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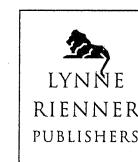
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# MODERNIZING WOMEN

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Gender and Social Change  
in the Middle East

Valentine M. Moghadam



BOULDER  
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## Contents

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## 4

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# Patriarchy and the Changing Family

*The social institutions under which men [and women] of a definite historical epoch and of a definite country live are conditioned by . . . the stage of development of labor, on the one hand, and of the family, on the other. . . . The less the development of labor, and the more limited its volume of production, . . . the more preponderatingly does the social order appear to be dominated by ties of sex.*

—Frederick Engels

This chapter examines the impact of social change, especially education, on the family and patterns of marriage and reproduction. The "Middle Eastern Muslim family" has long been described as a patriarchal unit, and it has been noted that Muslim family laws have served to reinforce patriarchal gender relations and women's subordinate position within the family. The persistence of patriarchy is a matter of debate, and some feminist theorists argue that industrialized societies are also patriarchal. Sylvia Walby, for example, distinguishes between the "private patriarchy" of the premodern family and social order and the "public patriarchy" of the state and labor market in industrial societies.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter the term "patriarchy" is used in its strict rather than liberal sense—that is, in terms of Caldwell's "patriarchal belt" and Kandiyoti's "classic patriarchy," based on kinship systems in agrarian settings. I have also adopted Hisham Sharabi's concept of "neopatriarchal society," the result of the collision of tradition and modernity in the context of oil-based dependent capitalism and, as I argued in Chapter 2, limited industrialization.<sup>2</sup> Here I describe the contradictions and challenges that patriarchy and the family have encountered from economic development, the demographic transition, legal reform, and women's increasing educational attainment.

The family is perhaps the only societal institution that is conceptualized as "essential" and "natural." The biological basis of kin ties and women's reproductive capacities historically have conferred such a status on the family. This emphasis on biology has led to reductionist and functionalist

accounts of the family, accounts that transcend cultural barriers and unite Muslim and Western conservatives. Consider sociologist Talcott Parsons's functionalist perspective. He argued that the modern family has two main functions: to socialize children into society's normative system of values and inculcate appropriate status expectations, and to provide a stable emotional environment that will cushion the (male) worker from the psychological damage of the alienating occupational world. These functions are carried out by the wife and mother. It is she who plays the affective, "expressive" role of nurturance and support, and it is the husband who plays the "instrumental" role of earning the family's keep and maintaining discipline. The Parsonian view is very similar to a contemporary Muslim view, which sees the family as the fundamental unit of society and stresses the mother's role in the socialization of children—particularly in raising "committed Muslims" and transmitting cultural values. These two similar accounts of the family and women are not only descriptive but also prescriptive.

Proponents of the family as a natural unit or a haven in a heartless world frequently warn of its impending death. Throughout the world, the alarm tends to be sounded by persons and groups of the right: Christian fundamentalists and Orthodox Jews in the United States, anticomunists in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s, Islamists in the Middle East. What are some of the indicators of the weakening of the family? According to Kingsley Davis, the state of marriage has become severely weakened in Western nations over the past forty years. He cites easy divorce, the postponement of marriage, a rise in the proportion of the never-married, an increase in nonmarital cohabitation, and the ready availability of contraception as forces that have eroded the family and compromised its ultimate function—the licensing of reproduction. In the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, high divorce rates and low birthrates led demographers to warn that these societies may not be able to reproduce themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Laments about the current condition of the family imply that at an earlier time in history the family was more stable and harmonious than it is today. Yet despite massive research, historians have not located a "golden age of the family." One historian lists as causes for the small family size in fourteenth-century England, "birth control, infanticide, high infant mortality, late marriages, infertility due to poor diet, high female mortality, and economic limitations on nuptiality."<sup>4</sup> The marriages of seventeenth-century Europe were based on family and property needs, not on choice or affection. In one of the most famous historical observations, Thomas Hobbes described life in the mid-seventeenth-century as "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short." Two in ten children died in infancy; another two died before reaching puberty; and more either died before reaching marrying age or simply never married. Those who did survive and marry spent most of their adult lives reproducing and

raising the next generation.<sup>5</sup> Loveless marriages, tyrannical husbands, high death rates, and the beating, abuse, and abandonment of children add up to a grim image.<sup>6</sup> John Caldwell notes that many writers have tended to romanticize the peasant family, even though A. V. Chayanov calculated that Russian peasant women and girls worked 1.21 times as many hours as men and boys. Teodor Shanin writes that despite their heavy burden of labor (both housework and fieldwork) and their functional importance in the Russian peasant household, women were considered second-class members of it and were nearly always placed under the authority of males. Quarrels and tensions seem to be endemic to the extended household and family everywhere. Amartya Sen's model of "cooperative conflicts" within households and Hanna Papanek's concepts of "unequal entitlements to resource shares" and "socialization for inequality" contradict idealized notions of harmony.<sup>7</sup>

But myths about golden ages are easy to construct, especially during times of rapid social change, socioeconomic difficulty, or political crisis, as Stephanie Coontz found for the United States.<sup>8</sup> At times like this, the family question and its correlate, the woman question, come to the fore. These questions are tackled and answered quite differently by different social groups and political forces. For example, many conservatives feel that a major source of family dissolution is female employment. In the former Soviet Union during perestroika in the late 1980s, social problems were blamed on the "overemployment" of women and their "forced detachment" from the family under communism. The solution, according to this view, was to reduce female labor force attachment and increase women's family attachment. In Eastern Europe, too, a romanticization of the family, of domesticity, and of the private sphere, combined with an emphasis on women's maternal roles, followed the end of communist rule. Somewhat inconsistently, many writings and speeches presented the family as having been the site of resistance to the monolithic state *and* as having been destroyed by the communist policy of imposing public activity on women and substituting institutionalized childcare for mother's care. Barbara Einhorn explains that postcommunist ideology included the frequently voiced opinion that politics is men's prerogative in a return to a "natural order" in which women have privacy in the home and men in the public sphere.<sup>9</sup> There are parallels with the ideology of the conservative movement in the United States, as described by Rebecca Klatch:

The ideal society, then, is one in which individuals are integrated into a moral community, bound together by faith, by common moral values, and by obeying the dictates of the family and religion. . . .

While male and female roles are each respected and essential and complementary components of God's plan, men are the spiritual leaders and decision-makers in the family. It is women's role to support men in their position of higher authority through altruism and self-sacrifice.<sup>10</sup>

The parallels with modern Middle Eastern ideals of the role of women and the family are striking. According to the late Murteza Mutahhari, one of the major Iranian Islamist thinkers, “For Muslims, the institution of marriage based on mutuality of natural interest and cordiality between spouses represents a sublime manifestation of the Divine Will and Purpose.” He continues:

Marriage and family living are very significant aspects of a society. They are responsible institutional aspects for the benefit of posterity. Family upbringing of children determines the quality of successive generations. . . .

Mutual affection and sincerity, as well as humane compassion and tenderness, are highly desirable attributes in married couples, in the context of their mutual and social interactions. These are often in evidence in societies governed by Islamic moral and legal checks and balances. In the others, such as those in the West, these qualities are seldom noticeable.<sup>11</sup>

In similar fashion, the late Egyptian Islamist Seyid Qutb placed far more significance on the role of marriage and the family than did historical Islam, which considered both as down-to-earth civil contracts, according to one account of Qutb’s work. In accordance with conservative theories of motherhood and education, Qutb spoke in glowing terms of the family as “the nursery of the future,” breeding “precious human products” under the guardianship of women. Qutb further celebrated the holy bond of pure love between a man and a woman, who both voluntarily enter into a relationship of marriage as two equal partners, each discharging functions assigned by nature and biology. A woman fulfills her functions by being a wife and mother, while a man is to be the undisputed authority, the breadwinner, and the active member in public life.<sup>12</sup>

To the Islamist intellectual, the Muslim family is by no means the site of oppression or subjugation. Consider the views of the Iranian woman writer Fereshteh Hashemi, who in 1981 wrote that in the context of marriage and the family,

women have the heavy responsibility of procreation and rearing a generation: this is a divine art, because it creates, it gives birth; and it is a prophetic art, because it guides, it educates. God, therefore, absolves the woman from all economic responsibilities so that she can engage herself in this prophetic and divine act with peace in mind. Therefore, He makes it the duty of the man to provide all economic means for this woman, so as there shall not be an economic vacuum in her life. . . .

And in the exchange for this heavy responsibility, that is, the financial burden of the woman and the family, what is he entitled to expect of the woman? Except for expecting her companionship and courtship, he cannot demand anything else from the woman. According to theological sources, he cannot even demand that she bring him a glass of water, much less expect her to clean and cook.<sup>13</sup>

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, a 1990 study by the Research Group for Muslim Women’s Studies tried to explain low female employment by suggesting that Iranian women were by choice more attached to maternal and family roles:

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, in order to guarantee the implementation of the legal right of *nafaghe* (a continual allowance being paid by husband to his wife and children), many women who are not specialized in a particular field have chosen to limit their activities to their homes by taking care of their families. They have also realized that the real place for them is their homes, where they are able to raise and train Muslim children and disseminate revolutionary culture, a woman’s effective role in the success of Islamic Revolution.<sup>14</sup>

The notion of the family as a woman-tended haven against a heartless world seems to be universal—or at least universal among middle classes in modern societies—rather than specific to any culture or religion. Some have argued that in the West, this concept of the family emerged in the course of real struggles against the market and the state.<sup>15</sup> But the haven ideology is deficient on a number of counts. It obfuscates the extent to which this ideal is socially limited; for example, it most obviously is not experienced in households maintained by women alone, a phenomenon that is becoming statistically significant throughout the world, especially in regions with considerable male out-migration. In the United States, 26 percent of all households are female-headed, up from 12 percent in 1970.<sup>16</sup> In Iran tens of thousands of women became widows during the Iran-Iraq War, and a far larger number of Afghan women were widowed in the 1980s and 1990s. Of what use to them is the ideology that their “real place” is at home rearing children while their husbands are earning the family’s daily bread? The haven ideology obscures the very different opportunity structures available to men and women in the society and the economy; it occludes power differentials and inequality within the family; and it suggests a public/private dichotomy and separation of family and state that do not exist.

