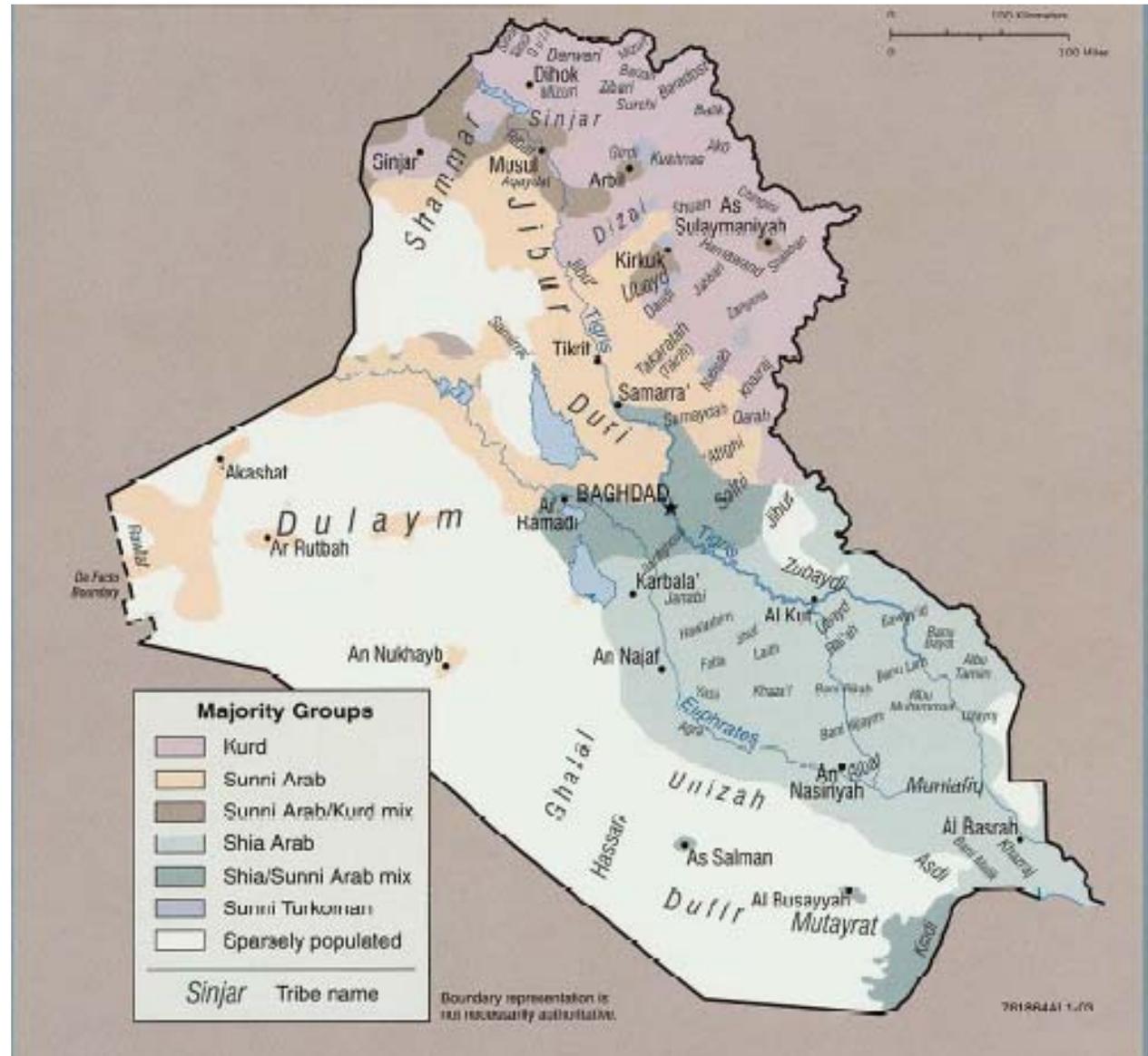


Iraqi Ethnic, Tribal, and Religious Groups



Iraq is a multi-ethnic nation

Ethnic Group	Estimated Population	Also Found In	Religion	Language
Arabs	16 to 20 million	Throughout North Africa and the Middle East, Iran	65-80 percent Shia, 20-30 percent Sunni, less than 5 percent Christian	Arabic (Iraqi dialect)
Kurds	3.6 to 4.8 million	Turkey, Iran, Syria, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan	Mostly Sunni, Shia, and Yazidi minority	Kurdish
Turkomans	300,000 to 800,000	Related to other Turkic peoples in Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkmenistan	Primarily Sunni	South Azeri Turkish
Others	As many as 1 million	Mostly Christians, Iranians, and other groups found in the Middle East	At least 50 percent Christian; Shias, Sunnis, and members of other religions account for the balance	Mostly Arabic, some Persian and other languages

