THE USE OF CULTURE IN OPERATIONAL PLANNING

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by

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Recent conflicts, such as Operation Iraqi Freedom, have challenged operational commanders to develop skills to manage indigenous population issues. These skills were developed out of necessity after the conflict is over. Dealing with the population, such as the Iraqi Shi'ites, inevitably leads to a crash course in the local culture. Cultural knowledge, though, is neither significantly used nor considered during planning and not referenced during execution until the primary conflict is over. Instead of being an afterthought, cultural knowledge should be one of the primary considerations of planning. Cultural knowledge and understanding can benefit a combatant commander's mission when integrated into an operational level course of action especially when the desired outcome is to win and utilize the popular support of the indigenous population. A special staff position on a joint task force level staff could provide the commander and staff all the necessary information during the planning and execution phases of the operation. This special staff person, a cultural consultant, would have training in the study of culture, as well as military operational knowledge, and would not only be the resident expert but also would have access to other experts in the academic and professional arena.

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

THE USE OF CULTURE IN OPERATIONAL PLANNING, by MAJ Elizabeth E. Bledsoe, 60 pages.

Recent conflicts, such as Operation Iraqi Freedom, have challenged operational commanders to develop skills to manage indigenous population issues. These skills were developed out of necessity after the conflict is over. Dealing with the population, such as the Iraqi Shi'ites, inevitably leads to a crash course in the local culture. Cultural knowledge, though, is neither significantly used nor considered during planning and not referenced during execution until the primary conflict is over. Instead of being an afterthought, cultural knowledge should be one of the primary considerations of planning. Cultural knowledge and understanding can benefit a combatant commander's mission when integrated into an operational level course of action especially when the desired outcome is to win and utilize the popular support of the indigenous population. A special staff position on a joint task force level staff could provide the commander and staff all the necessary information during the planning and execution phases of the operation. This special staff person, a cultural consultant, would have training in the study of culture, as well as military operational knowledge, and would not only be the resident expert but also would have access to other experts in the academic and professional arena.

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ACRONYMS

CPA   Coalition Provisional Authority

FAO   Foreign Area Officer

JAG   Judge Advocate General

MP   Military Police

OIF   Operation Iraqi Freedom

SCIRI   Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq

ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Near the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom Tom Brokaw on *NBC Nightly News* showed clips from the *Al Jazeera* network. These clips would be on an event that Tom Brokaw reported on earlier in the news broadcast but now from the point of view of the Muslim Arabic news organization. It was amazing to see the difference in perspective. The NBC news reported on the how the soldiers repelled an attack from Iraqi insurgents, maintained control over a town, and attempted to establish security. *Al Jazeera* showed hospital rooms full of injured women and children that were supposedly the result of the fighting within that same town. They portrayed the US military as killers and occupiers versus liberators and peacekeepers. The difference in perspective is not simply because the news organizations were on opposite sides of the war. There is a distinct difference between Western cultures and Muslim Arabic cultures, such as the Iraqi culture. This may seem like an obvious statement but its true meaning seems to be lost on many Westerners, including their governments.

Cultural understanding is not derived from demographic information like that usually provided to the military in country briefs prior to deployment. Cultural understanding is gained from studying and understanding the people, religion, history, customs, and their social and political structures. Even after study, the knowledge gained would be but the tip of an iceberg. "Most of what we observe as the manifest or explicit forms of culture; including clothing, gestures, and food, are only the surface level manifestations. These are the most visible but the least important elements of culture"

(Marine Corps Combat Development Command 2005, 27). For true understanding, it is necessary to live among the people gradually understanding the subtleties and nuances of their culture.

Currently the US government and military are struggling within postwar Iraq and attempting the construction of a democratic state. Although there are fundamentalists who will continue to try to terrorize and destroy any attempts at democratic progress, some of the problems are caused by the Iraq Coalition's lack of understanding and, at times, disrespect for the Iraqi culture. An author from *Foreign Affairs Magazine* had a similar opinion. "Throughout the occupation, the coalition lacked the linguistic and area expertise necessary to understand the Iraqi politics and society, and the few long-time experts present were excluded from the inner circle of decision-making in the CPA [Coalition Provisional Authority]" (Diamond 2004, 34).

In contrast, there are some innovative thinkers in Iraq who are attempting to understand the Iraqi people and gain their respect and assistance in providing security and exposing the insurgents. In an article in *The Wall Street Journal*, Greg Jaffe illustrates the use of culture in making some small gains in Ramadi, Iraq. He states, "Battling guerrilla warfare depends less on firepower, and more on human intelligence, culture sensitivity and reconstruction" (Jaffe 2004, A1). The article talks about Captain Ayers who is responsible for providing security for Ramadi, a town in the Sunni triangle. In order to gain popular support, Captain Ayers discovered and established relationships with key people in the town. "In Ramadi, there is a confusing network of more than 100 tribes, subtribes, sheiks and subsheiks. Loyalties shifted" (Jaffe 2004.). Ayers enlisted the assistance from the local police force and established joint patrols and information

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sharing. Despite continuing attacks and punishment from the insurgents, Captain Ayers has gained and maintained some amount of loyalty and cooperation from the Ramadi people due to his cultural sensitivity and respect.

<p style="text-align:center">Thesis and Questions for Study</p>

In the same way it aided Captain Ayers in his mission at a tactical level, cultural knowledge could enhance the effectiveness of an operational course of action. Cultural knowledge and understanding can benefit a combatant commander's mission when integrated into an operational level course of action planning and execution especially when the desired outcome is to win and utilize the popular support of the indigenous population.

To benefit the commander's mission, the cultural information must be relevant not only to the local people, but also to the military goals. How does the commander get this information? The cultural information cannot be provided in a vacuum without perspective on the mission at hand. It also cannot be a one-time briefing that the commander must absorb and somehow apply to every concept of the operation. To truly benefit a commander and his mission he needs a continuous feed of cultural information and guidance relevant to his current planning or actions. This study provides one recommendation for this continuous cultural guidance.

The next question is what cultural information is the most relevant and that can be utilized to tailor a concept of the operation to fulfill mission requirements without ostracizing the population? Basic demographics are not enough. They are not representative of the peoples' cultural norms, practices, traditions and basically how they think. There are not any joint staff members that are trained to read the people as a

culture vis-à-vis an enemy or an objective. The information they provide is based on demographic information plus the addition of responses or actions of the population to current events. There is no true understanding of the culture and why the people react in response to certain actions. Anthropology is the study of people and their cultures. The aim in anthropological studies is to develop cultural patterns and find the inherent reasons for their practices and traditions. An anthropological cultural analysis can provide a joint staff the core information they require to complete mission planning and progressive execution.

Experience in recent conflicts, such as Bosnia and Kosovo, have shown the American military in more peacekeeping and stability operations roles vice total war. Soldiers are learning more about techniques and tactics for providing stability and security than their doctrinal wartime missions. Training centers established mock local populations so that deploying soldiers will get an idea of the local culture.

Future operations are likely to be the same kind of policing action with a large amount of interaction between US military forces and indigenous people. There is less likelihood of a worldwide conventional war, like World War II, compared to protracted conflicts geared toward a nonstate actor, an organization, or a country. Given this, there will rarely be a need for total destruction. The military goals will be identified as destroying or diffusing the bad elements with an eye towards future rebuilding. The integration of cultural knowledge in operational planning will increase in importance, and it will be a continuing theme central to actual and perceived US success. "Wars are won as much by creating alliances, leveraging nonmilitary advantages, reading intentions, building trust, converting opinions, and managing perceptions--all these tasks demand an

exceptional ability to understand people, their culture, and their motivation" (Scales 2004, 10).

The "Phase IV" planning has been most criticized in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Many critics have stated that there appears to have been no plan for postwar Iraq, and this has led to the terrorist and guerrilla-type attacks on Coalition forces. Phase IV is the rebuilding and security phase that relies on cultural knowledge and the human element to help win over support and unite the country under the new democratic government. "The human element seems to underlie virtually all the functional shortcomings chronicled in official reports and media stories: information operations, civil affairs, cultural awareness, soldier conduct, and most glaringly, intelligence, from national to tactical" (Scales 2004, 10). Integrating cultural knowledge into operational planning will not only help with the decisive phases of the operation but will help tailor the operation that will include a functional "phase IV" with early coordination from the appropriate government organizations. Early integration could also help tailor predeployment training, so that soldiers going into the conflict will have a better understanding of the culture of that particular region.

Understanding how to analyze or study a culture is the foundation of gaining cultural knowledge. This thesis includes broad guidelines for cultural analysis and uses the Iraqi Shi'ite population and Operation Iraqi Freedom as the example for study. Much of the study uses recent publications on Iraq and the Shi'ites and does not include any personal research or observations. In essence, the cultural analysis is derived from second-hand sources, not from personal experience or study within the region. This study is also not a definitive solution but presents the problem and offers recommendations to

increase military awareness and generate further discussion and research. It does not attempt to solve all the problems or establish second and third order effects of integrating cultural knowledge into operational planning.

In order to explain how cultural knowledge and understanding can benefit a combatant commander's mission the study will begin with a review of the major literature sources in chapter 2. Because the analysis relies on books and articles instead of personal experience, it is important to understand how another person's view and opinions could influence this study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology that will be used in the subsequent chapter to describe the culture under review. Chapter 4 is the analysis of Iraqi Shi'ite people, and, finally, chapter 5 will provide recommendations for future use of cultural knowledge in operational planning. Ultimately, this study will show why cultural knowledge is important to operational commanders and what cultural information is most relevant to the mission. Finally, the conclusion will offer a solution to the cultural information void on the operational staff.

There is one important note on transliteration while reading this thesis. The Arabic names are spelled differently depending on the author of the book or article and the time frame that it was written. Many names have no standardized spelling because the Roman characters in the English alphabet only approximate the spelling from the original Arabic. There is consistency in spelling in the original text of this thesis except where authors were directly quoted.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

When studying a culture through second- and third-hand sources, it is difficult to determine if there is bias and what it would include. It is difficult for any cultural observers not to include some personal or cultural bias in their studies. Knowing this, a researcher should consider potential bias and compare and contrast sources to find the potential areas of question. Without personal observation, at some point the researcher must provide the most likely answer and state that there are assumptions in the analysis. The purpose of this chapter is to point out the potential biases in the major resource materials and to show some of the contrasts in opinions.

Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics,
Culture, and History of Shi'ite Islam

In his book *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture, and History of Shi'ite Islam*, Juan Cole makes the argument that national borders do not bind the Shi'ite religious culture. He discusses the Shi'ite people from the year 1500 to the present examining the Shi'ite populations in Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, and Iraq. "Looking at Shi'ite Islam (and other major Islamic movements) outside the box of a national framework, at its international networks and the profound interactions they entail, is among the prime tasks of historians of religion" (Cole 2002, 1).

Juan Cole's analysis, separate from the government and nation-state, provides a critical view of the religion without the layer of politics and other environmental interactions. His book allows the reader to begin to understand the Shi'ite as a separate people from the encompassing label of "Islamic." The reader starts to see the shades of

gray between Shi'ites and other Islamic people. Cole's book intends to inform, but he does so with a protective tone to a world of uninformed readers that mostly hold an unfavorable view of Muslim people.

The Iraqi Predicament People in the Quagmire of Power Politics

In contrast to the previous book, *The Iraqi Predicament People in the Quagmire of Power Politics* looks at Iraq as a nation-state without much mention of the separate religions or subcultures. The book is overtly biased towards the Iraqi and Arab people and against the US and UN policies and actions. The authors, Tareq Y. Ismael and Jacqueline S. Ismael, view the US as a hegemony that is attempting to fulfill its "manifest destiny" by maintaining superpower status at all cost.

> With the ascension of George W. Bush to the US presidency in 2000, there was a more assertive militarist and corporatist agenda that shunned multilateralism and established astronomically high increases in defense spending. The events of September 11 provided justification for this new orientation, and have been used since by the Bush administration to advance American hegemonic interests globally. (Ismael and Ismael 2004, 5)

Although the bias is obvious, this book is beneficial because it presents a completely different view. It forces the Western reader to defend their beliefs and policies by arguing against the authors' theses. In so doing the readers may discover their own biases and begin to understand the perceptions of the Iraqi people. The authors seem extremely knowledgeable about the subject, but the book offers no explanation of their qualifications or studies.

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Bernard Lewis, the author of *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*, is described as an eminent authority of Middle-Eastern history. His book substantiates the claim with a detailed Muslim history. Lewis makes an interesting assertion during the introduction that begins to make the reader think about Muslim frustrations with the Western world. "There is indeed good reason for questioning and concern, even anger. For many centuries the world of Islam was in the forefront of human civilization and achievement. In the Muslims' own perception, Islam itself was indeed coterminous with civilization, and beyond its borders there were only barbarians and infidels" (Lewis 2002, 3). He begins his history prior to the Ottoman Empire and ends prior to the September 11 terrorist attacks. Despite the timing of the book, it provides interesting insight to Muslim history, and possible explanations for current conflicts between Western governments and the Muslims.

The United States and Iraq's Shi'ite Clergy: Partners or Adversaries?

W. Andrew Terrill in *The United States and Iraq's Shi'ite Clergy: Partners or Adversaries?* provides a concise history of the Iraqi Shi'ites and focuses on their recent interaction with the British and US governments. Terrill is an analyst at the Strategic Studies Institute. The book has an analytical tone with no evident emotion either way. There are some subtle biases to the US, but primarily the book is objective and provides a great deal of detailed and relevant interaction between the US and Iraqi Shi'ites. It was the best source for identifying Shi'ite organizations and the most influential or notable people.

The author, Geoff Simons, also provides in *Iraq from Sumer to Post–Saddam* a historical synopsis of the Iraqi people with his perspective on the Iraqi people in the "New World Order" (2004, 3). He overtly criticizes the US and UN for sanctions inflicted on Iraq prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom. He states that the US controls the UN and is only concerned about wars. He mentions other Western governments who lie and have hidden agendas. "We need to reaffirm the principle that the protocols of international behaviour are properly sanctioned by ethics, not by perceived self-interest of this or that state, even if a hegemonic power" (Simons 2004, xiii). Simons' discussion presents another view and perspective. Like Ismael's book, it forces the reader to defend their beliefs on the subject.

Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation
of Ba'thist Iraq, 1968-1989

An Israeli professor and modern Middle East historian at the Haifa University, Amatzia Baram provides an interesting viewpoint on the Ba'athist ideology in his book *Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba'thist Iraq, 1968-1989*. His belief is that early Ba'athist ideology helps provide a sense of identity to the Iraqi people. "By resurrecting and imbuing with great national significance elements previously rejected, ignored or downplayed in Ba'ath ideology such as territory, race and local pre-Islamic and pre-Arab historical epochs, the Ba'ath regime of Iraq has sought to reshape the collective identification of its countrymen" (Baram 1991, xii). This perspective provides a secular view of Iraq nation building. Baram's book sheds a different light on the Ba'athist party that is contrary to current popular opinion. This is also interesting in

another aspect because Baram is Israeli and his viewpoint is certainly different from Western historians and writers.

Baram's information, as stated in the "Preface," is from second- and third-hand sources. He was unable to do research in Iraq due to the political environment. He used Iraqi sources and histories to write his book.

<u>*Culture Theory*</u>

This book *Culture Theory* by David Kaplan and Robert Manners describes the recent theories of the study of culture. Kaplan and Manners admit that this is a difficult task because it is hard to get a consensus among anthropologists on any specific theory. "Yet one thing remains quite clear. And that is that anthropologists cannot even describe and analyze cultural phenomena without employing theory and some degree of generalization, however tentative these may be" (Kaplan and Manners 1972, viii). This book provides several valid frameworks in which to study culture. Although these frameworks can be disputed, they provide a starting place for studying and analyzing culture. Two of the frameworks serve as the methodology for the analysis in chapter 4.

<u>*The Arab Mind*</u>

Although the book *The Arab Mind* by Raphael Patai is copyrighted in 1973, it provides a comprehensive cultural, and at times, psychological look at the Arab mind-set. Raphael Patai is a Middle East cultural expert and has written many books on the subject. This book is a detailed analysis on the Arabs from child rearing to conflict and the Western influence. There were many statements regarding Arabs that were relevant and insightful despite the fact that the book was written thirty years ago. Much of what he

wrote is equally true today and provided a different perspective of the Iraqi Shi'ites as Arabs.

Although there are more references, these were the most important sources that influenced the analysis and contributed to the study. All of the references provided direct or indirect information. The direct references provided information that answered a question from this study. An indirect source provided background, perspective, and an overall sense of the Shi'ite cultural environment. The next chapter is primarily based on discussions from the reference, *Culture Theory*. It provides the model for the Shi'ite cultural analysis and discussion in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The difficulty in utilizing culture in operational planning is determining which aspects of the culture are relevant and should be taken into consideration. Similar issues have been discussed amongst anthropologists. The aspects and the methodology used to study culture can influence the outcome of the research and the problem arises in determining what aspects will provide the most accurate picture. This chapter will examine some of the issues surrounding the study of culture in general and then will describe four types of anthropological methodologies: comparativism, relativism, functionalism, and structuralism. It will conclude by describing the methodology that will be used for this paper.

Anthropological methodologies are used vice sociology, psychology, or simple demographics. Anthropology is the scientific study of culture and offers the best tools in examining culture as a whole or in specific areas. Anthropologists are "concerned with the interaction between subsystems or institutions such as the social structural, ideological, and technoeconomic" (Kaplan and Manners 1972, 4). Anthropologists do not consider any part of culture out of bounds for study although, because of practicality, they may limit their research to specific aspects that interest them.

One of the hazards of studying culture is comparing it to your own culture. This is beneficial in certain ways because it allows the observer a foundation with which to understand the new culture. "We are able to understand any phenomenon only because it bears some similarities to things we already know" (Kaplan and Manners 1972, 5). The

downside of this is that our own biases or preconceived notions may so affect the study preventing a true look at the culture. "A perennial problem in the social sciences is that of investigation bias" (Kaplan and Manners 1972, 24). So the investigator must be aware of the hazards and realize that ethnocentrism will not allow them a true understanding of the studied culture.

Anthropologists utilize two separate methods of studying cultures in general. Emic is the "inside view" (Pelto 1970, 68) of a culture utilizing the natives conceptualization of the framework and structure of the culture (Kaplan and Manners 1972, 22). The opposite is etic, the external view of the culture that enables the observer to more clearly see patterns, similarities and differences (Pelto 1970, 68). The specific anthropological methodologies utilize an emic, etic, or a combination of both approaches.

The first two methodologies out of the four discussed in this paper are relativism and comparativism. These theories look at the study of culture in different ways. Kaplan and Manners best describe the distinction, "The relativist tells us that a culture must be examined as a totality and only in terms of itself; while the comparativist says that an institution, process, complex, or item must be removed from its larger cultural matrix so that it can be compared with institutions, processes, complexes, or items in other sociocultural contexts" (Kaplan and Manners 1972, 5). In other words, the relativists say that cultures cannot be compared to other cultures and comparativists believe that aspects of the culture must be utilized for comparison in order to be understood. In reality, anthropologists use portions of each theory in the study of culture.

The reason for this combination of theories is because in order "To describe *any* society one must use categories, terms, and concepts which transcend the individual case"

(Kaplan and Manners 1972, 7). Despite the fact that the observer may use both methodologies in the study it is important to understand the distinction between the two. This assists the observer in maintaining discipline during the study and not falling victim to cultural preconceptions.

The last two methodologies are structuralism and functionalism. As with the previous two, each has distinctions that must be realized although they will be used together in the analysis later in chapter 3. Structuralism classifies pieces of the culture into structural elements. Julian Steward, an American anthropologist, "distinguishes among three broad levels: family, tribe, and state, and defines each of these in terms of the largest autonomous sociopolitical unit engaging in collective action" (Kaplan and Manners 1972, 48). Those levels are considered core institutions of culture and are "strategically crucial to the way the system is organized from those which are peripheral" (Kaplan and Manners 1972, 47). Figure 1 illustrates Stewards' theory.

What is most interesting and most useful to this study is Steward's concept of change in relation to his theory. "It follows, therefore, that while change may be initiated anywhere in the system--in the peripheral as well as in the core institutions--unless these changes react upon and transform the core institutions, the system as a whole will not undergo a change of cultural type" (Kaplan and Manners 1972, 48). Any cultural organization, the family, tribe, state, or government, can be categorized as either a core or peripheral feature. The core structures will have the biggest impact on the entire culture. This understanding of structuralism in studying a culture allows for a relatively quick understanding of the heart of the culture, those organizations that can inflict the most and the fastest change on the culture.
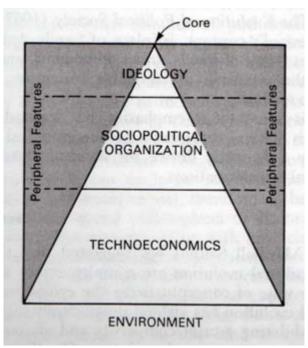
Figure 1.   Diagram of Julian Steward's Concept of Different Cultural Elements
Source: David Kaplan and Robert A. Manners, *Culture Theory* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Wavelend Press, Inc., 1972), 47.

