

**WRITING THE SOUK AS A SOCIAL FACT:
DEMARICATION OF FIELDWORK SEMIOSIS IN MOROCCO**

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Introduction

Geertz's demarcation of fieldwork semiosis in *Meaning and order in Moroccan society: three essays in cultural analysis* (Geertz et al. 1979) is a holistic, generative narration which exports knowledge from the field thanks to linguistic strategies designed and deployed to carry scientific postulates. It concerns the dispersal of the elements of a sign system used to stylize a simulacrum from the field, subconsciously motivated by colonial aspirations and political motives—a critique from postmodernism (Sylvain 1996)—but in essence wishing to open up the parade for pedagogy and discussion in the agora by the introduction of new hues into the social and cultural geography of the alterity-underscored external terrain. The text emanates from the 1960s and represents a crystallization of a social diagram, whose currency has expired in our time, having been replaced by newer forms of organization, but not lacking in a heuristic importance of its own. I argue that Geertz's literary fossilization of the souk as a Middle Eastern icon, an emblem of Maghrebi culture and a living social artefact has salience only when considered in the light of the legacy of the classical social thinkers. Malinowski influences him with his incarnation of narrative-laden participant observation. Durkheim reconstructs his world view with an insistent elaboration of social fact, which Geertz touches, *feels* and has an incessant need to describe, using discursive strategies. Weber's contribution towards the redefinition of cultural interpretation is bolstered, furthermore, by semiosis-grounded theories, which make ethnographies stand out as literary masterpieces in how they inadvertently capture social phenomena.

In 1981, James Peacock discussed a similar constellation (Parsons, Weber and Geertz), and was furthermore seconded in 1993 by Alan Tongs, who discussed the philosophical underpinnings of Geertz's *oeuvre*, but neither author considered applying his research directly to the souk milieu (Peacock 1981; Tongs 1993).

Durkheim

Geertz's adaptation of Durkheim has been discussed by Chun (2005), but I would like to associate a different type of re-writing with his text. I argue that Geertz attempts to preserve a copy of what Durkheim determined as the social fact and that this drives his highly qualitative descriptions of the souk as a cultural *artefact*. It is really by capturing the souk as a *social* phenomenon that Geertz drives his most important lessons in anthropology. He tries to adapt the socio-psychological and organico-psychic aspects that Durkheim explained in the collective creative criss-crossing that is responsible for the social aspects of cultural life, as validated by this explanation from Durkheim:

Voilà ce que sont les phénomènes sociaux, débarrassés de tout élément étranger. Quant à leurs manifestations privées, elles ont bien quelque chose de social, puisqu'elles reproduisent en partie un modèle collectif; mais chacune d'elles dépend aussi, et pour une large part, de la constitution organicopsychique de l'individu, des circonstances particulières dans lesquelles il est placé. Elles ne sont donc pas des phénomènes proprement sociologiques. Elles tiennent à la fois aux deux règnes; on pourrait les appeler socio-psychiques. Elles intéressent le sociologue sans constituer la matière immédiate de la sociologie. On trouve de même à l'intérieur de l'organisme des phénomènes de nature mixte qu'étudient des sciences mixtes, comme la chimie biologique. (Durkheim 1894: 21)

Durkheim's insistence on the socio-psychic announces the importance of individualism and subjectivity, which I will discuss later in my paper. These qualities establish the *moelle épinière* or spinal cord of the social sciences, their primary constitution giving them finality and validating their existence.

Another description of the collective corpus immobilized in time by Durkheimian sociology is the notion of the collective. A reading of Durkheim foreshadows the virulence and tumult of the Moroccan souk, with its bargaining aspect and multiple layers of ethnic and trade-based players. First of all it responds to the criterion of the collective. The result is, as Durkheim says, an explosion of common life, a product of actions and reactions engaging in our individual conscience by virtue of the special energy which is rooted in its collective status. If all the forces vibrate in one direction, this is because they are carried by one force, and each is pulled by all:

Si tous les coeurs vibrent à l'unisson, ce n'est pas par suite d'une concordance spontanée et préétablie; c'est qu'une même force les meut dans le même sens. Chacun est entraîné par tous. (ibid.)

