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Power, Law and Blood: Sources of Patriarchy in the Middle East

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POWER, LAW AND BLOOD:
SOURCES OF PATRIARCHY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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What are the reasons behind the inferior status of women in Middle Eastern society?ⁱ Why are they veiled, secluded, mistreated and degraded? For many Western commentators the answer is obvious and singular: Islam. In this paper I will demonstrate that this easy answer is mistaken, and that the cultural denigration of women is best understood as the result of what Deniz Kandiyoti has called the "patriarchal bargain."ⁱⁱ I will then trace the historical and cultural roots of this invidious bargain, which has been generally understood as an inevitable consequence of the evolution of patrilineality in situations of cultural complexity. However, the case of the Egyptian Middle Kingdom, which was patrilineal, culturally complex, but yet very friendly to women's rights, shows that this common understanding is insufficient. Alongside complexity and patrilineality, a belief in female inferiority requires a fateful linkage between blood and belonging. This linkage, I suggest, is correlated with an unstable environment and a competitive social formation where power is ephemeral and hard to maintain.

The Subordination of Women in the Middle East

To begin, let me present the evidence for female inferiority in the Middle Eastern context. If we define subordination as exclusion from the public sphere, then clearly Middle Eastern

women are subordinate to men, since girls are obliged to remain within the walls of their father's house, while respectable women must stay hidden in the compounds of their husbands' family. This domestic space is the famous harem, the protected feminine part of the household. The term harem derives from the same Arabic root (h-r-m) as *haram*, which means sacred, forbidden, taboo; the holy areas surrounding Mecca and Medina are haram, as are actions which are ritually polluting. H-r-m is also the root for *hurma*, honor, which makes sense, since honor in the Middle East is closely associated with a man's ability to guard the chastity and privacy of his harem. Traditionally, only the closest of male family members are allowed to enter this private zone, and respectable women are obliged to remain within it as much as possible. Those women who do leave the feminine refuge of the harem and enter into the public domain must carry their privacy with them, hiding from the gaze of men by veiling themselves in concealing robes, the *hijab*,ⁱⁱⁱ an institution seen by both outsiders and Middle Easterners themselves as a central feature of their culture. Men and women alike believe that women who do not or cannot follow the rules of self-concealment are licentious.^{iv} In contrast, while women are private, men are public. All men should participate in *muwajaha*, an open 'meeting of faces', and a man of honor is expected to come out of his house every day to circulate in public among his fellows, or else risk opprobrium and suspicion.^v

Women's anonymity in the Middle East is such that traditionally-minded husbands do not refer to their wives by name, to do so is sacrilegious (haram); rather, they obliquely mention 'my house' or perhaps, at most, allude to 'the mother of my sons;' similarly, when men draw up the family genealogy only male ancestors are mentioned, as if the lineage were reproduced by masculine parthenogenesis. Because of the public obscurity of women it is quite possible for the stranger sitting in a rural coffeehouse to imagine that he has arrived in a wholly male society,

since women are so little seen or heard, appearing only as enigmatic figures draped shapelessly in robes and veils that camouflage their femininity and even their humanity. ^{vi}

As we shall see, modern Islamic commentators have recently argued that the veiling of women in public and their seclusion in the household does not in itself demonstrate their cultural inferiority. According to this perspective, women's relegation to the home only points to a complimentary division of roles, with men and women having separate but equal parts to play. Ideally this may be so, but general cultural assumptions of female inferiority are revealed linguistically and behaviorally. ^{vii} Women in the Middle East have long served as the preeminent 'natural' category for all that is inferior and tainted in humanity. It is significant that in Arabic, the word female, *'awra*, signifies not only 'women in general', but means also 'blemished', 'blind in one eye', 'defective', and 'genitalia'. ^{viii} Similar negative terms and accompanying attitudes toward women are to be found equally in Arabic and non-Arabic speaking regions, where women are derided by men as unreasonable, emotional, childish, polluting, incompetent and immoral - everything men ought not be.

Typically, across the Middle East women's work is devalued, as is their judgement and contribution to the household; they are not likely to have any part in decision-making, nor can they accumulate resources that might give them independence. There is also a strong and hierarchical separation of the sexes in every aspect of daily life, so that men eat separately from their women, and are given the best of the food. The codes of male superiority are inculcated from an early age, with the active support of mothers who believe girl children grow 'like rain-fed barley', without health care or special treatment, while boys, 'like irrigated wheat' are a more valuable and delicate crop demanding extra care and concern; ^{ix} therefore it is the boy who gets the toys, the fruits, the candy and extra attention; girls are responsible for cleaning up after their

brothers and waiting on her younger siblings. Money the boy earns, he spends on himself; money the girl earns, she gives to her mother. Very often, boys' violence against girls is not condemned and may even be encouraged. As Susan Dorsky reports from a village in Yemen: "A three year old continues smacking his nine-year old sister with a sharply edged toy gun. She forces a smile as she tries to block the blows. Their mother, another woman, and several older boys and girls are present, but do not intervene or criticize the boy." ^x Writing about similar acts witnessed during her stay with the Swat Pukhtun of Northern Pakistan, Cherry Lindholm explains the mother's blasé attitude structurally:

"One might think that the mother might, out of a sense of solidarity with her own sex, prevent her sons from beating her daughters; however, far from preventing such violence, she is more likely to encourage it since, not only does it prepare her daughter for the treatment she will receive from her future husband, but also it gives her son practice in the handling of his future wife who is, after all, the mother's future daughter-in-law; it is in the mother's personal interest that her sons should be able to control their wives properly." ^{xi}

Coincident with the general denigration of feminine intelligence and ability is a further commonly held belief that women are dissolute creatures eternally prepared to disgrace their husbands because of their potential for sexual promiscuity. Abdellah Hammoudi's words about highland Morocco apply more generally across the region: "Women are constantly vilified and ranged among the sinister powers; they are seen as beset by uncontrollable sexual impulses that dishonor men in their roles of husband, father, and brother or as guardians of patriarchal morality." ^{xii} Or, as a typical proverb puts it: "When a man and a woman are alone, Satan is the third." In fact, *fitna*, the Arab term for chaos and anarchy, is based precisely in the fear of female

promiscuity. Because of this danger, women must be confined behind the walls of her compound, and must be punished for straying.

