites at the center, and among all that have access to and influence over it. The most dramatic examples of the creation of such new social and cultural orders, in the history of traditional, pre-modern society, are the Great Empires and the Great Religions.

A very important dimension of the activities of central elites seeking to alter the structure of society is that of coerciveness. This is apparent when central elites try to force their elites, and broader strata, into new social and political orders that are alien to them. Examples are found in the history of militant religious elites, whose methods in some cases resembled those of militant traditionalistic elites. More obvious examples are found among contemporary revolutionary elites, rationalistic or communistic. The basic orientations and the institutional implications have usually been a mixture of those of the 'traditionalist' and the 'transformative' elites. Coercive elites share the 'traditionalist' elites strong inclination to rigid control and regulation, their somewhat negative attitude to the possibility of allowing any degree of autonomy to groups whose symbols and traditions differ from their own, and their resistance to any independent innovation. These coercive orientations and policies have often led to the annihilation of other elites and of entire ethnic groups and social strata. Coercive elites resemble the flexible, non-alienated transformative elites in taking on the task of forging new goals, symbols, and centers, of attempting to establish new political and cultural orders with new ranges of institutional activities, and of widening at least symbolically, if not institutionally, the participation of broader strata in these orders.

Differences between the coercive and non-coercive innovative elites stand out most clearly in their attitudes with respect to regulating the relations between personal and collective identities. Coercive elites in ideological and educational fields attempt to submerge personal identities in the new collective identity. They minimize personal and subgroup

autonomy, making collective symbols and their bearers the major controllers of the personal superego.

The more transformative, non-coercive elites, on the other hand, prefer to encourage or at least permit the development of a type of personal identity which has reference, but not a too rigid one, to the new collective identity. This personal identity is not entirely bound up with any one political system, state, or community. It has flexible openings to a variety of collectivities and communities. Yet it tends to generate a strong emphasis on personal commitment to do something for the community. It also entails a very strong connection between personal commitment, personal identity and several types of institutional activities. We may sum up the differences in the impact of different orientations and patterns of response to situations of change by reviewing the several ways in which they utilize the reservoirs of tradition available to them, and the several ways in which different forms of traditional life and symbols persist within the new settings. The reservoirs of tradition consist of the major ways of looking at the basic problems of social and cultural order and of conceiving solutions to them. They also identify the available structures through which the various solutions may be implemented.

A high degree of resistance to change implies inability to define such problems in a new way. There is often a militant emphasis on the necessity of holding exclusively to the old, given answers to these problems. If the possibility of new answers is admitted, it is limited to very partial, discrete, new answers to segregated aspects of the social order. These discrete answers may be subsumed under some of the broader of the older answers. In all these answers there is stress on the importance of defending the exclusiveness of the old problems. The defense may thus become a new problem. Resistance to change is also usually characterized by attempts to maintain the internal structure and the existing level of differentiation of existing social units and to minimize the scope of new and more differentiated groups.

The highly adaptable groups and elites, on the other hand, are characteristically willing to use existing tradition for posing and solving new problems of social and cultural order. Hence they distinguish between different layers of traditional commitments and motivations and try to draw on them all and on existing organizations, so far as possible, in the new tasks and activities. There are clearly two major foci of continuity of tradition among such groups. The first is the persistence, perhaps flexibly, of certain poles or basic modes of perception of the cosmic, cultural, and social order. The second lies in the persistence of autonomous symbols of the collective identities of major subgroups and collectivities, however great may be the concrete changes in their specific content.