Elements of Iraqi Arab Social Organization

- ✦ Each individual is a member of a tribe (*'ashira*) and groups of tribes are part of tribal federations (*qabila*). There are about 150 tribes in Iraq.
- ✦ Some tribes are quite large. For example, the Al-Dulaim number about 100,000 with most of them in western Anbar province
- ✦ Tribes are composed of related clans (*fukhdh*) led by a paramount *sheikh* or *sheikh of sheikhs*
- ✦ Clan leaders are called *sheikhs*
- ✦ Clans are divided into houses or sub-clans (*beit*) and then into extended families (*khams*)
- ✦ The clan and tribal system is segmentary
- ✦ Most Iraqis identify strongly with their tribe such that they are more loyal to it than the national government

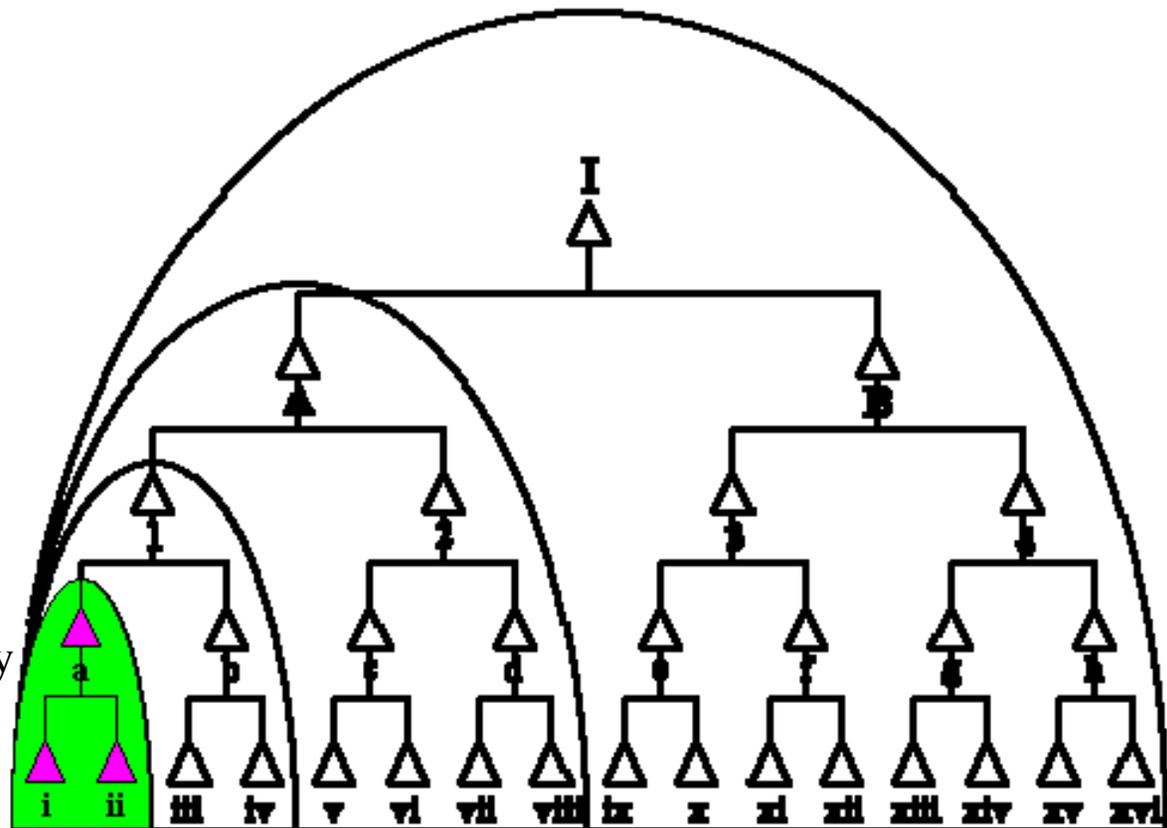
Segmentary Clan Structure (Iraq)

I: tribe (*'ashira*)

A-B: clan (*fukhdh*)

1-4: house (*beit*)

a-h: extended family (*kham*s)



Clan Dispute Settlement & Solidarity

- ✦ The clan *sheikh* is expected to settle disputes between extended families and sub-clans. However, dispute settlement through revenge killing may occur between families of different sub-clans without the intervention of the *sheikh*.
- ✦ If these vendettas get out of hand the *sheikh* may authoritatively impose a settlement.
- ✦ Raids and ambushes are the accepted means of
 - settling disputes
 - enforcing authority
 - obtaining property
- ✦ The *sheikh* represents the interests of the clan within the tribe. And each tribe has a grand *sheikh* who is normally the head of the largest and most powerful clan.
- ✦ Clan members assist each other with loans, jobs, political support, bureaucratic intervention, etc.

Politics of Revenge

- ✦ Each clan or tribe must avenge the death or harm (e.g., theft) done to any member by someone outside of the clan or tribe.
- ✦ With a strong national government tribal revenge was inhibited by the police much of the time.
- ✦ If American troops kill clan members all other clan members have an obligation to seek revenge.
- ✦ The same applies to conflict between Sunni and Shiite sects who belong to different tribes.