Nor does women's morality improve as she grows older. On the contrary, as Cynthia Nelson records, according to Arab folk belief: "A child of the male sex comes to the world with sixty *jnoun* (spirits) in his body; the child of the female sex is born pure; but every year, the boy gets purified of a *jinn*, whereas the girl acquires one; and this is the reason that old women, sixty years and with sixty *jnoun*, are sorcerers more malignant than the devil himself." ^{xiii} The menace of women becomes especially powerful once they lose their virginity - it is then that they can be transformed into powerful forces of evil, becoming uncontrollably lascivious after their introduction to sexuality. ^{xiv} Given this prevailing ideology, it is no coincidence that everywhere in the Middle East the birth of a boy is the occasion for noisy congratulations, while a girl is greeted with silence or condolences. ^{xv} Unsurprisingly, to call a man 'effeminate' is a deadly insult throughout Middle Eastern culture. For example, as Sawsan el-Messiri reports, in urban Cairo "A husband is expected to be able to support his family. If he does not fulfill this role he is described as 'one who is fed by his wife,' and often called a 'female.'" ^{xvi}

In this light, the Muslim ethos of equality and autonomy of all believers seems to hold only for men - women are debarred from equality by their supposed natural inferiority. From the male point of view, it is right and proper that women be treated as subordinates, since they are conceptualized as innately incapable of logic, stubborn, self-willed, eternally polluted by menstruation and child birth, driven by overwhelming emotions, fundamentally immoral and sensual. The popular attitude is captured in the sermon of a contemporary Muslim preacher in a Jordanian village, as recorded by the anthropologist Richard Antoun:

"Oh ye people, verily women are discord. And the messenger of God did not point out to us anything more disturbing of the peace than women. And verily the discord among the people of Israel was on account of their women. And verily, this is the cause of dishonor and the rending of God's commandments and prohibitions, and the loss of family lines, and the ruin of houses, the thing that destroys houses.... The woman on leaving the house is accompanied by Satan until she returns to her dwelling." ^{xvii}

Lest we imagine that this is an attitude confined to ignorant villagers and bigoted mullahs, compare the rural preacher's words to those of the founder of the modern Bank of Egypt:

"All revealed laws agree that the woman is weaker than the man, that she is inferior in body and comprehension, and that men are superior to women.... Women were created for men's earthly pleasures and in order to take care of domestic affairs; God did not create them to attempt to defeat the men, nor to give opinions or establish policies.... They are emotional and, lacking analytical insight, are given to unbalanced mood shifts, from joy to sorrow, from pain to pleasure, from hatred to love." ^{xviii}

Islam and Women: Alternative Views

The preacher and the banker quoted above confidently believe that Islam forthrightly condemns the weakness, emotionality and immorality of women and demands their seclusion in the household. Are they correct? It would seem so, in the light of well-known sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (*hadith*) such as: "Those who entrust power to a woman will never know prosperity." "The dog, the ass, and woman interrupt prayer if they pass in front of the believer." "I do not leave after me any cause of trouble more fatal to man than woman." "I took a look at paradise, and I noted that the people there were poor people. I took a look at hell, and I noted

there women were the majority.”^{xi} Furthermore, the Quran itself includes a number of passages that would unambiguously appear to signify female inferiority. This is most especially true of the famous injunction that "Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend their property (for the support of women)... As for those (women) from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them."^x These traditions coincide with legal rulings that gave men the right to divorce their wives with ease and to marry up to four women, prescribe harsh penalties for female infidelity, limit a woman's inheritance to half that of her male siblings whose testimony in court has twice the weight of hers.

However, of late revisionist Muslim feminists have deployed textual scholarship to challenge taken-for-granted anti-female traditions in Islam. For example, Fatima Mernissi writes that the Prophet's favorite wife Aisha rebuked Abu-Hurayra, the source of the tradition that women defile prayers, as follows: "You compare us now to asses and dogs. In the name of God, I have seen the Prophet saying his prayers while I was there, lying on the bed between him and the *qibla*."^{xi} Mernissi goes on to assert that many of the more famous anti-female traditions are derived from dubious hadith reciters (especially Abu-Hurayra) whose documented negative attitudes toward women led them to falsify or overstate the Prophet's words.

Supporters of women's rights also assert that Quranic verses (*surahs*) that subjugate women to men are negated or at least challenged by other *surahs* that specifically give equal blessings to both women and men according to their virtues, without reference to their gender. For example, they point to the *surah* which asserts that "men who surrender unto Allah, and women who surrender, and men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey.... Allah hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward."^{xii} Similarly,

the Quran plainly states "wives have rights corresponding to those which husbands have, in equitable reciprocity."^{xxiii} From this evidence, common assumptions about the negative Islamic view of women are exaggerated, to say the least.

Revisionists have also vigorously challenged other aspects of Islam that seem to support female inferiority. For example, they note that the Quranic justification for polygamy was not to further male domination over women, but to protect orphans in a society where warfare was common. Furthermore, the Quran states explicitly that polygamy is only permitted if a man can treat all his wives absolutely equally - a stipulation that many reformers have said is practically impossible for any man to meet except if he is a saint. Therefore, these commentators argue that for ordinary persons monogamy is the only morally secure form of Muslim marriage, even though polygamy is explicitly permissible.^{xxiv} They also note that Muhammad was monogamous for twenty-five years, unwaveringly remaining faithful to his much older first wife, Khadija. And they note as well that the great majority of his later marriages were political in motivation, as he used his wives to cement relationships with other groups and his own allies (the first five caliphs were his in-laws). But perhaps Muhammad's attitude toward polygamy can be best seen in his stipulation that the marriage between his favorite daughter Fatima and his cousin Ali must be strictly monogamous (though Ali was also famous for his many 'temporary marriages').^{xxv}

In a similar vein, the strong sanctions against adultery, which is punishable by death, are offset by the legal demand for eyewitness accounts from four reliable persons - a condition that renders any confirmation highly unlikely. And divorce, while allowed, is execrated by the Prophet as the most reprehensible of permissible things. Muslim feminists also recall Muhammad's affection for women in general, and for his favorite wife Aisha in particular. We

are reminded that he chose to die in her room, where he was buried, as were the first three Caliphs, an honor that hardly seems congruent with a belief in female inferiority. As for the right to 'scourge' exasperating women, feminist commentators note that the Prophet himself never beat his wives, but preferred instead to withdraw into solitude when angry, telling his followers "only the worst among you" would ever resort to violence against their wives. ^{xxvi}

Revisionists also hold that veiling was originally an extraordinary measure applicable solely to the wives of the Prophet; it served to remove them from public scrutiny and interference, thereby allowing Muhammad some private life. A similarly casual attitude toward female modesty can still be seen in present-day Bedouin societies where veiling is little practiced, since it is both useless and unnecessary in an environment where everyone is well known, and where a great deal of outdoor work and participation is required from all, male and female alike. ^{xxvii} Critics of orthodox misogyny note as well that the women of the early Muslim community were not expected to demurely withdraw from public life and activity. The Prophet's wife Aisha is again cited as an example of a female who participated in public debates, accompanied Muslim troops to war, was a respected reciter of tradition, and a powerful political leader in her own right. ^{xxviii} Muhammad's first wife Khadija also is often mentioned as an early exemplar of an independent woman in Islamic society. She was a successful entrepreneur who operated her own trading enterprise with the help of her loyal husband and partner, who was much younger than her, and who relied upon her for advice and support.

