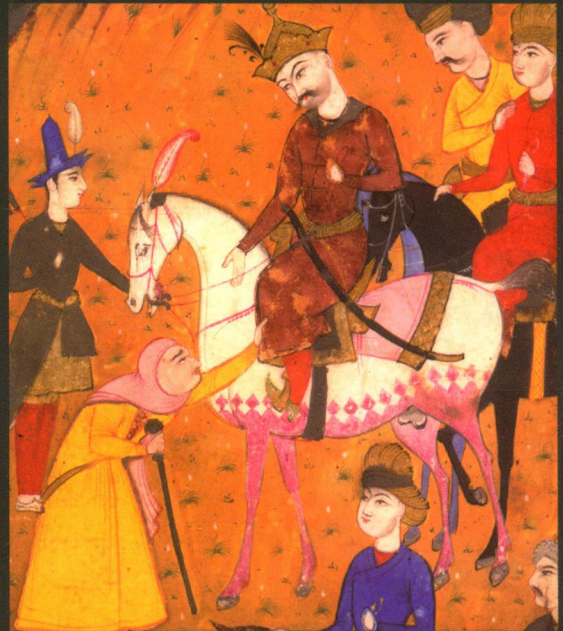
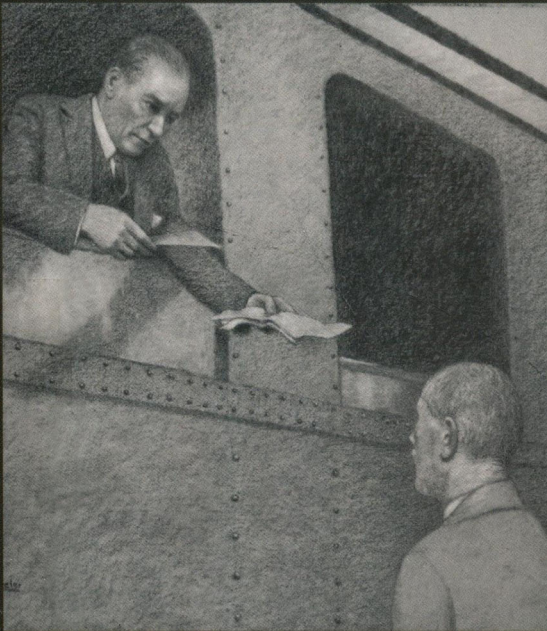


LINDA T. DARLING



A HISTORY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND POLITICAL POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST

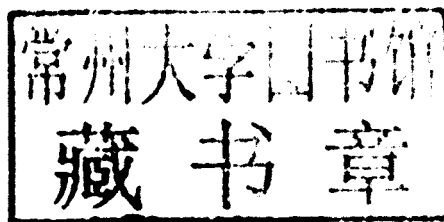


THE CIRCLE OF JUSTICE
FROM MESOPOTAMIA
TO GLOBALIZATION

A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East

The Circle of Justice from Mesopotamia to
Globalization

Linda T. Darling



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A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East

From ancient Mesopotamia into the twentieth century, the “Circle of Justice” as a concept has pervaded Middle Eastern political thought and underpinned the exercise of power in the Middle East. The “Circle of Justice” depicts graphically how a government’s justice toward the population generates political power, military strength, prosperity, and good administration.

This book traces this set of relationships from its earliest appearance in the political writings of the Sumerians through four millennia of Middle Eastern culture. It explores how people conceptualized and acted upon this powerful insight, how they portrayed it in symbol, painting, and story, and how they transmitted it from one regime to the next. Moving toward the modern day, the author shows how, although the “Circle of Justice” was largely dropped from political discourse, it did not disappear from people’s political culture and expectations of government. The book demonstrates the Circle’s relevance to the Iranian Revolution and the rise of Islamist movements all over the Middle East, and suggests how the concept remains relevant in an age of capitalism.

A “must read” for students, policymakers, and ordinary citizens, this book will be an important contribution to the areas of Political History, Political Theory, Middle East Studies and Orientalism.

Linda T. Darling has taught Middle Eastern history at the University of Arizona since 1989. Her research has focused on finance administration and political legitimacy in the Middle East. She is the author of *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560–1660*. She is a member of the Middle Eastern Studies Association of North America and has published a number of articles in academic journals.

