



Patriarchy in Transition: Women and the Changing Family in the Middle East

Author(s): VALENTINE M. MOGHADAM

Source: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, TURBULENT TIMES AND FAMILY LIFE IN THE CONTEMPORARY MIDDLE EAST (SPRING 2004), pp. 137-162

Published by: Dr. George Kurian

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41603930>

Accessed: 19-04-2016 06:43 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Dr. George Kurian is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*

Patriarchy in Transition: Women and the Changing Family in the Middle East

VALENTINE M. MOGHADAM*

INTRODUCTION

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. Walby (1990,1996) distinguishes between the “private patriarchy” of the pre-modern family and social order and the “public patriarchy” of the state and labor market in industrial societies. In his work on South Korea, Lie (1996) has distinguished between agrarian patriarchy and patriarchal capitalism. In this article I use the term patriarchy in its strict rather than liberal sense—that is, in terms of Caldwell’s (1982) “patriarchal belt” and Kandiyoti’s (1988,1992) “classic patriarchy,” based on kinship systems in agrarian settings. I have also adopted Sharabi’s (1988) concept of “neopatriarchal society,” the result of the collision of tradition and modernity in the context of oil-based dependent capitalism. 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 in countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).¹

DISCOURSES ON THE FAMILY

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

*Director of Women’s Studies, Associate Professor of Sociology, Illinois State University Normal, Illinois 61790, USA

Email: vmmogha@ilstu.edu

¹ This article draws on chapter 4 of the second edition of my book, *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003).

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. In both Western and Muslim societies, commentators warn against the breakdown of the family and of family values.

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.” Caldwell (1982: 166-69) notes that many writers have tended to romanticize the peasant family, even though Chayanov calculated that Russian peasant women and girls worked 1.21 times as many hours as men and boys. Shanin (1987) 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.

But myths about golden ages are easy to construct, especially during times of rapid social change, socioeconomic difficulty, or political crisis, as Coontz (1992,2000) has found for the United States. At times like this, the family question and its correlate, the woman question, come to the fore, especially for conservatives. 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 and the former Soviet Union, 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, as discussed by Bodrova, Posadskaya, Wolchik, and Einhorn (see Moghadam 1996a). 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. For the conservative movement in America in the 1980s, the ideal society was one in which individuals were “integrated into a moral community, bound together by faith, by common moral values, and by obeying the dictates of the family and religion.” In this ideal community, male and female roles are each respected as essential and complementary components of God’s plan, but 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” (Klatch, 1988: 675-76).

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, marriage and family living are central to social reproduction and are “a sublime manifestation of the Divine Will and Purpose.” He also argued that “mutual affection and sincerity, as well as humane compassion and tenderness”, are highly desirable attributes in married couples and “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 (Mutahhari, 1982: 7, 31, 58). In similar fashion, the late Egyptian Islamist Seyid Qutb spoke in

glowing terms of the family as “the nursery of the future,” breeding “precious human products” under the guardianship of women. A man and a woman 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 (Choueiri, 1990: 127-8).

To the Islamist intellectual, the Muslim family is by no means a 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 [sexual relations], 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 (cited in Tabari and Yeganeh, 1982: 180).

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, a study by the Research Group for Muslim Women's Studies (1990) 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.

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 (Zeretsky, 1976; Humphries 1977). 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. 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. Female-headed households - both *de facto* and *de jure* - are proliferating in parts of Morocco and Egypt. Of what use to such women 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 provide for his family. In yet other cases there are social policies creating extra-family supports: day care, 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 apparently undifferentiated West, the 1990s saw the formation of a coalition of conservative Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant governments and non-governmental 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 (Moghadam, 1996b; Lynch, 2002).

In addition to a kind of bourgeois family discourse common to both contemporary Muslim and contemporary Western ideologues, 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, the result of socio-economic

development and women's educational attainment, and (2) the rise of middle-class movements, mainly Islamist, that evince values and attitudes reminiscent of the moral discourse of the European bourgeoisie.