The fact that such proud and autonomous women were less and less to be found as Islam expanded is due, some feminist historians and critics argue, not to the precepts of Islam but to increasing governmental authoritarianism and the creation of relations of hierarchy during the Abbasid era and later. Especially crucial was the widespread taking of concubines by the

conquering Muslim troops, which undercut the authority and autonomy of a man's legitimate wives. For these new Muslim elite "acquiring a wife was a much more serious undertaking than stocking up on concubines who could be discarded, given away, or even killed without any questions asked. A wife had her legal rights to property settlement. She had family connections."^{xxix} Under these circumstances, slave women were increasingly preferred as consorts, while their independent freeborn sisters were relegated to seclusion and marginality. Present-day Middle Eastern attitudes toward women, revisionist critics say, reflect the later imperial history of enslavement and denigration, which removed independent women from the public sphere. These attitudes are in contradiction to the original teachings and practices of Islam that gave women far more personal autonomy than is now on offer.

Moreover, even as women lost much of their independence and authority when the Islamic world entered its imperial stage, there remained many legal guarantees in Islamic law that served to protect their rights. For instance, the family law ordained in the Quran and promulgated in Islamic jurisprudence directly challenged male dominance and affirmed the humanity of women. Of special significance in this regard was the strong Islamic repudiation the old practice of female infanticide, which Muhammad resolutely opposed. Even more important, Islam vastly altered the pre-Islamic legal status of women. Where previously they had been regarded as chattel of their husbands or fathers to be inherited and disposed of at will, they now became shareholders in the decedent's estate, with their own individual rights of inheritance which could not be alienated by their brothers or husbands.

Other aspects of Islamic law that would seem to be anti-female, which I mentioned above, are offset by compensatory guarantees that make them more egalitarian than they appear when viewed in isolation. For example, the rule that a woman is entitled to only half of the

amount inherited by her male relatives was more than balanced by the dowry of goods, money and sometimes land that a girl was legally entitled to receive from her family when she married. This dowry, augmented by a substantial brideprice (*mahar*) from her husband's household, legally became her own private property, to spend and use as she pleased - though both were usually integrated into the common household resource base. But at divorce, a woman could reclaim her brideprice and dowry from her husband, and Islamic courts would be obliged to find in her favor.

Women's absolute rights to property derived in part from the way marriage has been conceptualized in Islamic law. As distinct from the sacramentalized marriage of Christianity, Muslim marriage was viewed as a witnessed contract, transacted, bargained over, signed, sealed, and in principle reversible, in which the woman (or her guardian) exchanges her sexuality and reproductive capacities in exchange for a negotiated bride price and for permanent protection and maintenance.^{xxx} If terms were not met, the contract could be legally annulled and the mahar returned to its rightful owner, the spurned or estranged wife. In principle, this arrangement allowed a woman considerable negotiating leverage in divorce cases, despite the husband's legal authority over her.^{xxxi}

As Noel Coulson has persuasively argued, the advent of Islamic law changed the status of the woman "from the position of sale-object to that of contracting party.... endowed with a legal competence she did not possess before."^{xxxii} In effect, far from demanding subordination, Islamic jurisprudence made wives legally independent persons for the first time in Western history. This is contrast to the status of women in European Christian society, where until very recently the wife's property was permanently joined to that of the husband and where the conjugal unit took precedence over the individuals who made it up – in effect making the wife a

legal appendage of her husband. In contrast, Muslim family law denied the primacy of the conjugal unit under male authority "in favour of equality of rights on the part of all concerned."

^{xxxiii}The wife's jural and personal independence was graphically symbolized in her retention of her own family name after marriage, and expressed concretely in her legal capacity to earn her own money and run her own financial affairs. Of course, this is not to say that women always took advantage of their options - most followed custom, effaced themselves, and left their affairs to men.

But if Islamic law did give women new rights and privileges it also took away some existing freedoms. For example, as noted above, the Quran allowed men to divorce their wives with ease, but prevented women from doing the same. This was a change from pre-Islamic practice, where Bedouin women apparently had a wide freedom to change mates. In Islam, fornication (*zina*) was redefined to include old patterns of temporary, female-initiated sexual relationships or wife 'leasing;' these now became capital crimes. And while Islam permitted polygamy, it prohibited polyandry.

Islam thus has a mixed record in its legal attitude toward women - simultaneously giving them new powers while abrogating old ones; treating them as objects at one point, as equal and autonomous individuals at another. ^{xxxiv} This ambiguity can be seen in the complex and sometimes contradictory manner in which legal schools addressed family and sexual issues. ^{xxxv} The Hanafi legal school, for example, permits women to stipulate terms in a marriage contract. These terms can include provisions against polygamy or male control over resources. Elsewhere, the Malikite school, while not allowing such negotiation, gives women much greater freedom in obtaining divorce than other schools. ^{xxxvi} But in spite of the inequities that are legally

enjoined, on balance it is clear that the Quran, sunna, and hadith largely affirm the value of women. As the feminist social historian Leila Ahmed concludes:

"(T)he unmistakable presence of an ethical egalitarianism (in Islamic texts) explains why Muslim women frequently insist, often inexplicably to non-Muslims, that Islam is not sexist. They hear and read in its sacred text, justly and legitimately, a different message from that heard by the makers and enforcers of orthodox, androcentric Islam.... For the lay Muslim it is not this legalistic voice but rather the ethical egalitarian voice of Islam that speaks to them clearly and insistently. Only within the politically powerful version of Islam... is women's position immutably fixed as subordinate." ^{xxxvii}

Feminists are not the only ones who have tried to reconcile the fundamentally egalitarian principles of Islam with the facts of sexual inequality. As I mentioned earlier, instead of stressing innate female inferiority and immorality, some revisionist Muslim clerics and leaders now argue for the "immutable and complete difference in the nature of the sexes, which is part of the God's plan for the world." ^{xxxviii} Within this divine plan, according to the former Libyan ruler Muhamar Qaddafi, "woman and man are equal as human beings... there is a role for each of them, matching the difference between them.... She becomes directly responsible for another person whom she helps to carry out his biological functions, without which it would die. The man, on the other hand, neither conceives nor breast-feeds." ^{xxxix} The Islamist ideologue Sayyid Qutb has made a parallel claim. Using Quranic texts supplemented with medical evidence, he insists that women have endocrinal and nervous systems that naturally suit them to be homemakers, and proclaims that "the whole Islamic social system... is an extended family system, pertaining to a divine order and set up in conformity with human instincts, needs and requirements." ^{xl} Conservative religious reformers are not the only ones to make a quasi-

biological argument for the complementarity of the sexes. For example, the academic Nafissa El-Amin writes that Muslim family life and law are based on notion that men and women are "equal in humanity and complementary in function."^{xli} A man should properly be viewed as a servant to his homemaker wife, repaying her for her essential domestic labors by providing money and protection.

