

## Chapter 3

# The Genes of Politics: Groups, Classes, and Families



In the Middle East, individuals express their social and political demands through membership in various groups. These collectivities range from family units to class aggregations, from recreational groupings to religious affiliations, from personal cliques to political associations.<sup>1</sup> Middle Eastern societies contain a kaleidoscopic array of overlapping and interlocking groups in constant flux. Individuals maintain membership in a large number of groups. In so doing, they build webs of personal connections that constitute the basic sinews of the social system.

Group formations dominate the vertical dimension of stratification as family, friendship, ethnic, religious, professional, recreational, and political groups exist in a state of continual interaction. The social and political systems resemble mosaics composed of a "limitless crisscross of groups."<sup>2</sup> This web of fluctuating groups, however, is not a seamless one. Differing levels of power, wealth, and prestige indicate a system of stratification. The lines etched into this system cut horizontally across other group configurations. In this sense, family, tribal, and religious groups, for example, are embedded within a structure of interrelated classes.

The key political dimensions of power and authority are shaped in the Middle East largely by the prevailing group and class structure. A complex prism of

<sup>1</sup>For purposes of our analysis, a *group* is defined as a collectivity of individuals who interact in varying degrees in pursuance of a common interest or goal. This definition is broad enough to include aggregations exhibiting a wide variety of organizational styles yet narrow enough to exclude collectivities of individuals who neither interact nor share similar goals.

<sup>2</sup>This is Arthur F. Bentley's phrase. See Bentley, *The Process of Government* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 204.

group formations filters political demands and helps determine public policy. Although a changing political system tends to alter the social structure, political changes are often the result of a shifting social structure. The politics of development and modernization are profoundly influenced by the patterns and processes that mark group and class relationships.

In all societies, social structure strongly influences the political process. The patterns of group interaction, however, vary considerably from one area of the world to another. Distinctive characteristics mark the styles of group and class interaction in Islamic cultures and Middle Eastern societies. Some of these patterns are congruent with patterns in other societies; some of them are not. The Middle Eastern patterns are the subject of our analysis.

## Group Structure: Vertical Stratification

*In the East persons were more trusted than institutions.*

T. E. Lawrence

SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM

The Middle Easterner belongs to a number of groups that vary greatly in their membership, goals, and modes of organization. These groups also differ in their capacity to further the interests of their membership. On the basis of organizational style, groups in the Middle East can be divided into two major categories, formal and informal.<sup>3</sup>

Formal groups are corporate collectivities that are officially organized and visibly operating. Membership is clearly defined, and the members have specific and sharply differentiated roles. In our group taxonomy, formal groups include both associational and institutional structures.<sup>4</sup> Associational groups are highly organized structures that are formed for the articulation of a specific interest. Examples include trade unions, business organizations, civic clubs, and ethnic, religious, professional, and political associations. Institutional groups exist primarily to perform a certain function but also act to promote their own interests. Although officially organized, like associational groups, they generally operate somewhat more loosely. Institutional groups are usually governmental bodies and include legislatures, bureaucracies, armies, and political parties. Formal

<sup>3</sup>The terms *formal* and *informal* risk exposing us to the criticism of ethnocentricity. From the viewpoint of many non-Westerners, even informal groups have form and can therefore be considered formal. We use the term *informal*, however, to refer to an unofficial, fluid, personalistic, and relatively covert type of group structure.

<sup>4</sup>Associational and institutional interest groups are part of an important typology of groups developed by Gabriel Almond in his comparative study of political systems. For the original presentation of this schema, see Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman, eds., *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 33–38. For Almond's most recent formulation of interest group categories, see Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Comparative Politics Today: A World View* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), pp. 70–85.

groups always maintain a corporate apparatus that includes officials and functionaries with clearly defined responsibilities.

Informal groups are noncorporate, unofficially organized collectivities that articulate their interests in a relatively diffuse manner. This category includes kinship, status, and regional groups as well as anomic aggregations that tend to form spontaneously, such as rioting crowds and demonstrations. Most often, however, informal groups are cliques, factions, or coteries. They are highly personalistic in character and take shape on the basis of constantly fluctuating relations among individuals. The personalistic and amorphous nature of informal groups enables them to maintain a degree of fluidity and flexibility that is absent in the more rigid formal groups.

## PATTERNS OF GROUP INTERACTION

Formal political associations have been conspicuously absent in the social history of the Islamic Middle East. Even economic associational groups have been of limited significance, despite the sporadic appearance of trade union organizations during this century. Nor does the mere existence of associational groups necessarily indicate that they play an active role in the sociopolitical life of the area. Often they exist only as empty organizational shells, while their functions are performed by other structures. This generalization is, of course, more applicable to certain Middle Eastern countries than to others. In Morocco, Algeria, Turkey, and Bahrain, labor unions have not only existed but have on occasion had an appreciable impact on political processes. In Iran and Iraq, on the other hand, the existence of modest union organization has been more a facade than a force. In still other countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Oman, there have been no trade union organizations.

Institutional groups have played more important roles in Middle Eastern political history than have associational groups. Although parliaments and political parties are recently established institutional groups, bureaucracies and armies are of more ancient vintage. Thus, while associations are generally twentieth-century phenomena in the Middle East, certain institutional groups have roots that extend back many centuries. These groups, however, have tended to be large, sprawling conglomerations composed of personal cliques, familial networks, and regional factions. Middle Eastern military systems today are often analyzed in terms of various officer cliques, while bureaucracies are best understood as systems of administrative factions.

Associational and institutional groups that have played a critical role in Western political systems have been considerably less significant in the Middle Eastern context. The dominant group structure in the Islamic world has been the informal group.<sup>5</sup> Group organization hardens around particular individuals and kinship structures. Small, shifting clusters of individuals form cliques that resemble one another only in their personalistic, informal, fragmented mode of

<sup>5</sup>As we will see in Chapter 4, informality is one of the major characteristics of patrimonial social and political systems.

organization. Key political decisions are made in the context of this kind of group. Formal groups exist either as extraneous facades or as general structures within which small, informal groups carry out their important activities. Informal groups penetrate and many times suffuse the more formal aggregations. Decisions attributable to the formal organization may in fact be the product of a parasitical informal group within it.

In local Moroccan politics, for example, political parties are perceived by the people "as amalgamations of individuals bound together by a multiplicity of different personal ties rather than by any all-pervasive organizational structure or ideological commitment. . . ." In Lebanon, "loyalty to patrons, relatives or nonrelatives, takes precedence over loyalty to labor unions."<sup>6</sup> In national Iranian politics, the *majlis*, or parliament, "masks a fluctuating and fractionating network of personal cliques, and it is here where decisions are made and business is transacted."<sup>7</sup> The army in such countries as Iraq and Syria has been described as a "collection of factions."<sup>8</sup> The situation is excellently summarized by Clifford Geertz: "Structure after structure—family, village, clan, class, sect, army, party, elite, state—turns out when more narrowly looked at to be an ad hoc constellation of miniature systems of power, a cloud of unstable micropolitics, which compete, ally, gather strength, and very soon overextended, fragment again."<sup>9</sup>

The growth of effective formal groups in the Middle East has been stunted by a number of interrelated factors. The technical, social, economic, and political conditions of organization are often absent. The formation of a viable formal group structure requires a certain level of organizational skill, a minimal degree of trust and cooperation, a reservoir of funds for administration, and a willingness on the part of political elites to tolerate the existence of such groups. In Middle Eastern societies, these conditions of organization are seldom all present at once. Social and political demands, therefore, are formulated and presented in a much different organizational environment.

Groups in the Middle East are necessarily more limited in size in order to maximize trust and cooperative endeavor. Group members protect the private and secret nature of their proceedings in order to strengthen their position against both rival groups and the national political regime. Individuals attempt to retain the greatest possible personal freedom so that they may move in and out of groups, depending on their perception of their own best interests. This, in turn, promotes considerable fluidity and fragmentation, since group mem-

<sup>6</sup>Lawrence Rosen, "Rural Political Process and National Political Structure in Morocco," in *Rural Politics and Social Change in the Middle East*, ed. by Richard Antoun and Iliya Harik (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 299.

<sup>7</sup>Fuad I. Khuri, "The Changing Class Structure in Lebanon," *Middle East Journal* 23 (Winter 1969): 40.

<sup>8</sup>James A. Bill, "The Politics of Legislative Monarchy: The Iranian Majlis," in *Comparative Legislative Systems*, ed. by Herbert Hirsch and M. Donald Hancock (New York: The Free Press, 1971), p. 365.

<sup>9</sup>See P. J. Vatikiotis, *Conflict in the Middle East* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 108.

<sup>10</sup>Clifford Geertz, "In Search of North Africa," *New York Review of Books* 16 (April 22, 1971): 20, as quoted in Dale F. Eickelman, "Is There an Islamic City? The Making of a Quarter in a Moroccan Town," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5 (June 1974): 280.

berships continually change in a manner that defies any rigidity, officiality, or formal routinization.

Besides these negative reasons for the lack of effective formal groups in the Middle East, there are a number of positive explanations. Small, informal groups are able to attain their common goals readily enough to preclude the need for larger groups. Over the centuries in the Islamic world, small groups have simply proven to be more efficient and effective structures than larger groups. Recent research by economists and political scientists who work with "collective good" theory casts serious doubt on the assumption that it is rational for individual members of a large group to work to achieve the collective good of that group.<sup>11</sup> Instead, it is argued that the individual who fails to contribute to the large group will still stand to share in the reward once the group's goal is attained. In large groups, it may well be that an individual's effort will make no perceptible difference in the attainment of the group's goal. In this situation, the rational individual will not contribute to the group's effort. Such is the case in most associational and institutional groups.

In a smaller group, each individual's efforts are more likely to make a difference in attaining the group's goal. In such a group the individual will be more susceptible to the pressures of other group members, who can further cooperation through mutual personal persuasion. In Middle Eastern social history, where groups have been not only small but also highly personalistic, this has been especially true. In such societies, there is much doubt about the efficacy of membership in, or attachment to, large or mass institutional groups. Personal ties based on kinship, friendship, and religious and regional affiliation have been among the best means of ensuring effective individual effort.<sup>12</sup>

One further reason for the emphasis on personal ties in the Islamic Middle East has been a belief in the nobility and generosity of manner. Individuals in Islamic culture who believed in these virtues joined various brotherhoods and guilds that incorporated characteristics of both formal and informal organization. These guilds and brotherhoods have been important political aggregations throughout the history of the Islamic world. The Islamic guild, for example, has generally represented the interests of the lower- and lower-middle-class members of society. It was "a spontaneous development from below, created, not in response to a State need, but to the social requirements of the labouring masses themselves. Save for one brief period, the Islamic guilds have maintained either

<sup>11</sup>For the basic presentation of this theoretical approach, see Mancur Olson, Jr., *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).

<sup>12</sup>Ibn Khaldun's theory of social solidarity (*asabiyya*) proposes that *asabiyya* is critical to successful group activity and ultimately to civilization. *Asabiyya* is the cement of human relations and is based first on common ancestry and eventually on common interest and life experience. *Asabiyya* was most easily developed in small, informal, and highly personalistic groups. As Muhsin Mahdi writes: "Solidarity comes into being as a result of common ancestry, but it is usually sustained by external factors: the feeling of relatedness is dictated by the necessity of cooperation and self-defense." (Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History* [London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957], p. 197.) See Ibn Khaldun's own writings about group formation in the Islamic world in *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. by Franz Rosenthal (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967).

an open hostility to the State, or an attitude of sullen mistrust, which the public authorities, political and ecclesiastical, have always returned."<sup>13</sup>

The early craft guilds resembled Byzantine structures and were organized on the basis of a common craft or skill. With the passage of time, and particularly following the rise of the Qarmatian (Carmathian) movement during the ninth to the twelfth centuries,<sup>14</sup> the guilds became deeply infused with a moral and often mystical spirit. This attitude contributed greatly to organizational cohesion and inspired the members to dedicate themselves to furthering group goals. Although the various guilds and brotherhoods had differing organizational emphases, they generally blended formal and informal characteristics. On the one hand, they exhibited such formal accoutrements of organization as elaborate ceremonial activity and a rigid internal hierarchy. On the other hand, they were intensely personalistic and highly secretive. The term *tariqa* ("brotherhood" or "order") literally means a "way" or "path" and refers to a mode of conduct, not to a formal association.<sup>15</sup> Thus, in the Middle Eastern context, even structures as corporate as guilds have an element of informality that renders them a highly diversified composite of organizational types. Like the familial group, which we examine later in this chapter, the guild has managed to span the formal-informal dichotomy.