The relationship between the family and the state illustrates the fine line between the public and private spheres. Nowhere is the family free of state regulation. This intervention takes various forms. Apart from marriage registration (and defining what is acceptable and unacceptable), there is family law, the content of which differs across societies. There are also laws pertaining to reproductive rights, contraception, and abortion. There may or may not be legal codes regarding the provision of care within families and the responsibilities of family members to each other. In many cases female family members are understood, if not legally required, to be care providers (to children, to in-laws, and to parents). In other cases, a father is legally required to pro-

vide for his family. In yet other cases there are social policies creating extra-family supports: daycare, homes for the aged or infirm, nursing help, and so on. There may or may not be legal codes pertaining to domestic violence, child abuse, wife battering, or spousal rape. There are invariably laws pertaining to family disintegration (which may come about through divorce, death, abandonment, or migration). Far from being an enclave, the family is vulnerable to the state, and the laws and social policies that impinge upon it undermine the notion of separate spheres. Yet the haven ideology persists and is often strategically deployed by state authorities and dissidents alike.

Moreover, and notwithstanding Mutahhari's swipe at the presumed lack of family values in the West, the 1990s saw the formation of a coalition of conservative Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant governments and nongovernmental organizations over family values. It first formed around what it saw as objectionable recommendations pertaining to women's sexual rights in connection with the UN's International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which took place in Cairo in 1994, and the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW), in Beijing in 1995. The alliance regrouped in June 2001 at the special session of the UN General Assembly on AIDS in New York, to halt what it saw as the expansion of sexual and political protections and rights for gays being pushed by the European Union.<sup>17</sup>

There are some similarities and some differences between the trajectory of the Arab-Islamic family and that of the family in Western countries. They share a patriarchal structure that undergoes change as a result of economic and political developments. The timing, pace, and extent of the changes differ. In the contemporary Middle East, the family is a powerful signifier, and there is a strong conservative trend to strengthen it and reinforce women's maternal roles, albeit within a nuclear family setting. This trend seems to have arisen in the context of two parallel developments: (1) the erosion of classic patriarchy and the extended household unit, and (2) the rise of middle-class movements, mainly Islamist, that evince values and attitudes reminiscent of the moral discourse of the European bourgeoisie. Let us examine patriarchal social structures and gender relations in order to place in proper context changes in the family, fertility, and the status of women in Middle Eastern countries.

### Patriarchal Society and Family

Patriarchal society is a precapitalist social formation that has historically existed in varying forms in Europe and Asia in which property, residence, and descent proceed through the male line. In classic patriarchy, the senior man has authority over everyone else in the family, including younger men, and women are subject to distinct forms of control and subordination. As noted by Deniz Kandiyoti, the key to the reproduction of classic patriarchy lies in the

operations of the patrilocally extended household, which is also commonly associated with the reproduction of the peasantry in agrarian societies. The subordination of women in kinship-ordered or agrarian societies is linked to the reproduction of the kin group or the peasantry, as well as to the sexual division of labor. Childbearing is the central (though not exclusive) female labor activity. But just as in capitalism what a worker produces is not considered the property of the worker, so in a patriarchal context a woman's products—be they children or rugs—are not considered her property but those of the patriarchal family and especially the male kin. There is a predisposition to male dominance inherent in the relation between the precapitalist peasant household and the world of landlords and the state and in the reproduction of kinship-ordered groups, wherein women are exchanged and men transact what Gayle Rubin called "the traffic in women." In the context of classic patriarchy, women are considered a form of property. Their honor—and by extension the honor of their family—depends in great measure on their virginity and good conduct.<sup>18</sup> One classic study of "the values of Mediterranean society" described the importance of manliness, woman's sexual purity, and defense of family honor in Andalucia, Spain, villages in Greece and Cyprus, and among the Kabyle in Algeria and the Bedouins of Egypt. Pierre Bourdieu referred to honor killings among the Kabyle while J. G. Peristiany described honor and shame among Cypriots thus:

Woman's foremost duty to self and family is to safeguard herself against all critical allusions to her sexual modesty. In dress, looks, attitudes, speech, a woman, when men are present, should be virginal as a maiden and matronly as a wife. . . . For an unmarried woman, shame reflects directly on parents and brothers, especially unmarried ones, who did not protect or avenge her honour.<sup>19</sup>

In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Frederick Engels wrote of the "world-historical defeat of the female sex" in the wake of the agricultural revolution and the advent of civilization and class society. Gerda Lerner reversed Engels's narrative by arguing that the subordination of women—the creation of patriarchy enforced by legal codes in the ancient Near East—enabled the development of private property and state power there and elsewhere. Similarly, Michael Mann has described the trajectory of patriarchy historically and cross-culturally. He has identified and traced the interrelations of five principal stratification nuclei—five collective actors that have affected gender-stratification relations over recent history. They are: the atomized person (more pertinent to liberal, bourgeois society); the networks of household/family/lineage; genders; social classes; and nations and nation-states. According to Mann, the patriarchal society is one in which power is held by male heads of households. There is also clear separation between the public and private spheres of life. In the private sphere of the household, the

patriarch enjoys arbitrary power over all junior males, all females, and all children. In the public sphere, power is shared between male patriarchs according to whatever other principles of stratification operate. Whereas many, perhaps most, men expect to be patriarchs at some point in their life cycle, no female holds any formal public position of economic, ideological, military, or political power. Indeed, females are not allowed into this public realm of power. (It goes without saying that men have the monopoly on the means of violence.) Within the household women may influence their male patriarch informally, but this is their only access to power.<sup>20</sup>

Mann's framework accords well with what we know about the legacy of *patria potestas*, the Roman paternal authority. Roman women citizens could inherit, own, and dispose of property, and they could divorce their husbands too. But otherwise the paterfamilias—the family patriarch—had total authority over all members of his household and could sell his children into slavery or prostitution. Roman law and custom also allowed parents to kill deformed children. The Christians of the first five centuries were not unaffected by these aspects of Roman culture, and the abandonment of children was practiced until a church decree banned it.<sup>21</sup>

Patriarchal societies distinguished the public arena from the private. In the public sphere, power relations overwhelmingly involved male household-heads (patriarchs), and the private sphere was usually ruled formally by a patriarch. This arrangement left no basis for collective action by women. If women sought public influence, they had to go through patriarchs. Social stratification was thus two-dimensional. One dimension comprised the two nuclei of household/family/lineage and male dominance. The second dimension comprised whatever combination of public stratification nuclei (classes, military elites, etc.) existed in a particular society. The latter dimension was connected to the former in that public power-groupings were predominantly aggregates of household/family/lineage heads. But apart from this connection, the two dimensions were segregated from each other.

As agrarian societies gave way to modern society, stratification became gendered internally with the entry of women into the public sphere. Mann notes that in Western Europe, from about the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the stratification system changed under the pressure of emerging capitalism, first in agriculture and then in industry, as more of economic life became part of the public realm. Louise Tilly and Joan Scott have explored the effects of this change on women in terms of work and family relations.<sup>22</sup> Mann goes on to note that the particularist distinction between the public and the private was eroded first by employment trends and the emergence of more universal classes, second by universal citizenship, and third by the nation-state's welfare interventions in the private household/family. Thus Mann presents a model of the trajectory from patriarchy to neopatriarchy to a stratification system based on gendered classes, personhood, and the nation. It should

be noted that women's rights movements have emerged in the latter part of this trajectory and have contributed to the elimination of some of the more egregious aspects of the patriarchal legacy.<sup>23</sup>

Like Judaism and Christianity before it, Islam came into being in a patriarchal society. The French ethnologist Germaine Tillion argued that the origin of women's oppression in Muslim societies had to be traced to ancient times and the beginnings of patrilineal society. She identified endogamy, the practice of marrying within the lineage, as setting the stage for the oppression of women in patrilineal society, long before the rise of Islam. Endogamy kept property (land and animals) within the lineage and protected the economic and political interests of the men. Quranic reforms provided women with certain legal rights absent in Judaism and Christianity and also corrected some injustices in pre-Islamic Arabian society. For example, Islam banned female infanticide, entitled women to contract their marriage, receive dower, retain control of wealth, and receive maintenance and shares in inheritance. In the early centuries of Islam, various legal schools of thought were established, and within the framework of the Shari'a, norms and laws were formulated to meet a woman's needs in a society where her largely domestic, childbearing roles rendered her sheltered and dependent upon her father, her husband, and her close male relations. Eleanor Doumato suggests that pre-existing Christian customs and Roman laws, as well as customary practices in Arabia, influenced early Muslim views on women and the family.<sup>24</sup> When family laws were codified and modernized much later, they were based on a combination of the Islamic legal schools (Hanafi, Maleki, Hanbali, Shafii), pre-Islamic or tribal customs, and Western (French, Swiss, Belgian) legal systems. Muslim family law gave male members of the kin group control over key decisions affecting "their" women's lives.

Despite the Muslim woman's legal and religious rights to inherit, own, and dispose of property, this right was often circumvented by more powerful male relatives, including her brothers, uncles, or husband's agnates. In the Shari'a, the custody of children is first accorded to mothers, but ultimately the children of Muslim marriage are taken into the formal custody of the father's patrilineal kin group, generally at the age of seven for boys and nine for girls, or puberty for the boy and the time of marriage for the girl, depending upon interpretation.<sup>25</sup> Alya Baffoun has noted that although men and women are in theory equal before religious law, "an imbalance is introduced through sexual and economic inequality—polygamy, unequal inheritance rights and male monopoly of the production of commodities."<sup>26</sup> Mounira Charrad has explained that Islamic law, especially in its Maleki version (which has historically predominated in North Africa), "encourages kin control of marriage ties and thus facilitates both marriages within the lineage and collectively useful outside alliances." She continues, "By favoring males and kin on the male side, inheritance laws solidify ties within the extended patrilineal kin group.