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 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 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 Rubin (1975) called “the traffic in women.” In the context of classic patriarchy, women are considered a form of property (Hirschon, 1984). Their honor—and, by extension, the honor of their family—depends in great measure on their virginity and good conduct (Pitt-Rivers, 1977; Tillion, 1983). One classic study of “the values of Mediterranean society” described the importance of manliness, woman's sexual purity, and defense of family honor in Andalusia, Spain, villages in Greece and Cyprus, and among the Kabyle in Algeria and the Bedouins of Egypt (Peristiany, 1966).

In *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels (1884/1972) 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. Lerner (1986) reversed Engels' 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, Mann (1986) 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. Within the household they may influence their male patriarch informally, but this is their only

access to power. This arrangement left no basis for collective action by women. If women sought public influence, they had to go through patriarchs.

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. Tilly and Scott (1978) have explored the effects of this change on women in terms of work and family relations. 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 emerged in the course of this trajectory and have contributed to the elimination of some of the more egregious aspects of the patriarchal legacy.²

Like Judaism and Christianity before it, Islam came into being in a patriarchal society. Indeed, Tillion (1983) 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, and 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 Sharia, 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. Doumato (1991) suggests that pre-existing Christian customs and Roman laws, as well as pre-Islamic customary practices in Arabia, influenced early Muslim views on women and the family. When family laws were codified and modernized across the Muslim world 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 extensive control over key decisions affecting "their" women's lives.

Despite Muslim women's legal and religious rights to inherit, own, and dispose of property, this right often has been circumvented by more powerful male relatives, including her brothers, uncles, or husband's agnates. In other domains, male relatives exert great influence on women in the family. According to Shari'a law, 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

² On the connection between modernity and the rise of women's rights and feminist movements, see Jayawardena (1986) and Chafetz and Dworkin (1986).

puberty for the boy and the time of marriage for the girl, depending upon interpretation (Nasir, 1990). Baffoun (1982: 228) 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.” Charrad (1990: 20) has explained how 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.” Charrad 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” (Charrad, 1990: 21).

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). The patriarchal belt is characterized by male domination, son preference, restrictive codes of behavior for women, and the association of family honor with female virtue. In the Muslim areas of the patriarchal belt, veiling and sex-segregation, legitimated on the basis of the *Quran or hadith*, form part of the gender system. In many areas, the preoccupation with female virginity leads to honor killings in the event of real or perceived sexual misconduct by women.³

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 (1969), which were exogamous, the Arab-Islamic tribes are endogamous and favor cousin marriage, as noted also by Goody (1990). Tillion, Baffoun and Keddie all have pointed out that endogamy increases the tendency to maintain property within families through the control of women in tightly interrelated lineages. Keddie (1990: 80) 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 argues, is surely one reason cousin marriage has long been preferred among Middle Eastern people: It encourages family integration and cooperation. She explains 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” (Keddie, 1990: 81). Friedl (1991: 197) has made a similar observation with respect to village women in Iran, calling their apparent autonomy and

³ 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 extra-marital relations - because such sexual transgressions presumably violate the integrity and honor of the family.

mobility “a brittle freedom” that is “not grounded anywhere in ideology or practice”. Of the Bedouins in Israel, Al-Krenawi (1999) writes that “the main goal is to keep women within the extended family and tribe.” Patriarchy is thus strongest in rural areas, within peasant as well as tribal communities.

Family structure in the Middle East has been described as extended, patrilineal, patrilocal, patriarchal, endogamous, and occasionally polygynous (Caldwell, 1982: 162). 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 (1990), 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-marrying situations. Based on her fieldwork in the 1970s, Tapper (1984) 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. Goody notes that pastoralists (such as the Bedouins) are closer to the exclusively patrilineal and patriarchal model. Nasir (1990) explains that in rural and bedouin areas girls are married at ages below the required minimum age and frequently at thirteen.

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 (e.g., Abadan-Unat, 1981). 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 (Kandiyoti, 1985).