In this new discourse distinction is justified on 'natural' grounds by reference to evolutionary biology, which is said to prove scientifically that the sexes are naturally in relations of functional complementarity.^{xlii} From this perspective, a correctly organized Muslim society will allow women to fulfill their normal, instinctive and noble role as reproducers, child raisers, and preservers of the family while men will act their appropriate parts as protectors and wage earners. This modern view grants women a nominal equal status with men so long as the balanced and supposedly innate relationship of complementarity between the two sexes is maintained. Any shift in the balance is reckoned to be a deviation from God's blueprint and from the natural order; it can only lead to animalistic lust, misery and social collapse; a sad state of affairs which, many Muslims say, already obtains in the West.

In replying to charges of sexual inequity by proclaiming a genetically programmed male-female complementarity ordained by God, the new commentators are on shaky ground in terms of science, theology and logic, since it is hard to see how such a divinely ordained 'natural' complementarity should require such assiduous buttressing. However, this new orientation does make a great deal of cultural sense, since it validates the existing division of labor and reconfigures the ideology of equality by presenting women as equal to men so long as each sex remains within its own spheres. Women now once again have the possibility of being heroines,

not by leading armies as Aisha did, but by cleaning the dishes and diapering the baby, as is right and natural.

The History and Culture of Misogyny

Yet despite its justification of female domesticity, the reformist Islamic rhetoric of complementarity has not had any more success than the feminist reinterpretation of Islamic texts in persuading Middle Eastern men to give more respect to women. Instead, women are increasingly obliged to work outside the home to supplement family income, while also continuing to work at their traditional household tasks, without either any help from their male partners (helping would contradict the natural order of things) or any credit (women's work is unimportant and foolish). This is the case in both urban and rural environments, as many studies attest.^{xliii} In other words, despite the discourse of complementarity issuing from some reformist Muslims, and despite the feminist revisions of orthodoxy, women's lives and work very often continue to be demeaned by Middle Eastern men. The evidence of Islamic texts and jurisprudence demonstrates that it is not the message of the Islam, which is generally positive about women, that is at the core of Middle Eastern misogyny. To understand the roots of the androcentric attitudes of the Middle East we need to take into account historical and cultural factors that preexisted Islam.

As a number of historians have noted, the Middle East has long been home to patriarchal cultures. For these writers it is the long-prevailing patriarchal culture, not Islam, which is the culprit in establishing and sustaining a male-centered universe throughout the Middle East - and elsewhere in the circum-Mediterranean world, extending into Northern India and Central Asia.

^{xliv} Veiling, for example, has an ancient past, and continues to exist even among Christians, Jews

and Hindus of the region. Assyrian tablets dating from the thirteenth century BC prescribe veiling for respectable women, while conversely prostitutes and slaves were forbidden to hide themselves. In these instances the veil was used not simply as an indicator of modesty, but also as a means to differentiate between rich and poor, free and slave, public and private.^{xiv} In this light, one could even say Islam's basic egalitarianism is verified by the fact that, in contrast to the invidious rules of the Assyrians, there is no law in Islam *against* veiling: rather, among Muslims any woman can don the veil, regardless of her social status.

In her excellent account of the history of women's rights in the Middle East, Leila Ahmed shows that most of the pre-Islamic Middle Eastern empires generally gave women few powers. Females were excluded from the prestigious professions and from public office; divorce was usually difficult for wives, much easier for men, and women were expected to be complaisant and obedient to their husbands, who had the right of corporal punishment over their wives, children and slaves - a right which continued into Roman law, where a man had the legal right to kill his wife and children. For instance, a Mesopotamian law code from 3,000 BC says that a woman who contradicts her husband should have her teeth knocked out, while an adulteress could be put to death. Although women had handicaps in the most ancient Middle Eastern states, their position gradually went from bad to worse, culminating in the Empire of the Sassanids, whose huge harems and anti-female laws set a new low standard for the treatment of women. Sassanid women were not allowed to serve as witnesses, could be loaned out as concubines at the will of their husbands, and were generally uneducated, housebound, strictly segregated from men, and were without financial resources. The Byzantines were not far behind their Persian enemies in this regard, though there is evidence that some of their women, like later

entrepreneurial Muslim wives, did have access to independent capital and could participate in trade and finance. ^{xlvi}

Commentators have not come to any final conclusions about the cause of the steady expansion of male power and the corresponding diminution of women's status in the pre-Islamic Middle East and its environs save to say that these shifts seem to coincide with the rise of great centralized kingdoms, which required an increased division of labor, greater state power, and the expansion of status hierarchies. It has been argued that this centralizing process necessarily entails greater male dominance, as patrilineal inheritance is initiated to control male rights to ever-more valuable permanent property invested in corporate households, while patriarchal power expands male authority over women who could potentially disrupt the solidarity of the extended lineage by their independence. Deniz Kandiyoti believes the evolution of patriarchy is "bound up in the incorporation and control of the family by the state, and in the transition from kin-based to tributary modes of surplus control." ^{xlvii} Others say this transformation is the culmination of earlier changes, dating from the Neolithic substitution of sedentary agriculture for mobile hunting and gathering, which led in turn to more surplus accumulation, greater distinction between male and female labor, the rise of male elites, and the development of female seclusion as a way of asserting male status distinctions and defending women from abduction and rape. ^{xlviii} Here too subordination of women is tied to shifts in production and social organization, which is correlated with the rise of patrilineal and patrilocal ideology that eventually enslaves women to their fathers and husbands, despite their efforts to gain power and status within the system.

These quasi-Marxist arguments about shifts in the modes and relations of production are sometimes linked to a more ideological claim, derived from the work of W. Robertson-Smith and Montgomery Watt, that the central Middle East once was the heartland of an ancient pre-Islamic

matriarchal (and presumably kinder and gentler) culture, which was later transformed into a patriarchal system that oppressed the women who had once served as rulers. It is worth reiterating that no matriarchy has ever been found to exist anywhere, though women can have more or less public power in different cultural milieus - with the present-day Middle East at the low end of the spectrum. ^{xlix} What does exist cross-culturally are matrilineal and matrilineal social organizations. According to George Murdock's *Ethnographic Atlas* such systems (and their variations) are five times less likely to occur than patrilineal/patrilineal systems. This is usually explained as a consequence of internal contradictions: a matrilineal/matrilineal clan must rely for its defense on men who marry in whose loyalty is likely to be to their natal clan; meanwhile male members of the clan marry out and also suffer from divided loyalties. ¹ Generally in matrilineal and matrilineal systems women's status is quite high, marriage is fragile, and women have a high degree of autonomy in comparison to societies, such as those of the Middle East, which are overwhelmingly patrilineal and patrilineal. (Note that there are many divergences from the ideal type, such as avunculocal and virilocal residence, or movement between matrilineages. In these instances, women's power and status is likely to be lessened). As David Aberle has shown, matrilineality is characteristic of small-scale societies that rely on horticulture or fishing for subsistence. Robin Fox argues this is because movable property is meager in such societies while resources are plentiful, so that female inheritance does not mean much; in contrast, matrilineality is rare among nomads or in areas with plough cultivation or large-scale agriculture where moveable property is far more valuable and necessary resources are in scarce supply. ^{li} If Fox is right, then it is unlikely that the Middle East was ever characterized by matrilineality, since it has always had a large nomadic component. It is also where the plough was invented and where large-scale agriculture first evolved.