The message of the Maleki family law is that the conjugal unit may be short-lived, whereas the ties with the male kin may be enduring. Maleki law defines the kin group rather than the nuclear family as the significant locus of solidarity. It facilitates—and reflects—the maintenance of tribal communities.<sup>27</sup>

As Caldwell and Kandiyoti have described it, the “belt of classic patriarchy” includes areas in North Africa, the Muslim Middle East (including Turkey and Iran), and South and East Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan, northern India, and rural China). Today, the tribal structure is the pristine type of patriarchal organization and can still be found in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and in parts of the Arab world and eastern Turkey. The social organization of the tribe (*qabila*) or the communal group (*qawm*, especially in Afghanistan) is based on blood ties and is patriarchal in the classic sense. Tribal identity, such as that of the Arab Bedouin or the Afghan Pashtuns, is generally based on notions of common patrilineal descent. Quite unlike the “primitive” groups studied by Lévi-Strauss, who were exogamous, the Arab-Islamic tribes are endogamous and favor cousin marriage, as noted also by Jack Goody. Germaine Tillion, Alya Baffoun, and Nikki Keddie all pointed out that endogamy increases the tendency to maintain property within families through the control of women in tightly interrelated lineages. Keddie writes that nomadic tribal groups “have special reasons to want to control women and to favor cousin marriage.” Pastoral nomadic tribes, the most common type in the Middle East, trade animal products for agricultural and urban ones. Tribal cohesion is necessary to their economy, which requires frequent group decisions about migration. Groups closely tied by kin are desirable because they make decisions amicably. The practical benefits of close kinship, Keddie argued, are surely one reason cousin marriage has long been preferred among Middle Eastern people: it encourages family integration and cooperation. Keddie explained that continuing “controls on women are connected to the pervasiveness of tribal structures in the Middle East,” or what Tillion called “the republic of cousins,” and noted that “even though most nomadic women are not veiled and secluded, they are controlled.”<sup>28</sup> Erika Friedl has made a similar observation with respect to village women in Iran, calling their apparent autonomy and mobility “a brittle freedom” that is “not grounded anywhere in ideology or practice.” Of the Bedouins in Israel, Alean al-Krenawi writes that “the main goal is to keep women within the extended family and tribe.”<sup>29</sup> Patriarchy is thus strongest in rural areas, within peasant as well as tribal communities.

In many parts of the patriarchal belt, and certainly in the Muslim regions, restrictive codes of behavior exist for women, along with the association of family honor with female virtue and a preoccupation with virginity in unmarried women. As Naila Kabeer notes, “Men are entrusted with safeguarding family honor through their control over female members; they are backed by complex social arrangements that ensure the protection—and dependence—

of women.” A family’s honor and reputation rest most heavily on the conduct of women. Real or perceived sexual misconduct by women result in honor killings. Sex segregation and veiling, legitimated on the basis of the Shari'a, is part of the Islamic gender system. In South Asian Muslim societies in particular, purdah (literally “curtain,” also meaning “covering,” “seclusion,” and “segregation”) remains common and is also strongly linked to men’s honor. As David Mandelbaum put it, “Honor is the key good for these men, and their honor is balanced on the heads of the women.”<sup>30</sup> Women’s life options are severely circumscribed in the patriarchal belt. One typically finds an adverse sex ratio, low female literacy and educational attainment, high fertility rates, high maternal mortality rates, and low female labor force participation in the formal sector. Some analysts, noting these demographic facts, have characterized Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and northern India as having “a culture against women,” in which women are socialized to sacrifice their health, survival chances, and life options.<sup>31</sup>

Patriarchy, therefore, should not be conflated with Islam but rather should be understood in social-structural and developmental terms. The emergence of a modern middle class tied to the capitalist economy or the state bureaucracy would seem to represent a weakening of the patriarchal order. The persistence of classic patriarchy would be tied in part to the structure of rural life and the nature of production relations. The largest MENA countries, for example, contain sizable rural populations or populations only recently settled or urbanized. Precapitalist forms of social organization, including tribes and nomadic groups, may be found in Afghanistan, Sudan, and Yemen. Turkey provides an apposite example of the split between a highly patriarchal countryside and an urban context where gender and family relations are more egalitarian. In Turkey as in other large MENA countries with agrarian sectors, women have always worked and engaged in productive activity. Their participation in rural production, while considerable, has been historically devalued by the pervasive patriarchal ideology that sees women as “lacking in mind and religion.”<sup>32</sup> This ideology is so strong in the rural areas that even the rise of female-headed households in some of the poorer countries, such as Yemen, caused by male out-migration to the oil-rich countries did not significantly change women’s position in the family or vis-à-vis men. Women themselves seem to be aware of urban-rural differences, as one Palestinian refugee’s comment suggests:

I think women who live in the cities are better off than the ones who live in villages. They are very different. In the villages, women don’t even have basic rights. They don’t have a life. For example, in the villages, men never take into consideration women’s opinions. Women aren’t even allowed to sit with their husbands or speak with them. They exist just to produce children. That’s all. There are no discussions about or understanding of women on the part of men. I’m certain the situation of women in the cities is better.<sup>33</sup>

Patriarchy can be intensified as a result of political and economic changes. An example is provided by the experience of the Palestinians. Zionism left them landless and proletarianized, disrupting the traditional structure of the extended peasant family. Endogamous marriage was gradually replaced with exogamous marriage. But the proletarianization of Palestinian men, which was very unstable and insecure, was not accompanied by a similar process for women. As a result, family size did not decrease, fertility rates did not decline, and women's status did not improve. According to Nahla Abd-Zubi, "The family in this period was transformed from a productive and reproductive unit—producing agricultural goods as well as a new generation of workers—into an almost exclusively reproductive unit. Whereas production took place outside the family, and was done by males, reproduction became centered in the family, as the women's main task." In this modern context, a new form of the patriarchal family was strengthened. Cheryl Rubenberg concludes that "Palestinian patriarchy, especially as it has developed in West Bank villages and the refugee camps, has been highly deleterious to women."<sup>34</sup>

### Family Structure in the Middle East

Family structure in the Middle East has been described as extended, patrilineal, patrilocal, patriarchal, endogamous, and occasionally polygynous.<sup>35</sup> The concept of sanctity and privacy of family life remains strong and a high premium is placed on the good sexual conduct of its female members. In the past, such conduct was guaranteed via segregation of women in the "forbidden" sectors of the house—the hareem, or harem. Although hareems have disappeared, women are still more closely associated with the domestic chores and living arrangements of the household. Outside the home, good conduct and family honor are managed by segregating men and women in educational institutions, occupations, and workplaces, although physical segregation has given way to more interaction. The preferred marriage among Arabs and Muslims of the Middle East has been cousin marriage, particularly between children of two brothers (parallel patrilateral cousins), but it is of course not the exclusive form of marriage. Among Arabs and Iranians, ties to the natal family are hardly ever broken, even in out-marriage situations, and so the daughter has recourse to her own family in the event of repudiation, widowhood, or domestic problems. The situation in South Asia, Afghanistan, prerevolutionary China, and rural Turkey may be different; there, a girl's ties to her natal family tend to be weakened after marriage, making her more vulnerable before her husband's agnates. One reason for these differences may be the different kinds of "bridewealth," or "endowments of the bride."<sup>36</sup>

Among Arabs and Muslims there are different, and direct and indirect, forms of bridewealth: (1) endowing of the bride by her father (*jahaz*) or her in-laws (*mahr*); (2) in Iran and Afghanistan, indirect dower consisting partly of the *shirbaha* (literally, "milk price"), which is cash provided by the groom and given to the bride's father to buy a *jahaz*, to which he is expected to add at least the equivalent cash amount; and (3) direct *mahr*; which may be immediate or deferred but is intended as a sort of social insurance and financial protection for the wife in the event of repudiation or widowhood.<sup>37</sup> These marriage transactions are elaborated by class. A woman from a wealthy family may control relatively large amounts of wealth, which enhances her standing within her new family. In nonelite cases, however, the bride does not receive the dower directly; or the wife may forfeit it if she seeks a divorce; or the amount is too small to provide any financial security.

Some scholars argue that in a rural setting, the payment of brideprice to a woman's kinsmen symbolizes men's control over a woman and over the transfer of her productive and reproductive capacities to her husband's kin group. But a woman's natal ties are maintained throughout her life, and she may utilize the support of her kin in production and to bring pressure against her husband and his family. The support of kinsmen, however, is subject to variation. A woman may count on the aid of her brother. But a woman may also be beaten by her brother or father and sent back to her husband's household when she turns to kinsmen of limited resources with complaints of illness or maltreatment. In fact, the woman's own relatives may condone the husband's action and blame his fury on her bad attitude or her "long tongue."<sup>38</sup>

The early years of marriage in patriarchal settings are usually stressful for young brides. They are subjected to orders from older sisters-in-law and are clearly subservient to the authority of their husband's mother. In this extended family setting, the products of new brides' domestic and agricultural labor, like those of other members of the household, are under the control of the senior male and senior female (mother- and father-in-law in extended family households, older brother and wife in fraternal joint family households). Senior males and females are the center of authority. Soheir Morsy notes that quarrels between women in domestic groups reflect the conflicts and tensions between the men upon whom they are dependent.<sup>39</sup>

The pattern of cousin marriage is one strategy for keeping property within the lineage; it also seems to mitigate the view of women as property, argues Goody, rejecting the Lévi-Straussian view of women as pawns who embody transaction and exchange. But the exchange of women does seem to take place and has been discussed with respect to Afghanistan. There, brideprice is more customary, especially in out-marriage situations. Based on her fieldwork in the 1970s, Nancy Tapper has described the mobility and migration patterns that revolved around brideprice. Men from one region would

travel to another to find inexpensive wives, while fathers would travel elsewhere in search of a higher price for their daughters. Patriarchy, therefore, persists where precapitalist social formations remain in place. Goody notes that pastoralists (such as the Bedouins) are closer to the exclusively patrilineal and patriarchal model. Jamal Nasir explains that in rural and bedouin areas, girls are married at ages below the required minimum age and frequently at thirteen.<sup>40</sup>

Whereas the patrilineal extended household is characteristic of rural areas in many Middle Eastern countries, it is less typical in cities, especially in large metropolitan areas. There, neolocal residence is assumed upon marriage, and the nuclear family form prevails. Some of the most extensive studies on changes in household or family types and the impact of economic changes on women's status have been undertaken in Turkey. In the 1970s Kandiyoti delineated six socioeconomic categories of women: nomadic, traditional rural, changing rural, small town, newly urbanized squatter (*gecekondu*), and urban, middle-class professionals and housewives. Family form and household composition varied across these groups, as did the gender division of labor. An interesting discovery was that although patriarchal attitudes and practices remained strongest in the countryside, the patrilocal extended household was being undermined by market incorporation, migration, and poverty. The wealthier landed households were in a better position to sustain extended families. In general, postmarital residence was linked to class, mode of production, resources, and bridewealth.<sup>41</sup>

State policy, including the legal system, exerts a further influence on the persistence, modernization, or weakening of patriarchy and, by extension, on women and the family. Let us examine the contribution of Middle Eastern states to the position of women, gender relations, and the fate of the patriarchal family.