If the emergence of a modern middle class tied to the capitalist economy or the state bureaucracy would represent a weakening of the patriarchal order, what explains the persistence of the patriarchal family, society, and family law? Certainly one explanation would pertain 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 (Braun, 1987). 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 subordinate to men. 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-a-vis men.

In addition to forms of social organization, political factors can influence patriarchy,

resulting in a new, or neopatriarchal form of social and gender relations. The experience of the Palestinians is a case in point. 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 Abdo-Zubi (1987: 29-30), "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. Rubenberg (2001: 13) concludes that "Palestinian patriarchy, especially as it has developed in West Bank villages and the refugee camps, has been highly deleterious to women."

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. 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, (cited in Rubenberg, 2001: 1).

NEOPATRIARCHAL STATES AND PERSONAL STATUS LAWS

Another critical factor in the persistence of patriarchy lies in state policy, including the legal system, which exerts a further influence on the persistence, modernization, or weakening of patriarchy and, by extension, on women and the family. As mentioned above, 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 (Moghadam, 1998), and Kandiyoti (1988) has described how women "bargain with patriarchy" to maneuver within its confines. The patriarchal contract is realized within the family and codified by the state in the form of Muslim Family Law or the Personal Status Code.

Esposito (2001) has explained that Islamic law changed little between its formulation in the middle ages and the early modern period, when the Ottomans introduced legal and

administrative reforms in the nineteenth century. Commercial, penal, and criminal laws changed, but Muslim family law, which had been practiced through the centuries, remained unchanged. But with the advent of reform movements in the early twentieth 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 (Moors, 1999). In 1926, Kemal Atatürk 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 more equitable family code and by 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.

In the post-colonial period, the first comprehensive change in the legal 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 (PDRY) in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) 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 has been higher. Courts also may deny permission to marry if the age gap between an adolescent bride and her prospective spouse is too wide (Nasir, 1990: 7-8).

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 (Ghousoub, 1987; Hélie-Lucas, 1993; Al-Khayyat, 1990). Yet some states have challenged local and communal patriarchal interests. Modernizing, developmentalist elites—particularly but not exclusively those with a socialist orientation—saw the emancipation of women as part of their program for change (Molyneux, 1982; Kruks, Rapp, and Young, 1989; Moghadam, 1992). 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 (Massell, 1974). States in the patriarchal belt that have undertaken such actions are Turkey under Kemal Atatürk, 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 (Joseph, 1991).

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 (Shehadeh, 1998; Welchman, 2001). 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 (Charrad, 1990:20; 2002). For this reason, women's organizations in the Middle East and North Africa have prioritized the modernization of family law as a key demand of their movement for women's rights and full citizenship.

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 undermines 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 on the basis of global discourses and international conventions. 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. Whether the regimes be monarchies or republics, radical or conservative, socialist or populist, they share the essential features of neopatriarchy. Hisham 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 patriarchal 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 (Sharabi, 1990: 145).

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 or male privilege perpetuate them 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 Taleban rulers in the 1990s. Muslim family laws that render women legal minors and dependents of men reflect and perpetuate a modernized form of patriarchy.

Last but not least, a key 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 patriarchal society, family, and the 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 a number of regions, including the Middle East. As we have 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. As late as 1988, Algeria reported 5.4 births per woman — the legacy of the Boumedienne pronatalist policy. The authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran also adopted a pronatalist policy after the 1979 revolution; abortion and the importation of contraceptives were prohibited,

and a powerful family ideology was disseminated. The result was that in 1988, the total fertility rate in Iran was 5.6 births per woman, an increase since the 1976 census. The 1990s, however, saw a reversal of the Islamic state's pronatalism and policy on the family; the state began to encourage widespread use of contraception, and a dramatic decline in fertility ensued. Elsewhere, too, the demographic transition is in place and fertility rates are declining - a sign, perhaps, of the crisis of patriarchy in MENA.