Non-coercive transformative elites also utilize reservoirs of tradition,

especially through differential use of the various layers of traditional commitments and motivation in new activities and organizations. They may also accept, or even encourage, continuity in the collective identities of many subgroups and strata. Yet there are several major differences between transformative and adaptive elites. The first, by their very nature, are obliged to redefine the major problems of social and cultural order and to enlarge the scope of available and permissible solutions. True, in doing so they usually stop short of rejecting the pre-existing symbols, preferring, as we have seen, to incorporate them in their own new symbolic order. Nevertheless, they do redefine the major problems of this order. Because of this, and especially because of their acceptance of a certain variety of answers to these problems, they tend also to facilitate or encourage the rise of new groups or collectivities, especially of more differentiated, specialized ones, committed to new institutional goals. Hence they may maintain continuity of tradition mostly on levels of commitment to central symbols of the social and cultural orders and of very general orientations to these orders. But they do not maintain commitment to the full content of these orders, which may continuously change.

With a coercive elite, the situation is more complex. On the one hand, if it is successful in attaining or seizing power, it is then in a position to destroy most of the concrete symbols and structures of existing traditions, strata, and organizations and to emphasize new content and new types of social organization. Yet at the same time it may preserve considerable continuity with regard to certain basic modes of symbolic and institutional orientations. Most coercive elites grow out of societies with a relatively low level of institutional and symbolic flexibility. They may as a result pose some of the basic problems of social and cultural order, and of their interrelations, in broad terms, for example, with emphasis on power, in much the same way as their predecessors did. However, the solutions and the manner in which they are worked out, for example, in the problem of how to establish a 'strong' autocratic absolutist society as against a 'strong' industrial one, would differ greatly from those of the preceding order. Coercive elites attempt to utilize many of the traditional orientations, but shorn of much of their concrete content and of their identification with and connection to the older order or to any parts of it. In other words, the basic attempt is to unleash and to control, in a new way, the primary motivational orientations inherent in the older systems, while at the same time changing their content and basic identity. A similar process occurs with regard to the incorporation of symbols of partial groups or even of some of the older central symbols, especially 'patriotic' ones. On the one hand we find an almost total negation of these symbols; on the other hand, because the problems that have to be posed about the nature of the social order remain much the same, there may be parallel

attempts to use or uphold these symbols, or similar general symbolic orientations, although in an altered context and with little or no autonomy.

SOME FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF DIFFERENT PATTERNS OF RESPONSE TO CHANGE

We may now briefly examine some of the conditions that influence types of orientation and patterns of response to change, with special reference to traditional societies. Anthropological, sociological, and psychological research point to several sets of variables and their interrelations as being of chief importance.

Certain of these variables, for example the extent of rigidity or differentiation, so closely resemble some of the characteristics of different patterns of response to change that there may well be some circularity in the argument. Yet the claim that the more 'flexible' social structures or traditions tend also to develop more 'flexible' or positive patterns of response to change seems to us to be indeed true or at least feasible. But the correlation only partially accounts for the patterns of response to change. They fail to account for differences within the range of positive attitudes to change between 'adaptive' and 'transformative' response, or for the emergence of coercive elites. Again, many variations in the patterns of response to change seem to be related to other variables, not just to the degree of flexibility of the social structure.

The first set of these other variables seems to be the extent of the internal solidarity and cohesion within a group. A second set includes the rigidity and uniformity of the internal division of labor and of the social structure and cultural order, as evident especially in the degree of autonomy of their various components. It includes also the degree of openness of any given group towards other groups, towards the broader society, and towards the social and cultural orders in general.

Structural flexibility or rigidity can be measured first by the extent to which institutional tasks are differentiated and performed in specific situations, and second, by the extent to which each group, role, or situation, is governed by autonomous goals and values or is dominated by those of another such sphere.

The flexibility or rigidity of the symbolic orders of the cultural tradition of a society has to be measured first by the extent to which the content of the cosmic and cultural order, of the social collectivity and the social order, and of the socio-political centers, is closed, fixed, or relatively open. Second, it is to be measured by the degree to which participation in these orders is open to different groups, and third by the nature of their symbolic, organizational, and institutional interrelations and interdependence.