### **Neopatriarchal States and Personal Status Laws**

In her important book *Beyond the Veil*, Fatima Mernissi drew attention to the specific forms of the sexual division of labor in Muslim societies, especially as it occurs within the family. Islam privileges patrilineal bonds and enjoins men to take responsibility for the support of their wives and children. In the Arab-Islamic family, the wife's main obligations are to maintain a home, care for her children, and obey her husband. He is entitled to exercise his marital authority by restraining his wife's movements and preventing her from showing herself in public. I have referred to this as the patriarchal gender contract, and Kandiyoti has described how women "bargain with patriarchy" to maneuver within its confines.<sup>42</sup> The patriarchal contract is realized within the fam-

ily and codified by the state. Thus, outside of the household, the source of patriarchal control is political-juridical: the state and legislation.

John Esposito has explained that in the tenth century A.D. the elaboration of Islamic law was considered complete, and for the next nine centuries family law remained intact and unchanging.<sup>43</sup> Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Muslim family law became subject to challenges from reformers and modernizers who sought changes in marriage, divorce, polygamy, child custody, and inheritance. This was part of the process of nation building, but concerns about women's position also motivated reforms. The first codification of Islamic Family Law was the Ottoman Law of Family Rights of 1917, which was also applied to the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>44</sup> In 1926, Kemal Ataturk abolished it and replaced it with a secular civil code adopted from Switzerland. At the same time, King Amanullah of Afghanistan tried, but failed, to raise the status of Afghan women in the family and society by introducing a modern family code and encouraging girls' education. Egypt's reform movement took place in the early twentieth century, and gains were made by women in the Nasser period, although family law retained male privilege. Other countries formulated family laws that were extremely controlling of women; these included Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia, where tribal customs and the most patriarchal interpretations of Islamic law shaped the family law and therefore the legal status of women and girls. As Amira Sonbol notes, a new form of patriarchy based on the concept of the "family" became the basis of the law, and the state became an effective participant in enforcing personal matters that were not its business before.<sup>45</sup>

In the postcolonial period, the first comprehensive legal change in the status of women in the family came with the Bourguiba reforms in Tunisia in the 1950s, which abolished polygamy and unilateral male divorce. Similar, though less radical, reforms occurred in socialist Syria and Iraq. In Iran, the Pahlavi state's Family Protection Act (1967 and 1973) gave women more rights in family matters and raised the legal age of marriage. Significant reforms to bolster women's position in the family were also undertaken in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in the late 1970s. Nasir reports that modern family laws raised the legal age of marriage for girls to fifteen, and in some countries it was even higher. Courts could deny permission to marry if the age gap between an adolescent bride and her prospective spouse was too wide.<sup>46</sup>

Some of the stronger critics of Muslim family law have complained that there is heavy resistance in the Arab world to changing anything having to do with the family.<sup>47</sup> Yet some states have challenged local and communal patriarchal interests, with important consequences for family legislation and more general policies affecting women. Modernizing, developmentalist elites—

particularly but not exclusively those with a socialist orientation—saw the emancipation of women as part of their program for change. These states were more inclined to curb the power of traditional and rural elites, which would entail an attack on forms of patriarchal control over women and young men, as was the case in Soviet Central Asia.<sup>48</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, states in the patriarchal belt that undertook such actions were Turkey under Kemal Ataturk, the PDRY in the late 1960s and the 1970s, and the DRA in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Iraqi Ba'th Party had an interest both in recruiting women into the labor force in the context of a continuing labor shortage and in wresting women's allegiance away from kin, family, or ethnic group and shifting it to the party-state. Women were recruited into state-controlled agencies and put through public education, vocational training, and political indoctrination. The 1978 personal status law, although limited in its objectives, aimed at reducing the control of extended families over women.<sup>49</sup> These were largely pre-Saddam Hussein advances.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the growing political power of Islamist movements led to conservative revisions of family laws in Algeria, Egypt, and Iran. In the early 1990s, revisions were enacted in Yemen (following the reunification of the conservative north and the socialist south) and in Afghanistan (following the fall of the left-wing government and the coming to power of Islamists). In response, women's organizations mobilized to call for more egalitarian laws. By the turn of the new century, family law had become the battleground upon which feminist organizations, Islamists, and neopatriarchal states vied for influence.

Despite some differences in the Muslim family laws across the countries of the region, some common patterns may be identified. Everywhere except for Turkey, religious law is elevated to civil status, and religious affiliation is a requirement of citizenship. Although Islamic law gives women the right to own and dispose of property, they inherit less property than men do. Women are required to obtain permission of father, husband, or other male guardian to marry, seek employment, start a business, or travel. The highly formal Islamic marriage contract does require the consent of the wife, and in some countries women may insert stipulations into the contract, such as the condition that she be the only wife. Marriage, however, remains largely an agreement between two families rather than two individuals with equal rights and obligations. Moreover, marriage gives the husband the right of access to his wife's body, and marital rape is not recognized.<sup>50</sup> Only men can divorce unilaterally and without cause. Children acquire citizenship and religious status through their fathers, not their mothers. Muslim women may not marry non-Muslim men. In many countries, the criminal code provides for acquittal or a reduction of sentence for men who commit honor crimes.

Change in family law is a significant index of social change in the Middle East, a barometer of the internal debate within Islam, and an illustration of

the capacity for Islamic reform. It is also highly indicative of the role of the state and of state legal policy in matters of gender and the family. As Charrad has argued, legislation is a key element in the strategies available to the state in its efforts to produce social changes or to maintain the status quo. Through the law, and especially through family law, the state can maintain existing gender arrangements; it can alter social policies and laws in the direction of greater restrictions on women; or it can introduce new legislation to foster more equality within the family and raise women's social and economic status. "Family law regulates marriage, divorce, individual rights and responsibilities, and the transmission of property through inheritance; it is thus a prime example of state policy affecting women."<sup>51</sup> For this reason, women's organizations in the Middle East and North Africa have prioritized the modernization of family laws as a key demand of their movement for women's rights and citizenship. (See Chapter 8.)

The nature of the political system, objectives of state managers, and orientation of ruling elites constitute crucial factors in the equation that determines the legal status and social positions of women. Variations in the application of Muslim family law and in its patriarchal content depend principally on the type of political regime and the strength of modern social classes. In some cases, state legal policies have worked to undermine the patriarchal Arab-Islamic family; in other cases, policies foster and perpetuate family structure and the authority of male members in a more modernized form of patriarchy, or what Sharabi calls neopatriarchy. Thus, three parallel and sometimes conflicting developments may be discerned in recent MENA history: (1) the expansion of industrialization, urbanization, proletarianization, and state-sponsored education, which undermine tribes, the extended family unit, and patriarchal family authority; (2) the retention of Muslim family law, which legitimates the prerogatives of male family members over female family members; and (3) women's demands for greater civil, political, and social rights. Polemics surrounding women and the family are responses to the contradictions of social change and emerge in the context of patriarchal societies undergoing modernization and demographic transition.

"Neopatriarchal state" is useful as an umbrella term for the various types of political regime in the Middle East, as I argued in Chapter 1. Whether the regimes be monarchies or republics, radical or conservative, socialist or populist, they share the essential features of neopatriarchy. Sharabi applies the term even more broadly to describe discourses, relations, and institutions in the Arab world. For Sharabi, the concept refers equally to macrostructures (society, the state, the economy) and microstructures (the family or the individual). Neopatriarchy is the product of the encounter between modernity and tradition in the context of dependent capitalism; it is modernized patriarchy. Whatever the outward (modern) forms of the contemporary neopatriarchal family, society, or state, their internal structures remain rooted in the patriar-

chal values and social relations of kinship, clan, and religious and ethnic groups. A central feature of this system is the dominance of the father within the household and at the level of the state.<sup>52</sup>

Neopatriarchal state practices build upon and reinforce normative views of women and the family, often but not exclusively through the law. States that legitimize their own power on patriarchal structures such as the extended family foster its perpetuation through legislation that subordinates women to the control of men. Examples are laws about women's dress and behavior passed in the 1980s by the Islamist state in Iran and long in existence in Saudi Arabia, the sexual conduct laws of the Zia ul-Haq regime in Pakistan in the 1980s, the sanctioning of honor killings in Jordan and elsewhere (until recently), and the restrictive laws passed by Afghanistan's Mujahidin and Taliban rulers in the 1990s. Muslim family laws that render women legal minors and dependents of men reflect and perpetuate a modernized form of patriarchy.

The control of women is central to the reproduction of the patriarchal unit—the extended family, the community, and the state—but it may also be a political strategy. Constructions of gender and discourses about women and the family are sometimes a convenient weapon between contending political groups. Political elites or neopatriarchal states may raise the woman question to divert attention from economic problems or political corruption—this has been a common device utilized by Islamists in Iran. Another reason states may find it useful to foster patriarchal structures is that the extended family performs vital welfare functions. The joint household system and intergenerational wealth flows that are characteristics of patriarchal structures provide welfare and security for individuals. This, of course, is incumbent upon an adequate supply of household members, especially sons. The material consequences of reproductive failure are disastrous, as Mead Cain observed for Bangladesh.<sup>53</sup> It is especially dire for women, who attain status and old-age security through their sons. In all cases, the persistence of patriarchy relieves the state of the responsibility to provide welfare to citizens.<sup>54</sup>

The patriarchal family and patriarchal ideology persist, therefore, despite challenges from a number of quarters. It is true that the family and ideology mirror the larger social structure; but it is equally true that culture, or the superstructure, often lags behind changes in the economic structure. Turkish feminist scholars have noted that after seventy years of Kemalist secular republicanism, the preoccupation with virginity remains.<sup>55</sup> One might take a cue from Marx and note that the traditions of dead generations weigh heavily on the minds of the living.<sup>56</sup> An equally important reason for the persistence of patriarchy is that most neopatriarchal states in the Middle East have an instrumentalist approach toward women, gender, and the family: policies and laws that strengthen the position of the state itself are the ones that will be enacted.

### **The Demographic Transition and Changes in Fertility Behavior**

Given the persistence of the patriarchal society, family, and state, it was not surprising that the World Fertility Survey (WFS), conducted in forty-one countries between 1977 and 1982, found that high fertility persisted in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, compared with other regions, as well as in South Asia, where the crude fertility rate was six children per woman in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. In Iran, fertility increased between the 1976 census and the 1986 census due mainly to the pronatalism of the Islamic government in the early 1980s. The 1990s, however, saw a reversal of the Islamic state's policy on the family, widespread use of contraception, and a dramatic decline in fertility. Elsewhere, too, the demographic transition is in place and fertility rates are declining—a sign, perhaps, of the crisis of patriarchy in the Middle East.

