

## Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power

Geertz begins with a discussion of charisma, which leads him to Edward Shils who connects individuals' symbolic value to their proximity to the centers of social order that affect change in society. Shils argues that any association with these centers yields charisma. Geertz then transitions to state that he will use Shils' argument in his analysis of the inherent sacredness of sovereign power. Geertz aims to explore the symbolic aspects of power from both historical, ethnographic, and sociological perspectives, especially considering the rites and symbols through which rulers show their power. When a monarch tours their country through a royal progress, the king or queen locate the center of society and marks her dominance over it.

A day before her coronation, Queen Elizabeth journeyed through London in a progress decorated with symbols, such as children arranged to represent the beatitudes and a man who represented Father Time with his daughter truth. In the following years, she visits many provinces throughout England, including Coventry, Oxford, Warwyck, and Sandwich, until her death. The royal progress was how Elizabeth promoted the "cult of the imperial virgin" and her charisma was developed from the symbols of chastity, beauty, peace, religion, and authority imbued in her province visits. The queen's entire life in the public eye was comprised of symbols where all virtues were explicitly represented, and Elizabeth became a moral idea in the society's center. Elizabeth represented the Protestant virtues consecrated by God, and through this gained her charisma.

Classical Indonesia on the other hand was less concerned with instructing religious virtues but instead centered around a more hierarchical version of monarchy. In Java, a hierarchy is defined all the way from peasants to the gods and sacred powers. *Negarakertagama*, a political text, describes the royal progress in great detail, explaining how the court and cosmos should mirror each other, and the king is between gods and humans. The poem glorifies the king, describes his palace, and explains how the geometry of the world is centered around Java. Then the poem explains the royal progresses, wherein the march itself represented the structure of the cosmos and organization of the court to the common people observing the procession. In the march, the princesses surround a king who is the center of it all. The progress aimed to establish social order by showcasing a king that seemed like a God. In England, subjects warned of the potential evils of power, and the queen promised to remain virtuous. In Java, subjects mimicked the hierarchical social structure displayed by the king. In both England and Java, the monarch is responsible for ensuring that society and the courts strive to the same high ideal.

In Morocco, personal power, the power of triumph, provided religious legitimacy. Power from God emerged from men who had the capacity to rule, particularly kings. In the 18th and 19th century Morocco was a warrior monarchy and the idea of the state as theocracy was more of an ideal than a reality. In order for an individual to have personal authority, he must protect it. *Baraka* is an individualistic quality, arbitrarily distributed, that allows some to be more successful than others. Royal processes were designed to demonstrate that the king had this quality. The Moroccan progress was long and constant, as kings shifted their capital as they moved from one Imperial city to the other. The king's mobility was an aspect of his power, where confrontations with local leaders was constant.

Progresses across cultures and throughout human history have symbols that demonstrate the individuals in society with power. The charisma of a leader and the leader's opponents all arise from the "inherent sacredness" and "vast universality" of centralized power.

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