

Family - Kin Relationships in Contemporary Kuwait Society ⁽¹⁾

During the last three decades, there has been a continuing debate over the impact of urbanization and industrialization on family-kin relationships in Kuwaiti society.

Studies concerning this topic in Arab countries are few: those that have been done all postulate the persistence of strong family-kin relationships in spite of urbanization. The study conducted by Dr. Fahed Thakeb Al-Thakeb examines those relationships from the following standpoints: general contact between family and kin, mutual help in need, business partnerships among relatives, marital relations and contact during leisure time.

The study produced the following findings:

1. About 35% of the sample visit their relatives every day; 45% visit them weekly. Visits are more frequent among those who form part of an extended family. Women exchange visits less frequently than males but they converse by telephone more frequently.

2. Assistance in times of need is extensive among all segments of the sample: assistance in cases of sickness, old age, child care, need for employment, counseling, financial aid. The first priority of assistance goes to brothers and sisters, then come parents and cousins.

3. In the field of business, 24% of the private businessmen in the sample have partners who are also kinsmen; 27% of those employed in government administrative offices have relatives, mostly brothers, in the same department. Those belonging

to the upper socio-economic class or to the younger generation show some deviation from the above line of conduct.

4. In the recreational field, 76% of the sample spend their leisure hours with members of their nuclear family; 11% with relatives and friends. A large proportion of the educated youth and of the upper socio-economic stratum prefer spending their leisure time with friends instead of kinsmen.

5. Endogamous marriages persist in 48% of the sample. Of these, 79% married their cousins. This practice tends to diminish among the highly educated and the upper socio-economic classes. With the spread of education and further contact between the sexes, endogamous marriage is expected to become less and less popular.

6. Inter-Family conflicts are difficult to study because Kuwaitis in general like to save appearances and to pretend that all is well within their families.

As a conclusion, family ties are on the whole quite strong among Kuwaiti families but they are beginning to weaken among the educated youth and the upper socio-economic strata, showing their adaptation to new conditions and to a modernized way of life.

(1) Abstract of a study conducted by Dr. Fahed Thakeb Al-Thakeb, published in Arabic in the **Annals of the Faculty of Arts**, Kuwait University, Vol. 3, 1982.