

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Class Analysis and the Dialectics of Modernization in the Middle East

Author(s): James A. Bill

Source: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Oct., 1972), pp. 417-434

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/162490>

Accessed: 31/01/2014 10:22

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

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.



Cambridge University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to
International Journal of Middle East Studies.

<http://www.jstor.org>

James A. Bill

CLASS ANALYSIS AND THE DIALECTICS OF MODERNIZATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Class analysis stands as one of the ancient and classic theoretical approaches to the study of politics and society. Stratification by class has been traditionally utilized by scholars and statesmen to explain patterns of political conflict and processes of social change. In modern American political science, however, this approach has yet to receive the attention and application that have marked traditional formal-legal and contemporary structural-functional analysis. The sharp reaction that developed against the former took the immediate shape of the group and elite approaches which to a large degree continue to displace or disguise class analysis.

With the deep attention that contemporary social scientists are devoting to the problems of modernization and political development and the increasingly evident limitations of both elite and group analysis, there has been a recent and promising return to class as the central theoretical concept. This trend has included conceptual and theoretical reassessment and research,¹ general historical and multinational comparative studies,² and empirical analyses of particular Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and Latin American societies.³

¹ The outstanding contributions include Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (rev. Eng. ed.; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959); Stanislaw Ossowski, *Class Structure in the Social Consciousness*, translated from the Polish by Sheila Patterson (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963); Milton M. Gordon, *Social Class in American Sociology* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1958); and T. B. Bottomore's two studies, *Elites and Society* (New York, Basic Books, 1964) and *Classes in Modern Society* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1966).

² Stimulating examples are Gerhard Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1966); and Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1966).

³ Among the writings of this category, the following provide especially fresh and novel insights: Lloyd A. Fallers, 'Social Stratification and Economic Processes in Africa', in Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.), *Class, Status, and Power* (2nd ed., New York, The Free Press, 1966), pp. 141-9; Richard L. Sklar, 'Political Science and National Integration - A Radical Approach', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. v (May 1967), pp. 1-11; Kenneth W. Grundy, 'The "Class Struggle" in Africa: An Examination of Conflicting Theories', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 11 (November 1964), pp. 379-393; Robert L. Hardgrave Jr., 'Caste: Fission and Fusion', *Economic and Political Weekly* (July 1968), pp. 1065-70; Wolfram Eberhard, 'Social Mobility and Stratification in China', in Bendix and Lipset (eds.), *Class, Status, and Power*, pp. 171-82; James A. Bill, *The Politics of Iran: Groups, Classes, and*

This study represents an attempt to develop a concept of class that will make it applicable not only to the more-developed societies but to the less-developed societies in particular. Such a definition will, of course, be shaped largely by the societies which it is used to analyse as well as by the problems it is used to confront. The focus here centers on class relationships and movements and the interaction of these with the processes of modernization in the Middle East.

CONCEPTUALIZATION AND REDEFINITION

The Middle East has often been represented as an area in the world where one cannot speak about classes and where class analysis is least relevant. This viewpoint has been usually explicitly presented by Western scholars and has rested upon assumptions positing various parochial conceptions of class, comparisons stressing the differences between Western and Eastern forms of feudalism, and arguments indicating the centrality of equality to the tenets of Islam. Despite this traditional assertion, a survey of leading historical studies of the Middle East reveals a surprising reliance upon the class approach. Such prominent Orientalists and Islamic historians as Hamilton A. R. Gibb, W. Montgomery Watt, Bernard Lewis, Gustav E. von Grunebaum, S. D. Goitein, Roger Le Tourneau, Reuben Levy, and Jacques Berque have sporadically analysed the Middle East in terms of class.¹ Yet, none of these scholars have endeavored (1) to examine systematically the meaning and relevance of this concept within the Islamic setting; and (2) to define rigorously and reshape the concept according to the area under consideration and the problems at issue.² These, then, are the tasks of this paper.

CLASS AND MEANS OF PRODUCTION

The term 'class' is immediately associated with the work of Karl Marx, and although the latter may not have been the originator of class analysis, he must, nevertheless, stand as the man who gave it meaning, depth, and appeal. Despite this, there is no instance in all of Marx's writing where he attempts to provide an explicit definition and indepth discussion of the concept so basic to his theory.

Modernization (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1972); Manfred Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 41-112; and the articles by Richard N. Adams and Anthony Leeds in Dwight B. Heath and Richard N. Adams (eds.), *Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America* (New York, Random House, 1965), pp. 257-87, 379-404.

¹ Walter Z. Laqueur's *The Middle East in Transition: Studies in Contemporary History* (New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1958) contains three dozen articles prepared by scholars representing many different fields and disciplines. Twenty-eight of the articles include sections of explicit class analysis.

² A partial exception is Jacques Berque, 'L'Idée de Classes dans L'Histoire Contemporaine des Arabes', *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, vol. xxxviii (1965), pp. 169-84.

The closest he comes is chapter 52 of *Das Kapital*, where he begins to discuss 'class' only to break off after a few paragraphs.¹ The writings of Marx, however, do provide various insights into his conception of class, and the excellent commentaries by Dahrendorf and Ossowski explore this matter in depth.

The Marxian view of classes that runs through his writings portrays them as defined and determined by their relationships to the means of production in society. For Marx, the basis of class lies here since it is the economic system that is the prime system. Marx's most explicit statements with regard to the concept class reveal this as well as the fact that although the economic factor is primary, the social, political, and subjective ramifications are never to be overlooked or underrated.² Marx's concept of class structure was fundamentally a dichotomic one, although evidence can be found to support the argument that he recognized a hierarchy of classes.³ Yet, he concentrated his theory and writing upon an inevitable confrontation between fundamentally opposed forces. The outcome of this conflict explains the dynamics of change through history.