The demographic transition is a process as far-reaching and important for the history and structure of populations as is industrialization. It involves a change from the high mortality and high fertility characteristic of preindustrial societies to patterns of low mortality and low fertility. Demographer John Caldwell argued that in Western Europe the economic and demographic transitions co-evolved: the transition from the traditional peasant (family-based) economy to the capitalist economy entailed changes in decisions about and need for reproduction. Large families became less rational as the cost of each additional child increased. But the process of change took place in two steps. First, mortality declined while fertility remained high or even increased, thus accelerating population growth. Harris explains that in the transition from peasant to commodity production, the stage of protoindustrialization entailed whole families working as a labor collective. Wages were so low that an adult male could not support himself, let alone a wife and family. As a result, the number of children increased. David Levine cites Michel Foucault to explain why: "The accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital . . . cannot be separated."<sup>57</sup> Then, as mortality continued to drop and as child and then infant mortality fell sharply, fertility began to decline as well, slowing rates of population growth.

In England and France, the rate of population growth increased by 1780, then slowed down after 1820 for France and 1879 for England. Although lower fertility came about in Western societies in the course of industrialization and urbanization, another important source of instability in the family-based system of production and reproduction, according to Caldwell, was "the egalitarian strain in the modern European ideology, powerfully augmented by the spread of education." The following trends, therefore, were significant in lowering the rates of fertility further: the enforcement of universal, compulsory

education; an intensification of the movement for women's suffrage and more equal rights for women; and an increase in the availability of the wares of the consumption society and their advertisement.<sup>58</sup> These trends are consistent with Mann's trajectory of patriarchy to neopatriarchy to gendered societies.

Marriage patterns changed, too, in the course of the demographic transition in Western Europe. The age at which couples married fell (from twenty-six to under twenty-four for women in France) and the number of people who married increased. Marriage and employment became compatible, and proletarian women continued to work after marriage. During the nineteenth century people still delayed marriage in both rural and urban areas in England and France, and fertility was higher in urban industrial than in rural areas. In the twentieth century, birthrates continued their downward trend because of the practice of birth control, though there were periodic increases. Tilly and Scott stress that mortality, marriage, and fertility patterns differed by class and region.<sup>59</sup>

Demographers studying global fertility decline since the 1960s offer eight explanations for the fertility transition: mortality reduction; reduced economic contributions from children; opportunity costs of childbearing, especially for mothers; family transformation; vanishing cultural props for childbearing; improved access to effective fertility regulation; marriage delay; and diffusion of ideas and practices.<sup>60</sup> These are plausible and pertinent variables, but the role of socioeconomic development, as argued by John Caldwell, may provide the most robust explanation. Caldwell does not deny the salience of access to efficient contraceptives and the diffusion of concern about population growth ("ideologies, attitudes, and the mechanisms of fertility control"), but he stresses that inadequate socioeconomic change may explain why some countries or some social groups within countries have been excluded from the global fertility decline.<sup>61</sup> Karen Oppenheim Mason adds gender to the equation, arguing that the status of women and the family determine some of the explanations offered above.<sup>62</sup> The status of women is thus both an independent and a dependent variable in the demographic transition. In this respect she echoes Caldwell's earlier work.

Socioeconomic development, gender, class, and the state certainly play a role in fertility. Many comparative studies on the causes of high fertility have tended to concentrate on the cost of children and the status of women as key explanatory variables. Lower status means restricted access to education and employment and hence higher fertility. As women from elite families are generally those with the most access to education and employment, fertility is also variable by class. There are exceptions, however; in some countries (for example, Saudi Arabia) elite women will receive private, Western-style education but will not seek employment or will abandon it after marriage, often due to conservative social norms. Poor women who are economically dependent and who are not the beneficiaries of a social security system need adult

sons in order to survive. Thus the cost of children and the status of women are themselves shaped by social class; reproductive behavior and fertility patterns, therefore, are class-differentiated. And as reproduction is so closely linked to production, the economic system within which families live and work will also explain and predict fertility patterns.<sup>63</sup> Simply put, there are rational reasons why the fertility behavior and needs of peasants, proletarians, professionals, and the poor differ. It should come as no surprise that salaried middle-class women are the ones having the fewest children.

High fertility persists in those areas with the traditional rural extended family, and in the 1970s and 1980s those areas were sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and Southwest and South Asia. Indeed, the World Fertility Survey found that fertility was highest in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. But it also found that "substantial fertility declines have been observed over recent years in all regions except sub-Saharan Africa."<sup>64</sup> As previously noted, many countries in the patriarchal belt have large populations dependent upon agriculture. High fertility is advantageous to the peasant family and its most powerful members; it is also justified on cultural-religious grounds. However, though the familial mode of production is typically found in circumstances of subsistence production, it can adapt for at least a time to urban life and the market economy without fully succumbing to the rules of the market. Where the process of proletarianization is not yet complete, large segments of the urban population are informal workers rather than formal-sector wage workers. When households are engaged in cottage industries, it is rational for them to increase the number of "workers," as was the case in Europe during the protoindustrial stage. For capital, large supplies of cheap labor are functional and profitable. Poor rural-urban migrants need their children to secure a purchase on town life and enable them to stay. The traditional elite, the merchants, organize their families much as do farmers and feel few, if any, ill effects from high fertility.<sup>65</sup> By contrast, the fully developed labor-market mode of production offers no rewards for high fertility.

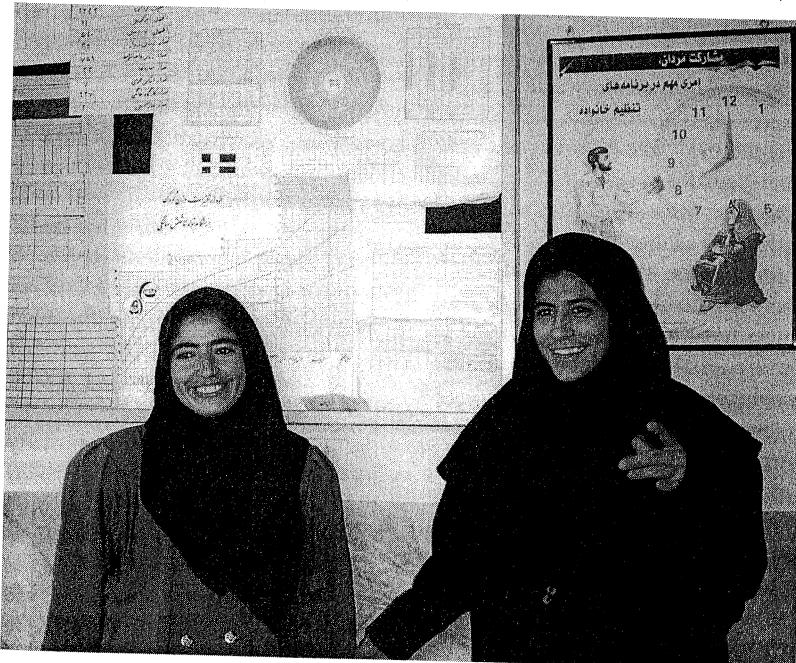
These explanations help us to understand the demographic transition in the Middle East, and its implications for the status of women, gender relations, and the family. As in other developing regions in the twentieth century, the demographic transition occurred more rapidly in MENA than it occurred in Europe. But MENA began its transition later than other countries with comparable levels of income, in part because of a slower pace of educational attainment and lower employment among women. The result of lowered mortality and high fertility in the second half of the twentieth century was accelerated population growth. MENA's annual population growth reached a peak of 3 percent around 1980, while the growth rate for the world as a whole reached its peak of 2 percent annually more than a decade earlier. On average, fertility in MENA declined from 7 children per woman around 1960 to 3.6 children in 2001. The total fertility rate (average number of births per woman)

is less than 3 in Bahrain, Iran, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Turkey, and is more than 5 in Iraq, Oman, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia. There have been impressive fertility declines in Morocco and Egypt since the 1980s, but only a slight decline in Saudi Arabia and none at all in Yemen, where the average number of births per woman is close to 8.<sup>66</sup>

The declines in fertility have been accompanied by declines in infant mortality and under-5 child mortality, quite dramatically in some countries. For example, in 1960 Tunisia had an infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) of 159, and its under-5 child mortality rate was 255. In the 1980s this declined to 58 and 83, respectively. By 2000 the rate of infant mortality had dropped to just 30. Iran similarly saw impressive achievements in the health of children as well as of mothers during the 1990s. Indeed, maternal mortality rates have dropped throughout the region, though they remain highest in Afghanistan, Yemen, and Sudan, the poorest and most rural countries. Life expectancy varies; it is highest in the oil-rich Gulf states (72 years) and Israel (80 years), lowest in Afghanistan (45 years), Sudan (55 years), and Yemen (56 years).

As noted earlier, state policy, including population or family planning policies, affect women's productive and reproductive choices. For many newly independent third world states, at least until recently, a large population was associated with national strength. This idea was stated quite explicitly by leaders of Algeria, Kenya, India, and China, to name a few. A pronatalist policy was adopted in 1979 by the authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which also banned abortion and prohibited the importation of contraceptives. In 1988 the total fertility rate in Iran was 5.6 births per woman and in Algeria it was 5.4 births per woman.

MENA countries have exhibited a variety of population policies and concerns. "Population policy" is understood to be an intention to improve the overall well-being of the nation's citizens. Definitions of "well-being" vary and are certainly debatable, as are prescriptions of how to reach objectives. In the 1990s, countries that were concerned about the rate of population growth (e.g., Iran and Egypt), faced the dual goal of improving health facilities, thus reducing natal and infant mortality, and of decreasing the birthrate. Other countries seek to reduce mortality rates and improve the population's health but do not actively seek to reduce birthrates (e.g., Israel, Saudi Arabia). At the level of state policymaking, the approach to population growth ranges from pronatalist to laissez-faire to pro-family planning. In several of the countries—notably Iran, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Turkey—the combined effects of socioeconomic development, women's educational attainment, and state-sponsored family planning programs have produced the lowest fertility rates of the region. Indeed, the average of about 2.5 children per woman in these MENA countries is even lower than the fertility rate of many Latin American countries.