Functionalism also categorizes cultural features but this theory looks at culture as an entity. This theory holds the belief that systems within the culture are interrelated like organisms and any change or problem with one system affects the whole body or culture. "Functionalism as a theoretical perspective in anthropology draws on the organic analogy--that is, it leads one to think of sociocultural systems as though they were a kind of 'organism' whose parts are not only related to each other but, at the same time, contribute to the maintenance, stability, and the very survival of the 'organism'" (Kaplan and Manners 1972, 56). As with any organism the culture must function and adapt to changing environments. If the culture cannot adapt it will cease to function in its true form and could be absorbed into another culture.

There are two types of functions described by Sociologist Robert Merton. The

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first, manifest functions, are those that contribute to cultural adaptation and are recognized by the people living within the culture. Latent functions are those functions that are not recognized by the people. As an example, Merton uses the Hopi Indian rain dance to illustrate his theory. "In short, according to Merton, the Hopi continue to enact the rain dance not simply because they are mistaken in the belief that the ritual produces rain, but because it performs the latent function of promoting group solidarity" (Kaplan and Manners 1972, 58). Although this may be an incorrect theory of the culture it does show that culture as an organism has intended and unintended functions and consequences.

The Shi'ite people in Iraq also provide a good example of manifest and latent functions. The Shi'ites' Islamic beliefs and their anticipated return of their messiah lead them to believe that contemporary governments are corrupt. Karbala is the city where two sects of the Islamic religion fought for power and control. The Sunnis defeated the Shi'ite sect. "Karbala has also been described as providing the Shi'ites with a proclivity towards defeatism as well as a belief that government is often (perhaps usually) corrupt and oppressive. In Iraq, this view was strongly reinforced by Saddam's years of misrule" (Terrill 2003, 4). The manifest function of the religious beliefs keeps the Shi'ites devout to their religion over any other rule. The latent function is their defeatist attitude and distrust of government.

Each of the methodologies described illustrates ways of studying culture and focuses on the culture from different perspectives or views. This is similar to studying the contents of a box in a dark room utilizing a flashlight. The box contents may look different depending on where and how the flashlight was held. These anthropological

methodologies are describing how and where to hold the flashlight. The observer cannot discover the true contents of the box without different perspectives, so anthropologists commonly use more than one methodology in their studies of culture.

In this study structuralism and functionalism will be primarily used in the analysis of the Shi'ite people in the next chapter. Although these two theories will provide a large part of the framework for analysis, there will be evidence of relativism and comparativism. The study will be from the etic viewpoint. The only means to get an emic viewpoint would be to complete a participant observation study of the Shi'ite people in Iraq. Obviously, this is not possible. Also, the etic perspective will allow for a better understanding because of comparison with other cultures.

Since Operation Iraqi Freedom is effecting a major cultural change, much of the analysis will be in respect to cultural change or transformation. Structuralism and functionalism best illustrate the culture in view of change and how it will affect the culture. The next chapter will begin the analysis of the Iraqi Shi'ite people using this methodology.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

This chapter will use the anthropological methodologies of structuralism and functionalism in order to analyze the Iraqi Shi'ite people. Chapter 5 will discuss the relevant information from this analysis that could be used for operational planning. In order to begin the analysis, though, it is necessary to understand the Iraqi Shi'ites in their environment. "Put simply, one cannot understand a culture without knowing its history, and one cannot understand a conflict without understanding its culture" (Marine Corps Combat Development Command 2005, 30). This chapter will begin with a brief history of Iraq and its current ethnic and religious make-up. The Arab mind-set is briefly discussed, as it is also part of the basis for Shi'ite culture in Iraq. The end of the chapter will describe the Iraqi Sunnis simply as a contrast to the Shi'ites. The Sunnis are also a part of the Shi'ite environment and have greatly influenced their history and cultural composition.

A Brief History of Iraq

The Iraqi region was most likely the center of civilization as early as 3500 B.C. The fertile lands between the Tigris and the Euphrates nurtured people from scattered tribes into a functional society. "Here it was that the first cities were born, writing began, and the first codified legal systems were established. Here it was--through such ancient lands as Sumer, Akkad, Babylonia and Assyria--that the vital cultural brew was stirred, the quite remarkable concoction from which Western civilization would emerge" (Simons 2004, 113).

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The Sumerians were at first nomadic, but as a food became plentiful, settlements developed along with trade, merchants, artisans, and engineers. They began to develop other interests because their basic needs were satisfied. "Sumerian scribes became the first people known to have written down epic poems, a type of recorded history and to have speculated on the meaning of life" (Simons 2004, 115). One of the most well known writings was the *Gilgamesh* epic. The book depicted a flood story, similar to that of Noah's Ark, as one of the many adventures of the part god, part human king all of which took place around the Euphrates River in ancient Iraq (Ferry 1992, ix).

The Arab term was first noted 853 B.C. on an inscription of an Assyrian monarch. The name Arab and the land Arabia were used more frequently in writings dating back to 500 B.C. "Hence an Arab was essentially a nomadic inhabitant of the Arabian peninsula. Long before the days of the Islamic expansion the Arabian nomads had traveled to other lands, and sometimes settled there" (Simons 2004, 140).

Islam began around A.D. 600 with the teachings of Mohammad. He was born in Arabia and, at the age of forty, began having visions. Based on his visions and callings, Mohammad began teaching the Arabian people that "God was One" (Simons 2004, 143), versus the many Gods and beliefs held by the individual tribes. He would recite verses that his followers would record which later became the Koran. Mohammad stated that he was merely a "conduit for God's Word" and "further claimed that his faith was not new, but simply the correct religion of Abraham that had been distorted by the Israelites" (Simons 2004, 143). This correct religion was called *Islam,* surrender to God. "Those who followed the true path would be known as *Muslims*, surrendered persons" (Simons 2004, 143).

Mohammad died without a successor and no guidance but the verses he dictated from God. "The victorious sweep of Islam within a few decades after Muhammad's death across a major part of the Old World constitutes a unique phenomenon in human history" (Patai 1973, 10). Local authorities determined that Mohammad's father-in-law, Bekr, would be his successor or *Caliph* (religious and political leader). Without any clear line of descendants, leadership, or doctrine the Muslim movement was loosely held together. Scholars debated the exact wording of the Koran in which many "drafts" were read and discussed. The politics and the fight for power eventually split the religion in A.D. 680. "In the modern world two sects--the Shi'ites and the Sunnis--are of particular significance: they represent the principal divisions of modern Islam, heavily underlining the political schisms in Iraq and other Muslim states" (Simons 2005, 144).

The trouble began when the fourth *caliph*, Ali, was assassinated in A.D. 661. His son gave up the throne to Muawiya Ummayad. In 680, Muawiya's son, Yazid, claimed to be the successor of the throne. "Ali's second son Husain rose to challenge the claim" (Simons 2004, 144). A fight began in Karbala and Yazid's overwhelming forces killed Husain. The Shi'ites became the people that supported Ali's line of succession (Husain) claiming that Ali was the first true *caliph* after Mohammad. "Sunnis regard Ali as the fourth and last of the "rightly guided caliphs" (successors to Mohammed (pbuh) as leader of the Muslims) following on from Abu Bakr 632-634, Umar 634-644, and Uthman 644-656" (Amin 2001, 1). They followed the Muawiya and Yazid line of succession.

At the decline of Nebuchadnezzar II and the Babylonian empire that included the ancient Iraq region, the Persians took control and ruled until Arab Muslims defeated them in A.D. 634. The Muslims conquered the Iraqi region and made the capitol Baghdad. The

caliphates controlled Iraq until 1375 when the Black Sheep Turkomans took control of the region. They ruled until 1468 when the White Sheep Turkomans expanded their territory and wiped out the Black Sheep. The Safavids, a tribe of Shi'ites, defeated the White Sheep who were Sunni and took over Iraq in 1508. Soon after, the Ottoman Empire took control of the Iraqi region and ruled until World War I.

Despite Ottoman control, there was a large amount of turbulence in the local leadership. Parts of Iraq became almost lawless. "Although it lay well within Iraq's borders, Karbala, had the air of a frontier town. The population showed hostility to the Sunni government in Baghdad, which could seldom station its Sunni troops there without endless trouble. The city became an ideal hide-out for all the murderers, thieves, embezzlers and army deserters in Iran and Iraq" (Cole 2002, 105). The culture of law within Iraq at the time was like that of the mafia. "Under these circumstances, gangs in mid-nineteenth-century Iraq and Iran used their armed force in the service of revolts by local notables or by tradespeople against the centrally appointed governor. They often became popular local leaders, transcending (at least for a time) their extortionist background" (Cole 2002, 121).

The "mafia rule" remained until World War I. The Ottoman Empire was defeated and the British took control of Iraq in 1914 while the French took control of Syria. The British based their framework for occupation on India ruling Iraq with Indian legal code and even making the rupee the local tender. The British ruled Iraq instead of allowing Arab control because of their concern that an Arab ruler could not maintain security and stability during the Turkish withdrawal.

The British maintained control of Iraq after the war under the League of Nations. The League of Nations installed borders and divided the lands of the Middle East. "The territorial definition of the Middle Eastern states has been a prime source of conflict in the modern world" (Simons 2004, 206). The borders were inflicted on people who knew no real separation. It further fragmented groups of people, such as the Shi'ites.

In 1921 at the Cairo Conference, Mesopotamia was formally renamed Iraq and given to King Feisal who was ousted out of Syria by the French. King Feisal, although a recognized ruler of Iraq, continued to have problems in Iraq that the British assisted in quelling. Despite the central government, the tribes maintained a large amount of control within Iraq. The British continually moved a small occupying force to stop pockets of violence and revolt. "T. E. Lawrence remarked that it cost Great Britain more than twice as much to suppress the revolt of the tribes of Mesopotamia after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire than it did to sustain the Arab revolt against the Ottomans" (Chalabi 1991, 20). Eventually, the British moved in larger and larger forces to maintain the security in Iraq. Although the British and King Feisal maintained control, it was at a costly price. The British began to realize that it was not worth the cost of controlling anymore and began a series of steps that would relinquish more control to King Feisal and the Iraqi government.

