salām taḥīyah: greetings from the highlands of Yemen

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introduction

The ethnography of communication claims that it is possible to describe speaking as rule-governed behavior. While it was important that this point be demonstrated by a number of excellent articles and monographs describing ways of speaking in different cultures (Schegloff 1968; Labov 1972; Gumperz and Hymes 1972; Irvine 1974; Bauman and Sherzer 1974), the field is not in my opinion related significantly enough to the concerns of contemporary, especially symbolic or interpretive, anthropology. In other words, speaking entails more than a knowledge of how to use signs "appropriately" in certain social situations—a view of behavior in the perspective of an older, more normative sociology—it also involves the communication of cultural meanings that are interpreted by actors in social contexts. By linking the ethnography of communication with what Geertz (1973) has called "cultural interpretation," sociolinguistics can be made to seem more vital and interesting to the concerns of anthropologists.

Attention to the "native point of view" was already evident in the earliest formulation of the ethnography of communication by Dell Hymes (1974). He referred to it as the "emic" model of speaking, defined as the "participants' own explanations and conceptualizations of their behavior" and "their 'homemade models' " (Hymes 1974:11–12). A particularly telling use of the emic model to help explain speech behavior can be found in Heath (1983), a study of speaking in black and white working-class communities of the Carolina Piedmont. And certainly, this article will depend heavily on an "emic" view of speaking, especially where the *sayyid*[1] speech community is concerned, as is described below. In Basso (1979) we are confronted with the Apache's parody of "Whiteman" ways of speaking that deeply offend Indian sensibilities. It is a double-edged, metapragmatic event: at once a scathing condemnation of "Whiteman" speech (and by implication the white man's moral character) as well as an affirmation of Apache ways of communication (which are connected with their concepts of human dignity).

Basso's approach is what one might call a "cultural interpretation" of speaking, which I intend to emphasize in this study of Yemeni greetings. In my view, too little has been done to wed the ethnography of communication with cultural anthropology's concern for symbols and their meanings.

There is, of course, another side to this intellectual coin. Whereas interpretive anthropology has made use of linguistic data to elucidate cultural concepts central to the society under investigation, rarely has such use been motivated by linguistically informed paradigms. In Middle Eastern ethnography, to take an example with which I am more familiar, the interpretive ap-

The North Yemeni speech event of greeting as a rich semiotic act is interesting to analyze from both a linguistic and an anthropological point of view. It is argued that an indexical or pragmatic approach combined with an "interpretive" or symbolic understanding of culture may lead to the most interesting insights into verbal forms and their social meanings. In particular, it is argued that different constructs of the "person" are created in the speech event. [Arabic, ethnography of communication, interpretive anthropology, and self]

proach has been brilliantly represented by C. Geertz (1979), H. Geertz (1979), Eickelman (1976), Rosen (1972, 1984), Meeker (1976, 1979), and others; all of them, to varying degrees, have noticed the importance of "language" to understanding their interpretive problems. Consider the following passage from a recently published work by one of its leading representatives:

> integral to the unification of the social and conceptual domains of Sefrou life was the role played by language in the formation of social relations. There is, of course, nothing mysterious about the central role of speech in Middle Eastern societies . . . As I watched the people of Sefrou maneuver within the range of terms and meanings available for the characterization of their relationships, I saw that linguistic usages were not simply labels attached to an available array of social positions and roles but were integral to the very creation of those ties [Rosen 1984:3].

However, when one proceeds to examine what is meant by "language" in this important work, one discovers that the author rarely ventures beyond the lexicon. We are given an analysis of names, recapitulated from an earlier work by C. Geertz (1979), key terms such as *ʿār* (shame) whose *semantic* range is supposed to tell us something significant about the Moroccan cultural universe, kinship terms, and an occasional proverb. But if I single out Rosen, it is not because he is alone in his basically semantic and language-reduced-to-the-lexicon approach, for he represents a continuation of work done on the problem of language-and-culture in Morocco since the 1960s when interpretive anthropologists first began to do their fieldwork there, and one fears that the limitation of this kind of research will perpetuate itself. There are a few exceptions to this generalization (cf. Khuri 1968; Rosen 1972; C. Geertz 1983; Eickelman 1985), but even these are not an extensive analysis of utterances. *Speaking* in all its diverse and complex forms, functioning across sociocultural contexts, ought to be the object of study, after which one can determine the specific forms that create the cultural constructs in question. Of the many competing approaches to the study of speaking today, the one that probably best represents (1) the amalgam of linguistics (and not just language philosophy, as in Austin 1962, Searle 1969, and Hancher 1979) and (2) a broadly conceived, holistic study is the approach known as the "ethnography of communication."

As an ethnographer of speaking in Yemen, I had become fascinated with the richness and complexity of the Arabic speech event of greeting. At first, I was simply concerned with understanding the "rules" of speaking in this event, given both the "traditional" theoretical approach of this kind in the discipline and my own practical need of having to produce greetings in context. Gradually I realized that a great many verbal and nonverbal signs in the speech event communicated values central to a Yemeni concept of the person. But more importantly, it dawned on me that the speech event did not merely "reflect" or "express" the person, it *created* it in social interaction. How this is done is the subject of this article. The point is that one cannot proceed in this venture by compiling a list of lexemes with their glosses, which are intuited to be somehow central to the cultural tradition, for this will truly leave us only with a "reflection" or "expression" of personhood, and not its creation, in language. We must study acts of sign usage in context—what is sometimes referred to as "pragmatics" (Silverstein 1976)—and then determine how, if at all, the person is constructed in them. Without such an act-oriented approach, the social construction of reality through language will be missed.

The data to be analyzed in this article demonstrate the fruitfulness of linking the ethnography of communication with interpretive anthropology in the Middle East. For several years now, the cultural construct of the "person" has had and continues to have a major interest for students of Morocco (C. Geertz 1971; Eickelman 1976; Rosen 1972) and elsewhere (Barth 1981).

the problem

While I was in Yemen (1979–81), I lived for approximately 1 year in a *hijrah* village, so-called because its inhabitants are *sādah* (pl. of *sayyid*) or reputed descendants of the Prophet

Muhammad, and therefore bloodshed is forbidden within its precincts. Feuding tribesmen may go to trade in the market or pray in the mosque with immunity from attack.[2] This village is surrounded by sedentary tribes located in small hamlets that dot the numerous *wādī*-s of highland Yemen. I would visit these hamlets to observe and participate in their various tribal social events, such as weddings, religious festivals, and dispute mediations.

In the *hijrah* village I noticed how extremely important greeting routines were to daily interaction and how sensitively their linguistic forms marked socially important meanings. When I visited tribal hamlets, I proceeded to use the same greeting routines I had learned in the *hijrah*, but quickly stopped doing so when I observed that they did not greet each other in this fashion. It was apparent that *sādah* and tribesmen employed different greetings in their respective communities, and, as I found out when watching them interact with each other, they could switch these greetings depending most often on the location they happened to be in.[3]

When I began to examine greeting routines of these two social groups more closely, I realized that linguistic forms were being used to create a public construct of the "person" in social interaction. I am not speaking here of the "person" in quite the same sense that Eickelman (1976), Rosen (1984), and Geertz (1971) have done in Moroccan ethnography, namely, the *cultural* conception of the individual (as opposed to the group) and the social organization of personal networks (as opposed to groups). Rather, I am concerned with a categorical conception of the person that forms a kind of baseline for social interaction, after which actors may try to find out more about each other that will identify them as individuals with certain kinds of backgrounds, specific political affiliations, approximate wealth, and so forth, such specific information then being used to "negotiate" social interaction (Geertz 1979) and reality (Rosen 1984). In themselves a kind of prelude for social transactions, greetings, not surprisingly, are crucial as a pragmatic act in which the former kind of "person" (public versus private and categorical versus individual) is constructed.[4] They create the stage or set the frame for interaction. Yet, despite being preliminary or preparatory, greetings are important: without them, social interaction in most cases simply cannot proceed.