This sentence determines the *éclat* of Durkheimian collectives in conjunction with Geertzian cultural stratification in the market place as the epicentre of cultural life. The souk represents a cultural micro-world, where the sheep slaughterhouses trade sense with textiles and piles of green almonds on the rocky and dusty surface of the market place. As Geertz explains through the division of labour in the bazaar in the section where he discusses the latter as an economic institution, each trade has a signification inscribed in linguistics and bolstered by ethnic discrimination and social ascription ('the Nisba'), in turn harassing the flow of the market place's ecosystem. Geertz makes this clear by deconstructing the entity of the souk between itinerant traders, farmers and herdsmen, and local traders. This collective corpus becomes the essence of the caravan economy, with its spiritual attachments to Muslim and Jewish religions and respective cultural practices of a people who engage in 'promiscuous tumbling' at work, friendship, politics, trade and their differences in terms of marriages, diets, worship and education. This cultural, ethnic and religious conundrum determines the collective aspect of the souk, out of which emerges a high quality of diversity and hybridity. The relationship between Geertz and Durkheim can therefore be summed up by the following quotation from the latter which establishes the grammar of collective sentiment:

Un sentiment collectif, qui éclate dans une assemblée, n'exprime pas simplement ce qu'il y avait de commun entre tous les sentiments individuels. Il est quelque chose de tout autre, comme nous l'avons montré. Il est une résultante de la vie commune, un produit des actions et des réactions qui s'engagent entre les consciences individuelles; et s'il retentit dans chacune d'elles, c'est en vertu de l'énergie spéciale qu'il doit précisément à son origine collective. (ibid.)

The beauty of the souk is how intertwined is the spirit of collectivity on the one hand and the dissimilarity which drives the actors to opposite poles on the other. Geertz's souk is one where all hearts vibrate in unison, but in a bipolar fashion, reaching great extremes through its associations with roots, language, religion, race, kinship and ancestry. Muslim and Jew dance together in the market place, but return home to protect their privacy in a militant way.

Geertz applies Durkheim's notion of energy to transliterate his own experience of individual consciousness, actions and reactions which melt into the iconic souk formation. The

energy that Durkheim has identified as the driving force of social action Geertz exalts in order to push forward his own ethnographic agenda, focused on reading signs and their dialogue with each other.

Durkheim confers on Geertz a social vision which allows him to peel the veil from the souk's face, to extract its fragrant multiple polyphonic persona, where the souk is reflected upon as an independent living social being. By further deconstructing its elements based on linguistic sign-attributions, like de-shelling salty pistachio nuts, Geertz completes the task of expressing the *effaré* soul of this centre of cultural and social *métissage*.

As mentioned earlier, it is important to recognize that Geertz bases his writing on the social icon contained within the concept of the 'social fact'. Geertz remodels Durkheim's theories to integrate them within a text which is a vehicle for showing and telling how anthropology works. Geertz in fact captures Durkheim's social fact and recreates in all of its theatricality a social fact *mis-en-scène*, an application of the concept inside culture, based on the isolated example of a Maghrebian moment.

Let us see which elements he borrows from Durkheim. I think the most salient is the notion of the 'generalizability' of the social fact, which is obligatory and must be validated in all hypotheses, even though it is contextualizing information for one cultural artefact. It has to carry general traits which are reproducible, and, in Thomas Kuhn's words, 'paradigmatic':

De plus, de la définition précédente, qui n'est pas une théorie mais un simple résumé des données immédiates de l'observation, il semble bien résulter que l'imitation, non seulement n'exprime pas toujours, mais même n'exprime jamais ce qu'il y a d'essentiel et de caractéristique dans le fait social.

