

THE IRANIAN DOWREH NETWORK AND ITS FUNCTIONS

by

RAMESH FARZANFAR

B.A., Tehran University  
(1972)

M.A., Tehran University  
(1975)

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF

SCIENCE

at the

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF

TECHNOLOGY

January, 1979

© Ramesh Farzanfar 1979

Signature of Author .....  
Department of Political Science, January, 1979

Certified by .....  
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by .....  
Chairman, Departmental Committee on Graduate Students

Archives

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE  
OF TECHNOLOGY

APR 6 1979

LIBRARIES

## THE IRANIAN DOWREH NETWORK AND ITS FUNCTIONS

by

RAMESH FARZANFAR

Submitted to the Department of Political Science  
On January 29, 1979 in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Science

## ABSTRACT

Despite the enormous changes in the basic institutions and social structures of Iranian society and the introduction of modern technology and means of mass communications, many traditional structures, especially those related to the social behavior and social communication of individuals are still functioning in Iran. These traditional institutions and structures not only have survived the process of change, but they have assumed a revived role in contemporary Iranian society because the effective institutions of social and political association and communication are absent. A "dowreh" is an informal group of individuals who enter into an intimate, closed-to-others relationship. This group activity is considered to be on a permanent basis, even if the group disintegrates after a short period of time. The members of group meet periodically, usually rotating the meeting place among the membership. As a common norm a dowreh meets weekly but some may meet only twice a month, others less often. The group which constitutes a dowreh is a small group, because the usual number of people in any single dowreh does not exceed 20 and it is more often about 8 to 15. The more, concrete, recognizable feature of a dowreh is its communicative aspect since the participants use it to discuss, organize and communicate with each other. Clearly, the functions of dowreh as a small group activity are not limited to these. During the course of this investigation we shall observe that each type of dowreh fulfills different personal and social functions for its membership.

The socio-political significance of dowreh lies in the fact that it is not an isolated phenomenon. The indefinite number of cells of small group informal association are inter-related and interconnected to each other. Rarely an individual confines himself to the membership in one dowreh. The majority, particularly those who are socially or politically active, will go to more than two dowrehs each week. In each single dowreh they assume a different social role and enter into a different type of small group association. What they

carry invariably, however, is their information; the social, economic and political information that is transmitted to them through their communication with their group. Thus, each individual becomes the linkage between several small group cells, and a social network of dowrehs is created. This social network covers most of the social strata and cuts across different classes. Our research, however, concludes that dowreh is essentially an urban phenomenon and it can not be said that such network pervades rural areas of the country too.

Thesis Supervisor: Lucian W. Pye  
Title: Professor of Political Science

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	5
2. THE POLITICAL SYSTEM	14
a. Historical Background	14
b. The Characteristics of the Political System	21
3. THE PHENOMENON	26
I. A Typical Case	26
II. General Description	29
III. Characteristic Features	31
4. THE TYPES OF DOWREH	35
I. Kadushin's typology	35
II. Political Dowrehs	37
III. Cultural and Integrative Dowrehs	54
IV. Utilitarian Dowrehs	71
5. NOTES ON SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF DOWREHS	75
APPENDIX A.	
A Note On Iran's Social Profile	84
APPENDIX B.	
Some Possible Explanations	91
Sociological Explanations	92
Political Explanations	107
BIBLIOGRAPHY	117

## INTRODUCTION

Some of the recent anthropological and sociological researches into the dynamism of social relationships among individuals and communities in non-industrialized societies have opened up new possibilities for political scientists for understanding and explaining the dynamism of the political systems in developing countries. Relying upon the findings of anthropologists and using their terminology and research tools, the political scientist no longer need limit himself to the observation and explanation of more concrete, formal institutions and structures of the government in the society under investigation. Guided by the group theory of politics, but going far beyond its assumptions, he attempts at finding and explaining the more hidden, informal structures and relationships that exist in these societies and among the individual members. By doing so, he assumes that the operation of politics in such societies is basically through networks of interpersonal relationships that cut across boundaries of class, status and group formations.<sup>1</sup>

We do not intend here to explain this approach or to base our research upon its specific assumptions. What is of significance for our study however, is one of their fundamental

---

1- See, for instance, Marc J. Swartz, ed., Local Level Politics (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co, 1969), and Steffen W. Schmidt, James C. Scott, Carl Lande, Laura Guasti, eds., Friends, Followers and Factions, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977)

political findings, which is the hypothesis that the operation of politics in non-industrialized countries is essentially through informal social and political structures and networks of interpersonal relationships.

A notable political scientist, with a different approach to political development, has reached the same conclusion sometimes earlier in his studies of the developing countries.<sup>1</sup> Fred W. Riggs points out that it is necessary for the political development theories to make the proper distinction between "formal" and "informal" structures constituting the political system of a developing country. While rejecting the approach based exclusively on the dichotomies of traditional-modern, diffuse-specific, and ascribed-voluntary, as oversimplified, he asserts that in order to conceptualize transitional societies one must consider such "pattern variables" as polar extremes rather than as dichotomies. Then, the important question which will arise is "which kind of group would play the most significant role in politics?" In Riggs' view, the model developed by Gabriel Almond and adopted by other theorists fails to provide the correct answer to this question. Because, he observes, we have inputs which do not lead to rule-making and rules which are often not implemented, there is a need for a different model from Almond's:

---

1- Fred W. Riggs, "The Theory of Developing Politics." World Politics 16 (1963): 147-171, and Fred W. Riggs, Administration in Developing Countries, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1964)

"We need a two-tiered model, a system which distinguishes between 'formal' and 'effective' structures, between what is prescribed ideally and what actually happens." 1

The Almond's model, Riggs maintains, applies at the formal level, but at the effective level what is required is a model which contains "a congeries of relatively autonomous or self-sustained units."<sup>2</sup> Each of these units can fulfill all the functions necessary for its survival, including the political function. When other structures arise for channelling and legitimating the functions of these units through central organs of government, these functions become politically distinguishable for the system as a whole. Consequently, traditional Indian society, for instance, was composed of "a composite of self-governing primary units: its familial, caste, village, tribal and other such groupings."<sup>3</sup> In such society the functions of formal government were minimal. Therefore, in Riggs' view, the formal apparatus of government in societies like India, is "superimposed" on a structure of decentralized, autonomous political cells which are not dissolved by the process of modernization, although they are disrupted and twisted by it.

"The superimposed formal apparatus of modern government, with its rule-making functions, seeks with only partial success to break through innumerable substructures of autonomous political life which neither feed inputs effectively into the superstructure, nor absorb its regulatory outputs. Such substructures are effective polities in their own right." 4

---

1- Riggs, The Theory of Developing Politics, P. 154

2- Ibid.

3- Ibid.

4- Ibid.

In other words, it seems that a dualism exists in the operation of politics in the developing countries. On the one hand there are the "formal" apparatus of government and official organization of political power which create a resemblance of rationally developed political institutions and impersonal bureaucracy for the management of power and authority. Consequently, these societies have the appearance of a democratic, pluralistic political system, with the required structures, organizations and legal procedures such as constitutions, parties, parliaments, interest groups, associations, etc. On the other hand, the actual operation of political system does not take place through these democratic channels and legal procedures. The operation of the political system is essentially through "informal", non-official channels. In most cases in developing societies, the country is ruled by one man and/or a group of traditional ruling elite, whose source of power and legitimacy does not emanate from, or depend upon, the formal organizations and structure of government. The participation in the political system of these countries is limited to certain groups, the relationships among those involved in the politics are personal, the management of power and authority through bureaucratic apparatus is not impersonal and rational, and access to political positions is possible only for those who can succeed in passing through the hierarchy of personal relationships, family cliques, and "patron-client" alliances.

This dualism in the dynamism of political system, is one



of the basic features of Iranian political system according to many of the empirical studies of the country. On the one hand, Iranian political system is formally structured on the basis of a constitution modelled after Belgian constitution and adopted after the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911. This constitution not only implies the rationality and impersonality of the organizations of government and emphasizes the separation of powers into three independent branches of legislative, judicial and executive, but it specifies and describes clearly the proper domain of each power, the impersonal procedures of the management of the power, and the proceedings of election and formation of parliaments (a House of Representatives and a Senate). Formally, the constitution specifies that the monarch is the head of the executive branch, but his power is limited so that his status may be regarded more as a symbol like the status of the monarch in Great Britain. The effective power of decision-making is ascribed by constitution to a cabinet headed by a prime minister. The executive branch is responsible not to the monarch but to the two Houses. Consequently, the real authority and power must rest in the two Houses whose members are chosen by the vote of the majority of people being cast through free election.

On the other hand, the actual operation of the Iranian political system and the real management of power and decision making do not take place through these formal institutions of government and as a result the fundamental laws of

constitution are not observed and followed. Since Reza Shah deposed the Qajar dynasty in 1925, established the Pahlavi dynasty and crowned himself as the monarch of Iran until his abdication in 1941 by allied forces, he was able to ignore the constitution completely, to rule as a dictator and to control legislative and judiciary branches of government. In 1953, after a short period of democracy in the country, his son returned to Iran from Italy with the assistance of the United States and he also began to rule as a traditional authoritarian monarch, ignoring the formal and legal institutions of government.

It seems clear that any attempt to explain the operation of politics in Iran must consider this dual aspect of the political system, since the explanation and understanding of the process of political change can not be comprehensive if one neglects the informal structures through which the actual process of politics takes place. This is particularly important in the case of countries such as Iran because the disrupting force of modernization process has not transformed the traditional structures of the political system. What are these structures? Why formal institutions do not function properly in Iran? Why do the informal structures and group associations assume major political roles?

This study does not attempt to answer all of these questions. It is an attempt at the identification and analysis of a socio-political phenomenon in Iran which is one of the major structures of "informal politics" and consequently an important substructure of the political system as a whole.

This socio-political phenomenon is called "dowreh" in Persian, which can be translated as "circle" in English. Yet, as it will be shown during the course of investigation, there is not an exact English equivalent for "dowreh," perhaps because the phenomenon itself does not exist in English-speaking societies such as Britain and the U.S.

There are only two published papers about this phenomenon in recent English literature on political development in Iran. The first pioneering study which is full of fresh ideas and insights, is the two articles by William Green Miller.<sup>1</sup> The second, more theoretical investigation is by James A. Bill and is an attempt to explain the phenomenon in a larger context of political analysis and theory with a specific developmental approach.<sup>2</sup>

As it will be discussed later, dowreh is a socio-political phenomenon. It is a social phenomenon and therefore subject to sociological research, to the extent that it functions as a means for group association, identification and activity regardless of any specific political interest. It is a political phenomenon, and therefore subject to political study, to the extent that it functions as an instrument to communicate, establish personal relationships and form alliances to gain access to power positions; or to exert power on others; or to influence their political attitudes, behavior and

---

1- William Green Miller, "Political Organization in Iran: From Dowreh to Political Party," The Middle East Journal, 23 (Spring, 1969): 159-167, and The Middle East Journal, (Summer, 1969): 343-350

2- James A. Bill, "The Plasticity of Informal Politics: The Case of Iran" The Middle East Journal (Spring, 1973)

decisions; or to achieve certain political ends. Furthermore, dowreh is not only a structure, but actually an amalgam of individuals associating through patterns of personal relationships. This direct, face-to-face personal contact which exists between the members constitutes the core of its structure and transforms it into an informal but very effective system of communication. The communicational feature of dowreh increases its political significance and therefore, makes it more relevant for political study.

Ideally this research should have been focussed on the analysis of the political nature, political functions and political configurations of dowreh phenomenon. Yet, there are many difficulties in the way of an empirical political investigation in a country such as Iran. Thus, for the present time, I have had to devote most of my research to a sociological study of the phenomenon, even though I shall attempt at giving a political explanation too. To achieve a better understanding of the ways in which a dowreh functions, the best method seemed to be participant observation. Thus, not only I use an informal language to describe my records of participating in different dowrehs, but specifically for this research I became a guest member of some of my family's and friends' dowrehs during a limited period of time last summer, while I was in Iran. Moreover, to complete my research, I proceeded with other methods. A large number of individuals I personally know were members of different dowrehs. Through them I was able to contact with other elite and non-elite Iranians

who participate regularly in various dowrehs. In this way, I could manage to conduct in-depth interviews using open-ended questions with a relatively large sample of individuals. However, since it was not possible for me to choose my sample through the application of empirical quantitative methods, I do not know whether there was enough representation from all segments and strata of Iranian society in my sample. For one purpose, however, the sample seemed sufficient, that is to identify the phenomenon properly and to draw general distinguishing lines of its structure. And because dowreh is essentially an urban phenomenon, it seems those individuals whom I interviewed could provide me with enough empirical data for socio-political analysis.

## THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

To understand the significance of dowreh network in the political system of Iran, we begin with outlining the major characteristics of the political system. Since, as we observed earlier, dowreh is a sub-structure of overall Iranian political structure.

a) Historical Background:

Political and social change in contemporary Iran has passed through four different historical phases. The first period is the period of constitutional revolution in Iran from 1905 to 1911. The constitutional revolution was the first popular movement in modern history of Iran, and while it did not succeed to transform the institution of monarchy, one of its major impacts on the political structure was the legal limitations it imposed on the absolute monarchical role. The constitutional revolution gave Iran a constitutional structure which at least in theory, for the first time in the long history of Iran, limited the powers of the monarch and provided for the representative democratic government. The fundamental laws of the constitution were conceived to introduce a parliamentary system like European constitutional monarchies into Iran. Unlike the past when the authority of the king was derived from God and religion, the constitution declared the "whole people" as the "source of authority". The chosen members of parliament were described as representing "the whole people", and unlike the monarch, they were given extensive powers. They

acquired the right to approve, disapprove, or modify all laws, concessions to foreigners, loans and budgets. They could investigate any "matter conducive to the well-being of the government and the people"; they were guaranteed two-year term free of arrest, dissolution, recess or dismissal. The monarch, retained only nominal prerogatives as the Head of the State. Sovereignty was defined as a trust confided by the people to the person of the king. His "person" was invested with the supreme command of the armed forces, and ministers were both appointed and dismissed through his "Royal Decrees". But, the constitution stressed the "responsibility" of executive branch of government to the representatives of people in a number of qualifying clauses: "Ministers cannot divert themselves of responsibility to parliament by pleading verbal or written instructions from the king"; "if parliament, by an absolute majority, declares itself dissatisfied with the cabinet or with one particular minister, that cabinet or minister shall resign" and "ministers, besides being individually responsible for their ministry are also collectively responsible to parliament for one another's action in affairs of more general character." The king, however, retained one important source of power, in addition to being the supreme command of the armed forces, which was the right to appoint half the senators to an upper house, which was intended to moderate the extensive rights of deputies in the lower house of parliament.<sup>1</sup>

---

1- Ervand Abrahamian "Communism and Communalism in Iran: The Tudeh and the Firqah-i-Dimokrat" The International Journal of the Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 1, (1970), PP. 23-24

It is clear that enforcement of such a constitution would have transformed the nature of political system in Iran. But the hopes of constitutionalists were ruined by subsequent turn of events. In less than 15 years, the constitution became a historical piece of paper, and the entire political system regained its traditional characteristics. In 1907, a major threat to the survival of nation occurred when Britain and Russia, who have been the main international antagonists for a generation, now put aside their global differences, because of their mutual fear of Germany, signed an Entente. As a part of their international agreement, Iran was divided into three geographical zones: the north was defined as within Russia's sphere of influence, the south within Britain's and the central provinces were left as a neutral zone. Two years later, the Russian military occupied their sphere. And as the First World War came to the Middle East, Ottoman troops invaded Azerbaijan, the northern province of Iran, and German agents infiltrated tribal regions in the central provinces, and British officers in their zone formed the South Persia Rifles.<sup>1</sup>

By the end of the war Iran was in the process of disintegration and chaos. The northern province of Azerbaijan had its own Azeri-speaking government. Another northern province, Gilan, with the help of the Red Army, had declared itself a Soviet Socialist Republic. In the western part, Kurdistan was a battlefield between Assyrians and Kurds. In the south, Arabestan -later named Khuzistan- had changed its traditional

---

1- Ibid.



autonomy into virtual independence with its own Arab Sheikh. Also in the south, Sistan and Baluchistan were more or less autonomous regions ruled by local tribal chieftains. The central parts of the country were the domain of the Bakhtiyari tribes in Isfahan, and Qashqai and Khamesh tribes in Fars.