Since the activity of informal groups is herein considered the most dominant form of group politics in the Middle East, our discussion emphasizes this type of group rather than associational and institutional groups. This does not mean that we choose to ignore formal groups but that we will accord them an emphasis somewhat more commensurate with the political influence they wield in the area of our investigation. To state it quite baldly, a Middle Eastern legislature, for example, is much less important as a decision-making apparatus than are the informal groups that penetrate it, control it, and, most important, survive it.

### THE POLITICS OF INFORMAL GROUPS

Informal groups, usually referred to as cliques or factions, are a fundamental unit of political action in many societies. In contrast to northern European and

<sup>13</sup>Bernard Lewis, "The Islamic Guilds," *Economic History Review* 8 (1937): 35-36. The research of Gabriel Baer indicates that the craft guilds were both more formally organized and more closely linked to the government than is commonly thought. Baer's arguments, however, are most applicable to guild structures after the eighteenth century. Also, the brotherhoods were always better examples than the guilds of the type of informal group that existed in opposition to governmental power. The state was better able to infiltrate and control guild structures than brotherhood organizations. For Baer's conclusions concerning Turkish guilds, see "The Administrative, Economic, and Social Functions of Turkish Guilds," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1 (January 1970): 28-50.

<sup>14</sup>This was a great liberal movement that swept through the Muslim world, advocating social reform in general and justice and equality in particular. The movement appealed to all classes, sects, and religions but found special acceptance among the artisans, skilled, and semiskilled workers. See L. Massignon, "Karmatians," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 4 vols. (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1927), vol. 2: 767-772.

<sup>15</sup>This point is made in Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1968), pp. 189-190; and in Morroe Berger, *Islam in Egypt Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 67.

North American societies, where formal groups play a prominent role, the informal group is dominant in southern European, North African, Middle Eastern, and Latin American cultures.

It is true that wherever human beings are gathered, they will develop informal groups. Thus, in American society there are many obvious manifestations of informal-group politics. However, even within the United States, the tendency to organize informal rather than formal groups differs in strength from one area of the country to another. In the South and the Southwest, nonassociational groups are active. This once led an observer to characterize the state of Louisiana as "the westernmost of the Arab states."<sup>16</sup> Generally, however, the American political process places relatively less emphasis on informal groups and relatively more on such aggregates as trade unions, legislatures, and political parties. This is not the case in much of the world. Studies of Brazil, India, Burma, Taiwan, Japan, and Italy, for example, impressively demonstrate that informal and nonassociational-group politics are dominant in these societies.

The gradual recognition of the critical role that informal groups play in the less industrialized world has been recently accompanied by preliminary analysis (by a small number of scholars of contemporary Middle Eastern political systems) emphasizing this phenomenon. Amal Vinogradov and John Waterbury, for example, introduce the term *security group* to refer to a factional group that "is the maximal unit in which there is some predictability in the exercise of power and authority."<sup>17</sup> Clement H. Moore discusses what he terms *contingent interest groups* that cut across associational interest groups and serve as "gatekeepers" for North African political systems. According to Moore, "Examples of contingent interest groups range from sets of Algerian cousins and fellow maquisards or a Moroccan family of notables to professional veto groups or a handful of individuals out to convince Bourguiba that Ben Salah's Plan is a menace."<sup>18</sup>

The most crucial units of interest aggregation in the Middle East remain informal groups. In Iraq this kind of collectivity is referred to as a *shilla* or *jama'at*, and in Saudi Arabia the term most often used is *bashka*. The Egyptians also use the word *shilla* to refer to a group of approximately two to twelve members who socialize together and who work to help one another advance politically and economically. A slightly more diffuse Egyptian informal group is the *duf'a*, or old-boy network. The *duf'a* (literally "pushing out") is often the general structure from which the more tightly knit *shillas* are formed. In Kuwait, the *di-waniyya* is an informal gathering where men meet to discuss and determine important political questions. Other words in the Arab world that carry the idea of cliques and factions but that sometimes also indicate a higher level of formality include *kutal* and *fi'at*. In Iran, the sociopolitical system is backed by a gigantic

<sup>16</sup>For reference to this memorable quote, see T. Harry Williams, *Huey Long* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), p. 194.

<sup>17</sup>Amal Vinogradov and John Waterbury, "Situations of Contested Legitimacy in Morocco: An Alternative Framework," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13 (January 1971): 34.

<sup>18</sup>Clement Henry Moore, *Politics in North Africa: Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1970), pp. 201-202.

network of informal, personalistic cliques referred to as *dawrahs* ("circles"). Afghan group dynamics are dominated by loose factional aggregates referred to as either *dastahs* ("handfuls of individuals") or *girdabs* ("little whirlpools"). One of the most important of the informal groups in Turkey is the personal collectivity based on *hemşeri* ("from the same region") relations. The *hemşerilik* is a group that forms and re-forms as fellow villagers and "hometowners" aggregate to assist one another with social, economic, occupational, and political aims. In Egypt, the same kind of group formation prevails in the *baladiyya*, which is in fact a kind of informal, extended family group.<sup>19</sup>

The juxtaposition of informal groups with formal political associations is seen in the case of Bahrain, an archipelago off the coast of Saudi Arabia, just west of the Qatar peninsula. An early modernizer, Bahrain is the oldest petroleum-producing state in the Persian Gulf and had already established a girls' school in 1928. Strikes and labor unrest have occurred in this small shaikhdom ever since the mid-1950s. Ruled absolutely by the al-Khalifa family, this country has nonetheless had notable experience with municipal and national consultative bodies. The actual politics of Bahrain have taken place within an extensive network of clubs (*nawadi*) and societies (*jam'iyyat*). Numbering approximately one hundred, these informal groups, "whose memberships include a majority of Bahrain's elite public, have played the essential functions performed by political parties in other political systems."<sup>20</sup> Ostensibly organized for social, professional, and recreational purposes, these clubs are often intensely political. The 250-member al-Arabi Club, for example, is composed of educated Bahrainis who push for nationalistic and democratic goals. The University Graduates' Club, on the other hand, is oriented more toward the elite and consists of college-educated intellectuals from both the middle and upper classes. It is the establishment's liberal conscience. These kinds of informal groups in Bahrain coexist both with formal organizations and with the ruling family, whose tentacles reach deep down into the club network.

Informal-group activity in the Middle East has manifested itself in a myriad of ways. Ranging from tiny dyads that plug in and out of one another to enormously complex coalitions based on kinship, these groups have little in common besides their personal, informal nature. Personal homes have served as locations for the meetings of the more exclusive of the groups, while mosques, coffee-houses, teahouses, common rooms, and bazaar shops have served as meeting places for the more inclusive of the groups. Informal groups operating in these kinds of settings constantly relay information through the various societies. It is largely on the basis of this information that personal and political decisions are made. In addition, it is in precisely such groups and such settings that middle-grade army officers sometimes decide to intervene in the political affairs of their countries.

<sup>19</sup>For two more recent studies of networks of informal politics in Middle Eastern urban settings, see Guilain Denoeux, *Urban Unrest in the Middle East* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1993); and Diane Singerman, *Avenues of Participation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>20</sup>Emile Nakhleh, *Bahrain: Political Development in a Modernizing Society* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1976), p. 41. Most of the information in this paragraph is drawn from the Nakhleh book.

One of the important characteristics of informal-group politics is an intense and pervasive spirit of personalism. The fundamental social and political ties tend to be personal in nature.<sup>21</sup> In moving into a wide variety of informal groups, the individual strives to broaden personal contacts in order to gain representation on as many fronts as possible. What determines the Middle Easterner's power and influence "is not the fact that he holds a certain office or even that that office affords certain opportunities for personal aggrandizement but the extent and success with which he as an individual is able to cumulate a wide range of personal ties, to display to others a number of highly valued personal characteristics, and . . . to merge them into a larger framework of political importance reaching up to the very highest government levels."<sup>22</sup> In this kind of environment, individuals develop great skills in personal persuasion. Decision making is determined by personal push and pull, as is interestingly indicated by the Turkish expression *torpil* and the Iranian term *parti*. While the formal group tends to deemphasize the personal element, the informal group preserves and promotes personalism.

The personal nature of group politics in the Middle East is exemplified well by the Lebanese *zu'ama* system (singular: *za'im*). In the Lebanese context, the *za'im* is an informal group leader whose followers support him on the basis of personal loyalty and personal rewards. The personal power of the *za'im* is rooted in local and regional communities and is buttressed by the fact that the leader and his followers share a common religion or sect. Among the important *zu'ama* families are the Frangiehs (Maronites), the Jumblatts (Druze), the Shihabs (Sunnites), and the al-As'ads (Shi'is). Leaders with names such as these have been present for years in the national political institutions of Lebanon. When the Maronite leader and Lebanese president-elect Bashir Gemayel was assassinated in 1982, he was replaced in his presidential position by his brother, Amin Gemayel. The strength of the family ties of the *zu'ama* system is very great indeed.

At the level of the informal group, the argument that Middle Eastern politics is basically nonideological is quite convincing. Commitments are more often to individuals and family units than to ideas. The precedence of personal ties over ideology is seen in the striking examples of family units that contain within themselves all shades of political and professional commitment. Such families are able to transcend regime changes and even revolution. The Marei family in Egypt is a case in point.

The father, Ahmad Marei, was a well-to-do supporter of the old regime, a member of the Wafd Party, and a parliamentary deputy. During the Nasserite revolution, the influence of the family remained intact. One brother (and the patriarch of the family today), Hassan Marei, was appointed minister of commerce and industry in 1954. Another brother, Sayyid Marei, the most powerful member of the family over the years, had served as a member of Parliament for six years during King Farouk's rule. Under Nasser, Sayyid was minister of agriculture for many years and an important official in the Arab Socialist Union. A

<sup>21</sup>See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of personalism in the Middle Eastern variant of patrimonial politics.

<sup>22</sup>Rosen, "Rural Political Process," p. 216.

third brother, Marei Marei, served as director of the chemical organization during the Nasser period. During these years, the Marei family had the added connection of their more radical cousin, Ali Sabry, a former member of the Free Officers, secretary-general of the Arab Socialist Union, and one of Nasser's five premiers. Despite Sabry's removal from power by President Anwar Sadat in May 1971 and his subsequent imprisonment, the Marei brothers survived well.

During the Sadat period, Hassan Marei remained influential in the industrial community, while Marei Marei held a directorship in a state holding company. In 1974, Marei Marei took charge of the very lucrative economic relationships between Egypt and Iran. In September 1971, Sadat appointed the ubiquitous Sayyid Marei deputy premier and minister of agriculture. In October 1974, Sayyid became speaker of the assembly, and four years later, he settled in as presidential advisor to President Sadat himself. The Marei-Sadat relationship was cemented by the 1975 marriage of Sayyid Marei's son, Hassan, to Sadat's daughter, Noha. Because Sayyid and Hassan were so closely associated with the Sadat era, from which Mubarak has tried to distance himself, the new president has not allowed them to reemerge in public life. Hassan has, with his brother Nasr, become a highly successful businessman. Sayyid's brother Marei, who was not a high-profile member of the Sadat entourage, has become the family's active politician. He is the chairman of the foreign relations committee of the Consultative Assembly. The first loyalty of "the Mareis and most other Egyptians is to the family itself, and political ideology is not sufficiently compelling to undermine primordial family ties."<sup>23</sup>

This pattern of family tenacity and ideological malleability has also prevailed in such countries as Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Morocco. Even the leading families of the very conservative shaikhdoms of the Persian Gulf have had members who have espoused radical causes. Shaikh Saqr bin Sultan, who ruled Sharjah between 1951 and 1965, is a notable example. Saqr, a strong Arab nationalist with Nasserist sympathies and a dislike for the British, was deposed in 1965, primarily for these reasons. In 1972, he returned from exile in Cairo and failed in an attempt to regain the throne.