Some linguistic and historical evidence for ancient matriliney in the Middle East does exist, but it is equivocal. It is certainly true that more varieties of marriage were permitted in Arabia prior to Islam, and that some men did live with the families of their wives, giving their lineages a matrilocal and matrilineal appearance; it is also the case that some Bedouin tribes still trace their origins back to female founders. But neither of these facts is real evidence of an ancient female-centered social organization. Rather, tracing one's lineage to a female ancestor can be easily understood as the result of polygamy, so that descendants of the founder differentiate themselves on the grounds of their respective great grandmothers, whose sons would begin and continue as rivals over their common patrimony. This pattern continues to occur today among the Bedouin and elsewhere.

The evidence of men living with their wives' clans and being adopted by them that are found in accounts of early Arabian tribal marriage reflect the leeway possible in the kinship organization of pre-Islamic families, but not a coherent matrilineal system. Instead, these are most probably special cases, perhaps a consequence of the 'lease' marriages or 'group' marriages, cited by al-Bukhari as common in pre-Islamic Arabia,ⁱⁱⁱ in which the mother of a child could have some freedom to choose the man she wished to designate as her child's father. The man chosen might then move in with her to protect his investment against other possible claimants. Or, even more likely, these cases may have been a consequence of the tensions of polygamy, as the sons of a less favored wife left their father's household, where they were unwelcome, to be taken into the tents of the more sympathetic members of their mother's family - a pattern which still is quite common in the Middle Eastern world.

If the postulate of a pre-Islamic matrilineal organization is shaky, so is the idea that patriarchal attitudes inevitably arise as a direct consequence of greater social complexity and

changes in the relations of production. For instance, it is not at all evident that farmers are more misogynistic than their mobile hunter-gather predecessors. Some hunter-gatherers sharply discriminate between prestigious men's hunting that brings in valued meat, as against despised women's gathering that brings in ordinary produce of the fields. It does not matter that the work of women provides the mainstay of the diet - it is the dominant cultural attitude that counts, and women's work, and women themselves, can be devalued and held in contempt despite their all-important productive input. But although hunters and gatherers can be as androcentric as anyone else, in their mode of production women's outdoor work remains absolutely necessary, which means that female seclusion cannot occur; it also means that women may have considerable autonomy in controlling their own sphere of work.

An example of this can be seen among desert-dwelling Middle Eastern pastoralists, where the necessities of nomadic life require women to work unveiled and to enjoy quite substantial freedom in decision making, since they have to take responsibility for the household when their husbands are absent, as is often the case (note that in Africa and elsewhere the frequent absence of men often correlates with matriliney). As Lois Beck documents among the Qashqai of Iran, women's "work is respected and regarded as vital to the economic unit; no household can exist without her labor."^{liii} So, as among hunters and gatherers, the ecology and mode of production of the desert nomad oblige women to be very much more independent than their urban cousins. But this freedom does not necessarily alter the strongly patriarchal morality of the tribesmen. Tribal women are, in reality, much less likely than urban Muslim women to be granted any inheritance whatsoever, and they are far more likely to suffer corporal punishment for adultery or other delicts, despite the legal protection offered by the Quran. Obviously, then, a simple and co-operative mode of production alters the parameters of patriarchy, but does not

necessarily preclude it. And, as Erika Friedl notes, even where tribal women do appear to have considerable freedom and authority, in the Middle East these are “only a function of socioeconomic circumstances and not embedded in a gender-egalitarian (not to speak of gynocentric) ideology.”^{liv} In such a context, women’s liberty and status are easily abrogated.

The Roots of Patrilineal Misogyny

The taken-for-granted correlation between patriliney, complexity and female subordination is based on the belief that men in a complex society must take measures to be certain the son who will inherit from them is actually their own flesh and blood. To insure this they develop a patrilineal ideology and strictly control their wives' freedom and sexuality, and simultaneously gradually degrade women as individuals and as a social category. But while male dominance and the denigration of women is indeed often characteristic of complex patrilineal/patrilocal social formations, it is not at all inevitable. My contention is that another element is required: a deep-seated faith that blood inheritance is the crucial factor in determining jural and personal identity. Contemporary Middle Easterners, and modern Westerners as well, may consider this belief to be a reflection of the ‘natural’ state of being in which ‘real’ offspring are the fruit of sexual intercourse between a man and his wife.

But the notion that children must be of the same blood as their parents (and particularly the same blood as their father) is actually cultural, not natural or inevitable. In fact, it is perfectly possible for a strictly patrilineal/patrilocal society to designate children as legitimate by virtue of adoption or simply because they were born to one's wife. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa ‘ghost marriages’ allow a childless woman whose husband has died to take lovers and bear their children, who are then considered members of her deceased husband’s patriline. The same

principle operates in woman-woman marriage where a postmenopausal or sterile widow can marry other women and become the 'father' of the children sired by the male lovers of her 'wives'. As in ghost marriage, these children belong to the widow's husband's patriline.^{lv} However these African cases occur in very simple and societies that lack central leadership, intensive agriculture, and state systems. To really make my point I require an example from a complex social formation, preferably one from the Middle East.

Egypt during the Middle and New Kingdom provides is just such a case.^{lvi} It was the archetypical hierarchical and complex society. It featured intensive agricultural production based on the Nile's annual cycle of flooding. As Fox's theory predicts, it was also patrilineal and patrilocal. Yet treatment of the sexes was remarkably even-handed in this vast archaic empire. Women could own property, inherit, act as legal individuals, make provisions in marriage contracts, initiate divorce, and so on. Marriage, save for that of the Pharaoh, was monogamous. There was no veiling or female seclusion, and women were treated in general with respect and dignity, despite male dominance in the political, professional and religious spheres. Furthermore, save in the family of the Pharaoh,^{lvii} there was no great concern for insuring the actual paternity of a child. As a result, children were often exchanged, and those without sons commonly adopted an heir from outside the family - something unknown in present-day Middle Eastern culture. So, while Egypt certainly had a patrilineal and patrilocal kinship organization, actual blood relationship was not crucial; of primary importance were the father's jural rights over the child. In ancient Egypt, the pater takes precedence over the genitor.