Specifically, I will maintain that the public categorical concept of the person involves the key values of both honor and piety, but that their *relative* importance is reversed in the two communities. For the person of the *sayyid,* piety is dominant over honor (or, in an analysis akin to Dumont's (1966), we might say "englobes"), whereas for the person of the tribesman, honor outweighs piety. It is true that certain social contexts may bring out subdominant sides in each personal configuration—for example, a *sayyid* interacting with a tribesman may wish to foreground his "honorableness" as a person, for whatever strategic reasons, and, conversely, a tribesman may want to demonstrate to the *sayyid* that he is a "pious" individual—but this does not alter the fact that one value or the other is *ideologically* dominant for the member of one social group or another.

Most of this article will be devoted to the pragmatic analysis of the ways in which the person (as analytically defined above) is constructed in the *sayyid* and tribal greeting routines. The term "pragmatic" has, unfortunately, as many different uses in philosophical and linguistic literature as the notion of the person has in sociology, anthropology, and psychology, so I will now try to clarify the sense in which I intend this analysis of greetings to be "pragmatic."

It is argued here that the study of Arabic greetings can benefit greatly from the notion of the speech "index," as this notion has been developed by Michael Silverstein (1976) within a general framework of the ethnography of communication and within a Praguean structural-functional tradition which, at least in the work of Roman Jakobson and Michael Silverstein, has drawn on the theory of signs propounded by C. S. Peirce (1932).

Of the complicated type of signs that Peirce described, three of them—the icon, index, and symbol—have been found to be of lasting significance in semiotics. Icons are signs whose physical properties bear some resemblance to the "object" they signal. Some examples: a road map is an icon of some delimited territory, the word *caw* is an icon of the raven's call, even the Stars

and Stripes is an icon of the 50 states. The likeness is not as close in some cases as in others, but still must be evident if the sign is to be classified as an icon. Indexes are signs that bear some existential relationship (spatiotemporal contiguity) to the "object" being signaled. Thus, an exit sign in a movie theater is an index located very near the doorway it signals. An arrow in a corridor is an index signaling spatial direction. The symbol differs from the icon and the index insofar as, on the one hand, the relationship between its physical sign characteristics and its meaning is arbitrary and, on the other, there need be no contiguity with the "object" signaled. In other words, the symbol is defined in terms of what the other two categories of signs are not.

Of course, no actual, specific sign is, as Peirce realized, "pure" in the sense of belonging to only one category, for in reality the overwhelming majority of signs is "mixed." For example, the lexeme *caw,* though iconic of a bird's call, is also symbolic insofar as its sounds conform to the phonological conventions of English. Our analysis of speech indexes will have to take this fact into account. Indeed, we will find *iconic indexes* to be prominent in the greeting event. The *sayyid,* as it were, is presenting himself as an "icon" of the pious person and the tribesman as an "icon" of the honorable person.

I will first present some key values of Yemeni society that are crucial to the social construction of the person. Then I will proceed to describe the categorical notion of the person for the *sayyid* and the tribesman, as it depends on these values. Preliminary to the analysis of the way in which the person is created in the speech event of greeting is a fairly lengthy section on the nature and sequencing of the verbal and nonverbal indexes appearing in it. The final part will be devoted to the demonstration of the argument that these indexes do indeed construct the kinds of person I will have previously adumbrated.

the values of honor and piety

Fundamental to an understanding of the "person" in Yemen, as it is in most Arab societies, is the concept of *šaraf* (honor), yet it is not easy to define. Both men and women possess honor and, as Meeker (1976) has pointed out for another area of the Middle East, it is both ascribed by virtue of patrilineal descent as well as achieved through what he calls "glorious deeds" in the public arena. It would appear, however, that what is valued as a glorious deed in the *sayyid* community is not the same as the action so recognized and prized in the tribal one. In the latter, as is well known, honor accrues to the individual who excels in acts of hospitality, eloquence (especially poetry), and courageous violence such as daring raids or warfare (see Bourdieu 1965 and Jamous 1981 for particularly good discussions of the way in which honor is tied to such acts). In addition, the public "control" of women (as in many cases also the possession of land and herds) is also a "glorious deed."[5] And while a *sayyid*'s honor is dependent on some of these actions, such as the control of women and lands, hospitality, and eloquence are given far less emphasis in *sayyid* social action than in its tribal counterpart, and the more violent public deeds would run counter to the ideology of peace to which they are committed, except in defense of Islam. In place of raiding and warfare one would have to substitute learning as a "glorious deed" by which a *sayyid* achieves honor in his community.

It is not only the types of performances through which honor is achieved, however, that distinguish the two communities. As Meeker (1976) again was the first to make clear, for tribesmen to engage with each other in glorious deeds, it must be presumed (at least ideologically) that they are equals in social status and power; that is, one only performs a glorious deed against another who is as honorable as oneself, for one does not win points by challenging an inferior, nor can a superior usually be induced to take up one's challenge (for the reason that his reputation will only suffer—if he wins, he will be considered a "bully" and if he fails, he risks losing all his honor). It is, then, important for tribesmen to establish symbolically that they are persons of *equal* strength and status, otherwise the transaction cannot be one in which honor is

achieved. Among the *sādah,* however, it is not as crucial that one perform deeds against an other in some sort of public agon and, furthermore, *hierarchy,* not equality, is built into the concept of honorable relations among men. It is part of *sayyid* ideology that there are clear moral and material differences between men in the community and the relative status of these men should be publicly recognized if transactions are to be carried out on an honorable footing.

It cannot be emphasized enough that what is crucial for social interaction in either community is (1) *demonstrating* one's respect *(iḥtirām)* for the social honor of the other in some symbolic act, which is simultaneously (2) a *demand* for respect of one's own honor, also demonstrated in a symbolic act, by the other. Thus a luncheon, as an act of hospitality, is more than just demonstrating respect for the other's honor; it is also a demand that the other reciprocate the show of respect, often, though not always, in the form of another luncheon. Adults are constantly being evaluated on whether or not they are *muḥtarim* (respectful)[6] as indicated by their public acts.[7] This norm is just as strongly felt in hierarchical relations in the *sayyid* community as it is among equal-status individuals in the tribal community. That is, even though a high-ranking *sayyid* can expect to receive a more elaborate greeting from an inferior than he is obliged to give, nevertheless he cannot neglect to demonstrate a show of respect due the status of an inferior without incurring social criticism.

In Middle East ethnography, especially works devoted to Morocco (cf. Gellner 1969; Jamous 1981), a conceptual opposition is often drawn between honor and *baraka* (blessing) where the latter is understood to be a charismatic, often magical power inhering in the person and deeds of a religious figure or saint who is descended from the Prophet Muḥammad. The *sādah* of the *hijrah* (and more generally in Yemen) do not, however, subscribe to this sort of mystical belief. Instead, they place great emphasis on piety, which might be defined as an attitude of reverence for God demonstrated in the performance of Islamic ritual and strict adherence to Islamic credo as defined by the Zaidi (Schīᶜa) sect. As in the case of honor and the attitude of respect harbored by the individual, piety must be demonstrated in performing certain religious acts.