Sans doute, tout fait social est imité, il a, comme nous venons de le montrer, une tendance à se généraliser, mais c'est parce qu'il est social, c'est-à-dire obligatoire. Sa puissance d'expansion est, non la cause, mais la conséquence de son caractère sociologique. (Durkheim *ibid.*: 22)

As Durkheim notes, its character of expansion is not its cause, but the consequence of it being a sociological fact. This single statement gives currency to Geertz's application of it in the souk. We understand that Geertz applies sociological facts in foreign countries, and the souk's fossilization through writing is a clear-cut method for inscribing into memory an anthropological phenomenon which comes alive today and forever.

That said, Geertz is not always in line with Durkheim, notably on the matter of objectivity and subjectivity in research. Durkheim is a proponent of objective research, without giving in to individual conscience:

Nous arrivons donc à la règle suivante: *La cause déterminante d'un fait social doit être cherchée parmi les faits sociaux antécédents, et non parmi les états de la conscience individuelle... La fonction d'un fait social ne peut être que sociale, c'est-à-dire qu'elle consiste dans la production d'effets socialement utiles. Sans doute, il peut se faire, et il arrive en effet, que, par contrecoup, il serve aussi à l'individu. Mais ce résultat heureux n'est pas sa raison d'être immédiate. Nous pouvons donc compléter la proposition précédente en disant: La fonction d'un fait social doit toujours être recherchée dans le rapport qu'il soutient avec quelque fin sociale.*

En second lieu, notre méthode est objective. Elle est dominée tout entière par cette idée que les faits sociaux sont des choses et doivent être traités comme telles. Sans doute, ce principe se retrouve, sous une forme un peu différente, à la base des doctrines de Comte et de M. Spencer. (ibid.: 64)

Durkheim's objectivity is epistemologically important because Geertz introduces subjectivity into his writing to reflect a more Weberian sentiment, where meaning is attributed to social phenomena by subjective feelings.¹ While *performing* the social fact at its very best through an expressive portrait of the souk, this pernicious point marks a significant departure from French sociology, which advocates the esoteric approach to learning based on a strong sense of logic that rebukes passions and prejudice:

Nous croyons, au contraire, que le moment est venu pour la sociologie de renoncer aux succès mondains, pour ainsi parler, et de prendre le caractère ésotérique qui convient à toute science. Elle gagnera ainsi en dignité et en autorité ce qu'elle perdra peut-être en popularité. Car tant qu'elle reste mêlée aux luttes des partis, tant qu'elle se contente d'élaborer, avec plus de logique que le vulgaire, les idées communes et que, par suite, elle ne suppose aucune compétence spéciale, elle n'est pas en droit de parler assez haut pour faire taire les passions et les préjugés. Assurément, le temps est encore loin où elle pourra jouer ce rôle efficacement; pourtant, c'est à la mettre en état de le remplir un jour qu'il nous faut, dès maintenant, travailler. (ibid.: 80)

This objectivist approach to social sciences is expressed in another text by Durkheim, *Sociology and the social sciences*, where he describes the mandate of sociology as something concrete, something synthetic that rejects abstraction:

¹ For a rendering of the dichotomy between subjectivity and science in postmodern anthropology, see Spiro 1996.

Dans le premier sens, la sociologie est dite *générale* parce qu'elle considère dans toute sa complexité la réalité sociale que les sciences particulières divisent et décomposent par abstraction; elle est la science concrète, synthétique, tandis que les autres sont analytiques et abstraites. (Durkheim and Fauconnet 1903: 11)

It would appear cautious to state that there is a very strong similarity between Durkheim's philosophy and Geertz's travel-based anthropological theories. Durkheim expresses the soul of Geertz's approach, which the latter recycles and re-elaborates through new approaches to explain the phenomenon further and to show how it works in reality in an over-extended fashion. Geertz's anthropology is far from being based on fiction, yet his imagination allows him to catch a notion and creatively adapt it through external fieldwork. The collective aspect of the social fact and the generalizability of social facts to general postulates of social science are two buttresses of a Durkheimian inspiration for Geertz, even if he himself rarely mentions Durkheim as a philosophical source.

