AL-Raida

Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World

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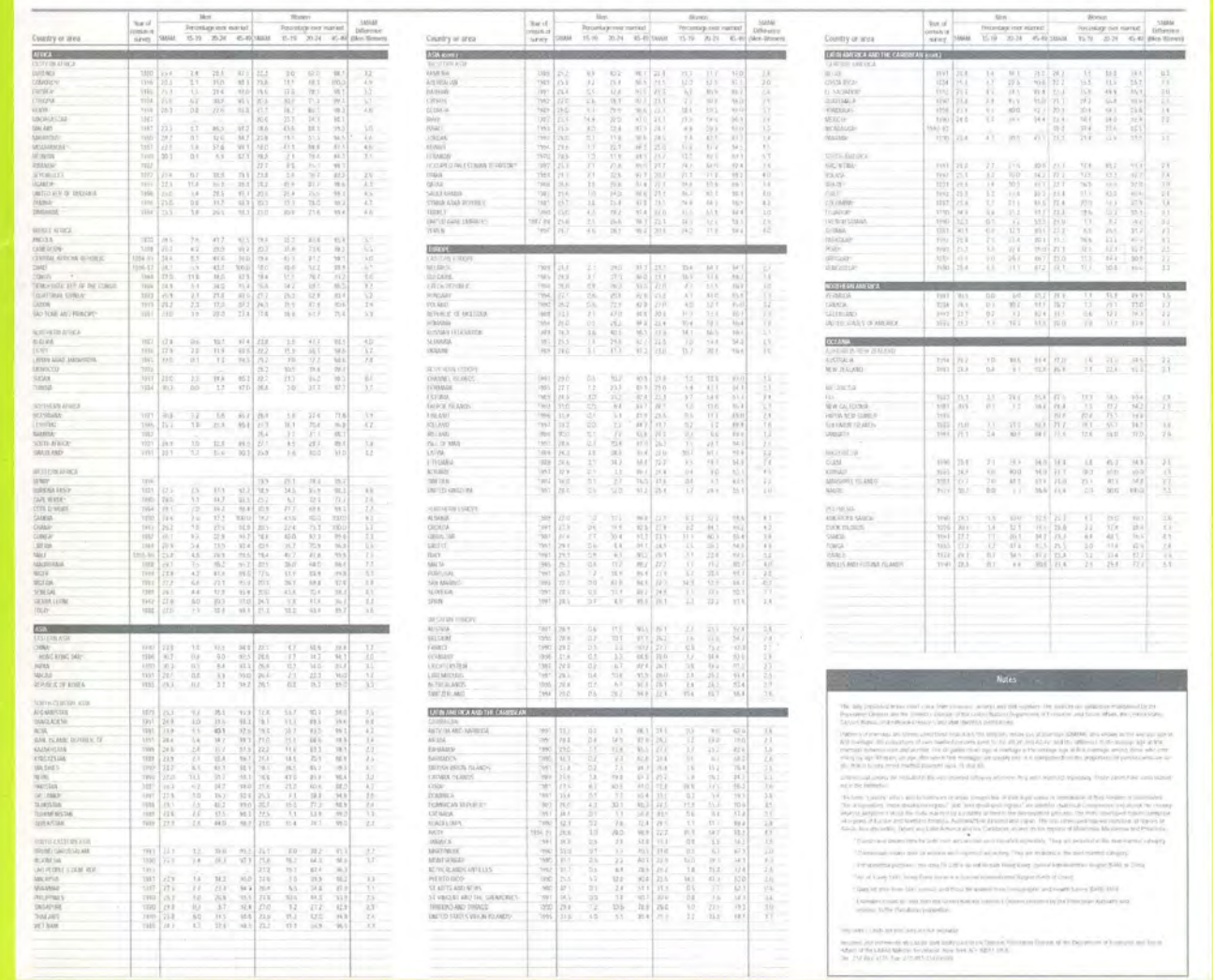
United Nations Population Division Department of Economic and Social Affairs

World Marriage Patterns 2000



Marriage Patterns in the Arab World

ABOUT IWSAW

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) was established in 1973 at the Lebanese American University (formerly Beirut University College). Initial funding for the Institute was provided by the Ford Foundation.

OBJECTIVES: The Institute strives to serve as a data bank and resource center to advance a better understanding of issues pertaining to Arab women and children; to promote communication among individuals, groups and institutions throughout the world concerned with Arab women; to improve the quality of life of Arab women and children through educational and development projects; and to enhance the educational and outreach efforts of the Lebanese American University.

PROJECTS: IWSAW activities include academic research on women, local, regional and international conferences; seminars, lectures, and educational projects which improve the lives of women and children from all sectors of Lebanese society. The Institute houses the Women's Documentation Center in the Stoltzfus Library at LAU. The Center holds books and periodicals. The Institute also publishes a variety of books and monographs on the status, development and conditions of Arab women, in addition to *Al-Raida*. Twelve children's books with illustrations, and two guides, one of which specifies how to set up children's libraries, and the other which contains information about producing children's books, have also been published by IWSAW. In addition, the Institute has also created income generating projects which provide employment training and assistance to women from war-stricken families in Lebanon. The Institute has also devised a "Basic Living Skills Project" which provides a non-formal, integrated educational program for illetrate and semi-literate women involved in development projects. Additional IWSAW projects include: The Rehabilitation Program for Children's Mental Health; Teaching for Peace; and the Portable Library Project. The latter project was awarded the Asahi Reading Promotion Award in 1994. For more information about these or any other projects, write to the Institute at the address provided below.

ABOUT AL-RAIDA

Al-Raida is published quarterly by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) of the Lebanese American University (LAU), formerly Beirut University College, P.O. Box 13-5053/59, Beirut, Lebanon; Telephone: (01) 867-618, ext. 288; Fax: (01) 791-645. The American address of LAU is 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1846, New York, NY 10115, U.S.A.; Telephone: (212) 870-2592; Fax: (212) 870-2762. e-mail: al-raida@beirut.lau.edu.lb

PURPOSE AND CONTENT: *Al-Raida's* mission is to enhance networking between Arab women and women all over the world; to promote objective research on the conditions of women in the Arab world, especially conditions related to social change and development; and to report on the activities of the IWSAW and the Lebanese American University. Each issue of *Al-Raida* features a File which focuses on a particular theme, in addition to articles, conference reports, interviews, book reviews and art news.

SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES: We seek contributions from those engaged in research, analysis and study of women in the Arab world. Contributions should not exceed ten double-spaced typed pages. Please send a hard copy and a diskette. We reserve the right to edit in accordance with our space limitations and editorial guidelines. Submissions will not be published if they have been previously published elsewhere.

SUBSCRIPTION

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magazine

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The quarterly journal of the Institute
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Nawal El Saadawi:

Better to Pay and be Free than to Pay and be Oppressed

Samira Aghacy
Chairperson, Humanities Division, Lebanese American University

No Arab Woman inspires as much emotion as Nawal El-Saadawi. No woman in the Middle East has been the subject of more polemic. Certainly, no Arab woman's pen has violated as many sacred enclosures as that of Nawal El-Saadawi. Fadwa Malti-Douglas [1]

In 1998, the Humanities Division of the Lebanese American University presented on its Gulbankian Theater a major play production "The Women's Prison" based upon Nawal El Saadawi's autobiographical work *Memoirs from the Women's Prison*, presented and directed by Lena Abyad. It deals with El Saadawi's experience in prison in 1981 after the Camp David Agreement when the Egyptian government launched a large-scale arrest campaign, cracking down on political activists, which included many intellectuals who were accused of crimes against the government. El Saadawi was apprehended on September 6, 1981 where she underwent a series of interrogations and was released two months later after the assassination of President Sadat.

El Saadawi was invited to the opening of the play, and that's where I first met her with her husband Dr. Sharif Hattatta. Her thick white hair and shiny black eyes together with a candid simplicity made me feel in the presence of genuine transparency and purity. I felt that I needed no masks, pretensions or appearances to communicate with her. There she was lofty, sublime, charismatic, a rare being in a world of hypocrisy and appearances. She spoke her mind on women's rights without fear of intimidation or criticism, and her ardor and enthusiasm were unbounded. At the same time, I was struck by the great respect her husband, Dr. Sheriff Hetata, had for her. He was content to sit with the audience without any desire to be in the limelight. I admit I had not come across such a man who truly respects his wife and does not stifle her creative powers. This is a man who, like his wife, has devoted his life to the cause of freedom. He spent 13 years in prison and nearly two years in exile after escaping from prison. Furthermore, he is himself a writer who has published a vast number of articles and works of fiction. Indeed two of his novels were translated into English: *The Eye with an Iron Lid* (1974) and *The Net* (1974), while his memoirs entitled *Open Windows* came out in three volumes (1993, 1995, 1997).

Sometimes described as the Simone de Bouvoir of the Arab world, El Saadawi is known for her controversial views and fierce campaigns demanding equal rights for women in a male-dominated society. She has devoted her life to the cause of freedom and equality in the Arab world and has published 36 books, including her memoirs. An ardent supporter of women's rights, El Saadawi wrote several books and novels focusing on the oppression of Arab women by ancient traditions and their treatment as sex objects in the Arab Islamic world. From the very beginning, her writings were considered controversial and dangerous for the society and were banned in Egypt and other Arab countries. Her book *Women and Sex* (1972) which dealt with the highly controversial subject of sexuality, politics and religion created a big controversy resulting in El Saadawi losing her job as Executive General Director in the Ministry of Health. Notwithstanding, El Saadawi managed eventually to re-publish her book in Lebanon, which was distributed on a large scale in the Arab world. Over the years, El Saadawi has received countless death threats and eventually required continuous police protection. Her courageous and uncompromising views make her, as Fadwa Malti-Douglas puts it, "the most visible woman in the Arab World," particularly that her writings "threaten many of the existing discourses on women in the Middle East."[2] She has spoken out in support of political and sexual rights for women, has fought against female genital mutilation and has worked against poverty, fundamentalism, and inequality of all kinds. After her release from prison in 1982, she founded the Arab Women's Solidarity Association (AWSA), a

3000 member group recognized by the United Nations, and dedicated to "lifting the veil from the minds" of Arab women. AWSA was the largest organization of women in the Arab world until its dissolution by the government in Egypt in 1991 following the group's criticism of the Gulf War.

Over the past few months, she has suffered increasing persecution which she refers to as "paying the price of freedom." The latest controversy started with the independent weekly newspaper *Al-Midan* which came out on March 6, 2001 with a large headline on its front page that read: "From Nawal Al-Saadawi: Pilgrimage is the remnant of idolatry." Based on this interview, she has been charged with transgressing against Islam and exhibiting scorn to it. On her part, El Saadawi has denied "scorning" Islam and has made it clear that her views have been manipulated and quoted out of context for commercial and political ends. In the newspaper interview, El Saadawi reiterates her opinions regarding the rights of women and her opposition to women wearing the veil, which implies that women are only bodies, subject to exploitation and inequality in economic and inheritance rights. In other words, she sees that such practices as wearing the veil are "not necessarily an indication of morality in the woman who wears it."[3] She insists that all of these practices are in contradiction with the true spirit of Islam and the correct interpretation of the Quoranic text and accuses religious dignitaries of being obsessed with sexual matters rather than the essence of religion, which she claims to be justice, love, and equality. She also suggests that religion as it is practiced in Egypt has inherited some customs and rituals from periods of Egyptian history preceding Islam. As a result, a whole campaign of harassment and false accusation was raised against her. Many readers wrote to the *Al-Midan* newspaper demanding that "Saadawi's head ... be chopped off with a sword"[4] as a punishment for her views. Furthermore, she was accused by the Mufti of Egypt of having "overstepped the bounds of Islam." Accordingly, two cases were raised against her. One case was sent to the prosecutor asking him to try her on the charge of having transgressed against Islam. Nevertheless, the case of slandering Islam was dismissed by the general prosecutor's office, but the family affairs tribunal decided to hear the petition, which aims to divorce El Saadawi from her husband. A case of *Hisba* (a rarely applied Islamic concept that allows any Muslim to charge another with apostasy) was raised against her accusing her of breaching the codes of Islam and demanding that she be separated from her husband (since Muslims cannot marry apostates) after 37 years of marriage.

This is the second time an Egyptian intellectual is under trial for apostasy aiming to separate her from her husband. The first case concerned Professoer Naser Abu Zaid who lives now in exile in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, such accusations have not stopped El Saadawi from voicing her criticism of *Hisba* which in her view is "punishing the innocent and is in direct contradiction with the most basic of human rights which hold the individual alone responsible for his actions and do not permit any form of collective punishment." She cannot comprehend how a "husband and his wife are arbitrarily separated from one another because a third party that has nothing to do with their private lives sees that this separation should be enforced because he has differed with one of them on a matter related to freedom of opinion."[5] She asserts that such acts are in contradiction to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which has been ratified by Egypt, and ensures respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with national laws and international human rights standards. Nevertheless, despite fierce persecution El Saadawi and her husband have stated publicly that whatever the outcome of the trial, they will not accept either divorce or exile. Her husband was quoted as saying "I don't want to be separated from my wife. I am now 78, and I don't know what to do without her."[6]

El Saadawi, who is praised in the West for writing against women's oppression and female circumcision to which she herself was subjected has generally been viewed in Egypt and the Arab world as someone who has gained fame "by confirming to Westerners their own prejudices about Arab and Islamic culture."[7] As Malti Douglas puts it, in the eyes of many people in the Arab world she has become "a tool of Western imperialism" despite her "consistent opposition to Western Imperialism."[8] There have been few reports in the Egyptian Press on her case, and her views have been generally overshadowed in her home country. She herself asserts that despite the recognition she has had abroad "in Egypt I hardly had a chance to express my views in the local media."[9] In her article entitled "A War Against Intellectuals," Mona Megalli attributes this complacency and cold indifference by the general public in Egypt to the "success of society's more conservative factions in seizing the moral high ground, as well as alienation, a reaction against globalization and economic pressures."[10]

El Saadawi's case is another example of persecutions and smearing campaigns that have, over the past decade or so, targeted Egyptian and Arab intellectuals. Since Arab

governments have persistently taken it upon themselves to curb freedom of speech, it is becoming increasingly difficult to think or express one's opinion in our part of the world. For instance, the fierce campaign launched against Haydar Hadar's novel *A Banquet for Seaweed* has raised issues that have plagued Arab cultural and political life for over two decades. The novel was deemed insulting to Islam and the Syrian writer has been severely attacked. Over the past decade, writers and intellectuals have been imprisoned, injured or killed for their opinions. In 1992, the columnist Faraq Fouda was killed by extremists, and in 1989 Nobel Prize-Winning novelist Naguib Mahfouz was knifed in an attack by Islamists. The case of the 62-year-old sociology professor Saaddine Ibrahim founder of the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Social Developmental Studies which has for more than a quarter –century been a tireless advocate of democratic values in Egypt is, as Carla Power puts it, a "showpiece for human rights violations."[11] Ibrahim was sentenced to seven years for allegedly defaming Egypt and receiving illegal funds from the European Union. This case reveals the difficulties writers and intellectuals are facing in their indefatigable efforts to promote democratic and egalitarian values in Arab countries. The attack against freedom of speech in the Arab world and the attempt by governments to silence any free opinion reveals that the forces of oppression are slowly taking over. The charges raised against the Kuwaiti woman writer Laila Al-Othman whose works were viewed as attempts to breach the moral and religious codes, is a telling example of the situation. As Social Anthropologist Hania Sholkamy maintains, "any time there is critical thinking, any dissent from...the official dogma that interprets whatever our ailments are ... [it] is a crime in itself and [the concerned country's] reputation is harmed."[12] In February 2000, a large number of Egyptian intellectuals called on other Arab intellectuals to boycott the Cairo International Book fair (held in February, 2001), accusing the government of oppressive measures against intellectuals. In the Bookfair, three novels were confiscated: *Before and After* by Tawfiq Abdel Rahman, *The Children of the Romantic Error* by Yasser Shaaban and *Forbidden Dreams* by Mahmud Hamed. Furthermore, the Egyptian government confiscated books that belong to the Arab Heritage such as the works by Abu Nawwas and others. Indeed some of EL Saadawi's own books were banned. Other measures aimed at intellectuals, writers and artists include accusations of blasphemy, lawsuits condemning their literary and artistic works, and attempts to use them as scapegoats and drive them out of their countries through "cultural and ideological terrorism."[13] As the Jordanian writer Ibrahim Nesrallah (who was accused of heresy) sees it, such acts can be viewed as a "new strategy" aimed at "distorting the views of truly nationalistic writers, accusing them of heresy and alienating them from the Arab individual."[14]

Despite the general atmosphere of antagonism towards freedom and free thought, El Saadawi remains one of those who insist on upholding principles and promoting the cause of freedom. Despite persecution and fear for her life, she remains undaunted by these threats and has made it clear that "such cases don't scare me or worry me. I've acquired psychological immunity with time." For her it is "better to pay and be free than to pay and be oppressed."[15] Accordingly, El Saadawi insists that the struggle for human rights must be fought without hesitation. Despite intimidation and harassment, she has vowed that she won't leave her country for she has a responsibility for the silent majority that supports her. Despite the fact that an Egyptian court has dismissed the case against her and all charges have been dropped, the fight continues. Indeed those of us who believe in democracy and human rights will pursue our solidarity efforts with all intellectuals like El Saadawi and will continue to fight against all attempts to stifle free opinions by opposing these new acquisition tribunals against intellectuals or individuals who believe in freedom and equality.

End Notes

1. *Men, Women, and God (s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
2. Ibid., 14.
3. Statement by Nawal El-Saadawi (May 18, 2001).
4. Quoted in Khaled Dawoud, "'Off With Her Head'", *Al-Ahram Weekly Online* (April 12- 18, 2001).
5. Statement by Nawal El-Saadawi
6. Quoted in Khaled Dawoud, *Al-Ahram Weekly Online* (June 14-20, 2001).
7. Mona Megalli, "A War Against Intellectuals," *Middle East Times* (August 3, 2001).
8. 14.
9. Quoted in Dawoud, *Al-Ahram Weekly Online* (June 14 -20, 2001).
10. *Middle East Times* (August 3, 2001).
11. *Newsweek International* (June 4, 2001).
12. Quoted in Megalli, *Middle East Times*.
13. Statement by El-Saadawi.
14. www. Al-jazeera net/art and culture (June 1, 2001).
15. Quoted in an interview with Katrina Payne (July 27, 2001).

Triple Trouble:

Mixed Marriages and Interlocking Forms of Discrimination in Lebanon

By Dima Dabbous-Sensenig
Lecturer in Media and Gender Studies, Lebanese American University

For a number of years now I have been researching, writing, and lecturing on gender issues, with an emphasis on the condition of women in the Arab world. I knew the statistics, most of the related data, and several stories about the plight of individual Arab and Moslem women in these patriarchal societies. In brief, I knew my subject. At least I thought I did, until I got married. What had previously been mostly an academic exercise suddenly and unexpectedly became a personal saga.

With the fulfillment of a lifelong dream (i.e. meeting the right person), came the harsh reality of mixed marriage in Lebanon. With my husband being non-Lebanese and of another confession, I was in double trouble. To start with, being Moslem myself, I could not marry a Christian in my own country without one of us giving up his/her religious identity and acquiring the other's. Being convinced that we chose each other for who we were and not for what we were to become, this was just not an option. Conversion under such circumstances could only be a real alternative, I guess, when one of the partners is convinced of the other's religion, or, perhaps, when both partners are not believers anyway and, for some reason, cannot go to Cyprus[1]. None of these was the case for us: as mature adults who knew who we were and what we wanted of life and of each other, we sought union in difference, despite difference, maybe even because of difference. Actually, one of the things I respected the most in my husband was his profound faith in God. The fact that he approached God in a different way than I did was an advantage rather than a handicap for the relationship. We both knew that, if wisely managed, this difference could help us grow through interaction, exchange, and especially challenge. To renounce this difference out of administrative necessity would not be in line with what we most deeply believed in, both as individuals and intellectuals: pluralism rather than homogeneity, inclusion rather than exclusion and free personal choice rather than submission (to unjust state laws).

Our civil marriage was celebrated in a European country. The latter was neither my country of birth nor my husband's. The marriage contract gave us equal rights and responsibilities. We were starting our life together on an equal footing. We also wanted to celebrate our union in each other's tradition. We thus arranged additional wedding blessings for our respective families: a Christian one in North America and a Muslim one in Lebanon. The first hurdle was overcome.

Of course, and I knew that (at least hypothetically) as a Lebanese feminist, civil marriage can only solve the most immediate problem of legalizing interfaith marriages. Other complications soon had to be faced. Upon coming back to Lebanon, I was confronted with another legal matter touching me on a very personal, intimate level: children. Although I was able to retain my religious identity through civil marriage, I realized/remembered that our children (to come) will automatically only carry their father's religious identity. This was unacceptable to my husband and I. If we believed in free choice for ourselves, we certainly wanted the same for our children.

Another related problem I was faced with was inheritance. As a future Muslim mother with 'Christian' chil-

dren, I was not going to be able to pass inheritance to them because of their 'pre-decided' non-Muslim confession. Although the parents can choose to and manage to free themselves from the shackles of confessional personal status laws in Lebanon (through civil marriage), their children's lives continue to be regulated by it. Our feelings of injustice could only be mitigated by the fact that we did not have any children yet. I guess we will have to cross that bridge when we get to it.