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. The 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. 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 (1982), was "the egalitarian strain in the modern European ideology, powerfully augmented by the spread of education." Marriage patterns changed, too, in the course of the demographic transition in Western Europe. The following trends, therefore, were significant in affecting fertility behavior and launching the demographic transition: 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 (Tilly and Scott, 1978). These trends are consistent with Mann's trajectory of patriarchy to neopatriarchy to gendered societies.

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; diffusion of ideas and practices (Bulatao, 2001: 2-3). These are plausible and pertinent variables, but the role of socioeconomic development, as argued by Caldwell (2001) 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. Mason (2001) adds gender to the equation, arguing that the status of women and the family determine some of the explanations offered above.⁴ 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. Women's lower status means restricted access to education and employment and hence

⁴ Karen Oppenheim Mason, "Gender and Family Systems in the Fertility Transition", in Bulatao and Casterline, pp. 160-176.

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 (Caldwell and Ruzicka, 1987; Greenhalgh, 1990). 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.

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 (Galal ed Din, cited in Caldwell, 1982: 364). 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 20th century was accelerated population growth. MENA's annual population growth reached a peak of 3% around 1980, while the growth rate for the world as a whole reached its peak of 2% 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 birth 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 eight (Roudy, 2001).

The declines in fertility have been accompanied by declines in infant mortality and under-five 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-five 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).

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 on the one hand, 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 socio-economic 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.

The Significance of Education

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 four 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 (Caldwell and Ruzicka, 1987: 749; McDonald, 1985: 110).

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 socioeconomic 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.⁵ 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 lowering fertility rates and rising age of marriage in the Middle Eastern countries surveyed.⁶

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. 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 (1987; xxv) 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.” 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. 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 undermine the patriarchal gender contract.

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 (1982: 322), “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.” Mernissi similarly has emphasized the role of state-sponsored education in creating two generations of independent women. These are the women, I would add, who are forming feminist organizations that seek further social changes, including the modernization of family law and the criminalization of honor crimes and domestic violence (Moghadam, 2002).

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% of that age group in Algeria and 18% in Iran are

⁵ *World Fertility Survey*, p. 17; *The Syrian Fertility Survey*, pp. 5, 9, 12; *The Turkish Fertility Survey*, p. 7.

⁶ 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 its website.

married (UN, 2002). As Mernissi (1987: xxiv) has 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 surge in unmarried young people and the fear of illicit sex led some Islamist leaders, such as then president Hashemi Rafsanjani, to encourage "temporary marriage" (*muta 'a* in Arabic, *sigheh* in Persian), and Islamic contractual arrangement for sexual relations. Temporary marriage is, however, highly unpopular in middle-class society, however, which associates it with legalized prostitution. Elsewhere, too, more young people are remaining unmarried. In Turkey, 14%, in Morocco, 13%, and in Tunisia, only 3% 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. 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 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. 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 (CAWTAR, 2002: 231).

There is some consensus that the dramatic increase in education among American 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

Table 1

Socio-demographic features in MENA, late 1990s

	% Females Literate 15+, 2000	Female Enroll- ments in Secondary School, % 1993-97	Female share of tertiary enroll- ment mid-1990s*	Singulate Age at First Marriage (Women) 1990s**	% Female headed house- holds	% Married women using contra- ception (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***	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***	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*, Table A/33, p. 229, and UN, *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*, Table 4.A; ** from UN, *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*; () under % FHHs from ESCWA, *Women and Men in the Arab Region: A Statistical Portrait 2000*, Annex 10.

Note: *** The figure for Iran did not include private universities. In 2002, the female share of university enrollments rose to over 50%. The CAWTAR report cites a figure of 21% female share of university enrollment in Morocco.

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 (Chafetz and Dworkin, 1986). 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. 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 factors: When Islamists first appeared, they were 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” (Ibrahim, 1980). In Algeria, Iran, Egypt, and Turkey, Islamist movements drew women supporters from the traditional or lower middle class. Such women continue to see the family unit as essential and natural, even while deploying such concepts as “equality” and “women's rights.” 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 have come to challenge their subordinate status within the family and the society, partly by engaging in a 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 (Moghadam, 1998). This seems to be equally true of working-class and middle-class women. 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 (1998: 152):

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.