*In Iran, rural health workers, known as behvarzes, are local women with two years' training who monitor maternal and child health and family planning. Photo courtesy of Farzaneh Roudy-Fahimi.*

### Education and Women's Empowerment

Higher levels of education tend to result in more knowledge and use of contraceptives, although the availability of family planning programs is also an important variable. Research on Egypt showed that whereas on average women desired 4 children in Egypt, the mean jumped to 4.4 among illiterate mothers and dropped to 2.1 for women with secondary school education. The mean number of children born to university-educated women was 1.8. Contraceptive use among the more educated was clearly a factor here, and remains so. But although fertility and education are negatively correlated, small increases in education—for example, a few years of primary education—are insufficient for fertility decline. There is also much evidence that the work status of the wife, especially if she works in the modern sector of the economy (nonagricultural cash economy), is an important determinant of marital fertility.<sup>67</sup>

The Syrian Fertility Survey of 1978 found that "while those with no schooling have a rate of 8.6 children, those with incomplete primary and those with complete primary schooling or above have rates of 4.3 and 3.2, respectively." And this despite the fact that "Syria has no organized family planning programme." The report concluded, "The very large differences in recent fertility between women of varying educational background and between rural and urban sectors suggest the likelihood of further decline in the national level of fertility as the Syrian population becomes more educated and urbanized." Similarly, the Turkish Fertility Survey of 1978 found that "women with high socio-economic status tend to have higher age at marriage and may have lower fertility." The survey found pronounced sociocultural and demographic differences between urban and rural, eastern and western, and educated and uneducated people in Turkey.<sup>68</sup> The more recent Demographic and Health Surveys—conducted in the early 1990s in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen, along with many other developing countries—similarly found that rural-urban residence, education, and socioeconomic status determined the number of children, as well as the health of the mother and child. In general, the surveys found declining fertility rates and rising age of marriage in the Middle Eastern countries surveyed.<sup>69</sup>

Thus we see that urbanization, industrialization, proletarianization, and mass schooling—so important to the demographic transition and the decline of classic patriarchy in the West—are present in the Middle East and have altered the social structure and gender relations. Developmentalist, welfarist, or revolutionary states also have helped to bring about societal changes, including legal reforms to bolster women's position in the family, as discussed above and in Chapter 3. Such legal reforms are an important basis for women to act as autonomous persons. But perhaps most important has been the expansion of schooling for girls. As Mernissi has stated: "Access to education seems to have an immediate, tremendous impact on women's perception of themselves, their reproductive and sex roles, and their social mobility expectations."<sup>70</sup>

The social changes just mentioned have led to differentiation among the female population and an expansion of the range of options available to women, including the right to make informed choices about marriage and childbearing. As Caldwell explained, a greater female role in reproductive decisionmaking would imply an important transition—a move toward a greater belief in female participation in work or social activities—and perhaps reflect and accelerate a decline in strong moral views on the separate roles of the sexes and the sanctity of maternity.<sup>71</sup> These trends are relevant to a growing proportion of the urban female population, and they have been visible enough to result in opposition by conservative forces. The relative rise in the position of women is seen by conservative forces as having the greatest potential of any factor to destroy the patriarchal family and its political, economic, and demographic structure.

Caldwell has argued that mass schooling probably has had a greater impact on the family in developing countries than it had even in the West. First, mass schooling has come in many countries at an earlier stage of economic and occupational structure development than it did in the West. Second, schooling frequently means Westernization, including Western concepts of family and gender. According to Caldwell, "Schools destroy the corporate identity of the family, especially for those members previously most submissive and most wholly contained by the family: children and women."<sup>72</sup> Mernissi similarly has emphasized the role of state-sponsored education in creating two generations of independent women. Her thesis is worth quoting at length:

As corrupt and inefficient as it proved to be, the national state did nevertheless carry out a mass educational programme (limited to males only in the rural area) after independence, and fostered the emergence of a new class: *educated youth of both sexes*. This class is the result of the interplay of three factors: (1) the demographic factor, the "youthification" of the population; (2) a political factor, the emergence of the welfare state; (3) a cultural factor, the change in women's self-perception as actors in society. . . .

Centuries of women's exclusion from knowledge have resulted in femininity being confused with illiteracy until a few decades ago. But things have progressed so rapidly in our Muslim countries that we women take literacy and access to schools and universities for granted.<sup>73</sup>

Educational attainment by parents seems to have some effect on their children's aspirations. A study of female education in Egypt in the early 1980s found that all the students whose father had a university education saw nothing less for themselves than a comparable education. Similar aspirations were also noticed among students whose mother completed a university education. Girls whose mothers were illiterate were more likely to see secondary education as their ultimate goal. The great majority of daughters whose mothers could read and write or had completed primary, preparatory, or secondary education intended to seek a university degree. Further analysis of students' aspirations in relation to fathers' occupations showed a high correlation between a student's level of aspiration for university or postgraduate studies and her father's employment in a professional field. Fully 100 percent of the daughters of fathers who worked in professional jobs aimed for a university or postgraduate education. Similarly, 96 percent of the daughters of fathers working in semiprofessional jobs expressed the same desire. The percentage of students aiming at only a secondary education was higher among girls whose fathers worked as small-business entrepreneurs (10 percent); religious functionaries, guards, and policemen (12 percent); skilled laborers (20 percent); and unskilled laborers (23 percent). The mother's employment status also showed a relationship to her daughter's hopes for higher education. The

great majority (98 percent) of the daughters of working mothers expressed a desire to pursue a university education; the other 2 percent were satisfied with a secondary education as their goal. A higher proportion (12 percent) of the daughters of nonworking mothers did not intend to go beyond secondary school. When education was related to employment, the girls' responses were more positive regarding the employment of educated women. The overwhelming majority (93 percent) believed that once a young woman completes her education, she must work. They further asserted that the ultimate goal of education for women was future employment.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, many MENA women recognize the importance of education, and studies find that women associate education with higher status, income, and economic freedom, and express a desire to be able to earn an income.<sup>75</sup>

Algeria and Iran, two large MENA countries, are representative of the profound family changes under way in the region. Whereas a few decades ago the majority of women married before the age of twenty, today only 10 percent of that age group in Algeria and 18 percent in Iran are married.<sup>76</sup> As Mernissi remarked, "To get an idea of how perturbing it is for Iranian society to deal with an army of unmarried adolescents one has only to remember that the legal age for marriage for females in Iran is thirteen and for males fifteen." The legal age was lowered—in fact to puberty for girls—following the establishment of Islamic rule, but it is interesting that this did not translate into a higher rate of marriage for girls under twenty—another example of the gap between laws and social reality. In Turkey 14 percent, in Morocco 13 percent, and in Tunisia only 3 percent of young women aged fifteen to nineteen were ever married in the 1990s. Mernissi has argued that the idea of a young unmarried woman is completely novel in the Muslim world, for the whole concept of patriarchal honor is built around the idea of virginity, which reduces a woman's role to its sexual dimension: reproduction within an early marriage.<sup>77</sup> The concept of a menstruating and unmarried woman is so alien to the entire Muslim family system, Mernissi adds, that it is either unimaginable or necessarily linked with *fitna*, or moral and social disorder. The unimaginable is now a reality. Young men, faced with job insecurity or lacking a diploma to guarantee access to desired jobs, postpone marriage. Women, faced with the pragmatic necessity to count on themselves instead of relying on a rich husband, further their formal education.

As a result, the average age of marriage for women and men in most MENA countries has registered a noticeable increase. In Algeria, Jordan, and Tunisia, young women marry at age twenty-four or twenty-five; in Egypt, Iran, Morocco, and Turkey, it is twenty-one or twenty-two. Even the oil countries, known for their conservatism, have witnessed an increase of unmarried young women: age at marriage for women is twenty-two in Saudi Arabia, twenty-three in Qatar and the UAE, and as high as twenty-five in Kuwait. The ages for young men are usually three to five years higher than those of young

women. The lowest age of marriage for girls is probably Afghanistan and Yemen, the poorest countries, where the fertility rates also are high. Of course, the patterns of nuptiality are influenced by urbanization: the more urbanized youth marry later in all countries. And it should be noted that in all cases the average age of marriage is considerably higher than the legal minimum.

The single most important determinant in the age of marriage has been education. More women are completing secondary school, and a growing proportion of university students are women. Educational statistics for MENA countries are not the most consistent or reliable, and it is sometimes difficult to discern patterns or trends over time. The figures in Table 4.1 have been gleaned from a number of sources, some of which contradict each other. Still, in comparing various data sets we can observe that women's share of university enrollments is nearly half in most of the large MENA countries. During the academic year 1999–2000, Lebanese women represented 53.2 percent of students enrolled in universities and institutions of higher learning, and 52.4 percent of these establishments' graduates.<sup>78</sup> And what are women studying? The fields of concentration—social sciences, humanities, natural sciences, medicine, law—vary from country to country. Women's share of education and the humanities has been high since at least 1980 in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. But a noticeable trend in those countries, and in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, is the feminization of enrollments in the medical sciences.<sup>79</sup>

There is some consensus that the dramatic increase in education among U.S. women in the postwar era was a major cause of the women's movement. The baby boomers, even more than those born a few years earlier, went to college in massive and unprecedented numbers. College education in turn increased women's labor force participation; at the same time there was an expansion of married women's labor force participation.<sup>80</sup> A similar pattern may be discerned in MENA countries—activist women, married and unmarried, emerge from the ranks of the educated and employed. This rapid social change—the impact of industrialization, urbanization, and education on marriage, the family, and gender roles—has caused a conservative backlash in the form of the Islamist movement. According to Mernissi, fundamentalism is a "defense mechanism against profound changes in both sex roles and the touchy subject of sexual identity."<sup>81</sup> Fundamentalists are concerned that education for women has dissolved traditional arrangements of space segregation, family ethics, and gender roles.

