CHAPTER II

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN KUWAIT

General Feature of Kuwait Society:

The founding of the original settlement of Kuwait is believed to have taken place about 1710. The name Kuwait, the Arabic diminutive of Kut, a fortress, probably referred originally to a small fort built to guard. The early community when they found conditions favourable and decided to make what had at first been a camping-site into a mere permanent home. It has been suggested that a Portuguese fort stood as the site of Kuwait town, but of this no evidence remains, although Niebuhr states that there was one "near Garen" (the name by which Kuwait was known among early European travellers).

In the 18th century, the area which is today Kuwait state formed part of the territory of the Bani-Khalid, the powerful Hasan tribe which dominated north-east Arabia. At the time of the arrival of the Aniza colonists there were doubtless other isolated groups settled here, probably

fishermen, but in due course the authority of the Sabah, leaders of the new arrivals, was accepted by all who lived in the area round the bay. The early settlers were called Bani Utub, but the late Shaikh Abdullah al-Salim has stated that this was not the designation of a clan, but merely the name by which the colonists came to be known after their long migration, meaning "the people who moved or trekked."

The line of succession of the first five rulers of Kuwait was from father to son, but hereditary succession has never been considered obligatory. On the death of an Amir, his successor was chosen by his people in the same manner as beduin tribes traditionally chose their chiefs, by settling a member of the ruling family who had already proved himself to have the requisite qualities of personality, leadership and good luck. The rulers of Kuwait - in the days before oil brought sophistication to both the economy and the character of the country had to govern two distinct groups of people whose interests were widely
different, and often conflicting. The town population, except in the early days, probably always out numbers the bedu, and from their activities the place derived its prosperity and the ruling family its revenue. But the beduin population, though poorer and fewer in number, enjoyed great prestige. By Arab tradition they embodied all the most admirable manly virtues, upholding the desert code of honour and chivalry, and constituted the fighting strength of the state. The Sheikhs of Kuwait, never forgetting their own beduin origins, always maintained traditional links with tribes men. They had to combine a beduin knowledge of the desert and a merchant's knowledge of town affairs. Indeed, as leaders of their beduin armies in the battle, they had to be completely familiar not only with the terrain of the desert, but with every aspect of tribal life. To keep the fiercely independent nomads under control it was essential for a settled Shaikh to treat them with the respect due to their aristocratic understanding; to sit in open majlis. Thus treated, the desert dwellers
would acknowledge the Shaikh's authority, and pay him the honour which they would give to a great tribal leader.

It was normal practice among the Shaikhs until comparatively recently to go out to camp in the desert in spring, attended by their personal retinue of beduin guards. It was customary for the Amir and the male members of his family to take wives from among the women of noble tribes. The tribal man despises a townsman who enjoys only the soft and sedimentary life. The rulers of Kuwait have always shown a familiarity with the customs and rigours of the desert. Old Kuwait had a population of about 60,000 by 1930, with the pleasantly disorganised look of a community which has grown up at random. The houses, built round courtyards, were mostly of one story only, but here and there a single upper room would rise above the general level of roof tops. The town stretched four miles along the sea shore and perhaps two miles inland at its densest central part. The poorer quarters for the most part lay

at the back or landward side of the town as the South Eastern fringe were many walled hautas or gardens which were used by men of prosperous families as their places of recreation amid the scant greenery of a few side trees.

Another, quite separate, area of Kuwait was the sea front. There the road between the houses and the shore provided one of the most picturesque scenes of the old town. The boats which took shape here were marvels of the carpenter's art, made with primitive traditional tools, but shaped into lines so functionally graceful that they were a delight to the eye. The sea faring activity in Kuwait in those days fell into three categories. There were the smaller boats used in local traffic, including the fleet of medium-sized bourns which carried Kuwait's fresh water supply from the Shatt al-Arab, the lighters which brought ashore the cargo from the British India steamers anchored in the bay, and the fishing fleet. There were the ocean-going bourns, the special pride of the Kuwaiti ship-builders, and the third type of seafaring activity was pearl-diving.
Kuwait before the days of oil was a Muslim state barely touched by outside influences. The original population were all of the sunni sect, but there was also a large of shia group, many of them Iraqi or/Persian origin. Together they formed a God-fearing community for whom religion coloured practically every thought and action of their lives, in a way that has something of a parallel in medieval Europe. The observance of the five daily prayers was never a meaningless formality. Similarly, the fast of Ramadhan was an exercise in self-denial by which men proved their personal devotion.

There were few comforts in the average Kuwait family's daily life in those days, and no protection against sickness or epidemics. Whenever disasters or distress came their way they accepted it fatalistically, especially bedu, whose control over their emotions was absolute. Theft, dishonesty, or crimes of violence were rare in old Kuwait town and when such offences occurred in the desert there were

21 Fareeth Zahra, A New Look at Kuwait (London), pp. 129-134.
well established rulers for compensation in money or blood. There could have been few societies where the accepted moral code was more universally observed, and it was recognized by everybody that the code was God's law rather than man's. An evil doer was by definition "one who does not fear God" or are who neither prays nor, fasts. Today in other changed material conditions of Kuwait, religion no longer exerts such a strong influence over men's lives and the individual's observance of prayer and fasting is often less strict than it used to be. More sophisticated Arabs will often argue that some of the Islamic rules of life, such as abstinence, from alcohol, are no longer relevant in a changed society. Nevertheless, Kuwait remains a Muslim country, and a natural unquestioning belief in God and in the teaching of the Quran remains deep rooted in the Kuwaiti character a comforting and stabilising influence through times of bewildering change. Most of the nomads to be found in the Kuwait emiteral and up till the 1940's belonged to the great tribes of east and central Arabia. Their clothing was shabby, never washed and rarely changed, but their bearing
was proud, their movements dignified, and they faced the world with a firm and penetrating gaze, conscious of their superiority. Their women folk, who could usually be seen busy around the kitchen-quarters of a camp were clothed in long coloured gowns, their heads draped in black, and their faces covered with the burga or snask with two eye-holes. They remained veiled even when attending to the cooking or household tasks. The tents in which they lived were black, woven by the women from the wool of their own sheep and goats; long and low in shape, they were divided into separate sections for men and women. The men's section was immediately recognisable by the coffee-pots which stood ready by the brushwood fire, while the women's section would often be more closed by having part of the side of the tent brought across the front to give some privacy. The rigours of desert life have dictated the importance of hospitality and other customs which ensure a man's safety

in the harshest of natural conditions. A chivalrous attitude to women in warfare has generally been faithfully observed except at moments of blind fanaticism concept of honour, loyalty, dependability, bravery and obedience to religious and social laws were of paramount importance to them, often dearer than life itself.