With the honeymoon over and married life settling in, little did I suspect that my problems were only going to get worse. I was soon to embark on the almost impossible mission of first documenting our marriage in Lebanon and then getting the residence permit for my husband. Not only did I experience first hand the slowness and inefficiency of bureaucracy in Lebanon (which was to be expected), but I soon realized that some of the governmental apparatus were simply incapable of dealing with my 'peculiar' situation. It felt like most of the government officials and professionals (lawyers) that I had to deal with were encountering this 'situation' for the first time in their bureaucratic lives! As a Lebanese woman, it seemed I was not expected by the Lebanese authorities to marry a non-Lebanese. This suspicion became a conviction after one full year of being sent back and forth from one governmental office to another to get a signature, or present a certain document, or sign an affidavit. Their list seemed to be inexhaustible. Worse yet, having started the whole process in Tripoli (where I had more '*wasta*')[2], but being myself born and a registered resident in Beirut, I actually only managed to complicate matters. It was then that I also experienced, at my own expense (both financially and physically), how uncoordinated the highly centralized bureaucracy in my country was.

The fact that he approached God in a different way than I did was an advantage rather than a handicap for the relationship

But the worst was yet to come. I would have gladly 'lived with' Lebanese bureaucratic inefficiency if it were not for one small incident. At the same time I met my (North American) husband, a (male) friend was meeting his Western European future wife. Our marriages were only a few weeks apart. He and I both thought we were very lucky to have met our soulmates. We both felt very happy, and we both were amused, even bewildered, that things were happening simultaneously and very similarly to us. The Lebanese government, however, had a different opinion about our respective marriages. Upon sharing with my friend my 'adventures' with Lebanese bureaucracy – after all, who can understand my hardships more than he does?, he told me, in his own words, that his wife's acquisition of Lebanese citizenship (she is an EU citizen) was 'a piece of cake'! As for my North American husband, to be allowed to only reside in Lebanon (citizenship is of course out of the question), a camel had to practically pass through the proverbial eye of a needle.

It was then that I became aware of the 'triple trouble' of being a Lebanese woman: Lebanon was not only a country infected by religious sectarianism complicated by (typical) incompetent Middle Eastern bureaucracy, but is was also a country with a unique combination of racism and sexism. Why were foreign men practically denied access to the country through mixed marriages? Why were foreign women, by contrast, welcomed in? The first logical explanation lies in the fact that Lebanon is a patriarchal, patrilineal society, where all aspects of an individual's life are traced back to the father, the head of the family: family name, social identity, authority, custody, religion, inheritance, health care, and so forth. Another explanation is that Lebanon is a racist country that has actively sought, through legislation, to keep 'unwanted foreigners' out. Naturally, the 'unwanted' here are not North Americans or Westerners in general – this category being an absolute minority in the cases involving mixed marriages. Those the government wants to exclude are more likely to be from an 'inferior' race (e.g. Africans or South Asians), or undesirable politically (e.g. Palestinians). From a legislative/bureaucratic perspective, the fact that a Lebanese male could easily marry a Palestinian or African woman whereas a Lebanese woman is actively discouraged from marrying even a Westerner (!) is just an example of the irony of Lebanon's interlocking racist and sexist laws.

I have often lectured on the various forms of discrimination exercised by the Lebanese government on its nationals, especially women: confessionalism, racism and sexism. I never realized how interlocking these forms could be. Now I have a first hand, personal example to give in corroboration. Unfortunately it is my own.

End Notes

1 Unlike in Lebanon where it is not available, civil marriage can be easily contracted in nearby Cyprus.
2 To have '*wasta*' in Arabic is to have access to influence peddling.

Recent Publications

Accad, Evelyne. *The Wounded Breast: Intimate Journeys through Cancer.* North Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex, 2001.
Agacinski, Sylviane. *Parity of the Sexes.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
Ahmad, Sarah. *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality.* New York: Routledge, 2000
Booth, Marilyn. *May her Likes be Multiplied: Biography and Gender Politics in Egypt.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001.
Lawler, Stephanie. *Mothering the Self; Mothers, Daughters, Subjects.* New York: Routledge, 2000
Russo, Ann. *Taking Back Our Lives; A Call to Action for the Feminist Movement.* New York: Routledge, 2001.

Call for Papers

The Encyclopedia of Women in Islamic Cultures, the first of its kind, will be published by Brill (Leiden) in 2003, as a 2,000,000 word, three-volume set. It will focus specifically on women in Islamic culture and will include non-Muslim women in cultures where Islam has had a significant presence. Given that it is a broad based, interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, transhistorical encyclopedia, we are interested in inviting broad participation in writing of the Encyclopedia entries. If your research is relevant to women in Islamic cultures, we would appreciate your sending us the following information: name, institutional affiliation, address, e-mail, fax, telephone, and discipline. We would also appreciate a description of your research interests (not more than 100-200 words) and a list of two to three of your publications relevant to EWIC. This information will be incorporated into our database which we will use to guide us in our invitations to potential contributors.

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Films

A Female Cabby in Sidi Bel-Abbès
Directed by Belkacem Hadjadj
At the death of her husband, Soumicha, mother of three, has to earn a living and becomes the only woman taxi driver in Sidi Bel-Abbès, Algeria. A Female Cabby in Sidi Bel-Abbès accompanies Soumicha around a city where political and religious violence rages, and records her experiences in a job normally reserved for men. Soumicha takes us around her city, introducing us to the many contradictory aspects of Algerian society. She acquaints us, in the course of her travels, with other women who, like herself, are struggling for more freedoms.

When Maryam Spoke Out
Directed by Asad Fouladkar
"When Maryam Spoke Out" is a ninety-eight minute Lebanese feature film, based on a true story that happened in Lebanon. It is a social tragedy about a lower middle class couple, Ziad and Maryam, who, after three years of marriage, discover that Maryam is barren. Interference from other members of the family around them breaks them apart. Ziad tries hard to make a new start but cannot escape his old feelings towards Maryam.

Keswa
Directed by Kalthoum Bornaz
Returning to Tunisia after a divorce, Nozha (Rim Turki) arrives home just in time to have her hands and feet hennaed in preparation for the wedding of her brother. Reluctantly, she agrees to wear her heavy and cumbersome keswa (gown), which is stiffly embroidered with silver thread. Thus swathed, she's forgotten by the wedding caravan, prompting a comic odyssey across Tunis involving the lovestruck Lotfi (Lotfi Achour), amiable cabbie Salih (Ali Mosbah), and dashing violinist Khalil (Ahmed El Hafiane).

Days of Democracy
Directed by Ateyyat El-Abnoudy
In this landmark documentary, filmmaker Ateyyat El-Abnoudy records the successes and failures of the female candidates in the 1995 elections of the people's assembly in Egypt. Because of the tremedous lack of coverage that female politicians receive and the difficulty in contacting them, El-Abnoudy was forced to shoot for 20 days straight, crisscrossing the entire country in her search for interviews. Despite the ultimately disappointing electoral results, this documentary is optimistic in its portrayal of Egyptian women and the role they are struggling to play in shaping their nation's future.

Quote/Unquote

"I expected married life to be different and more fun, not like still being a girl where society looks at what I wear and what I say. I thought, 'I'll be freer.' Marriage is inevitable in this society. One cannot stay unmarried. My cousin wanted to marry me and I had a number of proposals from other men, so I just wanted to get married to finish with it and to have peace of mind." (Sana Al-Khayyat, *Honour and Shame: Women in Modern Iraq*, pp. 74 - 75)

"The laws regulating marriage and divorce in Arab societies are in fact one of the legal remnants of feudalism and the patriarchal system where the woman becomes like a piece of land owned by the man, who is permitted to do as he wishes, to exploit her, to beat her, to sell her at any time via divorce, or to buy over her head, a second, third, or forth wife. As regards the rights of the wife, they consist of equality of treatment with the other wives of her husband. Whether it is possible for a man to give the same treatment, care and affection to an old wife as he gives to a young one, or to a semi-used one as he gives to a new one, is of course another question which is further complicated by the fact that he is the sole judge of his own behaviour." (The Hidden Face of Eve, p. 202)

"He doesn't let me learn to drive. I'd find it very useful. If I want to buy something he doesn't agree and says it's not important. If his parents or anyone else said it was worth buying, he would. This makes me hate him. With me, he's very mean. He forgets to buy me a present on my birthday and says he has provided me with a house and furniture — this is my present. He's never bought me a personal present in my entire life with him. He says I have my own salary. He tries to get his hands on my salary but I don't let him. My mother gave me a birthday party and he said I was spoilt, that these things are rubbish. He criticizes what I wear or what make-up I put on. When I sit I shouldn't cross my legs and when I enter a room I shouldn't say 'hello', but 'good evening'. I feel time is going so slowly. Four months with him seem like twenty years. He says, 'I want children but if they cry take them to the other room.' I can't bear it." (Sana Al-Khayyat, *Honour and Shame: Women in Modern Iraq*, p.115)

"Early marriage is one way to ensure that a wife is 'protected', or placed firmly under male control; that she is submissive to her husband and works hard for her in-laws' household; that the children she bears are 'legitimate', and that bonds of affection between couples do not undermine the family unit." (*Innocenti Digest*, p. 6)

"Marriage negotiation is just like a plan for a building. You have to realistically assess your resources and think in every little detail that is important for your comfort and the safety of the flat. If parents conduct a good and smart marriage negotiation for their children, it is most unlikely that the marriage would end in disaster." (Homa Hoodfar, *Shifting Boundaries in Marriage and Divorce in Muslim Communities,* p.128)

" Silence prevails, not only on the topic of the feminine body but also, more generally, on everything that touches upon intimate relations, which are constantly shifting between dream and reality, between love and hate ... Why do my tears fall when my neighbor is beaten up/ Why do I feel personally humiliated? The pain she experiences in her life affects me for many reasons. The life of such a woman is like a magnifying glass which reflects back to me an exaggerated image of my own condition. Obtaining the respect of others is a constant struggle for women. The enslavement of other women sets limits to my own blossoming ... But above all, her life reminds me of another woman's suffering, to which I was for a long time a spectator - that of my mother ... (Evelyne Accad, *Women and Sexuality in Muslim* Societies, p. 41)

"Despite Traditionalist attempts to contain women's awareness, the process which was begun to construct women's social identity is now irreversable. Today, both secular and Islamist women reject the institutionalized inequalities and demand a dynamic and adapted reading of Islam. Although seculars do not have access to the political sphere, vocal Islamist women, increasingly backed by civil society, are determined to implement conscious change through involvement in politics. The Islamic state has thus no other choice but to accommodate the participatory aspirations of moderate and modernist women whose partaking in politcs will undoubtedly implement democratic change in the political system. They are protagonists of a change which encompasses the entire society. Under the present circumstances where political Islam has demonstrated its limits, and the gap between civil society and the state is ever widening, only the opening of religion to modernity can avoid an ultimate rupture."
(Azadeh Kian, *Women Living Under Muslim Laws*, Dossier #21, p. 55)

From Iran

Stoning Women to Death

Storing is on the rise in Iran. Until now the number of stoning verdicts issued during Khatami's tenure have risen to seventeen. Eleven of the victims have been women. Even though ample effort and pressure is exerted by international human rights organizations and women's rights groups to save these women, most end up stoned to death.

Maryam Ayyoubi is the most recent victim to suffer such a fate. She was stoned to death in Tehran, In May, 2001 a 35-year-old woman was stoned to dealth, after eight years of imprisonment, for her alleged role in pornographic films. She denied the charges and professed innocence right up to her death. Again, a 38-year-old woman, Robabeh, was stoned to death in the same month. On June 25, a Tehran court condemned a young woman to 100 lashes and stoning.

The Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran calls on international human rights organizations, especially women's rights advocates, to condemn and protest against these inhuman and cruel punishments against women. Special emphasis must be placed on stoning, which has been meted out with greater frequency in recent months.

The Good Wife's Guide

This is from an article in *Housekeeping Monthly* May 13, 1955

- Have dinner ready. Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal ready on time for his return. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they get home, and the prospect of a good meal is part of the warm welcome needed.
- Prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your make-up, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh-looking. He has just been with a lot of work-weary people.
- Be a little gay and a little more interesting for him. His boring day may need a lift, and one of your duties is to provide it.
- Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives. Run a dustcloth over the tables.
- During the cooler months of the year you should prepare and light a fire for him to unwind by. Your husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you a lift too. After all, catering to his comfort will provide you with immense personal satisfaction.
- Minimize all noise. At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of the washer, dryer or vacuum. Encourage the children to be quiet.
- Be happy to see him.
- Greet him with a warm smile and show sincerity in your desire to please him.
- Listen to him. You may have a dozen important things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first - remember, his topics of conversation are more important than yours.
- Don't greet him with complaints and problems.
- Don't complain if he's late for dinner or even if he stays out all night. Count this as minor compared to what he might have gone through at work.
- Make him comfortable. Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or lie him down in the bedroom. Have a cool or warm drink ready for him.
- Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low, soothing and pleasant voice.
- Don't ask him questions about his actions or question his judgment or integrity. Remember, he is the master of the house and as such will always exercise his will with fairness and truthfulness. You have no right to question him.
- A good wife always knows her place.

Fay Afaf Kanafani Recounts

Fay Afaf Kanafani and IWSAW Director Mona Khalaf

On April 30, 2001 Fay Afaf Kanafani, UN Prize winner of Computer Generated Graphic Art - Year 2001 and recipient of the International Woman of the Year 2001, gave a *lecture* at the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World in which she recounted her testimony and presented her book *Nadia Captive of Hope: Memoir of and Arab Woman.*

Film Festival: Images of Women

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World organized its second annual Film Festival entitled *Images of Women* from May 7-10, 2001 at Irwin Hall, LAU. Two film makers Viola Shafik (Egypt) and Kalthoum Bornaz (Tunisia) were invited to participate in the event. The films screened were from Lebanon, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt.

From left to right: Kalthoum Bornaz, Mona Khalaf, and Viola Shafik

Seminars - World Trade Organization

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute held a series of three seminars, one for the Labor Syndicates (May 8, 2001) and two for Women and Human rights NGOs (May 22 and June 5, 2001). Issues related to Lebanon's accession to the World Trade Organization were discussed.

Workshop

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute held a three day workshop entitled "Building Coalitions: Benefits, Methods and Challenges" (May 31 - June 2, 2001). Thirty NGO representatives attended.

Marriage Patterns in the Arab World

The family is seen as the pillar of society, and women as the agents responsible for its efficient functioning, which implies taking care of children, spouse, and household management. Nelly P. Stromquist

In Arab societies, women's role is predominantly linked to the domestic sphere. The family is seen as a pivotal axis of society, a basic unit that demands that women devote all their time and energy to it. Over the past decades, there has been notable transformation in gender relations in Arab societies particularly in urban areas, and women have gained greater degrees of freedom. This can be attributed to a number of factors that have played a role in exacting changes in gender roles. One factor is education that has contributed to more awareness and empowerment despite the fact that the educational system in many Arab countries remains oppressive and not conducive to change. Indeed the majority of women still see marriage as the ultimate goal and destiny of the female sex. Despite the fact that marriage laws are oppressive and that the family is strictly controlled by men , marriage plays a major role in the psychological development of women since it gives them authority, power, identity and an eventual more egalitarian role with the husband. If the young wife's space is restricted and controlled and her role is subordinate, these restrictions are relaxed when she grows older. When she becomes a mother-in-law she gains power over her son's wife and more control over the family and the husband. Furthermore, since she is no longer viewed as dangerously feminine, she enjoys fewer restrictions and greater social mobility. A second factor that has contributed to change in women's domestic roles is directly linked to economy. Indeed women have increasingly derived a sense of independence and assertiveness from a job no matter how little they may earn. Notwithstanding, women still suffer within the household from domestic violence, marginalization and the unfair family laws that privilege men over women and give them the upper hand. Among the restraints that continue to plague Arab women are problems related to marrige, divorce, property rights, and rights regarding inheritance.

The first article in the file "The Marriage Mystery: Exploring Late Marriage in MENA" explores reasons why women are marrying at a later age in the Middle East and North Africa. In the second study, Diane Singerman and Barbara Ibrahim examine the soaring costs of marriage in Egypt that are forcing many couples into protracted engagements. Nadia El-Cheikh examines the 1998 proposed civil marriage law in Lebanon and the reactions of the concerned religious communities. Najla Hamadeh's article on urban and Bedouin co-wives studies the difference between rural and urban wives' reactions to the husband's other wife through case studies undertaken in cities and towns in Lebanon. Anne Tohme-Tabet traces choice modalities in the selection of spouses among the Maronite community in 19th Century Mount Lebanon. While May El-Hajj studies the impact of education on marital relations and tries to determine whether higher education contributes to more tension or more stability within the marriage. The article entitled "Misyar Marriage" traces the advantages and disadvantages of, what is referred to as Ambulant marriage, on women who accept to enter into such a marriage. The file incorporates a review of two works of fiction (Alia Mamdouh's Mothballs and Salwa Bakr's The Golden Chariot) on the politics of marriage in the Arab world. Finally a summary of marriage and divorce laws in Arab countries is provided.

Samira Aghacy

The Marriage Mystery:
Exploring Late Marriage in MENA

Manal Omar
Researcher & Web Assistant GDN Secretariat

Abstract[1]
Recent trends in developing countries reveal that women are marrying at a later age. A 1996 study of early marriage in developing countries revealed that the Middle East and North Africa region had the greatest decline in the proportion married before age 20, with some countries experiencing as dramatic as a 35 to 41% declines.[2]

This article will show how the changing economic structure is impacting the dynamics of the marriage social contract in the Middle East. The basis of this work is to entice further research into exploring marriage as an important variable beyond fertility levels. In order to impact reform or policy on the demographic trend towards an increasing single, female population, perceptions and the roles of women other than mother and wife need to be examined. In addition, policy makers need to develop safety nets for women who are currently marginalized in the labor markets, and are often seen as dependents on either fathers or husbands.

Introduction
For a long time, the picture painted of the MENA region was that of a homogenous high fertility region. In the early 1950's, the average total fertility rate (TFR) for MENA ranged around 7.[3] Demographers and family planning programs had little hope of being able to curb the high population growth that was anticipated. However, around the mid-1980s, the homogenous image was shattered, as TFRs began to widely differ from country to county. Although each country in MENA had a different starting point, there was a clear decline in TFR across the region. According to a study by Hoda Rashad and Zeinab Khadr, even the late starters, such as Libya, Sudan, and Syria, experienced an unprecedented pace of change. The study points out that "very few countries in the world managed to reach comparable magnitudes of decline even when the period of change was extended for fifteen years."[4]

Other countries that have experienced a similar trend in declining fertility levels, have found that marriage has played a keen role in lowering the TFR. A 1994 study done in Japan demonstrated that the decline in fertility among Japanese women was attributed not to contraceptive use but to late age at marriage. The study maintained that because Japanese women have married at a mean age of 27, there is a lower fertility rate. The researchers contend that delayed marriage has played the most important role in Japan's post-1973 fertility decline. Similarly studies throughout Europe and the United States, reveal that women of the age range 20-24 who were ever married fell from 64.2% in 1970 to 34% in 1994.[5] As a result, late marriage has been recognized as a universal trend. The trend is most noted in developed and industrialized nations, and many population and health specialists began to place an emphasis on the links between marriage at a later age and fertility.

Over the past decade many studies exploring how the increase of marriage age in MENA impacted TFR levels emerged. Indeed, many studies conducted demonstrated a clear link between marriage and fertility. Two studies conducted in 1996 showed that lower Egyptian fertility was directly linked to later marriage.[6] A 1997 study conducted in Morocco also linked the declining levels of fertility to later marriage. The study reports that the median age at first marriage among women aged 25-49 was 20.3 years in 1995; it was 17.5 years among those aged 45-49 and 23.8 years among those aged 25-29, suggesting a sharp increase over time.[7]

The two trends that seem to be emerging on the demographic front are a change in marriage patterns, often referred to as a "nuptial transitions", and a decline in fertility. Such changes are impacting the region on several levels, including social capital, security planning, and a new questioning of gender roles.

The question of fertility has received the primary

attention in terms of demographic shifts. While a clear pattern of rising age at first time marriages among women has been established by previous studies, there has been little analysis of the causes and consequences, particularly on the well being of women and the overall women's movement in the region. Demographers praise the increase in female education and women's entry to the labor market, pointing out the unforeseen decline in fertility rates in the region as a positive step towards development. More conservative and traditional society blame westernization, and foreshadow an increase in crime and social fragmentation as families are dismantled. Somewhere in the middle, many social scientists caution that despite the many benefits of the rising age of marriage among women, there may also be some consequences lurking in the back ground. Such consequences can have an impact on everything from politics to economics and society.

The importance of marriage in understanding fertility trends in the region has been recognized as an essential variable since the mid 1950s. As a result, marriage has been considered a crucial variable for social and demographic studies over the past few decades.[8] Particularly in the MENA region, numerous studies have attributed the decline in fertility to the changing patterns of marriage, more specifically, the rising age at first time marriage.