In 1924, the British and Iraqis signed a treaty of alliance. "This Anglo-Iraqi Treaty was designed to safeguard British rights in Iraq, including military bases" (Simons 2004, 217). In 1925, Iraqi parliamentary elections began under British supervision. In 1930, the British developed another treaty giving the Iraqi government more autonomy. The British maintained their air bases, trained the new Iraqi army, and wanted to

"harmonize foreign policies" (Simons 2004, 218). The treaty would allow Iraqi

independence in 1932 and entrance into the League of Nations. King Feisal died in 1932

without ever seeing true Iraqi independence. His son succeeded to the throne.

Between 1936 and 1941, there were seven political coups in Iraq. King Ghazi,

Feisal's son, lacked the ability to control Iraq. "Rule was autocratic: no independent

political parties developed and the successive government worked hard to control the

results of the elections" (Simons 2004, 218). The monarchy under Ghazi's son, Feisal II,

was weak and eventually ended in 1958. In the meantime World War II broke out and

there were elements in Iraq that thought the war would be a good way to get rid of British

control.

In 1940, the incoming prime minister, Rashid Ali al-Gilani, conspired with the

Nazis in order to get out from under the British. "In fact the Axis powers had already

promised Rashid substantial financial aid, other support, and--as a gesture to his Arab

nationalist aspirations--a United Kingdom of Syria and Iraq under the Iraqi monarchy"

(Simons 2004, 221). The British defeated the pro-Nazi forces within Iraq and installed a

new prime minister. "But the British hegemony in the region, preserved despite the

burdens and the tribulations of the Second World War, was soon to be shaken: fresh

waves of Arab nationalism were about to break" (Simons 2004, 223).

Syrian students studying in Baghdad founded the Ba'ath party, an Arab nationalist

party, in 1948. The party was comprised of a mix of Sunnis and Shi'ites. There was not

much Kurd participation because of the party's pan-Arab credo. In 1950 the party had

fifty members. By 1958, there were a few hundred members. In 1959, the party was

responsible for the assassination attempt on Qasim, a Sunni-Arab and leader of Iraq at the

time. On 8 February 1963, the Ba'ath party finally overthrew Qasim and took control of Iraq. "Although in the late 1950s a significant proportion of the members of the Arab nationalist Ba'ath party were Twelvers [Shi'ites], after 1963 Sunnis began to predominate and to monopolize its upper echelons" (Cole 2002, 179).

The Ba'athist party split in the mid-1960s creating three separate sections. The section that eventual took control of Iraq was the "centrists" (Baram 1991, 12). The Centrists were primarily Sunni Arab, including a middleman named Saddam Hussein. The Centrists took control of Baghdad in 1968. "Never before since World War II had the Sunni-Arab minority monopolized political (and, with the advent of a nationalization, also economic) power so totally and blatantly" (Baram 1991, 15).

Besides land reform and central government control one of the Ba'athist party's primary agendas was nationalism. "Less than a year after it came to power, the Ba'th regime launched a policy which sought to create (or as the case may have been, to invigorate and reinforce) a national-territorial consciousness resting upon the particular history of Iraq and, equally significantly, of what the regime, or a powerful circle within it, presented as the history of the Iraqi people" (Baram 1991, 25). This included developing an Iraqi identity within the Arab world. This was a precarious balancing act, though, as the party also wanted to please other Arab leaders. The nationalist campaign was not mentioned by the leadership out of fear of drawing criticism for the Arab world. Other Arab leaders may have regarded the promotion of Iraqi nationalism as a threat to the pan-Arab beliefs. This conflict continued through Saddam Hussein's rule. "Indeed, in his attempt to buttress the legitimacy of his regime by connecting it with Nebuchadnezzar and Hammurabi, Saddam Husayn is trying to build on shifting sands" (Baram 1991, 138).

25

The Ba'ath party geared the nationalism campaign towards the peasants of Iraq who were primarily Shi'ite. Many of the reforms were geared to improve their lifestyles. The party established a more progressive labor code, invested resources in advanced education, and constructed country roads, provided electricity and fresh water to rural areas and improved medical services. "In addition to greater Shi'i representation and social and economic improvements, the party had also come up with an ideology that would give Shi'i Arabs a sense of equality with their Sunni counterparts and of true belonging to the Iraqi political community" (Baram 1991, 20).

The nationalism campaign also included a strong sense of Iraqi history. This extended all the way back to Mesopotamia, pre-Arab and pre-Islamic times. There were three ideological aims of this "cultivation of folklore" (Baram 1991, 33). This first is the unity of all the ethnic communities. The second is to show Iraq's uniqueness compared to other nations of the world, including other Arab nations. The third is to illustrate the cultural and ethnic links from modern Iraqis to those "people who dwelled in Iraq in antiquity" (Baram 1991, 34). Centers of culture and folklore were established to research, explore, and celebrate Iraq's rich history.

The goal was to promote Iraq's varied ethnicity under the Ba'athist party and the government of Iraq. Saddam Hussein stated his desire for unity in a speech in 1981. "We must speak of the Iraqi who comes from Sulaymaniyya, and he who comes from Basra, without pointing to his ethnic origins . . . let us delete the words Arab and Kurds, and replace them with [the term] the Iraqi people" (Baram 1991, 35). The campaign, though, focused on Shi'ites and Sunnis and excluded the Kurds, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and the

Turkomans. "Under no other regime and movement was the negation of the Iraqi identity stronger than under that of the Ba'ath" (Baram 1991, 131).

Saddam Hussein became the de facto ruler of Iraq in July 1979 after his predecessor, Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, resigned. He came to power at the end of Iraq's wealthiest time in modern history just before the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). Iraq emerged from the war broke and struggling to control the Kurd rebellions in the north. This did not stop Hussein from invading Kuwait in August 1990. He is the second Iraqi ruler to lay claim to Kuwait because it was originally part of the province of Basra during Ottoman rule. In 1961, Abdul-Karim Qasim claimed Kuwait and was quickly deterred by British threat of a military conflict. Hussein was not so easily deterred.

Clashes between the Ba'ath party and the Shi'ites have existed since 1969, especially during Saddam Hussein's rule. Despite incentives for Shi'ites to join the Ba'ath party, the leadership and membership have primarily been Sunni. "Although the Ba'ath espoused a secular ideology of nationalism and "socialism," it became one more vehicle for relatively small Sunni Arab power elite to dominate [Shi'ite] Twelver Arabs and Kurds" (Cole 2002, 179). Clashes usually ended with the Ba'ath party winning and the Shi'ites being arrested, deported or executed. With the fear of Iranian influence or control, the Ba'ath government wanted to rid the country of any connection with Iran. "With the initiation of the Iraq-Iran war in 1980, the ethnic cleansing campaign expanded to include Iraqis of Iranian decent with the forced expulsion of over 300,000 Iraqi Shi'ites" (Ismael and Ismael 2004, 128).

After the Gulf War in 1991, the Shi'ites suffered greatly in an attempted uprising against Saddam Hussein. "In the immediate aftermath of this conflict, the Shi'ites moved

to the forefront of Iraqi politics when a number of southern cities rebelled against Ba'th party rule" (Terrill 2003, 9). Thousands were executed and arrested.

People of Iraq

Iraq has over 25 million people. Much of their current ethnic groups resemble the ethnic groups of ancient Mesopotamia. The Arabs are the majority and include about 80% of the Iraqi people followed by the Kurds (15%), with the Assyrians, Turkomans, and Chaldeans make up the remaining 5%. The dominant religious group is, of course, Muslim with the Shi'ites making up about 65% and the Sunnis 37%. The minority Christians are 3% of the Iraqi population (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency 2005). Religious sects, tribes, and families add more to this eclectic mix. "The Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurdish populations of Iraq are further subdivided by tribal affiliation with hundreds of tribes scattered throughout the country" (Terrell 2003, 27). The primary language is Arabic except in the North where Kurdish is the official language.

Distinctions between ethnic and religious subcultures are well known and noted among Iraqi people. One who is of Persian decent is not as well thought of as full blood Arab. Interestingly for historical and current event perspective, the Shi'ites in Iraq are primarily Arab but those in Iran are Persian. The Sunnis, on the other hand, believe themselves to be the true descendants of the ancient Mesopotamians because of the Shi'ite affiliation with the Iranians. "Sunnis have considered themselves the Mesopotamian 'loyalists'" (Held 2000, 343). Although the Iraqi history is rifled with internal fighting and bickering, they became countrymen once more in the face of a common enemy.

The Arab Perspective

Arab nationalism played a significant role in the shaping of the Iraqi Shi'ite people. Pan Arab beliefs influenced many of the Arab governments to include Iraq's. "In the Arab view, fostered for at least one generation by almost all Arab leaders, the Arabs constitute one nation, the Arab nation, and the division of the one Arab fatherland in the numerous separate countries is but a temporary condition that sooner or later must be, will be, overcome" (Patai 1973, 13). This nationalistic movement is significant because it attempts to unite Arab countries against all other countries especially Western countries.

Arabs are heavily influenced by their religion, which overwhelmingly is Muslim. In fact many Arabs use the words Muslim and Arab interchangeably neither realizing nor caring that there are non-Islamic Arabs. The combination of the ethnic and religious unity provides a strong sense of identity for the people. So much so, that you are either an Arabic Muslim or you are an infidel and you are either in the "House of Islam" or in the "House of War" (Patai 1973, 14). "One of the most frequently quoted proverbs, current in several variants in many Arab countries, is: "I and my brothers against my cousin; I and my cousins against the stranger" (or "against the world"). This is an acute comment on the Arab traits of family cohesion and hierarchical loyalties" (Patai 1973, 25). This particular trait and cultural belief is illustrated throughout the history of Iraq and other Arab countries.

The Arab mind-set also includes a polarization in their thinking where situations are either black or white with no shades of gray in between. "Several Western scholars have been struck by the pronounced Arab tendency to talk a polarized view of man and the world, to see everywhere stark contrasts rather than graduations, to note opposites

rather than transitions, to perceive extremes and be oblivious of nuances" (Patai 1973, 156). This mind-set is recognizable today in Iraq especially in those people who are so vehemently against the US occupation. In fact their violent reaction to the US occupation is also notably Arab. Arab beliefs allow violence to protect a person's honor especially when they have been wronged. "The blood feud is an organic part and inevitable consequence of the intensive group cohesion which characterizes the Arab ethos" (Patai 1973, 209).