To my teachers

Preface

Every Middle East crisis for decades has raised the question of Islam and politics. Western politicians' and journalists' reactions to events occurring during the writing of this book – two Gulf Wars, the September 11 destruction of the World Trade Center in New York, US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq – and public statements by government officials abundantly demonstrate our need for a better understanding of Middle Eastern political culture. Most writers, Western and Middle Eastern, present Islam as the sole indigenous guide to the exercise of political power in the Middle East (other than greed). This preoccupation with Islam has obscured from view other powerful local concepts that contribute to Middle Eastern political expectations, one of the most important of which is the Circle of Justice, a concept that emphasizes the interdependence among rulers, armies, taxes, the taxpaying classes, and the ruler's justice toward them. Specialists often dismiss the Circle of Justice as a literary trope, but this book argues that it was and still is a fundamental concept of Middle Eastern politics, so basic as not to need discussion there, though all but unknown in the West. There are many books on Islam and politics, but they do not fully explain Middle Eastern political thought and behavior because they ignore the relationships encapsulated in the Circle of Justice. This study compiles the history of the Circle (both the saying and the ideas it contains) and examines its role in Middle Eastern political life.

This book is aimed at students and general readers as well as Middle East scholars. It has several goals: to contribute to a narrative of Middle Eastern history centered neither on Islam nor on political structures, to counter stereotypes of Middle Eastern autocracy as universally tyrannical and Middle Easterners as aggressive and dangerous, and to explore a political tradition that is not religious or radical, but that is well known and even taken for granted by Middle Easterners. By offering a single narrative of Middle Eastern history, rather than one broken into ancient, medieval, and modern segments, it highlights cultural continuities and resonances from one era or political regime to another. Tracing the Circle of Justice through Middle Eastern history reveals a basic aspect of Middle Eastern political relationships which is largely ignored today but which is foundational to Middle Eastern political thinking, Islamic or not, in all eras including today.

Thanks go first to the teachers and colleagues at the University of Chicago, who introduced me to the Circle of Justice and gave me the tools to research it, or whose work influenced this study in one way or another: Marshall G. S. Hodgson, R. Stephen Humphreys, Halil İnalcık, John E. Woods, Richard L. Chambers, Robert Dankoff, John R. Perry, JoAnn Scurlock, Cornell H. Fleischer, Wadad al-Qadi, and Lisa Wedeen. I am grateful to the librarians who collected the works studied in this book, especially the staff

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Abbreviations

AcIr	Acta Iranica
AcOr	Acta Orientalia
AEuras	Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi
AHR	American Historical Review
AI	Annales Islamologiques
AJSLL	American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, ed. James B. Pritchard
AOH	Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungarica
AOtt	Archivum Ottomanicum
ARI 1, 2	Assyrian Royal Inscriptions, Records of the Ancient Near East, 1 and 2, ed. A. K. Grayson
ArsOr	Ars Orientalis
ASQ	Arab Studies Quarterly
AÜDTCFD	Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi
AÜSBFD	Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi
BEO	Bulletin d'études orientales
BRJMES	British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
CAH 4	Cambridge Ancient History, 2nd ed., vol. 4: Persia, Greece and the Western Mediterranean, c. 525 to 479 B. C., ed. J. Boardman, D. M. Lewis and M. Ostwald
CAJ	Central Asiatic Journal
CANE	Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, ed. J. M. Sasson
CHI	The Cambridge History of Islam, ed. P. M. Holt, A. K. S. Lambton, and B. Lewis
CHIr	The Cambridge History of Iran, ed. Sir H. Bailey, P. W. Avery, W. B. Fisher, I. Gershevitch and E. Yarshater
CSSAAME	Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East
CSSH	Comparative Studies in Society and History
EEQ	East European Quarterly
EI2	The Encyclopaedia of Islam (2nd ed., Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954–2004)
Elr	Encyclopaedia Iranica
HJAS	Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies
HMEIR	Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review
İA	İslam Ansiklopedisi
IC	Islamic Culture

IJIAS	International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies
IJMES	International Journal of Middle East Studies
IJTS	International Journal of Turkish Studies
ILS	Islamic Law and Society
IOS	Israel Oriental Studies
IQ	Islamic Quarterly
Iran	Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies
IranS	Iranian Studies
IS	Islamic Studies
İÜİFM	İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası
JA	Journal asiatique
JAAS	Journal of Asian and African Studies
JAHS	Journal of Asian History
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JAS	Pakistan Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan
JContempH	Journal of Contemporary History
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JEEH	Journal of European Economic History
JEMH	Journal of Early Modern History
JESHO	Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
JIS	Journal of Islamic Studies
JMS	Journal of Mediterranean Studies
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JPHS	Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
JSAI	Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam
JSH	Journal of Social History
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JTS	Journal of Turkish Studies
JWH	Journal of World History
MEEP	Middle East Economic Papers
MEJ	Middle East Journal
MES	Middle Eastern Studies
MHR	Mediterranean Historical Review
MSR	Mamlūk Studies Review
MTM	Milli Tettebbu'lar Mecmuası
MW	The Muslim World
NPT	New Perspectives on Turkey
OA	Osmanlı Araştırmaları
OM	Oriente Moderno
OTAM	Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi
POF	Prilozi za Orientalnu Filologiju
RA	Revue d'assyriologie/Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale
REI	Revue des études islamiques
RHM	Revue d'histoire maghrébine
RIMA 1	Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC (to 1115 BC), The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods, 1, ed. A. K. Grayson