However, in terms of understanding the conditions of economic development and exploring the well-being and security of women, marriage has often been passively researched. Marriage is considered one of the most important decisions an individual will ever make in his life, and it is one of the most important social events for the family and community in the Arab world. Recently, social scientists have expressed concern about the limited amount of research that focuses on marriage. Sholkamy and Khidir explain that while the patterns and processes of marriage has changed at accelerated levels, "our social science understanding of them has remained slow in its pace and classical in its outlook".[9]

Despite the fact that in MENA marriage is seen as all but universal, especially for women, little research has been done on marriage beyond the question of it's impact on fertility. According to Diane Singerman, the fact that "cultural blind economic analysis has not recognized the place of marriage in local economies" has led to misguided and possibly inaccurate measurements of poverty, particularly in Egypt.[10] The fact that a one time expenditure, of which entire families spend years saving for, and results in the spending of four and a half times GNP per capital[11] is ignored, calls into question the design and implementation of many of the poverty alleviation and development strategies for MENA.

Therefore, there is a strong argument that the question of the trend in marriage should not be limited to the impact on fertility. Marriage plays a crucial and important role in the social fabric of societies, particularly in MENA. Therefore, an understanding of the socio-economic forces underlying the rising age of marriage, and the possible consequences this trend can cause is crucial to the development of policy planning.

This article does not attempt to pinpoint exact causes and consequences. Instead, it hopes to shed some light on an under researched area that could contribute to a wide spectrum of areas. It hopes to bring attention to important aspects, and possible consequences that could affect not only the economic conditions, but the future well being of women in the region. In particular, the question of marriage could have a direct impact on poverty alleviation, demography changes, and the question of women security and future safety nets.

Methods and Materials [12]

The primary data source used in the paper are from The United Nations Women's Indicators and Statistics Database, WISTAT. However, data was supplemented with information from other United Nations agencies and World Bank research papers . In addition, many of the examples were based in previous research and analysis of census, household surveys, and records used in the relevant country. The primary research is based on a trend analysis of the data over the last few decades. A literature review of marriage and fertility studies has been incorporated as part of the analysis. The annexes provide detailed information on the data used for the analysis and graphs.

Is the Age Really Rising?

The evidence of the rise of first time marriage age is slowly being revealed in population and fertility studies in the region. Rashad demonstrates the steady increase of women's age at first time marriage in the MENA region.[13] In addition, Mary Kawar describes the increase age at marriage for women as one of the variables contributing to change in the region.[14] The trend, coupled with a consistent decrease in fertility rates since the 1980s, implies that some significant socioeconomic changes are occurring in the region.

No matter what the focus of the study, almost all conclude that marriage age in MENA is rising in one form or another. The actual rise differs from county to county, and can be as dramatic as ten years in Libya, where the average marriage age of 19 in 1970 increased to 29 in 1990, and to one year in a county such as Yemen.

Despite the wide variations, it is clear that women in MENA are marrying at a later stage in life. The chart and graph below demonstrates the rising age for various countries in MENA over the past three decades.

Table 1: : Singulate mean age at first time marriage

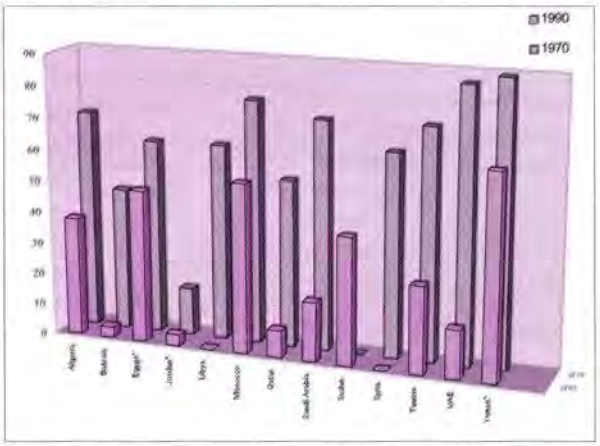
	1970	1990
Algeria	19.3	23.7
Egypt	20	21.6
Bahrain	20	25.6
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	18.7	29**
Morocco	19.4	22.2
Saudi Arabia	19	21.7
Sudan	18.7	24.1
Syrian Arab Republic	20.7	23*
Tunisia	20.9	25
United Arab Emirates	16***	23.1
Yemen	18	19.1

* estimate from Syrian Case Study
** from Rasha and Zafar (1998)
*** from Rasha and Zafar (1998) based on cohort 25-29

Source: The United Nations Women's Indicators and Statistics Database, WISTAT, 2000.

Overall, the age at first time marriage is not only increasing, but has slowly shifted away from the teenage marriages. Typically, girls as young as 16 were married, and started producing by within a year or two. However, the percentage of girls married in their late teens had decreased significantly, as demonstrated for some countries in the graph below.

Graph 1: Percentage Of Girls Married In Their Late Teens, 1970 and 1990



Source: The United Nations Women's Indicators and Statistics Database, WISTAT, 2000.

The chart below demonstrates the dramatic decline in fertility for a few countries in the region over the past three decades:

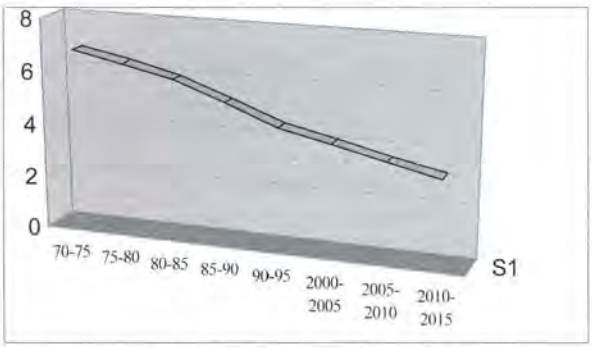
Table 2: Fertility Rates Over the Past Few Decades

	1970-1975	1980-1985	1990-1995
Algeria	7.38	6.35	4.3
Bahrain	5.94	4.63	3.43
Egypt	5.53	5.06	3.8
Jordan	7.79	6.76	5.58
Kuwait	6.9	4.87	3.2
Lebanon	4.92	3.79	3.09
Libya	7.58	7.17	4.1
Morocco	6.89	5.1	3.33
Oman	7.2	7.2	6.7
Qatar	6.76	5.45	4.1
Saudi Arabia	7.3	7.28	6.37
Sudan	6.67	6.42	5
Syria	7.69	7.38	4.7
Tunisia	6.21	4.9	3.13
UAE	6.35	5.23	3.8
Yemen	7.61	7.6	7.6

Source: The United Nations Women's Indicators and Statistics Database, WISTAT, 2000.

This dramatic decrease in fertility caused everyone from policy makers to development specialists to take notice. The high fertility rates had long been seen as the enemy of promoting women's rights in the region, with the absence of low education, low family planning alternatives, and low work opportunities leaving women dis-empowered. Moghadem asserts that, "stripped of their economic/productive role, women depend on motherhood performance for status and prestige and on children's labor as a strategy for survival".[15] The rapid decline sent a message that something was changing, and for those interested in promoting women's entry into the workforce or public arena the time had come to open new opportunities. The graph charts the TFR for the region using the average from sixteen countries over the past few decades:

Graph 2: Average TFR for the MENA Region



Source: The United Nations Women's Indicators and Statistics Database, WISTAT, 2000.

The three primary variables most often emphasized as affecting marital patterns are female labor force participation, woman's access to formal education - particularly higher education - and urbanization.[16] A quick look reveals most MENA countries are undergoing development changes simultaneously with the consistent increase in age of first time marriage. One population study in Jordan, after controlling for other variables, was able to demonstrate the strong effect of marital status on female labor force participation, with single women having significantly higher participation than currently married women.[17]

The data available for the MENA region, shows a clear rise in all the factors leading to delayed marriage. There is an increase in education and in women's labor force participation. The percentages for economically active women are becoming higher and higher. The chart below demonstrates the increase in economically active women in the region over the last three decades. The actual number of active women is not fully captured, and would be larger than the estimate if informal work such as agriculture or services were captured in the numbers.

Table 3: Total Economically Active and Not Economically Active By Age, for Total, Urban, and Rural Area*

	1970			1980			1990		
	Total Female population	Active	Not Active	Total Female population	Active	Not Active	Total Female population	Active	Not Active
Algeria	-	-	-	4,207,195	160,000	4,047,191	4	491,400	5,825,483
Bahrain	52,276	3,243	49,033	88,822	19,325	69,235	262	39,591	95,814
Egypt	11,915,812	653,417	11,262,395	10,868,206	695,912	10,169,966	2,328	1,398,149	12,764,350
Jordan	-	-	-	498,860	33,334	465,526	-	-	-
Kuwait	162,539	16,217	146,322	312,963	63,277	249,686	-	132,128	293,009
Lebanon	603,270	89,280	513,990	-	-	-	-	-	-
Libyan	994,453	29,358	965,095	847,144	106,582	740,562	-	-	-
Morocco	4,162,260	523,081	3,639,179	5,979,446	1,009,908	4,969,538	-	1,629,736	6,690,745
Qatar	39,419	1,393	38,026	-	-	-	-	19,635	51,724
Saudi Arabia	1,607,129	75,276	1,531,853	-	-	-	-	166,737	2,263,698
Sudan	-	-	-	4,995,098	1,549,410	3,318,244	127,444	-	-
Syria	1,528,025	131,808	1,396,217	2,194,188	156,753	2,037,435	-	627,786	3,616,617
Tunisia	-	-	-	2,082,400	455,550	1,626,850	-	494,300	1,938,989
UAE	-	-	-	96,310	9,803	86,389	118	65,415	204,401
Yemen	-	-	-	1,581,649	132,012	1,443,645	5,992	605,126	2,981,892

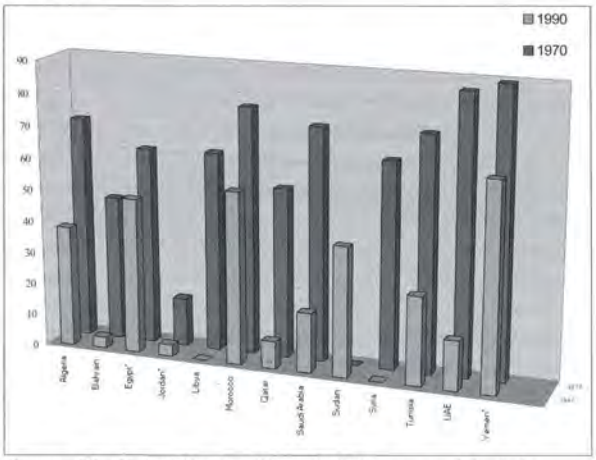
* The sum of active and not active may not always equal total population becasue there are some numbers whose status was unknown

** It is the opinion of the author that not active is not accurately defined, as there are many studies pointing out the necessity to include house work and other house hold activities as participation in the economy

Source: The United Nations Women's Indicators and Statistics Database, WISTAT, 2000.

In addition, there is a clear increase in education for women, and a decrease in illiteracy. Again, this varies across the region, and in comparison to other regions in the global community remains small, but the increase is still an important variable to understanding the increase in marriage age. The graph below demonstrates the decrease in illiteracy rates for a few selection countries in the region for age group 15-24:[18]

Graph 3: Illiteracy Rates for Age Group 15-24 in 1970 and 1990



Source: The United Nations Women's Indicators and Statistics Database, WISTAT, 2000.

The opportunities to work and to receive education undoubtedly played a role in women's lives in MENA. The traditional norm and role of women was slowly shifting, and more options were being presented. According to a UN and the Advancement of Women 1996 report, "women's commitment to and need for the family had traditionally been higher than men's because basic economic survival and the acquisition of valid social roles has been difficult for women to achieve outside of marriage and child bearing".[19] With economic survival and social roles rapidly changing due to a shift in economic structures, women are more likely to make use of the choices set before them. This has caused some women to take a more assertive decision to assert ideological or financial independence.[20]

Beyond Economics and Demography

There are many changes that have been occurring for women in MENA beyond education, health, and labor force participation. Women have emerged as a strong force, particularly during the Nasser age. Personal Status laws, community participation, and an increase in political representation are common trends in MENA. Annex 8 shows the amount of female participation in MENA governments over the past few decades. Indeed, a look at the political and pub-

lic participation of women in the MENA region shows a steady increase. As shown in Annex 9 all but a few countries have granted women the right to vote. The countries that have not yet granted women a voice in the political arena, such as Kuwait or Bahrain, have been grappling with the issue over the past few years. Although this may not have a direct impact on the rising age of marriage, it is an important factor in determining the progress and social outlook towards women in the public sphere.

Beyond economics, this new trend may also have great implications on the social structure. Marriage holds a primary place from a religious perspective, with the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) equating marriage to the completion of half one's religious duties. With Islam as the predominant religion, women's choice to delay marriage could be seen as a challenge to the religious status quo. There is a strong cultural belief that western women's movements resulted in sexual liberation that destroyed morality and dismantled the family within the region. As a result, the delayed marriage age may be met with a backlash from grassroot groups who feel their social structure is being threatened, and the primary target could be women.

Undoubtedly, the backlash may also have some roots in the overall harsh economic conditions. With single women forming 65.2% of economically active women in countries such as Jordan,[21] and women's employment levels exceeding men's in MENA as a whole[22], women may be perceived as competitors in the jobmarket. With high unemployment rates in MENA, men may feel threatened and thus react against women as a whole.

Liberating or Limiting?

The juxtaposition of these trends in marriage, family structure, education, and labor force participation illustrates the two faces of the decline in marriage. On the one hand, the decline in marriage, particularly for young people, is strongly associated with women's longer periods of schooling and increased labor force attachment. Furthermore, the educational and career opportunities that have become available since the 1980s have led many women to delay marriage and childbearing.

Numerous studies on women and development have revealed that among the positive effects of women who work in developing countries is a greater role in the family household. Women can avoid accusations and the psychological feeling of being an added burden on their husbands, as exemplified by one common phrase where unemployed women are referred to as "enemies of the spoon". Moghadem explains that there is "growing evidence from around the world that employed women, including working-class women with factory jobs, value their work for the economic independence and family support it provides and the opportunity to delay marriage and childbearing."[23] In a series of interviews conducted by Fatema Mernissi in Morocco in 1990, women praised their work experience and asserted that they would continue to work even if the additional income was not needed.[24]

Despite Mernissi and Moghadam's argument that equity and empowerment will only come with access to economic resources, there is much criticism from women in the region of the push towards employment and education. They agree with the conservative forces that are often dismissed as part of the patriarchal or Islamists male dogma that the phenomenon of late marriage is indicative of a social problem. Many highly educated women involved in development programs are quick to point out that the simple equation of women plus work equals liberation is faulty. Along with work, comes the potential for exploitation. Not only can factories and corporations exploit women with low paying jobs and long hours, but there is potential exploitation within the household as well. With the poor economic situation in MENA, many men are looking to establish a two income household. Women feel that this allows men an excuse to reduce their role as provider, and place a double burden on women of taking care of the household and having to earn an income. One Egyptian woman asserts, "We do not spoil our men the way you [women in the West] do. We work at home and men should work outside and provide for us.[25]

In addition, studies such as Singermann and Rashad and Zafar, have demonstrated that late marriage is not merely related to women's conscious choice, once they were exposed to a number of opportunities. In many cases, the economic cost of marriage has become high and has developed into a burden on the men. As a result, marriage is often delayed for men until the 30s, and there is an increasing trend to marry outside of the community. In addition, the lack of marriage feasibility - not enough eligible bachelors due to demographics (too young or too old) or male migration to the Gulf or West also plays a role. These are just a few examples of potential socio-economic causes demonstrating the fact that there are several other factors that may not directly pertain to women's status causing the trend in late marriage

Beyond the causes, there are several consequences that are not necessarily positive, particularly in terms of the women's movements. Backlashes such as the ones women are experiencing in Morocco and Egypt may be exacerbated by a rising population of single women, particularly as they enter the job market.[26]

The UN reports that "most people still marry but they marry later in life, especially women. As a result of these changes, many women - many more women then men - spend a significant part of their lives without a

partner, with important consequences for their economic welfare."[27] Despite the changing economic situation, social norms may not accept single women to live an independent life. Marriage has always been considered a woman's way of securing a future.

As women's level of education and financial independence increases, the potential for finding a suitable match becomes smaller and smaller. Many men are finding that the cost of marriage is too demanding, and many are forced to enter the labor market at a young age (and thus do not pursue higher education) or migrate to other countries (such as the Gulf area) to secure a job. One of the primary motives is to save for marriage.[28] This is adding extra pressure on young men wanting to start a family, and causing frustration and resentment among many men, whose age for first time marriage is also substantially increasing. One elderly woman cautions against men who lack the financial capability to marry maintains: "you have to watch these young men today. They want to have a family, but they do not want to pay for them ...In our time, men would feel embarrassed to ask about their wives' income ...A real man would rather die than ask his wife to feed the household." [29] Such factors also play a role in the current trend of women late marriage. The overall MENA region faces high unemployment rates and with a large young population, men are often suffocated by the little opportunities available.

The increase in women's education and entry into the labor force, although minimal, further aggravates the situation. Very few social scientists or economists recognize the financial and psychological burden being placed on men during the marriage process. Many educated women recognize the difficulty for men of their generation to play the role of sole provider, and have gone through informal means (such as the Zawaj Urfi[30]), where the man and woman marry with only two witnesses and no contract and no civil registration) to marry the man of their choice. However, this form of marriage denies women many of their rights (such as alimony, child support, or custody).

Conclusions

Despite the increase of women opportunities in terms of access to education and the labor market, the growing population of single women is still at risk. Many of the international labor conventions have not been ratified by Arab nations. For example, six Arab countries have not yet ratified convention 100 on equal pay for men and women doing similar jobs, and eleven countries have not yet ratified convention number 100 on equal treatment of both genders in terms of social security.[31]

At the same time, the increase in the number of single women raises many questions related to several cultural, traditional, and religious issues. This may cause a potential backlash against women in the region. Although the opportunities for women are still small in number and often limited to small percentages of the urban population, they have been visible enough to result in opposition by conservative forces. The relative rise in the position of females is seen by conservative forces as having the greatest potential of any factor to destroy the patriarchal family and its political, economic, and demographic structure[32] As a result, it is important to explore the social impact of the current trend in marriage.

With the social aspect in mind, it is also important to continue opening doors for women in the region in terms of economic development. Programs that incorporate economic development and social awareness objectives should be implemented. As mentioned above, women's participation in the labor force is still the lowest among all the regions, and although there may be social or cultural restraints, there are still little policy or governmental support for women. Moghadam asserts, "If Middle Eastern women were to lose their position in the labor market, it would certainly not be reasons of religion or culture. Economic and political forces shape their employment to a far greater extent."[33]

Moghadam also maintains that one of the greatest challenges facing women is the myth of difference versus inferior. Middle Eastern women maintain that they play different roles in society, but that does not mean they are inferior. Moghadem feels that this contributes to a self-censorship or a self imposed obstacle to women reaching their full potential. However, the attitude towards work in MENA is probably more indicative of the double burden imposed on women who work. Women are fully responsible for all domestic chores, since it is not socially acceptable for any form of employment to disrupt the household. In a study conducted by Homa Hoodfar, almost all informants thought that work was unnecessary for women, and that "if a woman chooses to work, she had to do so without jeopardizing her domestic responsibilities."[34] There is little incentive to add the responsibilities of paid employment on top of the day to day home responsibilities. The situation for working women is further aggravated by the lack of social supportive facilities (nurseries, cooperatives, etc)[35].

Furthermore, according to Hoodfar's study, almost all women, whether employed or not, felt that there was no point in working if they had no control over the income. Since in most cases, the husband is the head of the household, the income goes straight to him. Therefore, many women rejected this double burden, and instead chose to focus on the household rather than work. The younger generation is following in the steps of their mothers delaying the burden of marriage and home.

No matter what the explanation for women's decision to enter or avoid the labor force, there is a clear shift in marriage patterns and there is a strong need to understand the social and economic factors involved. The changing dynamics of the marriage market increase the risk of not marrying at all. Despite the increase witnessed, participation of Arab women in the labor force remains the lowest of any region in the world. In 1996, women represented 40% of the world labor force, and the participation of Arab women in the Middle East and North Africa Region at that time did not exceed 26%. If marriage is being replaced by women's integration into the labor market, it is important to insure a secure place for women in that market.

End Notes

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12. At this point, it is important to note some constraints. The MENA regions as a whole have two frequent challenges often identified by a number of disciplines from economists to demographers to sociologists. First, is the question of what defines a region. Although the MENA region is known to share the common language of Arabic, and has a majority religion of Islam, in economic terms each country and area differs greatly. In addition, the social and political environment of each country also differs greatly. The second difficulty often encountered by researchers in MENA is the lack of accurate data. This difficulty is further exacerbated when doing research on women or gender. As a result, whereas there is a clear established pattern of rising age across the region, the causes and consequences often differ. In order to explore the various different experiences in the region, case studies have proven an effective way to explore different areas and circumstances to analyze the current trend. Due to the political situation of the region, other countries with high political instability or civil war (such as Lebanon and Algeria) or external factors (such as sanctions in Iraq or the Palestinian occupation), make it difficult to understand the trend beyond a specific country analysis. Although no case studies were done in this paper, it is strongly recommended that future case studies be conducted.
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18. To view illiteracy rates for male and female population for various age groups over the past three decades, see Annex 6. For more information on education achievements for women over the past two decades see Annex 7.
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The Costs of Marriage in Egypt

By Diane Singerman and Barbara Ibrahim*

It is common knowledge that it takes many years to accumulate the sums of money needed for marriage in Egypt, as well as in many other countries in the Arab world. Getting married has become a protracted campaign for young people and their families right across the social spectrum. This economic challenge has unexplored implications for national economies. And in Arab countries with huge and growing cohorts of young people, the expectations of the young have important political repercussions, as leaders and states are expected to meet the needs of their youthful populations.