Although Mernissi underscores the revolutionary impact of the education of women in Muslim societies, she failed to consider the phenomenon of the educated Islamist woman. Islamist movements have been recruiting in the universities, and throughout the Middle East one sees veiled university women who are also active participants in Islamist movements. This, too, can be explained in terms of both the contradictions of social change and class

**Table 4.1** Sociodemographic Features in MENA, 1990s

	% Females Literate 15+, 2000	% Female Enrollments in Secondary School, 1993–1997	Female Share of Tertiary Enrollment, mid-1990s*	Age at First Marriage (women) 1990s**	% Female-Headed Households	% Married Women Using Contraception (total)	Total Fertility Rate
Afghanistan	22	12	—	—	—	—	6.0
Algeria	57	62	—	24	11	52	3.1
Bahrain	83	97	58	23	—	62	2.8
Egypt	44	73	—	22	13	56	3.5
Iran	70	73	36 <sup>a</sup>	21	6	73	2.6
Iraq	46	32	—	22	—	—	5.3
Israel	94	87	—	24	—	—	3.0
Jordan	84	—	47	25	— (9.6)	56	3.6
Kuwait	80	66	62	25	5	50	4.2
Lebanon	80	84	49	—	— (14.2)	61	2.5
Libya	68	—	17	—	—	49	3.9
Morocco	36	34	41 <sup>b</sup>	22	15 (17.3)	58	3.4
Oman	62	66	46	19	— (12.5)	24	6.1
Palestine	—	44	—	— (7.7)	—	—	—
Qatar	83	79	73	23	43	—	3.9
Saudi Arabia	67	57	47	22	—	32	5.7
Sudan	46	20	—	26	13	10	4.9
Syria	61	40	41	—	— (9.3)	49	4.1
Tunisia	61	63	45	25	11	60	2.3
Turkey	77	48	38	22	10	64	2.5
UAE	79	82	—	23	—	28	3.5
Yemen	25	14	13	19 (YAR)	12	21	7.2

Sources: Population Reference Bureau, *Women of the World 2002* poster, except for \* from CAWTAR, *Globalization and Gender: Economic Participation of Arab Women* (Tunis: CAWTAR, 2002), tab. A/33, p. 229; and UN, *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics* (New York: UN, 2000), tab. 4.A; \*\* from UN, *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics* (New York: UN, 2000); numbers in parentheses from ESCWA, *Women and Men in the Arab Region: A Statistical Portrait 2000* (Beirut: ESCWA, 2000), annex 10.

Notes: a. The figure for Iran did not include private universities. In 2002, the female share of university enrollments rose to over 50 percent.

b. The CAWTAR report cites a figure of 21 percent female share of university enrollment in Morocco.

factors: Islamists, whether they be male or female, are typically lower-middle-class and of recent rural or small-town background, “experiencing for the first time life in huge metropolitan areas where foreign influence is most apparent and where impersonal forces are at maximum strength.”<sup>82</sup> In Algeria, Iran, Egypt, and Turkey, Islamist movements have women supporters drawn from the traditional or lower middle class. Such women continue to see the family unit as essential and natural. At the same time, many Islamist women have had to face second-class citizenship and subjection to patriarchal gender relations within their movements and communities, and many have rebelled against it. Often these educated—and sometimes employed—Islamist women raise questions about male domination, polygyny, and unequal norms and laws governing divorce and child custody. These women, who challenge their subordinate status within the family and the society, partly by engaging in a more woman-centered re-reading of the Quran and early Islamic history, have come to be known as Islamic feminists.

Women’s employment has been almost as important as women’s education in changing the position and self-perception of women, and in altering the patriarchal gender contract. This seems to be equally true of working-class and middle-class women. Sociologist Tahire Erman has shown how Turkish migrant women’s involvement in paid employment has led them to question patriarchy, although she finds that other factors—such as affiliation with the Alevi sect, adherence to leftist ideology, and having strong mothers—also shape the extent to which women question patriarchy. In describing her entry into the world of paid employment, one woman told Erman:

When I wanted to work, my husband objected to it. He said, “Who will take care of the children if you are not home all day?” (Another woman joins in, saying, “Our husbands didn’t want us to work. They said they wouldn’t live on women’s money. This is the influence of the village.”) But we needed money. We needed it for our children. Through a relative I found a job as a maid. First I didn’t tell my husband (laughing). After a couple of days, I said to him, “Look, I started working for a nice lady. She pays me well. We need the money.” This is how I started working.<sup>83</sup>

Around the world, educated and employed women have formed women’s rights organizations, have become involved in trade unions and professional associations, and have helped change family relations from patriarchal to egalitarian. A similar pattern is emerging in the Middle East, where educated and employed women are pushing for the modernization of family law, greater participation, and more equality (see Chapter 8). A “critical mass” of educated and employed MENA women, with fewer children and more time for civic activities and collective action, have formed women’s movements that are challenging patriarchal gender relations, the neopatriarchal state, and patriarchal family laws.

In this, they have the support of some men who share their values and goals of egalitarian family relations. In 1999–2000, Mansoor Moaddel and his associates undertook a comparative study of value orientations in Egypt, Jordan, and Iran concerning religion, gender, and politics. Their findings confirm the arguments I have made regarding significant social changes in the region as a whole but also variations across the MENA countries. For example, while the respondents in all three countries attached great value to the institution of marriage, a rather significant number of Iranians (17 percent) agreed with the statement that marriage had become an outdated institution. On the issue of wife obedience, only 47 percent of Egyptians, 42 percent of Jordanians, and 24 percent of Iranians strongly agreed with the statement that a wife must always obey her husband. Interestingly, the overwhelming majority of respondents in all three countries disagreed with the institution of polygamy.

Moaddel and his colleagues found, too, that the ideal number of children varied in the three countries. Most respondents in Egypt considered two or three to be the ideal number, in Jordan four or more, and in Iran, two. It should be noted that this corresponds almost exactly to the total fertility rate in each country. In response to a question asking if women needed to have children in order to feel satisfied, about 89 percent of Egyptians and Jordanians agreed, but only 47 percent of Iranians. Correspondingly, a far larger percentage of the Iranian respondents (40 percent) agreed that a working mother could develop intimate relations with her children, just like a nonworking mother, compared with 23 percent in Jordan and only 19 percent in Egypt. On the question of whether men should be favored over women in jobs, given high unemployment rates in the region, a considerable majority of respondents in all three countries said that men should be given preference. But the younger age group displayed less gender bias than the older age groups. And finally, in measuring the strength of family ties, the researchers found that 86 percent of Jordanians, 78 percent of Egyptians, and 53 percent of Iranians surveyed agreed with the statement that “making my parents proud of me is one of my main goals in life.”<sup>84</sup> Family ties still matter.

## **Conclusion**

As Esposito and others have shown, Islamic law was formulated in the early years from the victory of conservative jurists over those who wished to retain interpretation and contingency in Islamic jurisprudence. Muslim family law certainly determines women’s legal status and shapes their social positions and options. But to explain the persistence of patriarchy and the preoccupation with women and the family, one must also look at the social structure: forms of economic organization, property relations, social classes, forms of stratification and segmentation, and the state. Since the 1960s, social struc-

tures in the Middle East have undergone rapid change through industrialization and modernizing state systems. The material bases of classic patriarchy crumble under the impact of capital penetration, infrastructural development, legal reform, mass education, and employment. In this context, women and the family have experienced change, and Muslim family law has become a field of contestation among feminists, fundamentalists, and the state. Particularly in urban areas, there has been a shift from the extended household unit characteristic of classic patriarchy to a more modernized version, or neopatriarchy. Some family forms in the contemporary Middle East are remarkably similar to those of the classic bourgeois nuclear family. Others reveal signs of a shift from patriarchal to more egalitarian gender dynamics. In general, the patriarchal gender contract remains in place, but economic changes and women’s collective action may undermine it in the years to come.

It was also in this context of social change, and especially changes in the structure of the family, that legal conservatives and Islamist ideologues sought in the 1980s and 1990s to stem the tide by insisting on returning to or strengthening patriarchal family laws. (See Chapter 5.) In some countries, the conservatives made gains. But in countries like Algeria, Iran, Turkey, and Tunisia, conservative Islamic forces have had to face strong resistance from what I call modernizing women. It is clear that women do not represent a homogeneous social category in the Middle East. They are differentiated by region, class, and education; educated women are further divided politically and ideologically. Yet the available evidence shows that socioeconomic development and increasing rates of female education and employment have affected the structure and size of the family, as well as women’s gender consciousness. During the region’s long twentieth century, therefore, the Arab-Islamic family and its concomitants—rigid sex roles, women’s legal status as minors, the prerogatives of fathers and husbands, high fertility—have been challenged by socioeconomic developments (industrialization, the expansion of the urban labor market, and education) and political action (state legal reform and women’s movements).

Michael Mann has suggested an evolution, in the West, from classic patriarchy to neopatriarchy and a gendered class structure. The capitalist market and liberal bourgeois ideology worked in concert to break down the private/public and male/female dichotomies, while the growth of education “provided women with one of their furthest points of entry into the public sphere and into economic stratification.”<sup>85</sup> Parallel to these socioeconomic changes were ideological, cultural, and discursive developments around women’s equality, autonomy, and liberation. In the Western world, socioeconomic changes—including mass education and mass employment—have resulted in a dramatically different female relationship to the family, as well as in the proliferation of family or household forms. Rather than being limited by the family, “women’s prospects are that around two-thirds of their adult lives will be

spent without children in the household, and possibly half to two-thirds without a husband.”<sup>86</sup> In the last 100 years, it has become increasingly possible for the individual to live without the insurance afforded by an extended set of ties. This is not yet the generalized case in the Middle East. The family remains important not only economically but emotionally, even for highly educated Middle Eastern women. But their range of choices regarding family formation, duration, and size has quite definitely expanded.

## Notes

1. Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); and Sylvia Walby, “The ‘Declining Significance’ or the ‘Changing Forms’ of Patriarchy?” in V. M. Moghadam, ed., *Patriarchy and Development: Women’s Positions at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). For a discussion of the status of women in connection with modes of production, see John Lie, “From Agrarian Patriarchy to Patriarchal Capitalism: Gendered Capitalist Industrialization in Korea,” in Moghadam, *Patriarchy and Development*, pp. 34–55.

2. On patriarchy in the Middle East, see Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). My approach has been inspired by Deniz Kandiyoti, especially “Bargaining with Patriarchy,” *Gender and Society* 2 (3) (September 1988): 274–290; and “Islam and Patriarchy: A Comparative Perspective,” in Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron, eds., *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 23–42.

3. Kingsley Davis, ed., *Contemporary Marriage* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); and Anastasia Posadskaya, “Changes in Gender Discourses and Policies,” in Valentine M. Moghadam, ed., *Democratic Reforms and the Position of Women in Transnational Economies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), pp. 162–179.

4. Barbara Hanawalt, cited in John Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 410.

5. David Levine, “Punctuated Equilibrium: The Modernization of the Proletarian Family in the Age of Ascendant Capitalism,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 39 (Spring 1991): 3–20. See also James Vander Zanden, *Sociology: The Core* (St. Louis: McGraw-Hill, 1990), p. 254.

6. See, for example, Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence* (London: Virago, 1989). See also Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers*. Boswell’s study locates the phenomenon of child abandonment in *patria potestas*, the Roman-derived paternal authority. Gordon’s study of wife and child abuses in Boston is highly critical of the patriarchal family and the prerogatives of the father. Both studies recognize extra-family causes of abandonment and abuse, such as food scarcity, disease, poverty, and unemployment.