Marx's use of the class concept carries with it some very relevant and useful characteristics which have since been often discarded, distorted, or ignored. In the first place, Marx was concerned mainly with forces, relationships, and trends. Not in the least interested in static description, Marx saw in class the basic force of movement of the deepest and most general kind. This emphasis upon the fundamental relationship that class had to the processes of revolutionary change was a major contribution. Class indicated conflict and this became the driving dynamic of change. In short, Karl Marx presented class as the basic concept for analysing a changing society through time.

Marx's theories were understandably shaped to a great extent by the society which he observed and lived in – nineteenth century Europe during the harsh stages of early industrialization. Much of what he said and implied then will not stand with regard to the needs of this paper, which treats Eastern agriculturally oriented Muslim societies. Marx's own writings concerning what he termed 'Asiatic societies' reveal a conspicuous absence of class analysis. In his occasional references to China, India, and Russia, Marx did not discuss the class relationships of these societies. Instead, he tended to stress the importance and power of the state and bureaucratic organization as if these abstractions were the ruling class. According to Karl Wittfogel: 'This was a strange formulation for a man who ordinarily was eager to define social classes and who denounced as a mystifying "reification" the use of such notions as "commodity" and "the state", when the underlying human (class) relations were left unexplained.'⁴ In his

¹ Karl Marx, *Capital*, translated by Ernest Untermann (Chicago, Charles H. Kerr and Co., 1909), vol. III, pp. 1031–2.

² See, for example, Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York, International Publishers, n.d.), esp. p. 109.

³ See Ossowski, *Class Structure*, pp. 69–88.

⁴ Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957), p. 380.

New York Daily Tribune articles, Marx views Asiatic societies primarily as they affect and are influenced by the industrialized West. Western (particularly English) class relations are stressed even here.¹

The ultimate emphasis upon the economic in defining and determining class is perhaps the major inadequacy of Marxian class analysis, for it restricts and constricts the concept making it less applicable to societies where other power bases or relationships are more vital. In the Middle East, political influence, personal manipulation, saintly ancestry, and traditional education generally superseded wealth in their impact upon social structure. In lands of great scarcity and relatively little material wealth, other values besides the latter became the source of competition and stratification. The critical relationships involved modes of maneuver rather than modes of production. This kind of situation generated a high rate of social mobility which in turn invested traditional Islamic societies with great elasticity. The Marxian framework largely ignored this phenomenon as well as other group movements that were central to the shaping of Middle Eastern social and political systems. Finally, Marx's analysis oversimplified the class structure resulting in the brushing aside of several key groups and classes whose growth and appearance were not a basic part of the theory.

One of the best indications of the difficulties that Marxian class analysis holds for contemporary sociopolitical study concerns the approaches taken by recent socialists and revisionist theoreticians. Eastern European scholars, in particular, have recently paid a great deal of attention to the class concept. In 1963 President Gomulka warned Polish intellectuals to cease describing society in terms of Western bourgeois sociology of stratification and to make use instead of Marx's analytic definition of class. Despite this attention, however, there has been little done with regard to the reconceptualization of the class concept. Activity has been concentrated in the area of theoretical surveys of the literature on class and studies referring to the appearance of new classes in society. Soviet scholars have been even less daring in their re-evaluation. Rather than redefine Marx's basic concept, they have decided to stretch it to meet the demands of the day. Thus, practically all potential revolutionary groups and classes are being considered 'working classes'. Terms such as 'semiproletariat', 'incipient proletariat', and 'commercial-clerical proletariat' reveal the attempt to include the professional and salaried middle classes within the working class. Soviet sociologists have come to equate 'physical' and 'intellectual' labor and point out that 'white-collar people are not in any way different from workers'.²

¹ See, for example, the articles on India and China reproduced in Henry M. Christman (ed.), *The American Journalism of Marx and Engels* (New York, New American Library, 1966), pp. 83-109, 185-210.

² See L. A. Gordon and L. A. Fridman, 'Distinctive Aspects of the Working Class in the Economically Underdeveloped Countries of Asia and Africa', *Soviet Sociology*, vol. II (Winter 1963), pp. 46-63; and M. N. Rutkevich, 'Elimination of Class Differences and the Place of Non-Manual Workers in the Social Structure of Soviet Society', *Soviet Sociology*, vol. III (Fall 1964), pp. 3-13.

The unimpressive record of Marxist ideology in the Middle East stems partly from the uneven attempts to view the area in terms of traditional Marxist categories. Besides the theoretical gymnastics described above, Soviet thinkers have gone so far in the Middle East as to include 'all national forces' and even 'all social classes' as part of the 'proletariat'.¹ In other instances they have emphasized the key revolutionary role of the 'national bourgeoisie', while in still other cases they have considered classes and the class struggle to be a question of secondary importance in the Middle East.

CLASS AND AUTHORITY

After two decades in which descriptive studies of community stratification dominated the class approach in the United States, a German sociologist introduced a study in 1959 calling for an analytic redefinition of class. In *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf calls for a return to the class concept as used by Karl Marx and for a redefinition that would improve upon the Marxian inadequacies.

