



# FOLK ISLAM

# INTRODUCTION

- 70-85% of Muslims practice Folk Islam
- “In folk Islam...people in everyday life are believed to be at the mercy of evil powers: spirits, ghosts, demons, evil eyes, curses and sorcery. Their only protection is to seek the aid of Allah, angels, saints, charms, good magic and other powers” – Paul Hiebert
  - Rick Love, *Muslims, Magic and the Kingdom of God* pgs. 19&22

# FEAR-BASED WORLDVIEW

- Aspects
  - Two factors that fear based worldviews are based on:
    - Man's fear of man – tribal warfare, oppressive dictator
    - Fear of the supernatural – gods, demons, ghosts or other forces.
      - Roland Muller, *The Messenger, The Message and The Community* pg. 79
  - Influence of “Unseen Powers”
    - “those whose lives operate in the fear-power paradigm often see themselves living in a physical world that co-exists and is influenced by **unseen powers**”. Muller pg. 80
    - Musk calls them “Trans-empirical” – powers which are beyond scientific analysis. Bill Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam*
    - Power is an important concept in fear-based cultures. Muller pg. 80

# FEAR-BASED WORLDVIEW

- Rules for dealing with “Unseen Powers”
  - In fear-power worldviews the main way of dealing with a power is to establish **rules** to protect people from harm. Muller pg. 80
- Ways of dealing with powers
  - Witch-doctor
  - Charms & Amulets
  - Sorcery/Spells
  - Potions



Hand of Fatima



The Evil Eye

# FEAR-BASED WORLDVIEW

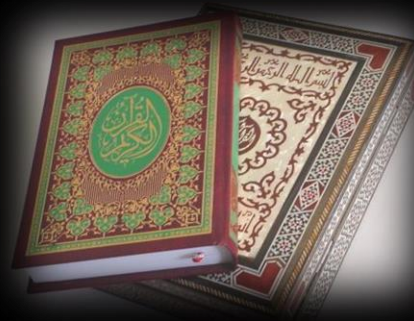
- Folk Practice in Islam
  - Allah is far away
    - “The God of Islamic theology would appear to be so far removed from humans’ lives that substitute focuses of power are sought in the accessible practitioners of popular Islam” - Musk
    - Allah’s distance drives Muslims to folk/animistic practices



The Whirling Dervishes

# FEAR-BASED WORLDVIEW

- Islam + Animism = Folk Islam?
  - The last two Surahs of the Quran 113 & 114 were recited by Muhammed to protect him from illness, the evil eye, Jinn and men who sought to harm him.
  - “After more than thirty years of living, working and travelling in the Muslim world I have concluded that ***Qur’anic Islam and folk religion are inextricably linked***, especially in that the Qur’an seems to host animism” – Vivienne Stacey, *The Supernatural in Islam and Christianity*, pg. 2





# WESTERN ASSUMPTIONS

- The influence of Science
  - Division between the natural and supernatural worlds.
- “The very fact that we have a word such as ‘supernatural’ should alert us to the fact that we have a particular worldview based on the natural laws of Nature. Since Newton’s formulation of this theory, most Westerners have become so used to this form of thinking that we cannot imagine what it is like to live with a view that rules nothing out, in which nothing is truly predictable. We bring this Newtonistic view into Christianity, and try and explain everything in life based on immutable laws. **Thus we struggle to understand people who live in an open universe not controlled by comprehensible laws. For the animist, there is no clear distinction between the natural and supernatural. While we think in terms of science and psychology, the animist thinks in terms of the forces that affect their lives**”. – Muller pg. 79

# HOW THE GOSPEL ADDRESSES FEAR-POWER

- The **Bible** identifies a real world of evil spirit beings
  - **Satan** is exposed as a fallen angel, ruler of the kingdom of the air, and prince of the devils.
  - The O.T. includes reference to heathen gods as demons (Deut. 32:17)
  - **Jesus** addresses demons directly and commands them, expecting their obedience (Matt 8:29-32)
- Scriptures that address Spiritual Warfare
  - Eph. 5:8-16
  - Eph. 6:10-18
  - Col. 2:9-15
  - 2 Pet. 1:3&4