7. See John C. Caldwell, *Theory of Fertility Decline* (London: Academic Press, 1982), pp. 166–169; Teodor Shanin, “A Peasant Household: Russia at the Turn of the Century,” in Teodor Shanin, ed., *Peasants and Peasant Societies*, 2nd ed. (London: Blackwell, 1987), pp. 21–34; Amartya Sen, “Gender and Cooperative Conflicts,” and Hanna Papanek, “To Each Less Than She Needs, from Each More Than She Can Do: Allocations, Entitlements, and Value,” both in Irene Tinker, ed., *Persistent Inequali-*

*ties: Women and World Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 123–148 and 162–183.

8. Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); and Stephanie Coontz, *Time After Time: Recurring Family Myths, Changing Family Realities* (Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations, 2000).

9. Barbara Einhorn, “Democratization and Women’s Movements in Central and Eastern Europe: Concepts of Women’s Rights,” in V. M. Moghadam, ed., *Democratic Reform*, pp. 48–73. See also Posadskaya, “Changes in Gender Discourses and Policies”; Valentina Bodrova, “Women, Work, and Family in the Mirror of Public Opinion”; and Sharon Wolchik, “Women and the Politics of Transition in Central and Eastern Europe,” in Moghadam, pp. 29–47, 162–179, and 180–195.

10. Rebecca Klatch, “Coalition and Conflict Among Women of the New Right,” *Signs* 4 (1988): 671–694; quotes appear on pp. 675–676.

11. Murteza Mutahhari, *Sexual Ethics in Islam and in the Western World*, trans. Muhammad Khurshid Ali (Tehran: Bonyad Be’tat Foreign Department, 1982), pp. 7, 31, 58. Note the swipe at the presumed lack of family values in the West.

12. See Youssef M. Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (London: Pinter, 1990), pp. 127–128.

13. Fereshteh Hashemi, “Women in an Islamic Versus Women in a Muslim View,” *Zan-e Rouz* 22 (March 1981), translated and reprinted in Azar Tabari and Nahid Yeganeh, eds., *In the Shadow of Islam: The Women’s Movement in Iran* (London: Zed Books, 1982), p. 180. “Companionship” and “courtship” are euphemisms for sexual services.

14. Research Group for Muslim Women’s Studies, *The Social Status of Iranian Women Before and After the Victory of the Islamic Revolution* (Tehran: Cultural Studies and Research Institute, Ministry of Culture and Higher Education, 1990), p. 33.

15. See especially Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life* (New York: Harper, 1976); and Jane Humphries, “Class Struggle and the Persistence of the Working Class Family,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 1 (1977): 241–258. For a more critical view, see Wally Seccombe, “Patriarchy Stabilized: The Construction of the Male Breadwinner Wage Norm in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *Social History* 11 (1) (1986).

16. Jason Fields and Lynne M. Casper, “America’s Families and Living Arrangements: Population Characteristics 2000,” U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, June 2001. Via [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov), accessed October 2002.

17. See Val Moghadam, “The Fourth World Conference on Women: Dissension and Consensus,” *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 3 (1) (1996): 93–102; Colum Lynch, “Islamic Bloc, Christian Right Team Up to Lobby U.N.,” *Washington Post*, June 17, 2002, p. A1; and Jennifer Butler, “Alarmed by Global Progress on Reproductive Rights, the Religious Right Storms the United Nations,” *Religious Consultation Report* 6 (1) (2002): 5, 11.

18. This discussion draws on Kandiyoti, “Bargaining with Patriarchy”; Ellen Meiksins Wood, “Capitalism and Human Emancipation,” *New Left Review* 167 (January–February 1988): 1–21; Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on a Political Economy of Sex,” in Rayna Rapp, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157–210; Raphael Patai, *Women in the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967); Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), esp. chap. 1; Germaine Tillion, *The Republic of Cousins: Women’s Oppression in Mediterranean Society* (London: Al-Saqi Books,

1983), esp. chap. 6; and Renée Hirschon, "Introduction: Property, Power and Gender Relations," in Renée Hirschon, ed., *Women and Property: Women as Property* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), pp. 1–22.

19. J. G. Peristiany, "Honour and Shame in a Cypriot Highland Village," in J. G. Peristiany, ed., *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 171–190; quote appears on p. 182. See also Pierre Bourdieu, "The Sentiment of Honour in Kabyle Society," in Peristiany, *Honour and Shame*, pp. 191–242. Honor killing is the name given to a customary practice whereby women and girls are killed by members of their family on suspicion of having had or having aspired to pre- or extramarital relations—because such sexual transgressions presumably violate the integrity and honor of the family.

20. Frederick Engels, *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972; originally published in 1884); Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Michael Mann, "A Crisis in Stratification Theory?" in Rosemary Crompton and Michael Mann, eds., *Gender and Stratification* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1986), pp. 40–56.

21. Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers*. It is worth pointing out that in Boswell's brief chapter on Islam, Muslim practices vis-à-vis children are found to be more humane than Roman-derived early Christian practices.

22. Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work, and Family* (London: Routledge, 1978).

23. On the connection between modernity and the rise of women's rights and feminist movements, see Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1986); and Janet Saltzman Chafetz and Gary Dworkin, *Female Revolt: Women's Movements in World and Historical Perspective* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1986).

24. Eleanor Doumato, "Hearing Other Voices: Christian Women and the Coming of Islam," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23 (2) (May 1991): 177–199. See also Germaine Tillion, *The Republic of Cousins*.

25. Jamal J. Nasir, *The Status of Women Under Islamic Law* (London: Graham & Trotman, 1990), pp. 122–126.

26. Alya Baffoun, "Women and Social Change in the Muslim Arab World," *Women's Studies International Forum* 5 (2) (1982): 227–242.

27. Mounira Charrad, "State and Gender in the Maghrib," *Middle East Report* 163 (March–April 1990): 19–24; quotes appear on pp. 20–21.

28. Nikki R. Keddie, "The Past and Present of Women in the Muslim World," *Journal of World History* 1 (1) (1990): 77–108; quotes appear on pp. 81–82. In addition to the sources in endnotes 2 and 18 above, see Peter McDonald, "Social Organization and Nuptiality in Developing Societies," in John Cleland and John Hobcraft, eds., *Reproductive Change in Developing Countries: Insights from the World Fertility Survey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 87–114; Hisham Sharabi, "The Dialectics of Patriarchy in Arab Society," in Samih K. Farsoun, ed., *Arab Society: Continuity and Change* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 83–104; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969); and Jack Goody, *The Oriental, the Ancient, and the Primitive: Systems of Marriage and the Family in the Pre-Industrial Societies of Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). On family honor and *fitna* in the Middle East, see Fatma A. Sabbah, *Woman in the Muslim Unconscious*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984); Mai Ghoussooub, "Feminism—or the Eternal Masculine—in the Arab World," *New Left Review* 161 (January–February 1987): 3–13; and Fatima Mernissi,

*Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*, rev. ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

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66. Farzaneh Roudy, "Population Trends and Challenges in the Middle East and North Africa," Population Reference Bureau policy brief, October 2001.

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68. *World Fertility Survey*, p. 17; *The Syrian Fertility Survey* (Voorburg, Netherlands: International Statistical Institute, 1984), pp. 5, 9, 12; *The Turkish Fertility Survey* (Voorburg, Netherlands: International Statistical Institute, 1984), p. 7.

69. The Demographic and Health Surveys were carried out by Macro International, Inc., with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development. Final reports and other publications for the countries surveyed may be found on the DHS website at [www.measuredhs.com](http://www.measuredhs.com).

70. Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil*, p. xxv.

71. Caldwell, *Theory of Fertility Decline*, p. 219.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 322.

73. Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil*, pp. xxiii–xxiv.

74. Hind A. Khattab and Syeda Greiss el-Daeiff, "Female Education in Egypt: Changing Attitudes Over a Span of 100 Years," in Freda Hussein, ed., *Muslim Women* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), pp. 169–197. The authors of the study found, however, that their respondents still distinguished between "suitable" and "unsuitable" jobs for

women. Appropriate careers were teaching, social work, and, in medicine, pediatrics and gynecology (p. 183).

75. See, for example, Jennifer Olmsted, "Women 'Manufacture' Economic Spaces in Bethlehem," *World Development* 24 (12) (1996): 1829–1840.

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78. Mona Khalaf, "Employment, Breadwinning, and Women's Status: The Case of Lebanon," paper presented at the Conference on Women and Gender in the Middle East: A Multidisciplinary Assessment of the State of Theory and Research, Bellagio, Italy, August 27–31, 2001, p. 12.

79. See CAWTAR, *Globalization and Gender: Economic Participation of Arab Women* (Tunis: CAWTAR and UNDP, 2001), tab. A/34, p. 231.

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### Islamist Movements and Women's Responses

*How can God's victory prevail when women adorn themselves openly and mix with men, and when defiance of God's law continues day and night?*

—Al-Ribat, Islamist newspaper in Jordan, 1991

*If fundamentalists are calling for the return to the veil, it must be because women have been taking off the veil.*

—Fatima Mernissi

The nebulous transnational network Al-Qaida, the Palestinian suicide bomber, the strangely medieval Taliban of Afghanistan—since the late 1990s, these have been the symbols of political Islam in the Western imagination. But what is the larger context in which they arose? Social changes and international relations alike have given rise to an ideological movement of a specific type—known as Islamic fundamentalism, political Islam, or Islamism—advocating reconstruction of the moral order that has been disrupted or changed. Islamist movements have arisen in the context of socioeconomic crisis, a crisis of legitimacy of the state and political order, and the weakening of the patriarchal family structure. In this context, gender has become increasingly problematized and politicized. Community morality and the status of women are central concerns of Islamist movements. Gender identity is linked to group identity—the group here being the radicalized Muslim community, which has a twofold *raison d'être*. First, it has been under attack by internal and external enemies and must reassert itself. Second, it sees itself as the solution to the country's cultural, political, and economic malaise and to the crisis of national identity. Islamization measures include the banning of alcohol; the imposition of veiling; and the restoration or strengthening of Shari'a law. Islamists are especially critical of Western influences on gender relations. Thus Islamism and feminism have become implacable foes. At the same time, Islamist movements have their own women supporters. A women's movement certainly exists in the Muslim world, with roots in the late nineteenth century, but it is clearly bifurcated along class and ideological lines. This chapter will examine