The second period in modern history of Iran begins with the arrival of colonel Reza Khan, the commander of a brigade of Cossacks, in Tehran and his subsequent coup d'etat in 1925. Arriving in Tehran he deposed the cabinet, named himself supreme army commander and helped in the formation of a new cabinet. He, then, convinced the British that he was Iran's last hope of salvation from Bolshevism and acquired the Soviet Union's support by promising them to implement a treaty of neutrality. Once he could achieve the withdrawal of British and Russian troops from Iran, he ousted the prime minister and gained control of the rural gendarmerie and the urban police by having transferred from the interior ministry to his own ministry of war. He successfully subdued the various tribal and provincial rebels, and gradually transformed the decentralized contingents of local levies, cossack brigades, and the South Persia Rifles into a centralized army. In 1925, having monopolized the control of all armed forces, he deposed the ruling Qajar dynasty and founded the new Pahlavi dynasty. Reza Shah ruled Iran until 1941. He was a modernizing dictator, whose program of "nation building" was based upon the creation of a large organizationally modern army, and a modern bureaucracy, both of which intended to strengthen the process of

centralization of the government. Not only he instituted the national conscription and increased the military budget and enlarged the size of the army, but he utilized the oil revenue to restructure bureaucracy. Very early in his reign, he ignored the constitution. Disregarding elections, he chose the deputies of parliament himself and thus, "parliament ceased to be the central institution of the state and instead became a screen hiding the nakedness of militarism with the decorous formality of constitutionalism."<sup>1</sup> Reza Shah's reign came to an end with the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran in August 1941, when he was forced to abdicate.

The third period begins with the new monarch Mohammad Reza Shah, who assumed power after his father's abdication. The young Shah had to give many concessions to the opposition. From 1943 until 1953, Iran experienced a decade of democracy and for a second time there was a true parliamentary system in Iran, "however influenced by old families, cliques, and rivalries."<sup>2</sup> Internationally, the rivalry among great powers to gain influence in Iran started again. When Russian troops did not withdraw from northern region of Iran, the United States interfered and forced the withdrawal of Soviet troops. From this period, the U.S. increasingly took over the role played by Great Britain in Iran. Internally, Iran was experiencing the effects of modernizing policies initiated

---

1- Ibid., P. 26

2- Nikki R. Keddie "The Iranian Power Structure and Social Change 1800-1969: An Overview" International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 2, (1971) P. 11

by Reza Shah. There were for the first time, mass ideological parties becoming involved in struggle for power. Among these parties two became politically significant; the communist Tudeh party with large portions of the working class and radical intellectuals among its membership, and National Front, with the support of nationalist middle classes. "For all the shifts and opportunism shown by some involved in the struggles of this period, the issues were real and many Iranians devoted themselves to the cause of achieving full national independence."<sup>1</sup> When the popular prime minister, Dr. Mossadegh, nationalized the British controlled oil, the whole country supported this move. However, the boycott of the country's oil by British government led to the near bankruptcy of the economy, and subsequently the government was overthrown by an American assisted coup d'etat.<sup>2</sup>

From 1953, the fourth period begins with the return of Mohammad Reza Shah to Iran and the active American involvement in the reorganization of Iranian military. During this period the political system has regained its traditional characteristics. So far, the present Shah has continued the acceleration of previous processes of centralization and militarization. Like his father, his dictatorship is concomitant with reforms, initiated in 1963 with land reform.

In all these four periods, certain aspects of the operation of politics in Iran have remained unchanged. These

---

1- Ibid.

2- Ibid., See also Richard W. Cottam Nationalism in Iran (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964)

aspects help to explain why the informal substructures such as *dowreh* are essential in the operation of political system in Iran. Briefly these are:

- The encroachment of the executive branch of government on the legislative and judicial branches.
- The ineffectiveness of constitution, and the process of ruling by decrees.
- The accumulation and concentration of power in the hands of the monarch, his absolute control over the army, bureaucracy and foreign policy.
- The creation and maintenance of a privileged, expanding army apparatus, its encroachment on civilian operations of the state, and its assumption of the functional role of preserving monarchy.
- The creation and expansion of a secret police, with the functional role of preserving monarchy through the use of every possible means.
- The existence of an ineffective, decorative parliament. The king handpicks each member of the ruling elite.
- The containment of social tensions mainly by repression and the use of terror

Under the two kings all forms of political association and organization were banned. Reza Shah even did not trust a loyal party to be formed. Not only labor has not been allowed to organize and strikes have been dealt with harshly, but the formation of formal interest groups has not been possible. The present king in 1975 declared the dissolution of

all existing political organizations and formed his National Resurrection Party (Rastakhiz). The party was hoped to be an "instrument for mobilizing the masses in the service of monarchy". For a year the membership of this party was obligatory for all. Then, the membership was a prerequisite for working in any bureaucratic organization in the country. From 1963 until recent crisis all newspapers, journals and magazines were banned except three government subsidized and controlled newspapers and some of their other publications. The censorship was not limited to these publications and books, everything publishable must be approved prior to publication.

b) The Characteristics of the Political System:

The recent empirical studies, particularly those by James Bill and Marvin Zonis show that the Iranian political system operates mainly through informal structures. Bill observes that the exercise of power in Iran is played out primarily within networks of informal groups. "Factions, coteries and ad hoc collectivities of all sorts are the kind of group formations that count in Iran."<sup>1</sup> He observes that the political, social, economic and technical conditions of organization are absent in Iran and a stifling political environment has obstructed the growth of formal associations and has promoted instead the proliferation of secretive, less visible formal groups. Thus, a web of informality exists, at the heart of which the Shah is located. There is an intense competition to gain the ear of the king. And consequently, the king

---

1- James Bill, Op. Cit , P. 132

surrounds himself with confidants who serve as channels of access. "These individuals include ministers, generals, courtiers, statesmen and senators. They also include relatives, personal friends, old classmates and trusted advisors. These personalities 'who circle the power of the monarch' filter and relay informations and petitions to the Shah. They, in turn, are surrounded by their own entourages each member of whom serves as a lower level but additional channel to power. This network of personal webs is in constant flux and Iranian petitioners develop ingenuity and expend energy in efforts to gain a firm foothold in it."<sup>1</sup>

Intimately interrelated with the informality of the exercise of power in Iran is what Bill terms as "personalism, omnipresent tension, and insecurity".<sup>2</sup> "There is a conspicuous absence of formal institutions embodying well defined principles of goal attainment and cooperative effort. Power has not flowed from institution to institution but rather from individual to individual."<sup>3</sup> Thus, a complex web of personal relationships, channels the concentration and distribution of power.

As we repeatedly mentioned, one of the characteristics of the Iranian political system is that it is structured on the balance of tension. There is a pervasive rivalry and conflict at all levels of the system. The tension is in-built in the individual, group and class relationships as well. The functional role of this tension has been system preserving because

---

1- Ibid., P. 134

2- Ibid., P. 135

3- Ibid.

it acts as an integrating and amalgamating force.<sup>1</sup> A shifting and fluctuating balance provides the opportunity for the weaker to become the stronger and the stronger, the weaker. Thus, no one in the position of power can be sure of the permanency of his status. Every one is engaged in constant maneuvering to shift the balance in his favor.

A direct consequence of this tension in the political system is that those who are involved in the political process do not trust the possession and exercise of power.<sup>2</sup> The "politics of distrust" in turn, creates a situation of profound insecurity.

Insecurity is one of the psychological characteristics that can be found almost in all of the discussions of Iranian society and history. The observation that everyone agrees upon is that those who are involved in the politics and occupy the various political positions have to guard themselves constantly against the possibility that the power of others - individuals, government, etc.- will undermine their status and well being. This feeling of insecurity generates a chronic anxiety in the political elite and leads to their maneuvers. Through a complex and delicate process, the individual actors attempt to establish various networks of alliance and counter alliance to protect themselves against interpersonal manipulations and betrayals. Thus, Westwood points out that to understand the

---

1- Ibid., P. 141

2- Andrew F. Westwood "Politics of Distrust in Iran" The Annals, (March 1965) P. 124

extent of mistrust and insecurity in Iranian political system, one must look within Iran and to the "negative equilibrium of Iranian politics. "The precarious, ever-shifting balance of individuals and tiny factions that has denied men the power to act effectively as government also has denied them the power to act effectively as opposition."<sup>1</sup> This has led to a situation in which Iranians have found it exceptionally difficult to trust one another or to work together over time. The mistrust is not a consequence of ignorance, misunderstanding or some special national psychological trait. It is rooted in the reality of politics in Iran. Thus:

"Expecting betrayal, men seek to balance political alliance with contradictory alliance, thus each fulfilling the other's prophecy of betrayal. To have lines of alliance in so many directions that no betrayal, no development will leave one isolated and exposed is the ideal, and the quest after this ideal, of course, leaves all isolated and exposed. Iranians expect that the power of government will come to bear against them unless they can intercede with those who apply it. Reality confirms this expectation for more often than not." 2

Marvin Zonis' study of the political elite of Iran shows the high degree of insecurity among the elite and its relation to several other character orientations and attitudes.<sup>3</sup> His major assumption is that the attitudes and behavior of political elite in societies "whose political processes are less institutionalized within the formal structures of government" are valid guides to political change and understanding of the system.<sup>4</sup>

---

1- Ibid.

2- Ibid.

3- Marvin Zonis The Political Elite of Iran, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971) P. 86

4- Ibid., P. 57



Zonis' analysis leads him to the conclusion that the members of the political elite of Iran have four psychological dispositions: a) manifest insecurity, b) political cynicism, c) personal mistrust, and d) interpersonal exploitation. The more concrete and manifest political attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of the elite were found to form six clusters: a) xenophobia, b) orientation to the Shah, c) social disdain, d) family disdain, e) government disdain, and f) populist non-elite orientation.

## THE PHENOMENON

I. A Typical Case:

I was born in a middle class family in Tehran, the capital city of Iran. We are not considered a rich family, but so far we have lived a very convenient life. My brothers and I were sent to good primary and high schools and all of us entered universities first at home and later abroad. My father is a retired government employee and my mother is a retired school teacher. Both are educated. From the time that I can remember (around 1955), each of my parents had his/her own weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly social gathering with a certain number of individuals. They called them their friends. I must differentiate between these special gatherings and "family" gatherings. The family socializing occasions were in a completely different category because firstly, the family gatherings were not supposed to be on a regular basis. They were random, or mainly dependent on social occasions, such as the occasions of birth, marriage or death of a relative or the formal ceremonial socializings on special holidays and national or religious observation of particular festivals, etc, while the meetings of each of my parents, respectively, were scheduled to be on a continuous, regular basis. My father, on certain evening during the week, went to meet his hamdowrehiha (the participants in the same dowreh). And each month the same familiar group came to our home at a certain afternoon to spend the evening together. The same pattern was followed by my

mother who had her own circle of friends that met regularly at least once a week. Secondly, as a rule, the family gatherings were "open" to all members of our family and relatives, including the children. The dowreh gatherings of each of my parents, on the contrary, were closed and limited only to each of them and their respective dowreh members. As an strictly observed rule, the children were not allowed to attend their meetings, nor could the husband or wife participate in the other's weekly sessions. My father did not attend my mother's dowreh even when it was held at our home, and my mother refrained from participating in her husband's meetings. Very early in life I learned the meaning of dowreh, its specific rules, and the differences it had with other types of family and friends social gatherings. The special form of dowreh meetings was so much distinguished from other types of socializings, that when in the home of one of our relatives certain members of family decided to form a family-dowreh, they limited the participation in it to some agreed-upon relatives, and "closed" it to others. When I went to highschool some of my class mates began to have their own dowrehs, which in their case depended upon the explicit permission of their parents. Iranian highschool girls are restricted in many aspects of their social life. The conditions, however, are more liberal and relaxed in the westernized city of Tehran and particularly in those schools that have a relatively expensive tuition and therefore limited to middle and upper middle class families. My high school was one of the all girl schools, with basically middle class girls. Some of

those who had more financial resources and more liberal parents could extend their relationships to out of school occasions and thus form their dowrehs. The daughter of an army officer, for example, formed a dowreh of five of her friends after her parents investigated the social background of each would-be-member girl, informed the others' parents, and then provided their own daughter with the necessities of such extra-high-school social activity. I could not become a member of one of these dowrehs because I was not allowed to spend two or three afternoons each week out of home alone. The same pattern of making intimate friendships, turning it into a group friendship and forming dowrehs repeated itself among my classmates in my college years at Tehran University. The difference between dowrehs of highschool girls and dowrehs of university students was basically in the substance of the conversations. The university students were more interested in politics, arts and literature, and their talks very soon turned into hot discussions about important issues of the day. When I met my future husband, at the time a young poet and writer, he was an active member of three different dowrehs, among them a closed circle of young and old intellectuals, poets, writers, translators and social critics. After our marriage, I was able to attend, as a guest and observer, some of the meetings of one of these three dowrehs. While I was very much interested in attending the other two dowrehs and I was eager to be accepted as a permanent member of all three and my husband was willing to take me, and while I was an educated woman, it was not possible for

me to participate in those dowrehs. The main reasons were: a) all three dowrehs consisted only of male members, and b) all members, except my husband, were against the admission of an outsider to their inner circles, male or female. However, before coming to the U.S., three years ago, I had the opportunity to participate in my mother's dowrehs. These were two weekly gatherings, one always took place in my parents' home on Thursday evenings (the night symbolically and traditionally important for the religious Moslems since it precedes Friday, the Moslem Sabbath day), and the other was a regular weekly gatherings of some ten women of my mother status and age, rotating the meeting place in each individual's home.

## II. General Description:

Despite the enormous changes in the basic institutions and social structures of Iranian society and the introduction of modern technology and means of mass communications, many traditional structures, especially those related to the social behavior and social communication of individuals are still functioning in Iran. These traditional institutions and structures not only have survived the process of change, but they have assumed a revived role in contemporary Iranian society because the effective institutions of social and political association and communication are absent. A "dowreh" is an informal group of individuals who enter into an intimate, closed-to-others relationship. This group activity is considered to be on a permanent basis, even if the group disintegrates

after a short period of time. The members of group meet periodically, usually rotating the meeting place among the membership. As a common norm a dowreh meets weekly but some may meet only twice a month, others less often. The group which constitutes a dowreh is a small group, because the usual number of people in any single dowreh does not exceed twenty and it is more often about 8 to 15. The more concrete, recognizable feature of a dowreh is its communicative aspect since the participants use it to discuss, organize and communicate with each other. Clearly, the functions of dowreh as a small group activity are not limited to these. Later, during the course of this investigation, we shall observe that each type of dowreh fulfills different personal and social functions for its membership.

The socio-political significance of dowreh lies in the fact that it is not an isolated phenomenon. The indefinite number of cells of small group informal association are interrelated and interconnected to each other. Rarely an individual confines himself to the membership in one dowreh. The majority, particularly those who are socially or politically active, will go to more than two dowrehs each week. In each single dowreh they assume a different social role and enter into a different type of small group association. What they carry invariably, however, is their information; the social, economic, and political information that is transmitted to them through their communication with their group. Thus, each individual becomes the linkage between several small group

cells, and a social network of dowrehs is created. This social network covers most of the social strata and cuts across different classes. Our research, however, concludes that dowreh is essentially an urban phenomenon and it can not be said that such network pervades rural areas of the country too.

### III. Characteristic Features:

More specifically, the common characteristic features of the social phenomenon of dowreh can be summarized as follows:

1) The group activity, association and pattern of interpersonal relationships is called dowreh when: a) the meeting among the group is on a regular basis, and a presumed permanent duration; b) the membership of the group is limited to a certain number; c) the permanency and regularity of the interpersonal relationships and meeting among the group are recognized and devotedly observed by the members.

2) The dowreh is a group activity. It is a small, more precisely, primary group activity. The group is informal and its relationship is non-associational, if one accepts the Almond's classification of interest groups into associational, institutional, non-associational and anomie.<sup>1</sup> Dowreh, therefore, is not a formally and legally recognized or registered association. It is a group like kinship and neighborhood groups. The individuals who form a dowreh relate and communicate with each other to attain certain socially identifiable goal, or satisfy some psychologically recognizable needs. These

---

1- Gabriel A. Almond & Bringham G. Powell, Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach, (Boston: Little Brown, 1966) P. 75

goals and needs are common to all members.

3) The nature of the relationship in a dowreh is interpersonal. It can be hypothesized that the group activity of dowreh is an extension of the individual's social life, and it is closely related to his/her social status as a member of society, and his/her psychological characteristics as a member of certain groups.

4) The act of association through a dowreh and the acceptance of membership is voluntary. It is only the individual's conscious choice that makes him a member of a dowreh, and not the force of the legal or political institutions. Furthermore, there is no social obligation to make membership in a dowreh inevitable for individuals.

5) The voluntary act of membership in a dowreh is recognized as legitimate both publicly and privately by the society as a whole and by non-members individually. The legitimacy of membership in dowrehs is so much recognized that even the closest relatives do not interfere with such association.

6) Dowreh is a closed group, in the sense that it is a social unit composed of certain number of individuals which does not permit the free participation of others unconditionally. Of course, it is possible for a member to invite an outsider to attend one or two meetings, but the permanent membership in the group and regular participation depends on the agreement of all members.