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. 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, sociologist 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%) agreed with the statement that marriage had become an outdated institution. On the issue of wife obedience, only 47% of Egyptians, 42% of Jordanians, and 24% 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-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% of Egyptians and Jordanians agreed, but only 47% of Iranians. Correspondingly, a far larger percentage of the Iranian respondents (40%) agreed that a working mother could develop intimate relations with her children, just like a non-working mother, compared with 23% in Jordan and only 19% 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% of Jordanians, 78% of Egyptians, and 53% of Iranians surveyed agreed with the statement that "making my parents proud of me is one of my main goals in life" (Moaddel, 2002).⁷ In the Middle East, patriarchy may be in crisis, but family ties still matter.

CONCLUSIONS

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 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

⁷ I am grateful to Mansoor Moaddel for making his report to the NSF available to me.

segmentation, and the state. Since the 1960s, social structures 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, as Kandiyoti noted, but also salient are 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. In various 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. 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).

One cannot escape the conclusion that the combination of declining fertility and changes to the structure of the family, along with the conservative backlash and women's activism are signs of the crisis of Middle Eastern patriarchy.

REFERENCES

- Abadan-Unat, Nermin
1981 "Social change and Turkish women," in Nermin Abadan-Unat (ed.), *Women in Turkish Society*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Abdo-Zubi, Nahla
1987 *Family, Women and Social Change in the Middle East: The Palestinian Case*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Al-Khayyat, Sana
1990 *Honour and Shame: Women in Modern Iraq*. London: Saqi Books.
- Al-Krenawi, Alean
1999 "Bedouin-Arab Women in the Negev," mimeo, Center for Bedouin Studies and Development, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel.

Baffoun, Alya

- 1982 "Women and social change in the Muslim Arab world." *Women's Studies International Forum* 5 (2): 227-242.

Braun, Armelle

- 1987 "Slow death for Turkish patriarchy," *Ceres/The FAO Review* No. 117,20 (3) (May-June): 37-41.

Bulatao, Rodolfo A.

- 2001 "Introduction," in Rodolfo A. Bulatao and John B. Casterline (eds.), *Global Fertility Transition*. New York: Population Council.

Caldwell, John C.

- 2001 "The globalization of fertility behavior," Pp. 93-115 in Rodolfo A. Bulatao and John B. Casterline (eds.), *Global Fertility Transition*. New York: Population Council. 1982 *Theory of Fertility Decline*. London: Academic Press.

Caldwell, John C., and Lado Ruzicka

- 1987 "Demographic levels and trends," Pp. 742-772 in John Cleland and Chris Scott (eds.), *The World Fertility Survey: An Assessment*. New York: International Statistical Institute, Oxford University Press.

CAWTAR

- 2002 *Globalization and Gender: Economic Participation of Arab Women*. Tunis: Center for Arab Women's Training and Research.

Chafetz, Janet S., and Gary Dworkin

- 1986 *Female Revolt: Women's Movements in World and Historical Perspective*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld.

Charrad, Mounira

- 2002 *States and Women's Rights: The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- 1990 "State and gender in the Maghrib." *Middle East Report* 163 (March-April): 19-24.

Choueiri, Youssef M.

- 1990 *Islamic Fundamentalism*. London: Pinter Publishers.

Coontz, Stephanie

- 2000 *Time After Time: Recurring Family Myths, Changing Family Realities*. Minneapolis: Council on Family Relations.

- 1992 *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*. New York: Basic Books.

Doumato, Eleanor

- 1991 "Hearing other voices: Christian women and the coming of Islam." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23 (2) (May): 177-199.

Engels, Frederick.

- 1972 [1884] *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*. New York: Pathfinder Press.