Demographers have noted that throughout the Arab region longstanding marriage patterns are undergoing change, in a process widespread enough to qualify as a "nuptiality transition." Arab countries are experiencing later ages at marriage, larger percentages of nuclear households, and increasing numbers of men and women who remain celibate (unmarried) into middle age or later (Rashad and Khadr 1998; Rashad and Osman 2000). The trends toward later marriage ages are associated with reduced fertility and have thus been welcomed by demographers and policymakers concerned with high rates of population growth. More recently, however, public discourse in Egypt and elsewhere in the region has raised new concerns over the social "cost" of delayed marriage and its unintended consequences. Research presented here suggests that some young people are creating alternatives to marriage or substitutes for a "good" that they cannot easily afford, in the parlance of economists. In response to the perceived high costs of marriage, some NGOs in Egypt have experimented with alternatives to traditional marriage such as mass ceremonies where costs are subsidized (El-Magd 1998, see also Wiktorowicz and Farouqi 2000 for similar trends in Jordan).

Religious groups have promoted the idea of marriages based on only token exchanges of material goods and low bride price, but with seemingly few takers. News accounts in the media suggest that `urfi or customary, common-law marriages that are either secretive or unregistered are increasingly popular among young people because these types of marriage reduce expenses (Allam 2000; Shahine 1998). Other young people decide not to marry, marry foreigners within Egypt or migrate abroad. Marriage traditions are also changing. For example, urban, educated women with more resources are marrying younger men in larger numbers, reversing longstanding traditions of older men marrying younger women (Osman and Shahd 2000).[1]

The costs of marriage remain under-researched and under-theorized by social scientists, but paradoxically they are discussed quite often in the media and indirectly make their way into public debates on Personal Status Law and women's rights (see Ezzat 2000, Lloyd and Naguib 1994). Historically, attempts to change the laws that regulate marriage and divorce have been at the center of some of the most contentious political debates in Egypt since the early 20th century (see Sonbol 1996; Ahmed 1992; and Badran 1991). In January 2000, the Egyptian Parliament passed a controversial new law that granted a wife a "no-fault" divorce if she renounced all financial claims due her from the husband. Yet the economic implications of these reforms for marriage and divorce have not been fully addressed.

In rich and poor neighborhoods alike, young people and their parents are confronted by the social pressures to make a good match and marry at a "suitable" standard of living. In Egypt, a popular saying encourages the bride's family to test the mettle of a fiance by "tiring him out" financially. At the same time, others bemoan the rising expectations of brides and their families who demand too much of a groom.

Data reported here come from the 1995 DHS survey and, for the first time a small national household expenditure survey (380 households) which asked specific questions about the aggregate costs of marriage in 1999.[2] We investigated the gendered norms around

contributions to marriage from the four main participants: the bride, the groom, the bride's family and the groom's family. We also suggested a national map of marriage costs that varies by rural and urban residence and other socio-economic variables. Finally, the data available enabled us to investigate the relationship between poverty, its transmission, and the costs of marriage.

The Data:
The International Food Policy and Research Institute (IFPRI) in conjunction with the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Trade and Supply launched a 2400 household, nation-wide expenditure survey in 1997 (Egypt Integrated Household Survey, EIHS). While designed to consider the public policy implications of commodity subsidies for low-income households, the detailed information from the sample provided a rare opportunity to understand the relationship between the cost of marriage and other economic, social, and demographic variables (see Datt, Jolliffe, and Sharma 1998; and Bouis and Ahmed, 1998). A sub-sample reinterviewed in 1999 allowed us to add a module of questions addressing marriage costs and strategies (Haddad and Akhter 2000).[3]

Based on previous ethnographic research and field experience, the module collected data about major component costs of marriage, methods of accumulation, and which party to the marriage paid for each (bride, groom, bride's family, or groom's family). The cost of marriage is an aggregate figure that includes items that custom and/or religious law dictate that the parties purchase or attain before a marriage can occur. Typical marriage costs in Egypt include housing, furniture and appliances, gifts of gold to the bride (*shabka*), bride price (*mahr*), celebrations, the bride's trousseau (*kiswa*), kitchenware, less expensive furnishings including lamps, carpets, sheets, etc., (*gihaz*), and other gifts exchanged during the courtship period. If there is a bias in our results, it was an underreporting of expenses, since it may be hard for respondents to remember the large number of purchases that are made over time for marriage.

In Egypt, it is typical for families to allow a couple to finalize their marriage only after they have purchased their apartment or home, or built or renovated a new room in an extended family residence. Beyond renovation and construction costs, the marriage cannot take place until the apartment is completely furnished, decorated and supplied, down to the spices in the kitchen and clothes in the wardrobes (Hoodfar 1997; Singerman 1995; and Rugh 1984).

Findings:
As expected, our study found that marriage costs were a formidable challenge to Egyptian families, averaging LE 20,194 (US $5,957 in the mid 1990s). Total marriage costs were thus four and a half times higher than GNP per capita (gross national product) estimates of $1,290 in 1998 (IBRD/World Bank 2000, 12). In rural areas the average cost was LE 17,373 ($5,125) or four times GNP per capita and in urban areas, LE 24,969 ($7,365) or almost six times GNP per capita.

The burden that marriage places on households becomes even more apparent when we examine data at the household level. The average cost of marriage nationally is eleven times annual household expenditure per capita (see Table 3 below). This translates to ten times annual household expenditure per capita for urban households and twelve times annual household expenditure per capita for rural ones. The average total cost of marriage was twice as large as entire annual household expenditures in the aggregate (i.e. the sum of the expenditures of all members of one household). Thus, the average cost of marriage was equal to the entire expenditures of all members of their household for two full years. In urban areas, those households living above the poverty line had to accumulate 2.5 times entire annual household expenditures in the aggregate, while those households living below the poverty line accumulated 1.3 times entire annual household expenditures in the aggregate. In rural areas, the financial burden lay more heavily on those living below the poverty line, who accumulated 2.6 times entire annual household expenditures in the aggregate, as opposed to 1.7 times for those living above the poverty line (data not shown).

Another way to think of the magnitude of these costs is to apply them to the estimated total number of marriages per year in Egypt. Since an estimated one in twenty of all 13 million households in Egypt experience a marriage each year according to the survey results (nearly a quarter of the households had experienced a marriage during the past five years), the national cost of all 650,000 marriages equals LE 13.11 billion ($3.867 billion). This figure, by comparison, dwarfs the figure for total economic aid to Egypt from the United States in 1999 — $2.1 billion (U.S. State Department 2000, 2).

Costs of marriage shift over time, in reaction to local, national, and international trends. EDHS cohort data, presented in Table 1, allows us to track changes in the cost of marriage from the bride's side only. Although not a perfect indicator, because the bride's side share of relative contributions to marriage also fluctuates over time, the data show that marriage costs have risen with increases in the cost of living and declined in time of economic recession. After adjusting for inflation, we see that marriage costs for a bride's family rose

dramatically in the years following 1965. In absolute terms, the median costs roughly doubled in each five-year interval, leveling off somewhat in the 1990s. The largest cost increases were experienced between the later years of the 1970s and the early 1980s, a period marked by economic change and growth. The bride's cost of marriage in real terms for those marrying in 1970-75 increased 37% over costs between 1965-69. For the cohort of brides that married between 1975-79, their costs were 49% higher than their counterparts in the late 1960s. The next cohort of brides (1980-84) spent 52% more on marriage than their earlier counterparts. In the later 1980s and 1990s, the increases rose more gradually, but of course absolute costs were rising dramatically. Over a 30-year period, or approximately a generation of women, marriage costs for a bride's family had risen ten times over 1965 levels (unadjusted for inflation), i.e. from LE 300 in the mid-1960s to LE 3,542 by 1990-95. Parents arranging their child's marriage deplore the increases in these costs (even if they forget that their incomes have also expanded greatly in the last thirty years). When parents of adolescents were surveyed in 1997 about the main problems facing youth, 59% identified buying an apartment or house for marriage, followed by 21% replying that youth lacked money, and 10% identified problems furnishing the marital home (Ibrahim et. al. 2000, 3).

Table 1: Bride's Side Real Marriage Costs, 1965-1995

Year	Urban Bride's Side Real Marriage Cots		Rural Bride's Side Real Marriage Cots		Average Bride's Side Real Marriage Cots		Real Per Capita GDP Growth Over Previous Period (%)
	1979 LE	% charge	1979 LE	% charge	1979 LE	% charge	
1965-1969	743	-	381	-	523	-	-
1970-1974	1032	39%	508	34%	716	37%	7%
1975-1979	1287	25%	491	-3%	781	9%	38%
1980-1984	1314	2%	468	-5%	796	2%	25%
1985-1989	859	-35%	423	-10%	592	-26%	-4%
1990-1995	533	-38%	255	-40%	352	-40%	2%

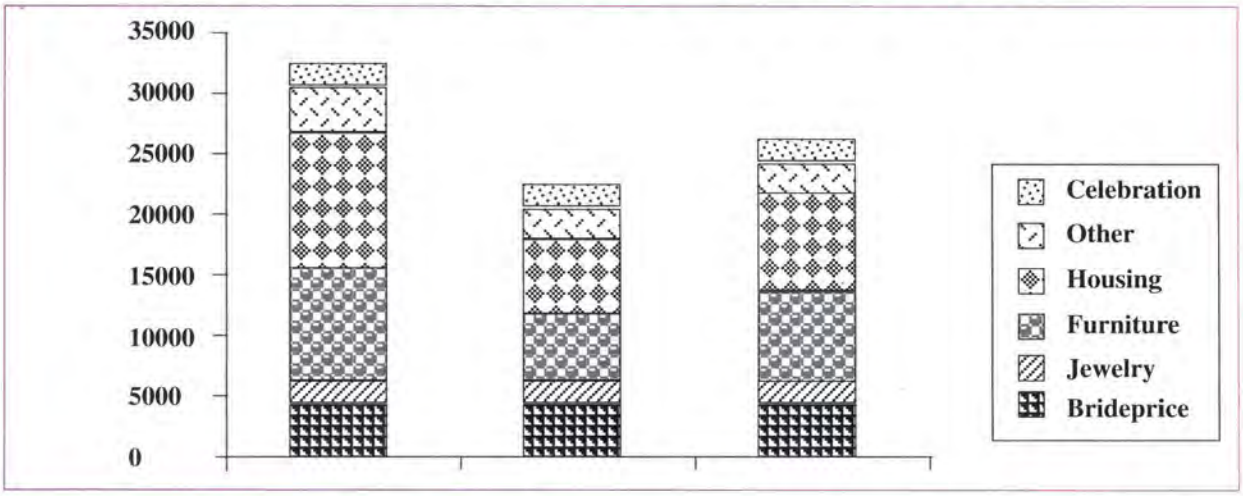
While average ages at marriage have risen in Egypt in the past decades, the increase has not been as marked in all Arab countries (see Rashad and Khadr 1998). We do not have the data to suggest a causal link between the cost of marriage and increasing age at marriage, but there is indirect evidence that it does take longer to complete a marriage than in the recent past. In 1986, census officials added the marital category katb el kitaab— married but not living together (i.e. those who had signed a marriage contract but not yet established a joint household) in addition to the standard category of gawaz. This innovation recognized the reality that many young couples must wait for long periods of time before they are able to complete their living arrangements. (see Singerman 1995; Hoodfar 1997). In fact, between the 1986 and 1996 censuses there was a four-fold increase in the proportion of couples "caught" between these two stages. (CAPMAS 1987; 1997

Gendered norms shape who pays for each marriage expense. Housing costs are typically born by the groom and his family and the bride's family uses the bride price (always paid by the groom and his family to the bride's family) and additional monies to furnish the apartment or rooms in an extended family dwelling. If the bride has access to housing, the groom's side is expected to purchase more of the furniture. The housing costs of couples living with their family (39% of our 1999 sample) were significantly lower than for couples who set up housekeeping as nuclear families. The groom's side typically purchases major appliances such as stoves and washing machines. The cost of housing is approximately a third of the total costs of marriage as Figure 1 demonstrates, and furniture purchases follow closely behind (31% and 28% respectively). It is not only necessary to acquire a physical space before a couple can marry, but that space must be furnished, finished, decorated, and supplied in particular ways, according to the norms of particular classes and regions.

Fulfilling the religious aspect of marriage finances known as the mahr, or brideprice, appears to be on the decline in Egypt. Some couples, particularly in urban areas, stipulate a merely symbolic amount for the bride price as it is registered in the marriage contract. According to the EDHS trend data, 37% of the cohort that married between 1990-95 did not exchange a bride price at all, and in the1999 EIHS sample, only 27% of the couples reported exchanging a bride price. If households do not demand a large bride price from the groom, they nevertheless expect the groom to purchase a greater share of the furniture. In other words, there may be a trend toward shifting resources away from the bride price in favor of contributions to necessary items like furniture and furnishings.

The shabka is typically paid exclusively by the groom and his family, although some sharing is reported, and the exchange of shabka in general has become more

FIGURE 1: Component Parts of Total Costs of Marriage, Urban/Rural, '99 Marriage Module (n=380)



widespread over the past few decades (EDHS cohort data). This trend is significant because the shabka, which is almost always a gift of gold jewelry or precious gems is given directly to the bride. Thus it becomes her property throughout the marriage, even in the case of divorce, and it retains its value and acts as a kind of insurance against personal or household emergencies.

As Table 2 demonstrates below, the costs of marriage are largely borne by the groom's side in Egypt, who bear approximately three/ quarters of the costs. Within that, roughly equal shares are provided by both the groom and the groom's family members. In Cairo and other urban areas, where young men can earn income and work several jobs, individual grooms bear most of the costs of marriage, while in rural areas it is the groom's family that contributes more to marriage.

Table 2: Contributions to Marriage Costs by Region

Region	Groom's Family	Groom's Share Alone	Total	Bride's Share Alone	Total
Urban	28	44	72	24	29
Rural	45	34	79	19	21
Total	38	37	75	22	24

In our 1999 sample, the bride's family provides twenty-four percent of the costs of marriage and the bride herself only 2.3%. Regional variation is significant; in rural Upper Egypt for example, there is little contribution from the bride's family (13%) and only .03% from the bride, thus conforming most closely to the traditional pattern of full funding from the groom's side. In rural areas, women are much less engaged in wage labor, thereby reducing their ability to contribute to marriage costs. In general, the most pronounced variation by region of our sample is what might be called a "patriarchal slide" of gender norms as one moves farther south in Egypt and into more rural areas, where the groom's family provides more of the resources (more than 80% in a mirror image, in highly urbanized Cairo, the bride's family share is highest (29%) and declines to 13% in lower rural Egypt.

Over time, the EDHS cohort trend data on bride's side marriage costs reveals a significant increase in the proportion of costs women report their families contribute towards marriage. The meaning of these shifts, and whether greater contributions towards marriage from the bride and/or her family translates into greater power in the household, merits further research. Contrary to our expectations, neither education nor employment status of grooms or brides were significant in explaining the sharing of marriage costs.

The challenge of accumulating these sums of money was met by multiple strategies, including participating in informal savings associations (*gama'iyyat*), saving money in other institutions, receiving cash wedding gifts, taking second jobs (26% of all grooms), borrowing money, selling property, and migration abroad. The most common vehicle for accumulating the sums were informal savings associations, which a third of the grooms and bride's family, a fifth of the groom's families and 6% of the brides utilized (data not shown).

Poverty and the Cost of Marriage:

Egypt has sustained impressive economic growth rates and income gains have propelled it out of the World Bank's category of a low-income country since the 1970s. Yet poverty has remained a vexing challenge and there has been a slight increase in both the depth and severity of poverty between 1981-82 and 1997

(Adams 2000, 263). Assaad and Rushdy argue that "at least one quarter of Egypt's population is poor by any standards and another quarter lives on the margins of poverty (1999, 11)." A detailed national survey in 1995 found that 37.3% of the households were objectively poor (Nagy 2001, 42). In our 1997 sample, 27 percent of the Egyptian population was living in poverty, with slightly higher rates in rural areas (Datt, Jolliffe, and Sharma 1998).[4]

While the causes and measurement of poverty are extremely complicated theoretically, comparatively, and methodologically, we posit that ignoring and under-estimating the effects of the cost of marriage on expenditure data may unnecessarily distort poverty measures and more importantly, distort the ability of policymakers to formulate successful poverty alleviation strategies. Few surveys of household expenditures, including the 1997 EIHS, include detailed questions on the costs of marriage. Certainly, some costs associated with marriage are included in these surveys but others escape or are lumped together, such as celebrations for births, weddings, and deaths. Survey instruments need redesign to delineate and measure these costs more accurately. For example, a future objective of research might be to understand what proportion of household savings is directed towards marriage expenses. Since we have shown that grooms and their families provide more of the marriage expenses, policy initiatives need to take gendered norms into consideration if, for example, they are interested in improving educational or job training for young men. The financial pressure on young men influences their decisions about career paths, migration, and educational and skills training because they must save several times their annual income for marriage, or remain single dependents in their parents' household.

The average cost of marriage was equal to the entire expenditures of all members of their household for two full years.

It should also be noted that marriage represents, for women in particular, who tend to inherit less than men for both religious and customary reasons, the largest inter-generational transfer of assets in their lifetime. While we have found that brides do not furnish a large share of marriage expenses, the campaign to marry also influences their educational and career paths (see Amin and Hassan, forthcoming; Singerman 1995 and Hoodfar 1997).

The common pattern of ignoring marriage expenses in household expenditure surveys remains problematic. We see a parallel in the way that measurements of work and income once ignored women's economic contributions. It took a long overdue application of a gendered analysis of labor force participation to uncover the significant role of women's domestic, informal and non-salaried sources of income.

The significance of these expenses should also provoke a debate about the indigenous "meaning" of poverty. As Table 3 demonstrates, the average cost of marriage nationally is roughly eleven times annual household expenditure per capita The national cost of marriage for households living under the poverty line is LE 9,466, dwarfing their annual household expenditures per capita twelve times over. There is a puzzle here that deserves more attention in order to understand the social, psychic, and health costs to very poor households of amassing such sums over time. We also must investigate how poor households recover from a marriage episode economically, since we know that households borrow money from others, sell their property, and/or defer training and other investments to marry children, perhaps sacrificing other basic needs, such as health care or education, in the process. We do not mean to suggest that an investment in marriage is somehow an "irrational" strategy, since the end result is often a new household that is established at

Table 3: Total Marriage Costs Relative to Annual Household Expenditure Per Capita

	Total Cost of Marriage for Households			Total Cost of Marriage Relative to Household Expenditure Per Capita		
	Above the Poverty Line	Below the Poverty Line	All Households	Above the Poverty Line	Below the Poverty Line	All Households
Urban	34.012	8.822	24.969	11	9	10
Rural	19.680	11.219	17.373	10	15	12
Total	24.688	9.466	20.194	11	12	11

a relatively high standard of living, providing a healthy and sustainable environment for the next generation.

Disaggregation is important in order to understand why marriage is a relatively greater burden for some groups rather than others. For example, in urban areas, Egyptians above the poverty line spend eleven times their annual expenditures on marriage, while those living below the poverty line spend nine times on marriage. The greatest burden is carried by Egyptians who live below the poverty line in rural areas and spend fifteen times their annual household expenditures per capita in order to complete one marriage transaction (see also Ibrahim and Wassef 1999). Rural households living in poverty spend almost LE 3,000 more than their urban counterparts living in poverty, even though the national average of the cost of marriage is almost LE 7,000 more for all urban households than rural ones.

Macro-economic trends of growth, poverty, employment, and globalization are difficult to predict, as are the resulting changes in the state's commitment to social welfare, but we can be fairly sure that Egyptians will continue to launch elaborate strategies to invest in the next generation. This very difficult savings campaign clearly influences the economic decision-making and life choices that young men and women and their families make. Ethnographic and demographic research suggests that similar traditions and challenges surround marriage in other Arab nations, with unknown consequences. What if any are the responses of governments and those responsible for investing in the welfare of the younger generation? Though many questions remain unanswered about the cost of marriage in Egypt and throughout the region, at the very least we hope our research will spark further study and debate.

End Notes

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1. In 1996, Osman and Shahd found that 27% of grooms married older brides. As recently as 1986 only 2% of grooms married older brides (2000).

2. For further elaboration of the results of this survey and more detailed analysis of this issue, see Singerman and Ibrahim, forthcoming. The authors gratefully acknowledge support for the development of this research provided by the Population Council, the American University Senate Research Award (Washington, D.C.), the New Arab Demography Project of the Social Research Center at the American University in Cairo, and the Mellon Foundation. Invaluable research assistance was provided by Amina Hegazy, David Spielman, Fatma El-Hamidi, Rania Salem, Maria Buzdugan, and David Richards. Helpful advice at various stages of the analysis was offered by Ragui Assaad, Omaima el-Gibaly, Fredric Shorter, Rachel Kranton, Magued Osman, and Saher El-Tawila. Special thanks are due to Akhter A. Ahmed and Lawrence Haddad at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) for sharing their data and agreeing to add a battery of questions on the cost of marriage in Egypt to one of their surveys.

3. The 1997 questionnaire consisted of 18 sections on a series of topics, which integrated monetary and non-monetary measures of household welfare and a variety of household behavioral characteristics. The questionnaire was administered to 2,400 households from 20 Governorates using a two-stage stratified selection process (see Datt, Jolliffe, and Sharma 1998, 6-7).