7) Viewing dowreh from a different angle, it can be said that dowreh is a sociological substructure in the overall social



system. It is a social unit composed of individuals. This substructure is not political or psychological by itself. It assumes different functional roles according to the purposes and social goals for which the group is formed. Thus, dowreh phenomenon has two distinguished features: on the one hand, the internal structure of dowreh, or its behavioral pattern remains unchanged whatever function it assumes. On the other hand, the substance of this structure, or the functions of dowreh change continuously. For instance, the internal structure of a dowreh composed of housewives who discuss their routine concerns is sociologically identical with the internal structure of a dowreh composed of intellectuals with political concerns.

8) While a specific dowreh is internally closed to other members of society and therefore as a social unit it has recognizable "boundaries", it is not an isolated, rigid unit. Like family units that are related to each other and compose the web of a society, each dowreh is related to others through one or more of its members. This characteristic is sociologically and politically significant, since it leads us to the hypothesis that there is a dowreh "social network" in Iranian society.<sup>1</sup> As M.N. Sirinavas and Andre Beteille point out, "a social network can be viewed as a set of concrete interpersonal relations linking the individual to other individuals who are members of diverse systems of enduring groups and categories.

---

1- William G. Miller identifies this as "dowreh system".

Here we represent the network from the viewpoint of the actor, and there are as many networks as there are actors in a social system."<sup>2</sup> We shall discuss this point later. For the moment, it is necessary to recognize that different units of dowreh are connected to each other through their individual members. In the same way that the individual cuts through the boundaries of household, lineage, village, and class so as to form interpersonal relations in the pursuit of his interests, he cuts across the boundary of his dowreh and becomes a member of several dowrehs with different social substances. This creates a web, a social network composed of group cells, in regular and durable interrelation and communication with each other. The concept of social network, of course, implies that the different units are not interrelated hierarchically, or the points of linkages are limited. The concept has a further significance and that is its emphasis on the communication aspect of dowreh network. We shall argue that what makes dowreh network politically distinctive among other networks of personal relationships in Iran is this communicational aspect.

---

1- M. N. Sirivanas and Andre Beteille, "Networks in Indian Social Structure," MAN Vol. 64, (Nov-Dec, 1964) P. 166

## THE TYPES OF DOWREHS

I. In his discussion about social circles, Charles Kadushin asserts that social circle is the major informal mechanism which links power persons and powerful organizations,<sup>1</sup> and concludes that a social circle has three defining characteristics:

1) A circle may have a chain or network of indirect interaction such that most members of a circle are linked to other members, at least through a third party. It is thus not a pure face-to-face group.

2) The network exists because members of the circle share common interests -political or cultural.

3) The circle is not formal -i.e., there are: a) no clear leaders, although there may be control figures; b) no clearly defined goals for the circle, though it almost always has some implicit functions; c) no definite rules which determine modes of interaction, though there are often customary relationships; and d) no distinct criteria of membership.<sup>2</sup>

Kadushin, then, differentiates social circles on the basis of common interests that circle members may have into four kinds of circles: cultural, utilitarian, power and influence, and integrative. Cultural circles "draw members together on the basis of valuational goals such as religion, psychotherapy and other 'philosophies of life'; expressive goals such as literature, art and recreation; and cognitive goals such as

---

1- Charles Kadushin "Power, Influence and Social Circles: A New Methodology For Studying Opinion Makers," American Sociological Review, Vol. 33, No. 5, (Oct, 1968) P. 691

2- Ibid., P. 692

science and technology. "Utilitarian circles are characterized by the need to trade goods and services with other producers in 'external economy' industries such as 'Wall Street', or 'Seventh Avenue' or 'Hollywood'." Power and influence circles are exemplified by those involved in the organization and management of power. Finally, integrative circles are "elaborations of interaction resulting from some common experience such as ethnic membership, wartime experiences, or membership in an occupational community."<sup>1</sup>

To classify different dowrehs on the basis of the shared interests of members is not an easy task. Clearly, there are structural and functional differences between dowreh as a group activity and as a social network and social circles as defined and characterized by Kadushin. A fundamental difference appears when one considers the social contents or the societies in which the two phenomena exist. Social circles discussed by Kadushin are substructures in highly organized, functionally specific, industrialized societies of the West. Dowreh is a substructure in the traditional, functionally diffuse, developing society of Iran. Consequently, although a dowreh can be considered a social circle, its functions and varieties go far beyond those defined by Kadushin.

For analytical purposes, however, we use the four classes proposed by Kadushin and describe some specific examples of these four types. After examining specifically political dowrehs, a description will be given of housewife, friendship,

---

1- Ibid.

recreational, intellectual and religious dowrehs that can be considered among the cultural type. Certain businessmen and technocrat dowrehs may be regarded as utilitarian. There are not specifically integrative dowrehs among those presented here since some of the religious dowrehs fit into that category also.

In this section we present the substance of each type of dowreh. Further explanation will be proposed later.

## II. Political Dowrehs:

1. As it was discussed, the operation of the political system in Iran is mainly through informal structures. Cliques, factions, coteries and other informal group formations provide the main channels of access to power positions. Thus personal relations are of crucial importance for social mobility. Although the Iranian society is highly stratified, it is possible for an individual to move up the ladder of social classes through the network of personal relationships. The formation and increase in the number of factions, cliques and other types of personal alliances has been encouraged by the authoritarian nature of political system, and the insecurity and conflict which it creates. As we observed, a characteristic feature of Iran's political system since 1925 until 1941, and from 1953 until recent crisis is that the formation of all kinds of political associations, parties and interest groups as legitimate channels for political activity has been controlled, hampered and banned by the government. Thus, the dowreh system has assumed major functions in the Iranian political system. Not

only does it provide effective channels for mobility, but it is used as a substitute for some political organizations such as parties. Individuals make their alliances by participating in different dowrehs, and more important, they use various dowrehs as their primary source of political information and communication.

There are numerous cases in which a specific dowreh composed of upper class members has led to a socially significant political organization, such as a party, or action, such as a political movement. It is believed that the constitutional movement in Iran originated in dowreh-like gatherings and secret societies. Miller asserts that most of Iran's political parties before 1953 were expansions of small dowrehs.<sup>1</sup> And it is a known fact that all major parties after 1953 have been the extension of different dowrehs.

Among those dowrehs which have led to political parties two cases are well-known: The Arani Circle and the Progressive Center.

a) Dr. Arani's Circle:

In 1941, shortly after the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran a circle of young Marxist intellectuals in Tehran formed the nucleus of Iran's most important communist party, the Tudeh (Masses) party. Within two years this circle grew into a national movement with considerable following among the intellectuals and the working class. It remained a major political force until its suppression in 1953.<sup>2</sup>

---

1- Miller, Op. Cit.

2- Abrahamian, Op. Cit., P. 291

The majority of those intellectuals who created the original nucleus of communist movement in 1941 were the former members of Dr. Arani's circle, who were just freed from prison.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Taqi Arani was born into an Azeri-speaking middle class family in Tabriz at the turn of the century. He completed one of the few secular schools in the city and left for Tehran. At the height of the anti-British demonstrations after the First World War he entered medical school in Tehran, and very soon he was drawn into the nationalist movement. Arani was strongly influenced by extreme nationalism. "While advocating rapid modernization, he favored the elimination of foreign words from Persian, the revival of Zoroastrian ideals, and the creation of a centralized state, claiming that the Sassanian Empire had such an administration."<sup>2</sup>

After graduating from college in 1922, Arani went to study Chemistry in Berlin. While living in Weimar Republic, he was exposed to socialist ideas. He studied socialist literature, took an active interest in the German left wing, and through it in the exiled communist party of Iran. During his study for his doctorate, he taught Arabic at the university, wrote three short book about Persian literature and attracted around him a circle of fellow Iranian students interested in Socialism. "The European left wing, however, failed to alter

---

1- Sepehr Zabih, The Communist Movement in Iran, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966) P. 64

2- Abrahamian, Op. Cit., P. 294

his nationalistic views of the linguistic issue in Iran."<sup>1</sup>

Arani returned home in 1930, a convinced Marxist determined to introduce and popularize Marxism in Iran. This was made impossible by a 1931 law banning the propagation of Socialism and Communism in Iran. Thus, he and some of his colleagues from Germany formed a dowreh-like secret circle and organized discussion groups. During the meetings, they read and translated socialist classics and prepared articles on the class struggle, historical materialism and the social sciences for their underground journal, Dunya (the world).

In April 1937, after a student strike at the Tehran Technical College, the police uncovered the organization and arrested Arani with fifty-two of his associates. Although some of them were soon released, the group remained famous as "the fifty-three." After sixteen months of intensive investigations, forty-eight of them were brought to trial. Among them "twenty-six had attended higher institutions for learning, six of them West European universities. Professionally, the group comprised two professors, four physicians, three lawyers, one engineer, three high school principals, four high school teachers, eleven civil servants, eight workers, and one peasants. The average age of the intellectuals among them was only thirty seven."<sup>2</sup>

It is known that Arani's followers met in different discussion groups. Thus, it can be said that they could extend their original dowreh into other dowrehs. "More than 65 per-

---

1- Ibid.

2- Ibid.



cent of the circle belonged to the middle class, 15 percent to the upper middle class, and 20 percent to the lower bourgeoisie."<sup>1</sup>

After their arrest, in early January 1938, formal indictments were issued by the prosecutor general of Tehran, and a public trial was held from November 2 to November 13 of that year. All were prosecuted under the Anti-Communist Act of 1931, and were charged with having communist ideas. However, all of the fifty-three denied being communists. Some of the defendants admitted an interest in Marxism, and many confessed to be socialist.

The trial ended with the conviction of the fifty-three defendants. Ten of the leaders received the maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment; the others received terms ranging from three to seven years. Arani himself died in the prison hospital on February 1940, allegedly because of the deliberate negligence of hospital authorities.<sup>2</sup>

On December 18, 1941, only two days after Reza Shah's abdication, twenty-seven of "the fifty-three" were released. Among these, those who had retained their political convictions decided to form a communist party with the title Tudeh (Masses). "The leading personalities in this decision were Arani's colleagues from Europe."<sup>3</sup> Within a year, the Tudeh party in Tehran had grown enough to call its first provincial conference. One hundred and twenty delegates, each representing

---

1- Zabih, Op. Cit, P. 67

2- Ibid., P. 68

3- Abrahamian, Op. Cit, P. 299

ten members in the capital and vicinity, drew up a program for the party and elected fifteen candidates to its provincial central committee. This leadership was given the authority to act as the official central committee of the whole national organization until the convening of the first party congress.<sup>1</sup>

b) The Progressive Center:

Unlike Dr. Arani's circle, the "Progressive Center" was not formed to transform the political system, or educate people to an ideology. The constituting members were all from the upper classes, they believed in the political system and their purpose was to attain power positions. Thus the party which their dowreh was its nucleus, became a system supporting party financed by the government and controlled by the Shah himself.

Shortly after a government sponsored referendum on the Shah's "white revolution" in 1963, rumors spread throughout Tehran political circles that with the advise of the United States State Department and of the C.I.A., a single-party would be created by the Shah.<sup>2</sup> At this time, one of the famous dowrehs of Tehran was the one organized and participated by Hassan Ali Mansur, called Kanun-i-Taraghi (Progressive Center). Apparently, the regular meetings of this dowreh were devoted to discussions on Iran's social and economic problems. But, immediately after the spread of the rumors, the dowreh was further distinguished by being royally chartered as the Economic Research Bureau to the Imperial Court. This symbolized the

---

1- Ibid.

2- Marvin Zonis, Op, Cit, P. 86

intentions of the members of the dowreh. Earlier, Mansur had said that his colleagues would play no role in Iranian politics and his center would develop a proper foundation and become popular. "Apparently, the 'foundation' that Mansur sought was not to be found in mass support. For mass support or even a firm base among the political elite would bear no relation to the fundamental source of political power in Iranian society -the Shahanshah."<sup>1</sup>

After the granting of the royal charter, the Progressive Center, held a rally and Mansur announced that members of the Center could enter the coming elections of the Majles (Iranian Parliament).

Late in the summer of 1963, a government sponsored Congress of "Free Men and Free Women of Iran" was held in Tehran. This Congress proposed a list of 193 candidates to be elected. The list has been prepared by negotiations between Mansur and the Ministry of Interior. Of the 193 candidates, 38 (including Mansur ) were members of Progressive Center. In the subsequent elections all were elected.

Within two months, after the Majles held its first session, 150 of deputies joined the Progressive Center. By December 15, Mansur announced the conversion of his Center into a party called Iran-i-Novin (New Iran). In March 1964, Mansur was called by the king to form a new government. As he predicted earlier, party members did hold all cabinet portfolios, save the ministers of war and foreign affairs.<sup>2</sup> Although,

---

1- Ibid., P. 87

2- Ibid., P. 88

only months after its founding, the Iran-i-Novin party was in control of the cabinet and the parliament, the Shah ordered the formation of other "loyal opposition" small parties.

The members of the Progressive Center dowreh could retain power positions after the assassination of Mansure, because immediately Hoveyda, an intimate friend and colleague of Mansur and one of the founders of the dowreh was appointed prime minister in 1964. The group remained in power more than 13 years. When finally Hoveyda was ordered to resign in 1977, the members of another dowreh occupied the power positions. These individuals were members of an older dowreh called Guruh-i-Iran-i Now (New Iran Group). Two active and influential members of this group, Amuzegar and Ansari became prime minister and minister of finance respectively. Nearly forty percent of the members of the New Iran Group were employed at one time by the United States Point IV Program.<sup>1</sup>

2. It may be argued that rarely there are instances of purely "political" dowrehs since the acts of making political alliances and transmitting political information can be done in other kinds of dowreh gatherings such as friendship or recreational dowrehs. But, in fact, there are specifically political dowrehs as we described earlier.

Marvin Zonis, in his study of the political elite of Iran, presents an "ideal type" of a dowreh in general.<sup>2</sup> But our further research points to the specifically political nature of this dowreh, and therefore we present it here as the "ideal-type" of a political dowreh.

---

1- Bill Op. Cit, P. 47

2- Zonis Op. Cit, PP. 238-239

Zonis gives the names, level of education, age, principal and secondary occupation of the eleven members of one of the oldest political-economic elite dowrehs of Iran. These individuals constitute the core of this old, continuously operating dowreh. Zonis reports that along with four or five others who have joined or left the group over time, the 11 members have been meeting weekly for lunch over twenty-five years. Some of the salient characteristics of these individuals which testify to their common interests are gathered in a table by Zonis:

BIRTH DATE, EDUCATION, AND OCCUPATION OF THE  
MEMBERS OF AN "IDEAL-TYPE" DOWREH

Members	Birth Date	Education	Principal Occupation	Secondary Occupation
M. Namazi	1901	Traditional	Senator	Business
M. Khosrow Shahi	1920	European Commercial	President Tehran Chamber of Commerce	Business
G.H. Khushbin	1898	D. Law Geneva	Minister of Justice	Banking
A.H. Behnia	1907	D. Economics Paris	Minister of Finance	Business
N. Entezam	1889	D. Law Paris	Ambassador to France	Landowner-ship
A. Entezam	1907	Tehran School of Diplomacy	Director National Iranian Oil Co.	Landowner-ship
M. Najmabadi	1894	D. Law Paris	Ambassador to Britain	
A. Ardalan	1910	D. Law Paris	Ambassador to Moscow	
E. Mahdavi	1901	Agricultural College, Germany	Minister of Agriculture	Farming
A. Vakili	1908	License, Paris	Senator	Business
A. Amini	1905	D. Law Paris	Prime Minister	Landowner-ship

(1)

This dowreh has the reputation of being the "french doctorate" group, although some of the members have not been educated in France. The reason for this reputation gives another clue to the foundations of dowrehs in Iran. Usually those who are familiar with a certain culture and have attended higher educational institutions in the country of that culture, form their clique with marked preference for that culture and language. For instance, the above-mentioned New Iran Group is notorious for its Americanism. In the same way, there are Anglophile, Germanophile, and other such groups and dowrehs.

As it is clear from the table presented by Zonis, with few exceptions, the members of this dowreh are all in the same generation and have had similar educational experiences. The members of the dowreh held the important political positions listed in the table within the period of three years in the early 1960s, particularly while Amini was prime minister. It is, therefore, logical that Zonis includes the names of all eleven among the 307 most politically powerful Iranians. The source of this power is explained by the table itself. All eleven individuals are economically strong.

To explain the prevalence of these kinds of groups, Zonis emphasizes their occupations. He quotes a member of the elite as referring to them as "joint stock companies" for the exploitation of the political situation and less frequently of the economic situation."<sup>1</sup>

In zonis' view, such groups are formed "ostensibly on

---

1- Ibid.

non-political grounds" because of the impossibility of overt political activity. The purpose of the group "is the mutual furtherance of the member's careers. These groups may even bind their members to secrecy and mutual aid by oaths or various rituals."<sup>1</sup> The "french doctorate" dowreh, Zonis maintains, is an apt example of this type. Like the examples mentioned earlier, the members of this dowreh "placed" its members in different positions throughout the political structure.

