

The Islamic Middle East

An Historical Anthropology

Charles Lindholm

 **BLACKWELL**
P u b l i s h e r s

Contents

List of Illustrations	xi
Preface	xiii
Acknowledgments	xvii
Glossary	xix

Part I Introduction

1 The Middle East: Assumptions and Problems	3
The Middle East in Western Eyes	3
Where is the Middle East?	7
Equality and Individualism as Central Values	10

Part II Preconditions for Egalitarian Individualism

2 Ways of Living	17
The Ecological Framework	17
The Bedouin Option	19
Shepherds and Confederacies	22
Independent Farmers of the Mountains	25
The Dialectic of Desert and Sown	28
3 Traditions of Authority and Freedom	33
Continuities with <i>Jahiliyya</i>	33
Emissaries and Exemplars: Types of Prophecy	36
The Legacy of Gilgamesh	41
The Limits of Authority	46
4 The Social Construction of Egalitarianism	49
Ibn Khaldun's Theory of Authority	49
Group Feeling: the 'Band of Brothers'	53
Middle Eastern Kinship	55
Complications in the Model	59

Part III State and Society: Prophets, Caliphs, Sultans, and Tyrants

5 The Prophetic Age	65
The Rise of Islam	65
The Reconfiguration of Ordinary Life under Islam	73
The State in Early Islam	78
Tensions and Divisions	81
6 Early Struggles for Authority	84
The Rule of the Righteous	84
Movements of Religious Resistance: Kharijites and Shi'ites	88
Maintaining Secular Domination	90
The Abbasid Rebellion	96
The New Hierarchy of the Courtier	100
7 Sacred and Secular Rulers	105
The Quest for the Redeemer: the Qarmati	105
Pragmatic Tribesmen: Buyids and Seljuks	107
The Religious Option	112
8 Novelties and Continuities	120
The Ottoman Exception	120
Other Experiments: Chevaliers and Assassins	127
Reprise: the Uses and Abuses of Government	131

Part IV Sacred Power: Reciters, Lawyers, Incarnations, and Saints

9 The Essentials of Islam	139
The Authority of the Quran and the Necessity of Practice	139
The Problem of Salvation	146
The Charisma of the Prophet	148
10 Recapturing the Sacred Past: the Power of Knowledge	151
The Authority of History	151
Legalism in Islam	155
The Education of the Scholarly Elite	160
Resistance to the Authority of the Learned	163
11 The Partisans of Ali	167
The Charisma of Ali	167
The Two Faces of Shi'ism	170
Shi'ite History: Acquiescence and Rebellion	173

Khomeini's Revolution	178
12 Sufism in Practice	181
In Search of the Beloved	181
Ecstasy and Remembrance	185
The Cosmic Order	188
The Spiritual Division of Labor	190
13 The Contradictions of Saintly Authority	194
The Cult of Saints	194
The Delegitimization of Sufism	198
The Exaggeration of Charisma	200
Ambiguities of Selflessness	203
Islamists and Sufis	206
 Part V Dilemmas of Subordination	
14 Slaves, Eunuchs, and Blacks	213
Gelded Warriors: Slaves and Clients	213
Race and Inferiority	216
The Categorization of Human Types	219
Noble Slaves, Base Freeman	224
15 The Ambiguities of Women	228
Women in Middle Eastern Consciousness	228
History, Culture, and Misogyny	234
Quandaries of Patrilineality	237
The Dangers of Female Sexuality	241
16 Escapes from Distinction: Love and Friendship	245
Romantic Love	245
Love Between Men	251
'I Am You': Idealized Friendship	253
 Part VI Conclusion	
17 Problems and Possibilities	259
The Command of the Powerful	259
Egalitarian Individualism and Despotism	265
Resistance to Authority	268
 Chronology of Events	272
Notes	283
References	302
Index	315