4. The poverty line is the break even level of expenditures by a household needed to meet a minimum of food and non-food requirements (Adams 2000, 261).

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The 1998 Proposed Civil Marriage Law in Lebanon:

The Reaction of the Muslim Communities*

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1. Introduction

The personal status of the Lebanese is governed by the respective laws of the country's eighteen recognized religious communities. Article 9 of the Lebanese constitution says that the State shall "safeguard for the citizens of whatever religion or sect, due respect to their personal status code and their spiritual interests."[1] In addition to the Christian and Jewish communities, the Lebanese constitution recognizes three main Muslim communities, the Sunni, the Shiite and the Druze. Each of these communities possesses its own jurisdiction and sole competence in all matters of personal status.[2] Personal status rules are primarily *shari'a* based in that *shari'a* courts have jurisdiction with regard to the Sunni Hanafi and Shiite Ja'farı sects while the Druze have a Codified Personal Status Law promulgated in 1948 and amended in 1959. The various confessional laws, both Muslim and Christian, contain fundamental differences. Complications arising from having a variety of laws regulating the same issue is particularly acute in the context of marriage between persons belonging to different sects. In order to provide some remedy to this situation, the president of the republic presented the cabinet with a detailed draft of a facultative civil personal status code in February 1998.

The supporters of the law argued its necessity in Lebanon by pointing to the fact that couples are forced to travel abroad to contract the civil marriages denied to them by local laws. This was deemed to be an infringement of the country's sovereignty as the national civil courts are thus forced to apply foreign laws under whose auspices such marriages take place. Those Lebanese who choose not to marry outside Lebanon are forced to undergo conversion in order to comply with religious marriage requirements.[3] Furthermore, the proposed law, in some of its articles, was designed to be advantageous to the juridical status of women, since to varying degrees, the prevalent religiously based personal status rules are detrimental to women.[4] The preamble to the law also stressed the beneficial impact that such a law could impart to national cohesion.

In this paper, I will review the proposed law and reconstruct the reaction to it by the three principal Muslim sects in Lebanon, namely, the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Druze. I will outline the arguments, actions and reactions of different Muslim constituencies, namely, the clerics; the politicians; and the intellectuals and activists.

2. The Proposed Law

The question of civil personal status has a relatively long history in Lebanon. On 28 April, 1936, a decree by the French Mandate authorities entrusted the civil courts with personal status litigation, reducing the juridical competence of the religious courts to actions relating to marriage. However, the protest of all the communities, and particularly the Muslims, were so violent that the French High Commissioner was forced to postpone the decree indefinitely.[5] After independence in 1943, discussions concerning the introduction of an optional personal status law occurred during a debate surrounding the law of 2 April, 1951 which gave Christian religious courts powers similar to those enjoyed by Muslim religious courts. It is significant that, at the time, both Muslim and Christian clerics exerted strong pressure to institute the above mentioned law. In reaction to the extension of the powers of the religious courts, the Order of Lawyers proclaimed a strike that lasted for six months. The strike

was called off only after the Order received a promise that parliament would discuss civil personal status law sometime in the near future. As in the 1950s, debates over a civil personal status law burst out intermittently in the 1960s and early 1970s. One of the most serious proposals preceding the current one was elaborated by the Democratic Party in 1971. In 1997, the Syrian National Socialist Party also proposed such a law in parliament.

The proposed bill of 1998 is mainly confined to issues pertaining to marriage and its effects without delving into issues of inheritance and testaments; thus, it does not include all aspects of personal status. By not discussing the religious affiliation of the parties involved, the proposed law implicitly permits the marriage of a Muslim woman to a Christian man, a union forbidden by the *shari'a*. More explicitly, a number of articles are in clear contradiction to Muslim religious laws on personal status. Article 9 infringes upon Muslim men's legal right to marry more than one wife by clearly stating that "it is illegal to contract a marriage between two persons, if one of them is already bound by an existing marriage." Article 25 establishes the equality of the sexes in divorce by granting equal rights to women and men in initiating a divorce. The law also allows a marriage prohibited in Islam, namely the marriage between two persons connected through the relationship of *rida'ah* (suckling). Another article in the proposed law which is fundamentally contrary to the *shari'a* recognizes the principle of adoption.

The proposed law has been criticized by supporters of civil marriage as being wanting in secular spirit in that it allows religious marriages to be subject to religious laws. Indeed, the proposed law does not aim at abolishing the religious courts.[6] Moreover, the proposed law follows current legal practices with regard to other legal points, such as child custody, guardianship and inheritance. Thus, following a divorce, custody of the children is automatically given to the mother until the son reaches the age of seven and the daughter the age of nine (Article 42). As for guardianship, it is given to the father and reverts to the mother in the cases of the ex-husband's death, disappearance, or loss of sanity (Article 86). Finally, the law relinquishes the regulation of inheritance and testaments to the current religious personal status laws of the concerned parties (Article 110).[7]

3. The Sunnis
3.1 The Religious Establishment:

As soon as the actual text of the optional personal status law was made public, the clamor which had been going on for a few months intensified. Rumors that it was impending had already aroused vocal opposition. The polemic had started more than a year earlier when, on the occasion of Lebanon's Independence Day (22 November, 1996), the president announced his intention to present and support this proposal. A statement by the Sunnite Islamic Council rapidly followed which denounced the future project with a rare virulence.[8] The campaign was spearheaded by the Sunni Grand Mufti of Lebanon, Shaykh Muhammad Rashid Qabbani. The Sunni clerical establishment headed by Qabbani was the most categorical in its rejection of the law. The arguments offered against it were based upon the following grounds: that it opposed legal provisions in the *shari'a*; that it furthered secularism at the expense of the religious authorities and religious courts; and that it endangered the well-being of the family.

The Sunni establishment's position concentrated on a number of legal rejections. The first concerned the illegality, from an Islamic perspective, of a contract of marriage between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man. Under the *shari'a* and all modern Islamic laws, both for the Sunnis and Shiites, the marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim is null and void.[9] This view is so pervasive that even one of the most moderate of Shiite clerics, Muhammad Hasan al-Amin, confirmed that there is a consensus among Muslim jurists that such an act is forbidden.[10] A second major issue pertained to the prohibition of polygamy. The Sunni position on this matter was clearly enunciated by the judge Muhammad Kan'an who stated that the stipulation in Article 9 aiming at preventing a Muslim man from marrying more than one wife is contrary to the Qur'an, the Sunna and the *ijma'*. Moreover, Article 61 defined illegitimate progeny as progeny resulting from the relationship between two persons one of whom married to another under this law. Thus, a Muslim man who married in accordance with the civil law, and then contracted a Muslim marriage with another woman would find his progeny resulting from the second marriage to be illegitimate. Article 61 was understood by the Muslim establishment as a law aiming at outlawing polygamy.[11]

Another criticism concerned the articles pertaining to divorce. Muslims contended that the religious courts take rapid decisions concerning such lawsuits in order to insure a quick stabilization of the lives of the persons involved. One critic asserted that, in light of the situation prevalent in the Lebanese civil courts, divorce lawsuits are likely to last for many years, thus possibly impeding the resumption of a normal life for the parties concerned.[12] On a more substantial level, the Muslims criticized Article 26 which prohibits divorce by mutual consent. Objections were also raised concerning the length of time required to lapse before a divorced woman is allowed to remarry (*al-'idda*). Article 34 states that a woman can remarry only

300 days after the nullification of the previous marriage. This makes the *'idda* three times longer than what the *shari'a* stipulates. People related to each other via "suckling" are allowed to marry under the proposed law, thus contradicting Article 18 of the Law of the Rights of the Family of 16 July, 1962, which states: "Marriage of women to a man where there is a relationship by suckling between them shall be permanently forbidden...."[13] The article which legitimizes adoption was also deemed to be in clear defiance of the *shari'a*.

It is clear from the official and unofficial objections to the proposal that the main problem did not only lie with the contract of marriage per se but with its effects on personal status in general. One commentator stated that

> civil marriage is contrary to the *shari'a* as well as are its effects on child custody, support, divorce, *'idda*, adoption, the law of succession and guardianship.... Many of the details pertaining to civil marriage and its effects are clearly in contradiction to the Qur'an and Sunna.

Sami Khadra concluded by exclaiming:

> How is it possible to turn one's back on a divine *shari'a* ... and replace it with human laws... And what is the Muslim left with in a country that forbids the implementation of Islamic law in all areas except personal status?[14]

The view that personal status was the last bastion in which the *shari'a* could manifest itself was reiterated on various occasions, reflecting an almost existential concern.

Another reason for the opposition, as the Mufti of Mount Lebanon remarked, is that the bill "presupposes the drafting of unified civil laws for marriage, divorce, guardianship, financial compensations, child custody... in other words, it presupposes the establishment of secularism and the relegation of the religious authorities to the sidelines."[15] Thus, in addition to trespassing on territory covered by the Muslim *shari'a*, the law was seen to pose a major threat to the Muslim religious authorities. Indeed, at an early stage of the debate, Qabbani had stated:

> We have been following with apprehension suggestions concerning optional civil marriage, the elimination of the religious courts, and the transfer of their powers to the civil courts. The Muslim religious court is not subject to give and take. It is an established institution and its competencies cannot be entrusted except to the *'ulama* who are specialists in Islamic jurisprudence and its *ahkam*.

Sunni religious leaders in al-Kharrüb district highlighted this issue in a statement condemning the bill and its author, the president: "In his recent speeches on civil marriage, the president is undermining the authority of the religious leaders and is making a mockery out of them."[16] A civil law on personal status thus represented a direct threat to the clerics' autonomy in their relationship to the state and, equally important, to their legitimacy in regulating the personal matters of their communities.

That the law threatened the family was one of the underlying themes of the clerics' attack. Tripoli's Sunni Mufti, Shaykh Taha Sabünjı said that the bill was likely to undermine the family as society's nucleus, stating that "civil marriage heralds the end of the family."[17] One of the arguments used by the Higher *Shar'i* Muslim Council to discredit civil marriage claimed that "countries that have turned their back on religion have reaped nothing but anxiety, dissolution, and social and psychological crisis." The argument, presented in a statement by the council, focused on the dissolution of the family and the resulting "illegal cohabitation in the name of personal freedom." According to the statement, another result of the rejection of religion was that the "phenomenon of illegitimate children has become widespread... until matters came to [the point of] legitimizing homosexual marriages."[18] This view equated civil marriage with the utter dissolution of traditional "family values"; in countries where civil marriage exists, cohabitation rather than marriage is the rule, illegitimate children roam the streets and legal homosexual relations are tolerated. The statement reflects a real fear of the degradation of a certain ideal model and paints a picture of that degradation by describing the worst features of western society from the perspective of religious Muslims. What results is an apocalyptic picture of what Lebanese society could become if it were to go beyond the bounds set by the Muslim culture.

All of the above objections were clearly expressed by the Grand Mufti, who presided over the council, on various previous occasions. Marriage in Islam is governed by Islamic rules and "if these rules, which were set by the prophet Muhammad, were jeopardized, our lives will be sacrificed to defend them."[19] On a later occasion, Qabbanı stated that the proposed law "is an insult to the Muslims and the *shari'a* which was dictated by God and upheld by the constitution." The Mufti said that he would campaign with all spiritual leaders to confront "this dangerous proposal which we will not accept under any condition."[20] The attitude of the Sunni clerics was one of defiance and escalation as Qabbani reiterated that "there are limits that we will never allow anyone to trespass.... Religion and family

are red lines... our position is clear and irrevocable."[21] On 2 February, in a Friday sermon, Qabbani said that he would not allow "secular-minded people to cultivate the germ of civil marriage and other secular ideas in Lebanon so it spreads to Arab and Islamic countries."[22] The passing of the law in Lebanon was, thus, seen as constituting a dangerous precedent for the other Arab countries. Lebanon was to be the first and last battlefield in the confrontation between religion and secularism on a regional level.

By the time the position of the Sunni religious establishment was published in the official statement referred to above, the intensity of the reaction had reached a fever pitch. The statement reminded the Muslims that "for more than fifty years, some have tried to introduce the subject of civil marriage, arousing great controversy, and each time the Muslims stood against it in absolute rejection." Observing that "Muslim personal status laws are the epitome of perfection and equilibrium," the statement reiterated that "civil marriage is considered to be a violation of Islamic rules.. and of the Qur'an and Sunna... and that following its rules is a sin that leads to apostasy."[23] Once the term apostasy was used, it spread and was repeated by the Sunni and, later, the Maronite clerics. This was one of the practical intimidating actions undertaken by the religious establishment to halt any further discussion of the proposed law.

On a more popular level, the Dar al-Fatwa stepped up action by mobilizing the man in the street. Demonstrations against the bill spread and intensified to such a degree that the interior minister declared that street protests would be strictly banned. He, accused, moreover, the clerics of fomenting unrest in their calls for demonstrations. Sunni clerics remained defiant, maintaining that it was their duty to oppose the draft bill publicly, and to mobilize the masses against it.[24] By mid-March, Muslims around the country who were opposed to civil marriage used the opportunity given by Friday prayers to hold peaceful protests and to attack verbally those political leaders who were pushing ahead with the bill. In Tripoli, Islamic associations and movements staged a sit-in after Friday prayers in the Mansouri mosque. In Sidon, around 2,000 people gathered at the Zaatari mosque to hear sermons against the proposal. They shouted that the proposal would be passed "only over our dead bodies."[25] Delegations of women went to Dar al-Fatwa to express their objections to the proposed bill.[26] The following Friday, stirred up by fiery clerical sermons, several thousand worshippers poured into the streets of both Beirut and Tripoli after noon prayers to protest against the civil marriage proposal. In Tripoli, protesters burned a banner which read "civil marriage."[27] By 30 March, the newspapers were still reporting delegations to Dar al-Fatwa supporting the Grand Mufti's categorical rejection of the civil marriage bill.[28]

3.2 The Sunni Politicians

The religious dignitaries counted on the political leadership to support them. Qabbani said that he trusted the Sunni, prime minister, Rafiq Hariri "to take measures to block this dangerous precedent and act in accordance with God's wish."[29] The head of the Sunni Muslim religious courts expressed his further conviction that Muslim MPs would vote down any bill on the matter: "I am sure the proposal will not see light because Muslim members of parliament are fully aware of its dangers."[30]

A number of interlocking political factors influenced the subsequent reaction by various political forces in Lebanon. The most significant of these factors was the distribution of power between the Maronite president, Elias Hrawi, the Sunni prime minister, Rafiq Hariri and the Shiite speaker of the House, Nabih Berri. The personal and political interaction between these three men known as the "Troika" among the Lebanese, was of pivotal importance in determining their reactions to the proposed bill. Another variable included the specific relations of each member of the troika to his own religious community. Moreover, the timing of the proposition by the president of the republic was indicative of political motivation since it coincided with the last year of his term in office. Thus, the reaction to his proposal was closely linked to this perception that politics, and not the national welfare, was behind the president's initiative.

On 2 February, 1998 the proposal was presented to the council of ministers. During the cabinet's session of 18 March, it was adopted by a majority of 22 ministers out of 30. Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, who rejected the bill, pointed out that the cabinet had only endorsed the principle of an optional personal status law, and that it would need to study the draft, article by article, before endorsing it.[31] Insisting that his objections mainly concerned the timing of the debate, Hariri added that the law needed not only the approval of the Christian community but in-depth discussion; yet a heated debate over the proposal would only divert attention from Israel's maneuvers to avoid implementation of UN resolution 425.[32] Consequently, Hariri refused to sign the bill, thus preventing its presentation to parliament. As the Lebanese constitution does not bind the prime-minister to a deadline for his signature, the bill is still temporarily shelved.

The Higher *Shar'i* Islamic council, nonetheless, expressed its disapproval that the bill had been submitted to the cabinet before consultations had taken place with the religious authorities.[33] The struggle between the religious and political establishments over spheres

of influence was now out in the open. Indeed, the tension between the two forces reached dangerous levels when the Higher *Shar'ı* Islamic Council declared that "anyone who calls for the proposal, or agrees with it, is going against the will of the Muslims and loses all capacity to represent them in any position."[34]

Although the majority of cabinet ministers voted for the proposed law, the reaction of politicians in general, including deputies and ministers, was, largely, cautious and evasive. As the religious establishment became increasingly vocal, a number of Muslim deputies, particularly those who had previously been absent from the debate, demanded a suspension of any discussion of the proposed law. [35]

Ministers who opposed the bill hinted at political machinations which had surrounded its introduction to the cabinet. The minister of information spoke of an "act of infiltration," while minister 'Umar Misqawı stated that the issue "was an open bazaar between president Elias Hrawi and speaker Nabih Berri with the aim of confronting the prime minister." The former prime minister and current MP 'Umar Karami emphasized that political disagreements between the members of the troika had constituted the real context for the bill's approval.[36]

No prominent Sunni politicians spoke in favor of the bill, while quite a number took the line argued by the religious authorities. For example, Karami considered the civil marriage proposal to be a call for people to deviate from their various religions. In one statement, he equated secularism with atheism saying: "This law is rejected by all except for the few who call for atheism and secularism."[37] Even moderate Sunni politicians such as ex-prime minister and current MP Salim al-Hoss evaded the question by pointing out that the conditions prevailing in the country were not propitious for any discussion of the subject:

> All indicators suggest that the proposed law will fail in parliament. In order to avoid sharp divisions in the country we ask that it may be withdrawn, because further discussion will be followed by a demand that confessionalism be abolished completely on both the political and administrative levels. Is the country ready for such a probability at the moment?[38]

Al-Hoss was hinting at what many considered to be the crux of the problem: namely, that civil marriage was inextricably linked to the issue of political sectarianism.

The support that the Sunni religious clerics received from the leading Sunni politician, Hariri, and obversely, the Sunni clerics' backing for Harırı's opposition to the bill resulted in an unified position on the part of the Sunni community. This partly explains the strength and virulence of Sunni opposition to the civil marriage bill.

4. The Shiites

4.1 The Religious Establishment

Initially, the position of religious Shiites was slightly ambivalent. It gained in intensity only gradually, perhaps in conjunction with the fierce Sunni attack on the proposed legislation. On 21 January, one of the leading Shiite religious scholars, Mu˛ammad ˜usayn Fadlallah denied having given his full approval to civil marriage. The occasion was the publication of an interview with Fadlallah in the London-based al-Mou˛arrir which quoted him as stating that civil marriage was compatible with Islamic law under certain conditions. He subsequently explained that

> ... the Muslim marriage is a civil marriage in the sense that a religious cleric does not need to be present during the contraction of marriage. However the Muslim marriage includes provisions that are not found in the civil marriage.... Thus, we can say, from a Muslim point of view, that if a marriage does not include the provisions in the sharı'a , it is considered invalid and illegal.[39]

He confirmed that Islamic religious courts should govern the personal affairs of the Muslims.40 A month later, prominent Shiite clerics, 'Abd al-Amır Qabalan, demanded that the president of the republic withdraw the proposal for civil marriage before a cabinet vote in order to allow Christian and Muslim spiritual leaders, to examine it first.[41]

While the head of the Higher Shiite Council, Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din, at one point, stated that "civil marriage is a critical issue... it is not negotiable under any circumstances," [42] on another occasion he maintained that the Muslim marriage contract was similar to civil marriage, and that Islam had no problem with the latter.

Throughout the subsequent debate, Shams al-Din behaved with caution and prudence. Despite his principled rejection of the proposed bill, he was careful not to declare its supporters apostate, as did Sunni and Maronite spiritual authorities. Shams al-Dın's moderate tone was influenced by the political stance taken by major Shiite politicians.

Speaker Nabih Berri, and almost all the Shiite ministers of the cabinet voted for the bill. Shams al-Din's circumspection is to be understood in the context of his need to carefully balance his religious position with that held by his political allies. But a clear shift in his position occurred on the second day following the

cabinet vote, when he proclaimed his solidarity with the Sunni religious authorities. Thus the positions of the Sunni and Shiite clerics were finally brought into alignment. A meeting at Dar al-Fatwa which included Shams al-Din and Qabbani produced a joint statement condemning the civil marriage proposal.[43] By taking this stand, Shams al-Din was closing the door to potential accusations that the Shiites had tacitly accepted the bill, a necessary move due to a perceived lack of intensity by the Shiites when contrasted with the Sunnite opposition.[44]

Gradually, then, Shiite clerics rejected the proposed law in clear and unequivocal terms. Shams al-Din stated that "civil marriage is in violation of the core of Islamic thought and belief, and for this reason cannot gain any legitimacy, and should be dropped immediately."[45] Fadlallah attacked the bill repeatedly stating that the civil marriage bill would legalize adultery.[46]

On Friday 21 March, the Shiite clerics reiterated in their weekly sermons their opposition to the proposed law. Shams al-Din advised its withdrawal while Faḍlallah repeated that "a Muslim who embarks upon a marriage that is not bound by Islamic legal provisions is living in adultery."[47] By the end of the month of March, Shams al-Din's tone became threatening. As he reiterated that both Muslims and Christians opposed the proposal, he hinted that "had the spiritual authorities wished to bring the people into the streets to express their opposition to the proposal, they would have brought everyone capable of moving...." He added that he had had no idea that the situation was going to last so long since the idea should have been withdrawn the moment it was voiced.[48]

The advisor to the Ja'afari court, Muhammad Hasan al-Amin, was the only divergent voice among both Sunni and Shiite clerics. He considered the discussion surrounding civil marriage to be comic and insisted on the necessity of working toward the achievement of a completely secular state:

> I thought that Christian clerics would be more adamant in their rejection of civil marriage, since for them marriage is a sacrament..., while in Islam, it is possible to contract a marriage in front of a civil board, and it can be righteous if it conforms to the conditions of the Muslim *Shari'a*.... The civil marriage contract resembles the Muslim marriage contract in that both parties can conclude it based upon conditions to which they agree.... Since the Muslim marriage contract allows for the stipulations of conditions, what is the need for civil marriage? It is possible to come to a settlement of the problem by amending a few articles in the proposed law?[49]

Thus, the one Shiite religious cleric who tried to reconcile the clerical and secular positions, nevertheless, found, the option of civil marriage to be superfluous.

