

AL-SABAH

History & Genealogy

of

Kuwait's Ruling Family

1752-1987

آل الصباح

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وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَّفَ الْأَرْضَ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ
بَعْضٍ دَرَجَتٍ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَيْتُكُمْ

*"It is He who has appointed you viceroys in the earth,
and has raised some of you in rank above others, that
He may try you in what he has given you."*

Al Qur'an, Surah VI, 166
(interpreted by Arberry)

The Al-Sabah Dynasty

The Al-Sabah have ruled Kuwait continuously since the eighteenth century and are so much part of Kuwait's past and present that it has been said that, "If the Al-Sabah had not existed, it would have been necessary to invent them".¹

Today the family has over twelve hundred members. It is led by Shaikh Jabir al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait, and consists of all the living descendants in the male line of the dynasty's founder, Sabah I (c 1752-56). These people are officially registered as members of the ruling family and are distinguished from other Kuwaitis by the title of *Shaikh* (f. *Shaikha*).

The Constitution describes Kuwait's system of government as "democratic, under which sovereignty resides in the people", but it defines Kuwait as "a hereditary Amirate" and assigns the Amir much more power than is possessed by most other constitutional heads of state. Thus the system of government lies somewhere between a constitutional monarchy on European lines and an absolute monarchy.²

As Head of State, the Amir is declared "immune and his person inviolable". He is Supreme Commander of the armed forces and can declare a defensive war without prior consultation provided the National Assembly is quickly and fully informed. Also he can independently conclude treaties not affecting Kuwait's security or its economy - for example, treaties restoring diplomatic relations or establishing facilities for technical or cultural cooperation.

He rules through his Prime Minister and Cabinet ministers who are answerable to himself and to the fifty elected representatives of the people in the National Assembly. If the Assembly is clearly dissatisfied with a minister, the Amir relieves him of office upon the Prime Minister's recommendation. Similarly, if the Assembly should lose confidence in the Prime Minister (a position usually held by the Heir Apparent) or in the Cabinet, the Amir may demand their resignation and replacement. Alternatively the Amir could decide that the National Assembly's wishes ran counter to those of the nation at large.³ In such circumstances he would support the Cabinet and dissolve the Assembly - as occurred in 1986.⁴ He is thus the ultimate arbiter between the Government and the people.

The Amir maintains dynastic or family rule by reserving key government posts for his relatives. Al-Sabah shaikhs usually hold the Ministries of Defence, Interior, Foreign Affairs and Information. As for the appointment of the Heir Apparent and Prime Minister, this is made by the Amir following consultations with his relatives and especially those forming the Ruling Family Committee. The decision should be made public within one year of his accession and should be approved by a majority in the National Assembly. In the event of a nominee not being approved, the Amir would submit the names of three other candidates and the National Assembly would make a final choice. The Constitution⁵ restricts eligibility to rule to the male descendants of Mubarak I in the male line and theoretically anyone in that group could be chosen; but, in practice, the choice has so far been limited to the sub-groups in which power is now concentrated: the descendants of Mubarak I respectively through Jabir II (ruler 1915–17) and Salim I (ruler 1917–21).

Nothing is known of the origins of the Al-Sabah except that they belong to the noble 'Aniza tribal confederation and used to live in the central Arabian district called Najd. Unlike the ruling families of countries like Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, they did not establish their dynasty by the sword. Nor could they claim descent from the Prophet Muhammad in the manner of the Imams of the Yemen or the Sharifs of Mecca and their descendants – the Kings of the Hijaz, Iraq and Jordan. Instead they are said to have acquired the right to rule through a voluntary division of responsibilities between themselves and the other leaders of the community with whom they first arrived in Kuwait as settlers in the eighteenth century.⁶

As rulers their task was to carry the burden of local administration and to conduct relations with the Shaikh of the Bani Khalid tribe on whom Kuwait depended for its protection. Although the Al-Sabah must have been key figures in those early years, their position is unlikely to have been envied by the other leaders since it involved staying in Kuwait for most of the year and thus missing the profitable opportunities provided by pearling and trading. Yet there were compensations. A report written in 1756 describes Sabah I's son, Mubarak, as the most important person in Kuwait despite being "poor and still young"⁷ – a sign that the Al-Sabah enjoyed high prestige by virtue of their official position. Also, the willingness of the Al-Sabah shaikhs to forgo personal gain and consult the leading citizens before making major decisions gained them the respect of the people and encouraged the merchants to finance them voluntarily. This situation lasted well into the nineteenth century and is described in an eye-witness account by the British Resident in the Gulf in 1841:

