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Towards a Sociology of Islamic texts

Faisal K.P[*]

Abstract: A number of terms and concepts such as text, textuality and discourse have been contributing to various fields of social sciences thanks to several theoretical and methodological developments in anthropology and linguistics. One of the major aspects of such developments especially in hermeneutical approaches in anthropology is the enrichment of our notions of interpretation through analyses of non-western interpretive genres. Besides, such developments have also contributed towards recognizing the significance of notion of textuality in text-based cultural or religious traditions and towards identifying different genres of religious texts derived of different social backgrounds or complex social processes. It has been suggested that while dealing with the texts of a particular tradition, one may look into the socio-cultural encounter between text and its recipients, the institutional and ideological aspects of transmission of the texts, the level of interpretations, the discursive developments in construction of meaning, and so on. My attempt in this paper would be to problematise the concepts of texts and textuality in the day-to-day Muslim social life and to identify the role of structure and agency in the production and circulation of different genres of Islamic texts. The paper would argue that a clear understanding of the notion of textuality and the relationship between the texts and practices in the various contexts may resolve much of the issues long debated in the field of Sociology of Islam regarding the relationship between what is often termed as Folk and Elite Islam or Little and Great Tradition of Islam.

Keywords**:** textuality, textualisation, discourse, agency, power.

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Texts, textuality and textualization

John O. Voll, while tracing the genealogy of the contemporary Islamic resurgence, has found two processes in the Islamic tradition – *Tajdīd* and *Iṣlāḥ* which means renewal or revival and meaning purification or reform respectively. These two processes have been providing for revitalization of Islamic beliefs and practices among Muslims across the world (O.Voll, 1983). He notes that "inchanging circumstances and with different implications, these two phenomena have always involved a call for a return to the fundamentals of Islam as presented in the Islamic scriptures"(1983, p. 37). In other words, there were always efforts from the religious authorities to create a textual consciousness among Muslims which has been determining the characteristics of their symbolic values.

The textual consciousness at its simplest form evokes just a feeling in the actor that his/her acts are not in contrary to the Islamic prescriptions. However, the disposition to act in certain ways has been influenced according to the degree of the textual consciousness. The degree of the textual consciousness depends upon the nature of the society in relation to the religious texts, i.e., the religious literacy, the nature of the religious elites (*ʿulamā*) and their place in the social structure. As several studies on 'popular Islam' suggest, while a common man just refers an 'authoritative model' for action either in the available moral order, or received from a religious authority, the religious elites or the learned class look directly to the textual patterns of the practice, and try to define textual signification for the available models.

This underlines the significance of a dialectical relationship between the social structures of Muslim societies and their engagement with the religious texts or sources of authority and authenticity in any given point of time and space. What maintains this particular relationship, one may notice, is an ever-going social process that can be called textualization, a process that may explain the relationship between the text and the contexts. For using this term, I owe to some of the ideas presented by Dominick Lacapra (1980) in his article titled, *Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts*,[1] Daniel Varisco as he refers to textualised faith and textualised ideals in his *Islam Obscured* (2005) and Talal Asad's idea of discursive tradition.

For our purpose, textualization is used here to denote a process by which a common individual Muslim assigns meaning and legitimacy to his action by referring to any of the Islamic texts or a religiously held moral order, and by which a trained Muslim scholar finds signification to a particular individual action or socio-cultural phenomena in the religious-moral values of Islamic tradition. If we take the process of assigning religious meaning to the practice in this sense, then textualization is a dual process, occurring at two levels. At the lower level, a common Muslim can claim religious legitimacy to his action. At this level, there may not be a direct engagement with the text, since for religiously illiterates or less-literates referring the text means consulting a religious authority, which will refer the available texts for them. The religious scholar may either cite the available textual prescription, or produce a new one according to the accepted interpretational methodologies. From this perspective, textualization for a common man is just *practicing the texts*, while for an *imām*[2] or *muftī*[3] it also means an active engagement with the available texts, which may finally take him to textualise a particular practice. It is important to notice here that by trying to validate a particular act according to a particular religious text, the actor, in fact, is admitting the authority of the text and contributing to the construction of an authentic model of practice.