# THE EVIL EYE

## ■ Widow Aziza

- “Widow Aziza was renowned for her evil eye. Ahmed had been warned from childhood that his family did not use the walk to and from their fields, because of the fear of the widow’s “evil eye.” It was said by some that she used more than human powers to help her in her conflict. A rumor circulated that she had command over a certain jinni who helped her accomplish her aims. Ordinary Muslims recognize the power of the evil eye. Its force can devastate their lives....The fundamental concept of the evil eye is that precious persons or things are constantly vulnerable to hurt or destruction caused by other people’s envy”.
- “Most Muslims take precautions against this kind of eye, and protective measures are geared to prevent the ‘bad eye’ from harming an individual or a possession. Muslims all over the world design and use a huge variety of protective measures as insurance against the evil eye”.
  - Taken from ***The Unseen Face of Islam*** by Bill Musk pgs. 23-29

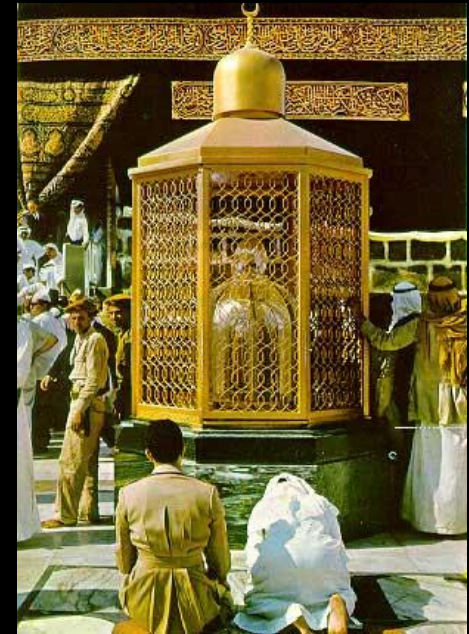


# JINN

- “Although *Iblis* or *al-Shaytan* is referred to once in the Qur'an as a *jinni* (Sura 18:50), for the most part the *jinn* seem to exist in the popular mind at least as a separate species of spirit. Created reportedly, of fire (Sura 55:15), they comprise a genus somewhere between angels and men. Like angels, they belong to the world of spirit. The fear of *jinn*, or the desire to subdue and use their services are strong motivating forces in the practices of many ordinary Muslims”.
- “*Jinn* are feared as beings who are jealous of humans, and so seek to trap or snare or hurt them in their jealousy”.
- “Muslims take precautions in going to areas such as graveyards, or shrines acknowledging the presence of jinns there, they recite certain prayers for God to help them”.
  - Taken from ***the Unseen Face of Islam*** by Bill Musk pgs. 38-42

# SAINT VENERATION

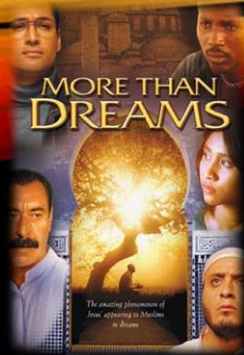
- All kinds of people in the Muslim world are involved in a give-and-take relationship with saints.
- Saints may be variously designated, Shafi (intercessor), Shaykh (leader), pir (elderly or wise person) or murabit (one who has joined himself to God). A major distinction occurs between living and dead saints.
- Dead saints abound in the Muslim world. Alive or dead saints are believed to possess great power.
- Ordinary Muslims relate to saints in a few major ways. The processes are seen as being mutually beneficial. Saints possess baraka, in return adherents express their dependence and gratitude for services rendered in the form of vows, visits and celebration of saints' days.





# DIVINATION

- Practices of divination or fortune-telling are widespread and much sought after by ordinary Muslims. Divination provides a major key for finding which of many possibilities may have caused the current circumstances in a Muslim's life.
- Among the Bedouin of Kuwait, a sahbara is a woman with the power of sorcery who can control men by casting spells over them.
- Women, though secluded in Islam in many countries still hold a great power of manipulation in the world of magic.
- The midwife is a major practitioner of the folk-Islamic world. Known as the qabila in Morocco.
- The shawwafa of N. Africa specializes in the matching of potential marriage partners.
  - Taken from Musk



# DREAMS AND VISIONS

- “Ordinary Muslims perceive dreams and visions as highly significant forces. They function in a strongly motivating way in most Muslim cultures”.
- “Muhammed received his revelation in a dream so too in modern times Muslims expect their leaders to have dreams to confirm certain actions. Visitational dreams are common throughout the Muslim world and may feature dead relatives, saints, jinn, angels or other spiritual beings”.
- Many Muslims come to Christ through dreams and visions
  - Taken from ***the Unseen Face of Islam*** by Bill Musk pg. 186
  - Images taken from [www.visionvideo.com](http://www.visionvideo.com) & [www.morethandreams.org](http://www.morethandreams.org)