"Both himself (Jabir I) and his Sons are perhaps among the worst dressed and most ill-lodged residents in the place. Excepting a small duty levied upon the sales and purchases of the Bedouins who resort to his Town, the Shaikh collects no taxes or customs . . . his subjects are devoted to an unusual degree and ready to place at (his) disposal both person and property . . ."⁸

But this situation did not last. As religious and tribal strife racked the region, the Al-Sabah skilfully negotiated with every party concerned - other regional leaders, the Ottomans and their Egyptian vassals who were trying to restore order, and local representatives of the European trading companies - aiming always to direct the benefits of Kuwait's strategic location and powerful navy where the rewards were greatest. In this way Jabir I and Sabah II managed not only to maintain Kuwait's independence but also to increase the prosperity of the Kuwaiti merchants and to alleviate the poverty of the Al-Sabah through the acquisition of date-groves in Ottoman Iraq. Later, when the Ottomans tried to extend direct control over eastern Arabia, Abdallah II (ruler 1866-92) increased the power and prestige of the Al-Sabah by siding with them and accepting further rewards and the Ottoman title, *Qaimmaqam* (Provincial Sub-Governor) of Kuwait.

As the leader of a dynasty that had ruled for over a hundred years and the recipient of Ottoman patronage and sources of income outside Kuwait, Muhammad I (ruler 1892-96) seems to have abandoned all semblance of deference to the leading merchants. Inevitably these notables took offence; and the complaint which they had started to make already in the reign of his father, Sabah II, became louder - namely that the contributions they had earlier paid to the Al-Sabah voluntarily and conditionally were now being levied as routine taxes. So too, quite apart from considerations of money and power, they were concerned that the foreign influences being introduced by Muhammad I and his circle were harming the cohesion and traditional character of Kuwaiti society. Except for an important group of rich traders with business connexions mainly in India and Ottoman Iraq,⁹ most Kuwaitis had retained the values and traditions of their original homeland in central Arabia and felt estranged from their Turkophile ruler and alarmed by what seemed to be Kuwait's gradual absorption into the Ottoman empire. This was the situation that encouraged Mubarak I (ruler 1896-1915) to assassinate his brothers, Muhammad I and Jarrah, and to usurp the throne in 1896.

To excuse this act some have tried to blacken the character of the murdered shaikhs and to present Mubarak as the saviour of Kuwait's independence.¹⁰ Others have argued that the Ottoman connexion was not as threatening or unpopular as has been alleged and that Mubarak exploited such fear as existed in order to satisfy his own ambitions.¹¹ Of these views the second seems nearer the truth. No one denies that Mubarak was gifted with political acumen or that his rule brought benefits to Kuwait. On the other hand it is also true that, far from securing Kuwait's independence, he merely replaced Ottoman links with British ones through the various "agreements" negotiated between 1899 and 1913. Although these provided guarantees of British protection which proved crucially important in several subsequent crises,¹² Mubarak obtained them by ceding control of foreign policy to the British who thus gained more influence in Kuwait than had ever been exercised there by the Ottomans. In addition, the notables' hopes of regaining their former ascendancy were not realised since, with the British behind him, Mubarak was able to acquire greater power than any of his predecessors. Kuwait's leading families bravely defied his

despotism and insisted on their historic rights, but their efforts came to nothing. Nor were they much more successful, after the brief respite of Jabir II's reign, in challenging Salim I (ruler 1917–21) and Ahmad I (ruler 1921–50). A breakthrough seemed to have been achieved in 1938 when, with the tacit approval of the British, a Legislative Assembly was elected that achieved many useful reforms. But then, after only six months, Ahmad I closed it and reverted to one-man rule (p. 52).

Until now the power of Al-Sabah had been the reward of an effort of will and it was only after American and British companies became interested in Kuwait's oil, first struck in 1938, that the dynasty acquired the power of great wealth. Ahmad I had made a point of negotiating with the oil companies in his own name, so it was into bank accounts controlled by the ruling family that the oil concession payments and revenues were paid. At first a mere trickle, they became a torrent in the 1950s, and it was estimated that by 1959 they amounted to at least £150,000,000 per year.