Besides clarifying and relating many of the key concepts and contributions in the field of class analysis, Dahrendorf presents two major contributions of his own: the difference between class as an analytic concept and stratum as a descriptive concept; and the displacement of Marx's crucial economic determinant by what Dahrendorf terms 'authority relations'. Throughout *Class and Class Conflict* the author argues that the confusion of class and stratum has resulted in the virtual disappearance in the West of class seen as an analytic conceptual tool. Dahrendorf writes: 'However one may interpret, extend, or improve Marx, classes in his sense are clearly not layers in a hierarchical system of strata differentiated by gradual distinctions.'²

Dahrendorf defines classes as 'conflict groups that are generated by the differential distribution of authority in imperatively coordinated associations'.³ The key to this definition is found in the concept authority which is in Dahrendorf's terms a legitimate relation of superordination and subordination which can rest on many bases – the ownership of property or modes of production being only one. Stratification on the basis of authority has also been stressed by W. Wesolowski, who writes that 'if there is any functional necessity for stratification, it is the necessity of stratification according to the criterion of authority and not according to the criterion of material advantage or prestige'.⁴

Although the Dahrendorf conceptualization is a major contribution to the

¹ A. Bennigsen, 'Sultan Galiev: the USSR and the Colonial Revolution', in Laqueur (ed.), *The Middle East in Transition*, p. 401.

² Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, p. 76.

³ *Ibid.* p. 204. For Dahrendorf's most explicit statements on the class concept, see also pp. 138, 148–52, 173, 238, 247.

⁴ W. Wesolowski, 'Some Notes on the Functional Theory of Stratification', in Bendix and Lipset (eds.), *Class, Status, and Power*, p. 69.

literature on class, it is not adequate in view of this study for certain important reasons. Perhaps due to his preoccupation with industrial associations, Dahrendorf views class in terms of interest groups and even defines them in these terms. He explicitly makes the point that he is not concerned with class seen in terms of society nor even segments of society but only in terms of associations, and 'imperatively coordinated' ones at that. It is stated that 'social classes are always conflict groups'¹ and that 'interest groups are the real agents of group conflict'.² It becomes difficult to discover what the distinction is between group and class with the most probable difference being that class is one species of group.³ The confusion becomes most apparent when Dahrendorf attempts to apply these concepts in a study of changing class structure.⁴

In an important point related to the emphasis placed on specific associations, Dahrendorf rests his definition of class solely upon authority relations. As we have indicated above, this is a significant contribution. For the purposes of this inquiry, however, it does not go far enough. For Dahrendorf, authority is 'legitimate power' which is ultimately and primarily related to 'imperatively coordinated associations'. Also, authority is said to concern 'social positions or roles' whereas power 'is essentially tied to the personality of individuals'. While power 'is merely a factual relation, authority is a legitimate relation'.⁵ This conceptualization does not consider superordinate-subordinate relations that exist outside associations (much less 'imperatively coordinated' associations). It also contributes little to the analysis of societies where 'factual' relations are more significant than 'legitimate' relations and where personalities are at least as important as formalized positions. As such, this formulation is only of indirect relevance in the Middle East where legitimacy is often yet to be established and where personalism reigns supreme within a web of nonassociational groups.

Dahrendorf himself does not always seem certain that he wants to limit the concept to this degree. He writes, for example, that 'the fundamental inequality of social structure, and the lasting determinant of social conflict, is the inequality of *power and authority* which inevitably accompanies social organization'⁶ (*italics mine*). Here and in scattered other places in the study, the author links power and authority – a somewhat surprising fact considering the pains that are taken to differentiate the two. It is obvious, however, that in Dahrendorf's study the key relationships defining the class concept do involve authority and not power. If he does occasionally bring power into the scheme it may very well be that the theoretician himself at times viewed authority relations as too restricting.

¹ Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, p. 238.

² *Ibid.* p. 181.

³ For Dahrendorf's position on classes as species of groups, see *ibid.* pp. 26, 152, 171, 213, 306.

⁴ See Dahrendorf, 'Recent Changes in the Class Structure of European Societies', *Daedalus*, vol. XCIII (Winter 1964), pp. 225–270.

⁵ Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, pp. 166–7.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 64.

CLASS AND POWER

The general view concerning the difference between power and authority is that authority is somehow a 'legitimate', 'formal', 'legal', 'rightful', or 'approved' power.¹ It is 'the institutional counterpart of power'.² Scholars who have stressed authority patterns rather than power patterns have tended to be specialists in Western industrial society and politics. In such societies, the role of formal institutions and associations looms especially large and questions of boundary maintenance, legality, functional specificity, and authoritative allocations are of immediate relevance. In many areas of the world, however, social and political systems are built upon informal and shifting relationships. In Middle Eastern societies, for example, boundaries are seldom distinct and fixed; the patterns of legality remain to be decided; that which is formal is usually that which is least important; and associations are few in number and ineffectual in character. With some of these distinctions in mind, it should not be surprising that our concept of class will pivot more around interaction and interrelationships than about drawing sharp lines of differentiation and demarcation.

In 1959 Leonard Reissman made an explicit plea to define class in terms of power when he attempted to view Max Weber's work in this way:

Interestingly enough, this emphasis upon power, upon which the meaning of Weber's theory of stratification depended, has been almost totally overlooked by many sociologists. Few theories and fewer research designs have done anything with Weber's system, nor has either picked up the cue of power as the central focus for the study of class.³

Although American sociology has tended to stress prestige and economics in defining class, a closer examination reveals that the power dimension was always recognized, if de-emphasized.⁴ Despite this, such prominent scholars as S. N. Eisenstadt, Seymour Martin Lipset, Hans L. Zetterberg, Gerhard Lenski, Manfred Halpern, and Richard N. Adams have stressed stratification in terms of power.⁵

¹ See, for example, the *Nomos I* volume of essays on authority. Carl J. Friedrich (ed.), *Authority* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1958).