The ruling clan has no sub-divisions, but the other two clans within the tribe divide again, the Buraih are composed of Aulad Wasil (in the west) and Aulad Ali (in the east) and Bani Abdilla. Each of these six sub-tribes then divides again into six sections, each having its recognized leader, each having anything from thirty to a hundred tents.

Comparison between the economics of pre-and post-oil Kuwait is meaningless. The two periods are of totally different dimensions. Nevertheless, it is interesting to look briefly at the commercial scene as it was in the days when pearls and animal skins represented the country's primary direct sources of income. As described by Colonel J.C. More in his 1926.
The capitals, he said, had a population of some 50,000 souls. About 10,000 of these were Persians, 4,000 Negroes, a few Jews, and two or three Chaldean Christians from Iraq. The rest were Arabs. Rice and Coffee were by far the largest items. Export of hide, pearls, re-exported sugar and tea, mostly delivered to Persian posts, was predominant. Kuwait in those days was not a rich country, but neither by Middle East standards was it poor. It made the best of meagre natural resources, supported itself through two world wars and the critical periods of Saudi blockade, and boasted a number of wealthy merchant families, yet it remained an essentially tribal society, without book-keeping or a civil service to record and regulate its finances, its women in Purdah, its feet planted firmly in desert tradition. There had been a number of earlier attempts to introduce modern amenities such as the setting-up of a health ministry by Shaikh Ahmad in 1936 and the opening of a free clinic to supplement the strained resources of Dr. Mylrea's Mission. In old Kuwait, twenty-five years ago, the mud-walled houses of the ordinary people
were/the same colour as the ground, and they rose from it like an organic growth.

Social stratification in Pre-oil Period:

Trade flourished in Kuwait prior to the discovery of oil but, it remained a very poor country. The average personal income was low. Pearl was most important item for export during the time. The majority of the Kuwaiti population was engaged in the business of pearl diving.

"Pearl diving was an occupation lasting from May to September. It operated along with the following lines.

(1) The Naukhuda (Captain of the ship) owned and operated ship.

(2) The divers, who lived and searched for oysters.

(3) The Siyals were those labourers responsible for letting the divers to the bottom of the sea, and who would pull them up when they collecting the oysters.

(4) Radaif who helped the Siyals in their jobs."

The money from the sale of the pearls was divided as follows:

- Naukhuda: 5 shares
- Divers: 3 shares
- Siyals: 2 shares
- Radaifs: 1 share

The captain used to borrow money from the pearl merchant in order to pay his workers and the merchant used to take over the ship, and the captain and workers began their work for him. Likewise, a new economic relationship was established that has a profound impact on Kuwait society.

Kuwait became famous in the Gulf prior to the discovery of oil for boat-building. The skilled labourers of boat building were Bahraini in-migrants. They were Arabs but belonged to the Shia sect of Islam. Historians considered them to be Arabs who converted to the Shia sect of Islam. They were skilled in this particular trade in Kuwait.

Kuwait was a traditional Arab country. The tribal and extended family relationship was pre-dominant in pre-oil period.
To complete the record of important buildings surviving in Kuwait from the pre-oil era, one must mention the American Mission compound. The pioneers of this Mission were Dr. C.S.G. Mylrea and the Rev and Mrs. Calverley. Kuwait's heritage from the past consists of a few notable buildings and a small number of private houses whose owners are conservative enough to prefer their traditional homes to new-fangled concrete boxes. A small body of enlightened citizens is interested in preserving what remains from the past, but their opinion may be over ruled by the majority who is impatient with the old where a property is not owned by the Shaikhs, or by a powerful and influential family, it has little chance of survival against the pressures of Kuwaiti business tycoons, who need offices, shops, and modern residential properties to let. Within the old town wall there were two large areas of cemetery, which in the old days were desolate places of derelict land frequented only by stray dogs and, according to the badawin,
by spirits. There were no identifiable grave-stones, tombs were marked one by lumps of rock. The larger cemetery at the Western end of town, where Shaikh Ahmad al Jabir was buried, is still unchanged, but a high concrete wall now hides it from passing eyes. In former days this wide waste land of the dead was visible from all sides, enclosed only by low walls of crumbling mud.

Arab houses in the past were flat-roofed because Kuwaitis liked to sleep out on the roof in summer. But the intense heat always caused the roofs to crack, and the sudden torrential rain storms of winter invariably caused leaks in the old houses. No country could have moved further or changed faster than Kuwait, but its leaders are anxious not to lose sight of their own past. In the small, pious, industrious, community of thirty years ago, life had few comforts, but the older generation can remember that Kuwaitis were not unhappy inspite of the austerity of those times.

The Kuwait Museum today provides the visible evidence of official interest in the past, and here the authorities are aiming to preserve for future generations the everyday objects which are no longer needed or used, as well as the archaeological finds which have given Kuwaitis a new sense of the continuity of their history. In the Museum there are household utensils, baskets, water-skins, all the domestic equipment which were used in their daily task by Arab women in the olden days, but which are totally strange to today's westernized Kuwaiti school children.

In another department were some models in miniature depicting scenes of old Kuwait there was the Quranic school, with the boys sitting cross-legged on the floor as hot summer afternoons the door would stand wide open to the streets.