Abdallah III (ruler 1950–65) found this situation more a nightmare than a dream come true. A man of simple tastes, he was revolted when Kuwaitis and foreigners began scrambling to enrich themselves by fair means or foul. Having waited twenty-nine years to rule (p. 40), he was profoundly disillusioned and it was unwillingly and amidst abdication threats that he mediated between the Kuwaiti and the foreign business communities and between those of his relatives who were struggling with them and with each other for money and land.¹³

Faced with the task of transforming Kuwait into a modern state, he delegated much executive authority to his relatives. Government departments – the forerunners of today's ministries – grew in number and size and each was headed by a shaikh. Perhaps more recognition should have been given to the work of these department heads – men like Shaikh Fahad al-Salim who pioneered Kuwait's constructional development and Shaikh Abdallah Mubarak who established its armed services and security system. Instead attention has focused on the unwillingness of the shaikhs to cooperate with each other and on the degree to which most of them profited from irregularities in public expenditure and land dealings.¹⁴

No one complained more bitterly than the leaders of the patrician merchant families. Abdallah III had close ties with them dating back to the pre-war years and wanted to involve them in government. But his relatives would have none of it. Accordingly the merchants became dependent on the Al-Sabah as dispensers of government favours. It is true that they retained their eminence in the social hierarchy and received fortunes through the policy by which the government spread the oil wealth by buying their property at inflated prices. It is also true that some of them made further fortunes as contractors and suppliers of needs created by government development projects. Nevertheless they lacked political power and were seen by outsiders as the shaikhs' juniors. Also at this time, in the 1950s, the Al-Sabah began bringing in talented non-Kuwaitis to set up businesses for them. With their help, the shaikhs and shaikhahs entered the terrain of the Kuwaiti merchants and began competing with them as business

agents, exchange and real-estate dealers and large-scale importers.

The notables were not alone in censuring the shaikhs. Devout Muslims, intellectuals, artisans and workers also complained and opposition groups gained many converts. Members of protest groups including the *Kuwait Democratic League* and the *Islamic Guidance Society* denounced the Al-Sabah regime, accusing the shaikhs of running Kuwait like a family fiefdom. They also condemned Kuwait's association with Great Britain and all the more so after 1956 when, in collusion with the Israelis, the British and French bombed Egypt and seized half the Suez Canal zone. Yet worse for the Al-Sabah was the massacre of the British-backed Iraqi royal family in 1958. The work of a group of army officers, this successful coup encouraged anti-monarchist and anti-British elements in Kuwait and made them bolder in demanding change and more ready to condone or even assist plots to subvert the Government.

While most shaikhs advocated fierce retaliation, Abdallah III decided to move with the times and seek three goals – the ending of Great Britain's preferential status in Kuwait; a better coordinated administration with stricter financial controls; and a return to the situation that had prevailed before the Ottomans, and then the British, predominated in Kuwait – to the days of Jabir I (ruler 1814–59) and his predecessors, when the power of the Al-Sabah had depended not on outsiders but on the support and guidance of their fellow Kuwaitis and, in particular, the leading merchant families. It can thus be seen that Kuwait's movement forward to a system of government standing closer to internationally approved democratic principles was also the revival of an indigenous tradition of consultation dating back to an earlier, prouder chapter of its history.

In 1959, Abdallah III reorganised the Government. He called on his nephew, Shaikh Jabir al-Ahmad (now Jabir III), to manage the state's finances and invited the notables to join Shaikh Jabir and several other up-and-coming shaikhs in planning an epoch-making reform programme.¹⁵

Several members of the Al-Sabah, including Shaikh Fahad al-Salim and Shaikh Abdallah Mubarak, resisted these developments. The latter, much strengthened by Shaikh Fahad's demise in June, continued to spurn official restraints and to place himself proudly above the common law. At the same time he aimed to preserve the status quo and Kuwait's alliance with the British on whom his own future largely depended. This is not to say that he was motivated only by self-interest. As head of public security and the armed forces he was genuinely alarmed by evidence of subversion in the country (pp. 43–4) and simply could not understand Abdallah III's subtle policy of appeasement which to him spelled weakness and disaster. Instead he cracked down on all dissent, ordered mass deportations and became so convinced he was the man of the hour that he felt justified in insisting on his formal designation as Abdallah III's successor. By pushing too hard, however, he undermined his position. In the spring of 1961, finding himself solidly opposed by his relatives, he left Kuwait in dudgeon apparently believing Kuwait could not manage without him

and that he would be asked to return on his own terms. In the event, this did not occur. Instead Abdallah III was encouraged by his departure and continued to lead the country towards reform in the belief that true stability cannot be imposed by force but is the fruit of compromise and efficient government.