² Talcott Parsons, 'On the Concept of Political Power', in Bendix and Lipset (eds.), *Class, Status, and Power*, p. 249.

³ Reissman, *Class in American Society* (Glencoe, The Free Press, 1959), p. 58.

⁴ After presenting all three dimensions, both Milton M. Gordon and Kurt Mayer underplay and ignore the power dimension. See Gordon, *Social Class in American Sociology*; and Mayer, 'The Theory of Social Classes', in *Transactions of the Second World Congress of Sociology* (London, International Sociological Association, 1954), vol. II, pp. 321-35.

⁵ See Eisenstadt, 'Changes in Patterns of Stratification Attendant on Attainment of Political Independence', *Transactions of the Third World Congress of Sociology* (London, International Sociological Association, 1956), pp. 32-41; Lipset and Zetterberg, 'A Theory of Social Mobility', in Bendix and Lipset (eds.), *Class, Status, and Power*, pp. 561-73; Lenski, *Power and Privilege*; Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change*; and Adams, *The Second Sowing: Power and Secondary Development in Latin America* (San Francisco, Chandler Publishing Co., 1967).

For the purposes of this study, classes are defined as the largest aggregates of individuals united by similar modes of employment and possessing similar power positions to preserve, modify, or transform relationships among such aggregates. It is an empirical question in any society to discover which are the largest aggregates of individuals united by similar modes of employment and possessing this kind of power. In the Middle East, these classes traditionally have been the following seven: the ruling class, the bureaucratic middle class, the bourgeois middle class, the cleric middle class, the traditional working class, the peasant class, and the nomadic class. The twentieth century has witnessed the appearance of two new classes: the professional middle class and the industrial working class.

The important concept power herein refers to the ability to influence and control the behavior of others.¹ This ability may rest as much upon indirect personal maneuver and verbal persuasion as upon direct threat, coercive demand, or economic inducement. The sources of power can be found in the political, economic, social, educational, religious, or psychological systems. One of the great scholars of Islamic society writes that 'political influence, military power, administrative rank, wealth, birth, and schooling, in every possible combination, strengthened or counteracted one another in assigning a given individual his place in society'.² In the Middle East, the economic dimension of stratification, for example, has seldom been of prime import, and 'power has led to wealth far more often than wealth led to power'.³ Among the more common, if less discussed, dimensions of power that have characterized Middle Eastern sociopolitical patterns are the following: (1) exchange transactions where one convinces others to accede to his wishes by rewarding them for so doing;⁴ (2) decisional situations where one controls the decision-making environment and thus the decisions made therein;⁵ (3) debt-inflicting relationships where one does favors for others with the expectation they they will someday be returned; (4) overt deference behavior that gains trust and thus builds vulnerability into the temporarily more influential; (5) informational exchanges that involve the giving and withholding of information of various degrees of accuracy and importance; and (6)

¹ This definition of power is slightly broader than those provided by scholars who have chosen to reword Max Weber's original definition. As such, it most closely approximates the definitions used by Peter Blau, Herbert Simon, Kurt Mayer, and A. F. K. Organski. For a fine collection of leading theoretical analyses of the power concept, see Roderick Bell, David V. Edwards, and R. Harrison Wagner (eds.), *Political Power: A Reader in Theory and Research* (New York, The Free Press, 1969).

² Gustave E. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation* (2nd ed., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 212.

³ Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change*, p. 46.

⁴ Peter Blau stresses the importance of this dimension of power relationships. He also investigates other key facets of such 'exchange transactions'. See Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York, John Wiley, 1964).

⁵ See Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz's interesting discussion of the 'nondecision-making process' in 'Two Faces of Power', *American Political Science Review*, vol. LVI (December 1962), pp. 947-52.

bargaining relationships which rest upon the bluff, the rumor, and the misrepresentation.¹

In the Middle East, power position has been closely related to occupational function. This has been partially due to the fact that one's mode of employment has greatly widened or narrowed the opportunities for one to operate in the environment outlined above. The military, cleric, and bureaucratic occupations, for example, have proved to be especially effective arenas for these kinds of power relationships in Islamic society. The close linkage between power and employment has also been a result of the development of Islamic history and the Prophet's early strictures concerning the occupational divisions of the Community. One of the earliest bases of stratification was the particular employment function performed by the Believers as they were assigned 'to a more or less definite hierarchy of professions'.²

It is not enough, however, to define class in terms of employment-power position, for by itself this means very little. It does not lead to important propositions or meaningful hypotheses nor does it yield insights into societies with persistently changing social structures. The concept power must be intrinsically intertwined with a special problem or task and it is in this way that it acquires its explanatory value. In this case, it is the power to preserve, modify, or transform the relationships of similar aggregates to each other. In short, power is viewed in terms of the relationships that classes have with each other or in terms of a changing social structure.

CLASS AND GROUP

Class analysis does not preclude the study of groups, since the latter have had a profound impact upon class relationships and class structure. By examining the role of groups as an integral part of the class framework, one is able to gain valuable insights into processes of continuity and change that mark the social structure. Intra- and interclass analysis is group analysis, and it assists in the investigation of class consciousness and cohesiveness. Family, tribal, and religious groups have played an important role in shaping the processes that have formed Middle Eastern society and politics. The group, then, must be defined in relation to class.