Erman, Tahire

- 1998 "The impact of migration on Turkish rural women: Four emergent patterns," *Gender & Society* 12 (2) (April): 146-167.

Esposito, John L., with Natana J. DeLong-Bas.

- 2001 *Women in Muslim Family Law*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

- Friedl, Erika
1991 "The dynamics of women's spheres of action in rural Iran," Pp. 195-214 in Nikkie R. Keddie and Beth Baron (eds.), *Women in Middle Eastern History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ghoussoub, Mai
1987 "Feminism—or the eternal masculine—in the Arab world." *New Left Review* 161 (January-February): 3-13.
- Goody, Jack
1990 *The Oriental, the Ancient and the Primitive: Systems of Marriage and the Family in the Pre-Industrial Societies of Eurasia*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Greenhalgh, Susan
1990 "Toward a political economy of fertility: Anthropological contributions." *Population and Development Review* 16 (1) (March): 85-106.
- Hélie-Lucas, Marie-Aimée
1993 "Women facing Muslim personal laws as the preferential symbol for Islamic identity," in V. M. Moghadam (ed.), *Identity Politics and Women*. Westview.
- Hirschon, Renée
1984 "Introduction: Property, power and gender relations," Pp. 1-22 in Renée Hirschon (ed.), *Women and Property—Women as Property*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Humphries, Jane
1977 "Class struggle and the persistence of the working class family." *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 1: 241-258.
- Ibrahim, Saad Eddin
1980 "Anatomy of Egypt's militant Islamic groups." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12 (4): 423-453.
- Jayawardena, Kumari
1986 *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*. London: Zed Books.
- Joseph, Suad
1991 "Elite strategies for state building: Women, family, religion and the state in Iraq and Lebanon," Pp. 176-200 in Deniz Kandiyoti (ed.), *Women, Islam and the State*. London: Macmillan.
- Kandiyoti, Deniz
1992 "Islam and patriarchy: A comparative perspective," in N.R. Keddie and B. Baron (eds.), *Shifting Boundaries: Women and Gender in Middle Eastern History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
1988 "Bargaining with patriarchy." *Gender & Society* 2 (3) (September): 274-290.
1985 *Women in Rural Production Systems: Problems and Policies*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Keddie, Nikki R.
1990 "The past and present of women in the Muslim world." *Journal of World History* 1 (1): 77-108.
- Klatch, Rebecca
1988 "Coalition and conflict among women of the new right." *Signs* 4: 671-694.
- Kruks, Sonia, Rayna Rapp, and Marilyn Young (eds.)
1989 *Promissory Notes: Women in the Transition to Socialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

- Lerner, Gerda
1986 The Creation of Patriarchy. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude
1969 Elementary Structures of Kinship. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Lie, John
1996 "From agrarian patriarchy to patriarchal capitalism: Gendered capitalist industrialization in Korea," in V. M. Moghadam (ed.), *Patriarchy and Development: Women's Positions at the End of the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lynch, Colum
2002 "Islamic Bloc, Christian Right Team Up to Lobby UN." *Washington Post*, (June 17): A1.
- Mann, Michael
1986 "A crisis in stratification theory?," Pp. 40-56 in Rosemary Crompton and Michael Mann (eds.), *Gender and Stratification*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Mason, Karen Oppenheim
2001 "Gender and family systems in the fertility transition," Pp. 160-176 in Rodolfo A. Bulatao and John B. Casterline (eds.), *Global Fertility Transition*. New York: Population Council.
- Massell, Gregory
1974 The Surrogate Proletariat. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- McDonald, Peter
1985 "Social organization and nuptiality in developing societies," Pp. 87-114 in John Cleland and John Hobcraft (eds.), *Reproductive Change in Developing Countries: Insights from the World Fertility Survey*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mernissi, Fatima
1987 Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Moaddel, Mansoor et al.
2002 "Religion, Gender, and Politics in Egypt, Jordan and Iran: Findings of Comparative National Surveys." Report to the NSF (August).
- Moghadam, Valentine M.
2002 "Women, citizenship and civil society in the Arab world." Forthcoming in *Al-Raida*.
1998 Women, Work and Economic Reform in the Middle East and North Africa. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
1996a Gender and Restructuring: Democratization, Economic Reform, and Women in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.
1996b "The fourth world conference on women: dissension and consensus." *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 3 (1): 93-102.
1992a (ed.) "Development and women's emancipation: Is there a connection?" *Development and Change* 23 (3) (July): 215-255.
1992b "Patriarchy and the politics of gender in modernizing societies: Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan." *International Sociology* 7 (1) (March): 35-54.
- Molyneux, Maxine
1982 "Socialist societies: Progress toward women's emancipation?" *Monthly Review* 34 (3) (July-August): 56-100.