These religious acts include, of course, the famous five pillars of Islam (prayer, fasting, alms, pilgrimage, and saying the *shahādah*), but what is not often realized is that the speech event of greeting is deeply connected with Islamic credo. It is not merely a coincidence that a verbal noun commonly used to refer to the speech event of greeting *(taslīm)* is derived from the verb *sallam* (to greet) that can also mean to "bless with divine favor," and for the reason that many formulas of greeting in fact literally invoke God's blessing on the addressee:

ṣabaḥ-tū (May your morning be blessed)
masē-tū (May your evening be blessed)
'aḷḷāh yisallim-ak (May God bless you)

In other words, when greeting a person one is in a very real sense engaging in a religious act, calling on God to bestow his favor on the addressee.

Interestingly, the Qur'ān contains an explicit emic model of greeting for devout Muslims. For instance, the greeting *as-salām ᶜalē-kum* (Peace be upon you) is the quintessentially Islamic mode of address, as revealed in this verse:

> When those come to thee, who believe in Our Signs, say "Peace be upon you" (Sūrah VI, 53)[8]

Thus, the use of this formula indexes the addressee as a member of the community of believers (the *'Ummah*) and it may be for this reason that some fanatical Muslims eschew pronouncing it when addressing *kuffār* (unbelievers). The greeting has even deeper resonances in Islamic faith, for it says in the Qur'ān that for those Muslims who are saved and are allowed into Paradise, "their greeting will be "peace"!" (Sūrah XIV, 23). Because the formula *as-salām ᶜalē-kum* is heard so often in social interaction, one is not, of course, always self-consciously aware of its deeper religious significance and yet there are situations—sometimes potentially desperate ones—where actors strategically draw on them for the purpose of framing their transaction in Islamic terms. Here is one example:

> At a strange meeting . . . the nomads are in suspense of mind and mistrust each other . . . After the whispers within had sufficiently taken knowledge of our peaceable demeanor, one approaching circumspectly, gave us the word of peace, *Salaam ᶜaleyk*, and it was readily answered by us all again, *Aleykom-as-salaam*. After this sacrament of the lips between Beduw, there is no more doubt among them of any evil turn [Doughty 1921:573].

But with respect to the greeting, there is no more important injunction mentioned in the Qur'ān than the following:

> If you are greeted courteously, then greet with a better one, or return it (at least) in kind, God takes account of all things [Sūrah IV, 86].

It is easier to illustrate the injunction than to explain it. If the party hailed by *as-salam ᶜalē-kum* reciprocates the greeting "in kind," then he or she replies with the standard *wa ᶜ alē-kum as-salām;* but if the addressee wants to reciprocate with a "better one," then to the above reply can be added the formulaic phrase *wa raḥmat uḷḷāh wa barakātuh*—"and the Mercy of God and His Blessings." In other words, one would be "heaping" more blessing on the addressee than one had received. Just *how* a speaker returns a greeting with a reciprocal or more intensive response will be examined in detail shortly; for now, it should be emphasized that not only the act itself but its very structure are deeply implicated in Islamic piety. Because piety must be demonstrated in action as enjoined by Islamic credo, the performance of the greeting becomes a pious act.

Because the *sādah* are closer to the literary, scriptural Islamic tradition, one would expect them to adhere more closely to the Qur'ānic model of the greeting event, and indeed we will find this to be the case. However, piety is also a strongly felt value among tribesmen and it would be wrong to ignore it. They too perform the "five pillars," often as assiduously as their *sayyid* counterparts, and we shall find that the notion of the greeting as a "blessing" is also present in their formulaic expressions. It should be evident that the greeting is related to many layers of cultural meaning. Just as it would be a serious mistake to reduce it to a matter of civility or etiquette without taking into consideration the concept of social honor, so would the analysis be impoverished by omitting its religious significance.

the *sayyid* and tribal concepts of the male person

the *sayyid* As descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad, the *sādah* possess tremendous *šaraf* that can be individually augmented by learning, ethical acts, and religious piety, and yet it would be wrong to exaggerate the importance of honor to their concept of the person. I once asked a *sayyid* friend of mine whether he thought the tribes had more *šaraf* than the *sādah*. "There's really no comparison," he replied. "The tribes are famous for their *šaraf* and we can hardly compete with them. For us, it is more important to be a *rajul dīnī,* 'a pious (religious) man.' " Perhaps we can benefit from a Dumontian formulation of the problem by saying that in the *sayyid* concept of the person piety "ideologically englobes" acts of *šaraf,* so that, for instance, "glorious deeds" of violence are only honorable in the cause of Islam or the deed of hospitality becomes supplanted by prodigious feats of learning and ethical conduct. Noteworthy also in this respect is the fact that the "control" over women is more often religiously than socially enjoined.

It is because piety dominates *šaraf* that we can also explain the *sayyid* hierarchical view of social relations. Life must be lived in strict conformity with Islamic doctrine, which is both interpreted and taught by the religiously instructed. These scholars are in the *sayyid* view the natural leaders of society, who dictate the conduct of others' lives in order that they may lead the "good" life. Though the tribesman adheres to Islamic credo and tries to remain pious, he jealously guards his autonomy from earthly authority that may compromise his honor.

the tribesman *(qabīlī)* As reputed descendants of Qaḥṭān, one of the mythical founders of the Southern Arabs, and of the Ḥimyaritic and Sabaean kings who controlled the ancient in-

cense trade, the tribes consider themselves to be men who have inherited great *šaraf*. But as we have been saying, a tribesman cannot rest on his laurels, he must strive to achieve more honor through "glorious deeds." There is always the danger that one might lose honor by despicable acts. According to legend, the *xaddām*, who are the low-status servants found in many tribal villages, are descended from Ḥimyaritic kings, but their ancestors proved themselves to be cowards in battle and so were stripped of their tribal identity. Today, tribesmen insist that the *xaddām* are not tribal, nor are they honorable.

Just as it would be erroneous to deny *šaraf* to the *sayyid*'s concept of his person, so would it distort reality to argue that the tribes have no concept of themselves as pious persons. My tribal friends prayed regularly and on Fridays, the holy day of the Muslim week, they would attend the imam's sermon in the *hijrah* or some other local mosque. They fasted during Ramadhan and tried to make the pilgrimage to Mekka at least once, often more than once. They readily admitted that their piety could not be as deep as the *sādah*'s, primarily because their illiteracy prevented them from reading many of the scriptures and commentaries and few had the inclination to become scholars. In short, they were quite willing to concede to me that in terms of *dīn* (religion), the *sādah* naturally excelled.

If in the *sādah* concept of the person piety englobes *šaraf*, the dominance of these cultural values is reversed in the tribal concept of the person. For example, according to Islamic credo, murder is *ḥarām* (forbidden), and yet honor requires revenge killing in tribal law. Temporal rulers like imams are to be resisted, even when they are the paragons of virtue, because of the fact that submission to another man's authority reduces one's own autonomy and thereby threatens one's honor. Political equality, not hierarchy, is the vision of social relations in the tribal community.