Failaka, the small island tying at the month of Kuwait bay, in 1935 when it mounds covered with postherds - Arrian, the Greek writer of the 2nd century A.D., who was the chronicler of the campaigns of Alexander the Great, gives information about an island of this name in the Persian Gulf. The discovery

of the Greek site as Failaka aroused keen interest in official circles in Kuwait, and the Government set up a Directorate of Antiquities and passed a law prohibiting the removal from Kuwait of any excavated objects, which were declared to be the property of the state. It is all these Failaka discoveries, both bronze age and Greek, which form the valuable and important archaeological sections of the Kuwait Museum.

We also came to know how far Islamic teachings and the extreme puritanism of the Wahhabis in the 18th and 19th centuries, had discouraged all forms of artistic expression in the Arabian Peninsula, and whether the creation and love of beauty had virtually been trained out of the people of Arabia through the harsh strictures of their faith. In the realm of craftsmanship, could express his artistic instinct in such things as the decorative worth added to leather goods, or in the patterns of silver studs which adorned the old wooden drinking bowls and incense-burners. In the old days there spread the medieval atmosphere of the old suqs, and the dark watchmen with lanterns would patrol the deserted alleys.
The sense of community in the small town of pre-oil days was fostered by neighbourly gatherings of men outside their houses at the end of the day, and before mass-communications this was how news was heard and passed on. The elderly Kuwaiti does not want to sit behind a wall where he can see nothing, he wants to be able to pass the day with friends and cast his sharp eye on the world about him. It is hard to sum-up the prevalent opinion about marriage custom today, hard to know the true feelings of the people in such matters which concern the deepest human emotions and the most binding of ancient customs. Arabs do not often disclose their inner most thoughts, and one only begins to understand the workings of their minds after a lifetime of experience and observation. Now in a time of social revolution, it is more difficult than ever to estimate the climate of opinion, or to know how deeply the modern ideas have been absorbed. There is certainly a generation gap greater than in almost any other society in the world, as parents find their children claiming new freedom, and know that it is useless to preach the old properties.
In every society men have made the rules by which a woman is judged chaste and respectable and in old Kuwait the rules laid down that decency was only preserved by seclusion in the harem, where a woman never met or was seen by men outside the immediate family circle.

Before Kuwaitis first school - the Mubarakaya - was opened in 1912, a few children were taught in the homes of self-styled teachers. There was no paper available so that pupil smeared clay on a block of wood and made inscriptions with a stick. At the Mubarakaya school the headmaster wrote his own stenciled text books. The emphasis was on arithmetic and letter writing, though later, history, geography and drawing were introduced by teachers from Palestine.

Before the discovery of oil, Kuwait was not much developed. The people were sticking firmly to the old traditions and culture.
The women were not given freedom to walk freely in the market or to get education in the schools and colleges. Educationally they were not much more advanced. They observed Purdah system. The buildings were not architecturally advanced. Bedwins inhabited the place mostly. They tended and reared their cattle and depended on them fully. They put the wool of the animals into use and earned their livelihood. They stuck up to their religion firmly. Quazi used to give his verdict and penalise the guilty and the criminals according to the Islamic Shariat. The people were poor and destitutes. Even technological and scientific development was at stake.

E. Social Stratification in post-oil Period:

After the discovery of oil, Kuwait entered into a new era of peace, prosperity and development. Export and Import system evolved fully and much fortunes were brought into Kuwait. Schools, colleges and Universities were established in large numbers. Full freedom was given to the women for receiving education at the Universities. The strength of the students at colleges and Universities rose by large numbers. Buildings with new architectures came into being. Social welfare and other departments relating to the speedy growth and development of Kuwait were established. Bright students were sent to the British Universities on scholarships. Now, Kuwaitis felt themselves much at ease. Judicial system was fully evolved and developed. The only old thing that still survived was the power of the Shaikh as a monarch. The Shaikh, inspite of the fact that judiciary held the supreme power and enjoyed many privileges, was the Supreme Judge to give the final decision. Things underwent

Vast changes. Kuwait now wore a new look. Contracts for new buildings with new architecture and designs were given out in large numbers.

The amount of progress that Kuwait has achieved in the span of a quarter of a century simply remarkable. Though, of course, this could be possible only because of the advent of oil which is a great source of wealth, yet keeping in view the small size of its population and geography, the achievements have been marvellous. During the past three decades there has been monumental progress in the fields of industry, housing, transport, education and social services etc.

The concept of the welfare state is part and parcel of the paternalis nature of Kuwait's Shaikhdom, though it owes a great deal to western models. As soon as money became available in big volume, health and education had a prior call on it. The Emiri-hospital, sanatoria, maternity units and a new big hospital were under construction. The most advanced diagnostic and thereapeutie equipment available were shipped to Kuwait in
enormous quantities. One of the first objectives of this expanding health services was to deal with the two most serious endemic diseases of the desert, small-pox and tuberculoses. The American Mission Hospital had fought a large and difficult battle to keep the former under control. Small-pox was mainly brought in by tribesmen from the Najd and the last great epidemic had occurred in 1932 when refugees crowded Kuwait following the Ithwan rebellion of the 1932 and its consequences. Violet Dickson gives a graphic description.

"In the first ten days of the epidemic over, 4,000 persons died. It was a terrifying sight to see the corpses being carried daily to their last resting place. But so great was the secrecy that we could not find out if cases had occurred in the houses of our own servants --- The Primitive Arabs knew only one cure; they believed that are particular smell, different in every case, had the power to cure, but the problem was to find the one and only smell which would be effective. In Nazzall's case (the ruler's chief guide and falconer) every possible thing was brought
before him, fruit, flowers, vegetables, cooked food etc.
Then children, young man and old women were made to pass before him......"

Tuberculosis proved a more intractable problem of all the ailments of the desert. This had taken the firmest hold, Philby, Thesiger, Thomas, Dickson and other Europeans who moved among beduins frequently spoke of the cruel coughing bouts that sometimes afflicted entire Arab families. The massive sanatarium that was opened in that year on the sea front at Shuwaikh was a model T.B. Treatment centre. It consisted of a three-storey air-conditioned building surrounded by a flower garden with every conceivable facility for treatment and recuperation. In 1956, an anti-tuberculosis campaign was begun in conjunction with the World Health Organization. A chest consultant with four medical assistants, a research team, nurses and radiologists used a mobile unit to travel around the desert in order to find out the real extent of infection and to encourage sufferers among the Bedu to submit to its treatment.
The Al Sabah hospital, opened in June 1962, marked the culmination of a decade of tremendous activity and spectacular spending as the welfare services. A further million dinars were spent on medical and surgical equipment and ancillaries, including a helicopter landing pad to bring in patients from the desert and island territories. In teaching, architecture, engineering, the growth of professional services was just as dramatic, and the importation of experts just as pronounced. For ten years or more, Kuwait has been in the probably unique position of having more expatriates than natives in its population.