This blood feud cultural practice will make uniting the Iraq people very difficult especially between the Shi'ites and the Sunnis. The Shi'ite differences in religious practices and beliefs were already points of contention. Politically the Sunnis having historically had the power in Iraq has also been a contentious point between them and the Shi'ites. "Given the Arab tradition of invective and proclivity to boasting and verbal exaggeration, any face-to-face encounter between two adversaries is likely to aggravate the dispute rather than constitute a step toward its settlement" (Patai 1973, 228). They will likely blame each other for their problems unless they choose to cooperate on some level and blame a third party, such as the US.

Another Arab perspective in stark contrast to Western cultures is modernization. Arabs have a reverence for old customs, practices, and traditions. Americans, although respecting the old ideas, are aggressive in moving towards future change. Social norms and practices have become the latest fashions. "In modern Western culture, the new is considered better than the old, and thus change in itself is considered a good; in tradition-bound Arab cultures, the old is regarded as better than the new, and thus the retention of the existing order is considered a good" (Patai 1973, 279). Arabs may think that

Westerners, especially Americans, disrespect and disregard their past especially in regard to religion. They may find them undisciplined and fickle as they quickly dispel old traditions in lieu of new practices that suit them better and fit their decadent lifestyles. The Iraqi Shi'ites are decidedly Arab in this respect as they also find old traditions the best way to weather future changes.

<p style="text-align:center">The Shi'ite Culture</p>

From a structuralist perspective the Shi'ite culture is driven by the clerics, the religious leadership. "Much of the current leadership can be found among the religious leaders. Although these individuals and their organizations may yet be displaced by more secular elites, they are the most powerful forces in the Shi'ite community at present (Terrill 2003, 2). Within the clerics there is a certain chain of command. The highest cleric is the Grand Ayatollah, *ayatollah ugma*, "great sign of God" (Terrill 2003, 5)*. Second is the *ayatollah,* sign of God and third is the *hojat al islam*, authority on Islam. The *mubellegh al resala* is the carrier of the message and the *mjutahid* is a graduate of the religious seminary. Finally the *talib ilm* is a religious student. The five levels of clerics with one Grand Ayatollah provide the "staff" that manages the religious education, ceremonies, issues, and often politics of the Shi'ite followers. "Most Iraqi Shi'ites are believed to be respectful of the clergy, and those with "believing minds" predisposed to accepting religious authority may be especially loyal to them" (Terrill 2003, 30).

Most Shi'ites are considered to be "Twelvers" who recognized the twelve Imams (religious leaders). Imams are holy personalities who were appointed and are successors of the Holy Prophet (or pbuh). There are sects within the Shi'ite religion who only

recognize the later Imams and are called "Seveners" or "Fivers" (Amin 2001, 3). The Twelvers believe that the Twelfth Imam is hiding and not dead and will return. "The disappearance of the twelfth Imam and his anticipated return as a messiah help to create a mental framework whereby many devout Shi'ites view contemporary governments as corrupt in a way that will eventually be rectified by a redeemer acting for God" (Terrill 2003, 3).

The burial places of four Imams are considered to be holy cities. These include Najaf, Karbala, Kazimayn, and Samarra. Samarra is the city where it is believed that the Twelfth Imam disappeared. An Islamic seminary was built in Najaf called "*Hawza al 'Ilmiya*, "learned Islamic scholars" and is the heart of Shi'ite religion in Iraq (Terrill 2003, 13). The current head of the seminary and the Grand Ayatollah is Ali Sistani. Sistani has his senior clerics (Ayatollahs) including Mohammed Ishaq Fayad, Mohammed Said Al Hakim, and Basheer al Najafi. "The *Hawza* emerged as an extremely important institution in Iraq almost immediately after Saddam's removal. At that time, mosques throughout the mostly Shi'ite south and the Shi'ite areas of Baghdad declared their allegiance to the *Hawza*" (Terrill 2003, 13).

Hawza clerics maintain their solidarity and work out their differences of opinion in private. Sistani is the spokesman for the Shi'ite people although he often speaks through his son. After Operation Iraqi Freedom began, Sistani expressed concern about the US involvement in Iraq's future government. This is not surprising since the Shi'ites have been oppressed under Hussein and have had little political power previously. "Rather, a variety of Shi'ite religious leaders sought to assume power themselves and limit the US role in governance" (Terrill 2003, 11).

There is one Shi'ite cleric who is a maverick to the senior Shi'ite clerics. He is Sayyid Muqtada al Sadr, who is the son of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al Sadr who led the Hawza prior to Sistani. Sadr is around thirty years old and has defined the US as an enemy. "Sadr's anti-American approach has emerged partially out of ideological conviction, but also as a way of challenging the quietist ayatollahs and establishing an issue upon which to define his leadership" (Terrill 2003, 16). In defining his leadership Sadr appears to display authority he does not have. Sadr has the rank of *talib* or student cleric. Although the lowest ranking of the clerics, he is known to be ruthless and appeals to the younger Shi'ites. Sadr's mentor is the Grand Ayatollah Aza Kazeem al Ha'eri from Iran. Both Ha'eri and Sadr favor the concept of clerical rule in Iraq instead of a secular representative government. "While Sadr's commitment to Islamic government has definitely produced adherents, he also appears to have offended a number of Iraqis and created legions of enemies by his transparent interest in seizing power" (Terrill 2003, 21).

The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) is another significant organization that has an effect on Shi'ite culture. It is a pro-Iranian organization and was led by Mohammad Bakr al Hakim until his assassination in August 2003. His organization openly supported Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. Hakim fled Iraq in 1980 due to the Shi'ite persecution from Hussein's government. The Badr Corps is the military arm of the organization, many of whom were trained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. Although the Badr Corps has been suspected of participating in the insurgency against US forces, the SCIRI has made public comments disapproving the insurgent operations and has chosen to participate in the Iraqi government. The SCIRI is

a part of the Hawza and has publicly discredited Sadr stating that he is "an upstart

without any claim to the leadership of the religious movement in Iraq" (Terrill 2003, 24).

Another organization claiming loyalty to the Hawza is the *al Da'wa Islamiyah*

(the Islamic Call). Founded in 1958, it is the oldest Shi'ite Islamic opposition party. "The

party began legally as a traditional political party, founded primarily to struggle against

communist and anti-religious trends in Iraq society" (Terrill 2003, 27). In 1979 and 1980,

the Da'wa led a series of assassination attempts on Ba'athist party officials including an

attempted assassination of then Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz. Hussein made

membership in the Da'wa illegal and punishable by death.

In the 1980s Da'wa had possible links to international terrorism "and may have

been involved in attacks against Americans in Kuwait and Lebanon" (Terrill 2003, 28).

"Much of what the outside world has understood as activism and militancy among

Shi'ites after about 1975 has been a manifestation of attempts to find political

representation in their various nations as an ethnic and religious community, as they

moved from being peasant subjects to being urban citizens" (Cole 2002, 173). They also

have close ties with the Lebanese *Hizb'allah* party (party of God) who are against the US

invasion of Iraq. Recently a faction of the Da'wa broke off and formed the Iraqi

Hizb'allah. Da'wa is cooperative with the SCIRI and actively participated in the Iraqi
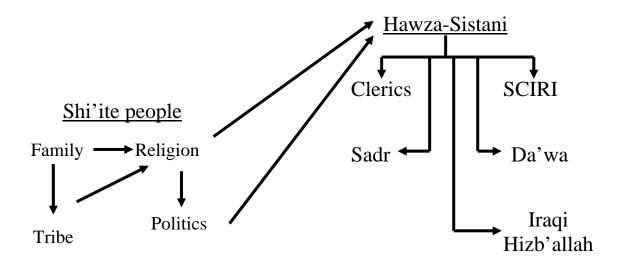
Governing council.

The lowest level organization in Iraqi Shi'ite culture is the family or tribe. "There

were however other groupings of considerable vitality and importance in traditional

Muslim society. Such, for example are the kin group--family, clan, tribe; the faith group,

often linked together by common membership of a sufi fraternity; the craft group, joined

in a guild; the ward or neighborhood within a city" (Lewis 2002, 111). The family is very

closely linked with the religious organization. The religious organization, since the

beginning of Islam, has provided religious as well as governmental guidance. "Many

Arab political parties, like those elsewhere in the developing world, are based on tribes,

sects, and ethnicity" (Terrill 2003, 31). It is difficult for the Iraqi Shi'ites to separate

religion and politics despite other Muslim cultures having a secular government.

Currently, there is no secular equivalent to the Shi'ite organization and no secular Shi'ites

have the influence equal to that of the clergy. Secular government representation to the

Shi'ite people will be as strange to them as non-Muslim representation.

Figure 2 shows a theoretical drawing of the influence of organizations on the

Shi'ite people. It shows that other than the family, the religious organization is the

biggest influence in their lives. This influence is not restricted to religion. The Grand

Ayatollah also provides guidance for political issues as well. "In May 2003, for example,

Sistani issued a *fatwa* [binding religious ruling to followers] calling on Iraqi Muslims not

to join or take part in activities sponsored by political parties because the agenda of those

parties were not yet clear" (Terrill 2003, 14). Compare this structure to those of US

people where religion and politics are primarily separated. For the most part, the

American people are more comfortable with a separation of religion and politics except

in instances where the politics directly concern a religious belief or practice. But political

affiliation is not necessarily derived by religion or ethnicity.

Referring back to Julian Sterward's diagram (figure 1), the core sociopolitical

organizations are religious or derived from religious organizations. One could argue that

the line between ideology and sociopolitical organizations could disappear in the case of

Shi'ite people

Family → Religion

Family → Tribe

Tribe → Religion

Religion → Politics

Hawza-Sistani

Clerics

SCIRI

Sadr

Da'wa

Iraqi Hizb'allah

US People

Family

Religion

Politics

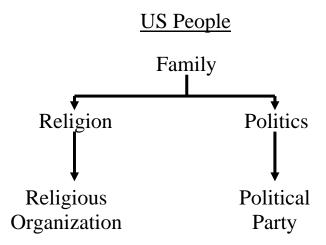Religious Organization

Political Party

Figure 2.   Theoretical Organizational Influences Comparing the Shi'ite People with US People

the Iraqi Shi'ite people. As stated in chapter 3, cultural transformation cannot take place unless the core is changed regardless where the change began. This is a significant fact when considering the US initiative to build a secular democratic government in Iraq. The sustainment of their religious culture and influence will be of great concern to the Shi'ites during the time where politics separate from religion.