Kuwait's transition to full sovereignty was completed on 19 June 1961 when Abdallah III and the British Political Resident in the Gulf, Sir William Luce, abrogated the Exclusive Agreement of 1899 and exchanged the letters of friendship that have since become known as the Treaty of Independence.¹⁶ Shortly afterwards, in a nervous mood induced by the Qasim crisis (p. 42), work began on the drafting of a Constitution. Completed and approved in November 1962, it was an enlightened document restricting the powers of the Al-Sabah and confirming equality before the law and religious tolerance; and it opened the way for elections to the first National Assembly which was opened on 29 January 1963.

Today Kuwaitis still remember Abdallah III with respect, and even those Al-Sabah shaikhs who once condemned his ideas as "near-Republican" now admit that his policies benefited themselves no less than the country as a whole. By promoting his own interests in association with those of Kuwait's notables and young activists before the Second World War, he earned their goodwill and dissuaded them from criticising the Al-Sabah in general and the broad principle of hereditary leadership. Similarly, in his later years, by seeking full independence from Great Britain, a prudent distribution of the national wealth and a representative form of government, he demonstrated a style of rule that enabled the Al-Sabah to survive the years in which less adaptable dynasties were swept from power in Egypt (1952-53), Iraq (1958) and the Yemen (1962).

The optimism that marked the early 1960s has so far passed the test of time. The picture that Abdallah III tried to present of the Al-Sabah as a group of solid citizens striving to serve their country has, despite certain exceptions, become generally accepted. Although some shaikhs and shaikhas have acquired vast riches, so have many Kuwaitis of quite humble background. Members of the Al-Sabah receive modest financial allowances and, like other Kuwaitis, must rely on their wits if they want to live the good life. Their children generally attend local schools and are brought up to avoid ostentation and, above all, never to consider themselves royal. Many continue their education beyond the secondary level and several have hard-earned doctorates from respected universities. Almost all of them take jobs. So too, under the leadership of Abdallah III's successors, Sabah III (ruler 1965-77) and the present Amir of Kuwait, Shaikh Jabir al-Ahmad, Kuwait has enjoyed lengthy periods in which its elected parliament and fearless press have been admired throughout the Middle East.

But there have also been difficulties. Enormous financial and social problems were created by the crash in 1982 of the unofficial "Souk al-Manakh" stock exchange in which thousands of Kuwaitis, following

in the footsteps of the shaikhs in the 1950s, had been cutting corners in pursuit of easy riches.¹⁷ The ensuing financial crash was aggravated by a slump in oil prices following the boom period of the 1970s.

The most ominous development, however, was the overthrow by Islamic revolutionaries of Iran's ruling Pahlavi dynasty in 1978-79. Just as the downfall of Shah Muhammad Riza Pahlavi created a dangerous power vacuum in the region, so the rise of the Islamic Republic in Iran appeared to menace neighbouring nationalist and monarchical regimes including that of the Al-Sabah. Moreover, since those regimes are Arab and Sunni-dominated whereas the Republic in Iran is Persian and Shia, the confrontation also reflected and exacerbated ancient sectarian and racial animosities.

When Iraq's Ba'thist leader, Saddam Hussain, ordered Iraqi forces to invade Iran in September 1980 in a bid to crush the nascent Republic, a war ensued in which Kuwait felt obliged to renege on its avowed non-involvement by providing Saddam Hussain with assistance. As Kuwait and the other Gulf states banded together into a defensive Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981, the Iranians made good their initial losses and then pressed into Iraqi territory, occupying the Fao peninsula only a few miles from Kuwait's northern border.¹⁸ Meanwhile other developments, including Kuwait's continuing support for Saddam Hussain's Sunni dictatorship, sparked a series of terrorist incidents in Kuwait sponsored in several cases by Saddam's Shia enemies at home.