I believe that the ancient Egyptian disinterest in blood purity and the relative equality of the sexes among them correlates with other characteristics differentiating their world from the rest of the Middle East. Egypt arose within the uniquely protected and rich valley of the Nile,

where regular flooding permitted tremendous and stable agricultural production. Outside the valley, ecological conditions did not favor the growth of powerful nomadic groups, and threats from desert tribes were relatively easily handled, though there was always danger from the warrior people of the Upper Nile. The culture that grew up in the Nile valley was, generally speaking, static, homogenous and secure, with a deep sense of its own ethnic superiority, continuity, and longevity. Egyptian society was also strongly hierarchical, and the Pharaoh was revered as a "divine essence, a God incarnate... His coronation was not an apotheosis but an epiphany."^{lviii} Death itself was alien to the Pharaoh: in his tomb he was supposed to live forever, ruling in an unchanging universe that was a reflection of the eternal Egyptian cosmos.

The major rival to Egypt was Mesopotamia, where the Sumerian Empire evolved. In contrast to the bounded, secure and regular world of Egypt, this region was much more like the rest of the Middle East, in that it "lacks clear boundaries and was periodically robbed and disrupted by the mountaineers on its east or the nomads on its west.... Mesopotamia is, for much of its grazing, dependent on uncertain rainfall and possesses in the Tigris an unaccountable, turbulent, and most dangerous river."^{lix} In these difficult circumstances, a sort of ruler far removed from the omnipotent Pharaoh appeared, as portrayed in the first written epic, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Unlike the divine Egyptian Pharaohs, Gilgamesh is a human being; he cannot conquer death. His sole motivation is gaining personal glory and honor in his lifetime: "I will face fighting such as I have never known, I will set out on a road I have never traveled! I will establish fame for eternity!"^{lx} Gilgamesh's authority is limited. To achieve his goals, he must rely on the support of his fellow townsmen, and he must constantly demonstrate to them his worthiness to lead. He is the product of an unstable and sparse environment favoring continual struggles for ephemeral positions of power among co-equal rivals. Far more than the divine

Pharaoh, Gilgamesh is the predecessor of the insecure dynasties that would rule in the Middle East thereafter.

While the Sumerians and later groups struggled for glory and power, in the lush, isolated and relatively secure environment of the Nile Valley, under the absolute command of a sacred Pharaoh and his priesthood, ordinary men and women were encapsulated in a social universe that seemed stable and everlasting. Pharaohs, anxious to insure the divinity of their sons, were obsessed with blood paternity – even to the point of engaging in sibling incest. But the vast majority of Egyptians, protected within the sacred hierarchy, required no belief in 'natural' inheritance through blood to buttress the solidity of their lineages or to secure their futures. Therefore, despite their patrilineal system, ancient Egyptians who were not members of the Pharaoh's family had little interest in the preservation of their bloodlines and were not at all preoccupied with controlling reproduction by enforcing female seclusion or inferiority. As we have seen, for them, a high degree of female equality and the adoption of heirs were normative. Meanwhile, the dual ideologies of patrilineal blood and patriarchal attitudes prevailed among Egypt's combative (and ultimately triumphant) neighbors. It was the latter model, suited to a far more volatile ecological and social setting, which would henceforth prevail in both ancient and modern Middle Eastern culture.

The centrality of this ancient and pervasive ideology of blood is evident when we survey contemporary customs in the Middle East. For example, despite Quranic injunctions, in general only patrilineal blood kin have the right to inherit land, herds, and other property. Often, only clansmen can purchase land owned by clan members. The biological equivalence of patrilineal clan members is made explicit in feuds, wherein the blood of any member can serve as payment for injuries done by any other, and each has an obligation to take blood revenge for dishonor

done to any other kinsman.^{lxi} The crucial importance of blood is equally obvious in attitudes toward those whose blood is suspect. For example, clansmen descended from slaves or other dependents might be incorporated into the lineage as clients, helpers and even as fictive kin, but they would be the first to be excluded from the group during periods of hardship. In parallel fashion, adoption of children from outside the extended family was and remains extremely rare in the Middle East.^{lxii}

This negative attitude toward outsiders not of one's own blood persists despite the fact that, as the posthumous son of his father, Muhammad had seen for himself the cruelty of a patrilineal society toward those who are without a protective family, so that a major emphasis in his teaching was on the obligation of Muslims to protect the weak, and especially to care for orphans. Without sons himself, he adopted into his family a number of adult outsiders, including the Persian Salman Farisi, the freed Syrian slave Zayid al-Harithi, and the African slave Bilal. These were among his first and most loyal converts, joining the alternative community of believers that was meant to replace the old patrilineal clan structure. Yet none of these could inherit his mantle.^{lxiii} On this topic, Islamic law and popular practice are in complete contrast to ancient Egyptian codes, which gave adopted children full legal rights of inheritance. In contrast, the children of slave concubines, who did not have legal rights in ancient Egypt, have a full share in the patrimony under Muslim law, since they are reckoned to share the blood of their father.

Because those descended from a common forefather are believed to partake of a shared common essence derived from their ancestral blood, the glory of any member reflects on all others now and forever; at the same time adultery committed by any clanswoman blemishes all her patriline for eternity – unless purged by honor killing. It is significant that such a killing is almost always the responsibility of a woman's siblings, not her husband, since it is *her* patriline,

not his, that has been sullied.^{lxiv} To maintain the purity of the bloodline father's brother's daughter marriage is the favored form throughout the Middle East, since it is as 'close to the bone' as possible. Pride in one's paternal blood relatives also means that the recollection of patrilineal genealogies has long been a preoccupation among Middle Easterners, and that a major art form is the recitation of poetry praising their paternal ancestors. Elite lineages typically brag that kinship connections were sought with them, while they, as the noblest clans, did not initiate ties with others. This was so even in Medina where, despite the Muslim ideal of religious communalism, marriages with the *ansar*, the local inhabitants of Medina, were rare indeed among the early Meccan migrants, who preferred to avoid contaminating their noble *qawm* (clan) with inferior blood.^{lxv} Even Muhammad's own lineage, the Quraysh, were not immune from pride in blood; the Caliph Umar argued that since Muhammad was the most noble of human beings, his people, the Quraysh, must be the most noble clan, and "for the rest, it follows proximity. The Arabs were ennobled by the Apostle of God."^{lxvi}

Ibn Khaldun, the great medieval theorist of Middle Eastern society, described the pervasive belief in blood in a way that most Middle Easterners would still concur with today: "Everybody's affection for his family and his group is more important (than anything else). Compassion and affection for one's blood relations and relatives exist in human nature as something God put into the hearts of men. It makes for natural support and aid, and increases the fear of the enemy. Those who have no one of their own lineage rarely feel affection for their fellows."^{lxvii}