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[1] In that article, Lacapra consider the textualization of the context as he writes: "The context or the real world is itself textualized in a variety of ways, and even if one believes that the point of criticism is to change the world, not merely to interpret it, the process and results of change themselves raise textual problems. Social and individual life has in part a textual structure and is involved in textual processes that are often more complicated than the historical imagination is willing to allow" (Lacapra, 1980).

[2] Though generally *imām* is used to denote the person who leads the five time prayers, it is here used as in the common Sunni terminology to denote a recognized religious authority in Islam, such as the founding scholars of the Sunni schools of jurisprudence.

[3] A *muftī* is used for Muslim scholar who is qualified to give authoritative legal opinions known as *fatwās*.

However, at the higher level, where the *ʿulamā* are directly engaging with the available texts, textualization has a more constructive role, because it is at this level that a particular practice is going to have its initial validity claim. Hence it is important to note that by *textualising a practice*, the *ʿulamā* are trying to signify it, either by prescribing for the elimination or permitting it to come to the fold of legitimate Muslim practices.

These arguments may appear as suggesting that the religious texts are social products and the concepts of 'divine' and 'transcendental' agencies, as scholars like Jack Eller (2007) highlighted, have limited scope in the actual patterns of religious practices among Muslims. However, the questions of authority and authenticity at each level, attach this social process with the transcendental realities. The textualization may not be significant in the social life, unless the community of the believers admit authority of the author and the authenticity of the model in question. Significantly, religious authority is not something that could be acquired by claims; rather it is built upon the moral capital (Ihle, 2008) of the individual. Thus, only when a person acquires adequate religious knowledge and a convincing religious life before the people, he will be considered as a religious authority. Considering this aspect of Muslim conception of authority Lambek notes,

> ...knowledge alone is not sufficient to maintain a scholar's authority. His personalbehaviour must be seen to accord with the purity of knowledge he invokes. Thus, if one maintains no authority without some reference to Islam, that reference correspondingly presupposes certain forms of conduct without which it may be-come virtually meaningless. The reputation for knowledge that lends a man authority in social action also curtails the variety of action possible (1990, p. 30).

Similarly, authenticity of the text or practice can be established only when they are not in contradiction with the general religious-moral values of Islam and transcendent ideals of Scripture. In this sense, textuality of a text depends upon the degree of application of Islamic interpretative methodology.

The genesis of Islamic texts

While tracing the historical development of Islamic tradition in general, one may notice that several factors have been influencing the process of textualization. As a result, one may easily identify three major modes of textualization, each of which is mainly determined by the particular nature of the society and quality of the religious scholarship. These three modes of textualization can be seen along with the three historical moments of the Islamic tradition, which Marshal G.S Hodgson (1974) explained in terms of (a) a creative action, (b) group commitment thereto, and (c) cumulative interaction within the group.

According to Hodgson, a tradition originates in a creative action, an occasion of inventive or revelatory, even charismatic, encounter: for instance, the discovery of a new aesthetic value; the launching of a new technique of craftsmanship; a rise to a new level of social expectation, one man of another; the assertion of a new ruling stock or even the working out of new patterns of governing; or, in the case of religion, an occasion of fresh awareness of something ultimate in the relation between ourselves and the cosmos- that is, and occasion of spiritual revelation, bringing a new vision" (Hodgson, 1974, pp. 80-81). The second moment of cultural tradition is *group commitment* arising out of the creative action: the immediate public of the event is in some way, institutionalized and perpetuated; that is the creative action becomes a point of departure for a continuing body of people who share a common awareness of its importance and must take it into account in whatever they do next, whether in pursuance of its implications or in rebellion against them… this group commitment retains its vitality through *cumulative interaction* among those sharing the commitment; above all, through debate and dialogue as people work out the implications and potentialities latent in the creative event to which they are bound (Hodgson, 1974, p.81).These three historical moments in their broader meaning can be identified as three major phases of the development of a tradition – a) the foundational phase, b) the formative phase and c) discursive/interactive phase. Each of these phases in Islamic tradition stimulated different modes of textualization that could be explained in terms of three genres of Islamic texts namely, foundational texts, formative texts and discursive texts.