Here several possible constellations can be distinguished. Each such symbolic sphere may be seen as autonomous, but closely interrelated with

the others, in the sense that participation in one gives access to another without, however, imposing its own criteria or orientations on it. Or each such order may be relatively closed, with purely 'external' or 'power' interrelations among them. Finally, one of these orders may predominate over the others, regulating access to them and imposing its own values and symbols on them.

The exact nature of such institutional and symbolic flexibility or rigidity necessarily differs greatly between different types of societies. Thus, in primitive societies rigidity is especially manifest in the close interdependence of units, such as clans and kinship groups, and in organizational and symbolic overlapping, or even identity, in the definition of these units. There is little differentiation between the symbols of belonging to one or another institutional sphere (political, economic, or ritual), and between the situations and roles in which they are enacted. In more complex societies with a much higher degree of organizational differentiation of institutional and symbolic spheres, flexibility or rigidity is especially evident in the institutional autonomy of the spheres, in terms of their specific goals, as against a relatively tight symbolic or institutional control of some central sphere over all the other spheres.

Beyond such interrelations, there is an additional set of variables in the content and organization of a cultural tradition. It is especially important to know the extent to which any given tradition entails active commitment to its values and symbols on the part of individuals and to know whether such commitment is relatively 'open' or ritualistically closed or prescribed. The distinction introduced above between weak or strong centers is closely related to this.

These major sets of variables—the extent of solidarity of a social group or system, the extent of autonomy of different institutional and symbolic systems, and the weakness or strength of different centers—tend to influence the different orientations and patterns of response to change. It seems that the general orientation to change is influenced by some combination of two of these sets of variables, namely, by the scope of solidarity of a system and by the degree of its institutional flexibility.

Most available data show that the lower the solidarity and cohesion of any given social system, the lower also is its members' adaptability to change. Social and psychological research show that the maintenance of the cohesion of primary groups, and to some extent of their solidarity links to wider social settings, is of crucial importance if their members are to be free to face new, or adverse, conditions. Destruction of solidarity may greatly impair this ability. Most of these studies, however, have dealt with primary groups within larger formal organizations, mainly in the framework of modern societies. There arises, therefore, the problem of

how these variables are related to variables in more formal aspects of micro- or macro-societal structures. It is here that the importance of institutional autonomy appears. In general, the adaptability of a social system to situations of change increases with the extent of the autonomy of its social, cultural, and political institutions and of its major symbolic orders.

Comparative research on this problem, here only beginning to be systematic, suggests that the chances of a society's orientation to change becoming positive depends on the strength of autonomous interrelations among its various symbolic orders, and on the extent to which the precepts of its traditions are non-ritualistic. Conversely, the degree of resistance to change depends on such autonomy being absent or slight, and on the social, cultural, and political orders being closely identified with one another.

Obviously there are many more permutations among these various elements of cultural traditions. Their influence on processes of change will have to be more fully and systematically analyzed in further research. Thus it may seem as if group cohesion and solidarity, on the one hand, and rigidity or flexibility of the social and cultural order, on the other hand, have a similar influence on adaptability and on transformative capacity, that they always tend to go together and seem to reinforce one another in their influence on processes of change. But closer examination of the data indicates that this need not always be the case. It may well be true that a very low degree of group solidarity and cohesiveness reduces adaptability and that high cohesiveness makes for positive orientations to change. But between the extremes the picture is not so simple. For example, a relatively high degree of group solidarity may be connected with a relatively rigid internal division of labour. In that case it need not denote lack of organizational adaptability to change; it may foster special kinds of adaptation.

In general, and in a very tentative way, one may say that the extent of the solidarity of a group or a structure tends to influence the degree to which individuals or groups with organizational ability will appear within it, and that the extent of flexibility in the social structure influences the nature of the general attitude to change within a society. What is important here is the relative focus of solidarity and cohesion of various groups and of their structural characteristics in relation to the social framework of the society. What matters above all is the possibility of carrying over this solidarity into new fields of instrumental activity, into patterns of participation in new social spheres. But neither of these sets of variables as yet explains the extent of a society's ability to crystallize new effective institutional frameworks of any given shape. The crucial variable seems to be the extent to which different types of entrepreneurial and/or charismatic elites and groups may emerge.