Enough has been said about the cultural concepts of the person. Let us now turn our attention to the first stage in the pragmatic analysis, an examination of the verbal and nonverbal indexes to be found in the speech event of greeting.

speech formulas and their discourse sequencing

We note, first of all, that the "said" of discourse in greetings is characterized by the use of (relatively) fixed unit-expressions called formulas, culturally valued patterns of speaking that are preserved for their own sake and in which few changes can be made, with the exception of such features as pitch, loudness, and so forth.[9] Ferguson (1967) has noted that Arabic abounds in such formulaic expressions that are used by speakers as forms of linguistic etiquette in social interaction (see also Youssouf 1976; Rossi 1939).

The first or lowest order of sequencing for these formulas is what might be called an "exchange," where a formula uttered by the speaker (A) has coupled with it in discourse a standard reply uttered by the addressee (B). The structure of such a communicative event so neatly fits Mauss's concept of exchange that it is no wonder he included the greeting and other "courtesies" within the domain of the gift (Mauss 1967 [1925]:3). On the other hand, Goffman (1981) calls this two-part structure a "dialogic couplet," borrowing his metaphor from the dramaturgical model of social relations, and the conversational interactionists have captured it under the drier phrase "adjacency pair" (Sacks et al. 1974). I prefer the notion of exchange to describe this sequence because of the moral compulsion implicit in the act of giving, receiving, and reciprocating the salutation.

What is interesting about the greeting exchange in Arabic, to a far greater degree than is the case (for example) in English, is that in the majority of cases one can tell from the *linguistic form* of the utterance not only that the formulas are coupled or paired, but that one formula is clearly the initiator of the exchange and the other is the response. In English, this is true of the pair "How are you?"/"I am fine" but not of "Hello"/"Hello" and many other such exchanges. Con-

trast these with our paradigm Arabic greeting: *as-salām ʿalē-kum* :: *wa ʿalē-kum as-salām*. The conjunctive *wa* (and) presupposes in the second "pair-part" that some talk precedes (and follows) it; therefore, we would expect the formula to come second in the exchange. Note, too, that the syntax of the sentence is of the "equational" type, the order of whose constituents is reversed in the two formulas (noun phrase + prepositional phrase, and vice versa). The syntax of the first formula is the more unmarked of the two, and hence it would seem more natural for it to appear first in discourse. The second formula, on the other hand, shifts the prepositional phrase with its addressee pronoun into first position, as if to draw attention to the addressee in the act. Note that the exchange is a perfect icon (diagram) of the event of greeting. Speaker A is giving a greeting and receiving one in exchange, whereas Speaker B is receiving a greeting and giving one in exchange. In other words, they are in a reciprocal, if inverse, relationship to each other, and this is beautifully mirrored in the fact that the formulas use the same words but in their inverse ordering. But the exchange is even more deeply iconic if one observes that the response formula may (and usually is) expanded to include the formula *wa raḥmat uḷḷāh wa barakāt-uh* (and the Mercy of God and His Blessings), which intensifies the illocutionary force of the original or first pair-part. Recalling the Qur'ānic model of speaking, we realize that the respondent is enjoined to equal or, better yet, elaborate the greeting of the addressor, and he does so by "heaping" on more blessings than he has received. The point is that the verbal expansion of the respondent's turn of talk is iconic of an intensified illocutionary force. Many formulas, as we shall see below, take a more expanded form in the second pair-part.

Besides the linking of formulas in exchanges, there is a second or higher order of sequencing of exchanges that we may call "chains" (Goffman 1981) of discourse. Two distinct types of chaining are discernible, with a third intermediate or mixed variety also commonly in use.

The simplest is an additive chaining of exchanges that we might schematize as follows:

	A		*B*
1.	x_1	: :	x_2
2.	y_1	: :	y_2
3.	z_1	: :	z_2

A and *B* are initiator and respondent, respectively; the subscripts on the small-case letters refer to the first and second pair-part, respectively; the Arabic numerals on the left indicate that there is a sequencing constraint operative in the chaining of the exchanges—that is, x_1 : : x_2 usually precedes y_1 : : y_2 and z_1 : : z_2 in discourse, and so forth. Examples of this type of chaining can be found in one-on-group greetings described for *sayyid* ceremonial occasions below, as well as many of the greetings to be covered in the tribal community.

A second, more complicated type of chaining involves the coupling in one turn of talk for either Speaker A or B of the second pair-part of one exchange and the first pair-part of a new exchange that we might schematize as follows:

	A		*B*	
1.	x_1	: :	x_2; y_1	: :
2.	y_2; z_1	: :	z_2; a_1	: :
3.	a_2	etc.		

Unlike our paradigmatic Arabic greeting *as-salām*, not all exchanges come with an automatically intensifiable response formula (for example, the response to the pan-Arab *ahlan wa sahlan* (literally "plain and people," but more or less equivalent to our "Hello") is *ahlan bīk* (*ahlan* to you). If one wishes to intensify the response of the initiating formula, one has to perform two acts in the second turn: reply with the expected second pair-part of the exchange (and closing it), but initiate another exchange that the first party (*A*) must complete. Here is an example:

	A		
1.	*ahlan wa sahlan*$_1$: : *ahlan bīk*$_2$	:	*ḥayy allāh man jā*$_1$ (May God grant long life to one who has come)
2.	*wa hayyā-k*$_2$ (And long life to you).		

Having completed the second exchange, *A* may stop or reply in kind by also initiating another exchange. This chaining type is frequently found in the one-on-one greetings, especially among *sayyid* individuals. And, of course, this is not surprising, for this discourse structure permits the respondent to "better" the greeting received from the initiator, and hence to maximize the piety of his act. Again, the verbal act is highly iconic of the Qur'ānic model of speaking.

A combination of these two structures yields a third type of chaining, commonly heard as a one-on-one greeting between *sādah*. For openers, the two parties would begin a series of reciprocal exchanges, followed immediately by a handshake and a kiss-on-cheek gesture accompanied by an embrace (for some of these nonverbal indexes, see footnote 9). More than likely, the next exchange would be based on an inquiry into each other's health that would be indexed by the expressions:

A		*B*
kēf ḥāl-ak (How are you)	: :	*wa‖ah, fi ni'mah* (By God, I'm fine)
(x_1)	: :	(x_2)

This will probably be repeated in another indexical form:

mā l-ak šī (Is there anything the matter?)	: :	*al-ḥamdu‖ilah* (God be praised) *want? kēf ḥāl-ak* (And you? How are you?)
(y_1)	: :	(y_2) : : (z_1)
al-ḥamdu‖ilah (z_2)		

(Note that *B*'s second turn is more like a "back" turn than the beginning of a new exchange.) Next might begin an extended inquiry into the health of each other's kinsmen and friends, and so forth.

In the *sayyid* community some greeting routines involving friends or special guests may violate the structures given above in that one of the parties—he who is bent on "honoring" the other—seizes the turn of talk and monopolizes it, the effect being that he showers a cascade of formulaic sayings on the other *without bothering to wait for or even expecting an exchange*. The other may once in a while utter an *ahlan wa sahlan* in response, but does not bother to keep up with the other's barrage. Observe that the greeter who monopolizes the turn of talk does not slight the other; on the contrary, he is honoring him by heaping one greeting after another on him without demanding a reciprocal act. This use of greetings indexes the hierarchical relationship of these two interlocutors.

the construction of the *sayyid* person in the greeting

According to what we have previously said, one would expect the *sayyid* greeting to construct a person in which piety is ideologically dominant over honor. The way in which the *sayyid* can create the image of piety is to emulate the Qur'ānic model of greeting, since it is pious to follow Islamic credo. This model stipulates that the respondent should reciprocate in kind or intensify the illocutionary force of the greeting received from the addressor.