Foundational texts

The foundational texts are the centre of all other texts and the textualization in this phase is the most significant moment in the history of Islamic tradition. As the community at this stage was simple and relatively more homogeneous, with easy access to the centre of the 'creative action', textualization at both the higher and lower level was simple. Prophet Muhammad was the sole authority in the introduction of the tradition and the people having easy and direct access to him, for anything and everything they approached him or looked for his comments. At times he communicated them the messages as he received the direct revelation from Allah in the form of definite texts as verses of *Qur'an* and sometimes he communicated them the will of Allah in his own words. That is in the introductory phase people listened to *Qur'an* from Prophet Muhammad and approached him for any religious matter (Goldziher, 1981).

Since the socio-cultural situations were comparatively simple in this phase, the individuals had just to recollect the model presented by the Prophet or needed its evocation by his companions, who saw what he was doing, saying and expecting. So textualization in the beginning was just reproducing the moral order or life pattern as approved by the Prophet Muhammad. However, the situation changed after the demise of the prophet as the community faced new challenges in referring to the authentic models of the Prophet. The new situation sought the codification of the orally transmitted *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* (the tradition of prophet). The codification of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* was the turning point in the history of textualization of the Islamic tradition. This resulted in the production of *Qur'an* in the form of written text, *Muṣḥaf* and the *Sunnah* in the form of several *Hadith* texts. Hence, the mode of textualization in this phase can be identified with the following processes.

Oral *Qur'an* and Model of Prophet
↓
Transmission
↓
Collective memorization
↓
Codifications → Foundational Texts (*Qur'an* and *Hadith*)

[Table 1. Mode of textualization in phase 1]

As this model illustrates, at the early period of the creative phase, *Qur'an* was available to the common people in oral form. *Qur'an* means recitation and the *Qur'an* is primarily regarded as an orally transmitted and performed text. During the Prophet's lifetime individual revelations were apparently memorized,[1] recited in worship, and sometimes written down. *Qur'an* in its written form was nothing but scattered documents written on many different materials. After the Prophet Muhammad's death – just about a year after – scores of *ḥuffāẓ* were killed in the battle with Musailima,[2] which made people worried about the very existence of the *Qur'an*. From this situation, there emerged the idea that *Qur'an* must be prepared as a book so that it would be protected and be easy to handle and use for reference.

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[1] During the life time of Prophet Muhammad, there were hundreds of his companions known as*ḥuffāẓ* (*Qur'an* bearers), who were specialists in reciting Qur'an and knew by heart every *sūrah* (chapter) in its proper place in the structure known today.

[2] Musailima claimed to be prophet, a claim which was anti-Islamic and so the first Khalīfa Abū Bakr waged a battle against him

The laborious effort to codify the written documents was carried out by a team led by Zaid ibn Thābit during the reign of first Khalīfa Abū Bakr. To ensure the wide reach of the written form, the third Khalīfa ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, appointed four secretaries to write as many copies of the document as there were big towns in the Islamic Empire (Draz, 1987). Henceforth, the scripts were handed down and the number of copies was multiplied.

The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad outside the *Qur'an* are called the *Sunnah*, the Traditions. There are three forms of the teachings – teaching (a) by oral instruction; (b) by the example of his personal behaviour; and (c) by his silence, that is, by letting others do as they pleased without comment or reproach. These three aspects of the Prophetic teaching- speaking, acting, and approving are the basis for the Muslim tradition called the *Sunnah*. Though *Sunnah* is considered as explanations of what is there in the *Qurʾan*, often it established new obligations and prohibitions for which no clear reference can be found in the *Qurʾan* (Draz, 1987).

Muslims make a clear distinction between the words of the *Qur'an* and the words of the Prophet (*Sunnah*). The classical approach to the relationship between the two is: while in the *Qurʾan* both the words and commands are of divine provenance; in the *Sunnah* only the intent of the command is divine, the wording may be from the Prophet (Brown, 1999). There is a clear distinction between the language, the style, and the structure of the two. Unlike *Qur'an*, which was available orally in a structured form, the *Sunnah* were to be collected, ordered and structured by human effort, which came to be known as *Hadith* texts.

A major technique used to authenticate a particular *Hadith* text is *isnād*, that is, to place the narrators of the *Sunnah* in a chain, stretching from the person relating the *Hadith* right back to the Prophet himself. The authenticity of the *Hadith* was determined by the moral capitals of the narrators in the chain. Besides, the authenticity was also checked by an extensive textual analysis. Using grammar, syntax, lexicography, etymology, philology and literary aesthetics, the compilers of *Hadith* examined the form and content of each one (Sardar, 2007).