"With the assistance of these representatives, the power of almost all significant sections of that structure can be utilized for purposes of mutual welfare. If some members of the group are in while others are out of power, no one need suffer unduly." <sup>2</sup>

This kind of using dowreh for mutual welfare in Zonis' view, provides Iranian politics with a significant degree of continuity and stability.

"When one of the members of the clique is elevated to a position of political importance, there exists a long established coterie of fellow elites who can be called upon to fill other offices. The premiership is the most vital of these." <sup>3</sup>

Limiting himself to his own dowreh, a new prime minister can choose individuals to hold ministerial portfolios, "men who have known each other, communicated with each other on a relatively intimate basis, and developed a more or less common outlook together for a number of years." <sup>4</sup> However, the practice of placing dowreh members in power positions is not limited to premiership, since similar opportunities arise

---

1- Ibid., P. 240

2- Ibid.

3- Ibid.

4- Ibid.



when one member of the dowreh accedes to any position of administrative responsibility.

3. The Iranian political system is characterized by "tension, conflict and rivalry." The Iranian political elite is distinguished by "manifest insecurity." Both of these features are related to the personal and group relations in dowreh system. As James Bill points out, the dynamics of individual and group relationships intertwine in the dowreh.<sup>1</sup>

Conflict and rivalry pervades the Iranian political system. Thus, tension exists virtually in all power positions in the system. Conflict involves personalities at every level. What intensifies this conflict is the artificially created overlapping and doubling of positions by the Shah who is located at the center of the web of conflict.

"The entire conflict stems from the struggle of the individuals concerned to gain greater favor with the Shah and at the same time to capture more control in the Iranian economic arena." 2

Consequently, all power positions are occupied by individuals "who are profoundly insecure."

"They have all come to realize that royalty, competence, and service do not necessarily insure them of their position, but that becoming too popular or too unpopular or too powerful or too weak are also vital variables..... Former friends and close associates upon gaining important influence in the political elite abruptly become fierce rivals.....Even the incredibly powerful work overtime not only to build their own networks of influence domestically but also to build international ties and supports." 3

The dowreh network provides the structural means of

---

1- Bill, The Politics of Iran, Op Cit, P. 44

2- Ibid., PP. 40-41

3- Ibid., P. 44

mobility and survival of the elite in the political system. Formal organizations, committees, commissions and associations can not operate as such in this system. Fissures, arguments, inactivity, personalism and organizational chaos are what characterize these formal organizations.

"The more subtle, intricate, and complex facets of tension and rivalry do not thrive in a formal setting where votes are counted and minutes recorded. In such organizations, one must take stands, submit to chairmen, presidents, and moderators, cooperate with others one does not really trust, open oneself to much unnecessary criticism, and bind oneself to time schedules, rules and procedures." 1

The dowreh network can be considered as the vehicle through which the rivalries and conflicts pass. During the meetings of a dowreh the important bargaining, negotiating, and decision making takes place.

Furthermore, as Bill observes, the dowreh network keeps many rivalries hidden which lessens dangerous encounters and imbalances. Mechanisms such as dowreh "encourage plotting and omnipresent interlaced antagonism but discourage concentrated and shattering confrontations,"2 In the same way, it weakens and splinters opposition while at the same time covers and hides it. Since most members of classes have their own dowrehs, and these dowrehs are related through linkage points of dowreh network, it may be said that dowreh structure "serves to knit together a class structure that would otherwise be very brittle." 3

---

1- Ibid., P. 45

2- Ibid., P. 48

3- Ibid., P. 49

Zonis, with his emphasis upon the "manifest insecurity" as one of the characteristics of the political elite of Iran, points out that organizing and participation in a dowreh largely stems from the feeling of insecurity among the elite. He quotes Claude and Florence Kluckhohn as saying: "because of the tension of continual struggle for social place, people have tried to gain a degree of routinized and recognized fixity by allying themselves with others in voluntary associations." <sup>1</sup> Dowreh is a voluntary association, and members of the political elite turn to it "to obtain a sense of security in the face of changing social system and more importantly as a base to attain or maintain political power."<sup>2</sup> Membership in a dowreh, as well as multiple job holding,

"are used to provide fallback positions, to offer the elite a variety of access points through which to approach the formal structures of political power, to multiply the elite's communication patterns, to provide contact with a diversity of individuals within and without the elite, and to establish reciprocal obligations with as many individuals representing as diverse sectors of Iranian life as possible. All such motives, in short, center around the acquisition of a sense of security." <sup>3</sup>

4. As we observed earlier dowreh is a social network that cuts across most of the classes and social strata of the society. A major role of the dowrehs in the political system is the communication function that they provide. As Miller points out, in the absence of an independent press, radio or television, dowreh network is one of the most persuasive and rapid means of transmission of political information, ideas

---

1- Zonis, Op, Cit, P. 238

2- Ibid.

3- Ibid., P. 241

or policies.<sup>1</sup> For instance, the political information is rapidly transmitted to the Bazaar merchants through different dowrehs. They, in turn, convey the information to Bazaar associates and customers. Thus, at this point, information becomes the Bazaar "rumor", "which for all its shortcomings is still the most effective means of communication between the elite and the populace as a whole."<sup>2</sup> Through the same means, information about the masses flows up to the elite dowrehs. It is, therefore, possible for the elite to transmit political opinions or gossip from the "high societies" of the north of Tehran, to the mosques, workshops, and tea-houses in the remotest corners of the south Tehran Bazaar within hours and to other cities of Iran, or even the countries outside of Iran within a day or two.<sup>3</sup>

Zonis, in his empirical research gives evidence for the statement that dowreh network is the source of information for the Iranian political elite. Among the three sources from which they most frequently get news about Iranian political and economic affairs, the most frequently cited single source is "other persons," i.e., dowreh members.

5. The relationship between the formal political system and the dowreh network is extremely important. As Bill observes, in times when the pressures of the political system increases, the dowreh network would flourish and would continue to grow and multiply. And at times, the leaders of the formal system

---

1- Miller, Op, Cit, P. 164

2- Ibid.

3- Ibid.

would break up the dowreh network which they would not tolerate.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the leaders of the formal political system have tried to destroy the dowreh network by infiltration. Reza Shah did not like secretive dowrehs. And the present Shah has tried successfully to control, destroy or change the substance of different dowrehs through the medium of his crowded secret police organization. Bill gives an example. "In 1961 eight middle-class Iranian friends and scholars met and formed a dowreh to discuss socio-political issues. They agreed on certain areas of concern and mimeographed a confidential one-page statement presenting their mutual opposition to corruption, injustice and oppression. Each member took a copy and the rest were locked away. Five months later, the Chief of the Secret Police called in one of the men and confronted him with a copy of the statement. It was one of the original eight copies. The dowreh broke up immediately."<sup>2</sup>

But we are not to think that all elite's dowrehs are political. For instance, a deputy minister told me of his non-political dowreh which could be stopped because of political considerations. He told me that they were eight members, all in politically sensitive positions. One, for example, was the head of a department in the Security Organization (SAVAK). They met weekly, and their meetings were strictly non-political in the sense that by agreement they did not discuss any politically significant issue. During their meetings they discussed personal problems and asked each other personal favors; to promote

---

1- Bill, Op. Cit., P. 47

2- Ibid.

a friend or a relative, to block a move by an unfriendly official in Plan Organization, etc. Their personal relationship was based on old friendship. This dowreh is held continuously for more than eight years. Two years ago, it so happened that all the members of the group were outside Tehran, in another city. They could not, therefore, meet according to the scheduled time. The seven members decided to send a telegram to their friend in Tehran. They did send the telegram with their initials under it which formed two Persian words meaning "the king's army". "The king's army" was also the name of the dowreh. However, their friend in Tehran did not receive the telegram. Instead he was interrogated about the meaning of the telegram and the presumed conspiratory group!

### III. Cultural and Integrative Dowrehs:

As we mentioned earlier, Kadushin defines cultural social circles as those which draw members together on the basis of valuational, expressive, and cognitive goals. Integrative circles, in his view, are those based on the interaction resulting from some common experience such as ethnic membership, or membership in an occupational community. While we accept this classification for analytical purposes, we assume that some of the cultural dowrehs may be considered as integrative and ~~vice~~-versa. Because of this we combine these two categories. Thus, a religious dowreh can be viewed both as cultural and integrative.

As examples of cultural and integrative dowrehs we shall describe and analyze these types: housewives, friendship,

recreational, intellectual and religious dowrehs.

1. Housewives Dowrehs:

The term "housewife", of course, is vague and may be interpreted in various ways. It is used here to identify and differentiate a specific form of small group activity of Iranian women. They are regarded as housewives because: a) they do not engage in any official public activity and are not members of any formal association, b) they are not employed by any private or public organization and c) their essential social role is performed as housewives. Included under this category are retired women and those who in spite of having the possibility of being career women, have chosen to stay home.

Housewives' dowrehs are socially important in a society like Iran. The Majority of Iranian women are still illiterate, traditional and living in rural areas. Their social activity is limited to child rearing and working on the farms. The living conditions of urbanized, middle class women is comparatively better. Most of the middle class women are educated, at least to the lower levels of primary and high schools. It is among these urbanized, middle class women that dowreh as a social activity is prevalent. The prevalence of dowreh among them can be explained mainly by the conditions under which they live. Unlike upper class women, a middle class woman cannot find a job outside her home because either she is unskilled or her traditionalist husband does not accept her role as a career woman. Furthermore, the social norms of the society do not allow women to participate in any kind of social activity (such

as membership in clubs or community organizations), or to spend their leisure time by themselves ( such as going to a movie, or dining alone in a restaurant).

In recent years, however, there have been significant changes in the social conditions of Iranian women. They now represent almost one-third of the country's work force and 37 percent of students in colleges and universities. Women can vote, and be appointed to public offices. But, despite these changes, the overall conditions of women in Iran remain unchanged. In many areas still the norms like pre-arranged marriage or the laws such as inheritance laws exist. For instance, an Iranian married woman cannot travel without the written consent of her husband. Or a daughter inherits only half of what a son does from the family estate; a wife inherits only one-eighth of her husband's estate and none of his fixed assets, such as land, etc.

Consequently, a middle class woman cannot extend the range of her social relations beyond family and friend relationships. Most of the time, she is confined to her home. This is true even in the case of educated and socially active women, particularly at the time of their retirement.

Like neighborhood and family group activities, housewives' dowrehs provide excellent opportunities for self-expression, social interaction, and psychological gratification for middle class women. A "typical" Iranian middle class, urbanized housewife usually participates in two or three dowrehs. One may be a family dowreh composed of female relatives. The other may



be a neighborhood dowreh composed of female neighbors. Finally, the third one is usually a dowreh comprised of old friends, or the wives of husband's colleaugues.

Examples: Mrs. Karimi is a retired teacher. At the moment of interview she has two dowrehs. While she was young and active she participated in at least four dowrehs a week. One of her present dowrehs is a reminisc~~ent~~ of those day. This dowreh has continued to meet regularly over the past twenty years. The core members are six individuals who met each other while working in the same school. During the past years, some members were added to the group and then withdrawn. All six members are educated. The range of their family income is more or less equal. All are married, and know each other's husbands. Their dowreh, however, is not open to their husbands' participation.

As in the past, their weekly gathering is spent talking, drinking tea and eating snacks or food. Their discussions are centered around personal problems, their activity during the previous week, their relationship with their husbands and children, etc. They also discuss rumors and gossips.

The second dowreh is completely different from the first one. It is a monthly gathering. The meeting place does not rotate among the membership, it is always at the home of Mrs. Karimi. The core membership of this dowreh is composed of 16 women. Six of these are relatives, five are neighbors and the other five are friends. But participation in this dowreh is not limited. The meetings are open to the female friends and relatives of the participants. The reason for the openness of

this dowreh is its special character. It is mainly a religious dowreh. Or, more exactly, it is a dowreh whose meetings are divided into two phases. The first phase is strictly religious and the rituals of the meetings are in accordance with the common religious meetings called Rawze. A Rawze is a sermon session during which one or few Moslem preachers each talk about an hour for the audience. The sermon of each preacher ends with a rite of mourning for a few minutes. Mrs. Karimi holds this Rawze every month because it gives her moral and psychological satisfaction and is in accordance with her religious obligations.

The first phase of each meeting of the dowreh starts with the arrival of the preacher. All participants sit around the room on the floor covered with a carpet. The preacher, an old Mullah enters the house, goes directly into the room, sits on the only chair prepared for him. He is the only male present. All others are female and they have wrapped themselves in the traditional Iranian veil, Chador. The mullah talks for an hour about social problems, the religious issues, and the life and behavior of Shi'ite saints. When he reaches to the last few minutes of his sermon, he begins to raise his voice and sings the eulogies about the prophet's family and Shi'ite Imams. While he sadly reminds the audience of the sufferings of the Shi'ite Saints, women begin to mourn and show their sympathy with crying and beating themselves. They cry, weep, scream and beat themselves for about five to ten minutes. Then the preacher lowers his voice and starts praying. The audience

stops mourning and joins the prayer. After a few minutes of praying the ritual ends. The preacher leaves the house immediately. His departure signals the beginning of the second phase. Usually the outsiders leave too. Those who remain, including the 16 core members, put their Chadors away, and start talking, drinking tea, and eating fruits, etc. The mood always turns into a joyous and happy one. Some start telling jokes and every one laughs. Then, the most able starts singing popular songs and someone begins dancing, while others collaborate by clapping!

I asked Mrs. Karimi whether she sees any contradiction in the different phases of this dowreh. Her answer was negative. She said that religiously the joyous session was legitimate. It was the logical phase after a mourning session. In her view most of the participants came to the first part because they wanted to "pour out" some of their emotional problems through mourning and screaming. The second phase was a necessary consequence of the first, because all women were then, at least for the moment, calm and emotionally happy. Her explanation, in technical language can be restated as : the first phase of the group meeting provides a situation for collective psychological "catharsis". The second phase, provides for the reestablishment of a normal recreational situation and the demonstration of psychological gratification.

## 2. Friendship Dowrehs:

Perhaps the most common type of dowreh is a friendship dowreh. It may be said that the pattern of a friendship dowreh

is inbuilt almost into all other types of dowreh, since a dowreh begins with the establishment of strong personal ties between individuals. But what differentiates a friendship dowreh from other types is its substance. While other dowrehs evolve to assume different functions, the functions of a friendship dowreh does not change over time. The basic interest shared by all members is the personal ties of friendship. The group meets regularly to enhance these ties. The members are satisfied by the psychological gratification they attain through interpersonal communication and group identification. There is not, in a "typical" friendship dowreh, any purposes beyond personal communication. This is perhaps one of the reasons of the permanence of such dowrehs. A friendship dowreh usually begins in highschool or college and survives throughout the lives of members. The majority of middle and upper class members have their friendship dowrehs in one form or another.

Examples:

A wealthy, educated young woman who has spent the last 12 years working as an executive secretary for various cabinet ministers, and is married to a famous gynecologist, told me that she has regularly participated in her friendship dowreh for the past 15 years. The 10 members are all ladies of upper class origin. They all met and established intimate relations with each other during their highschool education at a famous French school in Tehran. She said that their dowreh meets weekly. Although members are married to politically influential men, the dowreh is basically non-political. They meet only

to know about each other, to talk about their private problems, and to consult one another. All the members are, of course, female and in the same age group. Over the past 15 years, they observed one rule strictly; not to expand membership or allow any outsider to participate in the dowreh, not even their husbands.

This woman's husband has his own weekly dowreh, which is recreational, i.e., it is a gambling dowreh.

Another kind of friendship dowreh was the one participated by an intellectual. He said that over the past ten years he meets regularly with a certain number of his friends once a week. They are 12 individuals; 4 of them are university professors, 2 are publishers, one is a lawyer, 3 are state employees and 2 are businessmen. In fact, he said they do not have much in common. What binds them together is personal ties developed during their highschool and college period. They meet because they want to see each other, to discuss their personal problems and help one another.

### 3. Recreational Dowrehs:

Recreational dowrehs are those social gatherings which are basically for the satisfaction of a physical or psychological need, hobby or habit. There are many variations of this kind of dowreh in Iran; the most notorious are gambling dowrehs and sexual (orgy-type) dowrehs.

Gambling, drinking alcoholic beverages and extra-marital sexual relationships are all prohibited by Islamic laws. The upper classes however, meet regularly to fulfill these desires.

a). Gambling dowrehs are the most prevalent type of recreational dowrehs. Not only there are special houses and clubs for this purpose, but each group, especially among the elite, has its own dowreh, including the Shah himself. The number of members in such a dowreh depends on the type of gambling. Usually, poker games are the most common. The gynecologist mentioned above, every week meets five other doctors, and the meeting place rotates. They gather only for the purpose of gambling. The amount of money that circulates at each session is sometimes astonishing, often more than \$10,000. The membership in these dowrehs is strictly limited, since a certain level of mutual trust is an absolute necessity. If someone loses a large sum of money, this must remain confidential since there are numerous cases that when the case becomes known, some unwanted troubles follow. For instance, the middle and lower classes begin rumors about the amount of the wealth of the loser, which is not socially favorable in Iran, because even very rich people tend to hide their wealth.