Malinowski

The second most important influence on Geertz was Bronislaw Malinowski, his predecessor as anthropologist and academic in Great Britain and the United States. Malinowski's theories are important for a reading of Geertz because he coined some terms which became standard in the discipline, disseminated through picturesque writing and ambitious open lectures at academic centres across academic satellites.

Malinowski's legacy is based on a number of important contributions. In the first place, we should be concerned with the notion of *participant observation*, which is definitely what Geertz applied in his Moroccan fieldwork to obtain results which would then be exported to the home country and to the world. *Participant observation* means being able to relive a situation through immersion in the field in a cultural setting by understanding its structures and coherence and by living an experience through an insider-point-of-view insertion in a social context. Geertz's anthropological focus uses this one notion as a vehicle for collecting data and for dialoguing about culture. Whether Geertz was an avid reader of Malinowski is irrelevant. What is central is that Geertz recycled Malinowski's vocabulary and approach to extend it to fieldwork outside the abstract space of the isotropic hexagon. His adaptation of Malinowski is a phenomenon practiced by fieldworkers in the modern period. When Geertz goes to Morocco and deconstructs the trade

system in the souk, he is engaging in conversations and immersing himself fully in the environment, as well as learning the key vocabulary for his project. Malinowski's presence is reiterated in every word of Geertz's monograph, as the shadow that makes his achievements possible.

The second reason why Geertz is likely falling into Malinowski's footsteps is his exhaustive empirical work. Every stone has to be turned in the battle for cultural information, and Geertz is very conscious of this, as can be seen in his extensive vocabulary research in the souk. By coining the terminology for the souk's presence and actors, with every minute detail developed into signifiers of culture deployed in the social strata, Geertz duplicates the engagement that Malinowski advocated. Geertz's approach to empirical research takes him one step further because his literary apprenticeship is intensified and hermeneutically grounded, a true penmanship in scriptorial social studies. Malinowski influenced Geertz when he postulated that an anthropologist's mission is to obtain a 'mental picture of social life', an anatomy of a culture, a mental chart of its actions and reactions with a synoptical plan. The evidence for this is found in the text, as Malinowski explains:

It ought to materialise into a diagram, a plan, an exhaustive, synoptic table of cases. (1922: 14)

Similarly, one can note an application of this statement in Geertz's interlude on Morocco, when the latter offers a multi-folder interpretation of social phenomena: 1) bazaar shape, 2) bazaar participants, 3) bazaar formation through the caravan traffic, 4) the *funduq* as the heart of the caravan economy, 5) the *zettata* as a passage tax to the local power, 6) the bazaar as a cultural form, 7) the *nisba* and levels of attributing ascriptive distinctions to social spheres, 8) the bazaar as an economic institution, and 9) Islam versus the Jewish community. By doing so he applies the notion of the synoptic chart, disseminated by Malinowski. The synoptic chart is a sort of unique way of assembling the information concerning culture, an icon of one's writing and ability to see through social mazes. Malinowski also reiterates his interest in this approach when he insists on applying this method to all of anthropology:

The method of reducing information, if possible, into charts or synoptic tables ought to be extended to the study of practically all aspects of native life. (1922: 14)

According to him, the chart needs to be a vision into the soul of the native community, its psyche:

A collection of ethnographic statements, characteristic narratives, typical utterances, items of folklore and magical formulae has to be given as ... documents of native mentality. (1922: 24)

The anthropologist is hence obliged to make a cultural portrait of the group under study by firmly applying the magnifying glass to the vocal expressions of its identity and existence. This approach has to be very clear and detailed, validated by concrete and statistical evidence:

The organization of the tribe, and the anatomy of its culture must be recorded in firm, clear outline. The method of concrete, statistical documentation is the means through which such an outline has to be given. (ibid.)