This intensity of greeting is iconically indexed in several ways. One way is the metaphoric use of number categories in the noun (singular, dual, and plural). If (A) says *marḥabah* ("welcome," feminine singular), an appropriate reply would be *marhabt-ēn* (dual form). If the taker of the first turn intensifies his greeting by using *marhabt-ēn*, the respondent can build the crescendo by replying with *marāḥib* (the broken plural form). Another example: the initiator of the greeting says *ahlan* (indefinite accusative of the singular *ahl-* [people]) meaning "Hello" and the respondent indexes the intensified response by the use of the dual form *ahl-ēn* (note that there is no use of the plural form as a more intensified version of the dual).

Another way of iconically indexing an intensified response of greeting is the use of an "intensifier phrase" that is added to the "blessing" mentioned in the initiator formula. This point has already been demonstrated in one greeting formula, but there are other examples:

sabaḥ-tū : : *sabbaḥ-akum aḷḷāh bil-xēr wal-ʿāfiyah*
(Good morning) : : (May God bless your morning with goodness and protection)

masē-tū : : *massā-kum aḷḷāh bil-xēr wal-ʿāfiyah*
(Good evening) : : (May God bless your evening with goodness and protection)

In each respondent formula the phrase *bil-xēr wal-ʿāfiyah* intensifies the illocutionary force of the greeting. Note, too, that this effect is achieved by the use of the intensive Form II of the verb (*sabbaḥ, massā*) in the second pair-part, whereas the verb in the initiator formula is in the non-intensive Form I (see also below Form I *ḥayy* and Form II *ḥayyā*). In addition, the respondent formulas are more explicitly or overtly benedictions because God's name is directly invoked and the kinds of blessing ("goodness" and "protection") mentioned.

There is still another way of intensifying the response. Consider the following exchanges:

ʿīd mubārak	: :	*al-jamīʿ*		
(Blessed Holiday)		(To all)		
šahar mubārak	: :	*al-jamīʿ*		
(Blessed Month)		(To all)		
kulla sannah wantum bi-xēr			: :	*wantum kaðālik*
(Every year may you be in good health)				(And you likewise)
			: :	*al-jamīʿ*
				(To all)

Parallels of this response pattern can be found in other paired formulas in the dialect, such as *aḷḷāh yiʿēn-ak* (May God help you) : : *aḷḷah yiʿēn al-jamīʿ* (May God help all [of us]). With the exception of the third one, these exchanges become intensive not by heaping the blessing onto the addressor, but by extending it beyond the immediate party of the greeting to include the entire Muslim community.

Still more interesting is an intensification of the greeting response by focusing on the message form—Jakobson's "poetic function" (Jakobson 1960).

ḥayy al-bēt w-ahl-ah (Long live the house and the people in it) : :
ḥayyā ʾaḷḷāh man daxl-ah (May God preserve the one who has entered it)

The anaphoric pronoun *-ah* in the second pair-part rhymes with the pronoun in the first pair-part, the effect being to foreground the message form of the greeting. The intensification[10] of message form is an icon of the intensification of greeting. Another expression illustrating this use of the poetic function can be found in what to my ears sounds like a quintessentially Yemeni greeting used on the occasion of the *ʿīd* (religious festival):

min al-ʿāyid-īn as-sālim-īn (The celebrants of the *ʿīd* are in good health) : :
aʿād-akum aḷḷāh bis-sālim-īn (May God keep you among the ones in good health)

The first formula is particularly poetic with its parallelism of the Form I verb active participle ($C_1āC_2iC_3$) and the *-īn* plural ending. The parallelism of rhyme is intensified in the second pair-part by a repetition of the *-īn* sound.

A humorous elaboration of the *ʿīd* greeting is quintessentially Yemeni and deserves special comment. The greater says:

ḥajj-īn zāyirī ʾaw ḥariw-īn mugambaʿī (a *ḥajj* pilgrim or a groom to be)
(a) (b) (a) (b)

(Note: (a) and (b) indicate internal rhyme)

to which the addressee responds with a simple *ʾin šā ʾaḷḷāh* (If God wills), but then may want to elaborate by initiating another exchange. There is, of course, the presupposition that the addressee is still a bachelor and the exchange is used in order to draw out a laugh from the interlocutor.

In none of the above greetings is there an overt reference to the concept of honor. They invoke God's name and his blessings, and so on, or refer to particularly religious occasions. Yet, we cannot discount honor in the greeting routine. Those *sādah* who can command respect because of their learning, and so forth, can expect to receive highly intensified greeting re-

sponses from less prestigious men. Thus, the elaborated routines are not only an icon of the Qur'ānic model of speaking, which index the speakers' piety, but they are also indexing the relative status-honor of the two interlocutors, hierarchy of course being permitted in the *sayyid* view of social relations. We will also see how important signaling honor is in the greeting routines heard on various special social occasions.

Next, we will consider the use of the greeting in two cultural events, the *sayyid gāt* chew and the wedding.

The *gāt*[11] chew is the most keenly anticipated, and in many ways important, social event in the average day of the typical Yemeni male (and many females). Except for the month of Ramadhan, it is ordinarily held in the midafternoon, lasting usually until the sunset call to prayer. Friends convene in the *mafraj* (sitting room) of one of their houses, the host of the chew providing the accoutrements that will make everyone comfortable, but usually each individual is responsible for bringing his own *gāt*.

There is a cultural meaning underlying this event that is significant for the analysis of the speech greetings. The chew's purpose is to attain relaxation (the Arabic word for this is *rāḥah*) through pleasant conversation among friends in a comfortable atmosphere. Chewing *gāt* is thought to help stimulate conversation and all the paraphernalia of the chew (the cool water—sometimes scented, the spittoons in which to expectorate the masticated leaves, the *madāʿah* or waterpipe for those who like to smoke tobacco, ashtrays, comfortable mattresses and carpeting, back cushions and elbow rests, burning incense passed around in a *mabxarah* [brazier]) are there to help ensure each guest's comfort. A solicitous host is always asking his friends *anta murtāḥ* ("Are you comfortable?") and periodically getting up to rearrange the cushions for someone so that he can relax, refilling the water jugs or changing the charcoal in the waterpipe, and so on.

When a person arrives at a chew, he must decide how to greet the assembled guests. His first concern is to know whether there are any "honored" guests present, in which case he must greet them individually. If there are none, he has a choice of whether to greet each individual personally (relatively rare), or greet the assembly as a whole. When invited to a special *gāt* chew, men often ask their hosts in advance who will be there so they can determine proper etiquette.

One can enter the room, standing by the door so that one is facing everyone and utter *as-salām ʿalē-kum*, receiving the ritual response chanted in unison *wa ʿalē-kum as-salām*. Looking around the room, one sees an honored guest. Now, one can either greet everyone present, starting from the right and elaborating the greeting slightly with the honored guest, or one can more simply go up to the guest and greet him in that fashion, making sure that one's greeting is more intensive than the visitor's response.