Gambling also occupies a major part of family dowrehs. Some families gather every week and men and women start gambling for a whole day or night while children play.

b) Drinking and Opium Smoking is another type of recreational dowreh. Since drinking is prohibited by Islam, the way that most Iranians drink is different from Western people. By social norms, drinking in itself is a socially unacceptable act. Not only it is limited to adults, but by norms, it is regarded essentially as a masculine habit. Women are absolutely

prohibited by social norms to drink, even though many middle and upper class women do drink in fact, but usually in a European fashion, i.e., having a light drink like a beer or wine during or after dinner. Men, however, generally drink in groups and in large amounts. In a typical drinking session, men sit together. Before having lunch or dinner, they start drinking vodka or beer (not wine) and talk. They continue drinking during and after the meal until the day or night is over and they are drunk. Then everyone leaves. We must point out that the capacity to drink unlimited amounts of alcoholic beverages without getting drunk is a sign of prestige and during the session everyone pretends not to be drunk, sometimes to the point of being sick. The substance of talks, of course, is routine business, gossip and rumors, jokes and politics.

Opium smoking dowrehs are performed in the same pattern. Opium was introduced to the Iranian upper classes in the 19th century, but it rapidly grew into a national habit. Although the government has banned its use in all forms, it is estimated that there are half a million opium addicts in Iran, mostly of the old generation.

Whether opium smoking is a personal individual addiction or not, the act of smoking is usually a social habit, and the addiction of young people begins in the dowreh-like smoking social gatherings.

The way that Persians smoke opium also shows its social nature. There must be large amounts of burning charcoal and one or two pipes. The host puts the burning charcoal in a

specially designed flat piece of metal, in the middle of the room. The guests sit in a circle around it. The hostess, usually the lady of the house, brings tea and nuts and pastries and other snacks. Then, the most respected, usually the oldest, starts smoking by a special pipe and then, the pipe goes around. After two or three rounds, everyone is in a state of relaxation and happiness. Then they start talking; discussing political, social issues, or personal problems. It is important to have in mind that the way the Persians smoke opium does not cause hallucination for the smoker. The state of mind, in the words of one smoker, is "relaxed and clear, ready to concentrate but unable because of the euphoria-like feeling of the soul." This, apparently is a different feeling from the feeling one experiences by using other kinds of drugs. Also one must be aware that the stereo-type of an opium smoker in Iranian culture is totally different from, say, the stereo-type of a heroin addict in the U.S. Iranians do not look at an opium smoker as a criminal.

Since in recent times the use of opium is prohibited by law, the smoking dowrehs are more common, especially among the intellectuals and youngsters. The addiction to opium, however, is socially unacceptable.

c. The sexual dowreh is not too common, but there are different varieties of it throughout Iran, especially in Tehran and cities like Isfahan. Sex, like alcohol and gambling is a taboo in the Iranian culture. Traditionally in cities like Isfahan, where religious norms are very strong, there has been



weekly dowrehs that were a combination of all three. It is still a social habit of the rich Isfahanis (usually Bazaaris) to have their "drinking-smoking-sex" dowrehs. A member of one of these dowrehs described it as follows: A homosexual tendency among Isfahanis is well known. Thus, many rich Isfahani men have their secret lover boy, since the homosexual tendency assumes a particular child loving nature in Iran. Men, however, usually marry early, but they continue to search for the opportunity to sleep with a prostitute. (Prostitution formally does not exist in religious cities like Isfahan). The special dowreh is composed of 20 or more mutually trustful members, who are either merchants of the Bazaar themselves, or young sons of the Bazaaris, or favored people in the Bazaari Community. They know each other pretty well, i.e., they know their families, friends, social habits, etc. And they trust each other totally, in the sense that none of the talks or events of dowreh becomes socially known to outsiders. The place of the meeting is in a villa outside the city. Thus, the social habit assumes the expression of going to the Bagh (garden). It is important to notice that the meeting does not take place in the city, or in the home of one of the members. Also, we must bear in mind that the wives of these men know about the dowreh and whatever happens there and whether they agree or not, they do not protest, since it is socially permitted.

The meetings usually starts at 10 in the morning, when all members have arrived. A group of servants are present to help every one. Also one or two cooks are at work. The

villa has at least three large rooms. Everyone is male. Sometimes, however there are one or two prearranged prostitutes present. To an outsider, young and old men are all well dressed and well behaved. They all sit around the room. But only an insider knows that most of the men who sit next to each other are emotionally and sexually attached. The most respected sit at the best location, usually upper side of the room. Everyone sits on the floor covered with carpets.

At first, tea and snacks are served by the servants. The talks begin. Mostly they are about politics and business. Then, after two or three hours, the lunch is served in another room. Immediately before and after lunch, the drinking of alcoholic beverages begins in the same manner that was described earlier. Interestingly enough, not every one would drink. Some are very religious and they start their daily prayer in another room. However, opium and hashish are not strictly prohibited by Islam. Thus, after lunch the smoking procession starts. Large sums of hashish first, and then opium must be consumed by everyone present. We said must, because any act of rejection will be interpreted as a sign of rejection of participation in the whole group activity and breach in mutual trust and confidence. After one or two hours of smoking and drinking, if prostitutes are available, the willing persons go to another room for sexual act. Notice that the act is done in private and not in front of the others. Sometimes, there is a boy prostitute. Those, who have come with their lovers, start love making in another room.

With the arrival of the night, the participants depart one by one. The next morning, when the same people confront each other in the Bazaar, they behave in the normal business fashion. For instance, a young boy whose private role in the previous day's dowreh was to be the lover of a famous Bazaari merchant, now in the Bazaar acts as a service boy for the same person on strictly contractual, publicly recognizable basis.

In recent years some members of upper classes, especially young Western educated ones, have their own version of this "drinking-smoking-sex" dowreh, with two distinctive differences; the members are not all male, and membership is mixed. At the same time, the sexual act is not necessarily limited and performed in private, i.e., it is in the form of an "orgy". A girl who is graduated from Sorbone University in Paris and now is a high official in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has described for me her initiation into one of these dowrehs. She said that after returning from France, and after her appointment to an official position in the Ministry, she started to see her old high school friends. Very soon she became a member of three different friendship dowrehs. But it was one of her colleagues in the Ministry, a middle-aged, unmarried, culture Francais man, who invited her to one of their "library-meetings" on every Thursday afternoons. After lunch, around two in the afternoon, they went to a very expensive, nicely decorated apartment in Shemiran. (The northern part of Tehran where rich families live in expensive houses). This apartment was called "library" by the man. There, she saw some of her young and old

colleagues and officials of the Ministry, all from old aristocratic and new rich families. There were not any procedural ceremonies. The apartment was large and had many rooms in addition to two bars. A table showed large amounts of hashish, marijuana, cocaine and if someone needed, L.S.D. Opium was also provided in another room. After two hours the weekly games of lesbianism, stripping, and bottle-playing began.

There are also notorious, Western-type homosexual dowrehs in Tehran.

#### 4. Religious Dowrehs:

Many religious Moslem Persians, men and women, have their own specifically religious dowrehs. In these gatherings, always limited to one sex, the members read Koran, discuss problems of religion or argue about social and political events from the point of view of religion. Since religion is a crucial aspect of Iranian life, religious dowrehs are numerous and vary according to the particular religious inclinations of each group.

There are mystical religious dowrehs. Persia is the home of one of the great traditions of mysticism in Islam. The Persian literature and philosophy provide an abundant source of mystical expressions and experiences. But, there are also many living mystics who do not concern themselves with texts. They are living symbols, and indeed charismatic spiritual leaders of large numbers of devoted followers. Every spiritual leader claims to be a direct descendant of one of the Imams, or particularly a descendant of the Prophet, or Imam Ali.

Mysticism is prevalent particularly, among the old members of upper classes and many of them belong to different mystical sects, founded by a dervish, dead or living.

A typical upper class "religious-mysticist" dowreh meets every Friday from morning to night. The spiritual leader sits at the upper side of the room and the followers sit "under his feet". Their meeting starts with kissing the hands of the leader, listening to his sermon and talking about their own problems and experiences. Since the membership in such dowrehs would entitle the member to all potential favors from other members, the membership is very strict and each dowreh creates an aura of secrecy around itself.

Another kind of religious dowreh is a more pragmatic, non-mystical type. Generally, the members of these dowrehs, regard mysticism as a corruption in Islam. They are fundamentalist and dogmatic, sometimes militant and their sessions easily turns into political meetings. These dowrehs are participated by the middle and lower class groups. Some of these dowrehs, while preserving the core membership, and keeping regularity of meetings among the core group, extend the religious meeting to willing participants. Thus, they create a kind of religious "teach-in" group. The meetings are open to non-members and are advertised by flags and written papers. These groups are one of the communicational grass root organization of powerful Iranian religious leaders called Ayatullah.

But religious dowrehs are not only Islamic. Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews and Bahais have their own dowrehs. Famous among these are Bahais' regular meetings which are secretive

from the fear of persecution and the membership is mixed. Not only religious discussions are part of each meeting, but politics and personal problems are talked about also.

We must however, differentiate between these "dowrehs" and other secret or manifest religious gatherings in Iran. There is, for instance, a religious gathering we described called Rawze, which generally takes place in the house of a wealthy person. Every month, especially during the religiously important months of Ramazan and Moharram, wealthy Bazaaris provide for ten or fifteen consecutive nights of religious sermons by different Islamic priests (Mullahs). The participation is open to everyone, men and women, and it is not a limited group activity.

#### 5. Intellectual Dowrehs:

We described "the fifty-three" members dowreh. It began as an intellectual dowreh. In the same manner, writers, poets, social critics, artists and intellectuals have their own dowrehs, which in at least one case, has turned into a formal association with articulate aims and a constitution, that very soon was opposed and banned by the government.

A typical intellectual dowreh is described by one member as follows: the original core group was composed of a Western educated linguist and translator, a writer and a modern poet. These in turn initiated about 10 young students and 5 other intellectuals. The meeting place was at the home of the poet. Every week, Thursday afternoons, the group met. After discussing the social and political issues, the group concerned itself mainly with literature. Each week a new book was read by

all members and it was discussed by the group. Then a new work, translated or written by a member during the previous week was read, criticized and discussed. This particular dowreh was basically concerned with literature, mainly Western.

Another intellectual dowreh, and a common kind, is a teaching dowreh. A member told me that their group was composed of 5 members, two of them university professors and Western educated. Other three had degrees from Tehran University. They met weekly to learn Islamic philosophy being taught by a friend educated in Islamic philosophy and literature.

#### IV. Utilitarian Dowrehs:

There are numerous types of dowrehs, especially among the economically active and among the new social strata called technocrats, that can be identified as utilitarian. Earlier we mentioned that Kadushin defines utilitarian social circles as those that are formed for the enhancement of economic purposes such as "Wall Street" or "Hollywood" clubs. Our description of utilitarian purposes follows the same definition. Since the articulation of interests through formed associations is not functionally useful for the economically active groups in Iran, they organize in small, professional, non-formal associations with the clear intention of articulating and promoting their group interests. These informal dowrehs may be regarded as the Iranian type of economic "pressure groups." Small business groups, lawyers, doctors, engineers, and many other professional groups each have their own utilitarian dowrehs. These dowrehs differ from political and friendship and cultural dow-

rehs in two fundamental aspects; first, the membership in them depends on the social status of individual, his economic position and his professional skills. Second, the meetings are generally spent on discussions about specific economic or professional issues.

Examples:

A typical dowreh of Iranian Bazaari merchants consists of eight socially recognized and famous merchants of the Tehran Bazaar. These individuals are organized because of their mutual economic concerns. They are all respected in the Bazaar business community. The average age of the group is 56. Five of them are dogmatically religious. Three are more liberal. Over the past twenty years they have continuously and regularly met every Friday afternoon. The meeting place rotates among the membership. While they regard each other as "friends", they do not discuss personal problems. During their meeting every development in the business community is discussed. They talk about politics too. But politics is not their concern. In fact, over the years they have developed a kind of unwritten agenda for each week. At the beginning of every meeting, everyone describes his concerns about the economic situation. Then they proceed to plan their future actions. Sometimes, the group talks about specific issues, such as the new economic policies of the government or the fluctuations in the supply and demands.

This dowreh is linked to seven other Bazaar dowrehs through its members. It is interesting to know that the political and cultural orientation of these seven dowrehs are in many aspects



different from the original one. Each of the five religious members of original dowreh participate in five strictly religious dowrehs in which the business community adjusts its economic policies with the demands of religious leaders. Two of the more liberal members of the original dowreh participate in political dowrehs. One of them told me that in his political dowreh he meets with a former member of the officially banned Tudeh party, an old member of aristocracy, a landlord, and an intellectual who is an active member of the opposition movement called the National Front (a loose federation of followers of former prime minister Dr. Mossadegh).

Another example of utilitarian dowrehs, is a dowreh comprised of six industrialists whose main hobby is stockpiling expensive Persian carpets and antiques. They meet every two week on Thursday afternoon in the house of their oldest (and wealthiest) member. He is not only active in business and politics, but is an unofficially recognized trader of carpets. Before Second World War he was a landlord. After 1950 he moved into industry. Now he owns several textile factories. Over the past 25 years he has been able to stockpile over 500 precious Persian carpets in his warehouse in the northern Tehran. His basic instrument to find and buy these carpets has been his dowreh.

These six men participate in various political and recreational dowrehs, but their "carpet-antique dowreh" is strictly devoted to discussing any issue related to carpets or antiques. All members have known each other more than 30 years, and they

never engage in any trade of carpet or antique without consulting with dowreh members.

There are many examples of "antique buyers and dealers" dowrehs all over Iran, particularly in Isfahan, Shiraz and Mashhad. An old landlord-aristocrat told me that in fact, participating in this kind of dowreh is a necessary means to be in the business of carpets and antiques. He said that special antique dowrehs form a network, an unofficial and strictly controlled market all over Iran. Thus, if a wealthy individual wants to buy a famous carpet or antique in Mashhad, he will be able to find what he wants in thousands of miles away in a small village in the south, with the assistance of members of dowrehs in different areas. In the same way, if an antique piece is "discovered" in a remote village in the south, all interested persons will be informed in a short period of time and the price will be set for the piece.

Another example of utilitarian dowrehs is a dowreh comprised of 5 Tehrani dentists. They are all educated in the U.S. They have met regularly for the past six years every week. During their meeting they have specified their areas of specialization, regardless of their degree. For instance, they have agreed that only two of them should perform surgery. Thus, they have been able to determine the monthly, "quotas" of patients, each of them would treat. When a patient goes to see one of them, if his quota is completed by the end of the month he "hands over" the patient to the one with less number of patients.

NOTES ON SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL  
ASPECTS OF DOWREH

I. Is dowreh a group activity limited to certain classes or social strata in Iranian society? The answer is a qualified yes. We cannot, empirically, hypothesize that dowreh is only a middle or upper class habit. One characteristic, however, should be emphasized which is that dowreh is an urban phenomenon. It is well-known that Iranian society has been and to a large degree still is, an agricultural society. The country is not industrialized yet and the reforms of the government, after 1960, has not transformed the traditional social structure of Iran. But urbanization in Iran is not a modern phenomenon, although the modern cities developed in recent times.

Iran has witnessed the growth and decline of large and heavily populated cities throughout her long history. Max Weber was among the first social scientists who observed the importance of cities in oriental societies. In modern times, the old pattern of village-city has survived. The Iranian village was a small isolated, usually self-sufficient unit. The cities, on the other hand, were the center of artisans, merchants, and the residence of landowners with their guilds and quarters. After land reform in Iran, the pattern has not drastically changed. The villages are still separated from urban areas, and the city dwellers are still the strata usually identified as middle and upper classes. And every city still has its special professional "quarter", and non-official guilds. The number of city population, however, is growing by the

increase in the number of workers and other urban laborers.

We do not observe the dowreh network in the villages. Probably because generally the number of the population of each village is too large, and the work patterns do not permit sufficient leisure time.

But even in the cities, the dowreh network cannot be assumed to extend enough to include all segments of the city population. This is because the membership of a dowreh depends on at least two material preconditions: On the one hand the individual must enjoy a certain level of financial security and he/she must be able to afford the costs of arranging a social gathering at his/her home on a regular basis. On the other hand, a certain amount of leisure time is a necessary condition for participating or having dowrehs. Thus, we can exclude the members of lower classes such as working class from those strata who usually participate in dowrehs. Consequently, the number and variations of dowreh will increase by going up the social ladder, i.e., from lower middle class to upper classes.