An informal group "is like a cluster of bees round a queen bee. If the queen is damaged they quickly find another to cluster around."<sup>24</sup> The exigencies of politics require an individual to shift positions periodically in order to maintain as much manipulative leeway as possible. The informal group itself will often switch goals and alter the ideas that brought its membership together. Such changes, of course, always mean that a certain percentage of the membership will be lost, but this is one important by-product of the fluidity of this type of group. Individuals retain the capacity to circulate among a host of collectivities, depending on what they consider to be in their own interests. Coalitions are fragile and alliances fleeting in such social and political systems. Even the

<sup>23</sup>Robert Springborg, *Family, Power, and Politics in Egypt* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), p. 75.

<sup>24</sup>This statement was made concerning informal-group politics in India. See B. D. Graham, "The Succession of Factional Systems in the Uttar Pradesh Congress Party, 1937-1966," in *Local-Level Politics: Social and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. by Marc J. Swartz (Chicago: Aldine, 1968), p. 355.

strongest social cement, personal ties, can be cracked. However, the adhesive quality remains, so the relationship can be reestablished whenever the winds of fortune dictate that it be reestablished. This plasticity of informal-group politics promotes an underlying systemic stability in the Middle East.

Informal groups in the Middle East are characterized by alternating fission and fusion. "It is always possible to divide them, to prevent powerful coalitions from forming, for their solidarity, of course, is inversely proportional to their breadth. Hence political showdowns rarely occur."<sup>25</sup> Although tension, conflict, and competition infuse this network of "many-stranded coalitions,"<sup>26</sup> the overall group system persists and prevails. The tension promotes balance. "Equilibrium in conflict is not achieved by both or all sides desisting from conflict but rather in both or all sides persisting in conflict. . . . The best defense of a security group lies in keeping up steady pressure against its rivals short of attack."<sup>27</sup> This principle of counterbalancing in group politics is prevalent throughout the Middle East, although it manifests itself somewhat differently from one society to another. In the traditional countries of the Gulf and Morocco, it helps foster systemic fluidity and flexibility. In Lebanon, on the other hand, it froze into a more rigid pattern, in which groups directly confronted one another; there, the more common pattern of many sides balanced against one another gave way to confrontations between two sides. The fragility of this situation became all too clear in April 1975 when the society exploded into bloody civil war.

This network of floating factions could not persist without a sturdier group backing to help anchor it in the social structure. Individuals require a more reliable vehicle than factions and cliques to defend their interests and to achieve their goals. In the Middle East, this mechanism is the kinship group in general and the family in particular.

### THE PRIMORDIAL GROUP NEXUS: THE FAMILY

Kinship units represent a very special kind of informal group. The family, which is the basic unit and building block of groups in the Middle East, retains characteristics that render it more rigid than most factional and nonassociational groups. Although the lines of association that mark personal cliques and political factions appear and disappear with amazing rapidity, true kinship relations are much more difficult to create and destroy. Ties of kinship remain in existence whether or not political actors choose to recognize them. Since family networks are virtually impossible to destroy, they provide the element of permanence needed to offset the impermanence of other informal groups. Family groupings are the linchpins of the system of group interaction in the Middle East. Indeed, lineage patterns are "the invisible skeleton of the community."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Moore, *Politics in North Africa*, p. 202.

<sup>26</sup>This phrase is borrowed from Eric Wolf, *Peasants* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), and is quoted in Khuri, "Changing Class Structure," p. 35.

<sup>27</sup>Vinogradov and Waterbury, "Situations of Contested Legitimacy," p. 35.

<sup>28</sup>This phrase is John Gulick's. See Gulick, *Social Structure and Culture Change in a Lebanese Village* (New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation, 1955), p. 104.

This skeleton, however, contains the moving force of the community. In the words of Dale Eickelman; "Kinship relationships should be treated as something which people make and with which they accomplish things."<sup>29</sup>

The traditional Middle Eastern family unit is an extended family, usually consisting of a man, his wife (or wives), his unmarried sons and daughters, and his married sons and their wives and children. In the contemporary urban Middle East, the institution of the extended family is increasingly giving way to the nuclear family, which includes only the husband, wife, and children. Family groups, whether extended or nuclear, are consciously and carefully shaped. Marriage patterns are critical, since they determine the direction in which the family group will move. The most distinctive traditional trait of Middle Eastern marriage is the preferred marriage of a man and his father's brother's daughter (*bint'amm*). This paternal first cousin marriage was designed to strengthen important blood ties and to solidify a constantly expanding family unit. Such an endogamous marriage pattern has significant political implications. In the Middle East, it enabled family heads to enlist the critical support of their brothers and their brothers' sons. In societies deeply divided, this minimal unit of coalition was a relatively effective action group. Few family clusters could afford the internecine conflict that might otherwise have occurred among brothers, nephews, and cousins.<sup>30</sup>

Every individual in the Middle East thus begins with membership in one important informal group—the family. This group seeks to magnify its kinship ties in at least three different ways. First, contacts are strengthened and regular communication is maintained with as many blood relatives as is practically possible. Even when there is great geographical and genealogical distance separating kinfolk, family members seldom hesitate to approach one another for needed economic and political assistance. In Egypt, for example, "While members of the descent group may not socialize regularly with one another, and may indeed be quite distant genealogically speaking, they have no compunction about asking their kin and affines for economic and political favors."<sup>31</sup>

The second way in which family ties are expanded in the Middle East is by a very broad and flexible definition of kinship. The Afghan concept of *qawm*, for example, defines actual kinship on the basis of deep social and political cooperation among those who live in the same area. Somewhat the same applies in Morocco, where the term *qaraba* or "closeness" is expressed as a blood tie "even when no demonstrable ties exist, because however such ties are valued in practice, they are considered permanent and cannot be broken."<sup>32</sup> Also, kinship ties are often fictitiously manufactured in an attempt to enhance the influence of a particular individual or group. The most common examples of fictive kinship

<sup>29</sup>Dale F. Eickelman, *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981), p. 134.

<sup>30</sup>For an excellent discussion of the marriage patterns of Middle Eastern families, see Dale F. Eickelman, *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*, second ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1989), pp. 151-178.

<sup>31</sup>Springborg, *Family, Power, and Politics*, p. 54.

<sup>32</sup>Eickelman, *The Middle East*, second ed., p. 156.

are elaborate arguments that purport to document one's direct descent from the family of the Prophet Muhammad.

Finally, family contacts are broadened by the incorporation into the kinship group of new individuals and families through marriage. This is why in the Middle East, "Arranging marriages is a highly serious matter, like waging war or making big business deals."<sup>33</sup> The process by which two families are brought together through intermarriage can be described as "family nesting." "Family nesting occurs when two families, tied together through marriage, reinforce that connection through a series of social, economic, and political exchanges."<sup>34</sup> The branches of the family trees in the forests of Middle Eastern society and politics are filled with family nests. In Egypt, the Marei family discussed previously nests with other powerful kinship units such as the Muhy al-din, Sabri, Shamsi, Abaza, Mashur, and Elwan families. The Mareis have even nested with the Sadat family. ". . . It is by nesting with other families that the descent group of the Mareis performs the greatest services for its members. The sheer number of family members involved in these nests, and the scope of their various economic and political activities, provides a complex of opportunities for the exchange of economic and political favors."<sup>35</sup> From the era of Farouk to that of Mubarak, families with whom the Mareis nested were among the most influential in the country.

For the family group to remain strong, its members must maintain a continually updated knowledge of the intricate kinship structure to which they belong. In the Ottoman system, for example, "Every member of the clan kept a genealogical map in his head to orient him in his relations with others."<sup>36</sup> In Turkey, the situation is one "of everyone having to know very precisely to what extended family, to what kin village, to what lineage, to what clan, to what clan federation and to what principality or khanate he belongs."<sup>37</sup> This awareness of precisely where one stands with regard to other group members contributes greatly to group solidarity and, ultimately, to the capacity to attain group objectives. Strands of kinship serve, at the very least, as relatively permanent lines of access among group members. It is in the individual's self-interest to be familiar with as many of these connections as possible.

Like all other group formations in the Middle East, the kinship group (whether family, tribe, or clan) is internally divided and fragmented. Intrafamilial tensions, quarrels, and feuds are common. However, within the nuclear family, the divisions are not as deep or the tensions as intense as they are outside the family. More important, the kinship group presents a united front against outside competitors. Fragmented collectivities gain solidarity and cohesion through

<sup>33</sup>Hildred Geertz, "The Meanings in Family Ties," in *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society*, ed. by C. Geertz, H. Geertz, and L. Rosen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 363, as quoted in Eickelman, *The Middle East*, second ed., p. 170.

<sup>34</sup>Springborg, *Family, Power, and Politics*, p. 73.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>36</sup>Şerif Mardin, "Historical Determinants of Stratification: Social Class and Class Consciousness in Turkey." Paper prepared for the Comparative Bureaucracy Seminar, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Spring 1966, p. 19.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

the pressure exerted by external rival forces. In this system of balancing opposition, the family unit always fares best. This is because the kinship group is the most cohesive and tenacious of the Middle Eastern group formations.

In addition to being both a biological and an economic unit, the family is very much a political aggregation. Family members support one another in their drives to improve their respective power and authority positions in the particular society. Besides providing support for its members in their efforts to attain political goals, the kinship group is politically relevant in many other ways. It serves, for example, as the staging ground from which individuals can move on to membership in other groups, both formal and informal. The family, in fact, determines much of its members' participation in other collectivities. Such informal groups as personal cliques and political factions have fathers, sons, brothers, nephews, cousins, and in-laws strategically sprinkled throughout them in patterns that tend to benefit the particular family unit. As often as not, a single family is represented in rival political factions, parties, or movements. Thus, although informal-group membership cuts across kinship lines, it is also true that the filaments of kinship cut across the boundaries of cliques and factions. A major function of distributing family members among various other groups is the construction and maintenance of channels of communication among these groups, whether they be rivals or allies.

The ligaments of kinship bind the system of groups into a working whole. They run through rival collectivities, thus softening tensions. Through membership in both formal and informal groups, blood relatives and in-laws help bind these two major organizational types together. Family members in such institutions as bureaucracies and parliaments are in close touch with relatives who are members of cliques and factions. Decisions made in one context are directly influenced by what occurs in another context.

Morocco has sometimes been referred to as the kingdom of cousins, and monarchical Iran was frequently called the country of one thousand families. Observers have labeled Farouk's Egypt as the land of two thousand families and contemporary Pakistan as the country of sixty families. The intricacies of family relationships explain a great deal about the orientations, formation, and behavior of political elites in the Middle East. The more traditional the society, the more useful kinship analysis will be in understanding it. In all the Middle Eastern countries, however, patterns of kinship and marriage are valuable in understanding the structure of power and authority. Those societies that are developing politically and modernizing rapidly may have a relatively large number of ruling families, as well as a high rate of familial mobility. A study of such family structures can explain much about national elites and the political processes of the societies under investigation. Selected examples follow.