Those who have studied non-Western societies in terms of groups have often failed to come to grips with the essence of the socio-political processes in those areas. The primary reason has been an emphasis placed upon formal institutions and associational collectivities. One of the contributions of the work of Gabriel

¹ For a discussion of these kinds of relationships, which are of crucial significance in the personal and collective interaction that occurs in the Islamic Middle East, see James A. Bill, 'The Plasticity of Informal Politics: The Case of Iran', Paper Prepared for Delivery at the Conference on the Structure of Power in Islamic Iran, University of California, Los Angeles, 26-28 June 1969.

² Von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, p. 177.

Almond is that it provides a general scheme of interest groups that can be applied comparatively.¹ At the same time, however, it uncritically emphasizes and glorifies the associational interest group which happens to be of central importance in Western democratic systems. In the less-developed areas in general and in the Middle East in particular, the well-organized and well-boundaried associational group is of peripheral importance at most.

In an attempt to apply the Almond group typology to a particular developing area, Myron Weiner centered attention upon the group that Almond himself had stressed – the associational interest group.² In so doing, he excluded not only the non-associational groups but the institutional groups as well. Fred W. Riggs writes that by excluding institutional groups, Weiner deliberately omits the key centers of decision-making in India.³ Thus, although Weiner's study is certainly an important contribution, it is so because it provides an excellent analysis of associational groups in India.

Riggs himself calls for a 'two-tiered' model of 'one which distinguishes between "formal" or "effective" structures, between what is described ideally and what actually happens'.⁴ He points out that Leonard Binder takes one more step in the right direction when he includes the influence of institutional groups in his study of Iran.⁵ The thesis presented here, however, is that in analysing many developing societies it is necessary to go even further than this and to concentrate upon those groups which are least organized and least visible. In the Middle East, these are the most 'effective' structures.

The informal or non-associational groups are often most crucial because of the political, social, economic, and technical conditions of organization. These include a certain level of cooperation and trust, competent leadership, committed membership, adequate financing, and political toleration. In Iran, for example, the four conditions of organization are seldom present, as the very society is built upon personal informal relationships best exemplified by the gigantic web of cliques or highly informal groups called *dawras* (circles). It is in the *dawra* where decisions are made and business is transacted.⁶ The group concept in this study,

¹ For Almond's own account of this scheme, see Gabriel Almond and James S. Coleman (eds.), *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 33–8.

² See Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity: Public Pressures and Political Response in India* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962).

³ Riggs, 'The Theory of Developing Politics', *World Politics*, vol. XVI (October, 1963), pp. 147–71.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 154.

⁵ Binder, *Iran: Political Development in a Changing Society* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1962). Professor Binder, however, also stresses such interpersonal interaction as bargaining, legitimizing, consulting, and lobbying.

⁶ Social cliques and informal groups of various types are referred to as *equipos* (teams) in Mexico, *panelinhas* (little saucepans) in Brazil, *nkiguenas* (discussions) in Kenya, and *batsu* (cliques) in Japan. In Mexican-American communities of the south-western United States such groups are termed *palomillas* or 'little pigeons', as the members tend to flock together.

then, must take into consideration the extraordinarily important informal group, for the latter is closely related to class and change in the Middle East.

Group is defined here as an aggregate of individuals other than class who interact in varying degrees in pursuance of a common interest. As such, group is a residual category. This offers no difficulties in the Middle East since analysis will be confined to those aggregates which are well recognized as groups by Middle Easterners. Besides encompassing the informal group, this definition makes room for ethnic, religious, tribal, and family aggregates.

THE MIDDLE EASTERN CLASS STRUCTURE

The class structure outlined

Oh, Son of Hāraṣ, know that in no country can the people be alike since the principle of classes is everywhere firm and fixed. . .

There is a group of soldiers and corpsmen, an élite and a number of princes, a group of jurists and a class of merchants and artisans. Lowest of all are the afflicted and the poor who are the unfortunate and the suffering. They are always the broken-hearted and the weary. . . .

The Compassionate Lord in the great Koran ordained limits and regulations for all of these classes and benefited all with the blessings of law and equality.

(Imām 'Alī (c. A.D. 600–660), *Farmān to Mālik*.¹)

As the words of the son-in-law of the Prophet and one of the great Muslim leaders indicate, Islamic society contained the recognition of the existence of both inequality and equality. This apparent contradiction runs through Islamic political theory and first alerts one to the peculiar dialectical flexibility inherent in the Middle Eastern class structure. G. E. von Grunebaum writes that 'the Muslim's personal equality with his fellows in the faith. . . does in no way preclude elaborate social stratification within the community of Islam'.²

Fig. 1 presents a graphic representation of the class structure as it has generally characterized Islamic societies. This diagram is an adaptation of a scheme introduced by Gerhard Lenski and is a great improvement upon the usual pyramidal views of society. It portrays the power distribution while at the same time does away with the impression that classes are nothing more than layers stacked one upon the other. Lenski writes that this type of overlapping diagram indicates that the class structure is 'not a series of separate and distinct strata in the geological sense of that term'.³ This kind of figure also more realistically illustrates the great gap that separates the upper and lower classes.