The *Hadith* criticism thus emerged put three criteria to measure the genuineness of a *Hadith* text: a) The degree to which a report can be ratified from other identical reports from other transmitters; b) The reliability, in character and capacity, of each individual transmitter; c) The continuity of the chain of transmission (Brown, 1999). On the basis of the methods and criteria used in the *Hadith* collection, six out of several collections have been regarded as most authentic among which the compilations of Abū Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d. 870) and Muslim (d.875) are considered most important.

Formative texts

With more people from different socio-cultural backgrounds being converted to Islam and the Muslim societies had to face complex socio-cultural realities, the situation demanded a more sophisticated textualization. Hence the question of reconciliation between the pragmatic demands of social reality, the traditional norms and values of the Community in making, and the transcendent ideals of Scripture, was to be resolved by a complex form of textualization, which could institutionalize the Islamic value system and establish a normative order for the society.

Thus, the formative phase of Islam is characterized by its idealized socio-cultural orders encountering diverse social realities, which stimulated diverse responses from the religious scholars, known as *ʿulamā*. The *ʿulamā's* urge for balancing between the ideals and the realities together with the spirit of engaging with religious knowledge, resulted in the emergence of different branches of religious sciences, and the development of new methodologies for interpretation of the foundational texts.

Among the major religious sciences emerged during this period are, *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, *ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* and *ʿIlm al-Fiqh*. The first deals with the basics of *Qurʾan*, the order of revelations and their contexts, prioritization of texts and rules for recitation, etc. *ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth* deals with the question of authority and authenticity of the Prophetic traditions. It also contains methodology for prioritization of texts by categorizing *Hadith* literature in a hierarchical order according to their acceptance. *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* is the theoretical and methodological jurisprudence of Islam, which contains rules and methods for extracting legal orders from the foundational texts and *Fiqh* is the practical jurisprudence, which constitutes the *Sharīʿah*(Hannan, 2009).

Since Islam has no single organized religious institution empowered to formulate authoritatively the articles of beliefs and practices (Saleh, 2001), every Muslim qualified to interpret the foundational texts can investigate the problems and come with his jurisdiction on the matter. The practical interpretation of the foundational texts to meet the requirements of the time and space in accordance with the notion of Divine Will is called *ijtihād*. However, the question of qualification for *ijtihād* led to the recognition of the authority of a new class of *ʿulamā* who were well-versed in *Qur'an* and *Hadith* with adequate linguistic training and could apply learning and experience to the issues of religious law. The new class of *ʿulamā* was known as *fuqahā*, or jurists. Their prime initiatives were to formulate a systematic legal order for different categories of human behaviour. Thus, the *fuqahā* tried to detail the normative patterns of religious practices, rules and regulations for socio-economic interactions, legal measures in the civil and criminal offenses, etc.

In this process of systematization of social values and normative order, the *ʿulamā* not only referred the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, but also made an extensive use of two more sources of Islamic law, namely *ijmāʿ* and *qiyās*. *Ijmāʿ* means unanimous agreement or consensus of Muslim scholars on a point of law. *Ijmāʿ* was considered as a valid source on the authority of the *Hadith* as reported by Ibn Māja[1] and others: “My community shall never agree on error”.

However, in practice, it is difficult to arrive at a unanimous agreement because of the varying abilities of the men participating and diversity of interests and regional circumstances influencing each investigator. Therefore, it is recognized that unanimity can be achieved only on the basis of the principles that there is no knowledge of any dissidents or of agreement by the preponderant majority (Shaltout, 1987). It is also to be noted that *ijmāʿ,* as Gellner (1981) rightly observed, does not license the democratic aspect of legislation, because it is only allowed only when there is no clear and direct legislation on a specific issue in *Qur'an* and *Hadith.*

Qiyās refers to the application of analogy in extracting Islamic law. In *qiyās*, human reason is used to compare an existing situation with one for which legislation already exists. For instance, *Qur'an* clearly prohibits the consumption of wine. The rationale of this prohibition, according to most jurists, is the effect of alcohol on the mind. On this basis, any product that leads to the same effects, such as narcotics, can be prohibited using the principle of *qiyās*, thus extending the rule for wine to narcotics even though there is no specific prohibition of narcotics in the *Qur'an* or *Sunnah*(Saeed, 2006).