Arrival		Guest
ahlan wa sahlan$_1$ (Welcome)	: :	*ahlan bī-k*$_2$ • *ḥayy aḷḷāh man jā*$_1$ (Welcome to you. Long life to the one who has come)
wa ḥayyā-kum aḷḷāh$_2$ • *Marḥabah* (And long life to you. Welcome)		

Note that the guest could reply to the last formula with *wa marḥabah bi-kum* (and welcome to you) or *marḥabt-ēn* (welcome [dual]), and so on, but he knows that if this round robin is to cease, he must allow the arrival to have the last word.

Ideally, of course, one should stand for the arrival and shake his hand (see footnote 9), but anyone who has chewed *gāt* Yemeni-style knows how awkward standing under such circumstances can be. Chewable *gāt* leaves are usually stripped from the branch and placed in one's lap, so one has to be careful to gather them up in the folds of the *fūṭah* (the male garment) before rising from the sitting position. Some guests, therefore, might prefer to remain seated

when shaking the arrival's hand, but how can this be done when standing signifies respect of the other's honor? The way out of the dilemma is the following exchange:

Guest (seated party)		Arrival
al-gāyim ʿazīz	: :	*wal-jālis lā yahān*
		or
		wal-jālis afḍal
(The standing party is dear |beloved|)		(And the seated party is not despicable)
		or
		(The seated party is better)

Here we have an example of how the verbal indexical system interacts with the gestural one. The indexical system of speech can intervene to indicate that no slight of the other's honor was intended, and that no disrespect was taken.

Suppose the arrival, after having uttered *as-salām ʿalēkum,* decides he need not greet any person present as an honored guest. Now he encounters another choice of strategy. He has acquitted himself honorably to the group and he can confidently take his seat, but he can elaborate the greeting further with the following exchange:

Arrival		Assembly
wa riyyiḥ-hum	:	*wa huh*
(And |may God| grant them relaxation)		(and him |also|)

Note that *riyyiḥ* (Form II) is derived from the same root as *rāḥah* (rest) and *murtāḥ* (comfortable) whose meanings are connected with the notion of relaxation. The exchange in other words alludes to the cultural purpose of the *gāt* chew.

Yemeni weddings are quite extravagant, all-day affairs lasting from 2 to 7 days and sometimes longer, with countless relatives, friends, and outside guests in attendance. One of the more important celebrations for the groom is the *samrah* held in his honor on the *lētat ad-daxlah* (the night of the consummation), when his family, in-laws, and friends come to chat and while away the evening in pleasant entertainment, before he is taken on his procession *zaffah* to meet his bride for the first time and to sleep with her that night. The *samrah* is held in a large *mafraj* that is usually packed with guests squeezed shoulder-to-shoulder along the walls, the groom or *ḥarīw* seated in his wedding clothes at the far end of the room in the place of the honored guest.

What is the greeting strategy to be employed by a guest in such a situation? The room is usually too crowded for the arrival to greet each individual personally, with an elaborated greeting for the groom (though I have in rare instances seen it done). It is far more practicable for him to use an one-on-group greeting. He enters the room loudly addressing the assembly with *as-salām ʿalē-kum* and receives the ritual response. Having now fulfilled his duty towards the assembled group, he can honor the groom. The guest walks up to him and the groom stands to receive him. They shake hands and the guest may kiss him once on both cheeks, after which he says to the groom: *ahlan wa sahlan* (and receives the ritual response). At this point the guest may tell the groom a brief joke or a pleasantry that will draw a laugh, this speech event being considered appropriate at the wedding *samrah* because it is the guest's function to entertain the groom and put him at ease on the night he is to consummate his marriage.

The next time that the guest sees the groom after the marriage has been consummated, he greets him with the salutation *dām aḷḷāh as-sarūr* (May God make your joys everlasting) to which the groom responds *wa sarūrak dāyim* (And may your joys be everlasting). The use of the formula indexes the period of the marriage subsequent to its consummation. Note that the initiator item is this time in the intensive form relative to the response (given that it is in the form of an explicit benediction). Again, it is not difficult to explain this apparent exception to the form of the greeting exchange, for it is the groom who is being honored and therefore he should receive the more intensive part of the exchange.

the construction of the tribal person in the greeting

Before we go on to talk about the formulaic exchanges and their chaining in discourse, it should be pointed out that adult male tribesmen often use creaky voice and a high tenor, almost a falsetto in pronouncing the greetings, which might be interpreted as a stylized way of rendering "manhood" and "virility." Loudness or force is also an important feature of the performance.[12] By contrast, the voice of the *sayyid* is more "natural" and softer, sometimes even trailing off into a barely audible whisper. These differences in voice quality iconically index the "aggressive" and "warlike" person as opposed to the man of "quiet contemplation" and "peace."

Most tribal one-on-one greetings involve reciprocal exchanges (that is, where the response formula does not intensify the illocutionary force of the initiating formula) linked together in what I have previously called a Type 1 chain. Here is a typical routine:

	A		*B*
1.	*guwī-t* (You've been strengthened [by God])	: :	*najī-t* (You've been saved [by God])
2.	*kēf al-ḥāl* (How are you?)	: :	*sallam ḥāl-ak* (May God bless you)
3.	*ḥayy aḷ-laḥyah* (Long life to you; literally, "Long life to the beard")	: :	*ḥayy(a) laḥyat-ak* (Long life to you; literally, "Long life to your beard")

Like their *sayyid* counterparts, these exchanges take the form of religious benedictions; yet note that, as a result of the ideology of honor englobing piety, the exchanges are symmetrical, the balance in the give-and-take of communication being an icon of the balance and equality of social relationships. They are never, to my knowledge, otherwise. Whereas it would be pious for the respondent to "heap" the blessing on the other, this would compromise his status as an honorable man.

More than just the balance of exchange signals the honor of the actors. Note that in the third formulaic pair there is an explicit allusion to the concept of honor. *Laḥyah* refers to a man's beard, but one must bear in mind that in tribal society facial hair is interpreted as a sign of male honor.[13] In connection with this meaning of the beard, consider a widespread gesture among Bedouin and sedentary tribal populations where the man grasps his goatee with his right hand and points it towards the man he is challenging, saying *ʿēb ʿalē-k* (Shame on you). One presupposes that his own honor has been impugned and that he is now shaming the honor of his interlocutor.

There is another one-on-one greeting that consists of only one exchange that illustrates some of the same points:

A		*B*
guwī-t wa ʿilm-ak (May you be strengthened [by God]. And what's your news?)	: :	*ʿilm-anā wa salāmat-ak* (Our news is your safety) or *ʿilm-ak mā šarr* (Your news is [that there is] no evil)

There is again reciprocity in the response formula without intensification. Moreover, the literal translations obscure the fact that *A* is really asking about *B*'s intentions (that is, whether they are hostile or not), on the presupposition that all tribal relations are potentially hostile due to long-standing and unresolved feuds. Of course, one feuds in defense of one's honor; therefore, the above dialogue creates, as it were, the image of someone always wary and always ready to protect his honor.

In the case of either of the above greetings, if one of the interlocutors is inviting the other into his home, he will use a special formula:

marḥabah fōg al-ʿen war-rās wa marḥab aṣ-ṣōt
(Welcome on the head and eyes, and welcome of the voice)

The expression *fōg al-ʿēn war-rās* (on the head and eye) is an intensive form of welcoming the other. (Several informants interpreted it metonymically; that is, the head and eyes are considered among the most prized parts of the body and by contiguity with them the welcome takes on added worth.) The second formula *marḥab aṣ-ṣōt* (welcome of the voice) means that the host (the speaker of this invitation) will sacrifice a sheep in honor of his guest, the voice referring metonymically to the bleat of the animal when its throat is cut. The fact that the balance of exchanges has suddenly been offset is not a contradiction of the argument that an honorable person is being constructed, for the formula is not so much a greeting as it is an invitation to accept the speaker's hospitality, one of the "glorious deeds" by which honor accrues to an individual. The speaker has made himself into an honorable person by inviting the other into his home for a meal, and not just any meal, but one at which meat will be served (making the deed even more "glorious").