The first historic gesture of revolt made by Kuwaiti girls happened in 1955. At this time a group of girls in one of the large secondary schools, whose rules insisted that pupils must wear Abbas to come to school, took their cloaks into the school yard and burnt them. They were told by the authorities that they could please themselves about wearing the Abba, but that if they wished to stop wearing it

they must also stop attending classes. Now the first generation of their sex have had a modern education, and could, therefore, demand freedom to earn their own living and break out of Purdah.

Today, abbas are no longer compulsory for school girls, Kuwaiti women have made the new ways acceptable by showing that they can behave with modesty and propriety without the external trappings of garments which were originally designed to evade them from the lascivian gaze of men.

One particular interesting sign of women’s new freedome has been the opening of a special ladies department in the Kuwait National Bank. It is run by a widow of a director. Now the girls have achieved their final emergence into social equality when the more enlightened men allowed their young wives to meet their own-made acquaintances. Now Kuwaiti girls work in Offices, drive cars, move about the streets freely in European Clothes.

The new schools which had opened a few years after oil production were by 1960 producing their first generation of
literate school-leavers, both boys and girls, ready for the thousands of clerical jobs in the various administrative departments. Today, wherever possible Kuwaitis have the dignified jobs in offices; manual labour is done by foreigners.

The first great change we noticed in the dress of the workers.

In the early fifties the workers in the streets were nearly all dressed in blue denim, and even Kuwaitis of the merchant class were experimenting with suits of European style.

Those who are setting the tone and pace of new Kuwait belong to the generation aged thirty and under, those who grew up with oil, and can scarcely remember the old traditional Kuwait with their opinions and outlook moulded by modern schools they have little interest in their parents' former way of life, and most of them do not want to be reminded of old times. The leading members of this group come from influential merchant families well established in old Kuwait, such as the Al Mulla, Al Ohanim, the Gharaballi, the Sagar, and the Diraj to mention only a few. Among them are also some distinguished families of Persian origin, domiciled in Kuwait for several generations, such as the
Behbehani and the Qabazard. Many of them have received part of their education in Europe or the U.S., and the ablest of them have completed their courses and qualified in competition with Western students. The new generations are widely-travelled. Many of them have married British, American or German wives, and since these girls would not consent to being shut away in women's quarters, but understandably insist on leading a European style in life, going out with their husbands and jointly entertaining in their own homes, they have set an example which has helped Kuwaiti girls to achieve a similar freedom.

Those modern families live in luxuriously furnished houses in the best suburban areas, and entertain the European way. Although Kuwaiti state is officially dry, in most of their houses the cocktail bar is the most prominent feature of the sitting-room, and there is always a lavish supply of drink.

It is hard to sum up the prevalent opinion about marriage customs today, hard to know the true feelings of
the people in such matters which concern the deepest human emotions and the most binding of ancient customs. Arabs do not often disclose their innermost thoughts, and one only begins to understand the working of their minds after a life-time of experience and observation. Now, in a time of social revolution, it is more difficult to estimate the climate of opinion, or to know deeply the modern ideas have been absorbed. Among the students at Kuwaiti first University, whose graduates were due to complete their courses in summer of 1970, there was a high proportion of girls.

As stated earlier, Kuwait is tackling the education problem with energy and resourcefulness. Its own external expansion of primary, secondary and University training has been supplemented by generous aid to other Gulf regions, where several schools have been paid for and handsomely endowed. Kuwait very sensibly sees its own long-term development as being within the context of the Gulf region as a whole, rather than as that of an isolated pocket of wealth
and good intention. In 1968, the country also started a broadly based vocational training scheme in collaboration with the International Labour Office. This to some extent begins where the Kuwait oil company let off, with its technical training schools at Magwa and Ahmadi by providing instruction in the basic skills of electrical and mechanical maintenance, the supervision of distillation and chemical plant, welding, and the repair of those vital manifestations of the affluent society: air conditioners, refrigerators and television sets. A second such institute, catering to technical, administrative and management training, was due to open in 1971. Self-dependance, and as an obvious corollary, the diversification of industry, are the urgent aims of all Kuwait's planning.

New streets have been created without reference to the old winding alleys, towering new marble-faced office-blocks give no hint of what was there before they rose to dominate the modern scene. There are multi-storey government

and commercial buildings, streets of plate glass-fronted shops, international hotels.

Proud of its transition from the old autocracy to a democratic form of government, Kuwait has the required quota of administrative buildings to house its new legions of bureaucrats - one may have a glance while passing through at the imposing size and opulence of the Municipality office, the National Assembly building, and the Ministry of Guidance and Information, huge structures of glass and concrete which outshine the other landmarks of the town's business centre. The whole of this ultra-modern centre is evidence of Kuwait's boundless self-confidence, and her determination to show that in material and technological achievement this small state is among the most advanced in the world.

Kuwaitis have used their money first and foremost to buy for themselves a higher standard of living, but they would not be human if they did not also desire prestigious monuments to proclaim visibly that Kuwait has moved into the 20th century. Kuwait is full of the outward signs of tremendous wealth and the implications of power that go with it.
Though Geographically small, Kuwait has the highest per capita income in the world. Through the financial heart of this city in a desert flow steadily increasing oil revenues which for 1971-2 reached the astronomical figure of £ 38 million a year, the greatest economic miracles of recent times. In Kuwait there had always been shrewed merchants and traders making a profitable living, and in the abundant opportunities of the act era their financial acumen were turned to good account. Kuwait benefitted from their experience and the merchant families themselves acquired handsome, personal fortunes. Businessmen from other Middle East countries, especially those in contracting firms, have also done very well out of Kuwait and the state now has a wealthy middle class, both Kuwaiti & foreign, which is exceptionally large in proportion to the total population.

