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## Politicking

But Mosul [the Ottoman *vilayet* encompassing today's Iraqi Kurdistan] has always been against the government, whatever form it should happen to assume; the begs have always played with the authorities as you play with a fish on the hook, and the fact that they were now constitutional authorities gave an even better zest to the sport and barbed the hook yet more sharply.

—Gertrude Bell, *Amurath to Amurath* (1911:284)

The Kurdistan Region is abuzz with politicking, a form of, and impetus for, much of the social connecting that takes place there. By “politicking,” I mean political activity in the form of conversations and actions. Politicking is by definition active and always in process. Politicking comprises the political stuff of state, local, tribal, and lineage governance, aspirations to such governance, as well as economic jockeying both licit and illicit. In one sense, politicking is patriliney's counterweight, because it is highly agenic and in motion, whereas patriliney makes claims to fixedness and immutability. But politicking also makes, shores up, and to an extent depends on patriliney. The two work in concert in Kurdistan, and as Kurdistan connects to the wider world.

A bureaucrat or politician's office is usually rectangular, with the entryway at one end, and a desk at the other. Along the sides are comfortable chairs and small coffee tables. Such an office can usually seat at least eight guests, and many can handle a much larger crowd. If you are welcomed into such an office, you will be invited to sit and make yourself comfortable. Within a few minutes, an attendant will appear and ask whether you prefer tea or coffee, and sometimes a soft drink or water is offered, too. A few minutes after that, he (the person in this role is usually male) will bring your preferred beverage and possibly some candy or