The possibility of multiple interpretations of the foundational texts both in terms of semantic and symbolic aspects with differences in approaches towards different categories of *Hadith*, and the possibility of application of *qiyās* in different ways, allowed different opinions on legal matters. The differences were debated for long, but only to be settled with consciences on disagreements in view of the larger perspectives of fundamental values and larger interests of *Sharīʿah* (*Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*). These differences later sorted out in the form of different schools of law, which came to be known as

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[1] Reported in his *Hadith*collection under *Kitāb al-Fitan wa al-Malāḥim*, *Hadith* Number, 4253.

madhhab. The entire processes so far discussed can be briefed as follows:

Responses **Knowledge base**

Verification of problems ← Historical/cultural Situation

↓

Prioritization of Texts

(foundational texts) ←*ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth&ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*

↓

Semantic Interpretations &

Symbolic Elaborations←*ʿIlm al-Balāgah*/ Arabic linguistics

↓

Different Opinions ←*Uṣūl al-Fiqh*

↓

Conscience on differences ← Doctrines of divine will & Islamic values

↓

Crystallisation of *Sharīʿah*➔Formative Texts (Schools of thought)

[Table1. Mode of textualization in phase II]

As the model shows, the beginning point of textualization in the second phase of Islamic tradition was confrontation of diverse socio-cultural, political and economic problems. The first response from the *ʿulamā* was verification of the problem looking to its cultural and historical backgrounds and referring the foundational texts. Confronting with diverse textual significations, they needed to prioritise the texts, for which they looked to their contextualities drawing on *ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth* (*Hadith* methodology) and *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* (*Qurʾan* methodology). Once a suitable text found to signify the problem, *ʿulamā* needed to elaborate the context, either through interpretation of the texts or elaboration of the practice, extending the meanings of the existing ones.

The linguistic training and expertise in the Arabic language served as the basic ground for this. The diverse bases of knowledge at the different levels favoured different conclusions, though not in all cases, in several issues. The differences were debated and discussed and finally settled on agreement with disagreements in the matters of details (*al-umūr al-furūʿī*). Consequently, these differences were institutionalised and grew as separate schools of law, called *madhhabs*. Out of several such schools, only four have survived and widely recognised by the majority Sunni Muslims. They are known as Mālikī, Ḥanafī, Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī *madhhab*s. Each *madhhab* has its own sphere of influence according to the appeal of its founders.

The founder of Shāfiʿī School is Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī of Egypt (d 205AH/ 820 AD) and its followers are found in Egypt, Syria, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and in India among Muslims in Kerala. Ḥanafī School, which was founded by Abū Ḥanīfa of Iraq (d.150/767) is widespread in Turkey, eastern parts of Arab world and the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. The Ḥanafī School was the official school of the Ottoman Empireand of Mughals in India. Mālikī School, founded by Mālik bin Anas of Hijaz (d.179/795) is predominant *madhahab* in North Africa, while the school of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d 241/855) got its followers among Muslims in Arabia, Egypt and Syria (Nasr 1997; Gellner 1981; Humphreys, 1995).

Discursive texts

With the development of *madhhabs* a general pattern of Muslim thought and life became established. It has been widely recognised by both Muslim and Western scholars that the period from the mid-2nd/8th to the late 3rd/9th century as the most creative phase of Islamic jurisprudence, in the sense that during those years *ʿulamā* were freest to define the principles of their inquiry and to determine main rules which ought to govern Muslim life (Humphreys, 1995). As a result, about four centuries after the death of Prophet Muhammad, there emerged a common perception that everything was now decided; all the interpretative questions had been addressed. Such an attitude implied that Muslims, henceforth, needed just to carry forward the interpretations of the past and hand them on to the next generation (Humphreys, 1995).