In the town centre the people who crowd the pavements come from many countries, but among men, Kuwaiti men may be distinguished because they still wear their own traditional dress, the dishdasha, launderies have appeared on every street corner, and it is obvious that they do good business. There
are young women of Arab complexion in European dress with mini-skirts, modern shoes, elaborate coiffures. In the city nearly three-quarters of a million people, perhaps one-seventh, are indigenous inhabitants. The rest are post-1946 immigrants who came to share in the oil-boom, and continued to come till they far out-numbered the original population. The Kuwaiti today has positively to assert his own identity or be submerged in the tide of foreigners.

Along the broad dual carriage ways which form the city's traffic artilleries, elegant new cars move in constant streams, bumper to bumper. So great is the density of cars here that it needed the world's most eminent consultants, including Professor Colin Buchanan, to devise system to allow a free flow of traffic, when the state began to revive its first oil revenues, a London firm Oatonun -planning consultants was commissioned to design the layout of the new Kuwait, only a few roads and buildings based as this plan were ever built, since it became clear in a matter of months that the

30. Fareeth Zahra
A New Look at Kuwait
original plan was going to be totally inadequate. The ugliness of Kuwait comes from the outlandish designs of many of the private houses, whose perpetrators have shown no regard for conventional rules of style and proportion, but more perhaps from the fact that since the building boom started, scarcely any parts of the central or suburban areas have been finished. The harshness of the Kuwait summer, with its sandstorms and desicating heat, means that all buildings need refurbishing annually. In the well-to-do residential areas, new road-plans, new drainage systems, new buildings, prevent many pleasant quarters from establishing themselves as completed, finalized, and tidy. In less prosperous areas the unitidiness is even worse.

There is one aspect of Kuwait for which everyone has unqualified praise, the trees and lawns and gardens which beautify the new city. There are trees everywhere, and producing shade/ rest for sun-stricken eyes. A particular source of national pride is the shuwaikh centre of Education.

31. Ministry of Guidance and Information of Kuwait
Kuwait Today, Nairobi, p.147.
Here, amid pleasantly laid out gardens stand a complex of buildings comprising secondary school and Technical College. In the design of the secondary school Lebanese architects used the traditional arch as a basic motif and these buildings have stood the test of time and still looking pleasing and appropriate in the Kuwait scene.

Among the other interesting and striking features of the town today are the mosques, whose slender minarets and attractive vertical 'interest to the general scene. Most of these mosques are new and use domed roofs in a variety of forms. In some cases a new minaret has been added to an older place of worship, where the former simple courtyard with its pillared arcade still remains. The sunni traditions in Najd and Kuwait framed upon artistic adornment in mosques, and in former days these places of worship were amongst the simplest and most unpretentious of buildings. The change from the simple old form of minaret came, like all other changes in Kuwait, with the age of oil. Kuwaitis felt that some of their /wealth/ must be devoted to making their mosques more elegant and elaborate, more befitting the status
of new Kuwait. Thursday nights are celebrated with the illumination of the electric bulbs as a mark of the eve of Friday, the Muslim sabbath.

A striking feature of the ship-builders' houses as the sea-front was their huge old teak doors, ornamented with large round iron studs, and sometimes with carving. In the righthand half there was usually a wicket-gate, the only part that was normally opened for the family's comings and goings. The cemetery at the east end of the town has been turned into a pleasant park with lawns and flowering shrubs. Because feelings were still sensitive about walking over the dead, a new six-foot-deep layer of earth was laid over the whole area before the gardens were planted.

Amir's new Seif Palace avoids both the monotony of the featureless concrete and glass style and the pretentious eccentricity of many private buildings. Its outline is pleasantly broken up into sections of varying height and a facade whose planes are set at different depths. Wall niches are backed with colourless titles, some plain turquoise blue, others with designs suggesting Persian art. In several
rooms there are woiden chests painted sea-green, which with a subtle use of brass suggest the traditional Kuwaiti bride chest, today so keenly sought after in the antique markets of the town. In the same room, lying like a pool of softest pink and grey on the stone floor, is a beautiful priceless antique Persian carpets, one of the treasures of the palace. Also much in evidence were modern books on current affair. In due course we came to a section which housed all the classic English works on Arabia and the Gulf. The interior of the palace gave us a feeling of harmony, of a building well-designed and appropriate to its purpose and background.

Over the years it had become a habit to hire Palestinians for every job which a Kuwaiti could not fill.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CLASS COMPOSITION:

Technological Development:

As stated earlier, Kuwaitis were fascinated by technological achievement and the coverage of the moon shot in the local press had included interviews with a group of young
man who worked in Kuwait's telecommunications, Brigadier Mubarak showed the Dame Dayish enthusiasm for modern machinery when he told us that he had that morning flown down to Bahrain and back in a Lightening jet fighter belonging to the army. Kuwait has never found it hard to recruit men for the army, because to the badawin bearing arms for his tribal Shaikh has always been a traditional part of life. However, the more disciplinarian side of army life is not too popular among recruits from the desert. The soldiers on guard duty never stood in stiff poses in the European manner, but merely adopted a normal comfortable stance and moved about from time to time when they grew tired of one position.

After many experiments with different type of workers' houses the Kuwait Government is now producing a design which meets with the general approval of those who came to live in it. In the early days of development foreign architects were unwilling to create houses on the ancient Arab Principle of rooms set round an enclosed courtyard, and in their first
efforts created box-like dwellings which gave no privacy except inside the house itself. Now from the experience they have seen the need to enclose such buildings within an outer wall, and the occupants can enjoy the feeling of seclusion which Arabs consider so important. In the days of living in tents no special receptacles were required to dispose of ash, or date stones, or bones from a meal, which could simply be tossed out of the tent on the sand. But now in carpeted houses the occupants are finding that modern conditions create new needs.