4.2 The Shiite Politicians

In a popular TV talk-show, Shams al-Din expressed the wish, as early as January, that parliamentarians avoid discussing the civil marriage issue, since he argued,"we have not elected members of parliament so that they may take decisions concerning such matters, which bring temporal authority into spaces which do not belong to it."[50] The message was clear: if support for the religious position was not to be expected, from politicians, then the politicians were not to get involved at all. Nevertheless, and in spite of this warning, a number of Shiite ministers and deputies openly supported the bill.

Shiite speaker Nabih Berri expressed the view that optional civil marriage would not contradict religious teachings.[51] He endorsed the cabinet's approval and considered that particular cabinet session to be "the most important of all ministerial meetings in recent history" for daring to tackle the issue of sectarianism. Berri accused the opponents of civil marriage of fearing the demise of political sectarianism: "The cause of the controversy lies in the call to annul sectarianism. The real battle isn't that of introducing a civil marriage law. Civil marriages made abroad are recognized here... The problem is political sectarianism."[52] The Shiite political community was divided between, Berri and his strong Amal party heavily represented in parliament and the Cabinet, on the one hand, and, Hizbullah backed by a group of religious clerics and some popular circles, on the other. The Hizbullah, the main political rival to Berri, rejected the bill repeatedly. On one occasion, a Hizbullah spokesman rejected civil marriage as "it would only lead to further moral degeneration among the young."[53]

The introduction of the optional civil law was understood by many, both opponents and supporters, as the first battle for the progressive dismantling of the confessional system, but the activists pushing for the civil marriage bill soon came to regret the association of the two issues. Indeed, one prominent journalist lamented the situation and expressed his incomprehension as to why civil marriage needed to be connected with the abolition of political sectarianism. He suggested that the connection between civil marriage and such a complicated national question aimed, as was usually the case, at the paralysis of any project capable of benefiting citizens.[54] The obvious and tacit link between the two issues led the information office of Fadlallah to take a defensive position stating that "the elimination of political sectarianism does not mean the elimination

of [religious] personal status because the latter is related to culture , not politics."[55]

5. The Druze

5.1 The Religious Establishment

The Druze religious establishment held a distinctive position which initially endorsed the optional secular marriage law. The fact that the Druze, alone among the Muslim communities, have a codified personal status law colored their reception of the new law, and their reaction to it. For instance, Article 10 of the law of 24 February 1948 (Pertaining to Personal Status for the Druze Sect) states that "polygamy is prohibited and a man shall not be permitted to have two wives at the same time. If he does so the marriage to the second woman shall be void." Moreover, Article 12 does not include the relationship resulting from suckling among those precluding marriage.[56] Indeed, the main points of disagreement between the Druze personal status law and the proposed civil law were only two. First, the Druze personal status law does not allow a divorced woman to return to her ex-husband in a subsequent remarriage; and, second, it does not allow mixed marriages.[57]

Acting Druze spiritual leader, Shaykh Bahjat Ghayth, said that civil and religious marriage contracts should both be allowed concurrently: "As long as the proposal is for voluntary civil marriage, we have no say in the matter."[58] The advisor to the Druze High Court of Appeal, the judge Shaykh Sulayman Ghanim, answered a question on whether civil marriage contradicted Muslim provisions in the following way:

> If there exists any contradiction between civil marriage, on the one hand, and Muslim and spiritual religious provisions, on the other, the contradictions, in any case, remain much less than those found between the legal provisions of one sect and those of another sect... Civil marriage remains a common denominator between the various religions and sects.

He added that the Druze personal status law has a civil and secular character that he " as a judge, saw nothing harmful in legislating an optional civil law."[59] The gap between the Druze code and the proposed law was not so wide as to warrant a strong reaction. Nevertheless, and in light of the intense rejection of the bill by other Muslim and Christian religious dignitaries, the Druze religious hierarchy realigned its position accordingly.

5.2 The Druze Politicians

From the beginning, the Druze political leader, Walid Jumblat, announced that he was backing the civil marriage proposal because the move would be "a step towards building a true civil society and annulling political sectarianism."[60] Three months later, Jumblat renewed his support for the bill: "I fully support the optional civil marriage because I have had three civil marriages myself."[61] The controversial bill also received the backing of Druze MP, Ayman Shuqayr, who is member of Jumblat's Progressive Socialist Party. He stated: "The bill's approval by the Cabinet is a positive move and is likely to enhance national accord and achieve a unified society."[62] A number of Druze politicians supported the bill in clear terms. Others, who were not equally vocal, did not reject it outright.

6. Political Parties, Organizations, Activists and Intellectuals not Representing Mainstream Muslim Ideology

Supporters of the civil marriage proposal included members of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, the Communist Party, the National Bloc Party, the Wa'ad Party, the Progressive Socialist Party, the Baath Party, the Arab Democratic Party and followers of former general Michel Aoun. By and large, all of these parties have a secularist agenda. Other prominent parties with more confessional characters did not support the bill.

Many NGO's, including, the Committee for Women's Rights, as well as lawyers and groups supported the proposed law. A considerable number of intellectuals and academicians also announced their support for a civil personal status law. The daily newspaper, *an-Nahar*, interviewed 30 writers, artists and intellectuals belonging to various religious sects. On the whole, all supported the proposed law declaring that it is a basic human right.[63]

'Asim Salam, the Sunni president of the Order of Engineers denied that civil marriage stood in contradiction to religious dogma. He argued that religion had to respect the individual.[64] The president of the human rights' organization, Ibrahim al-'Abdallah, stated that the details of the proposed law could be subject to debate but that his organization accepted the law in principle because it would give Lebanese citizens freedom of action and freedom of belief....[65] The Women's Rights Council organized a series of events to discuss the proposed law. The People's Right Movement undertook an active campaign, and organized a one-day forum at the American University of Beirut. Speakers complained that those in favor of civil marriage were being branded as non-believers.[66]

More conservative organizations and institutions had more difficulty in taking a position. This was exemplified by the controversy triggered among leaders of al-Maqasid, a Sunni philanthropic association which runs schools, clinics, and a hospital. When the head of its alumni league, Sami Sha'ar, welcomed the notion of optional civil marriage, it caused a reaction from the association's president, Tammam Salam, who

demanded consultations with the highest, ranking Muslim clerics before taking a position on the matter.[67]

It is important to note that an organized campaign encompassing intellectuals, activists and local NGOs did not crystallize until late in April when more than fifty non-governmental associations and political parties joined forces to campaign in support of a civil status law. Participants announced the formation of a group called the Meeting for an Optional Secular Personal Status Law.[68] But by that time, the bill had been politically shelved and the on the whole, the reaction of the NGOs and activists was modest when compared to the vociferous response of the religious establishment. The level of coordination, and the hesitant and slow response reflected the weakness of civil society in Lebanon.

The reaction of the population at large can be partly measured through a reading of a number of polls that were conducted at the time of the debate. It should be pointed out that the reaction of the population was not directed at specific articles in the bill but, more generally, toward the very idea of an optional civil personal status law. A questionnaire that circulated in late 1997 gave the following results: 26% of the Muslims polled knew nothing about the proposed bill; a majority of 83.83% preferred religious marriage; and support for the bill was highest among members of the upper classes, the young, and holders of university degrees.[69] Another questionnaire conducted among university students in late January of 1998 revealed that the proportion of those who approved of civil marriage within this category was much higher (64.48%). A difference between the principle behind the bill and its practical application was highlighted when students were asked: "If the law permits it, are you ready to contract a civil marriage?" The answers tended to be more negative than previously because the question no longer involved a theoretical possibility, but a more likely practical prospect. Only 44.62% expressed their willingness to marry under civil law. However, here again, the overwhelming majority of those unwilling to do so was constituted of Muslims (34.81%). It is significant that young women showed less willingness than young men to contract a civil marriage.[70] In March, a probe carried out by *al-sharika al-dawliyya li al-ma'lümat* revealed that half of those polled did not have a clear idea of the details of the proposed law. The proportion of those who approved of the bill was almost the same within the Muslim and Christian communities. Of the Muslims polled 31.5% supported the bill. This figure rose to 36.8% for the Christians. The notable exception was the high rate of approval prevalent within the Druze community (72.7%). Whereas there were no significant differences between the opinions expressed by men and women, the bill was more popular with the young and among educated citizens.[71]

7. Conclusion

Lebanon offers the example of a country which proved unsuccessful in bringing about a unified personal status law for its Muslim and Christian communities.[72] The latest attempt at introducing a civil personal status law revealed the enormous obstacles that such attempts have to face.

The controversy that surrounded the civil marriage bill exposed, moreover, the weakness of civil society and the strength of confessional institutions following twenty years of civil war. The tension between the secular and the religious spheres was revealed in all its magnitude during the debates over civil marriage. The absence of a real dialogue was evident not only in the campaign that was organized by the clerical establishment, but also by the complete estrangement of secular and religious discourses. Indeed, the negative responses demanding that the proposed law be withdrawn from circulation represented an obvious attempt at silencing secular voices and stifling democratic discussion.

Although religious dignitaries, belonging to the various sects condemned the proposed optional law, the Sunni clerical establishment was the most categorical in its total rejection. Only four political leaders supported the proposed law in clear terms: the Maronite president Elias Hrawi; his co-religionist the ex-general Michel 'Aoun, the Druze leader, Walid Jumblat; and the Shiite speaker of the house Nabih Berri. The voices of ordinary people were drowned out by the debate between politicians and clerics.

The reaction of each community to the bill was informed by a number of factors. While the responses of the Sunni political and religious leadership were concordant, the Shiite responses reflected divergent opinions among clerics and politicians. The Druze position was informed by their community's divergent legal practice in questions of personal law while displaying a generally unified stance among the religious, political and popular elements of their community.

Although discussion on the political level has subsided, the debate is still alive. The Meeting for an Optional Secular Personal Status Law has been organizing an awareness campaign that has included seminars, and discussion groups, as well as a petition which has collected 38,000 signatures. In September of 1998 this group organized a celebration for five couples who had recently celebrated their civil marriages outside Lebanon.[73] In the unwavering confessional atmosphere still prevalent in Lebanon, civil marriage constitutes a most meaningful political act.

End Notes

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Selves of Wives and Selves of Daughters

A Comparative Study of the Self-Constructs of Urban and Bedouin Lebanese Women*

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The Field-Study:
I began conducting my research on bedouin co-wives in the summer of 1992 and continued it in the summer of 1993; and for that purpose spent most of those summers in the Bekaa' valley. During the interval between the two summers, and in the winter of 1995, I interviewed a number of urban co-wives in the cities of Beirut and Tripoli and in the town of Baalbeck. My research covered eighty-five women, each of whose husbands had either one or two other wives. Twenty-eight of these were bedouin, thirty-five were sedentary of bedouin origin and twenty-two were urban. The main reason for the restricted number of subjects was the scarcity of polygynous households, especially in the cities.

One of the case-studies I include comes from outside the survey. It is an account of the relationship between my late paternal grand-mother and her co-wife, also deceased. I include this case because it seems to me to coincide with several characteristics of some relationships between bedouin co-wives; and because this case provides, within the scope of my experience, a unique example of polygyny in a higher social class. The account I give of it is based on direct observation that predates this study by many years; and on what was recounted to me, recently, by people who had lived in my grandfather's house.

Each co-wife covered by the survey was interviewed alone, often several times.[1] Sometimes, I also talked to the husbands or other family members. In fact, during the field-work, some husbands insisted that I include their points of view. One urban husband of three young wives told me: "Why do you talk to them?" indicating his wives. He added: "They will only tell you lies. If you want the truth, you can only get it from me". This husband, and other husbands, seemed to want to talk in order to explain away a condition of which they were ashamed, or on account of which they felt some guilt. I thought this was understandable in the light of the infrequent occurrence of polygyny; and in the light of the apologetic verses of the Kor'an that convey a double message discouraging polygyny as they legislate permission for it.[2]

I interviewed fourty-one first wives and fourty-four second or third wives. Approximately one third of the women lived in the same household with their co-wives. When asked about how they felt about their co-wife (or co-wives), 26.% said that they loved and/or had friendly feelings towards her (or them), 14% said that they had neutral feelings, and 59% said that they hated, were jealous of, or felt both hatred and jealousy towards, their co-wife (or co-wives). Those who claimed to have friendly or neutral feelings towards their co-wives were mostly bedouin (51% of the bedouins and 5% of the urban). As might be expected, second or third wives seemed to be more kindly disposed towards their co-wives than were first wives. One significant finding was that the first wife tended to feel less hatred for, and/or jealousy of, the subsequent wife (or wives) when she believed that her husband took another wife for reasons other than love.[3] When the husband married again in order to have offspring, or because his first wife had borne only daughters, or because his counterpart in an exchange-marriage (*muqayada*)[4] took another wife, the wife took more kindly to the new wife. Even when she believed that the husband married another woman because of an excessive sexual-drive, she tolerated the co-wife much better than when she thought that love propelled him towards the new marriage.

In order to illustrate the types of relations that exist among the co-wives, I shall draw a portrait of three

sets of them: one urban, one nomadic-bedouin and one sedentary rural of bedouin origin. In line with the data gathered, the chosen illustrations will describe antagonistic relations between urban co-wives and neutral to friendly relations between bedouin co-wives.

Wadad and Lama:
(Urban Co-wives Living in Beirut)

Wadad is the only daughter among five brothers of a well-to-do textile merchant. She finished high-school and oscillated for a few years between helping her father and brothers in the shop, and idling around waiting for an appropriate husband. She was physically unattractive, but probably had expected that her father's wealth and social position would help to procure her a husband. At twenty-five, she got married to Mounir, a self-made man who had recently earned a PhD. Soon after their marriage he was appointed to teach at a university. The marriage produced three children. When I met her, Wadad was in her late forties.

Lama, the co-wife of Wadad, was fifteen years younger than her. She was a tall black-eyed beauty, who had grown up as an orphan. Her mother had worked as a housekeeper in order to support her and her three brothers and sisters. The mother instilled in her children the value of education as their only means to rise from the state of squalid poverty into a more comfortable and respectable station. Lama and her siblings, who seemed to be endowed with high levels of intelligence and vitality, fulfilled their mother's dreams by acquiring university education. As a student at the Lebanese University, Lama took courses taught by Mounir. She found herself drawn to discuss her problems with her professor. Eventually, a love relationship developed between them, which led to their marriage. Mounir installed Lama in a separate house, and weeks later, broke the news of his new marriage to Wadad.

Lama believed that Mounir kept his first wife because he hoped to benefit from what she would eventually inherit. She also believed that her husband did not appreciate her enough because of her poverty. She tried to get around her co-wife's advantage and her own weak position, by becoming economically productive. Thus, she worked as a teacher and later as a school administrator. However, she did not seem to be motivated as a career-woman. She spoke of her job as an additional load to housework. For the latter she expressed unconditional loathing. She also did not exhibit much interest in her job. When I attempted to discuss with her conditions, or methods of education she showed little enthusiasm. The only ideas she expressed that were in harmony with what she was doing, were socialist views that criticize idleness and emphasize the practical and moral necessity that each able person join the work-force.

I visited the two households. Each of the two women's way of dressing and of decorating her home was telling about her view of herself and her mode of relating to life. Wadad's house gave the impression of a poorly organized antique shop. In the small apartment, in a fairly respectable neighborhood, the imitation Louis XV armchairs looked out of place. On shelves and on tables stood many silver frames containing family photographs. Several hand-stitched aubusson pieces, portraying little girls and wild animals, were displayed on the walls. She insisted on treating me to juice, cookies, nuts, coffee and chocolate every time I visited her. The cups she served coffee in were gold-rimmed with an elaborate design. She had dyed her hair an unbecoming yellowish blond color, and was dressed in what appeared to be an expensive designer dress, a size or two too tight for her.

Lama's apartment was in a newer building in a modest and populous neighborhood. The furniture in the living room included formica tables and other cheap practical items. The overall impression was that of a temporary residence. The colors were dark. Tin pots containing wilted plants stood on the window sill and on tables in the living room. It was probably the impact of Lama's story which made me see that everything looked sad and longing to be elsewhere. Lama was dressed in the extremely plain 'Islamic Costume', which has recently become popular among women of some pious Muslim groups. The costume consisted of a shapeless grey suit and a white scarf that enveloped the head and covered part of the forehead.

Wadad recounted that when her husband told her of his new marriage she felt as though the walls of her house were closing in on her. She fell to the floor, and, for three days refused to get up or to eat. (She must have been exaggerating). When her husband attempted to reason with her, she drove him out of the house by her hysterical shouting. Later on, she thought that if she allowed her grief to overwhelm her, she would die; and that that would please the couple whose happiness was being built on her ruin. Her death would hurt only her children. From then on, she decided to do whatever she could to hurt Mounir and Lama, while fighting to keep Mounir as father for her children. Thus, when he proposed to divide his time equally between the two households, she accepted. She even accepted to resume sexual relations with him "although I hated him like the devil. But I wanted to do anything that would spite her", Wadad said.

At one point during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1991), Lama's house was destroyed; thereupon she moved into Wadad's house. Wadad had asked her eldest brother to demand of Mounir not to infringe on her legal right to having a separate house. The brother said that he

would talk to him, but never did. She could not take the matter to court because the war had suspended judiciary action; and because the house was registered in Mounir's name. Wadad described the ensuing period as "hell". She confessed: "When the two of them stayed in their room, with the door closed, I felt I was losing my sanity". She said that Lama kept teasing her and invading all her space. She added: "She kept peering into my closets; and criticizing my clothes. She made fun of my style in setting the table, saying that I wasted all my time doing elaborate things that are totally useless". To illustrate the difference between her manners and those of her belligerent co-wife, she added: "When one day I bought a rag doll for Lama's little girl, Lama snatched the doll from the girl and tore it to pieces".

In 1985, during a round of fighting, a piece of shrapnel entered through the window of the living-room and hit Lama's five-year-old daughter in the head. The child was reduced to a vegetable-like state, and there was no hope of her condition improving. "After the injury to her daughter", continued Wadad about Lama, "she was transformed. She quit her coquettish ways, started praying five times a day, and tried to be civil to me and to my children. But sometimes I feel that it was better the other way. When she visits me with my husband, I feel awkward and humiliated. When somebody refers to her as 'Mrs. Mounir', I feel that she is erasing my very existence."

When I talked to Lama she sounded as one who considered her life shattered to pieces. She shed many tears as she recounted her story. She said that she had always wanted to live a great love. She added that when she and Mounir became attached to one another, she thought that she was going to live the love for which she had always yearned. She was not much bothered by his being already married, because she was sure that the true and strong feeling that bound them together would lead him to divorce his first wife. When time passed and he did not divorce Wadad, Lama felt that the love between them was shattered. "But all that became unimportant," added Lama, "after my daughter's accident. Seeing her with me only in body, without being able to reach her spirit, caused me to lose all attachment to life. I became certain that God was punishing me for having wronged Wadad and her children. I tried to evoke God's forgiveness by becoming a good Moslem. I also tried to compensate Wadad by going to her house and doing her housework. But she understood this to be a comment on her cleanliness. She insulted me, saying that my house was as dirty as a pig-sty". However, Lama's religious scruples did not stop her from criticizing Wadad's way of dressing and of carrying on "which was unbecoming to a mother and an elderly woman". Indeed, the one time I saw Lama smile was when she talked of her co-wife's turning blond in her old age!

Um Hussein and Amira (nomadic bedouins)

Um Hussein (the mother of Hussein) and Amira are co-wives in a nomadic tribe that spends most of the year in the steppe areas adjoining the Syrian Desert, and the summers in the Bekaa' valley. During the summers the women work in the fields, as day laborers. They also tend live-stock and carry on with the usual housework. I was told that their sojourn in the desert is an easier time for them, during which they are freed from working as farm-hands.

Their Bekaa' abode, in which I visited them, consisted of three tents: one for receiving guests, one for cooking and washing, and one for sleeping. The woman with whom the husband was spending the night would sleep in the tent allotted to receiving guests. The other wife would sleep in another tent with Abu Hussein's (the father of Hussein) sister Ghazaleh and the teen-age daughters of Um Hussein and Abu Hussein. The area around their tents was kept clean. The guests' tent was the best furnished, with imitation Persian rugs, a huge copper coffee-maker, and embroidered cushions used for seating visitors, or as back supports. That tent was referred to as Um Hussein's.