RIMA 2	Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC, I (1114–859 BC), The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods, 2, ed. A. K. Grayson
RIMA 3	Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC, II (858–745 BC), Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods, 3, ed. A. K. Grayson
RIMB 2	Rulers of Babylonia: From the Second Dynasty of Isin to the End of Assyrian Domination (1157–612 BC), Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Babylonian Periods, 2, ed. G. Frame
RIME 1	Presargonic Period (2700–2350 BC), The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods, 1, ed. D. R. Frayne
RIME 2	Sargonic and Gutian Periods (2334–2113 BC), Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods, 2, ed. D. R. Frayne
RIME 3/2	Ur III Period (2112–2004 BC), Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods, 3/2, ed. D. R. Frayne
RIME 4	Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC), Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods, 4, ed. D. R. Frayne
RMMM	Revue des Études Méditerranées et du Monde Musulman
RO	Rocznik Orientalistyczny
ROMM	Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée
SAO	Studia et Acta Orientalia
SI	Studia Islamica
StIr	Studia Iranica
TAD	Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi
TALID	Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi
TD	Tarih Dergisi
TDAYB	Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yıllığı Belleten
TED	Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi
THİTM	Türk Hukuk ve İktisat Tarihi Mecmuası
TİD	Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi
TM	Türkiyat Mecmuası
TOEM	Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası
TSAB	Turkish Studies Association Bulletin
TV	Tarih Vesikaları
WI	Die Welt des Islams
WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft

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1 Introduction

The Circle of Justice

The Circle of Justice is an ancient Middle Eastern political concept, and this book tells its story. The Circle of Justice is actually a mnemonic, a summarized description, of the interrelationship between Middle Eastern states and their societies. It got its name in the sixteenth century Ottoman Empire, but it had been written in a circle as early as the eleventh century and its circularity had been recognized much earlier; in fact, the earliest written descriptions of this relationship come from the third millennium BCE. Experience has demonstrated vividly how little the West understands Middle Eastern political culture and how poorly adapted Western political science is to that task. In an effort to pay more attention to indigenous political concepts, this book examines a concept of social justice based on interdependence between rulers and ruled, one that underlies their differing degrees of power and obvious conflicts of interest and that holds society together when such conflicts would pull it apart. The book traces the Circle's concept of justice from the earliest manifestation of its elements in ancient Near Eastern texts through the twentieth century, its transmission throughout society and from one regime to the next, the systems and institutions through which it was put into practice, and where we have evidence, the use of those institutions by ordinary people as well as rulers and elites.

What is the Circle of Justice?

The term "Circle of Justice" comes from the sixteenth-century Ottoman writer Kinalizade, whose version of the Circle, actually written in a circle, is in the illustration for this chapter. A saying quoted in many Middle Eastern works on politics expressed this indigenous concept of politics in shorthand form:

No power without troops,
No troops without money,
No money without prosperity,
No prosperity without justice and good administration.

This little saying encapsulated political relationships visible in the ancient Near Eastern empires of the Babylonians and Assyrians and later those of the Persians and Abbasids, Seljuks and Ottomans. The saying existed in many versions and translations and was quoted or referred to in a variety of literary genres and contexts, but it was more than a set of words. It summarized and idealized a set of interdependent political relationships that originated in the ancient Near Eastern city-states and that is known as the Near

3 *Introduction: The Circle of Justice*

Eastern concept of state.¹ The saying was both a schematic representation of the articulation of the elements of such a state and a recommendation for their optimal functioning.² Its full expression, first attested in the tenth century, reads as follows:

The world is a garden, hedged in by sovereignty
Sovereignty is lordship, preserved by law
Law is administration, governed by the king
The king is a shepherd, supported by the army
The army are soldiers, fed by money
Money is revenue, gathered by the people
The people are servants, subjected by justice
Justice is happiness, the well-being of the world.