The tribesmen also have a greeting exchange that is unique in its rule of use.

salām taḥīyah	: :	*ablaġ-t*
(Greetings of long life)		(I am fulfilled [or satisfied])

Like previous exchanges we have come across (for example, *salām ʿalē-kum*), this is used by an individual in saluting a group (the response formula being spoken in unison by the assembly),[14] but unlike these other exchanges one cannot also use it to greet an individual.

Fieldwork provided an instructive, if embarrassing lesson. I once greeted an important tribal sheikh who was a famous poet of the region with *salām taḥīyah*. His response was not what I expected; instead of hearing *ablaġ-t*, he greeted me with *ahlan wa sahlan*. A titter rose up from my friends, and when I afterwards asked them to explain my mistake, they tactfully pointed out, "It was an interesting idea you had to greet an important sheikh with *salām taḥīyah*, the way one would with *salām ʿalē-kum*. But, unfortunately, you can only use it when greeting *more* than one individual."

The second important point connected with this exchange's rule of use is that once it has been uttered, it effectively cuts off any greeting with *individuals* of that group. The same is not true, of course, of *salām ʿalē-kum*. Another anecdote from the field can verify this feature of the rule of use. While I was strolling in a *wādī* outside a hamlet, I came across a party of young men of my acquaintance. Not being in a gregarious mood, I simply hailed them with a *salām taḥīyah* and was about to proceed on my way when I noticed among them the son of one of my good friends about whom I was anxious to hear news. I stopped to inquire about him through this young man, but was momentarily confused about what to do. I knew that any transaction to be conducted between persons who have just encountered each other must be preceded by the greeting. It could not hurt to greet him again and did so, but the young men laughingly cut me off, explaining, "No, once you have greeted us with *salām taḥīyah*, you can't then say a special "Hello" to Abdullah."

On special occasions such as *gāt* chews or wedding celebrations, an individual greeting a group must decide which formulaic exchange to use, depending on such factors as the size of the group (if very large, then *salām taḥīyah* is probably more practicable), the importance of the occasion or any special guests who might be present (dignitaries, for instance, or honored members of the group such as guests, grooms, and so on). Even in very large assemblies, however, where special guests are present, the arrival would probably feel compelled to greet the special guests on an individual basis. There are basically two options open to him. One of these is to shake each person's hand, but linger a little at the side of the special guests whom he honors with a longer and more elaborate greeting. This is by way of performing a "glorious deed" of hospitality. By this strategy he has managed to greet every individual in the assembly. He may achieve the same end in more abbreviated fashion by addressing the whole assembly with *as-salām* (or some equivalent) and then approach the individual he knows he must single out for special attention. What he cannot do is use the exchange *salām taḥīyah*, for this cuts him off from greeting individuals.

The one exception that I know of to this rule of use occurs at the groom's wedding *samrah* (the celebration held on the night he is to consummate his marriage). On this occasion, the gathering is often enormous and the arrival may very well forego the nicety of honoring each individual with a one-on-one greeting. If he therefore utters *salām taḥīyah,* he will have acquitted himself of the duty to salute the assembly, but he will have failed to have singled out the groom for special acknowledgment. How, then, does our hapless guest solve the problem? He adds to the formula *salām taḥīyah* the qualifier *min dūn (ġēr) al-ḥarīw* (with the exception of the groom) and then goes up to honor him with a special greeting. What is going on here? We said that *salām taḥīyah* precludes a greeting of an individual, yet an exception is made in the case of the groom. The breaking of the norm on his wedding night has the significance of honoring him, because for once the individual takes precedence over the group in public recognition of honor. This act puts him in brackets, so to speak, and sets him apart from the rest of the company.

As a final example of elaborated routines, let us examine the greeting known as the *ḥāl* that is unique to tribal interactions. It is unique in comparison with all the previous routines because it is used by a group in unison saluting another group.

Groups might arrive at any number of different social affairs. At a wedding, it is customary for hamlets surrounding the groom's locale to visit on the wedding night, each hamlet sending a delegation of anywhere from a couple to perhaps a dozen or more men. At the *ʿīd* religious festivals, groups representing hamlets scattered along a *wādī* will convene at some central point and greet each other with *ḥāl,* after which they participate in a joint celebration. It is rare that groups come en masse to *gāt* chews, but if they do, they will greet with the *ḥāl*. The same applies to funerals as well as dispute mediations.

The basic *ḥāl* greeting is as follows. When the arriving group enters the meeting place (usually a large hall called a *dīwān*), the people already assembled there jump to their feet, forming a circle around the room, their backs hugging the wall. Space is then made in the circle's circumference for the new guests and the host or senior person of the assembly (for example, a sheikh) shouts in the creaky tone of voice described earlier:

1. *ḥawwil-hum yā rijjāl* (Give them the *ḥāl,* O men)

The host group then initiates the greeting with the following formulaic exchange:

kēf aḥwāl-akum yā rijjāl	: :	*kufī-t*
(How are you, O men)		(I am protected [by God])

After this exchange, the hosts initiate another round:

2.	*ʾanā ʿabd-akum*	: :	*wa muṣān*
	(I'm your slave)		(and [I am] safeguarded)

The meaning of this exchange needs to be clarified, because it would appear to contradict the egalitarian ideology so important to the tribal conception of the person. The hosts appear to be humbling themselves before their guests, but the formula *muṣān* uttered by the guests is used for a person who is under a sheikh's protection (and who would blacken his honor if he allowed anything to happen to his charge). Therefore, both parties have mutually lowered themselves and parity between them is thereby established.

Having now greeted the assembly as a whole, the group can break up into individuals, who approach the groom and exchange with him the following:

Guest		Groom
dām aḷḷāh sarūr-akum		*sallam aḥwāl-akum min aš-širr*
w-aṣlaḥ aḷḷāh šān-akum wa mā ḥāl-akum	: :	*w-aḷḷāh yidīm as-sarūr*

(May God make your joys everlasting. May God bless your affairs and health)

(May God preserve you from harm. God prolongs joys)

conclusion

One reason that the speech event of greeting in Yemeni society is important is that it signals concepts of honor and piety that are central values in the cultural system of the *sādah* and the tribes. Why should such values be alluded to in the first place? I argue that a certain type of public person is being *created* in the speech event of greeting (it is performative in an Austinian sense). We have said that honor requires a demonstration of respect to the other and a demand for respect of the self, a demonstration that is accomplished, as we have seen, in the greeting. We also said that piety entails *acting* in certain ways prescribed by Islam, one of these pious actions being the greeting. It follows that the greeting creates "honorable" and "pious" persons in the course of its performance.

What is interesting from a lingusitic point of view is *how* the person is created by the use of signs in the greeting. By uttering a formula that is in the form of a blessing, the first speaker demonstrates piety and respect towards the other. The addressee in the *sayyid* community will try to intensify his response by the use, basically, of linguistic icons: a longer response, a more intensive message form, higher number categories, and so forth. Alternatively, he may intensify the response simply by performing two acts instead of one: closing one exchange and opening another, which is yet another icon of intensification. In short, the pragmatics of the greeting hinge crucially on iconic indexes.