In the three decades prior to 1958, the Iraqi political elite represented a tight cluster of families. The core of the elite included such families as the al-Saids, the al-Askaris, the Kannas, and the Kamals. The famous Nuri al-Said held the post of prime minister fourteen times and that of minister twenty-nine times! Ja'far al-Askari, who was assassinated in 1936, was prime minister twice and minister eight times. Nuri al-Said and Ja'far al-Askari married each other's sisters. Tahsin al-Askari followed in the footsteps of his assassinated brother, Ja'far, when in 1942 he assumed two ministerial positions. He was the brother-in-law of

Ibrahim Kamal, who was himself a cabinet minister twice. Another al-Askari brother, Abd al-Hadi, married his daughter to Khalil Kanna, who held ministerial posts six different times. Two of Khalil Kanna's brothers were members of the Iraqi parliament.<sup>38</sup>

The Iraqi revolution of 1958 did not destroy the political power of the families. The Ba'thist regime of strongman Saddam Hussein al-Takriti is dominated by Saddam and his relatives from the town of Takrit. In the early 1980s, Saddam's two leading intelligence and security chiefs were his half-brothers Barzan Ibrahim al-Takriti and Watban Ibrahim al-Takriti. Saddam himself was the foster son, nephew, and son-in-law of Khayrallah al-Tulfah, the longtime governor of Baghdad. In the words of a leading scholar of Iraqi politics, the Takritis' power is so great that "it would not be going too far to say that the Takritis' rule through the Ba'th party, rather than the Ba'th party through the Takritis."<sup>39</sup>

In the shah's Iran, national politics were dominated by family considerations, since the political elite that clustered around the ruling Pahlavi family came from a small number of families. Among the most influential of the elite families in Pahlavi Iran were the following: Alam, Diba, Qaragozlu, Esfandiari, Ardalan, Bayat, Sami'i, Farman-farmaian, Bushehri, Jahanbani, and Emami. The ties among key members of these families were easily as close as the ties among the families in Iraq. Longtime minister of culture Mehrdad Pahlbod was the husband of Princess Shams, a sister of Muhammad Reza Shah. Former major general Minbashian was the brother of Pahlbod (formerly Ezzatullah Minbashian). The influential Senator Bushehri was the father of the husband of powerful Princess Ashraf, the twin sister of the shah. Former air force commander Muhammad Khatami was married to the shah's sister Fatima. Ardeshir Zahedi, Iranian ambassador to the United States, was once married to the shah's daughter Shahnaz. During the last years of the shah's rule, there were forty national elite families that dominated the economic and political systems in Iran.

Despite the shattering nature of the Iranian revolution of 1978-1979, political influence in the Islamic Republic has tended to follow the primordial lines of kinship and family. The strands of kinship about which power coagulates extended outward from the person of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini himself. One of Khomeini's daughters, for example, was married to the influential Ayatollah Eshraqi. More important, Khomeini's son, Ahmad, was a close advisor to his father after they returned together to Tehran in 1979.<sup>40</sup>

With the election of reformist president Mohammad Khatami in 1997, the system of personal and familial ties persisted. Chairman of the influential Expediency Council and two-term president of the Islamic Republic, Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani has a brother, Mohammad Hashemi, who serves as vice

<sup>38</sup>This information is drawn from Nazar T. Al-Hasso's excellent Ph.D. dissertation. See Al-Hasso, "Administrative Politics in the Middle East: The Case of Monarchical Iraq, 1920-1958." Ph.D. diss., The University of Texas, Austin, Texas, 1976.

<sup>39</sup>Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 1088.

<sup>40</sup>Detailed information on the web of kinship ties that bound the early leaders of the Islamic Republic is found in an article that appeared in *Iran Times*, February 6, 1981, p. 9 (in Persian).



president for Executive Affairs for President Khatami. Khatami's brother, Hadi, is also a presidential adviser. Iranian foreign minister and longtime Iranian ambassador to the United Nations Kamal Kharrazi has an older brother who is a member of the Assembly of Experts and who maintains a close friendship with the Leader, Ali Khamenei. Khamenei's brother, Hadi, served in the Islamic Parliament until 1992 and then became editor of an influential daily newspaper.

Family connections loom even larger in the shaikhdoms of the Persian Gulf where the core of the political elite always consists of members of the ruling family. The remaining members of the elite are drawn from other wealthy, aristocratic families. Political decision making in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain is monopolized by the ruling families in these countries. In Bahrain, where political and economic decision making is dominated by Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa and his brother, Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the names of the leading families such as Kanu, Fakhru, Shirawi, and Mu'ayyid are well known.

The following anecdote illustrates that in Bahrain, family is more important than any formal governing body: While in the marketplace in 1973, an elderly Bahraini was told to go vote in the elections for the Constitutional Assembly. The old man looked around and asked, "Who owns that building?" "A Kanu," he was told. "And who owns this one?" "A Mu'ayyid," was the response. "And this third one?" "Shaykh Khalifa." The old man then asked, "Will the elections change any of this?"<sup>41</sup> The right family connections remain an important passport to the elite in much of the Middle East.

Political revolution and economic modernization have hardly lessened the role of the family group in government. It is true that the form of family organization has changed considerably and that kinship relations now crystallize in new ways. The most evident change of this sort is the transfer from the extended to the nuclear family style of household. This change, however, has not fundamentally altered the important role that kinship relations play in the political process. Fuad Khuri writes that "the change from the extended family subculture to that of the nuclear family does not imply the loss of family ties and duties. Family ties and duties, no doubt, continue, but in new forms."<sup>42</sup> The physical living arrangements of the family may be changing, but its sociopolitical demands and supports remain essentially the same.

### THE POWER OF WOMEN: A CASE STUDY OF INFORMAL POLITICS

When one examines the informal nature of group politics in the Middle East, a number of previously overlooked and underemphasized dimensions of the political game suddenly come into sharper focus. Persons who were formerly considered peripheral to political decision making take on more central signifi-

<sup>41</sup>This story is presented in Nakhleh, *Bahrain*, p. 129 n.

<sup>42</sup>Khuri, "Changing Class Structure," p. 38.

cance. This is precisely the case in cultures where there is no sharp distinction between the private and the public spheres or where key community and national decisions are made in informal settings by individuals often considered peripheral to politics. An important case in point is the Middle Eastern woman. Studying the woman's role in society can provoke new insights into the kinds of actors and actresses who play out the political drama and can indicate both the importance of informal politics and the special place that family relationships have in Middle Eastern politics.

For years, Middle Eastern women have been stereotyped as an oppressed and passive group who have been hidden by veils and whose lives have been dominated by men. Western writers in particular have presented the Muslim woman as someone held captive in the kitchen or harem while her husband frolics personally and protects politically a system of polygamy that rationalizes female servitude. Quotations from the Quran and the relative absence of females on the public political stage have sometimes led outsiders to conclude that the woman in Islamic society has been little more than a personal and political cipher. This perspective has been reinforced by Middle Eastern historians and chroniclers who have traditionally downplayed the role of women in their writings. In addition, essayists and polemicists, both male and female, have distorted the historical position of women for various purposes.

In stressing the formal, public, and institutional aspects of political behavior at the expense of the private and informal dimensions, Western analysts have overlooked precisely those individuals who dominate the private realm. In the Middle East, women are important political forces because of their critical positions as personal nodes in the webs of informal relationships. In the crucial world of informal, private groups, women have been more than the homemakers. They have also been "the matchmakers and the peacemakers."<sup>43</sup> As anthropologist Emrys Peters puts it,

The pivotal points in any field of power in this, a superficially dominant patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal society where the male ethos is vulgar in its brash prominence, are the women. What holds men together, what knots the cords of alliances are not men themselves, but the women who depart from their natal household to take up residence elsewhere with a man, and who, in this critical position, communicate one group to another.<sup>44</sup>

This quotation refers to only one of the ways in which Middle Eastern women shape political events at all levels of the societies in which they live.

<sup>43</sup>We are indebted to Gerald J. Obermeyer for this phrase.

<sup>44</sup>Emrys Peters, "Consequences of the Segregation of the Sexes Among the Arabs." Paper delivered at the Mediterranean Social Science Council Conference, Athens, 1966, p. 15. This important observation has been quoted by such scholars as Cynthia Nelson and Carla Makhoul, whose works stress the political power of women in the Middle East. Anthropologically inclined analysts have been much more sensitive to this power than have political scientists. Two further examples are Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, who has done field work in Iraq, Egypt, and Morocco, and Lois Grant Beck, who has worked in Iran. Cynthia Nelson's field observations come from Egypt, and Carla Makhoul's from Yemen.

In both the traditional and the modern Middle East, women have exerted political influence through the wide variety of roles that they have played. Perhaps the most important of these have been natal and marital kinship roles. Such natal roles as daughter, sister, cousin, aunt, mother, and grandmother and such marital roles as wife and mother-in-law have been politically strategic throughout Islamic history. The special relationship between mother and son is particularly relevant to our understanding of Middle Eastern political events. As we shall see in the examples here, only the role of wife has been more important in the female repertoire of political roles. One knowledgeable observer writes that "it is hardly surprising that the relationship to the mother is preferred to the paternal one, and that every patriarchal society is condemned to be matriarchal on the edges. On the edges? Not at all! It is a question here of the depths of existence."<sup>45</sup>

Other roles in which Muslim women have exerted influence in the political arena include such diverse traditional callings as prostitute, concubine, entertainer, servant, religious leader, soothsayer, and advisor. More modern roles, such as career woman and politician-stateswoman, are becoming more important with time. Female revolutionaries and guerrillas are also increasingly active.

Among the tools that Middle Eastern women have used to exert influence are such resources as wealth, beauty, intelligence, and information, as well as both psychological and physical coercion. They have often converted the very signs of their oppression into formidable offensive weapons that have enabled them to secure their interests. Excellent examples of such weapons are the harem and the veil that segregate the sexes. The conventional wisdom is that it is the women who are excluded from the male world, but, as one scholar has recently written: "One can venture to assert that it is in fact the men who are excluded from the female world, as much, if not more, than females are excluded from that of man."<sup>46</sup> This researcher goes on to give a number of examples of how much easier it is for women to penetrate men's gatherings than for males to participate in those of women.

A survey of Middle Eastern history indicates the important contributions that women have made to the political process. From the very beginnings of Islam, women have been critical political forces. Indeed, as we shall see in Chapter 4, there is little doubt that the Prophet Muhammad could not have succeeded in his mission without the indispensable support of his first wife, Khadija. Other women who helped shape the early social system of Islam were Muhammad's wife A'isha and his daughter Fatima. Fatima's sister-in-law Zaynab

<sup>45</sup>A. Bouhdiba, "The Child and the Mother in Arab-Muslim Society," in *Psychological Dimensions of Near Eastern Studies*, ed. by L. Carl Brown and Norman Itzkowitz (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1977), p. 133. For another fine discussion of the power of the mother and mother-in-law in Muslim society, see Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1975), pp. 69-79.

<sup>46</sup>Carla Makhlouf, *Changing Veils: Women and Modernisation in North Yemen* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1979). This study contains fascinating material showing how the veil has traditionally provided Middle Eastern women with a mobile form of security and anonymity and has even facilitated the expression of aggressiveness. More than religious fervor is involved in the return to the veil in the 1980s and 1990s by numerous liberated young women in countries such as Egypt.

was also a powerful force in early Islamic history, as were the wives of the various imams who were the direct descendants of Fatima and her husband Ali.

The political role of women in the famous Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates is little known. In both instances, it was critical. This was especially true during the golden age of the cosmopolitan Abbasid dynasty in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. At a time when Europe was plunged into its Dark Ages and when Charlemagne and his lords "were reportedly dabbling with the art of writing their names,"<sup>47</sup> the powerful Abbasids, ruling from Baghdad, were debating philosophic texts and making gigantic intellectual strides in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and the arts. The glory and grandeur of this period are captured in romantically imaginative terms in *The Thousand Nights and a Night*, and such rulers of the period as Harun al-Rashid (A.D. 786-809) and his brilliant son the caliph al-Ma'mun (A.D. 813-833) are among the most renowned of Eastern rulers. Names such as Umm Salama, Khayzuran, and Zubayda, however, are considerably less known, even among scholars of the area. Umm Salama was the wife of Abu al-Abbas and thus served as a critical link between the two dynasties. A strong personality, she directed her husband's affairs, and he "took no decisive measure without Umm Salamah's advice and approval."<sup>48</sup>

Khayzuran was the favorite wife of the third Abbasid caliph, Muhammad al-Mahdi; she was also the mother of the fourth and fifth caliphs, Musa al-Hadi and Harun al-Rashid. A slave girl born in Yemen, she received an excellent education and caught the eye of the caliph al-Mansur, who brought her to the court, where his son al-Mahdi married her. For thirty years, during the reigns of three caliphs, Khayzuran's political power was enormous. Her agents and secretaries were spread throughout the empire; she intervened directly in the administration of justice; she influenced the rise and fall of the caliph's closest advisors; she financed the construction of public works; and she directed the succession of kings. It was Khayzuran who held the system together and ensured the smooth transition of kings both upon the death of her husband and then again when her eldest son, al-Hadi, passed away. Khayzuran was an owner of extensive property, and, next to her illustrious son Harun al-Rashid, she was the wealthiest person in the Muslim world of her day. In describing Khayzuran's role during the caliphates of her two sons, one writer succinctly summarizes her position: "The ambitious mother travels in state on the imperial highway of power."<sup>49</sup>

Better known in the annals of Islamic history than Khayzuran is her niece Zubayda, the wife of Harun al-Rashid. One of the greatest builders of public works in Islamic history, Zubayda is remembered particularly for sponsoring the construction of over ten miles of complex aqueducts leading into Mecca. She spent over 75 million dinars in digging the Mushshash Spring in that holy city—a spectacular feat in any age. Like Khayzuran, Zubayda was intimately involved in all the important political issues of the time. She had influence over judges, police officials, and military generals, not to mention her husband. The observation that "Zubaidah had (complete) control over Hārūn's mind and did with

<sup>47</sup>Philip K. Hitti, *The Near East in History* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1961), p. 244.