What can be assumed to be the linkage point between dowreh network and other social structures in Iranian society is a different form of social intercourse (hence, a different social phenomenon) in the cities and the villages, i.e., the social habit of gathering daily or weekly in the tea-houses, mosques and the homes of wealthy persons. Not only each occupational group (guilds), like painters or construction workers, have their own meeting place, in a teahouse or a mosque, but mainly because of religious duties, as we mentioned earlier, groups meet, at least weekly or monthly, in the home of a rich,

religious individual. Since many individual members of different dowrehs participate in the social gatherings in tea-houses, mosques or various houses, the dowreh network becomes connected with other groups and strata in society. These linkage points are important because the interpersonal communication provides for the channels of flowing information, particularly for the flow of political information.

It has been observed that political rumors play an important communicational role in Iranian society, and that there are recognizable lines of the flow of information from upper classes to lower ones. It is through dowreh network and its linkages with other segments of society that the center of political power becomes related to periphery; it is also through these channels that political communication between ruling elite and the mass of population occurs. These channels also provide the possible roads of social mobility. Many members of lower classes have been able to move upward through these channels.

II. Undoubtedly, dowreh is not a modern social phenomenon in Iran. It is rooted in Iranian history and culture. But the ever intensifying process of industrialization of the country is disintegrating the old patterns of culture and social behavior. Not only the culture of the peasants is in the process of transformation, but the cultural patterns of urban life is changing every day. With the growth of modern cities and the intensification of the process of urbanization, social patterns such as extended family are forced to disintegrate.

In the same way, many traditional social phenomena in Iran are deeply influenced by industrialization and urbanization. It can be hypothesized that many traditional formations of dowreh system are either destroyed by modern developments or are in the process of structural change. Such behavioral patterns as intimate relationship, and face-to-face interaction depend on geographical proximity which is not compatible with the demands of an industrialized economy. Like family relations, the group relations based on geographical proximity cannot remain unchanged in an economy which mobilizes individuals and scatters them continuously in different areas. Furthermore, the introduction of modern means of communication such <sup>as</sup> radio, television, modern forms of association such as impersonal participation in clubs, and modern ways of life, etc., all destroy the very social conditions upon which the dowreh network have operated. However, one cannot exaggerate the impact of modernization on the traditional aspects of social life in Iran because the essential structure of Iranian social life has not changed yet. We mean, of course, the political system of Iran. Not only the operation of politics has remained basically traditional, but the stifling policies of the government have revived the traditional patterns of communication. It seems that the dowreh network has flourished in recent years. Perhaps it will survive into predictable future unless the political system encourages the formation of associations and free participation of individuals in the system.

III. It is possible to document the existence of dowreh

network in the past two hundred years of Iranian history. And, consequently, it can be hypothesized that the phenomenon of dowreh has deep historical roots in Iranian society. The attempt to document the historical roots of dowreh is not too successful because there does not exist too many studies of historical sociology of Iran.

In the past two hundred years, during the reign of Qajar dynasty, many members of upper classes had their weekly and monthly dowrehs, the most famous among them, the political, religious and intellectual ones.

Ann Lambton maintains that various forms of secret societies have always existed in Islamic Persia. The Persians by forming secret societies have sought to obtain their political and social rights:

"Through membership of these secret societies and indulgence in covert activities the Persians experienced a satisfaction and sense of achievements and purpose often denied to them in other fields." 1

Consequently, the first impact of the West was felt through the informal dowrehs of intellectuals and reformers; and secret societies "have played no small part in the early phases of the movement for westernization and modernization, which led up to the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-6." 2

The Qajar dynasty came to power with the assistance of Turkish tribal forces and continued to depend heavily upon them. The despotic rulership of Qajar kings continued without

---

1- Ann K. S. Lambton "Secret Societies and the Persian Revolution of 1905-1906," St. Antony's Papers, No. 4 Middle Eastern Affairs, No. 1 1958

2- Ibid.

a major challenge until the religiously motivated movement against the concession of a Tobacco Monopoly to an English Company took place in 1891-1892.<sup>1</sup> As Lambton observes, this revolt was primarily against the misgovernment of the Shah.<sup>2</sup> People's discontent finally had been crystallized in the belief that the monopolies and concessions granted by the Shah to foreigners were a threat to Islam and the independence of Iran. About three decades earlier, Iranian intellectuals and reformers who were not religious, but were dissatisfied with the conditions of the country began to meet and organize in secret. One of the first group of these "modernizers" became notorious as a freemason party, and their lodge was called Faramushkhaneh. It is alleged that a number of those who later became the leaders of the constitutional revolution were among the members.<sup>3</sup> The foundation of the first Faramushkhaneh was attributed to Mirza Malkum Khan who was in favor of absolute westernization and the adaption of European ways of life. A number of prominent officials and bureaucrats are reputed to have been members of the group, and it is alleged that even the king himself, Nasir ud-Din had contacts with it. But eventually he became suspicious of the whole secretive society and in 1891 a notice appeared in the official gazette banning it. The group, however, continued its activities under a different name. Towards the end of Nasir ud-Din Shah's reign, the forma-

---

1- See for example, Nikki R. Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891-92, (London: Frank Press & Co., 1966)

2- Lambton, Op. Cit., P. 47

3- Ibid.



tion of secret and semi-secret groups flourished. The semi-secret groups became known as anjuman-ha-i milli (nationalist societies). These anjumans were indeed discussion groups organized to learn and discuss the liberation of the people from despotism and the benefits of freedom, justice and education. "Discontent with the existing conditions and a belief in modernization were the two things that held their members together."<sup>1</sup> With the passing of time, these societies became increasingly nationalist and made use of the new forces of nationalism in their struggle to overthrow the despotism. Nasir ud-Din was assassinated in 1896 by a member of one of these anjumans. A significant characteristic feature of these anjumans was their relations with the Shi'ite religious leaders called Ulama. And Ulama increased their influence upon the mass of people through their followers.

The secret societies were not limited to the capital city. In Tabriz, Kerman, Isfahan and other cities the secret groups formed to enlighten the people. Two members of a secret society in Tabriz, composed mainly of religious and merchant classes, founded, shortly before the outbreak of the Constitutional Revolution, a library which became the meeting place of the supporters of reform and modernization.<sup>2</sup> Anjumans were also formed in foreign countries such as Turkey and Iraq.

In 1901 there were social unrest in Tehran and by 1903 opposition to the government became more open. In 1904, some

---

1- Ibid., P. 49

2- Ibid., P. 52

of the various groups which had been meeting independently came to the conclusion that time was ripe to collaborate with others for the overthrow of the despotism. A secret meeting of some sixty persons was held in May 1904. The majority of the group belonged to the religious class, but it also included merchants, members of craft guilds, members of the bureaucracy, two Zoroastrians, and a tribal leader.<sup>1</sup> The present individuals "took an oath on the Koran to preserve the secrets of the group and to strive for the establishment of a code of laws and justice and the overthrow of the rule of tyranny and injustice."<sup>2</sup> After speeches made by members, a program of action, consisting of eighteen articles, was drawn up and a revolutionary committee of nine persons appointed. At about the same time, another secret society, Anjuman-i Makhfi formed to organize people for revolution. In April 1905, a group of merchants sought sanctuary in a religious shrine called Shah Abd ul-Azim to protest the conduct of a Belgian who was the director of the Customs Administration. This led to subsequent events of the revolution.

Even through this short account of the background of Constitutional Movement in Iran, the social and political significance of dowreh network becomes clear. In fact, as Lambton observes, "there was no other agency by which, in the existing circumstances, this preparation could have been carried through."<sup>3</sup>

As we observed earlier, the pattern of secret group activity

---

1- Ibid., P. 53

2- Ibid.

3- Ibid., P. 60

was repeated during Reza Shah's reign. Also, many groups who opposed the present government organize and meet secretly through their dowrehs.

It may be hypothesized that whenever the political system increases the pressure over the population, the dowreh network flourishes, at the moment that the system allows the free formation of political organizations, many political dowrehs will transform into formal associations. This happened during Reza Shah and immediately after his abdication in 1941.

At present, the dowreh network is an indispensable part of the political system of Iran.

## APPENDIX A.

## A NOTE ON IRAN'S SOCIAL PROFILE

Iran is one of the oldest countries in Asia. The overall size of the country is 628,000 square miles, or about one-fifth of the United States. It is on the same latitude as, and roughly equal in extent to, the States of Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado and New Mexico combined and has, incidentally, about the same population.<sup>1</sup> (In 1966 more than 25 million, in 1978 estimated 35 million).

In the north Iran shares the same borders with the Soviet Union (The Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea, and the Soviet Socialist Republic of Turkmenistan). In the east Iran is bounded by Afghanistan and Pakistan; in the south by Persian Gulf, and in the west by Iraq and Turkey. In the past, the Persian Empire included the whole of the Caucasus, the greater part of Turkemenistan and Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, northern India as far as Delhi, and large areas of present-day Iraq and Turkey, including Baghdad, Mosul, Erzerum and Trebizond.

Present-day Iran has inherited from the past an unusually heterogenous country from every point of view.<sup>2</sup> Topographically and climatically it includes high mountain ranges, vast deserts, tropical low lands, and hot dry plains near the Persian gulf. The major limiting factor to economic growth is water resources, with only about 13 percent of the country's

---

1- L. P. Elwell-Sutton, A Guide To Iranian Area Study, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: J.W. Edwards Publisher, 1952) P. 6

2- John K. Friesen and Richard V. Moore , IRAN, Country Profiles, A Publication of the population council, October 1972, P. 1

land cultivable. At present, approximately one-third of this land is under cultivation<sup>1</sup>, even though the economy is basically agricultural and not industrialized. The fertile and populous areas of the country lie for the most part along the lower slopes of the mountain ranges.

Socially, the country is as diverse and heterogenous as it is geographically. A substantial portion of the population is of Turkish, Arabic, Caucasian, or central Asian origin. Although Farsi (Persian) is the official language, and the centralization policies of government has made it the only language taught at schools all over the nation, Iran's rich ethnic mosaic sustains the use of many other languages and dialects which are the distinguishing characteristics of nationalities. In northern province of Azerbaijan the population is mainly Turki (Azeri)-speaking. To the south are the Kurdish tribes, and beyond them the Lur tribes with their own language and costumes. In the south there is Khuzistan where the population is Lur, Persian, and mostly Arab. In the central provinces, the Bakhtiari tribes live to the west of Isfahan, and further to the southeast are the Turkish Qashqai and the Arab-Turkish Khamesh tribes. The Persian Gulf coastal population is a mixture of Arab and Persian with a small negro community. The eastern provinces have also a mixed population, predominantly Baluchis, Arabs, Turks and Afghans. In Khorasan there are large Turkoman tribes,

The chief minority communities in the country are the

---

1- Ibid.

Armenians, the Jews, and the Assyrians.

The diversity in natural conditions and the composition of population, is also reflected in Persian culture, history and pattern of social development. The economic, social and cultural manifestations of "uneven development" can be seen all over Iran. At one extreme are the nomads, still numbering more than 15 percent of the population and at the other extreme the westernized and sophisticated elite concentrated at the capital, where they occupy the positions of power and wealth and control the government and business. In the middle, there are the majority of illiterate peasants (at least 60 percent of the total population) and a minority of urbanized traditional and modern middle classes.

While there are many local differences between the various tribes of Iran, their basic features of life is the same. Their way of life is conditioned by the mountainous nature of the country and the extremes of temperature and climate. The basis of the nomad's livelihood is his cattle, and the unceasing search for fodder for his livestock turns him into a wanderer and carries him from one grazing land to another. Grazing areas form a large part of the land that is neither inhabited nor cultivated- some 80 percent of the territory.

Traditionally tribes lived also on hunting and raids on the herds of other tribes and highway robbery. There were clashes with the government too. The nomads represented a military and political force opposed to the central government. The policy of government, however, from the beginning of the reign of Reza Shah until present time has been the

settlement, sometimes by force, of the nomadic tribes.

The pattern of village life in Iran is as old as the country's history. It was established at an early date and has altered little during the succeeding centuries.<sup>1</sup> Iranian villages are very small and isolated from each other and from urban centers. In the majority of them the population does not exceed a hundred. A typical village consists of a cluster of baked mud houses built around a small square or near a small mosque. These houses usually do not have more than two rooms and a small yard surrounded by a mud wall. To protect the peasant and his family from cold and hot weather, the rooms are windowless. The peasant's possessions are few and his way of life simple and primitive -sleeping blankets, cooking utensils, a teapot and a couple of trunks for clothing and food. The poorest usually share the living room with their livestock. Their subsistence food consists mostly of bread, yogurt and tea with occasional rice, eggs, mutton or beef and some fruits. In the daily life of peasants money is little used. The growing of cereal crops by the most primitive agricultural methods is the villager's main source of livelihood, as well as his principal occupation, the cycle of plowing, sowing and harvesting goes on uninterrupted. Health conditions among the peasants are as poor as among the tribes. A large number of epidemics and chronic diseases such as malaria and a variety of intestinal diseases are the main health

---

1- For a brief but insightful description of an Iranian village in recent times, see: William Green Miller, "Hosseinabad: A Persian Village," The Middle East Journal, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Autumn, 1961) PP. 483-498

problems.

Many aspects of tribal and village life are reflected in the social life of town and cities. In fact, it seems that many Iranian cities evolved from village originals.<sup>1</sup> The main square was the center, and around it was built the principal mosque, the palaces and dwellings of the ruler and other elites, later on the government and municipal offices, and most important of all the bazaar. At the present time the Iranian city still has preserved some of its essential historical characteristic features. For instance, each section houses its particular craft or commodity -wood-work, textiles, copper and brass, china and glass, rugs and carpets, kitchen utensils, clothing and shoes. The two socially and culturally important places in the city are bazaar and mosques. "The bazaar is much more than a market. It is above all the social and political hub of the city's life, the habitat of the middle class, unknown in the villages, which yet wields enormous influence in the country's affairs."<sup>2</sup> While the bazaar constitutes the economic backbone of the city, the mosques form the cultural and communicational skeleton of it. The majority of the population in the cities are Moslems and except the modern middle class in large modernized cities, most of the traditional classes attend prayer and sermon sessions in the mosques daily or weekly. Not only individuals socialize in the mosques, but they discuss political and cultural issues.

---

1- Elwell-Sutton, Op. Cit., P. 29

2- Ibid.



Historically Iran has been a basically agricultural and rural country. But the world-wide modernizing forces of the last 100 years are bringing rapid and far-reaching changes throughout the country, and nowhere the impacts of modernization can be seen and felt as in the cities. The industrialist and secularist policies of Reza Shah created a modern working class and a new, urbanized modern middle class, both of which do not depend on the traditional economy. The pace of modernization accelerated after second World War. The land reform in 1963 and the sudden increase in oil prices in 1973, have had devastating effects on the economy and culture of Iran.

In the cities the opposing extremes of the process of change can be seen in every aspects. A large number of peasants who could not receive land through the program of land distribution, because they did not live on the farm but worked there as day-laborer, have come to the cities. These and an increasing number of peasants who could not cultivate their small share of land due to the lack of necessary capital have sold the lands to agrobusinesses and have created an utterly poor and unemployed urban population which surrounds the cities.<sup>1</sup> The city itself is in the process of mushroom growth while it has an insufficient and inefficient public services. At one extreme is those modern, European parts of the city with the most expensive modern apartments and housing. At the other extreme is the slums inhabited by newly arrived peasants. At one extreme is the tendency to assimilate a modern way of life,

---

1- MERIP REPORTS No. 71, (Middle East Research and Information Project) October, 1978.

strongest among the professional classes, the government officials, upper strata of army officers and political and economic elites. At the other extreme is the illiteracy, poverty and blindful acceptance of all aspects of traditionalism. Not only the economic gap between the two extremes is vast, but the cultural and social gap is also enormous. Located in the middle of these two extremes is a growing middle class which is increasingly dependent on the modernization process. The majority of Iranian middle class accepts the Western features of life and is conscious of living a more prosperous and convenient life with the facilities that modernization brings about, such as electricity, social services, television and cinema. But their "rising expectations" are not confined to economic demands. They are the most nationalist and politically aware and they and their children, the students, are those who oppose the autocratic rule of the Shah.

The recent crisis in Iran can be viewed as the inevitable outcome of a process that we outlined some of its features above. The social picture of the present Iran is one of an old-established and deeply-rooted social and economic and political way of life undergoing devastating change in all aspects. So far the changes have effected only a minority of population through a process of uneven development. They also have created the opportunity for some to benefit most. But the process of change can not stop. It is accelerating.