This statistical approach is somewhat dissimilar to Durkheim's 'energy' of the social phenomenon. While on the one hand Malinowski's writing seems to be positioned amidst gridlines, boxing in ideas and social phenomena, this outline is what gives meaning to the enterprise by paralyzing the mobility of life in a sudden, crisp and physical snapshot that has spirit. This mechanical approach has been contradicted in the very personal, almost intimate style adopted in his diary, which invited scholars to consider questions such as 'reflexivity', thus posing a qualitative and vertical challenge to positivism (Malinowski 1967).

The next element of Malinowski's methodology which seems to have rubbed off on Geertz is the collection of the *imponderabilia* of social life:

Within this frame, the *imponderabilia* of actual life, and the type of behaviour have to be filled in. They have to be collected through minute, detailed observations, in the form of some sort of ethnographic diary, made possible by close contact with native life. (Malinowski ibid.)

The *imponderabilia* are mentioned by name only once in the text; however, the remaining text is an application of this concept. The *imponderabilia* are the indigenous ways of life, their customs, practices, events, entangled in a spiral of a self-corrective evolution. Participant observation is based above all on this constitutive element. The meat of anthropological research is derived from the *imponderabilia*, which provide a socio-cultural goldmine permitting cross-breed comparison, that is, the comparison between modern man and indigenous man, who form the

antecedents of its apparition. This task must be completed in the spirit of greatest clarity and detail, with precisions on the finality of actions:

No one would dream of making an experimental contribution to physical or chemical science, without giving a detailed account of all the arrangements of the experiments; an exact description of the apparatus used; of the manner in which the observations were conducted; of their number; of the length of time devoted to them, and of the degree of approximation with which each measurement was made. (ibid.: 2)

Malinowski's pedantic insistence on method, detail and excellence is the driving force behind this anthropological programme because he embodies a refined standard of vision, meticulously endorsing his values through concrete and instrumental linguistic and paradigmatic methods. In the final and most important stage, Geertz has fallen under the influence of Malinowski because of his insistence on the writing artefact, which will prove the anthropologist's presence in the field and represent a focus on literacy and communication, a formulation of a *corpus inscriptionum* that serves as a witness account:

This corpus *inscriptionum Kiriwiniensium* can be utilised, not only by myself, but by all those who, through their better penetration and ability of interpreting them, may find points which escape my attention, very much as the other corpora form the basis for the various interpretations of ancient and prehistoric cultures; only, these ethnographic inscriptions are all decipherable and clear, have been almost all translated fully and unambiguously, and have been provided with native cross-commentaries or scholia obtained from living sources. (Malinowski 1922: 24)

Malinowski called for anthropologists not only to do their own work but to be writers. By leaving a written artefact behind in an Albert Camus sort of way, an anthropologist will create an archive that can be used to advance knowledge by being a dream-catcher for novel impressions and observations.

Weber

Besides Durkheim and Malinowski, many readers have endorsed the position that Geertz has been profoundly touched by the writing of Max Weber.² Max Weber used to be Geertz's adviser's, Talcott Parsons', main focus of study. Parsons was Weber's most important translator

² Addi and Obeida (eds.) 2010: 3-5, 16, 20-21, 34-35, 38, 45-46, 118-119, 138.

in English (Peacock 1981: 127). This link allowed Geertz to become familiar with some foundational concepts of his programme, namely the necessity to do subjective research as a counterattack against positivism, as well as the insistence on interpretation as the driving strategy behind concept elaboration. Linked to these two aspects was Geertz's focus on semiotics, translation, explanation—which were the outfall of a new literature-based approach to social studies (Geertz 1973).

Weber's influence on Geertz has provided a way of combatting causal explanation or *Erklären*, to add new dimensions to readings of texts, that would include subjectivity and personal aspects of data sourcing. This idea originally came from Wilhelm Dilthey during his elaboration of *Geisteswissenschaften* but was reinvented by Weber under the school tag of *Verstehen*, or understanding. In the first chapter of *Economy and Society*, Weber writes that:

Sociology is a science concerning itself with the explanatory understanding – *deutend verstehen* – of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences. (1922: 4)

Weber suggested the idea that knowledge in social studies had to be acquired in an intersubjective fashion, which defied the scholastic dismay of many people, the objectivity associated with scientific research before this time, continued in the present time.