The Iraqi women had always been skilled at making colourful long-pite rugs, dyeing the wool of their own white sheep for the purpose. On the floors of the houses they were not using such rugs, for sale in the Kuwait market. In this way we can finally say that Kuwait is a land of formidable attainments, and inevitable mistakes. Its people have embraced the opportunities of wealth with hard practical sense and an exhuberant self-confidence, creating out of them an assuming Arab market-town and seaport which had been old
Kuwait an impressive new metropolis. Nowhere, except among the very old, was there any nostalgia for the former simple life. The whole phenomenon of their country's rise to wealth and power was something they had taken in their stride with a great sense of pride and a marvellous adaptability. Unlike primitive aboriginal peoples in other parts of the world who have failed to come to terms with civilization, the desert people had been able to accept the new order of things, and were sharing in the new prosperity.

Modern Kuwait did not simply knock down the old and replace it with a marble and concrete urban jungle. It began, in the early 1950's, an ambitious programme of tree-planting to break the desert winds and sandstorms, to assist and attempt to stem erosion and irrigate. In the more hopeful regions, contractors denuded the sea shore of its sand and shingle in order to lay the foundations and mix the concrete for houses, cinemas, civic buildings, schools, hospitals, sports, arenas, roads, garages and all the other manifestations of the wealthy

32. Sapsted David
Kuwait
and socially conscious society. The bustle of building activity and the turmoil of traffic-laden roads is not hard to imagine. The new Kuwait has the best and the worst of the Western civilization. Architects and civil Engineers from virtually every country that could lay claim to a reputation in those spheres came in from Egypt, Morocco, Europe, Britain and America, armed with their own particular solutions and riding their own hobby horses of the cannot between the indiscipline of this brave new world and the traditional architecture of Kuwait, Dr. Saba Shiber has said:

"Its buildings were closely knit labyrinth that repelled heat and sandstorms --- having thick walls, narrow apertures and properly located slits for ventilation --- Despite all the millions of dinars spent since the discovery of oil, one can safely say --- that few are the new buildings which obey any of the laws of functionalism and organic design."

It was a London firm of planning consultants for that I tried to give cohesion to their mushroom development. A development board was set up in 1952 and this tried to
coordinate the activities of a multiplicity of building schemes during the next critical decade. There were some notable exceptions to the indiscipline. The main luxury hotels were build in logically modern style and sensible locations. The flourishing port and industrial centre of Shuwaikh and the great 20th century complex of Shuaiba are unrestrained in their tribute to industrialization. By 1970, Kuwait's approach to economic policy was not unlike Britain's approach to membership of the European economic community. It could see no practical alternative to a course of action that it was reluctant to pursue.

The unquenchable Kuwait need of water - for household, industrial and irrigation use - is expected to generate an average demand of 600 million gallons a day within the next twenty years. Taking account of natural and artificial constraints such as climate, existing development, environments factors, and the network of oil installations cutting through the country, the new masterplan combines an imaginative blueprint for living with what is inevitably a compromise.

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33. Sapsted David
    Kuwait
between a desert community and a super-imposed technology. The hinterland of the urban stretch is occupied by the oilfields, except for the region south-west of the bay around Jahra, which is set aside for the extension of its agricultural activity. Agricultural expansion is also planned for the larger part of Bubiyan island, while the northern oilfields are flanked by green zones stretching eastwards to the coast and joining up with the recreational area north of the bay.

In order to probe the cause of Kuwait's unique wealth yet dependent social structure, however, and perhaps to seek long-term solutions to that dependence, it is necessary to look at the basic economic facts. And, no economic appraisal of Kuwait can neglect to take account of the preponderant influence of oil. There is and always will be a natural imbalance in the country's economy due to the immensity of its oil reserves and to the relative ease with which its crude oil is obtained. Oilfields are the fountain head of all Kuwait's boundless wealth Kuwait oil flowed out in undiminish-
ing volumes through the pipelines which led ultimately to the exporting tankers and markets of the world. The claim of one
of the geologists of the early exploration days that he would gladly drink all the oil discovered in the Gulf, would have seemed a trifle boastful in more recent times.

Over the first twenty years, production increased every year by an average of 35 percent, reaching an aggregate of 706 per cent by 1966. By far the largest part of the total volume comes from the KOC fields; from 100 percent in 1953 they had dropped by less than 10 per cent to 91 per cent of all Kuwait's production in 1967, despite the combined contributions of Aminoil and the Arabian Oil Company fields. Although KOC's production showed some remarkable jumps over the years, mostly brought about by events such as the Iranian nationalisation, various Suez crises and the Iraq threat, the company maintained a commendable consistency in its development programme. In 1951, a staggering 63 per cent increase in production was recorded over the previous year. On the other hand, 1956, 1959 and 1961 saw the annual increase needle fluctuating around the 0-5 to 2 per cent mark. But looked at over this 25-year period during which KOC contributed the lion's share of Kuwait's oil production, an average annual increase of more than 30 per cent can not be complained of.
The KOC gave an undertaking in 1967 to endeavour to keep the annual increase at a minimum level of 6 per cent, and in order to provide for a continuing rise in the level of production it formed an organizational unit known as COPE (crude oil Production expansion). Admittedly Kuwait's oil reserves are immense - an estimated 10.4 thousand million tons, which is almost one-third of the entire Middle East total, and 16% of the entire eastern hemisphere's proven resources. Many of the states of Africa and Middle East are in dire need of money to finance military escapades of one kind or another, some are corrupt to a point where it is impossible to discover what happens to revenue from oil or any other source. Kuwait can afford to conserve its inheritance, at least within the bounds of a sensible expansion programme. With the installation of LPG Plant and the subsequent introduction of reinjection facilities, KOC made a useful contribution to the arresting of this wasteful process. The development of state industries and the increasing use by state and oil companies of gas in the generation of electricity and desalination of sea-water, provided further savings. The gas

34. Sadler P.G. and M.W.Khouja
produced in the oil fields in 1968 amounted to 478,958 million cu.ft. of which 53,678 million cu.ft. was reinjected. Despite this considerable improvement in the situation, more than 250 million cu.ft. of gas went to waste during 1968. The lucrative off-shore Japanese production was also beginning to make its contribution by this time. Although the new posted-price arrangement came into effect in 1955, its real effect was not felt until the levelling of production caused by the Suez crisis had been overcome by a new spurt. It must be granted that Kuwait lagged behind almost every other major producer in terms of income per barrel of oil over the twenty five years from 1946. By this time, Libya was enjoying an income of one dollar seven cents a barrel. To some extent, these figures reflect the relatively high sulphur content of some of the country's oil and its high specific gravity, which help to depress market value.