At this phase, the *ʿulamā* started to believe that their task was to correctly transmit what they have received. Hence, textualization at this level was confined within the boundaries of a particular school of law. The scholars just engaged themselves with writing commentaries on the works of the founder of particular *madhhab*, or extending his ideas or methods to deal with new social realities. Consequently, while addressing current realities, the *ʿulamā* approached the available texts and tried to resolve the problem in terms of the categories and logic of established legal doctrine. In this sense, textualization in the third phase was concerned about filling gaps and resolve contradictions in the existing body of doctrine quite as much as to deal with the real problems of Islamic society(Humphreys, 1995). This phase represents a paradigmatic shift in general Muslim approach to religious texts. From the independent interpretative engagements with the foundational texts (*ijtihād*), it moved towards the dependent mode of interpretation, which is called *taqlīd.*

However, it is important to note here that while writing the commentaries, *ʿulamā* were articulating new discourses too. Contrary to a perception that this phase represents the sterile scholasticism and intellectual decadence, Qasim Zaman writes:

> The discursive form of the commentary was, in fact, one of the principal means through which law was not only elaborated but also expanded and modified to meet the exigencies of changing times. Commentaries allowed scholars to preserve the identity and authority of their school of law, their legal tradition, while simultaneously providing them with the means to make sometimes important adjustments in that tradition (2001, p. 38).

Apart from the commentaries, *fatwā* constitutes another major device for addressing new social realities. A *fatwā* is a non-binding legal opinion of a *muftī*[1] or a *faqīh* who derives it by applying the devices of *ijtihād* carried out either conforming to the methodology of a particular school of law or independently. A *muftī* occupies a niche between the jurist as teacher and the jurist as judge (Messick, 1986, p. 103). The *fatwā* is issued on a particular issue of ritual or conduct in response to a petitioner's question. The petitioner could be an ordinary Muslim with a question about some ritual observance, a *qāḍī* (jurist) seeking guidance in a difficult piece of litigation, or a ruler wishing to establish the lawfulness of an act of state. In either case, the *faqīh's* opinions were presumably authoritative but in principle non-binding and a petitioner could always seek a plurality of opinions (Humphreys, 1995, p.217).

The following figure (Table 3) may illustrate the kind of responses that the *ʿulamā – fuqahā* and *muftīs* – took while balancing the imagined ideals and real life situations.

Responses		**Knowledge base**
Application of formative texts	**←**	**Real or imagined situations**
↓		
***Fatwā* or Elaborations/Clarifications**	**←**	**Methodology of particular school**
↓		
Differences In elaborations /*fatwa*	**←**	**Multiple interpretations**
↓		
Codifications/compilations/ commentaries	**→**	**Discursive texts**

[Table 3. Mode of textualization in Phase III]

The above model shows that the Islamic scholars subscribing to different schools of law, engaged with the dominant texts of the school applying them to the real and imagined situations. In the process, they further explained the texts of the *imāms* of a particular

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[1] A *muftī* is an Islamic legal expert who issues a *fatwā* and a *faqīh* is scholar of Islamic Jurisprudence.

madhhab extending the foundational texts and issued *fatwās* as required by the new contexts applying the interpretative possibilities in the texts. The interpretative application of the texts, though not always, permitted different opinions and multiple positions of *fuqahā* on several issues. The differences of opinion within the *madhhabs* were approached by the *ʿulamā* not as limitations but as possibilities that could generate new discourses and providing for new understandings. Consequently, major works in Islamic jurisprudence and *sharīʿah* law presents the different positions of various scholars in the same school of law. Thus, textualization in the phase is discursive in nature and a continuous process.

Social structure and textualization

Finally, the issues of texts, textuality and textualization raise the question of power in society. Who produces the texts? Who patronize it? Whose text/*fatwā*/model is to be accepted? After all, religious texts are the source of particular set of knowledge, then to what extend the sociology of knowledge will be useful to analyze the role of power and authority in the textualization processes? These and similar questions may be asked while approaching the textual tradition of Islam and analyzing the patterns of Muslim beliefs and ritual practices.

All these questions are directly or indirectly related to the questions of power and authority, social structure and institutional arrangements for ordering Muslim social life. This will also underscore the significance of different approaches to the different texts as discussed above. textualization in this sense is directly linked to the process of Islamization. Muslim societies across the globe have different experiences of Islamization.

The conversation that took place in the institutionalized structural arrangements involving the *ʿulamā* and official preachers represents a vertical model of Islamization whereas in the conversion carried out by the Sufis, general preachers, and merchants, Islamization process has been horizontal. In the vertical model, the texts are at the centre, and the focus of Islamization has been the forms of practices and sets of values and ideals as prescribed by the texts. However, in the second model of Islamization, which has been the predominant one in the conversion took place in most of South India and the South East Asian countries, the process was mostly informal with a natural spread as the Sufis and merchants, who played the instrumental role in this model, focused more on personal piety and religious life. That is, instead of having listened to instructions from the top, people have been attracted to the personal models presented by the preachers.