If there has been any aristocracy in Islam, it has developed from the family

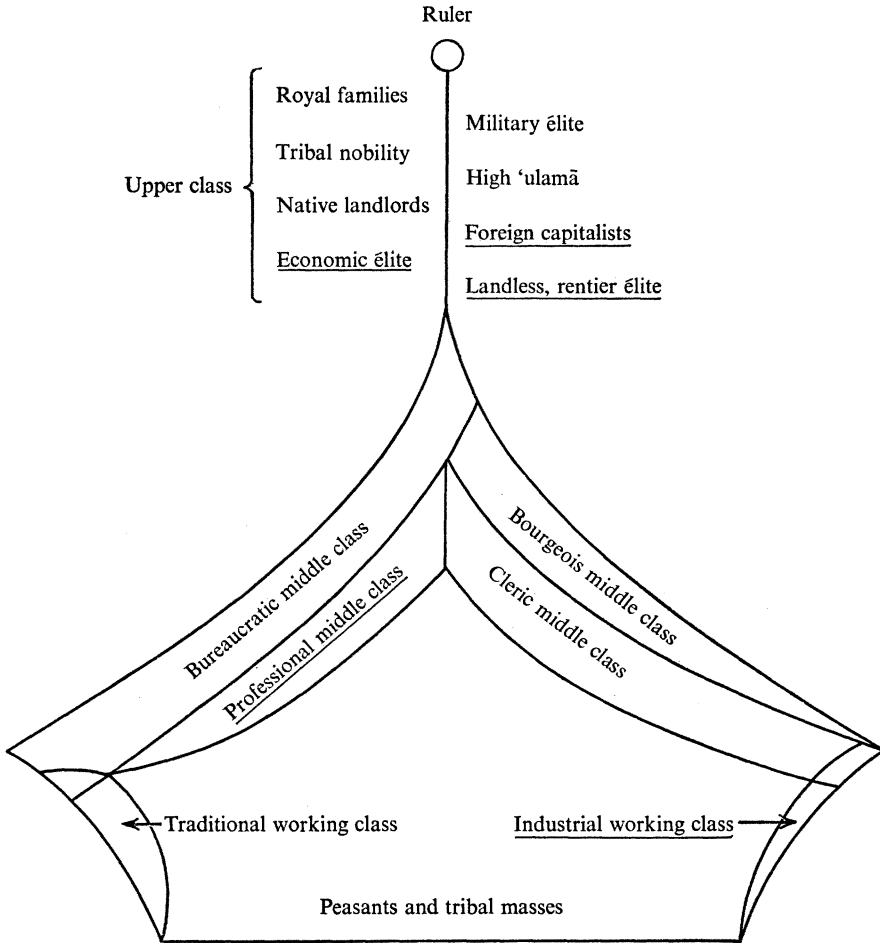
¹ 'Alī, 'Farmān to Mālik-i Aṣhtar, Governor of Egypt', in *Sukhanān-i 'Alī* – The Words of 'Alī, translated from the Arabic by Javād Fāzil (Tehran, 1966), p. 242.

² Von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, p. 170.

³ Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, p. 285. For Lenski's diagram, on which Fig. 1 is based, see *ibid.* p. 284.

FIGURE I *A descriptive view of the Islamic Middle Eastern class structure*

(The new groups and classes are underlined)



and companions of the Prophet.¹ Generally speaking, however, the traditional ruling class can be broken down into six major components: (1) the ruler (Sultan, Shah, or Shaykh); (2) the ruling families; (3) tribal nobility; (4) native landlords; (5) system-supporting high 'ulamâ' (clerics); and (6) military élite. As Fig. 1 indicates, an indigenous economic aristocracy and a landless rentier élite have become part of the upper class relatively recently. There has also been a group of foreign industrialists and businessmen that has been symbiotically combined with other upper-class groups and which reinforces and supports the indigenous ruling class. These alterations in ruling-class composition have developed during

¹ See Reuben Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam* (Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 65.

the last two centuries with the strong advent of foreign influence and the discovery of oil in the Middle East.

The traditional middle classes have included the bureaucratic, bourgeois, and cleric classes. These classes which are termed 'middle' because of their possession of similar power positions represent three different modes of occupation. These classes have existed for centuries and have been the elements that have controlled and benefited from the traditional religious-oriented educational system. The bureaucratic middle class tended to overlap more with the ruling class, while the clerical middle class was in closer contact with the masses. The bourgeois middle class has been composed of merchants, traders, and businessmen and its center of activity has been the bazaar. Although historical descriptions of the Middle Eastern class structure have generally omitted this bourgeoisie, recent scholarship has documented and called attention to this class.¹ The last two decades have been witness to the appearance of a professional middle class whose members rest their power position on the talents that they possess thanks to a modern education.

Middle Eastern society has been made up largely of peasants, nomads, and workers who compose the lower classes. In terms of size, the peasant and nomadic classes have dwarfed the working class. Much has been written about the poverty, dependence, disease, and ignorance that have prevailed among the peasant class. The traditional working class has included such groups as servants and manual workers on the one hand to craftsmen and artisans on the other. These groups have tended to be slightly more powerful than the peasants although their situation has grown steadily worse through time. The development of industry and the process of urbanization have resulted in the appearance and growth of a new urban industrial working class. This class is still in its embryonic stage, but its strategic location in the large cities and the social awareness of its members make it a potentially explosive force.