<sup>48</sup>Nabia Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 11.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 132.

him as she pleased<sup>50</sup> is perhaps only a slight exaggeration. In the succession battle between her son Muhammad Amin and al-Ma'mun, she played a critical role in Amin's victory. Zubayda was a major force also in turning Harun against the powerful Persian Barmecids, who had directed the political fortunes of the Abbasid dynasty more than any other family. Indirectly, but very effectively, she helped bring about their destruction. Zubayda left her imprint deeply in the sands of Abbasid social and political history.

Moving chronologically onward and geographically southward, we come to the Sulayhid dynasty, which ruled in South Arabia from 1037 to 1138. This Shi'i dynasty made its capital in Sanaa and later in the Dhu Jibla of today's Yemen. The Sulayhi "educated their daughters to the same standards as their menfolk, instilled in them the same moral and political principles, and made them their equals in astuteness, ability, and judgement."<sup>51</sup> The greatest of the Sulayhid queens was Urwa bint Ahmad al-Sulayhi, who upon her husband al-Mukarram's death in 1084 took complete command and ruled for fifty-three years. A woman of great political acumen, Queen Urwa ruled the Sulayhid state by judiciously emphasizing tactics of compromise, personal maneuver, and the wise appointment of assistants and advisors. Urwa's political success is perhaps largely attributable to the training she received under the direction of another woman, Queen Asma, the wife of the founder of the Sulayhid dynasty.

The Ottoman Empire, which boasts a political history that extended from the thirteenth to the twentieth centuries, is a much more significant example of an Islamic system in which women wielded political power. The Ottoman style, however, is more similar to the Abbasid style of indirect kinship control than to the Sulayhid style of direct rule by a queen. Although one can select any particular sultan and discover in association with him a number of women active in the central decision-making process, we will cut into Ottoman history at its height of grandeur, the reign of Suleyman I the Lawgiver (1520-1566). Suleyman was known for his legal promulgations and his empire for its architectural creations, naval strength, and military expansion deep into Europe. Surrounding Suleyman were three women of particular note—his mother, Hafsa Hatun, and his wives, Hurrem Sultan and Gulbahar Hatun. Their political influence was great, especially in controlling the sultan and the grand vazir, the most important administrative official in the Ottoman system. Of these three women, the most powerful was Hurrem Sultan, a former Russian slave girl known in the West as Roxelana. It was she who convinced Suleyman to let her live with him in the seraglio, "where she obtained complete ascendancy over the Sultan and ruled supreme in the harēm until her death in 1558."<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup>F. Wustenfeld, *Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka*, vol. 3, p. 15, as quoted in Abbott, *Two Queens*, p. 256.

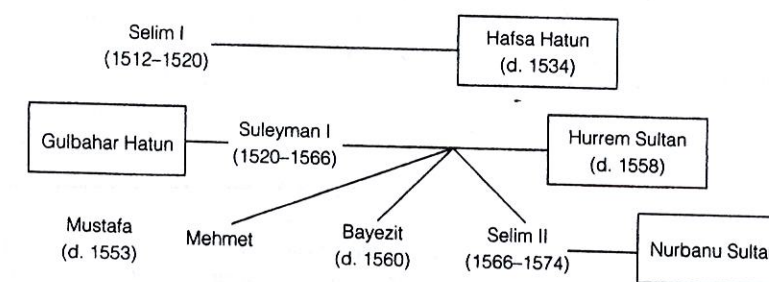
<sup>51</sup>Robert W. Stookey, *Yemen: The Politics of the Yemen Arab Republic* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978), p. 67.

<sup>52</sup>N. M. Penzer, *The Harēm* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1937), p. 186. There are many sources that describe this period of Ottoman history. For an excellent example, see Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 87-111.

Hafsa Hatun and Hurrem Sultan formed an alliance of convenience to expel one grand vazir and appoint another early in the reign of Suleyman. The new vazir, Ibrahim Pasha, felt indebted to Hafsa Hatun for his position and was careful to do her bidding. Meanwhile, he was independently linked to Suleyman himself, who permitted the vazir to run the empire. Ibrahim Pasha in the process became one of the most powerful of the grand vazirs in Ottoman history. An extraordinarily ambitious person politically, Hurrem Sultan came to regard the vazir as a major competitor and sought to destroy him. When her mother-in-law died in 1534, she moved quickly against the vazir. The now exposed Ibrahim Pasha found an ally in Suleyman's first wife, Gulbahar Hatun, who was anxious that her son Mustafa become the heir apparent. Hurrem Sultan, with her own sons' interests at heart, gathered other supporters (including the French ambassador) and was able to prevail in the struggle. In 1536, Ibrahim Pasha lost not only his job but also his life.

Hurrem Sultan then succeeded in getting her eldest son, Mehmet, named as heir to the throne. With his untimely death, however, Gulbahar Hatun, with the assistance of the new vazir, Hadim Suleyman Pasha, finally placed her son Mustafa in the coveted position. Hurrem Sultan's power, however, was not to be denied, and she forced this vazir into exile. She now ensured that someone more reliable got the post: Her own son-in-law, Rustem Pasha, became vazir. This new alliance resulted in the execution of Gulbahar Hatun's son Mustafa. When there was a revolt in 1555, partially against this execution, Hurrem Sultan's son Bayezit successfully put it down. When Hurrem Sultan died in 1558, she had determined that one of her sons would become the next sultan. Her son Selim succeeded Suleyman to the throne in 1566 and ruled for eight years as Sultan Selim II. Selim's wife Nurbanu Sultan in fact ruled the empire during his reign. During the rule of her own son, Sultan Murad III, she shared political power with her daughter-in-law Safriyah Sultan, and so it continued. It is small wonder that the Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has come to be historically known as the Sultanate of Woman (*Kadinlar Sultanati*). (For a diagrammatic representation of the women of Suleyman the Lawgiver's reign, see Figure 3.1.)

Early in this century, women played an important part in the various constitutional and revolutionary movements that swept across the Middle East. An ex-



**Figure 3.1** The women of Suleyman the Lawgiver's reign. The names of the women in the system appear in boxes.

cellent case in point is Halide Edib Adivar, a leading Turkish intellectual, nationalist, and supporter of Mustafa Kemal's movement for independence. Born in 1883, she was educated at the American College for Girls and then began writing and speaking for liberal causes. Her inspired public speeches in support of the nationalist revolution earned her national and even international fame. Her statement that "governments are our enemies, peoples are our friends, and the just revolt of our hearts our strength" became the rallying cry of Turkish nationalists.<sup>53</sup> Halide Edib Adivar actually served in Kemal's army as a corporal, a sergeant, and a sergeant major.

Women also played a critical role in the Iranian constitutional movement from 1905 to 1911. They organized themselves into informal meeting groups (*anjumans*) and did not hesitate to take to the streets in support of their political ideals. When the newly established parliament (*majlis*) faced extinction in 1911, a large group of women marched on the building:

Three hundred women surrounded the entrance to the *Majlis*, or Parliament, recently formed, and demanded admission. A few only were admitted. They walked in closely veiled, but when they found themselves in the assembly they tore their veils aside, and said that their intention was to kill their husbands, their sons and themselves if the liberty and dignity of Persia were not firmly upheld. They offered their money and jewels, saying: "We are women and cannot fight, but we can give to our country." They had their own places of assembly where they discussed these matters, and they used the Press, and personal influence was largely exerted.<sup>54</sup>

As time has passed, Muslim women have assumed a more direct and dramatic role in Middle Eastern politics. In the Algerian war of independence, women were an important part of the resistance and did everything from hiding fugitives to throwing bombs. National heroine Jamilah Buhrayd, for example, rather than becoming a seamstress, became a revolutionary and was eventually shot, after having been imprisoned and tortured by the French. Young women have been very conspicuous in the Palestine guerrilla movement. Laila Khaled, for example, gained international notoriety when she was captured as part of a four-plane hijacking operation in September 1970. In May 1972, two young Arab women, former nursing students, participated in the hijacking of a Sabena Boeing 707 to Lod Airport in Israel. There are many other examples. One observer writes: "Mostly young and often educated in the West—France, England, the United States—the Palestinian girl fedayeen have a better political understanding than their male counterparts. Indeed, they are more the material from which real revolutionaries are made. Proportionate to their numbers they have caused the Israelis more trouble than have their male comrades."<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup>Elizabeth Warnock Fernea and Basima Qattan Bezirgan, eds., *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1977), p. 189.

<sup>54</sup>C. Colliver Rice, *Persian Women in Their Ways* (London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1923), p. 270. For an even more dramatic description of this event, see W. Morgan Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia* (New York: Century Co., 1912), p. 198.

<sup>55</sup>John Laffin, *Fedayeen: The Arab-Israeli Dilemma* (New York: Free Press, 1973), p. 138.

This revolutionary role of Muslim women in influencing Middle Eastern politics is only one of many more direct and formal ways that they now exert power. As their legal rights expand and as they gain greater stature in the formal governmental arena, Middle Eastern women are acquiring political authority. Women's movements are present in the Middle East, and women are slowly taking their places in government bureaucracies. In so doing, however, they have not relinquished their traditional influence in the informal sphere of power. It is as part of the informal group or family that women continue to operate most effectively.

In Pahlavi Iran, Empress Farah Diba did not confine herself to social work and charitable causes. Although she headed nearly forty different social organizations, she was also involved in political issues. In the latter half of the 1970s, the empress was the shah's last important line to reality and was the only person left among his advisors who could take issue with his decisions. Toward the end, the shah refused to take the advice of his wife seriously. If he had, the political outcome in Iran might possibly have been different.

In Tunisia, Wassila bin Amar, the wife of former President Bourguiba, was long embroiled in national politics. Her advice and opinions often shaped the course of events in that country. In November 1977, she visited President Sadat in Cairo to indicate her country's support for his direct approach to peace in the Middle East. Jihan Sadat, the wife of the assassinated Egyptian president, was an important force in Egyptian society and politics. She had a significant power base in the presidency, the government more broadly, and within the wealthy bourgeoisie. It took President Mubarak almost five years to dismantle the foundations of her power.

With the resurgence of Islamic movements across the region, women continue to wield influence from behind the veil. The indomitable, independent women of Egypt, for example, have in many cases gone back to traditional garb while at the same time maintaining their integrity and even increasing their power. In Iran, women played a major role in the revolution, donating their jewelry and organizing demonstrations in support of the movement. Since the revolution, veiled women quietly hold influential positions in governmental organizations such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the major universities in the country. In the division of physical sciences at Beheshti University in the 1990s, women held three department headships.

Muslim women in the Middle East have never enjoyed legal equality with men and have suffered discrimination in many areas of existence. Any study of the formal scaffolding of the social and political systems clearly demonstrates their lack of authority. Such inequity, however, is not the same as the lack of power. Middle Eastern women have never been powerless. Indeed, they have played a pervasive and persistent part in shaping political decisions and determining political events ever since the time when the widow Khadija married and then materially and psychologically supported the young man Muhammad. Only by analyzing politics at the informal level does one begin to understand and appreciate the significance of women to the entire political process.