The process of social change or the undermining of existing patterns of life, social organization, and culture, accompanied as it often is by structural differentiation, gives rise, by its very impetus, to a great variety of new groups. These will display a new range of differences in basic organizational features. By their very nature most new occupational, religious, and political groups in new status categories or in elite groups undertake new tasks, new types of activities, and are oriented to new organizational settings. These tasks and activities vary greatly, of course, according to whether the emerging system is an empire with a predominantly agrarian base, or is some system with mercantile and factorial bases, or is a system of industrialism, possibly democratic. But these groups of elites also differ greatly in general organizational ability, in their adaptive, innovative or transformative capacities in their own direct sphere of activities, and in their relationships to the broader groups and to the more central institutions of their society.

What are, then, the conditions that influence such elites? We referred above (p. 457), to inherent tendencies, within patterns of tradition, to initiate certain kinds of change. Instead of dealing with this point directly, we shall concentrate on the third set of variables mentioned above, the set affecting the content of a cultural tradition and the strength or weakness of a center.

The strength or weakness of the major centers of any social or cultural order may have structural repercussions on the cohesion and orientations of its major elites in general and of the intellectual strata in particular. Weak centers tend to generate or to be connected with the emergence of new elites that are low in internal autonomy and cohesion, restricted in their social orientations, and inclined to be dissociated both from each other and from the broader strata of the society. Strong centers, on the other hand, generate, or are connected with, more cohesive elites and with intellectual strata that in general have fairly close interrelations. Whether these interrelations will be coercive, hierarchical, or autonomously interdependent and the nature of relations with broader groups and strata will depend largely on the exact structure and content of such centers, especially on their flexibility and on the openness of their symbolic content.

It is the interrelation among: (a) the degree of solidarity of different groups and strata, (b) the structural and symbolic autonomy of different social spheres, that is, the degree of rigidity or flexibility of these spheres, and (c) the strength or weakness of the major centers of the symbolic orders, that is, the social, political, and cultural (in case of traditional societies usually religious) centers, that can best explain, in a limited and preliminary way, the development within a given society of elites and

groups with different degrees of organizational, innovative, and transformative capacities. In any society, but particularly in well differentiated societies, these relations are rather complex and heterogeneous. A complex society with a multiplicity of different traditions and groups, necessarily gives rise, in situations of change, to a great variety of elites and groups that differ in organizational, innovative, and transformative capacity. These often compete strongly among themselves for relative predominance in the emerging social structure. It would be impossible here to go into all the possible variations; we shall present therefore only some general hypotheses in terms of very general tendencies. Further research will enable us to go beyond these very rough generalizations.

First, in a society, or parts thereof, that has high solidarity but low structural flexibility, new groups will be relatively traditionalistic but well organized. On the other hand, in a society, or parts thereof, that has a high level of flexibility but a relatively low level of solidarity, several new groups or strata may be fairly adaptable, but not very well organized. In a society that has high levels both in flexibility and in solidarity, we might expect groups or elites to appear that would be both fairly well organized and fairly adaptable.

But the extent to which such elite groups are able to influence broader institutional settings, and especially the more central institutional cores of the society, will mostly depend on the types of centers that exist, and on their relations to these centers. The capacity to affect the broader institutional settings will be smaller among elites that are relatively non-cohesive, that are alienated from other elites and from the broader groups and strata of the society, and that are either very distant from the existing center or succeed in monopolizing it, to the exclusion of other groups and elites. In terms of center-building such groups will probably emphasize the maintenance of some given attributes of collective identity, together with the regulation of internal and external force.