Of course, as many ethnographers have demonstrated at great length, this is an ideal model that is manipulated, extended, or suborned in an infinite number of ways by social actors seeking their own advantages. And as Ibn Khaldun himself says, shared blood does not automatically

bring unity; that requires "social intercourse, friendly association, long familiarity, and the companionship that results from growing up together, having the same wet nurses, and sharing in other circumstances of death and life." ^{lxviii}

But the fact that patriliney is affected by social conditions and personal ambitions does not mean that the cultural value of blood is non-existent. Instead, it serves, according to Max Weber's famous metaphor, as a switchman, orienting the direction of social action. If brothers and lineage mates sincerely believe themselves to be indissolubly bound together not just by their shifting personal interests, but by an essential biological bond, then they are far more likely to stand together as solidary units against enemies. The postulate of a masculine blood legacy is therefore an essential part of what Muhammad Arkoun has called the 'cultural imaginary' of the Middle East - that is, the historically constructed image of self and other that is characteristic of the entire society. ^{lxix} The appearance in Arabia of this blood obsessed segmentary patrilineal system (rather than a bilateral system where kinship is traced through both lines, or a hierarchal conical clan with elite 'elder' lineages) can be understood as a response to the mobile and aggressive social environment of the ancient Middle East, where evolutionary competition favored the success of groups bound together by their notions of shared substance passed down through the paternal line; this segmentary kinship system allowed the formation of groups with clear relationships of allegiance and countered tendencies toward diffusion, internal dissension and overlapping loyalties that would only be exacerbated by a bilateral kinship system. At the same time, it permitted flexibility and adaptation to shifting circumstances in a way that more rigid conical clan structures did not. ^{lxx}

Over the long term, then, faith in a shared blood substance that naturally binds co-equal patrilineal relatives inextricably together acts as a stabilizing and constructive model for aligning

and motivating social actors in a shifting and perilous environment where any order at all was hard to achieve. Those groups that did accept the belief in blood unity had advantages over those who did not, so that the ratification of this concept by Muslim law (which stamped out all traces of confusing cross-cutting matrilineal rights) was simply the final step in a long-term historical adaptation to a demanding, fluid, and individualistic world in which collectives are fragile and under threat. Imagining a 'natural' community derived from shared blood lends a symbolic physical substance to these groups, offsetting deep centripetal tendencies and providing a psychological source for clan solidarity against attackers.

The hypothesis I have offered of a causal correlation between status instability, an ethic of competitive egalitarianism, a cultural idiom of natural difference located in blood inheritance, (with its implications of rejection of adoption, extension of inheritance to the children of slaves and the denial of alternative marriage forms based on female choice), and the evolution of patrilineality into misogynistic patriarchy is tentative and requires more cross-cultural testing. But regardless of the causal nexus, it is clear that the Middle Eastern ideology of male blood and honor rests upon an obvious and disturbing contradiction: i.e., even though genealogies and the official organizational model of the society take account only of men, the incontrovertible fact is that the patriline springs from the womb, and that women - outsiders to the patrilineage and men's supposed natural inferiors - are the real centers of the segmentary, masculine social structure in their role as child-bearers and mothers.

Of course, the actual centrality of women is recognized in any number of ways within Middle Eastern culture. For example, *rahm*, (the womb) is a common Muslim metaphor for spiritual communitas; ^{lxxi} it is linked to *rahma* (mercy), and to Allah in his benevolent aspect of al-rahman - the merciful. Through this imagery, human beings, as children of God, are saved by

the compassion of their Creator, like children are held in the embracing arms of their loving mother. Thus, men who have suckled from the same wet nurse are tied together as foster brothers.^{lxxii} Yet this discourse of milk relations and female fecundity is very much subordinate and minor; in ordinary speech rather the reference is to patrilineality and *nasab* (descent). In religion as well, negative images of women have stimulated a counter-discourse among many Sufis, where the feminine has been very positively evaluated - God is a bride and enlightenment is a process of unveiling. It was, after all, a female saint, Rabiya, who first enunciated the Sufi faith in divine love. Sufism also favors 'feminine' aspects of religion: emotional intuition, ecstatic experience, hidden knowledge, magical practices, and immersion in the encompassing womb of God's love (as exemplified especially in the work of al-Arabi).^{lxxiii} Sufis and other unorthodox groups have also been especially welcoming of women's participation and egalitarian in their treatment of women - attitudes that have contributed to mistrust of these groups by the larger community.^{lxxiv}

But as Abdella Hammoudi writes, in the predominant Middle Eastern ideology the fact of female power is "scandalous according to patriarchal norms and yet impossible to avoid;" its tensions force men to struggle continually "to transcend the structural contradiction between a patriarchal system and the physical reproduction of lineages."^{lxxv} This insurmountable tension lies at the root of male antagonism toward females in the Middle East, as men seek to suppress, degrade and control the women who can so easily disrupt the illusory solidarity of their blood relationships. Women in the Middle East are denigrated and held in contempt not because they are so weak, but because they are so strong.

Endnotes

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- i For heuristic purposes, this paper will assume a degree of cultural unity for the Middle East, taken here as extending from North Africa across to Northern and Western Pakistan. This is not to deny the great differences that exist within this vast area. Nor is it to deny similarities with other societies where patriarchy and female seclusion prevail, such as Northern India (see Papanek 1973 for a classic study). My hope is that the argument made here has enough breadth to be useful for further comparative research, and enough ethnographic and historical detail to help in conceptualizing the structural roots of shared cultural values in the Middle East and elsewhere. For my argument in favor of this sort of study, see Lindholm 2002.
- ii Kandiyoti 1991.
- iii There are any number of variations on the veil, ranging from the all enveloping black *burqah* of Afghanistan, which leaves women only a grid to peer through, to the diaphanous Turkish *yashmaq*, which elegantly covers the hair and lower part of the face.
- iv For this reason, a major moral accusation against the West is the corruption of women, who go about with naked arms and uncovered heads, mingling in public with men from outside their families.
- v For example, the Kayble of Algeria define themselves as men who confront one another face to face (*qabel* - a word which also means hospitality, doing honor to others - see Bourdieu 1977). In terms of religious symbolism, men represent the *zahir* (surface) world of streets, markets, and mosque, while women represent the *batin* (hidden) world of the house and the intimate world. This is the source of the wide-spread association between orthodoxy and masculinity; mysticism and the feminine (see Messick 1993).
- vi As I shall discuss later, some tribal women, especially nomads living among close relatives and required to do arduous work outdoors, do not veil at all. But veiling is enjoined in urban areas and among peasants as well, and is recognized in those environments as a mark of respectability.
- 7 Of course, I am not claiming that all Middle Easterners hold negative attitudes toward women. There are innumerable exceptions, correlated with personal attitudes and education. But I *am* claiming that the denigration of women is a pervasive cultural value.
- viii See Ahmed 1992: 116 for this definition.
- ix Razavi 1993.
- x Dorsky 1986: 87.
- xi Cherry Lindholm 1982: 56.
- xii Hammoudi 1993: 150-1.
- xiii Nelson 1973: 52.
- xiv See Dwyer 1978.
- xv The nomadic Tuareg are always the exception to every gender rule in the Middle East, since they reverse many of the standard social forms that hold true elsewhere. For instance, in their matrilineal-matrilocal social order powerful women own property and act politically; meanwhile the Tuareg men are veiled. See Murphy 1967
- xvi El-Messiri 1978: 536
- xvii Quoted in Antoun 1968: 671-97.
- xviii Tal'at Harb quoted in Stowasser 1993: 14-15.
- xix Cited in Mernissi 1991: 56-7, 64, 76.
- xx Quran 4: 34.
- xxi Quoted in Mernissi 1991: 70.
- xxii Quran 33: 35.
- xxiii Quran 2: 229, see also 4:1, which remarks that women are persons created with a 'single soul' to men.
- xxiv This argument finds some resonance in popular practice and belief. Among the Pukhtun with whom I lived the only polygamous man cited as living up to the Quranic requirement was an individual who did indeed treat his wives equally - he lived in the men's house and avoided them both.
- xxv This ambivalence continues to be marked among Muslim men today, who do not wish their daughters to be subjected to the humiliation of a co-wife, but who may want to take a second wife themselves. Such an attitude is in contrast to Africa, where polygamy does not awaken great ambivalence and where co-wives generally appear to live in relative harmony.