Their concern not only rests with religious heritage. Previously, when Shi'ites have gotten involved in politics they have paid a painful price. Two prime examples are the Iran/Iraq War and the first Gulf War. In both cases the Shi'ites were treated horribly with arrests, executions, and deportations. "With Saddam's stranglehold on the clergy remaining in place, religion thus devolved into another instrument for use in controlling the society" (Terrill 2003, 10).

The functionalist view, the second methodology for cultural analysis, looks at the culture like an organism unable to separate functions within the culture without looking at the effects on the rest of the organism. Some of the functions have obvious and directed purposes (manifest) and some functions are inadvertent results (latent) that may or may not benefit the organism. A key point to remember, as taught by Darwin, is that if the organism fails to adapt to new and changing environments, it will perish.

In taking a functionalist perspective of the Shi'ite people, it is necessary to look at favorable and unfavorable aspects of their culture. The Shi'ite religion is distinct from other Muslim religions primarily because of their belief that the fourth caliph, Ali, was the only true caliph to Mohammad. The Shi'ite people celebrate his birthday, the day of his death, and his son's birthday. Ali was murdered and his son fought to maintain control over the throne but was severely defeated in Karbala. Hussein, Ali's son, is the

"ultimate example of noble martyrdom" (Terrill 2003, 4). His sacrifice serves as an example for the Shi'ites and serves to continue this mistrust of the government that is not cleric controlled or influenced. It may also explain why there were relatively few attempts to gain political control in Iraq.

During British occupation, the Shi'ites revolted against British rule while the minority Sunni Arabs cooperated. The Sunnis, despite being the minority, gradually gained power over the Shi'ites and maintained it partially due to the Shi'ite culture of defeatism. "Shi'ite patterns of resigned acceptance of government authority continued through a series of post-mandate regimes led by Sunni Arabs. Prior to Saddam Hussein's rise to power, Iraq's Shi'ite clerics had already developed what one scholar calls a "live and let live relationship" with the Iraqi government" (Terrill 2003, 7). This telescopic view of the Shi'ite people could lead one to believe that a latent function of their religion maintains their sense of doom and defeatism. This theory is not upheld when considering Shi'ites in other countries such as Lebanon and Afghanistan. It is possible, though, that defeatism is more obvious in Iraqi Shi'ites because their twenty-year oppression under Saddam. Saddam provided the most recent cautionary tale.

Is the Shi'ite religion affecting the culture's ability to adapt to a changing environment? "Clerical preoccupations with scholarship and aloofness from worldly matters sometimes have raised the question of Shi'ite religious institutions becoming inadequate to modern needs, even 'hopelessly obsolete'" (Terrill 2003, 30). The manifest function of the religion and the clerics is to guide the people both religiously and politically. The latent function is to control them and maintain influence and power. Since Mohammad's death religious clerics have fought for power. The idea of any

political rule without religious influence is not a favorable solution to Shi'ite clerics. It

not only means diminishing the power base, but it could also mean that the devotion to

religious studies and practices will weaken. There is a growing number, though, who

believes that a secular government is not only possible but also desirable. "Moreover, a

minority school of thought in Shi'ite Islam suggests that political activism can sometimes

substitute for theological accomplishments" (Terrill 2003, 18).

Part of the aversion to change is the widely held belief that to modernize is to

Westernize. This link between modernization and Westernization has prevented the

Shi'ite people, as well as other Muslim people, from changing and adapting.

> Western political domination, economic penetration, and--longest, deepest, and
> most insidious of all--cultural influences, had changed the face of the region and
> transformed the lives of its people, turning them in new directions, arousing new
> hopes and fears, creating new dangers and new expectations equally without
> precedent in their own cultural past. (Lewis 2002, 153)

In contradiction to this belief, the Japanese culture has been able to modernize without

losing their cultural identity. "Their country was occupied and ruled by America for a

number of years. And yet there is no evidence in Japan of anything even approaching the

Arab hatred of the West and the Arab cultural inferiority complex" (Patai 1973, 296).

Their modernization, heavily influenced by the West, took its own direction and has

made Japan a significant force in both the economic and political world. If the organism

cannot adapt to a changing environment it will stagnate if not completely perish.

> For growing numbers, the issue is not religion or nationality, not this or that
> frontier or territory, but freedom--the right to live their own lives in a free and
> open society under representative and responsible government. For them the
> prime enemy is not the outsider, he as foreigner, as infidel, or as imperialist, but
> their own rulers, regimes that maintain themselves by tyranny at home and
> terrorism abroad have failed by every measure of governmental achievement
> except survival. (Lewis 2002, 165)

Although arguably archaic, the Shi'ite religious leadership quickly reacted and established themselves as the local leadership during Operation Iraqi Freedom in Najaf, Karbala, and other southern Iraqi cities. Although this was a political play for power, they also reassured and cared for the people. "Clerics did this in many cases by assuming control of essential services, including neighborhood security, garbage collection, firefighting, education, and hospital administration. They also appointed administrators and imposed curfews, while offering civic protection, jobs, health care, and financial assistance to the needy" (Terrill 2003, 11). They were able to accomplish this because of their communication, organization, and ability to raise funds. The religious organization, throughout their history of oppression, has always taken care of their followers. In essence the cleric leadership had plenty of practice although this opportunity allowed the clerics to gain more positive control.

The Shi'ite Clerics as well as the people will have to develop a new worldview. No longer oppressed by an insidious tyrant, the Shi'ites can provide a positive impact on Iraq. They can have the political influence that has been denied to them since before the British occupation. "If they can abandon grievance and victimhood, settle their differences, and join their talents, energies, and resources in a common creative endeavor then they can once again make the Middle East, in modern times as it was in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, a major center of civilization. For the time being, the choice is their own" (Lewis 2002, 160). In order to develop the new perspective the Clerics will have to reflect on their changing role in the culture and the government.

<u>Sunnis in Contrast</u>

The Sunnis are not nearly so organized as the Shi'ites. Although the Iraqi power elite was primarily Sunni under Hussein, they never consolidated under the Sunni religious umbrella in any way that rivaled that of the Shi'ite hierarchy. "Hussein's strategy for maintaining power pitted various Sunni Arab tribes against each other as much as it divided Sunnis and Shiites. As a consequence, the Sunnis are fractured by competing factions and ideologies that has left them without a unified voice in a new Iraq" (Murphy 2004, 6). The fact that they are not as organized and are a minority compared to the Shi'ites, concerns the Sunnis and makes them insecure about the future Iraqi government.

Currently one organization has emerged under the leadership of Harith al-Dari called the Association of Muslim Scholars. It is currently the country's largest Sunni religious organization (Daragahi 2004, 14). The Sunni clerical leaders, ulema, provide guidance to the Sunni people but not with the same emphasis as the Shi'ites. The Sunnis "supported the view that the Prophet's legitimate successor could be chosen by man and should be an elected member of the Prophet's own tribe" (Atkins 2003, 6). They are considered the most secularized Arabs. This point alone places them and the Shi'ites on opposite ends of the spectrum. "Shias therefore regard Sunnis as secular usurpers whilst Sunnis see Shias as heretics" (Atkins 2003, 6).

Many Sunnis, now, are finding religion in Iraq because of the US occupation. Fear of the unknown future of Iraq has encouraged Sunnis to seek guidance from clerical leaders some of whom are encouraging the violent insurgency. US forces recently

released Imam Mahdi al-Sumaydai from prison. He was arrested for violent teachings and instigation.

A sect of the Sunni religion is the Salafi or Wahabbi tradition. Wahabbi is the dominant religious ideology in Saudi Arabia and is also the guiding belief system for Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda (Murphy 2004, 1). This sect "emphasizes their desire to return the Islamic World to the practices that prevailed at the time of Mohammad, which they see as the golden age" (Murphy 2004, 1). The Salafi leader in Iraq is Sheikh Adel Khalid Dawand. He is opposed to the insurgent violence in Iraq and has been threatened for his opposition by other Sunnis.

The Sufi Islam organizations are a distinct group like that of the Salafi or Wahabbi. They are brotherhood organizations within Islam. Sunnis are primarily members of the Sufi brotherhoods. They are most known for revering the mystical components of Islam.

> Because of Islam's austere rational and intellectual qualities, many people have felt drawn toward the more emotional and personal ways of knowing God practiced by mystical Islam, or Sufism. Found in my part of the Muslim world, Sufism endeavored to produce a personal experience of the divine through mystic and ascetic discipline. (Pike 2004)

There are four schools of Sunni Islam: Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki, and Sahfii. The schools are based on teachings previous caliphs. "In the Sunni world there are now Four Orthodox Schools (Schools of Fiqh) of thought [the Four Madhahib]: the Shafi'i, Hanafi, Maliki and Hanbali. With regard to legal matters, these four orthodox schools give different weight in legal opinions to prescriptions in the Quran, the hadith or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, the consensus of legal scholars, analogy (to similar situations at the time of the Prophet), and reason or opinion" (Pike 2004). These schools are similar to

the distinctions between the Shia Twelvers, Seveners, and Fivers. The differences in their beliefs further split the Sunni people. The Hanbali schools are the most restrictive in regards to following the Koran in religious practice and behavior. The Shafii is considered less strict in adherence to the Islamic practices.

Most of the insurgent violence has taken place in the Sunni Triangle. This has led to the belief that Sunni radicals are behind the insurgent efforts. "The Iraqis who fought most fiercely for the regime are widely believed to have been Arab Sunni, young, poorly educated, and especially susceptible to regime propaganda" (Terrell 2003, 11). Many of the Sunni leadership, to include Dawand, remind the world that they are not the only source of violence in Iraq. The Shi'ite cleric, Sadr, has also been a source of violent opposition and insurgency. Despite this the Sunnis are still the bigger concern because of their lack of organization and therefore, the US has less ability to influence them as a group. In order to influence the Shi'ites, Sistani was the known power and influential leader. The Sunnis are also a "key to stability, a powerful and well-connected element in Iraqi society that for centuries has produced the majority of politicians, generals, merchants, professors and doctors" (Zakaria 2003, 38).