Still other societies, or parts thereof, are marked by high levels of rigidity in the social system and in the symbolic orders, displaying little symbolic distinction between their various social and cultural orders, and having relatively weak centers. This seems to have been the case in many Southeast Asian patrimonial régimes. Here the elites will be traditionalistic, and non-transformative. Yet they may show a certain organizational capacity and some predisposition for limited technical innovation. In the less cohesive sectors of such societies there may be a few other elites with some positive orientation to change. These will be new ideological, professional or political groups, capable of adapting to new ideologies or symbols but having little ability for continuous institutional activity, and therefore little transformative capacity. Both of these types of elite will tend to develop 'closeness' in social and status perception, and to place

a ritual emphasis on certain specific and very limited types of status orientations. They will then conceive their own legitimation in terms of maintaining these restricted ranges of status symbols.

Insofar as rigidity of the social and cultural orders and resistance to change coexist with a rather strong center, one might also expect to find militantly innovative elites with coercive orientations. They will be most likely to arise in groups not too distant from the center and enjoying some internal solidarity.

Where there is a high degree of structural and cultural autonomy and flexibility, and also high cohesion within social groups, elites may attain a relatively high level of adaptability to change, but without showing much transformative capacity.

Here, again, it is the symbolic and institutional structure of the centers and their strength or weakness that is of crucial importance. The combination of conditions of flexibility with strong centers, which would then almost by definition be open, seems to increase the likelihood that highly transformative elites will appear. Research in a number of micro- and macro-societal settings suggests that under these conditions transformative capacity occurs mainly among elites that are relatively cohesive and have a strong sense of self-identity. It is found mostly among secondary elites somewhat removed from the center. They may manage to function within relatively segregated institutional spheres. Or they may have positive solidary orientations to the center and maintain some relations with the older elites and with at least some of the broader groups of the society. Such elites tend also to develop simultaneous orientations to collective ideological transformation and to concrete tasks and problems in different 'practical' fields. They perceive their own legitimation in terms of wide changes, not solely in terms of providing immediate benefits or status symbols to other groups.

Where high flexibility coexists with weak centers, the development of transformative elites is usually much impeded. Instead, one may expect to find a very great variety of elites, some of them traditionalistic and some highly adaptable, but each one with distinctive orientations. Insofar as no balance of power develops among them, their very multiplicity may jeopardize the successful institutionalization of any viable new institutional structure.

The preceding analysis of the conditions of development of different types of elites and of their center-building activities may seem to have been put in a rather deterministic way. This was, however, by no means our intention. As has already been pointed out, in every complex society there always exist rather heterogeneous conditions and a variety of sectors, each of which may produce different kinds of elites. Among such elites there

usually develops a strong competition for predominance, and the emerging situation as well as the result of such competition are never fully predetermined.

The relative lack of predetermination emerges still more clearly if we bear in mind the importance of the international setting in the development of various elites, as has been stressed above. Throughout our discussion we have emphasized the crucial importance of various secondary elites or movements as potential bearers of socio-political transformation. But the structural location of these elites seems to differ greatly among the different types of political régimes, mainly according to the nature of the division of labor prevalent within a society on the one hand, and the relative placement of these elites within the internal system of the societies, or within the international settings of their respective societies, on the other.

In general, it seems that insofar as the division of labor within any given social system is either 'mechanical' and/or based on a center focused mostly on regulation of force and/or on the upholding of symbols of common identity, then change-oriented or transformative cultural or political elites would more probably arise within international enclaves around the society than *within* it. The probability of any such transformative elite effecting change within the society would depend, however, either on the breakdown of its center because of some external or internal forces and/or on finding secondary internal groups or elites that would be willing, for ideological or interest reasons, to become its allies. On the other hand, insofar as a social system is characterized by a high degree of organic solidarity, then it is probable that a change-oriented elite, although it might be closely related to broader international settings and enclaves, would to some extent develop within the society.

The probability of its becoming effective would then depend more on the character of its relations with that society's centers and with its other elites, and with its broader groups, as has been briefly discussed above.