The women wore long loose robes and very attractive head-gear that made their eyes and the bone-structure of their faces appear to advantage. Um Hussein was plainly and soberly dressed in dark colors; and Amira wore colorful fabrics, an embroidered vest and a lot of make-up and jewelry. Ghazaleh, the independent business woman (she made and sold cheese), wore a more practical shorter dress with long pants underneath. She was the first to engage me in conversation about her life, commenting on the treachery of men: "If you trust the love of a man, you are like one who entrusts a sieve with holding water". She had married after a love-affair that had caused her to struggle with her family, and to finally succeed in convincing them to break her engagement to her cousin. After a few years of happiness, her husband married another woman from a neighboring tribe. He married the girl against her family's wishes, fleeing with her on horseback (white?) from her family's quarters to his own. Ghazaleh reacted by asking for a divorce, which the husband refused to grant. But Ghazaleh went back to her family"[5], "to live among those who love and respect her" (*mu'azzazah mukarramah*) she said, as she went off to attend to her business leaving me to interview her brother's wives. As she was recounting her story, I was struck by the good taste with which she could string her words and sentences. In fact, most of the bedouins interviewed were impressive conversationalists.

Um Hussein, a high cheek-boned classical beauty, was thirty-five when I met her in 1992. Her father used to be a sheep-merchant. She had three brothers and two sisters. She described her family as "a respectable one whose

members did not blaspheme and did not slander other people". She illustrated the high moral caliber of her kins by telling me that although one of her sisters had been dead for ten years, her husband still refused to remarry, saying that he could never find another woman like his late wife.

Um Hussein had married at the age of nineteen. She and her husband had had three daughters and one son. Her youngest child and only son, Hussein, had drowned in a pond when eight years of age. About one year before the death of Hussein, her husband expressed a desire to take another wife "in order that the daughters will have more than one brother to protect them when their father is no longer there for them". A few months after the boy's death, Um Hussein proposed that she herself find a new wife for her husband.

She visited a family that had three daughters of marriageable age and chose the youngest, Amira, a beautiful girl of seventeen. When the family of Amira set as a condition for their consent that one of the daughters of Um Hussein be given in an exchange marriage (*muqayada*) to Amira's brother, Um Hussein consented, despite her daughter's aversion to the young man.[6] The arrangement concluded, Um Hussein took Amira to the town of Baalbek to buy her trousseau. When Amira expressed her desire to wear an urban white bridal-gown rather than the usual bedouin wedding-costume, Um Hussein bought her one .

On the wedding day Um Hussein, still in mourning for her son, baked and cooked for the wedding feast. When she noticed that the neighbors were boycotting the celebration out of respect for her mourning, she changed her black garments and made a round of the neighbors asking them to join in the festivities. In the evening, she spread carpets, a mattress and cushions for the newly-weds, in a separate tent. She adorned the tent with flowers, filled a plate with fruits and a pitcher with fruit-juice. As she described all these details, I sensed in her, alongside the suppressed pain, a feeling of pride similar to the one conveyed as she told me of her brother-in-law's refusal to replace her dead sister. For her, both accounts reflected how respectable, self-denying, and generally good people the members of her family were.

Amira is the third daughter in a family of six boys and eight girls. Her father also is a sheep-merchant. When I asked her whether she could read and write she answered with a surprised laugh that added charm to her reddish-haired sunny-faced beauty. She laughed further: "The whole family is illiterate. The only exception is my father who taught himself, although he has never been to school". She said the last phrase with pride, still smiling broadly.

Amira looked perfectly happy. Before and after my interviews with her and her co-wife, she sat close to Um Hussein, a little behind her. She seemed unquestioningly willing to do her bidding and be guided by her. When I asked her why she had accepted to marry Abu Hussein, she answered: "Because they liked me and chose me from among my sisters, I also liked them". Since the choice referred to was made by Um Hussein and not by her husband, it was not clear whom the girl liked and whom she accepted. When I pressed her about why she had consented to marry a man old enough to be her father, she repeated that he was respectable, and that she felt that Um Hussein (Um Hussein again!) could make of her a better person. She also said that she liked the company of Um Hussein's daughters. From fragments of phrases punctuated by much giggling, I gathered that she was enjoying her sexual encounters with Abu Hussein; and that she did not feel guilty or awkward towards Um Hussein on that account. She seemed to feel that her youth and her co-wife's maturer age entitled her to be preferred sexually; and entitled Um Hussein to take precedence over her in other domains.

Um Hussein expressed regret about her new situation: "Who would like to see her husband in the arms of a girl of seventeen?" she asked. She added: "The new wife is like a new dress. Nobody likes to wear an old garment when one has acquired a new one." Yet, despite that, she treated her co-wife with maternal affection. She appeared to take Abu Hussein's new marriage as destiny, dictated by circumstances, for which nobody could be blamed. She said that her faith in God remained a great solace; and that what she really hoped for were God's grace and the respect of the community. It was obvious that she had, at least, the latter. The men treated her with affectionate respect; and the women sought her company and were counselled by her. The general attitude towards her implied that self-denying individuals like her, who upheld the norms of society regardless at what price to themselves, were considered to be the pillars and the pride of their small community.

When I revisited them in the summer of 1993, I found some change in the attitude of Um Hussein to Amira. I was told that during the winter Abu Hussein had divorced Amira and that he had taken her back only after much pleading from Um Hussein. The older co-wife explained: "Respectable people like us do not take other people's daughters, impregnate them, and send them back to their folks". When I asked Abu Hussein about the reason for the divorce, I was told that Amira's mother had caused it by urging her daughter to demand that he divorce his first wife. This made Abu Hussein so angry that he divorced Amira instead. He added: "I respect all the family; but Um Hussein has a special position, before everyone else; because she sacrificed for the sake of the family, and because she is the mother of my daughters and bears the name of my late son".

Um Hussein admitted that although she still considered Amira a good girl, relations between them had changed: "I no longer draw her to me and kiss her cheeks as I would my own daughters", she said. However, Amira, pleased to be carrying her new-born daughter in her arms, insisted that she still loved, respected, and obeyed Um Hussein. I witnessed Um Hussein giving her orders concerning what to do for the baby; and saw that Amira was prompt in doing her co-wife's bidding. Yet, Um Hussein had during this last interview the attitude of a chastising, rather than that of an approving and encouraging, elder, which she had had the summer before. Amira seemed to respond by trying her best to regain the affection and confidence of her co-wife, although her main effort was in the direction of tending the precious bundle that she carried when moving about in a cloth-basket dangling on her back from her shoulders. Probably the lack of anxiety in her attempts to appease her co-wife was due to the deep satisfaction she felt on account of the little one in the basket.

Almaza and Ward (Sedentary of Bedouin Origin)

Almaza was my paternal grand-mother, who passed away at the age of one hundred and four in 1964; and Ward, was her co-wife, the second wife of my paternal grand-father. She passed away in her mid nineties in 1988. Although the families of both women, the Hamadehs and the Harfoushes respectively, have been well-known in Lebanon for several centuries, the two families identified with their ancient bedouin descent. They were very proud of their origin and maintained many of the old bedouin traditions and values .

Almaza was a tall blonde, daughter of a *pasha* (an Ottoman title bestowed on some politically influential individuals), who, in her early twenties, married her paternal first cousin. Her father was proud of her, believing her to be of exceptional intelligence. Encouraged by her marked interest in politics, he used to discuss with her political matters that the other women knew only generally and vaguely. This interest, and her habit of conversing with politically active kinsmen about issues related to their work, remained with Almaza all her life. Strongly identifying with the family's political role, she did not seem to be bothered by the fact that her being a woman prevented her from direct political involvement. She had a poetic talent by means of which she sublimated her need to express herself in the field of her interest into composing songs and poems about events happening on the political scene.

A state of rivalry over political leadership existed between Almaza's father and later her brother, on the one hand, and her husband and later her son, on the other. Almaza always took the side of her family of birth (father and brother). She became eager for the advancement of her son's political career only after the death of her brother. Almaza showed the same type of preference when she undertook to use what she inherited from her parents for educating the children of one of her brothers, who had died young, depriving her own children.

When Almaza's brother, who was married to her husband's sister, took another wife, Almaza's husband retaliated by taking another wife, a traditional retaliation to avenge a sister under the circumstances. The second wife, Ward, was a short, dark-eyed, lively and intelligent woman. Even in her old age, she had a knack for saying things that made people laugh, regardless of how solemn the occasion might be. She often cracked jokes about the contrast between the title of her family of birth (she had the title of princess) and their extreme poverty. Before her birth her family had lost the wealth and political influence that they had had in the past. She was orphaned before her teens, and had grown up with her sisters and young brothers in a household run in harmonious collaboration between her mother and her mother's co-wife. Growing up amongst women and little boys, Ward probably yearned for the security that the presence of a man in the house brings. For, when she got married, she lavished on her husband more explicit appreciation than the traditions of their community permited.

Ward was not discreet in her efforts to please her husband. She used to wear kohl (this, for some reason, probably having to do with class, was not customary in her entourage, though very usual among other bedouin groups), rouge her cheeks, and get all dressed up when the time of her husband's return to the house approached. She also used to cook for him special dishes and insist on serving them herself. Such behavior shocked the women of her husband's family, whose traditions required that a woman show no sign of affection, but only respect, for her husband. For them, even uttering the husband's name was considered a shameless act. Thus, in the early period of her marriage, Ward was criticized and ill-treated. She was nicknamed "the rouged one" (*muhammarah*). Her co-wife felt that she had to defend her, although she also was shocked by her "shamelessness". Thus a bond, as between protector and protected, developed between the two women.

Before Ward's inclusion into the family, Almaza used to supervise the household, including care of the children. Afterwards, however, she gladly relinquished this task to her co-wife. Ward took over, adding some sophistication in housework that she had learned as she grew up closer to the town of Baalbek. She taught the women ironing and the use of certain utensils. Ward was also the one to manage finances. She used to set aside the money required for housekeeping, and give the rest to Almaza to spend as she deemed fit. One family ritual, called "the blessing", required that whenever a new harvest was brought home, Ward would take the first token to

Almaza for good luck. This ritual, vaguely reminiscent of pagan beliefs that associated fertility and plenty with femininity, was meant to be a prayer for abundance and for the preservation of the mother of the family (Almaza) until the next harvest.

Ward had no children; yet, her maternal love added warmth to the lives of several generations of the family. She lavished care and attention on Almaza's children. Her step-daughter grew to love her much more than she did her own mother. Later, when the wife of one of her step-sons died in child-birth, she took care of his numerous children. She also saw to it that what she inherited from her husband would go, upon her death, to her husband's children, and not to her nephews and nieces, who were her legal heirs, by Moslem law. The community appreciated Ward's lavishing attention on the children. She became very popular. Her small 'failings' faded from sight. Her rouge (which she continued to use way into her old age) and her "shamelessness" were no longer considered moral defects; and everybody came to appreciate and admire her generosity of heart and action.

The house they lived in was a large airy mansion that combined the Ottoman and the Mount-Lebanon styles of architecture. It featured a large hexagonal reception area, wide balconies, in the background of which stood arcades partially covered by colorful tainted glass, and a red brick roof. Except for the men's reception, where the seating arrangement was in divan-style, the house was furnished like the inside of some bedouin tents: no furniture, rugs and cushions spread on the floor and big wooden chests adorned with oriental designs to function like closets for clothes and stored items. The women wore clothes that also combined bedouin, Lebanese and Ottoman elements, choosing from those what was more becoming and more convenient for their various purposes. The young women kept an eye on fashion in Istanbul, and the older ones stuck to the fixed traditions of bedouin and Lebanese female clothing.

Almaza and Ward openly expressed to each other, in word and action, their thoughts and feelings, including their occasional jealousies of each other as co-wives. I was told that when once their husband, upon returning from a trip, went directly to Ward's room, Almaza expressed her anger by staying up all night keeping a fire ablaze in the open court. After that he always greeted her first, before going to see Ward. As a child, I often heard them bickering about who their late husband had favoured. Sometimes, they laughingly teased each other over who was going to die first and thus gain the privilege of lying in the grave closest to their husband. They also used to express their fondness of each other, each telling the other how lost she had felt when the other was away for a day or more.

During their husband's life-time, and after his death, they used to sit, in the afternoons, for long hours on the same cushion smoking the water-pipe (narguila) and discussing various issues. They often slipped into competitive discussions of the history of their respective families. Yet, behind each-other's backs, each used to remind the younger folk not to overlook their duties to the other. They also attended to each other in times of sickness, and confided in each other their innermost thoughts and feelings. Ward used to repeat the songs that Almaza composed; and Almaza's eyes often glittered as her face became wrinkled with merriment when hearing Ward's witticisms.

Conclusion

Where companionship and emotional exchange are concerned, bedouin women often rely a great deal on other women. The life-style of the bedouins causes them to spend most of their time with members of their own sex. The women, especially when young (since the older matrons often join the men's gatherings during meals and for social interaction), share work and amusement with other women. Friendships are exclusively with members of their own sex. This makes the co-wife a more likely candidate for enriching and sharing a woman's life than the husband is. This was apparent in the bedouin case-studies recorded above; and especially in reasons given by Amira to justify her consenting to marry Abu Hussein. Men live in their own separate world. Their presence is felt in big decisions and in gaining or losing wealth and/or status for the community, but not in the actual everyday life of the women. Towards kinsmen and husbands the women extend obedience and loyalty, where traditions so require. But, men as individuals, remain abstract entities that are rarely reached.

In comparison, women in the city rely heavily on their husbands for companionship and emotional exchange and support. This is because city-life is conducive to limiting the woman's daily contact mainly to members of her nuclear family or to her work-associates, if she happens to work outside the home. Also, life in the city is generally too fast and too busy to permit spending much time with friends or relatives.

The present study investigates whether some traits indigenous to Arab society are not more desirable than the adoption of ways that some Arab thinkers have been pursuing as desirable alternatives for promoting more equitable conditions for women. It is in line with Leila Ahmad's recommendation that reforms be pursued in a native idiom and not in one appropriated from other patriarchies found in other cultures (Ahmad,1992, 168). For example, in the light of the findings in this study Hisham Sharabi's call on Arab society to move towards the nuclear type of family in order to achieve democratic relations and to discourage patriarchy (Sharabi, 1988,

30-32) becomes highly questionable. For, whether Arab women live in extended or in nuclear families, they will be living within patriarchal structures. In fact, to live within a nuclear Arab family is often, for the woman, equivalent to falling under a more oppressive form of patriarchy than the tribal one, in so far as, patriarchal power in the tribe concentrates decision making and the assessment of individuals in a few elders who are usually chosen for their wisdom and their superior moral standing; whereas the same power of decision making and of passing judgement on women, accrues, within a nuclear family, to every husband, regardless of his moral or mental caliber. Moreover, the community's impact, within the tribe, puts a powerful check on the more subjective, and hence more capricious patriarchal rule, notably that of the husband, propelling him to observe moral guidelines that the husband in a nuclear family setting is under little pressure to observe.

End Notes

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1. Samar Al-Zahr, a doctoral student in sociology at the Lebanese University helped in interviewing subjects of this study, during one long week-end.

2. The Kora'nic verses that deal with polygyny are the following (The translation from Arabic is mine): "Marry as many women as you wish, two or three or four. If you fear not to treat them equally, marry only one" (Kora'n 4, 2). Also: "Indeed you will not be able to treat your wives equally, even if you try" (Kora'n 4, 128). Translation from the original Arabic is mine.

3. 81% of first wives who are friendly to their co-wives believe the reason of their respective husbands' taking other wives to be other than love. Only 18% of first wives are friendly to their co-wives when the subsequent marriage was believed to be caused by love.

4. Muqayada is an exchange of brides between two families. Two men give each other their respective sisters in marriage. Sometimes, as in the case of Amira, the father gives his daughter to a young man in exchange for getting the young man's sister for a wife. The traditions that reign over the practice of muqayada rule that if one husband involved in the exchange repudiates his wife then the other husband will repudiate his. If the one takes another wife, or takes his wife for a vacation or buys her a dress, the other is expected to do likewise!

5. Nowadays, there exists in Lebanese, and other Arab, cities a practice called bayt -al-ta'ah (The house of obedience) which enables a husband to bring home, by means of the legal authorities, an unwilling wife. Neither bedouins nor early Moslems practice or practiced this. See Dr Hassan Al-Turabi (1991, 43): Also Muhammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Sakhawi (1936, original manuscript 1497), Vol.12 esp. case: 388.

6. Later, they were negotiating to give the young man some sheep in order to be released of their promise to give him the girl in marriage. He refused. The marriage was celebrated, but after several weeks was still not consumated (one of God's blessings according to Um Hussein) and the girl was returned to her family, which made Amira, her couterpart in mokayada, do the same.

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Selection of the Spouse and the Network of Matrimonial Alliances Among the Maronites in Mount Lebanon Between 1830 and 1914:

A Study of Three Cases

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In the prevailing social, economic, political and religious conditions prior to the First World War, the choice of spouses among the Maronite community in Mount Lebanon was strictly a family matter. As such, it occurred within a vast network comprising the cousins on the father's side as a first choice, but also cousins on the mother's side and members of the village's families or of neighboring villages – the network was thus both socially and geographically limited. The configuration of these socially and geographically-confined groups reveals that endogamy was certainly a priority, but that exogamy was not excluded; indeed, the preferential choices of parallel cousins on the father's side[1] as spouses that characterize Arab societies in general does form an archetype but without confining it to the family realm exclusively. Although great importance was given to the offspring or lineage and to the social class of the marriageable individuals, this did not exclude the consideration of other lineages' "belongings, knowledge and power".[2]

This article highlights the choice modalities in the selection of spouses among the Maronite community in 19th century Mount Lebanon. It also reviews three families' network of matrimonial alliances in this region during the same period. The reconstitution of this network is based on archives such as church registers, family trees, biographies drawn by family members as well as oral history.

I. Selection of Spouses Among the 19th Century Maronite Community

When a boy reached the age of fourteen or fifteen, a family assembly was formed to choose a suitable wife for him. This assembly grouped his father, his father's father, his uncles and cousins on his father's side. The young female "candidate" had to belong to the circle of marriageable women, majawiz, traditionally defined by the family. Most often, she had to be 12 to 13 years old, having just reached the marriageable age.

A. The Family Assembly

In the socio-economic and political context of 19th century Mount Lebanon, marriage was a family matter, especially given the fact that the main protagonists were too young to take such an important decision on their own. The male members of the son's family chose the future wife or gave their approval in case of a request, and negotiated the amount of allowances. This assembly assessed the advantages that the family could draw from such an alliance; indeed, the selection criteria were mainly based on family interests, which varied from one social class to another.

Although endogamy was preferred, it was not applied as a general rule.[3] Sometimes the choice did not go beyond the parallel cousins on the father's side. In this case, the father of the girl, present at the family assembly, would give his approval right away. When the girl belonged to a wider circle of relatives, a trustee would be sent to consult with the parents.[4] In case of an agreement, a more official series of procedures would be initiated, and in the opposite case, the case would be closed. Negotiations were conducted in the utmost confidentiality so that none of the two parties would be prejudiced. Indeed, the slightest misunderstanding revealed in the family could harm the reputation of the party that is refused, and as a result could jeopardize its future.[5]

It so happened that sometimes the assembly would choose a young woman belonging to another family. When that happened, the young man's family had to

officially ask the girl's father for her hand. The latter would then discuss the matter with his own family members, who had nubile sons. If one of them expressed the wish to marry one of his sons to the girl, he enjoyed the priority. It was only if no one wanted the girl in the family that she was given to a stranger.

B. Places to Socialize or to Meet

Young Maronites of rural origin respected the marriage model as defined by their parents. The distribution by sexes of the social space reinforced the codification of behaviors, reducing thereby any chances of encounter. Indeed, the rural sociability developed in spheres that were differentiated according to sexes, so that young marriageable men and women had very little chances of meeting. A strict separation of both sexes in both public and private spaces prevented them from meeting. At church, women sat on the back benches, while the men withdrew towards the end of the mass from the back door. The women never participated in the village festivities, and did not even go to them. Dancing with men was strictly forbidden, and at home, they were not allowed to appear before a foreign visitor. They could not talk to a stranger even when they went to fetch water from the fountain.[6]

C. What About Love?

In most Arab and Mediterranean societies, girls had to remain virgin until their wedding day. The society of Mount Lebanon was no exception to this rule: emotions and sexual relations were a sacrosanct taboo, especially for young women.

Hence, prearranged marriages, totally devoid of feelings, were a common habit. The young fiancés barely knew each other: "During the Chehabi reign, parents were still the ones to choose their children's fiancés. They were naturally driven by their children's and their own interests; but in most cases the fiancé did not know his wife-to-be or had any liking for her. Children who had great respect for their parents were compelled to abide by their desires."[7] The ignorance in which the fiancés were left prevented any nascent love feelings. A nuptial song from the second half of the 19th century expresses this:

"Oh dear: oh my betrothed, roses are melting in your chest.
Oh dear: it has been one or two years since I got engaged to you (and)
I still do not know your name
Oh dear: Your name is the golden chain in the jewelry box
Oh dear: Win the one who buys you and lose the one who sells you lou, lou, lou..." [8]

Similarly, some extracts of poems written in the spoken dialect (*zajal*) reveal a great modesty when it comes to love feelings. The halo of caution surrounding passion proves that it was not tolerated by society:
"Oh Sannine Mountain! There you stand unmoved in your place!
No feeling, no cry of the heart moves you;
Move out of my way as I have a loved one behind me,
May God move you, or I will do so myself"[9]

If the above poem, ascribed to Emir Bechir II, expresses more war deeds than feelings, it brings to light the importance of the obstacles separating lovers.