Regaei El Mallakh in Economic Development and Regional Co-operation - Kuwait, points out that the country is preponderantly dependent on oil income, and that its budget is
a direct reflection of oil exploitation. The dangers inherent in the cost-price relationship between producer and consumer countries, bringing oil into even closer conflict with alternative fuels, was spelled out in unmistakable terms by the chairman of British Petroleum, Sir Eric Drake, in his 1971 statement to shareholders. Kuwait remained for the first quarter century of its period of industrialisation in the unusual position of depending almost entirely on a single basic product. Between 1965 and 1968 the gross national product increased from KD 591 million to KD 793 million, a growth rate of 10.3 per cent per annum.

Thus, the emphasis in Kuwait, at least in government circles, is on the need to diversify industry. In fact, the spread of manufacturing industry began almost accidentally as an offshoot of the supply units set-up on the coast at Shuwaikh in the early 1950s. The ever-present need for fresh water in the desert gave rise to an automatic priority when money first became available for large-scale industrial expansion. In 1953 the first government water distillation plant came into operation there. This plant used natural
gas to fire the boilers which in turn produced steam to heat, the sea water. Thus, in more-or-less solving the country's drinking water problem, a start had been made towards the development of a power industry. A separate power station was built in 1954 with four 7.5 MW generators, designed to feed steam at the correct temperature and pressure to a second distillation plant. But with cables and substations between the power stations and Jahra, Hawalli, Salmiya and other remote areas having to cope with an over-increasing demand, the entire system had to be overhauled in 1958.

From 1957 to 1962, consumption rose from 119 million to 418 million units. By 1967, the figure had reached 1.3 thousand million units. And of this total, only the relatively small amount of 117 million units was consumed by industrial plant. Here is a very practical illustration of the imbalance in Kuwait's economy created by a massive growth in domestic well being, exemplified by almost universal ownership of cars, refrigerators, air-conditioners, and television on the strength of a single product, oil. The sea was thus giving up seventeen million of gallons of fresh water everyday,
largely for domestic consumption, by the late sixties. A far cry indeed from the days when the walls of the desert were important enough to be fought over, and fresh water had to be carried into the desert in goatskins filled at the town's dhow harbours.

It was, incidentally, among the minor ironies of Kuwait's development that nearly ten years after the commissioning of the first Shuwaikh distillation plant, engineers building a road from Kuwait to Bara found a sweet water well at Raudhatain ten miles from the border with Iraq.

In 1961, the government took the initiative in setting up state backed, privately-run enterprises, with Shuaiba as the geographical location of the programme. A feasibility study was commissioned and a report prepared by 1963. As a result, the government gave substantial backing to ten industrial concerns, the most important of which in terms of a spread of production based as existing raw material, were the Kuwait National Petroleum Company and the Kuwait Petro-Chemical industries company, out of which the Kuwait chemical
Fertiliser Company emerged. At about the same time, the government paid KD 13 million for an 80 per cent share of the Petrochemical Company and joined with Gulf Oil, BP and Private interests to set up KCFC.

Thus, oil remained --- even within the diversification programme --- the basis of advance. Shuaiba became the site of the world's first all-hydrogen refinery. The legislature enacted the National Industries Law, also in 1965, to give sanction and preferential terms to the participants in this costly and ambitious industrial drive. It provided for corporate income tax exemption freedom from duty for all exported domestic products, and tariff protection for ten years. During this period, and indeed up to the seventies, these efforts produced little by way of statistical evidence to show that the imbalance in the country's internal economy was being ironed out. Government participation in the country's major industries is considerable. Apart/from its holdings

35. Sapsted David
Kuwait
petrochemical Joint Stock Companies it had, by 1966, a 51 per cent share in the Kuwait Invest company as well as 98.2% share in the country's foreign trade agency, in the two major transport companies, Kuwait Transport and Kuwait Navigation, it held respectively 50 and 75 per cent holdings; 51% of the National Industries Company (bricks and cement) and 50% of Kuwait Flour Mills; 25% of the Kuwait Hotels Company. In addition, commercial banks have comparatively vast funds representing a mixture of private savings and government deposits, on which no change is made or interest paid out. Expenditure on current account, primarily devoted to health, education and public works, totalled about 769 million, dollars (KD 274 million) during the same three-year period.

The principal objectives of Kuwait's plan, spanning the period 1967-8-1971-2, were set out by the country's planning board as: (a) to achieve a compound rate of growth of 6.5 per cent a year; (b) to diversify the economy and broaden by relatively faster development in the non-oil sectors; (c) to develop human resources by raising standard of education, training and health; (d) to relate the
educational system to the production of skills required for the development of the economy, (e) to secure a reasonable balance in the growth of different areas in the country with a view to ensuring a widespread diffusion of development benefits; and, (f) to strengthen economic ties with other Arab States.

None of the objectives is easy for realisation in economic terms, the scarcity of locally available stills and raw materials imposes disciplines on growth and diversity whatever plans may be formulated. Apart from this fundamental difficulty, an unforeseen setback occurred in the initial stage. The plan had received the clearance of a special committee of the National Assembly but was not approved by the government by the middle stage of its first year.

While investment in almost every part of the public sector was disappointing during the first three years of the plan, activity in the private and mixed areas exceeded the planning board's hopes. In these sectors KNPC made significant progress in its all-Hy-drogen Shuaiba refinery, while
the Kuwait Fertiliser Company, after a hesitant start, achieved production records in 1967 and 1968. New plant was under construction or at the "drawing board" stage for all the major industries at Shuaiba throughout the period of the Five Year Plan. Investment in the private and semi-public sectors was of the order of KD 118 million for 1976-8, KD 114 million for 1968-9, thus keeping pace with the programme at 57 per cent of the original budget.