In the tribal greeting the formulaic exchange is usually balanced, iconically reflecting the concept of equality among "honorable" men. Some of the indexes symbolically refer to things in the speech event that allude to male honor or presuppose social relationships, such as feuding motivated by values of honor. And many greetings index the coexistence of a group to be honored, the group figuring prominently in the tribal code.

Although there are many studies in the ethnography of communication demonstrating the "rule-governed" nature of speaking and that try to reveal the "emic" models of such behavior, there is still relatively little that has been done on what might be called the "cultural interpretation" of speaking, that is, the interpretation of the meanings speech events create that are central to social interaction. And while interpretive anthropology has appreciated the significance of studying language, it greatly needs to go beyond the lexicon in order to solve its interpretive problems.

notes

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[1]A note on the phonemic transcription system is in order:

	LABIAL	DENTAL	PALATAL	VELAR	PHARYNGEAL	GLOTTAL
	−v/+v	−v/+v	−v/+v	−v/+v	−v/+v	−v/+v
STOPS	b	t, ṭ/d		k/g		
FRICATIVES		ɵ/ð,ḏ	j	x	ḥ/ʿ	h
SIBILANTS		s, ṣ/z	š			
NASALS	m	n				
LATERALS	l,ḷ					
TRILLS		r		ġ		
CONTINUANTS	w		y			

Note: Emphatic consonants are indicated with a dot below the segment. The one exception is ḥ.

FRONT		BACK	
i (ī)		u (ū)	HIGH
(ē)		(ō)	MID
	a (ā)		LOW
	CENTRAL		

Note: A shwa epenthetic vowel appears in certain phonetically conditioned environments. Long vowels are indicated by a macron.

[2]See Serjeant (1977) for more information on the *hijrah* village in South Arabia. In my experience, other elements of the populations including tribesmen and the low-status *xaddām* (servant) could, and often would, live in the sanctuaries, but the *sādah* were always the dominant group. It should also be pointed out that only in principle was violence abhorred within the sanctuary; in reality, I heard of, and personally experienced, such violence occasionally, though it was morally frowned on by all.

[3]That is, in the *hijrah* a tribesman addressing a *sayyid* would more than likely use the *sayyid* form of greeting, whereas a *sayyid* visiting a tribal hamlet would more than likely greet a tribesman in his tribal speech pattern. If, however, a tribesman were greeting another tribesman, or a *sayyid* were greeting another *sayyid*, regardless of their location, their own greeting forms would be employed. Only once did I observe the *sādah* break these rules of thumb. This was at a time when the *hijrah* was having serious political problems with the surrounding tribes who were deeply offended by the actions of a young *sayyid* man. The *sādah* would often employ elaborate greetings in their *hijrah* with the tribesmen in order to show how much they "respected" them (this, at least, was the reason given to me). In other words, the greeting became an important strategy of showing the tribes that the *sādah* held their customs in esteem and perhaps to imply that they were "one" with them.

[4]In Middle East ethnography a fairly extensive discussion has emerged on the "person" and the "self" but it is not always clear in what sense(s) these terms are to be understood. A critical review of this literature to clarify the different uses of the term "person" would help sharpen the analytical formulations of various ethnographic problems, but this obviously cannot be undertaken in the scope of this article.

[5]To put it somewhat simplistically, for we do not have space here to elaborate on this complex theme, a woman is considered a highly passionate creature who—and this is where the ideology says she is different from a man—has not enough willpower to curb her unruly appetites. Therefore, it is believed that controls—veiling, public avoidance, and male relatives for escorts—must be imposed on her behavior in order to ensure the purity of her *ʿirḍ* (chastity). Given the onus on the man's honor of the woman's *ʿirḍ*, it follows that strange men and women ordinarily avoid encountering or acknowledging each other. The woman is not a "public person" to strange men. The rule of thumb, as far as the man's conduct is concerned, is to remain silent, refrain from eye contact, and maintain a space of several feet between himself and this anonymous "object" on the street. Needless to say, and in spite of his "iron will," the male lapses in this strict conduct once in a while, at which point the woman is perfectly within her rights to publicly berate the shameless scoundrel, if only to protect her *ʿirḍ*. For readings on the cultural concepts of gender and normative behavior related to them, see Antoun (1968), Abu-Zahra (1970), Dwyer (1974), Beck and Keddie (1978), Davis (1983), and others.

[6]There is, of course a difference between *muḥtarim* (respectful) and *muḥtaram* (respected) and both evaluative terms may be used in describing a person.

[7]Note that I say "adults" are evaluated for their respect; children are ambiguous in the game of honor. They are, rather like women, to be ignored in public if they are not part of one's family. On the other hand, they may be required to recognize an adult's honor and demonstrate respect for it in certain encounters, and the adult may not necessarily be expected to reciprocate.

[8]Translations from the Qur'ān are my own (Abdallah 1934).

[9]Besides the formulaic exchanges, a speech event of greeting involves hand gestures; kissing; facial expressions such as smiling and direct eye contact; bodily movements like head-nodding, standing, and in some cases dropping to one's knees in prostration; spatial arrangement of actors, and so forth. A greeting may, in fact, be performed without anything being said, as long as the appropriate gestures, facial expressions, and bodily movements are maintained by the actors in the scene. Gestures are usually thought to be an obligatory accompaniment of the verbal exchange. I often have saluted people in words only to be called out by my interlocutor in a mock-serious tone of reprimand: *yadd-ak, yadd-ak* (Your hand! your hand!) (note the geminate form of *yad* in Yemeni Arabic) which I then immediately extended. It is an insult to give someone a soiled or wet hand to shake, but rather than ask to be excused, the person may simply hold out his wrist or forearm which the other clasps. Propriety dictates that under most circumstances one stands when greeting another person (though there are ways of being excused from this obligation, as we shall see, which involve a strategic use of speech).

The distinction of right/left hand is, of course, important in such acts as eating and handing over anything like a letter, a book, money, tea, and so on. In all these acts the right hand is prescribed, the left hand proscribed. The difference is captured perfectly in the Yemeni proverb *al-yadd al-yamān lamā šaruf, al-yadd al-yasār lamā xabuθ* (The right hand when one is honored, the left hand when one is maligned). Even space to the right side of ego's body is categorized as "sacred" and "honorable" so that when greeting others, one not only does so with one's right hand, buy also starts with the person on one's right side and

moves counterclockwise until everyone has been greeted in a given space. If a man's honor is deserving of special regard, he is usually seated to the right of the host in the main of place of honor.

[10]For the idea of "intensification" in poetry, see Friedrich (1979).

[11]*Gāt* (or *qāt* as it is pronounced in classical Arabic) is a leaf chewed for its mild narcotic effect.

[12]I wish to thank Greg Urban for drawing my attention to this interpretation.

[13]A pious Muslim also sports a beard and in the context of *sayyid* society it has religious connotations.

[14]I first heard this greeting in the *hijrah* under peculiar circumstances. An intelligent and highly articulate *sayyid* youngster who talked to me at length about a variety of ethnographic topics would parody the tribal greeting with this exchange. Besides revealing something about *sayyid* attitudes toward tribal patterns of speaking, the parody underscored what in *sayyid* perception is quintessentially "tribal."

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