Verstehen referred to the idea of reliving the experience of an actor *nachleben* by putting oneself into his shoes or *sich hineinversetzen* to determine and observe reality by using a novel approach. Geertz defended the point of view that imagination was the key to understanding. Inspired by *Verstehen*, he related his thought to the following words of Weber's:

Recapturing an experience is important for an accurate understanding, but not an absolute precondition for its interpretation. One need not have been Caesar in order to understand Caesar. (ibid.: 5)

This quotation shows that imagination is as important as experience in completing the task of putting oneself into somebody else's position. Geertz's philosophy has been influenced by this statement in so far as he socially constructed a fictional world based on his travels, imagining peoples' lives and practices, underpinned by a hidden notion of what Weber would have called an 'ideal type': imagining more because one has seen a blueprint of 'that thing in the past'. Weber's influence on Geertz led him to ascribe intentions to social facts, something that became

instrumental in ethnographic typologies. This aspect was informed by the following Weberian statement:

Thus we understand the chopping of wood or aiming of a gun in terms of motive in addition to direct observation if we know that the woodchopper is working for a wage or chopping a supply of firewood for his own use or possibly is doing it for recreation. (ibid.: 8)

By assigning the values of intentions to social facts, Weber influenced Geertz because he adequately modified the sense of finality in his corpus. Regarding subjectivity, according to Weber social facts were important because they were attached to ‘subjective meanings’:

We shall speak of action in so far as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behaviour—be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence. Action is social in so far as its subjective meaning takes into account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course. (ibid.: 4)

The buttress of this concept was based on the production of signification. Social facts were meaning-producing because they were intersubjective. Subjectivity was part of the social equation, as Weber reiterates a little later:

We can accomplish something which is never attainable in the natural sciences, namely the subjective understanding of the action of the component individuals. The natural sciences on the other hand cannot do this, being limited to the formulation of causal uniformities in objects and events and the explanation of individual facts by applying them. We do not understand the behaviour of cells but can only observe the relevant functional relationships and generalize on the basis of these observations. This additional achievement of explanation by interpretive understanding as distinguished from external observation is of course attained at a price—the more hypothetical and fragmentary character of the results. Nevertheless, subjective understanding is the specific characteristic of sociological knowledge. (ibid.: 15)

By contrasting the social sciences with the natural sciences, Weber concluded that anthropology and sociology were underpinned by subjective understanding, which had to become an object of interpretation, something that a study of cells under a microscope would not permit.

While Geertz’s work is rather concrete, discrete, conservative and objective, it is clear that it is nevertheless premised intellectually on these concepts because we understand *Verstehen* and interpretation in their subscript. It has been said that Geertz joined the ranks of the hermeneutical

anthropologists, who focused on the writing of experience as the promotion of individuality over cultural phenomena. Literary approaches were weary of objectivity because they were rooted heavily in over-extended, over-flowing, boundless semiosis and interpretation. Weber pushed Geertz's agenda forward because he claimed that interpretation was pre-eminent over causality and argued that the latter derived directly from one's own subjectivity. By producing a text such as the *Works and Lives: Anthropologist as Author* (Geertz 1988), Geertz took things one step higher to establish not only the identity, but also the authority of the anthropologist on hegemonic claims.

Comparative Study

Geertz's article is a bearer of 'originality' in its approach, but studies of the souk have been undertaken from various points of view. Two comparative studies of souks come to mind concerning Morocco. Mervyn Beech wrote about the souk in a manuscript published in 1911 (see Beech 1969). This anthropological text is very similar in many respects to Geertz's writing in so far as it establishes a nomenclature (division of labour and ethnic lines), attacks customs and traditions, transcribes related folk tales and riddles (folklore) and develops a what the author calls a 'souk grammar', with an analysis of its syntax (substantives, adjectives, verbs, idiomatic phrases), signification and 'guttural utterance' (Charles Eliot, introduction to Beech 1969, xxiii). I would say that Beech's article is a rather linguistic interpretation of social anthropology; his analyses of the social aspects choke on the verbal expressions that are used to name things. Set against a highly structured language-based paradigm, they are more of a rigorous classification than a true literary interpretative analysis, and they are intended for a different but also important purpose.