## APPENDIX B.

## SOME POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

It is appropriate to summarize our analysis to find out the most distinguishable characteristics of the social phenomenon called "dowreh". Dowreh is a socio-political phenomenon, which is of major significance in Iran. What is called a dowreh is an amalgam of individuals, an informal group of individuals, who form their association in pursuit of a social end, and who always meet periodically on a regular basis, usually rotating the meeting place among themselves. The institution of dowreh is used by members to discuss, organize, relate and communicate with each other. As a rule, dowreh gatherings are weekly, but some may meet only once a month, others more often. While most Iranians participate in one or two dowrehs, those who are financially well off and are socially or politically active usually attend more than two dowrehs each week. This gives a socially significant aspect to dowreh, i.e., it connects different dowrehs. There are various and functionally different types of dowrehs; political, recreational, friendship, religion, intellectual, etc. Some dowrehs have names, known to the members, some do not. Some are attended only by men, some are attended both by men and women. Essentially dowreh is an urban social phenomenon and a middle and upper class social habit. The number of members of a dowreh is not specified by any social norm. The usual number, however, in a single dowreh is more than 5 and less than 20. The meetings are usually held in an individual's home. The nature

of communication and interpersonal relationship in a dowreh depends upon the functional aspect of dowreh for the whole membership. However, the social and political communicational role of dowreh becomes significant because dowrehs are related to each other. Since many members of a dowreh, in turn will participate in several other dowrehs, these small group associations become connected to each other and thus, they create a social network which is a persuasive means of transmission of economic, social and political information. More important, many of upper class dowrehs are group formation of individuals who have personal ties and also can be identified as cliques and factions. Thus, dowreh network creates the channels of social and political mobility for each member. The structural role of dowreh network, therefore, is not limited to the transmission of information; it is one of the major paths to power positions in society.

As we mentioned earlier, this Iranian phenomenon is of sociological and political significance. It is, therefore, possible to explain it both sociologically and politically.

#### SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATION

##### I. Definition, Structure and Function of Small Group:

###### a. Definition:

There is major agreement among sociologists and social psychologists that one of the most obvious reasons for a group to be formed, or for a person to join a group is that "the group itself is the object of the need."<sup>1</sup> People start

1- Darwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander, eds., Group Dynamics, (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), P. 75

to interact in a group either because they enjoy one another's company, or there is an interest in the activity. In the latter case, a group might be a means to attain some ends outside the group. Thus, the group is an instrument for satisfying needs.

The individuals who constitute a dowreh, form a group. Zander and Cartwright define a group as:

"A collection of individuals who have relations to one another that make them interdependent to some significant degree." 1

According to Paul Hare a "group" has five characteristics which differentiates it from other "collections of individuals": the members of the group are in interaction with one another. They share a common goal and set of norms, which give direction and limits to their activity. They also develop a set of roles and a network of interpersonal attraction, which serve to differentiate them from other groups.<sup>2</sup>

With the definition that Hare gives for small and primary groups, it is possible to categorize dowreh under these types. He defines small group or primary group as a collection of individuals having intimate, face-to-face relationship.

"Small groups include all those having from two to about twenty members. However, even larger groups may be considered 'small' if face-to-face interaction is possible and collections of fewer than twenty individuals may actually include several small groups." 3

---

1- Ibid.

2- Paul Hare, Handbook of Small Group Research, (New York: The Free Press, 1962) P. 10

3- Ibid.

We must point out that the concept of primary group is one of the important contributions of Charles Cooley. In a well-known passage Cooley defines the concept as:

"By Primary group I mean those characterized by intimate face-to-face association and cooperation. They are primary in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the individual. The result of intimate association, psychologically, is a certain fusion of individualities in a common whole, so that one's very self, for many purposes at least, is the common life and purposes of the group. Perhaps the simplest way of describing this wholeness is by saying that it is a "we"; it involves the sort of sympathy and mutual identification for which "we" is the natural expression. One lives in the feeling of the whole and finds the chief aims of his will in that feeling." 1

In Cooley's view, the most important spheres of the intimate association and cooperation are the family, the play-group of children and the neighborhood or community group of elders. He believes that these are "practically universal, belonging to all times and all stages of development, and are accordingly a chief basis of what is universal in human nature and human ideals." 2

The social importance of primary groups in Cooley's view, is that they are "springs of life," not only for the individual, but for the social institutions as well. What makes them the origins of human nature and the source of the human virtues, appears to be their three characteristics; the face-to-face relation, the temporal priority in experience, and the feeling of the whole as expressed by "we".

---

1- Charles H. Cooley, Social Organization, (New York: The Free Press, 1950) P. 23

2- Ibid., P. 24

Edward Shils also gives a definition for primary groups:

"By primary group we mean a group characterized by a high degree of solidarity, informality in the code of rules which regulate the behavior of its members, and autonomy in the creation of these rules. The solidarity involves a close identification of the members with any symbols of the group which might have grown up."<sup>1</sup>

Shils, however, maintains that while small size and physical proximity (face-to-face relation) have been regarded as elements in the definition of the primary group, they must be regarded as conditions affecting the formation of primary groups.<sup>2</sup>

Other sociologists also have tried to define primary and small groups. Charles E. King writes:

"The small group refers to a collectivity of persons of sufficiently limited numbers so that the persons are in direct, interpersonal, informal or formal relationships and share collective and/or like interests and goals." <sup>3</sup>

Adrian Mayor, instead of using the label "small groups", identifies them as quasi-groups:

"They possess a degree of organization, but are nevertheless not groups. They can be called interactive, quasi-groups, for they are based on an interacting set of people." <sup>4</sup>

The reason that Mayor calls these kind of groups, quasi-groups is that he thinks they differ fundamentally from the group and the association proper. He believes that they are

- 1- Edward A. Shils, "The Study of the Primary Group," in Daniel Lerner and Harold Laswell, The Policy Sciences, (Stanford University Press, 1951) P. 44
- 2- Ibid.
- 3- Charles E. King, The Sociology of Small Groups, (New York: Pageant Press, 1962) P. 2
- 4- Adrian C. Mayor, "Quasi-groups in the Study of Complex Societies," in Micheal Banton, ed., The social Anthropology of Complex Societies, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966) PP. 97-98

ego-centered, in the sense of depending for their very existence on a specific person as a central organization focus. Moreover, the actions of any member are relevant in so far as they are interactions between him and the ego or the ego's intermediary.<sup>1</sup>

Since some of the criteria to distinguish a primary group from other kinds were disputed by different sociologists, Elsworth Faris gives a definition which pertains to be comprehensive:

"The nature of primary group, lies not in its parts but in its organization. It depends not upon its spatial contiguity but upon its functional interaction. It can be described neither by statistical enumeration nor by spatial measurement. More is involved than separate elements. In addition to space there is also time. The primary group cannot exist without memories; it cannot endure without purposes. No mechanical or spatial description is adequate. It is a changing organization of functional activities tending toward an end, influenced by its past and guided by its purposes and its future. It is not a mechanism, it is a part of life." 2

b) Structure:

Three types of small or primary groups are much discussed in the literature; kinship, neighbors and friends.

Until the late 1940's many sociologists had adopted the view that there is not much need to study primary groups in a modern industrial society because primary groups could not

---

1- Ibid.

2- Ellsworth Faris, "The Primary Group: Essence and Accident," The American Journal of Sociology, No. 1, July 1932, P. 50



survive in such societies. They believed that industrial bureaucratic organizations were substituting for primary groups and they were more effective than primary groups in achieving the same goals. Moreover, industrial bureaucratic organizations required social conditions which were antithetical to primary groups. One of the major conditions so required was the need for primary group members to engage in differential geographic and occupational mobility.<sup>1</sup>

Litwak and Szelenyi maintain that in order for extended kin groups to remain viable, they must learn to communicate and exchange services in other than face-to-face situations; in order for neighbors to remain viable, they must learn to exchange services and communicate despite short membership turnover; and for friendships to remain viable, friends must learn to do both, in addition to learning how to deal with the most idiosyncratic aspects of life.<sup>2</sup>

Neighborhoods are characterized by geographical proximity of members. Consequently, neighbors tend to be in face-to-face contact with one another. But industrialization requires that people in a given neighborhood have short tenure, it follows that if neighborhoods are to survive industrial society, they must stress face-to-face contact without one of the dimensions of a classical primary group, i.e., permanent membership.<sup>3</sup> The same is true of kinship system and pressures

---

1- Eugene Litwak and Ivan Szelenyi, "Primary Group Structure and Their Functions: Kin, Neighbors and Friends," American Sociological Review, 34, June 1969, No. 3, pp. 465-6

2- Ibid., p. 466

3- Ibid.

for differential mobility in a technological society. However, unlike the other two groups, the individual has more options in choosing his friends.

As we discussed earlier, Iran is a developing country and is not industrialized yet. Thus, all requirements of classical primary groups can be observed in their formation in Iran.

Edward Shils distinguishes three types of groups, all of which are, in some sense, primary.<sup>1</sup> The first type he identifies as "primordial" primary group. This is the group united by common blood or common neighborhood. Membership in such a group is involuntary and produces a traditional outlook respectful of long term identities which are not subject to rational choice or calculation. The second type is the "personal" primary group, distinguished by the voluntary attachment of individuals who like one another personally. The voluntary nature of group membership distinguishes it from the former. The third type in Shils' view, can be distinguished as "ideological" primary group made up of those who share a common ideal to which they are intensely devoted. This type of group shares with the primordial group the feeling for the "sacred" quality of their union. In the one case it is the traditional order which calls forth awe and respect on the part of group members; in the other case, it is the new order, the "cause", which is holy. Both of these

---

1- Edward Shils, "Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties," British Journal of Sociology, (June, 1957)

types stand in contrast to the more casual and non-charismatic personal primary group. The personal and the ideological group share the feature of voluntariness which is absent in the primordial group.<sup>1</sup>

In all of these types of groups the ties that bind the members of each group together are strongly affective, intimate, "organic", and enjoin a broadly interpreted mutual responsibility or relatively unconditional loyalty to the particular others who make the group.<sup>2</sup>

c. Function:

The most obvious explanation of membership in a group is that the group provides satisfaction or personal response. In other words, it brings psychic gratification or enjoyment. Thus, the primary group may be said to have the associated function of training and support.<sup>3</sup>

According to Festinger small groups occupy a strategic position as determiners of the behavior and attitudes of their members. Because attitudes and behavior patterns are communicated or learned from other people, it is plausible to suppose that face-to-face communication among members of a social group would be a method through which much of the development of these attitudes and behavior patterns would occur.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, to say that primary groups "train" members means that the group aids in the psychological development of the

---

1- Michael Olmsted, The Small Group, (New York: Random House, 1967) PP. 58-59

2- Ibid.

3- Ibid., PP. 46-47

4- Leon Festinger, Stanley Schachter, Kurt Back, Social Pressure in Informal Groups, (New York: Harper & Bros, 1950) P. 3

individual by providing the context in which his intellectual and emotional development take place. The most prominent instant of this process is to be found in that primary group known as family.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, primary group membership gives the individual an opportunity for expressive behavior. Josephine Klein notes that the individual needs his group assurance that he is valued; he gains it by behaving in a manner acceptable to the group; and when he does this, he gives the others that same assurance of individual worth that he gains from them. Klein observes that it is pleasant to talk, to say what comes to mind, and to hear what others have in their mind. The mutual exchange of self-expressive behavior, in Klein's view, is mutually gratifying because this behavior has been learned in circumstances which were gratifying. Klein says that self-expression is not only healing, i.e., serving a "cathartic" function, but a measure of social control, and a means for clarification, leading the individual to solving his problem.<sup>2</sup>

## II. Social Networks:

The concept of network has been developed in sociology to analyze and describe those social processes involving links across, rather than within, group and category limits. The interpersonal links that arise out of common group membership are as much part of the total social network as are

---

1- Olmsted, Op. Cit., P. 47

2- Josephine Klein, Working With Groups, (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1961), pp. 54-60

those that link persons in different groups.<sup>1</sup>

Networks have been defined as "matrices of social links" or as "social fields made up of relationships between people."<sup>2</sup> Networks include all individuals who find themselves in a given field, and who are within direct or indirect reach of each other. That is to say, they include all individuals who are connected directly with at least one other member of that network.<sup>3</sup>

Network analysis attempts to explain how communities can be held together in the absence of strong governments or organized formal groups. Moreover, it explains how class and other divisions within a society can be made tolerable by the presence of cross-cutting alliances. It also helps to explain how consensus within a community can emerge as the result of the exchange of opinions among individuals and how such consensus can contribute to the process of nation building.<sup>4</sup>

Network analysis also provides insight into the individual's relationship and functioning within his society. The degree of social involvement of individuals differ. Some individuals may be deeply involved and extraordinary influential in their society because of their many active links with other members. Thus, a man who is a member of many groups, even if he is not clever or important, will gain more

---

1- J. A. Barnes, "Network and Political Process" In Marc J. Swartz ed., Local Level Politics, Op. Cit., P. 109

2- Mayor, Op. Cit., P. 98

3- Steffen Schmidt, et al, Op. Cit., P. XXIV

information and more experience than is available to a man with fewer contacts. If, in addition, his contacts are among influential groups, he will have access to information which members might not have been able to obtain in any other way.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, for example, a network analysis explains how what may have been as a dispute between two individuals can expand through the progressive involvement of persons directly or indirectly connected with the original antagonists, into a feud that eventually divides most of the community into two opposing camps. It also explains how overlapping alliances, in which other individuals may be allied dynamically with both antagonists in a conflict, produce mediators who work to abate the conflict.<sup>2</sup>

The most important aspect of network analysis is its contribution to an understanding of a society's communication system. A network model suggests how numerous radiating chains of linked individuals can pass a message throughout a society without the aid of mass media. Similarly it shows how the receipt of the same message from diverse sources enables the receiver to assess its accuracy.<sup>3</sup>

### III. Dowreh as a Small (Primary) Group Activity and The Social Network of Dowrehs

It is possible to hypothesize that the individuals who form a dowreh, for whatever purpose, engage in a small group activity and enter into the membership of a primary group.

---

1- Mayor, Op. Cit., P. 93  
2- Schmidt et al., Op Cit.  
3- Ibid.

Since Iran is not yet industrialized, the influence of tradition on the individual's social behavior is extensive and consequently the kinship, neighborhood and friendship ties are very strong. Moreover, the social conditions help to reinforce the influence of tradition and facilitate the formation of primary groups. One of the fundamental features of these groups, i.e., the face-to-face relationship is easily possible in Iranian society because the country is not yet industrialized, the relationships are still personal and the extended family has not been destroyed. The influence of family, particularly, is very strong in Iranian society. Not only the focus of all Iranian life is the family, but the total life of an individual is dominated by family relationships. "An Iranian", says Richard W. Gable, "is born into family and he never leaves it."<sup>1</sup>

As we observed earlier, the phenomenon of dowreh, as a group activity, assumes different characteristics according to the functions for which it has been formed. What are structurally stable and do not change with different purposes of the individual members are the nature of group and the structure of dowreh.

Those individuals who enter into the group activity of dowreh start to have relations to one another that make them "interdependent" in many respects. Thus, they form a group, by definitions we proposed earlier. It is possible to find all those five characteristics which Paul Hare mentions as

---

1- Richard W. Gable, "Culture and Administration in Iran", The Middle East Journal, 13 (1959) P. 410

the distinguishable aspects of a group, among the characteristics of dowreh. The members of a dowreh are in interaction with each other on a regular basis. They share some common goals and set of norms which give direction and limits to their activity. They also develop a set of roles, and a network of interpersonal relationships, which serve to separate and differentiate them from other groups.

The number of members in a dowreh is limited, and we can find the three characteristics of primary group which Cooley mentions among members of a dowreh. The relationship in a dowreh is face-to-face, the experience is shared as a temporal priority for the individual, and there exists a feeling of the whole, as expressed by we, among the members. In other words, a high degree of solidarity, informality in the code of rules which regulate the behavior of members and autonomy in the creation of these rules, can be distinguished as the characteristics of interpersonal relationships in a dowreh.

The group activity of dowreh cannot be classified and categorized easily, since with the intention of individuals, the function of dowreh for the group assumes different natures. Not only there are kinship, neighborhood and friendship dowrehs, but we can find the three types of primordial, personal and ideological group activity among different dowrehs.

What should be stressed, however, is the voluntary nature of group activity in a dowreh. The individuals must choose the membership of different dowrehs voluntarily.

The group activity of dowreh being a primary group acti-



vity, we can explain some of the functions of dowreh as functions of primary groups in general. The membership in a dowreh provides satisfaction and personal response for members. It brings psychic gratifications and enjoyment. It may be said that a dowreh has also the associated functions of training and support. However, it is only an empirical research that can establish the degree of the influence of different dowrehs on the development of the social behavior and attitudes of their members.

One of the observations of many Western social scientists in Iran is that Iranians show a high degree of the feeling of insecurity in their social relations.<sup>1</sup> It can be hypothesized that membership in a dowreh gives the individual an opportunity for expressive behavior, and it provides the means for his group assurance of individual worth. Moreover, many of dowrehs serve a cathartic function for the members and help the individual to solve some of his problems.