Our brief survey of Middle Eastern women in politics yields several general observations. First, women throughout Muslim history have had a more pro-

found impact on political events than is generally thought. Second, this political power has usually been wielded indirectly through men. Natal and marital relationships have been particularly crucial here. Third, there has been a movement over the past several decades among Middle Eastern women for legal equality and social and political rights. Although this movement has been slowed in recent years by the reassertion of Islam, it is still very much alive, even in the most traditional of countries, such as Saudi Arabia.

In the Middle East, women's liberation is a drive not so much to acquire power as to add authority to power: Why must women's political influence be indirect and confined to the informal arena? Middle Eastern women are on the move. They refuse to accept second-class status and to wield influence only in informal, private settings. In fact, they are using their informal group membership as the catalytic grounding for the formation of new political rights and empowerment. In the meantime, they continue to exert power informally, personalistically, and derivatively.<sup>56</sup>

## Class Structure: Horizontal Stratification

*It is He who has made us the inheritors of the earth, who has elevated us one above the other by degrees in order to help us experience His gifts.*

QURAN, CHAPTER 6, VERSE 165

Although informal groups and networks must be taken into account in any study of Middle Eastern politics, the political process is not played out in a seamless web of interacting groups. The cases presented here, for example, indicate that it is usually only women of the upper class who in fact influence the national polity. The masses of women (like the masses of men) have little if anything to say about major political decisions. By emphasizing only the group dimension, we suggest that group pluralism promotes equality. What is left out of the equation is the issue of horizontal stratification. Slashing across the web of groups are lines of stratification that profoundly affect not only the group dynamics previously discussed but also the entire political process of the Middle East. Serif Mardin cogently summarizes this point when he writes that although membership in a kinship group "raised the expectations of a less prestigious member of the group that he could rise in society, the fact that he belonged to a well-recognized stratum led to frustrations as regards the actual capacity to rise in society."<sup>57</sup>

G. E. von Grunebaum once wrote that "the Muslim's personal equality with his fellows in the faith which is guaranteed, so to speak, by his right to a direct relationship with his Lord does in no way preclude elaborate social stratification within

<sup>56</sup>For a fascinating and realistic symposium discussion by an articulate group of scholars and Middle Eastern women about their struggle for both power and authority, see A. Richard Norton, et al., "Gender, Politics and the State: What Do Middle Eastern Women Want?" in *Middle East Policy* 5 (September 1997): 155-189.

<sup>57</sup>Mardin, "Historical Determinants," p. 4.

the community of Islam."<sup>58</sup> The group network and communalism discussed above cloak a system of horizontal stratification in which Middle Eastern societies break down into a relatively small number of interrelated classes.<sup>59</sup> A class structure always involves entities in superior and subordinate positions. The overall hierarchy of classes is founded on the unequal possession of one of the fundamental values of social and political life. In the sociological literature, class is most often defined according to one of three different emphases: wealth, status, and power. An individual's place in a social class is determined by his or her position with respect to one of these characteristics. Although all three determinants are interrelated in the sense that the possession of one may strongly affect the acquisition of another, the question of which is the basic criterion remains open. In this volume on the Middle East, we define *class* in terms of power and employment position.<sup>60</sup>

## CLASS AND POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST

For our purposes, *power* refers to one's ability to shape and control the behavior of others.<sup>61</sup> This ability may rest as much upon indirect personal maneuvering and verbal persuasion as upon direct threat, coercive demand, or economic inducement. The basis of power may be located in the political, economic, social, educational, religious, or psychological systems. Because Islam is a way of life that involves all of these dimensions, power relations in Islamic societies usually involve a subtly integrated complex of factors. One Islamic scholar writes, for example, that "political influence, military power, administrative rank, wealth, birth, and schooling, in every possible combination, strengthened or counteracted one another in assigning a given individual his place in society."<sup>62</sup> Wealth is but one of a number of important variables that determine one's position in the class structure. Material resources have seldom been enough to enable individuals consistently to attain their goals. Personal contacts, social manipulation,

<sup>58</sup>Gustave E. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation*, second ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 170.

<sup>59</sup>For an important study in which *class* is the basic tool of analysis, see Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982).

<sup>60</sup>For two explicit attempts to discuss class analysis as it applies to Middle Eastern society and politics, see Jacques Berque, "L'Idée des Classes dans L'Histoire Contemporaine des Arabes," *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 38 (1965): 169-184; and James A. Bill, "Class Analysis and the Dialectics of Modernization in the Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3 (October 1972): 417-434. The latter article provides the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings for the linkage of class and power. For a recent formulation, see Alan Richards and John Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, second ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996).

<sup>61</sup>This definition of power is slightly broader than those provided by scholars who have chosen to reword Max Weber's original definition. In our view, a power relation can involve more than getting someone to do what he or she would not otherwise do. It can be a reinforcing pattern whereby one individual encourages another to continue behaving in a certain way, or it may simply be a case of one person's causing another to translate a predisposition into action.

<sup>62</sup>Von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, p. 212.

saintly ancestry, mystical strength, familial solidarity, higher education, political maneuvering, and an innate sense of timing are all crucial ingredients that help determine one's class standing.

Among the more common, if seldom recognized, dimensions of power that have been instrumental in shaping the formation of Middle Eastern class structure are the following:

1. Exchange transactions in which one person convinces others to accede to his or her wishes by rewarding them for so doing
2. Informational exchanges that involve dispensing and withholding information of varying degrees of value
3. Decisional situations in which one person controls the decision-making environment and thus the decisions made therein
4. Debt-inflicting relationships in which one does favors for others with the confident expectation that they will someday be returned
5. Overt deference behavior by which one person gains the trust of another and thus makes the temporarily more powerful person vulnerable
6. Bargaining interactions that occur in environments of doubt and rest upon such techniques as the bluff and the compromise
7. Kinship patterns in which family members strive to assist one another to improve their relative positions in the class structure
8. Modes of misrepresentation that distort reality in a manner designed to shift the balance of interpersonal influence

The exchange transaction is the simplest and most direct means of exerting power; it is a major pattern in all societies. It is most often expressed as financial dealings, which range all the way from salary transactions to bribery payments. In the Middle East, a disproportionately high percentage of exchange transactions occur in noneconomic terms, since the objects of exchange include personal loyalty, political service, religious approval, and reliable information. Informational exchanges are critical in societies where informality cloaks the exercise of power and where decisions are made within personalistic networks. Indeed, information is a valuable commodity in the Middle East. Political elites constantly seek information concerning the actual and potential opposition forces in their societies. Individuals and groups in the middle and lower classes both hoard and barter information in order to improve their own positions in the social structure.

Another dimension of the power syndrome is the phenomenon of "nondecision making," whereby superordinately situated individuals control the behavior of subordinates through the manipulation and control of the environment in which the latter must operate.<sup>63</sup> An example of this phenomenon in the Middle East is the executive control of parliaments and political parties. Decisions tend to be made in the parliaments and parties according to what the deputies believe the will of the ruler to be. It is not necessary that there be any communi-

<sup>63</sup>See Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz's classic discussion of the "nondecision-making process" in "Two Faces of Power," *American Political Science Review* 56 (December 1962): 947-952.

cation between the leadership and the representative. If deputies do not correctly anticipate what the ruler wants and do not act accordingly, they may find themselves politically unemployed; or, as happened in the mid-1970s in Bahrain and Kuwait, the rulers simply dissolve the parliamentary bodies themselves. Control is thus built into the structure of the system in a less than obvious manner. Learning how to interact in this kind of system is essential to the determination of one's class standing.

One of the most distinctive facets of power relations in Middle Eastern society is debt infliction. In the Muslim community of North Africa, "Every act requires some form of reciprocation as an inherent aspect of its very nature: Every act creates an obligation or expresses a right held."<sup>64</sup> Those upon whom debts are inflicted are put into a disadvantageous position of dependence. It is in this sense that Fredrik Barth describes the mechanism as it manifests itself in the Swat Valley in Pakistan. The relationship to political power is unmistakable here, since even "gift-giving and hospitality are potent means of controlling others. . . ."<sup>65</sup> As one Lebanese citizen puts it, gifts are "the lubricants of social interaction."<sup>66</sup>

Deference, which is part of the somewhat extravagant patterns of courtesy and politeness that obtain in the Middle East, can be used effectively to balance highly uneven personal relationships. When properly displayed, deference can loosen the control of the more powerful actor over the less powerful individual. Deferential behavior can stimulate a false sense of security in the superior person in any relationship, thus heightening his or her vulnerability. It was in this spirit that the Ziyarid prince Kai Ka'us Ibn Iskandar wrote his son that "if you are being fattened by someone, you may expect very quickly to be slaughtered by him. . . ."<sup>67</sup>

Another context in which power exchange occurs in the Middle East is bargaining, in which the actors in fact agree to disagree. Each side in the encounter uses a wide variety of persuasive techniques in order to further his or her interests. The outcome of the confrontation remains in doubt until the very end of the process, when one side indicates a willingness to accept the terms of the other. An individual who is able to use an effective blend of candor and the bluff, as in bargaining, can greatly enhance his or her position in the social and political hierarchy.

The final two tactics of control and influence have to do with kinship ties and modes of misrepresentation. As we noted earlier, the family is the most cohesive unit in Middle Eastern society. As such, it is least susceptible to radical change and most reliable as a unit of personal and group support. The mobility of one family member affects the potential mobility of the whole family. Entire families often move up in the class structure. They are also downwardly mobile.

<sup>64</sup>Lawrence Rosen, "Muslim-Jewish Relations in a Moroccan City," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3 (October 1972): 438.

<sup>65</sup>Fredrik Barth, *Political Leadership among Swat Pathans* (London: Athlone Press, 1959), p. 79.

<sup>66</sup>Fuad I. Khuri, *From Village to Suburb: Order and Change in Greater Beirut* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 86.

<sup>67</sup>Kai Ka'us Ibn Iskandar, *A Mirror for Princes* (The Qābūs-nāma), trans. by Reuben Levy (London: Cresset Press, 1951), p. 191.

Because of the centrality of the family in determining one's position in the power structure, individuals constantly seek to attach themselves to prominent families. This is usually accomplished through marriage, but it is also often done through fictive kinship ties. This is only one of the forms of misrepresentation designed to help improve one's class position. To exaggerate and falsely embroider reality at propitious times is a technique more frowned upon in the West than in the Middle East, where such behavior often deflects conflict and prevents violent confrontation. It also is a dimension of influence that must be considered when explaining class membership and class conflict.

### THE MIDDLE EASTERN CLASS SYSTEM

Throughout Islamic history, a person's power position has been closely intertwined with his or her occupational skill. Mode of employment to a large degree determined an individual's capacity to utilize the techniques and to operate effectively in the environment discussed above. An individual was best able to wield power using skills and talents one already possessed. The military, cleric, and bureaucratic occupations provided their practitioners with unusual opportunities to strengthen their positions in the class structure through informed use of the coercive, religious, and political dimensions of power. The intimate connection between power and employment was a direct result of the development of Islamic social history and the Prophet Muhammad's early strictures concerning the occupational bases of the community of Islam. One of the earliest foundations for stratification was the assignment of the believers "to a more or less definite hierarchy of professions."<sup>68</sup> For purposes of the following empirical analysis of horizontal stratification in the Middle East, we define classes as the largest aggregates of individuals united by similar modes of employment and maintaining similar power positions in society.

Classical Islamic thinkers have presented views of horizontal stratification that range from two-class to eight-class hierarchies. According to the criteria developed above, the traditional Middle Eastern Islamic social structure consisted of seven interrelated classes: the upper (ruling) class, the bureaucratic middle class, the bourgeois middle class, the cleric middle class, the traditional working class, the peasant class, and the nomadic class. This schema includes one upper, three middle, and three lower classes. This designation of upper, middle, and lower refers to the general power categories, while the more specific labels are assigned on the basis of both power and employment. The nomenclature of each class indicates its employment function.