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- xxvi Ibn Sa'd quoted in Mernissi 1991: 157.
- xxvii See Mernissi 1991 for a clear statement of this argument, Beck 1978 for ethnographic evidence.
- xxviii Aisha's participation in the Battle of the Camel, in which she was on the losing side against Ali, may well have played a major part in discrediting further female political activism. See Spellberg 1991.
- xxix Abbott 1946: 67.
- xxx In Iran a woman's virginity is explicitly referred to as 'her capital'. See Haeri 1989: 67.
- xxxi For some of the ways in which women's absolute rights over their mahar gives them a capacity to negotiate for their own benefit see Mir-Hosseini 1993.
- xxxii Coulson 1964: 14.
- xxxiii Hodgson 1974 Vol I: 341.
- xxxiv Muslim ambiguity about women is echoed in the works of scholars who are concerned with the transformations in women's rights and privileges occurring after Muhammad's advent. For instance, Stowasser 1984 argues that Islam greatly improved women's rights, while Abbot 1942 has a more mixed view, noting that reforms were negated by new institutions of female seclusion. Ahmed 1986 sees women losing their previous prestigious roles as priestesses and leaders after the advent of the Prophet.
- xxxv There are four major legal schools in Sunni Islam, each with a regional base.
- xxxvi As Ahmed 1992 points out, the regional variations in the major law schools indicate that a more equitable legal system could have been developed, and, by implication, might be still developed, within the Islamic framework.
- xxxvii Ahmed 1992: 66, 239.
- xxxviii Stowasser 1993: 15. For an account of the nature of this new rhetoric, see Metcalfe 1987.
- xxxix Green Book III: 98.
- xl Quoted in Choueiri 1990: 128.
- xli El-Amin 1981: 92.
- xliv This mode of legitimizing distinction is characteristic of the Middle East. See Lindholm 2002, 1992.
- xlvi See for example Papps 1993 on the wide-spread prevalence of women's labor in the Middle East, Al-Khayyat 1990 on urban women's lives in modern Iraq, Friedl 1991 on transformations of rural women's work in Iran. All of these studies show women are working harder, contributing more, and gaining little or no appreciation or status for their efforts.
- xliv In this regard, see especially the groundbreaking work of Kandiyoti 1991, 1992 and Tillon 1966.
- xlvi See Lerner 1986.
- xlvi Ahmed 1992.
- xlvi Kandiyoti 1991: 31
- xlvi See, for example, Tillon 1966.
- xlvi See Stocking 1995 for an account of early anthropological theories of matriarchal societies.
- l For classic statements see Fox 1967, Richards 1950, Radcliffe-Brown 1950.
- li Aberle 1961, Fox 1967.
- li Cited in Mernissi 1991: 183-4.
- lii Beck 1978: 352
- lii Friedl 1992: 213
- li For an example, see Evans-Pritchard 1940. In the Middle East a covert cultural emphasis on the reproduction of the lineage, regardless of blood inheritance, is recognized in the Bedouin proverb that the child belongs to the cradle.
- li This example is taken from Ahmed 1992.
- lii Yet even here adoption sometimes occurred, as is attested in the story of Moses.
- lii Frankfort 1948: 5.
- lii Frankfort 1948: 4.
- li Kovacs 1989: 21.

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- lxi Of course, co-responsibility varies considerably in different groups, with nomads generally having a wider range of responsibility for revenge than sedentary peoples.
- lxii It is noteworthy that no Middle Eastern country has ratified the Hague convention on intercountry adoption, which is aimed at rationalizing procedures for foreigners who wish to adopt local children when no adopting parents can be found locally.
- lxiii The principles of egalitarianism in the faith, combined with Persian sectarianism, did lead some Shi'ite extremists, notably the Qarmati, to proclaim that Salman Farisi was actually the proper successor to Muhammad. According to the Qarmati, Muhammad was the bearer of outward truth, Ali the bearer of inner truth, but Salman was the gateway to knowledge, raised above them both in sanctity.
- lxiv For a modern instance, see Shryock 1997
- lxv See Watt 1956; Nagel 1982.
- lxvi Quoted in Crone and Cook 1977: 225.
- lxvii Ibn Khaldun 1967: 97. His theory of the rise and fall of dynasties is based upon the tendency of rulers to substitute dependent clients for their co-equal blood kin. This led inevitably to a deterioration of unity and a loss of martial vigor.
- lxviii Ibn Khaldun 1967: 99, 148.
- lxix See Arkoun 1994.
- lxx For more detail on this, see Lindholm 1986.
- lxxi See Antoun 1989 for this analysis.
- lxxii For the Arab case, see Altorki 1980 and for Iran, see Khatib-Chahidi 1992
- lxxiii Al-Arabi cites two women as his major spiritual mentors and uses the union of male and female as the metaphor of the completion of the quest for divinity.
- lxxiv The Bekhtashi dervishes treat women as equal members of the brotherhood and radical Kharijite groups of early Islam permitted a great degree of female power, including, in one instance, the leadership of women (Dabashi 1993: 131). The Qarmati also opposed polygamy, concubinage, the marriage of young girls, and the veil (Ahmed 1992).
- lxxv Hammoudi 1993: 155, 158.

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