The significant difference in the two models is that in the second model it is not the text that is prescribed; rather it is the practice that is emphasized. Thus, in the Sufi model of Islamization, at least in the early periods, textual consciousness or introduction to formal texts succeeds rather than precedes religious experience (Trimingham, 1971, pp. 2-3). While in the former model of Islamization, expression of religion was also a communal matter. Therefore, all attempts were to maintain a standardized social order emphasizing ritual observances and a legalistic morality where the textual consciousness precedes religious experiences.

In the regions where Islam reached through rulers, there were efforts to standardize Muslim practices by establishing Islamic legal systems, instating *ʿulamā* as guardians of moral order. Most of the capital cities such as Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo and Cordova were also centres for high learning and literary activities. The *ʿulamā* produced plenty of books in different fields of theology, jurisprudence and philosophy. Hence, there were efforts to make the community of believers under the domain of the rulers, textually conscious.

In the interiors of conquered regions and other parts of world, where Islam reached to masses through Sufis and traders, the new communities formed were taught to be more concerned about piety and religious experiences than about the legalist or textual traditions. The developments were independent; the rulers or any formal institutional mechanism had hardly any effective control over them. Besides, the Sufis who always focused nurturing personal piety among the people were less concerned about the social order.

These two models of textualization and Islamization process coexisted in several parts of the Muslim world without much strife. Historically, the Muslim societies always tried to keep a balance between the legalist approach of the *fuqahā* and the interpretative approach of the *Sufis* that focuses on the possibilities of esoteric and exoteric meanings of the texts. In fact, it was this balancing act of creative engagements with the texts and contexts that led to emergence of different cultural zones in Muslim world as identified by the cultural anthropologists. The studies of Muslim societies have generally identified five distinct cultural zones, namely Middle Eastern, African, Central Asian, South Asian and Southeast Asian. Besides, scholars have increasingly been growing concerned of the presence of Islam in the European and American countries where Muslims are struggling to shape, perform and articulate their identities.

These cultural zones are characterized by domination of a particular *madhhab*, which provides for the spread of particular genres of foundational texts. Looking at the spread of the four dominant *madhhabs,* one can find that the *Ḥanafī* School remained strong in Iraq, from where it spread to Syria. It also moved eastward to Afghanistan and the undivided Indian subcontinent. The *Mālikī* School on the other hand, spread westward from Madina through Egypt, to almost the whole of North Africa, and to Central and West Africa. The *Shāfʿī* School which began in Cairo spread to Egypt's neighbouring regions of Arabia and East Africa. It also exists in some regions of Central Asia, and in almost all Southeast Asian countries besides the South Indian states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The *Ḥanbalī* School has a limited spread; apart from its main centres of Baghdad and Damascus, it could not stretch its influence much to other parts of world.

However, from the eighteenth century with the emergence of new reformist movements garbed under the term *salafism*, there has been a growing tension in most parts of the Muslim world regarding the questions of texts, textuality and textualization. Concerned with strict adherence to monotheism, the purification of Islam from accretions, the movement contained a revolt against Sufism and the local Muslim practices. In other words, the new *salafī* movements have been mainly a movement to revisit the existing textuality both in literature and practices. Challenging the authority and authenticity of formative and discursive texts, the reformists allowed only a restricted range of Islamic texts and practices. Hence at the heart of the ongoing tension in the Muslim world is the conflict between two approaches to the texts and the textuality of the practices. The reductionist notion of Islamic texts and the narrowed spectrum of Muslim social life proposed by the *salafi* movements have been in conflict with the broader discursive tradition of Islam and that is the source of the most of the contemporary socio-political conflicts in the Muslim world.