But the functions of dowreh are not limited to personal gratification for the members. An important characteristic of dowreh is important because of its structural location within the Iranian society. Structurally, the collectivity of individuals called dowreh, has many sociological functions. The important questions to be asked in this respect are: why do not formal institutions and associational groups function properly in Iran, and therefore, why do such informal group associations as dowreh assume such major social, psychological

---

1- See Bill, Zonis and Gable.

and political roles? Is dowreh a persistent and rigid institution or is it flexible? What are its functional aspects in the operation of social and political systems of Iran? Do these aspects facilitate the process of change and modernization or hinder it?

We observed earlier that dowreh is not an isolated phenomenon in Iranian society and that different dowrehs are connected to each other so that they can form a social network.

In a developing society such as Iran the process of social organization is not fully developed yet. The formation of bureaucratic organizations is not complete and the process of social communication is still traditional. It can be hypothesized that the existence of dowreh network, especially in urban centers, provides many of these functions for Iranian society. From the isolated small villages where the majority of population live, to the urban centers in the country, the social networks of dowreh and other groups, provide the channels of social mobility and economic and political exchange. The individual and his family form alliances with others for the purpose of mutual assistance. The economic ability of the individual is a significant factor, since power and wealth are very useful in the building of such alliances. With the aid of these allies the individual attempts to maximize his financial and psychological security.

A major consequence of social networks such as dowreh for the whole society is that it provides benefits for some members of all sectors of society, thereby minimizing interclass

hostility and reducing the bitterness of conflict between different organized groups.<sup>1</sup> This, however, leads to many other consequences that we shall discuss later.

The communicative aspect of dowreh is clear. The network of dowreh provides the most extensive, informal and effective channel for diffusion of information. This manner of communication is particularly effective because it is based on face-to-face communication. Recent studies on communication have proved the effectiveness of this form of communicative behavior.

The communicative characteristic of the network of dowreh assumes critical importance when one considers the authoritarian nature of political system in Iran in which not only the formation of political associations and groups is not possible, but most of the formal channels of political communication are controlled by the government.

#### POLITICAL EXPLANATIONS

Since membership in a dowreh is a group activity, it is through the group aspect of dowreh that particular individuals enter into the political system and achieve their specific goals, it seems proper to review some of the general arguments and hypotheses of group theory of politics. The theory assumes that individuals act in politics largely as members of groups.

The group approach to the study of politics was first

---

1- See Carl H. Lande, "Networks and Groups in South East Asia: Some Observations on the Group Theory of Politics," American Political Science Review, March 1976

developed and systematically elaborated by Arthur F. Bentley in his pioneering work, The Process of Government, published in 1908.<sup>1</sup> Bentley's approach was followed by David B. Truman in his study, The Governmental Process.<sup>2</sup>

Bentley defines a group as:

"a certain portion of the men of a society, taken, however, not as a physical mass cut from other masses of men, but as a mass activity, which does not preclude the men who participate in it from participating likewise in many other group activities." 3

The significance of a group in Bentley's view is its identification with "interest":

"There is no group without its interest... As to whether the interest is responsible for the existence of the group, or the group responsible for the existence of the interest, I do not know or care." 4

David Truman's definition of a group is more general:

"Any collection of individuals who have some characteristics in common." 5

In Truman's view, an interest group is:

"Any group that, on the basis of one or more shared attitudes, makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by the shared attitudes." 6

It is clear that despite some contrast in Bentley's and Truman's definitions, the nature of their views is similar.

1- Arthur F. Bentley, The Process of Government, (Camb: Harvard University Press, 1967)

2- David B. Truman, The Governmental Process, (New York: Knopf, 1951)

3- Bentley, Op. Cit., P. 211

4- Ibid., P. 212

5- Truman, Op Cit., P. 23

6- Ibid., P. 33

Thus, an interest group is, first of all, a collectivity of individuals. Bentley regards it as "a certain portion of the men of a society", while Truman uses the phrase "collection of individuals". Second, the essential characteristic of this aggregate of individuals is the nature of their interaction. Bentley speaks about "mass of activity" and Truman talks about "patterns of interaction". Finally, both refer to the point that this collectivity of individuals seeks to act toward a common goal. This goal can be specific such as pursuing a particular interest or it can be general such as moving in certain directions.<sup>1</sup>

Other political scientists also have developed a typology of groups. According to Gabriel Almond, there are four types of "interest orientation structures" or "interest groups."<sup>2</sup> These are: associational, institutional, non-associational and anomic interest groups.

Non-associational interest groups are those which pursue their interests informally and possess highly fluid, relatively concealed, and highly personal interaction patterns.<sup>3</sup> Almond and Powell maintain that non-associational interest groups reflect such distinguishing features as "the intermittent pattern of articulation, the absence of an organized procedure for establishing the nature and means of articulation and the lack of continuity in internal structure."<sup>4</sup>

---

1- James A. Bill, Robert L. Hardgrave, Comparative Politics, (Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1973) P. 121

2- Gabriel A. Almond, Bringham G. Powell, Comparative Politics, Op. Cit., P. 75

3- Bill, Hardgrave, Op Cit., P. 122

4- Almond, Op. Cit., PP. 76-77

Examples of this type of groups include kinship, lineage, ethnic, regional and status collectivities. According to Almond and Powell the influence of such groups is limited in highly industrialized societies, for two reasons. On the one hand, organization is highly advantageous for successful interest articulation in these societies and competition from numerous organized groups is too great to permit a high degree of successful articulation by non-associational groups. On the other hand, important non-associational groups with continuing interests soon develop organized structures and hence fall into one of the other classes of interest groups.<sup>1</sup>

Non-associational interest groups involve two major forms: the informal group or clique, and categoric aggregations to which interests are attributed. Racial, ethnic, class and religious groups are some of the examples.<sup>2</sup>

As Bill and Hardgrave point out, Almond's typology is based on a number of highly questionable assumptions. A major characteristic of many of informal groups such as factions or cliques is that, unlike categoric group which may have no organization, they do have organizational structure.<sup>3</sup> The difference, according to Bill and Hardgrave, between associational and non-associational interest groups resides in the kind of organization. The organizational characteristic of non-associational group, for example, includes such variables as personalism, informality and covertness.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, there

---

1- Ibid.

2- Bill, Hardgrave, Op Cit., PP- 122-3

3- Ibid., P. 124

4- Ibid.

are numerous instances of non-associational interest groups in modern, industrialized societies. Cliques, caucuses and personal coteries of advisers play important roles in modern societies such as the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of small groups in politics is well discussed by Sidney Verba.<sup>2</sup> He points out that to understand the process of government, one must look beyond its formal structures. According to him, the groups with face-to-face relationship like families, committees, juries, informal discussion groups, etc, are basic units of the political system.<sup>3</sup>

Verba asserts that face-to-face contact can have a greater effect on opinion and behavior of the individual than other forms of contact. This process, i.e., the process by which the individual manipulates the behavior of others or by which group members bring pressure on the individual, is called the process of social control.<sup>4</sup> Through social control, behavior is confined to acceptable limits; limits which maximize the possibilities of survival for the individual in the group. Thus, according to Verba, groups influence the opinion and norms of the group members because of a) the individual needs that the group fulfills (both affective needs and opinion-evaluations) coupled with, b) the internal pressures and sanctions that the group places on the non-conforming member.<sup>5</sup> Also, the relation within small, face-to-face groups tend to be diffuse. This diffuseness gives the small group a

---

1- Ibid.

2- Sidney Verba, Small Groups and Political Behavior, (Princeton University Press, 1961)

3- Ibid., P. 17

4- Paul Hare, Op Cit., P. 25

5- Verba, Op Cit., P. 26

potentiality for influencing individual opinion that larger, more specifically goal oriented organizations do not have.<sup>1</sup>

In Verba's view, the face-to-face groups to which an individual belongs exert a major influence on him. This influence takes place in two time periods. In the first place, the primary group plays a major role in the political socialization of the individual before he enters the political process. It forms the predispositions that an individual brings with him into his participation in political affair. Secondly, the primary group to which an individual belongs continue to shape his political behavior after he has begun to participate in the political process.<sup>2</sup>

Within the primary group, Verba observes, the individual receives training for roles that he will later play within society. This training consists in both the teaching of certain standards of behavior that can be applied to later situations, and the playing of roles in the family and in other primary groups that are similar to roles later to be played in the political or economic system.<sup>3</sup>

Verba confirms the observation that small group experiences in childhood not only provide certain generalized expectations from political relationships, but they also provide training for participation in these relationships. In his view, while much of this training takes place within the family, but it takes place in other face-to-face situations as

---

1- Ibid.

2- Ibid., PP. 29-30

3- Ibid., P. 31



well. Thus, the training for political participation that takes place in face-to-face groups continues beyond childhood and adolescence.<sup>1</sup>

Much of the literature that attempt to link childhood experiences and political behavior assumes that the political system will be congruent with the patterns in the primary group and will satisfy the needs developed there. But this assumption is not valid. Similar role experience in primary groups may lead to quite different political behavior.<sup>2</sup>

Participation in families, peer groups, work groups and other formally non-political groups influences the individual's style of political behavior by developing certain skills for political role-playing.<sup>3</sup>

The impact of the face-to-face group relationship on the political affairs is more direct, and therefore, have a more specific political content. Verba observes that the explicit political attitudes with which an individual comes into contact in the face-to-face group have a significant impact on his political views and behavior. This is especially so in the light of the strong influence that the primary group has on the attitudes of its members. However, the influence of the primary group does not lead to the development of a political "personality". The major impact is of a general nature, and it is more on political attitudes and specific opinions.<sup>4</sup>

---

1- Ibid., P. 33  
2- Ibid., P. 39  
3- Ibid., P. 42  
4- Ibid.

In Verba's view, the relative importance of primary structure differs from society to society. They are more important in traditional societies. This can be considered as a result of a) the relative weight given to primary and secondary group norms, and b) the relative degree to which political functions are performed in primary and secondary structures. In both traditional and modern societies, primary groups are significant reference points for norms and attitudes. But the loyalty to primary norms is considered to be more required in traditional societies. If, for instance, a situation would arise in Japanese politics in which an individual was caught between conflicting loyalties, he must consider the prevalent norms of society. In a conflict situation of loyalty to his political principles and convictions and his obligations developed in an intimate face-to-face relationship, the dominant norms in Japanese society would require that the individual fulfill his personal, particularistic obligation rather than follow the universalistic criteria associated with his loyalty to the rules of the impersonal political system. If he did not follow the norms associated with his loyalty to an individual, he would be subject to social disapproval and criticism.<sup>1</sup>

Verba describes some general effects that face-to-face group has on the political system as follows. The face-to-face group may conflict with larger political system of which it is a part in several ways. Firstly, the very existence of

---

1- Ibid., P. 48

primary group which have an effect on the political system may be regarded as a source of conflict with the development of a rational, efficient system. Secondly, the face-to-face group may support particular behaviors or attitudes that are deviant in terms of the norms of the larger system.<sup>1</sup>

If the particular norms of the system differ from those of the face-to-face group, the participation in group will be in conflict with the larger political system. Thus, conformity to the face-to-face group will mean non-conformity to the norms of the larger system.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, attachment to face-to-face groups may lessen the impact of the overall political culture on the individual. However, face-to-face groups are not necessarily in conflict with the political system. They also perform supportive functions. The norms they support may be norms that are congruent with those of the larger system. They may supply the individual member with effective outputs, the absence of which might place burdens on the political system. Moreover, they are a source of flexibility in running the system.<sup>3</sup>

One of the major supportive roles played by the primary groups is the socialization of children to take adult roles in the political process. Verba offers some hypotheses about the supportive role of primary groups. A) In so far as the leaders of the political system can directly penetrate and control the interaction process within the face-to-face

---

1- Ibid., P. 49

2- Ibid., PP. 49-50

3- Ibid., P. 54

group, the norms set by that process tend to support the larger system. B) The greater the degree of cultural fusion between primary and secondary structure, the more the norms of the small group will support the larger system. C) The more the face-to-face group perceives itself as participating in the decisions of the political system, the more the group will tend to support the norms of the political system. D) The more the face-to-face group perceives itself as receiving valued outputs from the political system, the greater will be its support of the system.<sup>1</sup>

---

1- Ibid., PP. 55-56

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1- Abrahamian Ervand, "Communism and Communalism in Iran: The Tudeh and the Firgah-i- Dimokrat," The International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 1, (1970)
- 2- Almond Gabriel A., Powell Bringham G., Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach, (Boston: & Toronto: Little Brown, 1966)
- 3- Barnes J. A. "Network and Political Process" In Marc J. Swartz ed., Local Level Politics, (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969)
- 4- Bentley Arthur F., The Process of Government, (Harvard University Press, 1967)
- 5- Bill James A., Hardgrave Robert L., Comparative Politics, (Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1973)
- 6- Bill James A., "The Plasticity of Informal Politics: The Case of Iran" The Middle East Journal , (Spring, 1973)
- 7- Cartwright Darwin and Zander Alvin, eds., Group Dynamics, (New York: Harper and Row, 1960)
- 8- Cooley Charles H., Social Organization, (New York: The Free Press, 1950)
- 9- Cottam Richard W., Nationalism in Iran, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh press, 1964)
- 10- Eswell-Sutton L. P., A Guide to Iranian Area Study, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: J. W. Edwards Publisher, 1952)
- 11- Faris Ellsworth, "The Primary Group: Essence and Accident" The American Journal of Sociology, No. 1, (July, 1932)
- 12- Festinger Leon, Schachter Stanley, Back Kurt, Social Pressure in Informal Groups, (New York: Harper & Bros, 1950)
- 13- Friesen John K., & Moore Richard V., Iran: Country Profiles, A Publication of the Population Council, October, 1972

- 14- Gable Richard W., "Culture and Administration in Iran," The Middle East Journal, 13, (1959)
- 15- Hare Paul, Handbook of Small Group Research, (New York: The Free Press, 1968)
- 16- Kadushin Charles, "Power, Influence and Social Circles: A New Methodology for Studying Opinion Makers," American Sociological Review, Vol. 33, No. 5, October, 1968.
- 17- Keddi Nikki R., Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892, (London: Frank Press & Co., 1966)
- 18- Keddi Nikki R., "The Iranian Power Structure and Social Change 1800-1969: An Overview," The International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 2, (1971)
- 19- King Charles E., The Sociology of Small Groups, (New York: Pageant Press, 1962)
- 20- Lambton Ann K. S. "Secret Societies and the Persian Revolution of 1905-1906," St. Antony's Papers, No. 4, Middle Eastern Affairs, No. 1, 1958
- 21- Lande Carl H., "Networks and Groups in South East Asia: Some Observations on the Group Theory of Politics," American Political Science Review, (March, 1976)
- 22- Litwak Eugene, Szelenyi Ivan, "Primary Group Structure and Their Functions: Kin, Neighbors and Friends," American Sociological Review, 34, June 1969, No. 3.
- 23- Mayor Adrian C., "Quasi-groups in the Study of Complex Societies," in Micheal Banton, ed., The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966)
- 24- Merip Reports No. 71 (Middle East Research and Information Projects) October, 1978
- 25- Miller William Green., "Political Organization in Iran: From Dowreh to Political Party," The Middle East Journal, 23, No. 2, (Spring 1969) PP. 159-167 and The Middle East Journal, (Summer, 1969) PP. 343-350

- 26- Miller William Green, "Hosseinabad: A Persian Village," The Middle East Journal, Vol. 18, No. 4, (Autumn, 1969)
- 27- Olmsted Michael, The Small Group, (New York: Random House, 1967)
- 28- Riggs Fred W., "The Theory of Developing Politics," World Politics, 16, (1963) PP. 147-171
- 29- Riggs Fred W., Administration in Developing Countries, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964)
- 30- Schmidt Steffen W., Scott James C., Lande Carl, Guasti Laura, eds., Friends, Followers and Factions, (University of California Press, 1977)
- 31- Shils Edward, "Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties," British Journal of Sociology, (June, 1957)
- 32- Shils Edward "The Study of the Primary Group," in Daniel Lerner and Harold Laswell, The Policy Sciences, (Stanford University Press, 1951)
- 33- Sirivanas M. N. and Beteille Andre, "Networks in Indian Social Structure," MAN, Vol. 64, Nov-Dec, 1964.
- 34- Swartz Marc J. ed., Local Level Politics, (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969)
- 35- Truman David B., The Governmental Process, (New York: Knopf, 1951)
- 36- Verba Sidney, Small Groups and Political Behavior, (Princeton University Press, 1961)
- 37- Westwood Andrew F., "Politics of Distrust in Iran," The Annals, 358 (March 1965)
- 38- Zabih Sepehr, The Communist Movement in Iran, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966)

- 39- Zonis Marvin, The Political Elite of Iran, (Princeton:  
Princeton University Press, 1971)