THE CLASS STRUCTURE ANALYSED

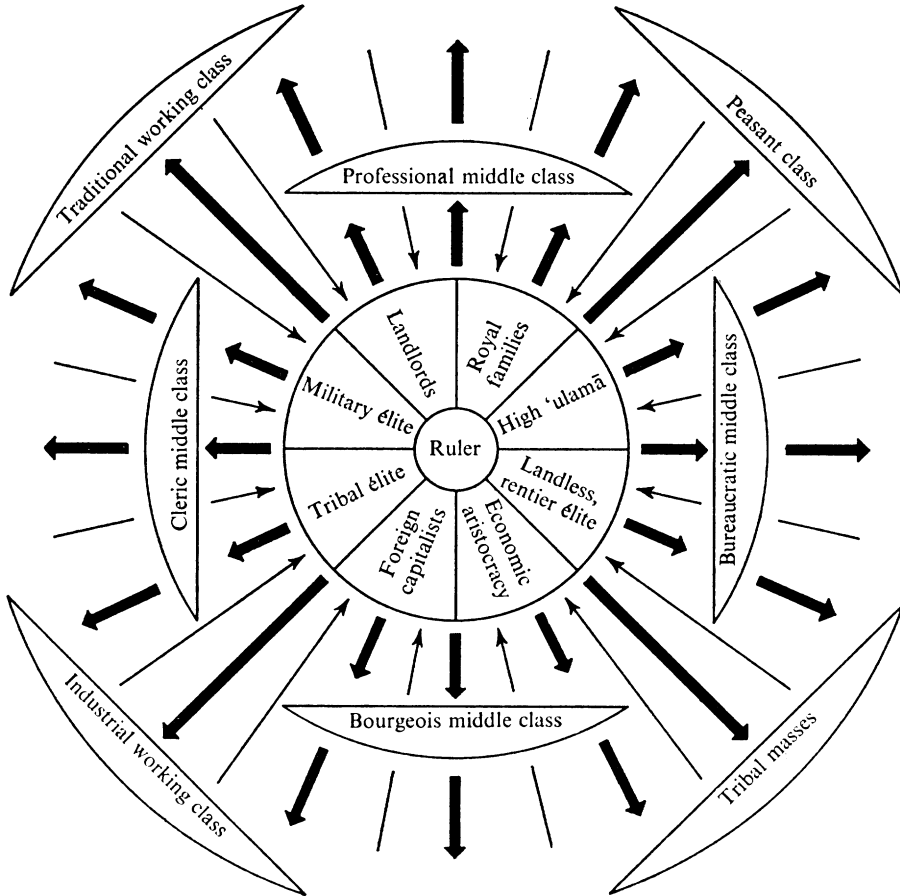
The Islamic Middle Eastern class structure has been knit together in constant movement and has traditionally possessed an extraordinary elasticity. This resiliency has been intimately related to intraclass group patterns as well as to interclass relationships and mobility processes.

Middle Eastern class relationships have been characterized by hierarchically uneven but strongly reciprocal power patterns. Fig. 2 provides a diagrammatic characterization of this system. Although individuals and groups belonging to classes may move in and out of the concentric power circles illustrated therein, the classes themselves remain in general hierarchy. This means that the power

¹ For an excellent analysis of the role of the bourgeoisie as a class in Islamic society, see S. D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1966), pp. 217-41.

FIGURE 2 *An analytic view of the Islamic Middle Eastern class structure*

(Only the basic vertical power flows are shown)



flow is always much heavier from upper to lower classes and that the lower classes are consistently embedded in a disadvantageous power position.

The dialectical pattern that marked individual, group, and class relationships in the Middle East resulted in a system-preserving balance of tension.¹ The middle classes, for example, moved in lively conflict with one another as well as with the ruling and peasant classes. The cleric class maintained a privileged religious position and control of the traditional educational system. The bourgeois middle

¹ The inspiration and theoretical framework that have shaped this analysis come from Manfred Halpern. For Halpern's general theoretical approach to the study of modernization, see *Violence and the Dialectics of Modernization* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, forthcoming). Halpern was also the first to point to the flexibility based upon balanced tension that infused Islamic society.

class always had certain economic and financial tools to bargain with, while the bureaucratic class enjoyed a political-administrative position. There was constant checking confrontation among these classes who also used these tools to check ruling-class activity against themselves. Classes with less power have been able to check classes with more power throughout the history of Islam. Thus, Raphael Patai writes: 'In spite of this great inequality in standard of living between the few rich and the many poor, and in spite of the spatial proximity of the two groups, there was a certain balance between the two.'¹

Although Middle Eastern class relationships have been marked by strong reciprocal power patterns, the classes always relate to one another in a generally permanent imbalance. Such is not the case in group interaction, however, as the power advantage is constantly shifting back and forth between and among the various groups.² This history of the patterns of collaboration and conflict that have marked Middle Eastern religious and tribal groups, for example, has been a cyclical story as the various sects and clans continually gain and lose in relation to one another.³ This dynamic flexibility that has characterized Middle Eastern group interaction has had a profound impact upon the class structure. Shifting and balancing group linkages, for example, intensely influence the class relationships into which they are woven.

One effect of this related group-class tension is the increased permeability of class lines. This is best explained in terms of two principles: (1) the overlapping membership that characterizes interclass groups; and (2) the high rate of interclass personal mobility. These two characteristics are interrelated since overlapping membership facilitates mobility and vice versa.

Throughout Middle Eastern history, many groups have been composed of individuals who represent two or more classes. This can be best seen in the case of family, tribal, ethnic, and religious groups. Fig. 2 indicates, for example, that tribal élite is one of the key ruling-class groups, while the lowly nomad is an important member of the lower class. In cases where tribal khans have felt a special responsibility to their tribe, they have helped improve the situation of the common nomad. Although tribal leaders have always been presented in upper-class ranks, there has been constant fluctuation in terms of what khans from which

¹ Patai, *Golden River to Golden Road: Society, Culture, and Change in the Middle East* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), pp. 278–9.

² For documentation of how this pattern operates in important Middle Eastern administrative settings, see V. Minorsky, *Tadhkirat al-Mulūk* (London, Luzac and Co., 1943); and H. A. R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West: I* (2 parts: London: Oxford University Press, 1950). These two sources contain descriptions of the offices and relationships that marked the Safavid and Ottoman administrative systems. The *Tadhkirat al-Mulūk* is a Safavid administrative manual.