With its historical synopsis and cultural analysis, this section showed how complicated one group of people is in Iraq. A person in Iraq can be a member of a family, tribe, religion, sect, sub-sect, school, and Sufi. All of those dynamics making up how one person thinks or feels. This does not even include political representation. This point alone shows how necessary it is that a cultural subject matter expert be required to at least explain the players and organizations let alone explain their motivations behind the actions. It definitely highlights how much is not known and how much is glossed over in

briefings and smart cards. The next chapter uses this analysis to highlight cultural

information that a commander would find useful and necessary in operational planning

and execution.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The previous chapter provided a lot of information concerning the Iraqi Shi'ite culture and history. The difficulty for the operational commander is determining what information is relevant to his mission and where to find that information. This chapter discusses eight points that provide necessary cultural information for commanders. Those points include:

1. Have a basic understanding of the major cultural differences.

2. Understand public opinion.

3. Know the centers of power.

4. Understand the tension points between centers of power.

5. Plan for quick, visible, positive results.

6. Understand local religions and basic belief systems.

7. Discover the culture's sources of pride and sources of shame.

8. Understand what aspect of the culture must be influenced in order to initiate change.

With culture becoming more integrated into mission planning it may also be necessary to modify senior level staff sections to provide a cultural expert or liaison who has access to cultural experts.

In describing the relevant information necessary in operational planning, this study is in no way criticizing the plan or the execution of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The

Iraqi Shi'ites and Operation Iraqi Freedom are merely relevant current examples that illustrate the importance of cultural knowledge and synthesis.

<u>Eight Points of Cultural Knowledge for Operational Commanders</u>

1. <u>Have a Basic Understanding of the Major Cultural Differences</u>

In order to determine a course of action the commander should consider some of the cultural idiosyncrasies that could complicate the plan. For example, Shi'ite women are not to be touched by strange men. It is not only a violation but also an insult to both the woman and her husband or father. With this information, it is unproductive and more dangerous to establish teams to search Iraqi people without including a qualified woman, such as a female MP. "Fatih Kashif al Ghita, a Hawza representative, summarized the situation by stating, "I hope that the occupation troops will not compel Iraqis who welcomed them to resort to violence. The Americans can avoid such an eventuality if they demonstrate an understanding of the political, social, economic, and even religious realities in Iraq" (Terrell 2003, 32).

Understanding cultural differences also includes the sub-cultures within the country. For example, assuming that the Shi'ites and the Sunnis practice religion the same way or have the same beliefs is a mistake. The Shi'ites celebrate different religious holidays than the Sunnis, much to their chagrin. Some of the religious practices are a source of conflict between the two groups. Not realizing this could potentially cause embarrassment, not to mention creating enemies instead of allies. Although the differences are not likely to be resolved, simply knowing that there are differences that should be and in fact are taken into consideration by the commander will earn respect from both Sunnis and the Shi'ites. This is more intuitive than "smart card" information

and requires a deeper understanding of the culture and sub-cultures. The smart card may provide some basic cultural "do's and don'ts," but it will not provide the level of detail that a commander requires to effectively plan his operations.

2. Understand Public Opinion

The US media reported a general belief among Americans that the Iraqi people would be overwhelmingly grateful for removing Saddam Hussein from power and that they would welcome US soldiers and help them. This was incorrect. Despite the fact that Hussein oppressed the Shi'ites, making their general quality of life miserable, Shi'ites were still unenthusiastic about the US occupation. There are at least two events that Iraqi Shi'ites held against the US Government leading to distrust and hesitation. After the first Gulf War, the Shi'ites in southern Iraq revolted against the Ba'ath party and Saddam Hussein. "Saddam's forces savagely attacked the Shi'ites and killed many of their leaders in the aftermath of the 1991 rebellion" (Terrill 2003, 9). The Shi'ites felt betrayed by the US expecting that they would support them in removing Saddam from power.

The second event is the UN sanctions on Iraq since the first Gulf War. "With the implementation of sanctions in 1990 and the destruction of Iraq's social infrastructure wrought by the 1991 Gulf War, the situation of the people of Iraq deteriorated precipitously and continued to decline throughout the decade" (Ismael and Ismael, 130). Shi'ites were starving and thus more susceptible to diseases proliferated by a lack of resources. The Shi'ite people blame the US for the UN sanctions implemented and upheld until the second Gulf War. Again, they felt betrayed by the US and abandoned. With this understanding, it is not difficult to see that an information operations campaign

could not begin to smooth the edges of the Iraqi resentment toward the US. The consequence otherwise is continued and possibly growing resentment.

It is also an important point to remember that the Iraqi culture views the US as strangely as the US views them. They have no foundation for understanding the US framework of culture or way of thinking. "Conservative Muslims have additional reasons for opposing a continued Western presence in Iraq. Many believe that the West is the source of cultural pollution that can undermine the fabric of moral society" (Terrell 2003, 16). Commanders should take this into consideration when planning stability missions. It is a flawed assumption that the Iraqi people understand why or what the US forces are doing especially in regards to the larger global context. Merely assuming this will weaken US efforts. Cultural sensitivity is not just understanding their culture but its also realizing that they don't understand yours.

3. Know the Centers of Power

From the previous chapter the Hawza and Grand Ayatollah Sistani appear to be the center of power for the Iraqi Shi'ites. The Grand Ayatollah's website (www.sistani.org) shows examples of statements that his staff released concerning questions from the Shi'ite followers. His guidance is taken very seriously regarding religion, politics, and anything else in Shi'ite culture. If the US wants to influence or gain cooperation from the Iraqi Shi'ites, he is the man to approach. If Sistani wants to cooperate then so will his followers.

Of course, Sadr is the exception to that rule and a radical maverick who may not understand the bigger picture or have the best interest of Iraqi Shi'ites in mind. Nevertheless, Sistani still has the ability to influence Sadr's actions. Another example is

Captain Ayers, as described in the "Introduction" chapter, respectfully approaching the center of power in Ramadi, the religious leader, for cooperation and the return of his stolen equipment. "The United States, through its military presence in Iraq, has found itself in a position whereby its civilian and military leaders must understand the internal dynamics and activities of the Shi'ite clergy within large Shi'ite and Iraqi societies" (Terrill 2003, 33).

In understanding the centers of power and their supporting structure, a commander can utilize the existing organization to facilitate their stability and support operations. The last chapter described how well organized the Shi'ites were in establishing control over services and administration of some of the southern Iraqi towns. Realizing their ability to control and assist those people, a commander could support and expand their efforts. In doing so, the commander works within an existing system and helps establish the legitimacy of the local leadership.

The catch, however, is that there is more than one center of power in Iraq. Even after discovering all the centers of power, there could be political implications of first approaching one center of power rather than another and appearing to favor one group over the other.

4. Understand the Tension Points Between Centers of Power

Iraqi history shows that the Iraqi Shi'ites and the Sunnis have continually fought for power. Even now the Sunnis are struggling to maintain the power they had under Saddam's regime despite the Shi'ites being the majority. Understanding their source of tension will allow the commanders to develop a means of establishing a dialogue between the two sides. In this case, the successful common ground might be Iraqi

nationalism. Arab nationalism was a tenuous subject in recent Iraqi history. That ideal

will exclude any Kurdish participation. The Islamic religion as a common ground is also

treacherous because of the inherent differences of beliefs and practices between the

Sunnis and the Shi'ites. That grudge goes back to A.D. 680. The most likely option to

bring the two sides together is Iraqi pride and their joint ability to reshape the country

without occupation or oppression. Also, Iraqi oil may eventually bring economic

prosperity that could benefit them all.

The Iraqi Sunnis are standing firm against Shi'ites trying to reestablish their

political power over the country. "Since the American conquest . . ., Iraq's Sunni Arabs

and Kurds have watched with growing alarm as the Shias' Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani

has extended his influence over the shaping of a new country" (*Economist* 2004, 41). The

Muslim Brothers, the Iraqi Islamic Party, and the Muslim Scholars' Board are all

organizations that are attempting to oppose the Shi'ites growing power and influence.

One of the former leaders of the Iraqi Islamic Party, Muhsin Abd al-Hamid, was a

member of the Iraqi Governing Council. Despite his participation, the Sunni leadership

did not believe their representation on the council was appropriate compared to the

Shi'ites. "Hard-core salafys reject cooperation with the Shiites and say they deviate from

acceptable doctrine" (Murphy 2004, 1).

Tension points exist between multiple organizations within the Sunnis and the

Shi'ites. This does not even take into consideration the conflicts between the Kurds,

Sunnis, and Shi'ites not to mention the US forces. In attempting to change the culture,

these tension points may never be resolved. This is important to remember in planning

and execution. Many of their arguments have existed for over a thousand years. These are

unlikely to be resolved or forgotten over night or over a matter of years. The ideal

solution is to work around the tension points with the expectation that all parties will

agree to disagree. The goal is to avoid "blood feud" situations.

5. Plan for Quick, Visible, Positive Results

The US information operation campaign will be useless without actions that

validate the campaign. Reestablishing basic services and medical care is one example that

all Iraqi people can benefit from. The downside is that there were already actions that

provided quick and visible results in a negative way and contradicted the US message.

"American tactics in Iraq almost certainly represent political blunders and have created

the perception of the Anglo-American forces as foreign occupying powers whose

intention was to humiliate and exploit Iraq" (Ismael and Ismael 2004, 85). These blunders

that the authors refer to include reinstituting the American dollar for Iraqi oil sales,

disbanding the Iraqi Army and supporting civilian employees, and censoring Iraqi press

(Ismael and Ismael 2004, 85). Despite validity for all those actions, it created a negative

Iraqi perception.

6. Understand Local Religions and Basic Belief Systems

That knowledge will greatly assist in comprehending the culture and interacting

with the people. "Religion is for most people, a source of coherence, rationality, and

reason" (Marine Corps Combat Development Command 2005, 32). It also shows great

respect when showing consideration for their beliefs and practices. Expressing interest or

curiosity will provide the commander with increased knowledge and the respect of the

people. These actions prove that the people are not thought of as a lesser class and that they are equal.

7. Discover the Culture's Sources of Pride and Sources of Shame

For the Iraqi Shi'ites it is most likely their devotion to their religious beliefs and studies. In other cultures, their source of pride could be their ethnicity or nationalism. Diplomatically, knowing the culture's source of pride can assist in establishing common ground and subduing the tension points between organizations. For the Iraqi Shi'ites, their source of pride could be used to facilitate their rebuilding of their confidence and faith in a new government. It could be used to build enthusiasm among the people to proactively participate in the rebuilding of their country.