The upper class in the traditional Islamic social structure represented a tiny percentage of the population, usually less than 2 percent. The upper class was a ruling class, because it possessed a monopoly of the instruments of power and authority in society. This class was composed of the elites that rested at the very apex of the governmental, landholding, religious, tribal, military, and business pyramids of influence. The rulers and the networks of ruling families were at the core of the upper class. Also included were the military leaders, the large native

<sup>68</sup>Von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, p. 177.

landlords, the highest-level bureaucrats (the vazirs, for example), the leadership of the ulema who supported the system, the tribal chieftains and khans, and the wealthiest merchants and business entrepreneurs. This ruling class exhibited exclusive and inclusive characteristics that tended to balance out one another, ultimately stabilizing membership size. In most cases, a single member of this class had a number of power-laden functions. For example, a member of the ruling family was often at the same time a military leader and a large landlord. The tribal nobility maintained large landholdings and were often among the highest-ranking military officials. In this way, wealth, influence, and coercive power reinforced one another and strengthened one's class position. This helped to narrow upper-class membership. On the other hand, the kinship mechanism tended to expand the size of the upper class while at the same time linking this class to the various middle classes. The extended family ties of a ruler, vazir, or landlord brought new waves of individuals into ruling-class ranks. Indeed, one of the best ways even today to understand ruling classes in Middle Eastern societies is to analyze the structures of leading families.

Ruling classes in the contemporary Islamic Middle East are shaped by the lines of kinship along which power flows. Family ties and intermarriage patterns help solidify an inherently fragmented and fissured upper class. The lack of any strong class consciousness, at least among the ruling class, is partially compensated for by a kind of interfamilial and intrafamilial consciousness. Although studies show that family membership in Middle Eastern upper classes is relatively unstable, there are indications that a small number of families remain in upper-class ranks over time. The informality of family structure in many ways mirrors the character of the upper class, which is also relatively fluid. In a study of the upper class ("patriciate") of Muslim Nishapur from the tenth to the twelfth century, Richard Bulliet writes that "the reality of the patriciate consisted in individuals and families who knew each other and recognized each other as being above the ordinary run of people. There was no formal membership in the patriciate."<sup>69</sup> In sum, the upper class in Islamic history has been a complex of leading clerics, generals, vazirs, khans, and merchant kings familiarly and informally bound together around the person of the ruler and his family. By virtue of its advantageous power position, this ruling class directs the political system of society.

The bureaucratic middle class has been the most powerful of the three traditional middle classes. Its membership is composed of the mass of governmental employees who staff the administrative system. Possessing a minimum of traditional education, these individuals are the scribes, accountants, recorders, and bureaucratic functionaries of traditional Middle Eastern society. Like the ruling class, this middle class is rather loosely and informally organized. Although in many Islamic societies there were families that came to be known as bureaucratic families, kinship ties are not as important as class indicators here as they are in the upper class.

In our concentric circles of class and power, the bureaucratic middle class most closely rings the ruling class. It is an important intermediary class that

<sup>69</sup>Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 86.

translates the directives of the ruling class into action. This administering class appears to be almost an appendage to the upper class because of its many points of contact with the rulers. Owing to this proximity, the bureaucratic middle class has more often served the interests of the ruling class than those of the other middle and lower classes. While maintaining an important power of its own, this class traditionally viewed its interests as intertwined with those of the upper class. The proximity to power always held out to the bureaucratic middle class the possibility of movement into upper-class ranks.

Located approximately between the bureaucratic and cleric middle classes is the bourgeois middle class, which is a class of businessmen, merchants, and traders. The symbol and center of activity of this class is the bazaar, or *suq*. As an individual, the merchant or trader has relatively little economic power and virtually no political influence. As a class, however, this bourgeoisie has considerable political power. When ruling-class policies have seriously endangered the interests of commerce and the lifestyles of the merchant, the bazaar has often become the heart of opposition to the regime in power. It was out of the ranks of the bourgeoisie that Islam itself developed as a community and civilization. Also, throughout the history of Islam, a number of social and religious movements have sprung up from this class in opposition to the prevailing political order.

There are three reasons why the merchants and tradesmen have been able to give birth to opposition movements. First, the members of this class managed to institutionalize their traditional informal patterns of interaction in a system of guilds and brotherhoods. Second, their organizational apparatus had a semblance of ideology, which helped provide a rationalization for their activities. This ideology was composed of various folk and mystic Islamic beliefs. Finally, this kind of organizational and ideological framework linked the business middle class with important elements in both the cleric middle class and the traditional working class. The *suqs* and bazaars were the meeting place for merchant, cleric, and artisan.

The cleric middle class, which is composed of the lower and intermediate ranks of the *ulema*, is the third traditional middle class. The members of this class enjoy neither the political influence of the bureaucrats nor the wealth of the businessmen. They have, however, possessed important religio-psychological influence over those members of society who are practicing Muslims. They also have controlled the educational system through their role as teachers and directors of the traditional educational institutions (*maktabs* and *madrasas*). The constituency of the clerics has been largely concentrated within the lower classes, and because of this, the interests of the cleric middle class have been closely entwined with those below them in the social structure.

The three traditional middle classes were closely related to one another in a number of ways. The members of all these classes were the products of the same educational system—a system that was directed by the *ulema* and that stressed reading, writing, religious law, rhetoric, and the *Quran*. The educational method used was rote memorization. One result of this was that all traditional middle-class individuals had a similar value system, largely conservative. This meant that these classes rebelled only under very special circumstances, consisting of either a severe and adverse disruption of business conditions or a series of policies by the ruling class that contradicted the tenets of Islam. Usually both

these conditions had to come about simultaneously in order for these middle classes to move to active opposition. Even then, the bureaucratic middle class seldom participated.

The bulk of the population of all Middle Eastern societies falls into the three lower classes, consisting of workers, peasants, and nomads. Ideally, Islam commands that the community treat the poor and least powerful with compassion. The giving of alms is one of the acts that all the faithful are expected to practice. In describing the class structure of Islamic communities, Imam Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet, said of the lower classes: "Lowest of all are the afflicted and the poor who are the unfortunate and the suffering. They are always the broken-hearted and the weary."<sup>70</sup> In fact, however, the situation of the lower classes has been little improved by such words of sympathy and ideals of charitable assistance. The harsher realities of class structure are reflected in another scheme of classification presented by the Abbasid courtier Yahya al-Fazl. He divides society into four classes and then writes that "the remainder are filthy refuse, a torrent of scum, base cattle, none of whom thinks of anything but his food and sleep."<sup>71</sup>

Most of the members of the lower class belong to the peasant class. In preponderantly agricultural societies, these are the individuals who work the land under a variety of arrangements that only alter the degree of their poverty, dependence, disease, and ignorance. The peasant class, located at the very bottom of the social structure, has very little power and is thus exposed to exploitation by all the other classes in society. For the individual peasant, this usually means abuse at the hands of landlord, merchant, and government official. Peasants have also often suffered from manipulation by the clerics and from the raids of tribesmen. The situation of the nomadic lower class is not much better than that of the peasants. The tribal masses have existed in a state of subjection to a hierarchy of khans and have had to struggle to make a living from an often inhospitable land. Because of a modicum of natural freedom and their occasional importance as military forces, the tribesmen have been a cut above the peasant in the power structure.

The traditional working class includes such groups as servants, manual laborers, craftsmen, and artisans. In the Middle East, this class has been as much a rural as an urban phenomenon. Like the members of the other lower classes, these workers have earned their livelihood through the use of their physical skills. Working with their hands, they have been scorned by the middle and upper classes. The members of this class have often joined guilds and brotherhoods; accordingly, they have enjoyed some organizational protection. This has placed the traditional working class in the best power position among the lower classes.

The traditional class structure in the Islamic Middle East remains in place to a large extent in contemporary Middle Eastern society. There have been, however, a number of obvious changes that have largely resulted from the forces of

<sup>70</sup>Imam Ali, Farman to Malik Ashtar, governor of Egypt, *Sukhanan-i Ali [The Words of Ali]*, trans. by Javad Fazil (Tehran, 1966), p. 242 (in Persian).

<sup>71</sup>Ibn al-Faqih, *Kitab al-Buldan*, as quoted in Reuben Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 67.



modernization discussed in Chapter 1. Land reform programs, coupled with the increasing emphasis upon industrialization, have caused a shifting of the bases of power of the ruling class. Land ownership, which was an important upper-class power credential for centuries, has given way to industrial investment in the form of contracting, banking, export-import trade, and business concessions of all kinds. The traditional middle classes have grown in size relative to the upper and lower classes, with the bourgeois middle class expanding at an especially rapid rate. Nomadic tribes are slowly being forced to settle, and as a result are grudgingly blending into the peasantry. Strong rural-to-urban migration patterns have resulted in the mushrooming growth of shantytowns and the appearance of an unemployed proletariat that continues to expand along the edges of the major cities. This last change is a dramatic one, since it represents the appearance of an important modern addition to the centuries-old class structure.

The relatively recent appearance of two new classes is a significant break with the past patterns of horizontal stratification in the area. Both an industrial working class and a professional middle class have emerged as definite formations in the second half of this century. Both classes are the products of the accelerating process of modernization, and their roots trace back to the growth of large industry and the development of modern systems of education in the Afro-Asian world.

Industrialization and urbanization have been the major catalysts for the appearance of the new urban industrial working class. Census data indicate that this class still represents a small proportion in the various Middle Eastern countries, but that it is growing at a rapid pace. The growing masses of unemployed migrants referred to above are a ready pool of unskilled and semiskilled labor for new industry. This new lower class is more powerful than the traditional lower classes because of its strategic and visible location in the large cities as well as its growing social awareness. The industrial working class, however, has barely begun to realize its potential as a social and political force. This is not the case with the second and more recent class formation.

### THE PROFESSIONAL MIDDLE CLASS

The forces of modernization and the acceleration of accompanying social change have given rise to the formation of a new middle class in the Middle East.<sup>72</sup> This class, which we here term the professional middle class, is one whose members derive their power from skills obtained through a modern higher education. Many members of the new class seek to advance themselves through their professional skills and talents rather than through the use of wealth and personal connections, two resources that most of them lack in any case. The professional middle class is not a bourgeois middle class, since its members earn

<sup>72</sup>For the pioneering study of this class, see Manfred Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963). For an analysis of this class as it challenged the shah's regime in Iran, see James Alban Bill, *The Politics of Iran: Groups, Classes, and Modernization* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1972).

their livelihoods less through ownership of property or entrepreneurship in business than through salaries, technical fees, scholarships, and professional activities. This class is composed of white-collar workers engaged in technical, professional, cultural, and administrative occupations. Its membership is drawn largely from such groups as teachers, bureaucrats, professors, students, technocrats, engineers, physicians, writers, artists, journalists, and middle-ranking army officers. Among the army officers, we must include political leaders such as Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Husni Mubarak of Egypt; Houari Boumedienne of Algeria; Mu'ammar Qaddafi of Libya; and Hafez al-Assad of Syria. All rose to power on the wave of the aspirations of the new middle class.

Although the professional middle class is not a class of intellectuals, it may be properly termed an intelligentsia, since it composes the intellectual elite in society. Unlike the educated members of the ruling class, who enjoy the twin privileges of great wealth and political authority, the members of the professional middle class have little other than their education to fall back on. Whereas the members of the traditional middle classes rested their power on the older educational system, dominated by religion, the individuals in the new middle class draw their influence from the modern educational system. This is what makes them an increasingly indispensable segment of society. Modernization results in constantly accelerated demands for qualified physicians, engineers, technocrats, teachers, and soldiers. Economic and industrial development guarantees the growth of the new middle class.

In Turkey, Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, members of the professional middle class have come to hold political power and have begun to implement developmental programs with varying degrees of success. In Iraq, Syria, Algeria, and Sudan, individuals from the new middle class have taken political control but have failed to solve the problem of division and discord among groups and classes. This failure has severely retarded political development and modernization. In Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the various Gulf shajkhdoms, the professional intelligentsia remain largely locked out of the political arena. In Morocco and Jordan, where this class is a relatively large one, a number of its members have moved into the political elite as the result of a calculated policy of co-optation on the part of the ruling class. All in all, membership in the professional middle class throughout the Islamic Middle East is rapidly approaching 15 to 20 percent of the population.