According to the Arab Economist of March 1971, "The Kuwait economy was still in 1970 under the effect of stagnation which characterised the activity of most of its sectors following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war." The Journal added, with some truth, "The basic problem lay in the fact that the huge oil revenues were reinvested haphazardly in an unco-ordinated way with the result that some sectors (construction, commerce and services) were favoured to the detriment of the others, creating basic disequite bria in the economy.

During the 19th century Kuwait's economic activities were centred entirely on trade and the sea. By no means
all the trade carried was via Kuwait, however, and Kuwait's ships handled much of the imports and exports of the other Gulf states.

CLASS COMPOSITION:

After the discovery of oil, more and more fortune was brought into Kuwait. Per capita income of the Kuwaitis increased enormously. Kuwaiti merchants involved in trade had big fortunes. The rich started growing richer. The poor also started growing rich. The standard of living of the people started becoming remarkably high. The tribes also grew very rich. Previously, they were rearing and tending the cattle, and now they became rich as they came to own vast pastures. Their standard of living became comparatively high and they became more refined and sophisticated. The merchants invested their money in business and made large fortunes out of it. The upper, middle and the lower classes started enjoying most of the privileges. The standard of living of the Kuwaiti people soon outclassed even the most advanced countries. This obviously owed to technological development and the oil boom. The fortunes collected
of the oil sales were spent on raising the standard of living of the Kuwaiti people. Kuwaiti was to be known as a welfare state.

The whole of the Indian ocean was a vast trading area, with sailing routes linking the countries which surrounded it. Kuwaiti merchants also reached back towards the source of trade goods for investment opportunities, with some purchasing date plantations, other financing crops by providing growers with working capital and similar financial ventures for example, many Kuwaiti merchants took an important part in the development of trade in Basra, when that port was prominent in the trade of the Gulf.

Thus, the Kuwaiti merchant families, grew up as trading dynastries, centred on Kuwait, but with an intricate net work of relationships, often based as kinship, which spanned the Middle East and a greater part of the Indian ocean, and it was these merchant families which provided that echelon of social and political readership to the country.

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36. Hatim M. Abdel Kadi
The Land of Arabs
The organisation of the national economy of Kuwait may be examined from several aspects. An overview of the existing structure of its institutions will tell much about the national accounts, with the division of the national product, either by source or by use, or an analysis of the labour market and the distribution of labour between the public and the private sector will tell more. The social strategy of establishing a future Kuwait, in which the aspirations of individual Kuwait may be fulfilled and the Kuwaiti character and culture of Kuwait enhanced, is drawn from the underlying adherence to private initiative and enterprise coupled with a national degree of paternalism which is evidenced in Kuwaiti's development to date; individual economic policy measures are formulated against that historical background.

Many of the policies of the Kuwait government may be seen, in fact, as being aimed at income distribution. These include not only the more obvious policies of land purchase and sale but the policies of joint participation in industry between the government and the private sector. This encourages
individual enterprise by lessening of risk, other policies facilitate the creation of the infrastructure for enterprise, or provide health and other social services; all have the effect not only of distributing existing income, but of making more equal participation in future development possible. If we adopt the usual classification of the Kuwait economy according to sectors, we come across the conclusion that the four sectors are actively involved in the overall development.

(1) The government sector, the private sector, the joint sector and the co-operative sector:

As indicated earlier, the importance of the government sector in the Kuwait economy brought about an enormous increase in GDP since 1971. An additional consequence of this increase was the structural change in the system which has been emphasised. This point too is significant to note down that the National Assembly (the Kuwait Parliament) was very active in its interest in economic matters and developments, being frequently at odds with the government.

37. Sadhr P.G. and M.W.Khouja
The Economy of Kuwait
After the 1975 elections the National Assembly continued its important influence in oil and economic affairs. The Prime Minister has always assumed a supervisory role of all financial activities, and since 1976 control has been exercised through a committee of the Ministers of Finance, oil, Commerce and Industry, and Planning. The Ministry of Finance has a very important role in that it controls the country's foreign investments as well as the internal receipts and expenditures of the government. It works in close coordination with the central Bank, and also participates actively in the Joint Sector of the economy. The Ministry of oil also exerts a direct influence, being in control of the country's main, almost role, source of physical wealth.

However, the social services are not available equally to all residents in Kuwait and care needs to be exercised in any interpretation of these statistics. For example, publicly provided education is essentially for Kuwaiti citizens only, while private schools, attended by non-Kuwaitis as well as Kuwaitis are supported by subsidies.
The importance of government activity in the economy, however, cannot be judged solely by reference to operations via Public finance. Its policies relating to other sectors, to their relationships with each other and to the relationships of the economy with the world at large are all important indicators of its attitude. The formulation and control of its policy is in the hands of the Supreme Petroleum Council. This consists of the Prime Minister as Chairman, the Ministers of Oil, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Industry and the Minister of state for Cabinet Affairs. One of its first actions since assuming control was the formulation of a conservation policy. This has to be undertaken in the light not only of its own requirements, but also in conjunction with its partners OPEC.

With its newly acquired freedom to interest itself in the whole process of oil extraction, transformation and marketing, the government has quickly evolved policies for the training of Kuwaitis to take their place in these various activities. It has also become directly involved in exploration activities and services relating to oil production and also in many of the down stream of operations.
But the World Bank Mission on the 'Promotion of Manufacturing in Kuwait' (1971) and a special report commissioned by the Industrial Bank in 1974 drew attention to the apparent Lack of coordination between these various agencies coordination is the harmonious inter-relation of activities in the pursuit of common objectives.

As for income distribution, this cannot be restricted to budgetary policy alone. A whole set of government policies as almost all economic matters has a bearing on income distribution. In particular, expenditure on social and other services and the provision of cheap concessions, such as electricity and water or loans for housing, have a distributional component and the actual distribution of government expenditure, through employment in the government service, is as much of a part of distribution policy as of employment policy.