³ See, for example, the results of recent research by G. R. Garthwaite in 'Pastoral Nomadism and Tribal Power', paper prepared for delivery at the Conference on the Structure of Power in Islamic Iran, University of California, Los Angeles, 26–28 June 1969.

tribes have been those involved. There has been a kind of rotating membership through time as particular khans from particular tribes move in and out of the ruling class. This special type of overlapping membership has permitted wide tribal representation in the upper class and has helped mellow class lines. It has also intensified a system of deep tribal rivalries that have pitted the various tribal élites (and tribesmen) against one another.

Group-class interaction can also be seen in the relationship of informal groups to the class structure. Schoolmate, religious, and recreational cliques, for example, draw members from various classes. The personal ties that prevail in such informal settings generate interclass communication in a relatively egalitarian environment. These ties are often used to facilitate class mobility as members help one another rise in the world of politics and business.

This characteristic of overlap as it marks group interaction is related in a more general manner to the mobility factor. As groups have alternated, with those in the weaker position sporadically moving to the stronger, individual members of these groups have consistently been able to take advantage of the change in fortune to move forward in the class structure. They gain leverage and impetus by riding the incoming group tide and by the time the tide ebbs again they have managed to move to higher ground. Middle Eastern history abounds with dramatic examples of social mobility as individuals have learned to maneuver and utilize the less obvious facets of power. The Ottoman, Safavid, Saffarid, Ziyarid, and Mamluk dynasties were founded and built by personalities who rose from the lowest classes of society. This has been a culture where grocers and cobblers became prime ministers, and slaves and soldiers became sultans and shahs.¹

The dynamics of mobility and overlapping membership have invested the Islamic class structure with great fluidity and this has been one of the crucial effects that group interaction has had upon class relationships. The reciprocal power patterns that marked relationships between classes were reinforced by such group dynamics. When the least powerful were unable to better their class position, they could often improve their individual or group position. When they were unable to do even this, they always possessed the tools and opportunities to check the most powerful, thus protecting themselves.

Traditionally, this system was able to absorb and digest new challenges and forces whenever they appeared. The pervasive flexibility of the system was such that the fundamental patterns weathered the change of dynasty, élite, monarch, and invader. For centuries, threats to this system appeared in the form of individuals and groups who sought only to modify in order to rule. Occasionally, a revolutionary individual would appear and shake the system to the core by his

¹ For a perceptive analysis of the manner in which new urban groups have fostered class fluidity in West Africa, see Immanuel Wallerstein, 'Ethnicity and National Integration in West Africa', in Harry Eckstein and David E. Apter (eds.), *Comparative Politics: A Reader* (New York, The Free Press, 1963), pp. 665-70.

drive to transform old relationships. Because of their scarcity and isolation, such threatening individuals were exposed and vulnerable and could thus be easily disposed of. Today, however, it is not only new men who are involved but new classes as well.

One of the new social forces that has challenged this traditional structure most intensely has been a professional middle class.¹ This is a non-bourgeois middle class, many of whose members relate themselves to others through performance and service rather than through material wealth or personal connexions. The members of this class are engaged in professional, technical, cultural, intellectual, and administrative occupations and include teachers, professors, students, technocrats, engineers, physicians, writers, artists, journalists, bureaucrats, and middle-ranking army officers.

In Turkey, Egypt, and Tunisia, the professional middle class has come to rule and has begun implementing programs of modernization. In Algeria, Syria, and Iraq, it has taken political control but has failed to heal debilitating intraclass dissensions. In Iran, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, this new class remains largely locked out of the political arena. Throughout the Middle East, however, the professional middle class is a burgeoning force and in many societies it is now doubling in size every fifteen years.

The members of the new class challenge the traditional system because of the insecurity and ascriptive atmosphere that have marked the dynamics of that system. In possessing a modern education and the skills and talents derived therefrom, they tend to reject power that is derived from nepotism, favoritism, maneuver, and influence wielding. Equality of opportunity and professional merit which can only serve to undermine the traditional system have become primary considerations to many members of this class. For this reason, they sometimes refer to themselves as 'uprooters'.²

Yet, the effectiveness of this class is hampered by intraclass divisions and tensions.³ These divisions, which are fostered and deepened by those who control the traditional socio-political system, break along many lines. Disagreement concerning the methodology and depth of change, differences in socio-economic background, and ethnic as well as specific occupational divergencies limit the impact of this new class. Thus, although the professional middle class now

¹ Those scholars of Middle Eastern society who have stressed the appearance and importance of a new middle class include Morroe Berger, Manfred Halpern, Raphael Patai, Roger Le Tourneau, Hamilton A. R. Gibb, Charles Issawi, P. M. Holt, and T. Cuyler Young.

² See, for example, Alfred Bakhash, *Kayhan* (Tehran), 27 February 1963.

³ Those who question the existence of a new middle class in the Middle East do so by stressing the divisions that exist within this class. In so doing they assume that class analysis disregards group activity. The most provocative presentation of this viewpoint is Amos Perlmutter, 'Egypt and the Myth of the New Middle Class: A Comparative Analysis', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. x (October 1967), pp. 46-65.

represents a fundamentally new challenge to the traditional class structure, there is no guarantee that it will forge relationships that are any more able to generate and absorb the continuing challenge of change. Its struggle to uproot and shatter the traditional patterns, however, is the central conflict that marks the Middle East today.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN,
AUSTIN, TEXAS