Moors, Annelies

- 1999 "Debating Islamic family law: Legal texts and social practices," Pp. 141-176 in Margaret L. Meriwether and Judith E. Tucker (eds.), *A Social History of Women and Gender in the Middle East*. Westview.

Mutahhari, Murteza

- 1982 *Sexual Ethics in Islam and in the Western World*. Translated by Muhammad Khurshid Ali. Tehran: Bonyad Be'that Foreign Department.

Nasir, Jamal J.

- 1990 *The Status of Women Under Islamic Law*. London: Graham & Trotman.

Peristiany, J.G.

- 1966 "Honour and shame in an Cypriot highland village," Pp. 171 -190 in J.G. Peristiany (ed.), *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*. University of Chicago Press.

Pitt-Rivers, Julian

- 1977 *The Fate of Shechem or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Research Group for Muslim Women's Studies

- 1990 *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.

Roudy, Farzaneh

- 2001 "Population Trends and Challenges in the Middle East and North Africa." Population Reference Bureau policy brief (October).

Rubenberg, Cheryl

- 2001 *Palestinian Women: Patriarchy and Resistance in the West Bank*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Rubin, Gayle

- 1975 "The traffic in women: Notes on a political economy of sex," Pp. 157-210 in Rayna Rapp (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York: Monthly Review.

Sabbah, Fatma A.

- 1984 *Woman in the Muslim Unconscious*. Translated by Mary Jo Lakeland. New York: Pergamon Press.

Shanin, Teodor

- 1987 "A peasant household: Russia at the turn of the century," Pp. 21-34 in Teodor Shanin (ed.), *Peasants and Peasant Societies*. London: Blackwell. (2nd ed.).

Sharabi, Hisham

- 1990
1988 *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*. New York: Oxford University Press.
1985 "The dialectics of patriarchy in Arab society," Pp. 83-104 in Samih K. Farsoun (ed.), *Arab Society: Continuity and Change*. London: Croom Helm.

Shehadeh, Lamia

- 1998 "The legal status of married women in Lebanon." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30, (4): 501-519.

Tabari, Nahid and Nahid Yeganeh (eds.)

- 1982 *In the Shadow of Islam: The Women's Movement in Iran*. London: Zed Books.

Tapper, Nancy

- 1984 "Causes and consequences of the abolition of brideprice in Afghanistan," in Nazif Shahrani and Robert Canfield (eds.), *Revolutions and Rebellions in Afghanistan*. Berkeley: University of California International Studies Institute.

Tillion, Germaine

- 1983 *The Republic of Cousins: Women's Oppression in Mediterranean Society*. London: Al Saqi Books.

Tilly, Louise A., and Joan W. Scott

- 1978 *Women, Work and Family*. New York and London: Routledge.

United Nations

- 2002 *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*.

Walby, Sylvia

- 1996 "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. 1990 *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Welchman, Lynne

- 2001 "Capacity, Consent and Under-Age Marriage in Muslim Family Law." *The International Survey of Family Law*, 2001 Edition. Cambridge University Press.

World Fertility Survey.

- 1984 *World Fertility Survey: Major Findings and Implications*. Voorburg, Netherlands: International Statistical Institute.

Zaretsky, Eli

- 1976 *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life*. New York: Harper.