The professional middle class is a threat to the traditional sociopolitical system in the Middle East. Many of its members decry the old network of personalism, favoritism, nepotism, and influence wielding that continues in many cases to suffocate their own opportunities to move forward on the basis of professional merit. What makes this class such a serious threat to the traditional social structure is not so much that all its members are agents of modernization but that some of its members demand political development. The latter refuse to relate to the ruling class in terms of subservience and deference. Instead, they demand a share of political authority and promise to uproot the power relations upon which the authority structure rests.

The professional middle class is composed of many individuals whose goals include a transformation of power relations and the authority structure. Many

of them prefer professionalism to personalism, justice to wealth, intellectual freedom to imposed stability, and effective political participation to political co-optation. Even in Saudi Arabia, a growing professional middle class chafes at the monopolizing power of one family and the social control and economic corruption that prevail in the country. In Lebanon, the new middle class is very weak economically. "But in no sense should this detract from its vital role as carrier of new skills, ideologies, and styles of life. And this is certainly more relevant to its role as an agent of modernization."<sup>73</sup> It was shortly after the Egyptian coup in 1952 that Ahmad Baha'eddine wrote that this new middle class was "the greatest hope we have for progress."<sup>74</sup>

The professional middle class has seldom borne out such hope, however, as it has not been as much a force for development as might have been expected. Besides the extraordinary strength of the traditional political system, there are other reasons why the new middle class has failed to implement much deep-seated reform.

Like every other social unit in the Middle East, this class is torn by internal cleavages and tensions. These divisions are along the lines of kinship, ethnicity, religion, occupation, social origins, geography (urban and rural), and university background. All of these divisions in turn affect the individual's orientations toward modernization and political development. The influence of those who would uproot the traditional patterns of power and authority tends to be nullified by those who seek to preserve the traditional processes in order to improve their own positions in the system. This group usually supports modernization at the expense of political development. These are the maneuverers in the new middle class who survive by manipulation while lacking the civility and courteous charm that was the hallmark of the aristocrats of the older generation. It is this segment of the professional middle class that is readily corruptible. In a stirring indictment of this group within the intelligentsia, one novelist writes: "Every country east of the Mediterranean is torn to bits by ever-competing jealous politicians coming to power by some kind of inheritance. . . . But I can envisage the day when these countries will be even worse, torn by degree-holders more self-interested and sycophantic than their predecessors, and far, far less charitable. If you think the sheikh grinds the faces of his tribesmen you should wait and see the Ph.D. grind the faces of all and sundry, without even a touch of the magnanimity we pride ourselves on."<sup>75</sup>

The professional middle class remains crippled in its challenge to traditional sociopolitical relations in the Middle East. The deep fissures throughout

<sup>73</sup>Samir Khalaf, "Urbanization and Urbanism in Beirut: Some Preliminary Results." Paper prepared for delivery at the Twenty-first Annual Near East Conference, Princeton, N.J., April 9-10, 1970, p. 37. This paper documents the important appearance of a new professional middle class in the Hamra district of Beirut. See also Samir Khalaf and Per Kongstad, *Hamra of Beirut: A Case of Rapid Urbanization* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1973).

<sup>74</sup>Ahmad Baha'eddine, "Al-iqta'iyyun wal-ra'smaliyyun wal-muthaqqafun" ["Feudalists, capitalists, and intellectuals"], in *Rose Al-Yussif*, no. 1353 (May 17, 1954), as quoted in Anouar Abdel-Malek, *Egypt: Military Society*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 178.

<sup>75</sup>Jabra I. Jabra, *Hunters in a Narrow Street* (London, 1960), as quoted in *A Middle East Reader*, ed. by Irene L. Gendzier (New York: Pegasus, 1969), p. 114.

the class are intentionally deepened by the ruling class in order to weaken the cohesiveness of this challenging unit. The political elite encourages those elements in the new class that are most susceptible to the blandishments of bribery and personal aggrandizement.

The new middle class carries another major weakness. It is separated from the lower class masses by an enormous social and cultural gap. Engineers or physicians with modern higher educations have separated themselves from the illiterate citizens that make up the majority of their own people. Often educated in universities of the West, multilingual in speech, fashionably chic in dress, secular in thought and belief, the professional represents the antithesis of the illiterate, suspicious, destitute, and deeply religious peasant. This division became most apparent in the Middle East in Iran after the revolution, when the masses turned to the religious leaders and tradition and away from the secular intelligentsia.

Today, the members of the professional middle class find themselves increasingly swimming against the tides of Islamic fundamentalism. Although they are still dedicated to the transformation of traditional patrimonial rule, there is no longer any guarantee that they are destined to become the leaders of the new political systems. The fact that the religious leaders, with their mass constituency, have hijacked the Iranian revolution is an indication that the professional middle class may no longer be the political force of the future in the Middle East. Increasingly, members of this class are returning to Islam as part of a general search for their dignity, roots, and personal heritage.

Despite all this, the professional middle class continues to grow. A few voices within the class continue to clamor for radical social and political change. Also, because the ruling class desperately needs the skills and talents of these individuals in order to implement its programs of modernization, these uprooters are slowly improving their power positions. On the basic issues of power and authority relations, the ruling class grudgingly gives ground while working to preserve the ongoing class structure from the challenges presented by the new class. Regardless of who ultimately takes control of future revolutions in the region, the professionals, technicians, and scientists will remain an indispensable part of society. Even the revolutionary regime in Iran has required skilled technicians in the oil fields, talented physicians in the hospitals, competent planners and managers in the bureaucracy, and capable pilots and officers in the military.

### THE DYNAMICS OF GROUP-CLASS INTERACTION

The dynamics of Middle Eastern social structure develop out of an integrated system of both vertical and horizontal stratification. The overall social structure might best be viewed as an intricate web of groups that is partitioned along class lines. Group and class structures relate to each other reciprocally, and it is this reciprocity that builds coherence into the sociopolitical system. The multi-stranded sinews of group relations bind the class structure together by crisscrossing class cleavages. Ethnic, tribal, religious, and military groups, for example, often draw their membership from several different classes. Here class distinctions are somewhat softened by common group affiliation. At the same time, group formations are molded and shaped to a considerable degree by class. Groups are often structured along class lines, and their memberships remain

confined within the boundaries of a single class. Family units, for example, tend to belong to a single class. Certainly, class divisions serve to retard individual and group mobility.

Class conflict in the Middle East is a muted phenomenon. There are three major reasons for this, and all of them relate to the impact of vertical stratification. First, the existence of a wide variety of important intraclass groups in the Middle East renders class units relatively diffuse. Fissures within classes are numerous and deep enough to weaken class cohesion and to retard class consciousness. Loyalty to primordial groups such as the family takes precedence over loyalty to class. Second, the plethora of groups with multiclass membership promotes interclass communication and draws together individuals from differing classes on the basis of shared group goals. As we have pointed out, this helps to integrate the class structure and therefore to mellow class conflict. Third, the group structure provides a system of mobility channels through which individuals can rise and fall in the class hierarchy. This constant individual movement across class lines lessens the harsh impact of class confrontation.

The pages of Middle Eastern history are dotted with dramatic examples of individual and group mobility. As one writer puts it, in the Middle East "one can be a liar in the morning, a vizir in the evening, and perhaps hanged on the following day."<sup>76</sup> Stretching vertically through the class structure are a number of shifting ladders of group configurations that, although unsteady and unpredictable, nonetheless can be negotiated by enterprising individuals. Many of the rungs of such ladders are difficult to discern because of the informal and concealed nature of their formation. Informal groups are, in general, the most reliable of the groups that span class divisions. Examples of groups that connect the middle and upper classes include military officer cliques, mystic orders, high administrative caucuses, and interfamilial marriage clusters. Let us examine the last example in more depth.

Nuclear families more often tend to be intraclass groups than do extended families, since the latter include a larger number of individuals, each striving to improve his own position in the social system. However, once one member of either a nuclear or an extended family is able to improve his class standing, he subsequently acts as a force that helps to propel other family members forward in the power structure. At the very minimum, the individual in the higher class will be able to protect and defend his family's interests. Always, however, when familial membership is spread among classes, it acts as a brake on class tension and conflict. A more significant aspect of family-group structure in relation to class interaction is the mechanism of interfamilial marriage. In the Middle East, the marriage of two individuals is better described as the union of two families. When the marriage partners are of different social classes, entire family clusters develop relatively tight interclass relationships. Indeed, it is very common and increasingly possible for individuals of middle-class background to search consciously for a mate who comes from a powerful upper-class family.

<sup>76</sup>Vincent Monteil, *Morocco* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), p. 141, as quoted in Rosen, "Rural Political Process," p. 223.

Many members of the middle-class intelligentsia attempt to improve their power positions by marrying into the ruling class. Some pursue this strategy in a very calculating manner. Others are torn between their commitment to merit and achievement and their desire to gain enough political leverage to enable them to implement their social and political ideas. Practically all of them are forced to rely upon familial connections at many junctures in their professional and political lives. To the more professionally competent and politically radical among them, this is unpalatable business, and many are visibly embarrassed by the fact that they either belong to the ruling class or have married into it. Middle-class professionals thus find themselves in the unenviable position of denigrating their familial ties while at the same time being forced to use these ties in order to survive and advance in society. This kind of pressured compromise is another factor reducing the effectiveness of their class as a revolutionizing force. In terms of this discussion, it represents a method whereby the challenging middle class is bound to the ruling class. Family clusters cut across class lines and then serve as bridges for the upwardly mobile members of the kinship group.

Groups, then, are much more fluid collectivities than classes in the Middle East because they have much greater ranges of mobility. A class can improve its position only by rather limited incremental movements. The ruling class will always be the upper class, and so it is down the line. By definition, classes must always remain in a power hierarchy. Individuals and groups, on the other hand, can rise dramatically or fall meteorically within the social structure. The great movement of individuals and groups increases flexibility in a class structure that would otherwise be fragile and much more susceptible to upheaval and radical change.

This social structure is a formidable obstacle to the processes of modernization and political development that are under way in the Middle East. The traditional social system refuses to be torn, and the basic power and authority relations that make up this system are extraordinarily difficult to uproot. Since class conflict, often the agent of transformation, is neutralized, change involves chipping away at pieces of the mosaic. This modifying change seldom disturbs the underlying network of power relations that is the basis for the group and class structure of Middle Eastern societies.

The situation analyzed above varies considerably from one Middle Eastern society to another. Some societies, for example, are relatively congenial to modernization and political development. In these societies, the lines of horizontal stratification are only weakly intersected by communal cleavages. As a result, the traditional social structure is more easily torn, because class configurations are more cohesive internally and more bared to conflict externally.

Much can be explained about the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war when it is recognized that the lines separating ethnic and religious groups had come to coincide more and more closely with class lines. The groups lost their cross-cutting character and gradually reinforced the explosive class divisions. In other words, the vertical structure of stratification gradually collapsed until it became a reinforcing part of the system of conflicting classes. The Lebanese upper class was dominated by Christian Arabs, while the lower class was overwhelmingly Muslim. Although there was some noticeable overlap, this had become less the case with time. When the explosion came, therefore, it was fueled by both group

and class conflict. The presence of the Palestinians, a highly politicized appendage to the Lebanese lower class, only exacerbated the struggle. When group and class lines begin to coincide in the Middle East, the system begins to lose its balanced stability. Violent conflict is often the result, and the consequent changes can either accelerate or retard development. In Chapters 4 and 5, we will examine those individuals who do most to determine the directions that these changes will take.

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## Chapter 4

# The Political Patrimony



An important component of the Middle East is the political system, which is composed of an array of individuals and groups, each with its own political influence. Some of these individuals and groups are political leaders who shape the political system. In this chapter, we shall analyze the political leadership of Muslim leaders. In the next chapter, we shall analyze how individuals are recruited into the political system. Middle Eastern political systems are a stronghold of absolute monarchy. As the last stronghold of absolute monarchy, the home of four kingdoms and empires, the Gulf. In order of ruling experience, King Hassan of Morocco, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, and King Abdullah of Jordan. The modern authoritarian leadership is a military coup or national revolution. Authoritarianism modified by democracy. In 1979. Besides these types of political systems, there are political systems that exist imperfectly in Israel. Despite all the differences, there are similarities in the Muslim world. These similarities exist throughout Islamic history and are the model par excellence.