The worst incident was an attempt to assassinate the Amir of Kuwait, Shaikh Jabir al-Ahmad, in 1985.¹⁹ Although he survived with only minor injuries, the attempt highlighted the increasing violence of Islamic fundamentalism. Likewise it focused attention on the Amir's vulnerability and on the succession issue, and this in turn increased tensions among the Al-Sabah. With no automatic system to determine the succession, jockeying for position is inevitable among the shaikhs. Since the more ambitious of them have often joined forces with malcontents in the National Assembly (on the approval of whose members the succession officially depends - p. 253), many observers believed that the relentless campaign of some deputies to blame the Government for all Kuwait's difficulties was not always motivated by concern for the national interest. On several occasions it was suspected that some deputies were exploiting the terrorist incidents and Kuwait's financial crisis to secure ministerial resignations and thus open up government posts for ambitious figures on the sidelines. Others were said to be intent on challenging the position of the Heir Apparent and Prime Minister, Shaikh Sa'd Abdallah al-Salim - a campaign encouraged by the small minority who are keen to discredit the Al-Sabah leadership in general and by others seeking to advance the interests of other sections of the ruling family. It was less the war situation or Saudi influence or local dissatisfaction with the Government's performance than the deputies' attacks on personalities and the effect of those attacks on sensitive dynastic issues that were said to have caused Shaikh Jabir to dissolve the Assembly in July 1986.

The calmness of public reaction showed a wide acceptance that Shaikh Jabir had acted in Kuwait's best interests. While Kuwaitis feel

a strong bond with other Arabs and Muslims, they are also very conscious of their own unique traditions and identity as Kuwaitis. They are also highly aware of the exceptional smallness and fragility of their country and of the fact that they constitute a minority of Kuwait's total population. Therefore, rather than leaning on any broad political ideology or pan-Arab leader, they tend to rally round their Amir, Shaikh Jabir, as the leader of their clan: and they provide him with broader support than is enjoyed by the National Assembly which is elected by a very small number of Kuwaitis (see note 3). "Kuwait for the Kuwaitis" is their heartfelt slogan, and "father of the Kuwaiti family" the favourite epithet for their Amir.

Nevertheless it would be entirely wrong to describe the Kuwaitis as monarchists. Throughout Kuwait's history, and all the more so since the promulgation of the Constitution in 1962, support for the Al-Sabah has been conditional upon their willingness to share power; and, in dissolving the Assembly, Shaikh Jabir disappointed and angered a significant minority²⁰, including members of the rising generation of well-travelled, university-educated Kuwaitis who regard as inadequate Kuwait's official system of government - what Shaikh Jabir's son, Dr Salim Al-Sabah, has called "a paternalistic state with democratic institutions".²¹

In the autumn of 1986, optimistic observers felt that Kuwait's already rallying economy would continue to improve and that Shaikh Jabir, despite having provided no promise or specific deadline, would eventually be persuaded to restore parliamentary life just as he did in 1980 when he ordered elections for an Assembly to replace the one dissolved four years earlier by his predecessor, Sabah III (p. 30). Others, conscious of the war raging on their doorstep and of the extent to which recent events had strained their relations with each other and with their neighbours, felt extremely anxious about the future.

To stress the value of hereditary rule is not the aim of this book which advocates no single political system for all countries. In Kuwait's case, however, it is obviously the shrewd leadership of the Al-Sabah that has enabled the country to survive for the past two and a half centuries. Likewise in today's critical circumstances it is Shaikh Jabir al-Ahmad and his trusted relatives who alone have sufficient authority and prestige to hold together the mosaic of Kuwait's population and to prevent Kuwait from sliding, like several other Middle Eastern states, towards dictatorship or chaos.