It is natural at this stage of the discussion to inquire whether the development of these different types of elite depends only on the 'formal' structure of the social and cultural orders from within which they tend to develop, or also on its content, that is, on orientations and systems of beliefs.

It would be very important for our discussion to analyze how differences in the content of tradition influence the perception of change, adaptability to change, and the possibility of effecting cultural transformation, that is, to see how such content influences the basic paradigms of a cultural tradition. We cannot deal with this problem in detail here. However, it

may be worth while to present some tentative conclusions derived from a re-examination of Weber's thesis regarding the Protestant Ethic.⁴

According to this analysis the central aspects of Protestant religious and value orientations, those that created, as it were, their transformative potential, were as follows. First of all was its strong combination of 'this-worldliness' and transcendentalism, a combination orienting the behavior of the individual to activities within this world, without ritually sanctifying any of them, through a mystic union or through any ritual act, as the final point of religious consummation or worthiness. Second, was the strong emphasis on individual activism and responsibility. Third was the unmediated, direct relation of the individual to the sacred and to the sacred tradition. This attitude, while strongly emphasizing the importance and the direct relevance of the sacred and of tradition, yet minimized the extent to which the individual's relation to the sacred, and his individual commitment, can be mediated by any institution, organization, or textual exegesis. Hence it opened up the possibility of continuous redefinition and reformulation of the nature and scope of such tradition. Further, it enhanced this possibility by a transcendentalism so strong as to minimize the sacredness of any 'here and now'.

These Protestant orientations, especially strong among Calvinists, were not, however, confined to the realm of the sacred. They were closely related to and manifest in two major orientations inherent in most Protestant groups' conception of social reality and of their own place in it, that is, in what may be called their status images and orientations. Their 'openness' towards the wider social structure was of crucial importance. It was rooted in their 'this-worldly' orientation in the economic sphere and in other social fields. Second, they were characterized by a certain autonomy and self-sufficiency from the point of view of their status orientation. They displayed little dependence, from the point of view of the crystallization of their own status symbols and identity, on the existing political and religious centers.

A full comparative application of these insights to other religions is still to come, but some preliminary hypotheses can be offered. The effects of the transformative capacity of religious or ideological ideas and movements on the motivational level, that is, in producing strong motivation to undertake new types of non-religious roles, may be greater when the transcendental and this-worldly orientations of these religions or ideologies are strong and when they evince clear ideological autonomy with regard to any given social or communal order. Conversely, such transformative effects are reduced by the degree of strength of a this-worldly

⁴ A fuller exposition of these points can be found in S. N. Eisenstadt, 'The Protestant Ethic Thesis in an Analytical and Comparative Framework', *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization, A Comparative View* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), pp. 3-46.

or an other-worldly orientation towards immanence, by the extent to which the religious groups are embedded in the existing political order and by the degree of apathy that negative attitudes to this order may entail.

The transformation of new central symbols and frameworks is, in its turn, greatly dependent on the extent to which the religious or ideological systems have shown a relatively high level of both ideological and organizational autonomy while at the same time being oriented to participation in the socio-political order. The more autonomous the religious organizations are, and the less they are identified with the existing political order, the more effective they can be in developing new types of central political and cultural symbols. Conversely, their ability in this direction is smaller when their autonomy is less and when their identification with the existing political order is great.

Again, the greater the extent to which a given polity and state constitute a basic referent of religious activity, the smaller is the extent to which internal movements and systems of reform oriented to the redefinition of the central spheres of the society can develop. Conversely, the stronger the universalistic and transcendental elements within these religious orientations the greater are the chances that such movements will arise.

Finally, the more the activist orientations within the religious value-system are other-worldly, the less likely it is that reform movements will direct themselves to recrystallization of the central spheres of the society. Conversely, the more these orientations have emphasized involvement in the secular world, and the stronger the specific ideological formulations of these orientations, the more likely it is that they will have far-reaching transformative effects.