Conclusion

In brief, the concern among Muslims towards textuality of their practices has always engaged both the learned and the common people in a process that may be identified as textualization. It is this process that has determined the nature and characteristics of the responses of the Muslim societies to changing situations. A brief social history of textualization process has clearly shown that the engagement with the texts in any Muslim society occurs at two levels, one at the bottom level and the other at the top. At lower level, there are the common people who are trying to define the Islam of their practices either by looking to what they conceive as authenticated traditional models or approaching the learned class to find out the textual significance of their practices. At the higher level, the *ʿulamā*, the religious scholars are involved in the process of responding to the emerging socio-cultural phenomena by situating the elements involved through the classificatory model of human practices. This is carried out by symbolic elaborations or semantic interpretation of the existing texts. At this level, the textualization is a discursive exercise, which may be affected by the power relations and the social structure. Hence any attempt to understand the religion and culture of Muslim societies may better start with a proper understanding of the process of textualization and the different approaches among the subjects to the texts and textualities.

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5. Full name(s) of the author(s), along with their affiliation and email address, may be typed at the beginning of the article.
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Journal:

In-text: Jacoby (1994)

Reference: Jacoby, W.G. (1994). Public attitudes toward government spending. *American Journal of Political Science*, *38*(2), 336-361.

Chapter in a book:

In-text: Dar (1963)

Reference:Dar, B.A. (1963). Ethical teachings of the *Qur'an*. In M.M.Sharif (Ed.), *A history of Muslim philosophy*. Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Qur an:

In-text :(i) direct quotation, write as 114:5

(ii) Indirect quotation, write as *Qur'an*, 114:5

Reference: *The glorious Qur'an*. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

Arabic transliteration guideline

Transliteration of Arabic letters

ب =	**B**	ذ=	**dh**	ط=	**ṭ**	ل=	**l**
ت=	**T**	ر=	**r**	ظ=	**ẓ**	م=	**m**
ث=	**TH**	ز=	**z**	ع=		ن=	**n**
ج=	**J**	س=	**s**	غ=	**gh**	و=	**w**
ح=	**ḥ**	ش=	**sh**	ف=	**f**	ه=	**h**
خ=	**KH**	ص=	**ṣ**	ق=	**q**	ي=	**y**
د=	**D**	ض=	**ḍ**	ك=	**k**	ء=	
Arabic Short Vowel		اَ=	**a**	اِ=	**I**	=اُ	**U**
Arabic Long Vowel		آ=	**ā**	إي=	**ī**	أو=	**ū**
Arabic Double Vowel				أو =	**aw**	أي =	**ai**

Note on transliteration

a) Transliteration refers to the representation of Arabic writing by using the Roman alphabet. Some Arabic letters have direct equivalent. Therefore, they need not to be transliterated. For instance, ‘ب’ is represented by ‘b’. But some other letters have no direct equivalents in the normal Roman alphabet. Therefore, a number of special characters have been created for the purposes of transliterating such letters, such as ‘Ṣ’ for the Arabic letter ‘ص’.

b) Transliteration has to be done with Unicode system. Unicode is a system provided in Microsoft word to facilitate transliteration system. In this system, each such letter is represented by an alpha numeric character which helps the writer to select and insert the letter from ‘*symbols*’ in ‘*insert*’ to the word file. For more details: *http://islamicinsight.in.*

c) Some examples of transliteration are given below:

كَتَبَ	*Kataba*	Verb is italicised
كَوَّنَ	*kawwana*	Verb is italicised
أَخَّرَ	*akhkhara*	Verb is italicised
كَاتِبٌ	*Kātib*	Agent noun is italicised
مَرْءَةٌ	*mar ah*	Common noun is italicised
القَاهِرَة	Al-Qāhirah	Place is not italicised
المدينة المنورة	Al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah	Place is not italicised
إحياء علوم الدين	*Iḥyā Ulūm al-Dīn*	Book's name italicised
محمد بن إدريس الشافعيّ	Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi ī	Person's name not italicised
من يرد الله به خيرا يفقهه في الدين	*Man yurid Allāhu bihi khairan yufaqqihhu fī al-Dīn*	Phrase is italicised
الْعِلْمُ بِلَا عَمَلٍ كَالشَّجَرِ بِلَا ثَمَرٍ	*Al- ilmu bilā amalin ka al-shajari bilā thamarin*	Phrase is italicised
بسم الله/لله/والله	*Bismillāh/lillāh/wallāh*	Such combinations with Allah are written as single words
عبد الله/كلام الله/ خشية الله	Abd Allāh/*kalām Allāh/khashyat Allāh*	Such combinations with Allah are written separately

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