الله يحفل بنا

- 1 *Economist*, 21 January 1967.
- 2 In practice the position shifts according to the political climate - the Amir encouraging liberalism in good times, but battening down the hatches in periods of danger. (See also note 21 below.)
- 3 Deputies in the National Assembly are elected by only a small part of the community. Those not entitled to vote include females, males under 21 years of age, and members of the ruling family, the police and the armed services. Out of an approximate total of 850,000 Kuwaitis (about one-half of the total population), there were only about 57,000 voters in the elections of 1985.
- 4 This also happened in 1976 (p. 30). The reverse occurred in December 1964 when Abdallah III accepted the Assembly's complaints about certain members of the Cabinet and called for its resignation and the formation of a new one.
- 5 For articles of the Constitution and laws regarding the succession, see Appendix J.
- 6 Husain Khalaf Khaz'al, *Tarikh al-Kuwait al-Siyassi*, p. 42; F. Warden, "Historical Sketch of the Uttoobee Tribe", *Bombay Selections*, vol. xxiv. (For the founding of Kuwait. see p. 194.)
- 7 Baron Tiddo van Kniphhausen, "A Description of the Persian Gulf and its Inhabitants" (see p. 197, note 15, line 9.)
- 8 S. Hennell, "Secret Report", 24 April 1841, *Bombay Selections*, vol. xxiv. See also Al-Shamlan, *Min Tarikh Al-Kuwait*: "They (the Al-Sabah) were not more privileged than most of the Kuwaiti people . . . The power of the ruler was limited" (p. 117, author's translation). (See also p. 174.)
- 9 The leader of this group was Shaikh Yusuf Al-Ibrahim (see p. 120).
- 10 H. R. P. Dickson, *Kuwait and Her Neighbours*, p. 136.
- 11 Al-Qinai, *Safahat min Tarikh al-Kuwait*, p. 19.
- 12 Besides these crises, such as the danger of invasion from Ottoman Iraq in 1901-2 and from the interior of Arabia in the 1920s, it is easy to imagine how many more might have arisen - and what the results could have been - without the 'British deterrent'.
- 13 An extreme case was the confrontation between Sabah Nasir Mubarak I and members of a collateral branch of the Al-Sabah (see entry on Fahad Malik Hamoud Muhammad Salman Sabah I - p. 200).
- 14 FO: 371/98324. "Areas of desert stretching from Kuwait town as far as Ahmadi and beyond have been grabbed by the shaikhs and others . . . The idea of course is that when the town planners come to acquire these areas they will have to pay compensation at the rates demanded by the 'owners'."
- 15 Besides Shaikh Jabir and his half-brother, Shaikh Sabah al-Ahmad, the group consisted of Shaikh Sa'd Abdallah al-Salim, Shaikh Salim al-Ali, Shaikh Jabir al-Ali, Shaikh Mubarak Abdallah al-Ahmad, and the late Shaikhs Sabah al-Salim (later Sabah III), Mubarak al-Hamad al-Mubarak and Khalid Abdallah al-Salim.
- 16 "Independence" is a misleading word here since, in fact, Kuwait has never been occupied or colonised. Before 1914 the Ottomans enjoyed nominal suzerainty but never administered the territory. As for the Anglo-Kuwaiti agreements affecting the period up to 1961, they defined Great Britain as the protector of Kuwait's independence and gave the British no right to intervene in internal affairs. Further, it was through the initiative of Mubarak I and not of the British that the Anglo-Kuwaiti connexion came about; and it was in accordance with Kuwait's wishes that this arrangement was maintained for sixty-two years and then amicably terminated.

- 17 The “Souk al-Manakh” provided ways of evading official controls. Speculators also included citizens of other states especially in the Arabian Gulf. The collapse involved US\$90,800 million and prompted the Government to spend about KD2,200 million (US\$7,500 million) on restorative measures. (MEEED, *Kuwait, Practical Guide*, p. 91.)
- 18 Until the arrival of the oil companies in Kuwait, the main income of the Al-Sabah derived from extensive date-plantations in the Fao region. (See p. 175, and p. 243, note 8.)
- 19 On 25 May 1985, a suicide bomber rammed a car packed with explosives into Shaikh Jabir’s motorcade as it was proceeding towards the Sief Palace. Subsequent incidents included attacks on oil installations in June 1986 which almost halted oil production in Kuwait.
- 20 The Kuwaitis who condemned the closure were described by one of their leaders, Ahmad Khatib, as “constitutionalists, democrats, nationalists, and a little bit leftists . . .” (*Financial Times*, 11 February 1985, quoted in Rosemarie Said Zahlan’s authoritative study, *The Making of the Modern Gulf States*). Commenting on their reaction to the closure in a paper delivered at the University of Exeter in July 1986, the Syrian writer and publisher, Riyad El-Rayyes, predicted that, “the Gulf intelligentsia will carry on advocating reform and the liberalisation of the ‘one family rule’ in each and every G.C.C. country. The unfortunate result of this perseverance . . . and the stubbornness of the regimes in not recognising the writing on the wall . . . will drive a number of this intelligentsia underground . . . and thus create a totally new explosive situation reminiscent of the one the Gulf experienced during the last days of the British Raj.”
- 21 Salim al-Jabir Al-Sabah, *Les Emirats du Golfe*, p. 196: “. . . l’autorité constituante veut éviter d’imiter trop servilement un modèle occidental de démocratie contraire aux traditions arabes et islamiques. Ni monarchie absolue, ni monarchie constitutionnelle de type européen, le régime sera celui d’un État paternaliste avec des institutions démocratiques et parlementaires. Toutefois, l’influence occidentale est évidente . . .”