In the Near Eastern concept of state, the ruler, with divine blessing or even divine appointment, protected the realm from external and internal enemies, for which he needed a strong military force. This force had to be supported financially; the money came from taxes, and in an agrarian society revenues could be high only if the cultivators were productive. Productivity was insured by the army's protection of society from invasion, banditry, and civil strife; by the maintenance of the infrastructure of irrigation works, roads, and markets; and by the provision of justice, which included, besides the enforcement of law, the remission or reduction of tax demands in times of disaster and control over the exploitative tendencies of landholders and governmental officials. The Near Eastern concept of state saw the ruler as far above the elites, the ally of the peasants against both elites and outside forces, in contrast to the European concept of kingship in which the king was the leading aristocrat and the nobles his peers. The exaltation of the ruler was one aspect of this concept of state to which Islamic thinkers objected, but its purpose was to grant the ruler unchallenged authority, especially over military and administrative personnel. He also had to be accessible to information and requests from the productive classes of society.

The absence or malfunctioning of any of these elements broke the Circle and threatened state power. If justice were not provided, for example, economic productivity and therefore revenue would decrease, the army would not be paid and would rebel, and the ruler would be unable to exercise power. Cooperation between rulers and ruled was thus the key to political stability.³ That was not a theory of government but a fact preceding political theorization and one often demonstrated in Middle Eastern history. Philosophers discussed the Circle's concept of justice in terms of "balance" or "equilibrium," but it was less a philosophical concept than a political one. Like patronage systems, this concept of justice involved reciprocal obligations that legitimized claims by inferiors on superiors as well as vice versa.⁴ Special institutions developed to deliver this justice: state-supported irrigation systems that ensured fertility and prosperity, laws and revenue surveys that apportioned taxes justly, and courts of petitioning that heard and adjudicated complaints.⁵ The continued functioning of these institutions through times of ideological change gave the concept of the Circle greater permanence in Middle Eastern society.

The Near Eastern state contrasts with the governance of the nomadic groups that sometimes gained control of Middle Eastern society. Tribally based, nomadic society tended to be egalitarian and personalistic rather than hierarchical and bureaucratic; the chief was a "first among equals" and the government was wherever he was. The political

unit was much more apt to split and divide, and leadership was often contested among the sons of the ruler, all of whom were considered potential heirs to power. Finally, taxation was not an annual collection of the surplus production but an occasional requisition usually for a specific purpose.

This book demonstrates the pervasiveness and importance of the Circle of Justice in the Middle East. While the circular form of the statement is not attested until Islamic times, texts containing the same elements and relationships appeared for millennia before and after the rise of Islam. Expressions in this book like “the ideas of the Circle of Justice” or “the concept of the Circle” refer not only to the circular quotation itself but also to the set of relationships to which it refers. Scholars have often dismissed the Circle of Justice as a purely literary conceit, something known only to writers and readers of mirrors for princes (advice works for current and future kings) or works of *adab* (collections of interesting and useful facts and sayings compiled for elites and courtiers). But the Circle was more than a literary curiosity; it was a description of real political relations in an agrarian empire, an understanding in capsule form of the political and economic interdependence between rulers and ruled that Middle Eastern governments and peoples had already arrived at.

There was a strong degree of consensus across the pre-Islamic and Islamic Middle East with respect to political values and goals, a consensus periodically interrupted, usually by outside invasion, but repeatedly reestablished. Rulers trumpeted these values to legitimize their exercise of power, and people used them to hold their rulers to account – not to thwart or usurp their power, but to induce them to employ it to meet their subjects’ needs.⁶ This complex of ideas was modified and added to over time; some regimes gave it more importance than others, and when some rulers ignored or discarded it, other segments of society kept the concept alive. We cannot at this late date determine how just any particular ruler or government “really” was, but we can see whether they made public and falsifiable claims of justice and established or maintained institutions and practices to provide justice and prosperity to their people. And while we cannot say how well ordinary people knew the sayings in their literary forms, we can judge whether they understood the ruler’s responsibility for justice if they used the institutions he provided and demanded this justice when it was not forthcoming voluntarily. The fact that governments attempted to put the Circle of Justice into practice shows that they recognized the people’s demand for justice, and the fact that people acted on it by presenting complaints against government officials indicates that they understood these relationships and considered their acts politically effective. Intellectuals were able to use the Circle for advising and exerting pressure on the ruler precisely because it was not a maxim of deceased pagan rulers out of a dusty old book but one of the ordinary ways most people thought about politics.

Intellectual history studies the origin and development of ideas, and numerous scholars cited in the notes have explicated the Circle of Justice as an idea. This book, as a cultural history, studies the expression, dissemination, and implementation of that idea in society. Because the evidence comes mainly from texts, the literary representation of the Circle holds a prominent place in this analysis, but the purpose of the many quotations and references is not so much to analyze the Circle’s conceptual development as to explore its circulation through society and from one society to another. Beyond verbal representations, visible expressions of the concept were a significant form of transmission, and still more significant were its enactments in ritual and in governmental processes, the media that publicized the concept most widely beyond the literate elite. Since we cannot