In 1976 a thesis appeared in Arizona which summarizes markets and labour migration in the Waryagharland and Central Rif area. The article is based on a social analysis of data – clans and tribal markets – that describe the functioning of day-to-day activities during the market mobility between villages, summing up business dealings per datum, and describing the division of labour between the traders, composed of herdsmen, artisans, donkey auctioneers, basket-makers, blacksmiths, knife-grinders, tailors, silversmiths and tinkers. An attempt is made to show the movement of goods between localities, with details of their provenance, as well as an analysis of then emerging women's markets (Hart 1976: 69-97). The text is exhaustive in detail

but insufficiently organized in terms of social functions, failing to show how the market apparatus exhales and exists. The narrative is written without buttressing the concepts of social functions that would sculpt them in our sub-consciousness. There is no consolidation of concepts, and everything remains fluid and vague. The text is descriptive rather than based on a thesis, with all elements serving as proofs of a cohesive whole. In this respect it appears like a flat, impressionist canvass of a lost-in-time reality. Geertz extended this analysis further by trying to show why the souk was original, and what was Moroccan about it, by emphasizing its originality.

Geertz's study exemplifies his ability to read culture as a text by showing the strategies he uses to drive his ideas. A deconstruction of the study of the souk confers validity on the claim that the latter projects the author's semiotically driven *Weltanschauung*. Geertz approaches the souk as a social scientist, but uses rhetorical expressions from linguistics and semiotics because his analysis is based on definitions from a living language which he has to synchronize into a mobile picture of society. Let us not forget that Geertz himself quotes Wittgenstein to this effect: 'An accurate picture of a vague object does not consist in a clear picture but a vague one' (Geertz 1979: 199).

Geertz's approach is crystallized in a study of rhetorical devices: naming cultural terms, translating them, and explaining the linguistic connotations that the language does not permit in translation, making associations between terms, making tart and biting conclusive remarks on elements of synchrony, giving examples, increasing the aesthetic quality of the text, and driving ideas in a further cognitive direction by appealing to the reference plane and palate of the reader to combat unfamiliarity of alterity and make a fission-specific punch.

Geertz's writing on the souk differs from current studies of the phenomenon. The difference between souk ethnographies stems from the nature of contrast in field data, the structures of its liminal yet central space in social stratification, and undoubtedly the writing style of the writer and his methodology.

As opposed to carrying out research based on tabulated results and mathematical formulas, classifications of charts or data-based programs, 'pour lui la culture est un flux incessant de symboles issus de l'imaginaire, et révélés par l'intersubjectivité' (Addi 2010: 16). In addition, Geertz supplies the reader with a text anchored in literary and linguistic terms and socio-psychic

qualities, derived from the key terms from the native tongue, Arabic, that have been missed and lost in translation. This quality sustains the synesthetical aspects of description. *Synesthésie* refers to a mixture of senses in application to literary terms. The souk, then, would be what it is for Geertz, a living feverish embodiment of fragrances, traffic, deal-making and bargaining, in a solid client-based relationship, characterized by solidarity with opponents and the regularity of transparency in relations, all while the Ark of Noah is ruled by obtuse misinformation and nourished by the desire for clarity. The apparition of Geertz's literature would seem unreal if connections were not made with his social predecessors. Durkheim inspires Geertz to study the collective and make principles regarding the generalizability of data. Malinowski infuses him with the smell of fieldwork and the incessant need for cultural immersion in the group being studied. It is not until one considers Weber that the literacy-based ethnographic project becomes pre-eminent, focused from now on interpretations of subjective inklings and hypotheses which lead to a boundless semiotic dismantling. By anticipating Geertz, these authors have established the conceptual legacy of his advance on literary anthropology. Timeless!

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