The corollary to this point is knowing the culture's source of shame. "Since the days of Homer and the Bible, the prime value conditioning the culture of people all round the Mediterranean has been the pursuit of honor, and its converse, the avoidance of shame" (Pryce-Jones 2003, 20). Avoiding shame or saving face is very important in Arab cultures. In this culture, personal violence is an allowable cultural norm to regain face that adds another level to the cultural mine field the US forces experienced. "Perceptions of shame and impotence fuel attacks, as they are now doing in Iraq" (Pryce-Jones 2003, 20).

8. Understand What Aspect of the Culture Must Be
   Influenced in Order to Initiate Change

This point goes back to Julian Steward's concept of cultural elements described in chapter 3 and what he considers as the core: ideology, sociopolitical organization, and technoeconomics (Kaplan and Manners 1972, 47). Steward's theory is that if the core is

not influenced to change then the culture will not change. The *Small Wars Manual* also discusses changing cultures at the most basic level, the level "that gets to the root beliefs and internalized values of a social system. Conversely, while the basic level is the most unconscious and invisible aspect of a culture, it is often the "source code" of the social system that must be tapped into and altered if the culture in question is in the midst of a violent conflict" (Marine Corps Combat Development Command 2005, 28).

In the Iraqi Shi'ite culture the source code can be considered to be the religion as interpreted by the clerics. Grand Ayatollah Sistani greatly influences the actions of his Shi'ite followers. For example, in order for the Shi'ite community to tolerate a secular government, Sistani will have to be convinced of its value and integrity. He, in turn, will convince his people of the benefits. The acceptance of a secular government versus cleric rule is a drastic change to their ideology and sociopolitical organizations. Understanding where the change has to begin will assist the commander in focusing his efforts.

<u>Cultural Consultant</u>

Knowing what cultural information is vital to the success of the operational commander. The issue now lies with where to get the information. The relevant cultural information required as described by the Eight Points above is more thorough than normal country briefings that describe basic demographics and country information. The commander requires access to in depth and interactive cultural knowledge and expertise. "With a deeper understanding of the region or host nation being supported, the commander is better prepared to deal with the design of his campaign or supporting efforts including civil dimension of operations and post-conflict activities" (Marine Corps Combat Development Command 2005, 27).

The "Culture Smart Cards" that US soldiers carried in Iraq is sufficient information for the tactical level actions. The commander, for planning and execution, requires a subject matter expert with an "anthropological" understanding of the culture, history, and current events. "An influential strategist once observed, "good strategy presumes good anthropology and good sociology" (Marine Corps Combat Development Command 2005, 23). There are several organizations with this level of information to include: special operations forces, linguists, Peace Corps, and the Department of State.

With the growing importance of cultural knowledge in operational level planning, a part-time consultant will not provide the commander the continuing counsel required for security and stability operations like those in Iraq. Commanders require the institution of a special staff position that provides recommendations and guidance similar to that of a Judge Advocate General staff representative. This person would be integrated into the staff planning and course of action decision process, and remain on the staff during execution.

The task force headquarters would maintain the cultural consultant position. Any of the previously stated organizations could provide the culture expert either permanently or on a rotating basis. They would further research the culture as required and consult with external agencies on requests for information or general knowledge. They would serve as the resident expert and the conduit to further expertise in the academic arena.

The ideal cultural consultant would have personal experience with the people and the culture in the designated area of operation. Their experience would provide a dimension to their expertise that they would not get from non-participative observation studies. The consultant would also have general training in cultural studies and analysis

such as anthropology or sociology. Military operational experience or knowledge would benefit the consultant in linking the mission to the potential impact on the culture. The task force could obtain more consultants as the mission dictated for subordinate units that required them.

This is a distinct change in mission planning and execution concepts for commanders who concentrate on maneuver and support for their operation. Most may only address cultural issues when they are forced upon them. With no training or education to synthesize the issue or develop a solution, those commanders must muddle through. It is no surprise, then, that there were blunders in Iraq in dealing with the culture, no matter how well intentioned. Muslim clerics "cite a litany of perceived American missteps, from the stalled reconstruction effort, the killing of innocent Iraqis and the abuse of prisoners, to soldiers entering mosques without taking off their boots, entering women's quarters during house raids and patting down female detainees" (Daragahi 2004, 15).

Although there are some resources for cultural information, such as political analysts and foreign area officers (FAO) they are not used nor designed to be used to the extent that is described above. The cultural consultant provides basic level or "source code" cultural information to the commanders and the staff in order to highlight the basic mind set and avoid potential blunders. Political analysts, although greatly knowledgeable about the region, does not necessarily have the anthropological or sociological training in order to develop a "source code" cultural analysis. They also don't necessarily have a military background or familiarization with military operations. So despite being a good

source of information, the political analyst may not be able to provide relevant information that could influence operational planning or execution.

FAOs are "officers trained and proficient as regional experts, with the requisite language skills, cultural and regional knowledge, and diplomatic aplomb to effectively operate within Joint Operations Concepts in any part of the world" (*FA 48 Proponent* website 2004). They are the closest example of the cultural consultant although they don't necessarily have any formal cultural studies training in general or of their designated region. The fact that they learn the language and must spend time in their region of expertise is still a benefit to the commander. The issue is that there are not enough FAOs to provide the necessary commanders and staff their expertise. Most FAOs work at the embassies and are not on operational level staffs.

Other staff members, such as the information operations officer, the S/G-5, and the intelligence officer, become the de facto cultural consultant out of necessity. This is especially true for Operation Iraqi Freedom. As cultural analysis in this form is not their normal job, these staff members don't have the adequate cultural studies training to provide the commander with the relevant, required information. Their mind-sets are to develop possible enemy thought processes and actions not a cultural analysis.

There is some precedence for a cultural consultant in history. The British military were successful in many ways in using cultural knowledge to influence their colonization operations. The British would send officials to live in their respective countries and would be liaisons to the rest of the British military and government. These civil commissioners had a staff of political officers who were "linguists, delighting in the customs of tribes and clans, explorers, soldiers, dedicated to their mission, they were the

best the British had to offer" (Pryce-Jones 2003, 18). The British suffered much of what the US forces are suffering now in Iraq with the insurgency and violent uprisings. "Eighty years separate the British and American endeavors to create a viable and independent nation-state out of intractable ethnic, religious, and tribal loyalties" (Pryce-Jones 2003, 18).

The commissioners depended a great deal on native agents within the country as advisors. In his article, "Britain's Native Agents in Arabia and Persia in the Nineteenth Century," James Onley describes the use of native agents. "Native agents not only had an extensive knowledge of local cultures, languages, and politics, which anyone recruited from outside the Gulf could not possible possess, but also could obtain, through their family, social, and business networks, the intelligence the British needed to operate their informal empire in the Gulf" (Onley 2004, 130). Many of the native agents were merchants who benefited from their interactions with the British in trading and sales. They also gained power and prestige under British rule because of their assistance. "By employing such men as agents, the Gulf Residents were able to operate *within* the local political systems of the Gulf to obtain the intelligence and mediation necessary for the maintenance of British hegemony in the region" (Onley 2004, 135).

Cultural consultants will not be native but will, ideally, have very close to native cultural knowledge. Because the consultants would also be the conduits to other regional and cultural experts, they can further research any unknown aspects of the culture. The cultural consultant is essentially representing the "native" while providing guidance to the command and staff on viable options with respect to the culture while completing the mission.

Further Research

One of the aims of this study was not only to show the benefits of cultural knowledge for the operational level commanders and staffs, but also to initiate further discussion. The media in recent stories has highlighted the fact that the local culture can assist or resist US military efforts like those in Operation Iraqi Freedom. This fact in relation to Phase IV of OIF is a growing topic of interest. Military leaders see that every Iraqi that the US military intentionally or unintentionally disrespects is potentially another insurgent. Therefore, cultural knowledge integration is, at the very least, significant enough to discuss in forums that can influence or recommend changes to planning and staff organizations.

Following discussions, a test staff would integrate a cultural consultant for a specified time in order to really analyze the benefits and develop the responsibilities. Until a cultural consultant is fully employed on a deployment it is doubtful that the command would recognize their utility and benefits. The command can incorporate the consultant into the task force staff prior to beginning a training cycle before a training center rotation and a deployment. The deputy commander and the cultural consultant can evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of a cultural subject matter expert with input from other staff members.

Between discussions and test beds, it will no doubt take a long time for cultural consultants to be fully employed and accepted on an operational level task force. This is expected because of the required change to the military culture as well as the operational doctrine.

Conclusion

The cultural effect of any operation is a concept that most commanders would prefer to overlook. It is a soft, fuzzy, nebulous area that is wrought with wrong directions and booby traps. Cultural knowledge and synthesis can be an art as well as a science similar to military tactics. There are those who are gifted in cultural understanding like commanders who are gifted in leadership and tactics.

Expert consultation can create a picture for the commander similar to the intelligence preparation of the battlefield. The cultural analysis of the Iraqi Shi'ite people showed some blatant areas of concern that may never have been noticed without further study. A cultural consultant will provide the cultural preparation of the battlefield that illuminates areas of concern or interest. The commander should have all the necessary expertise to successfully accomplish the mission. "Seemingly minor or tactical actions can cause major disruptions at the strategic level. We must adapt our plans and strategies to the nature of the culture and the people we encounter. We cannot dictate that they see events, priorities, and our own efforts through our own cultural prism" (Marine Corps Combat Development Command 2005, 39).

Cultural understanding and synthesis is a benefit to commanders as it provides relevant information to their mission. The cultural analysis is like a staff estimate aiding in planning and staff integration ultimately assisting in determining a course of action that best accomplishes the mission. The consultant is present during execution and provides guidance as required like the Judge Advocate General lawyer on a joint task force staff. In this respect, this template is nothing new to commanders. It is simply a new area of concentration that will benefit planning and execution like the information

operations staff during its inception. The Iraqi Shi'ites provided a solid example of why a cultural understanding and a resident expert would benefit the soldiers, the commander, and the mission.

In the contemporary operational environment, the culture of the indigenous population cannot be overlooked until the phase IV, rebuilding stage. "Winning a war and maintaining peace in a post-conflict environment are different skills with different approaches about when to use force. Deescalating confrontational situations rather than escalating them is of course essential" (Terrell 2003, 36). Cultural knowledge is important enough to incorporate into the planning and all phases of execution. The bottom line is that the consultant provides the commander with continuous, relevant cultural knowledge to aid in the planning and execution of missions.

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