In this society where family interests held the overriding priority and where young people hardly saw one another, there was barely any place for love. One had to be bold to express love, especially when it came against family plans. "There is a story in Deir El Qamar, which recounts the story of a young man of the Boustany family who loved a girl of the Kik family. When he told his parents about his marriage plans, they opposed him, along with all their relatives, as they had already chosen for him one of their own members. When he insisted, they shut him up in a cave designed to imprison family members who stood up against the common will. One night, he forced the prison's door lock and ran away with his beloved and they were never seen again...".[10] Young people had to comply with their families' demands. Disobedience of family will or demands to choose freely one's spouse were severely repressed, and those obstinate ones faced isolation and expulsion.

IV. Three Case Studies of the Choice of Spouses and Networks of Matrimonial Alliances

The three families selected for this study come from two villages located at the same altitude from either side of the Nahr el Kalb river: Shailé and Cornet el Hamra. The river's deep valley separated the cazas of Kesrouan and Qteh (Metn). The abolition of the feudal system in Mount Lebanon in 1845 did not have the same impact on both villages, despite their geographical proximity. In Shailé, the power of the machayekh Khazen family, important landowners, over the farmers (Kaï and Chemali) did not weaken. The network of matrimonial alliances between these families did not mix different social classes together, even though they were inscribed in the same territory. In Cornet el Hamra on the other hand, several branches of the Tohme family, who were silk traders, achieved an astounding social progress and were freed from the authority of the Abillama emirs who no longer had any direct control over them. Consequently, the network of matrimonial alliances went beyond its traditional limits to reach social strata that had been out of reach until then. The configuration of networks of matrimonial alliances changed at the end of the First World War, as Mount Lebanon's economic, social and political pattern was turned upside down. The social, economic and political conditions of these three

families were different. They determined the choice of the spouse, and thereby the shape of the matrimonial alliance networks.

The social position of the Khazen family, the territorial distribution of its offshoots and of its kin, as well as its geographic mobility, are all factors that shaped its networks of matrimonial alliances. Indeed, the machayekh in the 19th century only married people of the same social status, and were heavily bent on endogamy. Exogamy was in fact quite exceptional. Thus, a Khazen would marry another Khazen, or in lesser degree, other members of machayekh families from Kesrouan, such as Dahdah or Hobeish. They avoided any marriages with farmers. Any unions between individuals of different social classes could jeopardize the authority of the machayekh and broach their heritage. In fact, their geographical isolation, the separation of sociability spaces as well as their frequent moves between their winter and summer houses narrowed the chances of encounters between young people of two different classes.

Medium and small landowners, the Chemali family married according to a network of matrimonial alliances that only slightly varied from one generation to another. The stability of their choices was maintained by a regular economic situation. The Chemali family chose their spouses from within the family. But they mostly chose people belonging to other peasant families in the region, as access to the Khazen family's marriageable members was strictly prohibited. A review of the marriages that took place within the Chemali family, taken from the men's side, reveals a strong tendency among each lineage to keep women within the family. It seems that the Chemali family resented giving away their daughters to "strangers", whether from the village or the neighborhood. When they did not marry each other, the Chemali family chose spouses from the meridian Kesrouan first. Proximity and geographic mobility represent decisive factors in this respect. But a set of rules seems to have governed the choice of spouses from a different family. Matrimonial exchanges between different families adhered to the respective social dynamic of these families. Artisans, farmers and small farmers chose spouses from the same status as their own. But the social progress of an individual or a group of the Chemali family would lead them to choose spouses belonging to peasant families who had experienced a similar socio-economic path.

The Tohme family was formed of six branches in the 19th century. The social evolution of four of them allowed these to reach the ranks of the new bourgeoisie of Mount Lebanon. This social promotion altered their traditional network of matrimonial alliances, which was similar to those of small or medium landowners. The selection of spouses became therefore more selective. In the first place, these four branches retracted from the two other branches, so that marriages with the latter became increasingly rare, expressing a will to jealously preserve a harshly acquired social status. However, social reproduction was not the only cause governing this family's endogamy. Those families that had recently gotten richer or that were seeking social promotion sought to take advantage of the social acquisitions of those families that had already achieved a social ascension. The network of exogamic weddings also widened. The social progress of the Tohme family altered the circle of marriageable people (majawiz). The Tohme family went on choosing spouses from within the village, but their choice became more selective. It became confined to members of families who had already achieved social promotion. But any man recently promoted socially sought to contract for himself or for his relatives alliances that offered social benefits. Some aimed at the region's notables. Others broke down the barrier to the Abillama emirs, which had remained securely closed until then. The family's network of matrimonial alliances moved beyond the traditional geographical setting, to comprise families from the Kesrouan and Baabda regions, that had followed a similar path or that had gotten richer due to emigration. This change of matrimonial alliances network imposed new selection criteria. Consequently, any marriage that harmed the reputation of the Tohme family was severely punished; a case in point is that of a girl, who ran away with a small farmer (mrabi') around 1800, and her family responded by forbidding all their family members to have any contact with her.

The selection of spouses among the Maronite families in Mount Lebanon in the 19th century adhered to the family's will. It was confined to a logic dictated by social, economic and political interests that mapped out the network of matrimonial alliances within a determined social and geographical perimeter. Therefore, the Khazen, Chemali and Tohme families married a parallel cousin on the father's side, whenever the totality of family heritage was threatened. They married preferably with a cousin on the father's side, and at a lesser degree, with a cousin on the mother's side, or with someone who lived in the nearby region. Moreover, homogamy was a dominant feature among the Khazen and Chemali families. If the first only married machayekh like themselves, the Chemalis often chose spouses from families who experienced similar conditions. The ascending social mobility allowed the Tohme family to choose spouses from higher social classes.

Translated by
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EndNotes

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Marriage, Madness and Murder in Alia Mamdouh's *Mothballs* and Salwa Bakr's *The Golden Chariot*

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Marriage is one human relationship that is portrayed in many Arab women's fiction. It is usually employed as a means to question traditional female roles, re-define feminine selfhood, explore the conditions of female singleness in a patriarchal society, alert us to the emotional and psychological pressures exerted on women within these institutions, and confront us with dramatic examples of the ways in which marriage may legitimize the abuse of women. These ideas are clearly expressed in Alia Mamdouh's *Mothballs* (Eng. Edition 1996) and Salwa Bakr's *The Golden Chariot* (Eng. Edition. 1995). By focusing on traditional and non-traditional discourses of marriage, both Bakr and Mamdouh provide a very interesting and yet troubling perspective on the politics of marriage in the Arab world. They also show that for many women, the experience of marriage threatens a woman's identity, worth and existence. In many instances, it leaves nothing but the remnants of a self on the verge of madness.

In *Mothballs* Iraqi writer Mamdouh tells the story of nine-year old Huda's complex relationship with the setting and the people around her. Through the eyes of this young girl, the reader learns of a household filled with women whose lives are marked by tragedies, sorrows and frustrations. For instance, Huda's grandmother is a widow who has been mourning the death of her husband for a long time. Huda's mother – who is sick with tuberculosis – loses her husband to a second wife and one of her aunts waits endlessly to consummate her marriage. Thus, in *Mothballs* there are actually two stories taking place at the same time: the story of Huda's childhood and the story of how marriage affects the lives of the adult women around Huda. In fact, the latter is clearly manifested in the character of Huda's mother, Iqbal, and her younger aunt, Farida.

Iqbal's experience with marriage is one charged with defeat, sickness and lack of an independent identity. Early on in life, the young Syrian girl moves to Iraq with her mother and brothers. Later, she marries an Iraqi police officer and lives with his family. These changes play a very important role in molding the young woman's character. Cut off from her roots, her family and her surroundings, Iqbal adopts a new place and identity for herself. She understands and sees herself only as a wife and later on as a mother. Iqbal echoes this reality when she tells Jamouli, her husband: "You are my family. Your mother is my mother, and you are the father of my children," (37). Although these words reveal Iqbal's attachment to her husband, they are not born of love and devotion. Rather, the underlying reality is completely different.

Iqbal's marriage is one resembling a small prison. The wife dares not anger her husband or challenge his orders. She treats him well, out of fear, submission and duty. Like a prisoner who seeks the approval of a prison guard, Iqbal also seeks to satisfy her husband's every whim to avoid any threat to her peace. The narrator writes:

> She had whetted his appetite for sleep and snoring. She had covered him and gazed at him. She had sat at the end of the bed until he awoke, and when he called to her she went to him, bruised but radiant…

Elsewhere the narrator says:

> This was the bed where she had learned he was a man, that he was the ruler, the father and the chosen one. (41)

If this says anything, it is that Iqbal's existence and identity is closely tied to that of her husband, despite

the lack of love that marks this relationship. Yet what happens when this existence is threatened by the presence of a second wife? What happens when Jamouli asks Iqbal to leave? Can the self, which has survived only in relation to the other (husband), exist as a single entity?

Iqbal, losing her home and family implies the loss of all emotional and psychological stability, as well as any notion of identity. The woman no longer knows who and what she is nor what will become of her. In short, her existence, which had been deeply rooted in the institution of marriage, collapses. The author writes that upon learning the news of Jamouli's second marriage, Iqbal "opened her legs and beat on them. She raised her nightgown from her slender thighs and scratched them." She shrieked, crawled and "opened her mouth in an obscene movement, lifted her hair up and then let it fall on her face." The narrator tells us that:

> Her eyes bulged, as if she were emptying her bowels. She let out a cry and put her hand over her mouth, slapped her face and tore at her hair. (40)

Iqbal's breakdown is so fierce it borders on madness. And as the woman leaves her husband's home she wonders where to go and what to do. Iqbal realizes that there is no place left for her. She succumbs to the disease that had wracked her body for years and dies, revealing that in a patriarchal society like the one depicted in the novel, women can only exist as wives, and mothers. Once they lose that, they lose the basic essence of living.

Like Iqbal, Farida's experience with marriage is marked with hardships and tragedies. It is an experience that rocks the very foundations of her femininity and leaves her bitter, angry and insane. Yet, the young girl had once been full of confidence, spark and the glow of youth. Her, beauty had wetted the appetite of many men of her neighborhood. Still, it is Munir that Iqbal seeks. Although the latter is twenty years her senior and with "something of an evil spirit about him" (2), he is considered a perfect candidate for a husband. The reasons are clear. Munir is Farida's cousin and marrying him means they can all live under the same roof. Also, the man is terribly rich and will pamper his young wife with all that she desires; nevertheless, things don't work out as planned.

After endless preparations for the marriage, the marriage is not consummated because the bridegroom disappears for no apparent reason. In the eyes of society, Farida is neither a virgin nor a wife. Her marriage contract makes her a woman in the eyes of everyone, and her virginity keeps her a girl in her assessment of herself. As a female, she is suspended between two poles with no hope of settling in any. She does not belong to either institution. This is a very harsh reality for any woman to survive within, especially one who belongs to a traditional society. Farida's existence is possible only within defined borders and institutes, i.e. she can only exist as a daughter or as a wife. Since she has married, she has lost the status of a daughter without gaining the full status of a wife. Furthermore, she is now considered a source of potential diversion for many men. The latter no longer seek her hand for marriage but perceive her with something more sinister in mind. Everything turns upside down, and the young woman awaits the return of the husband.

The days stretch endlessly and the rage heightens:

> Months of days. Hours of bruises and slow, repressed rage. Every day she [Farida] fed her beauty with bribes and great blessings, never leaving her bed of indifference. She wanted the appearance of the first scream: a man and a woman. (133)

She does not understand why Munir has left, and talks to herself for hours. As a woman she feels rejected and denied the most important weapon she possesses, her beauty and femininity. Because she has been emotionally abused, Farida is psychologically traumatized. Her rage reduces her to the level of a wild beast, while her bitterness eats up all the vigor of her youth. When Munir finally comes back, her enthusiasm had become so destructive she almost killed the man. Farida pushes Munir's head into the toilet, spits on him and bites him. His presence unleashes a savagery so uncontrollable that it frightens all those who witness it. Yet, nothing is gained. At the end of the novel, we are told that:

> She remained a virgin, lifting up the title and contemplating it day and night. She took off the black dress, washed her dusty skin, and proceeded to put on a seductive nightgown; madness returned to her face. (151)

As one can see, the reality of marriage in Mamdouh's novel is traumatizing and arduous. Through the characters of Iqbal and Farida, the author reveals the threat marriage exerts on many a woman's sanity. Yet, if the experience of marriage leads to madness and violence in Mamdouh's *Mothballs*, Bakr's *The Golden Chariot* incites women to destroy the force that abuses them. By so doing, they liberate and purify themselves, in the only way possible, from the dehumanizing and demeaning treatment they endure at the hands of men.

The Golden Chariot is the story of woman in a prison ward. Through the voice of Aziza - one of the inmates who decides to create a golden chariot to take her to heaven where all wishes come true - the reader learns about the various crimes that Aziza and her fellow inmates have committed. The crimes range from murder and theft, to drug dealing. Indeed, almost all of the crimes committed are the result of man's abuse of woman's body. Thus, Bakr weaves a narrative whereby the violence committed by women against men (husbands, brothers, fathers) is merely a social protest against gender injustice, and the abuses they have had to endure. For instance, Aziza kills her step-father for violating her body, while Azimah castrates her lover who enjoyed her body for years but refused to marry her. Yet, it is Hinnah's crime that provides a striking example of the lot of women who exist as wives and who commit crimes to liberate themselves from the confining grasps of their husbands.

For Hinnah, marriage is a humiliating and degrading experience. On her wedding night, the young girl learns of her husband's insatiable appetite for sex. She also learns the meaning of marital rape. She tells Aziza:

> [An] insane urge impelled him to have sex with her on their wedding night no less than nine times, despite the terrible pain that she suffered and which made her beg him to desist from the painful act that made her feel as though she was going to die. But instead of responding to her tormented pleas, he persisted in violating her over and over again until daybreak, by which time she was in such agony...(39)

This experience soon becomes her lot in life. Marriage becomes a continuous process of sexual abuse. No matter how hard Hinnah tries, she cannot satiate her husband's desires, desires triggered at any place and time. The reader learns that sometimes her husband forces her to have sex with him in the bathroom, while visitors are waiting outside. Sometimes he surprises her by returning from work earlier than usual and "she would have to drop everything to go to bed with him." Worst of all was when she was forced to leave "her screaming suckling child to attend to his father's sexual needs". Accordingly, the house remains neglected. Because she was her "husband's mare, at his disposal day and night," (40) she had no time to attend to the domestic work.

As she grows older, Hinnah is forced to wear clothes which make her feel "like a tart in one of those nightclubs which had spread all over the city and not like a wife from a good family" (40). When finally she reaches the age of fifty, Hinnah hopes her husband's needs would subside. However, once more things do not change. The old woman finds herself forced to sleep with her false teeth because her husband did not desire an empty mouth. This leads to nights of wakefulness for fear of swallowing her dentures. Even her old body had to endure the cold January nights because her husband insisted on her sleeping naked.

The narrator writes that Hinnah desired nothing more than to be left in peace to enjoy uninterrupted sleep throughout the night and to be able to wear clothes of her choice which made her feel comfortable: "She wanted to feel comfortable in herself and to spare the old wrinkled skin of her face from make-up" (44). Because Hinnah has been denied any kind of dignity in her relationship with her husband, she unleashes her rebellion and refuses to have sex with him. Accordingly, he punishes her by taking a second wife and throwing her out of the house. Soon Hinnah realizes there is no alternative but to rid herself of the man thereby ending the matter once and for all. She opens the gas cylinder, makes sure the windows are closed, and hides elsewhere while her husband suffocates to death.

As one can see, Hinnah's crime becomes a process whereby the victim can reorganize her victimized self and restore a sense of dignity that had been denied her earlier on in life, and threatening to be denied to her once she is asked to leave her home. In other words, the planning and execution of the murder helps Hinnah reconstruct and restore the world of the self which had been so violated it had lost all will, power and independence for forty-five years. Since Hinnah had never refused her husband's demands her rebellion bursts forth in a violent manner. On a symbolic level, the murder liberates and purifies her of the humiliation she had felt when she was forced to have sex with him. It also restores a semblance of independence. Perhaps for this reason, Hinnah refuses to plead that "she killed in a moment of rage" (36). She also refuses to disclose the reasons behind the murder to any man present. Only when she is among female inmates that the true story is told, the depth of humiliation Hinnah had felt in her marriage relationship. Killing her husband releases her of a sexual obligation she had abhorred. Only through murder can Hinnah find freedom, the freedom to survive her last years in the dignity she desires.

Finally, both Bakr and Mamdouh 's novels portray the politics of injustice and suffering that exist within the institution of marriage. It also reveals the traumatizing effect that such an institution has on women. They become psychologically unbalanced, violent and sometimes destructive. In short, both authors reveal that in a traditional, patriarchal society there is a tragic story to tell about the lives of women who exist solely as wives and mothers.

Reflections on the impact of Education on Marriage

By Maysa El-Hajj
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In the past twenty years or so, enrollment of high school graduates of both sexes in colleges and graduate studies has taken place at an unprecedented rate in Lebanon, particularly in the capital to the extent that it has been taken for granted that the only normal thing to do after the Baccalaureate, is to go to university. At the same time, like previous generations, educated men and women are expected to marry and spend their adulthood in families of their own.

This paper is an attempt to study the impact of education on marriage. More specifically I am intrested in finding out whether there is a relationship between the number of years spent in formal education after high school and the occurrence of disagreement in the life of married educated couples. (Caldwell in Moghadam, 1993; Blood in Heiss, 1969; Burchinal in Edwards, 1969; Hoffman & Wyatt in Heiss, 1969).

Stating the problem: Based on the reviewed literature

In this study, I intend to find out whether the situation among Lebanese educated couples confirms or negates findings of two studies. One study by Silberstein on dual-carrier marriages (1992) notes that advanced education for women may also be a risk factor for marital distress. Another survey (also reported by Silberstein) found that men whose wives were educated felt marriage to be more frequently stressful (Hornung & McCullough, 1981).

The other study was done by Safilios-Rothschild (in N.C.F.P., 1971) on power structure in married couples in a number of countries. According to this study, college education, plays a very important role in freeing Greek men from the traditional ideology about male dominance, so that they are willing to yield some decisions to women and consult them about others. It is the educated men who usually have liberal attitudes and wish to bring about changes in the traditional social order, and one of these changes regards attitudes toward the position of women in the family.

According to Sussman, most women expect their husbands to be companions and friends, to treat them as equals, and to consult them about all family decisions. She found that, as such, the wives' satisfaction with the marriage to be greater when the husband is well educated. A third interesting finding in this survey was that a wife's higher educational accomplishment tends to increase her power in the family, through greater participation in decision making processes.

For the lay people, education is strictly aimed at enabling women in the urban milieu to work and help their male kin in the support of the family. Improving the position of women, making women independent, expanding the pool of available choices for women as to what they want to do with their lives, allowing women to climb up the ladder of the bureaucratic formal sector of employment, having women compete with men for top positions, delaying the age of marriage, limiting the number of pregnancies ... were not really intended consequences. As seen above the intended impact of female education was strictly functional. The aim of this work is to find out whether university educated wives display those changes. Do Lebanese educated women, like Western women, seek a sense of achievement elsewhere than in the household? Does the educational system in the universities (almost a replica of the Western one), create a situation where women like men associate feelings of achievement with success in the intellectual or business world? Have they grown to perceive the traditional roles (nurturance and emotional support) as inadequate, incapable of such valued rewards?

The Model to this Study

Based on the statement of the problem, one could say that education, beyond high school, produces more change in the role expectations women come to develop about wives and husbands. They begin to see the traditional division of gender roles as blurred. Namely, they expect more involvement of men in the family and domestic roles and project for themselve, more participation in the formal sector through a new role, the work role.

Male university graduates generally identify with the work role in the first place; this is where they derive their masculine identity as opposed to women who are confined to the private sphere of the family and the household.

The model stipulates that more education for women seems to have created a situation in which there is role conflict between spouses.

The Hypothesis and Definition of Concepts

The study concentrates particularly on whether more education for women leads to disagreement on: who should do what and how much of the household/marriage roles (the domestic role), the work role, participation/autonomy of women in decision-making processes , and on the type of marital relationship spouses are expected to maintain (institutional v/s companionship marriage).

Thus to verify the main hypothesis the following corollaries must be taken into consideration. The first one is that more educated women expect their husbands to participate in housework and childcare. The second is that more educated women expect to share in the so called traditional roles of a husband (handle payments, have a job, be a breadwinner too....). The third corollary hypothesis, is that more educated women expect to be autonomous in deciding on matters that concern their person and participation/sharing in family decision making. The fourth, is that more educated women expect their husbands to be their friends and act as such.

Methodological issues in Testing the Model and the Derived Hypotheses

In my analysis I relied on the self-reports of both husband and wife in couples where I conducted semi-structured interviews of around half an hour. At the same time I formulated the questions in such a way that besides a simple yes or no, or selecting specific categories, they always had the chance to answer in an open ended manner. That is give their own explanation to certain behaviors, opinions and situations that I thought would shed light on the role expectations and performance of the spouses.

All of the interviewes were conducted separately with each spouse on his/her own. While I was interviewing one spouse the other one was not in the room and could not overhear the answers.

The Sample and the Procedure

I collected my data by interviewing fifteen married couples who have graduated from the International College School. I.C. is known to incorporate a clearly defined set of cultural values in students emphasizing a rather secular approach to education and social interaction (Abu, Hamzeh, 1980). As such if university education has a differential impact on its attendants, as I am claiming, this similarity would allow me to be more confident of my assumed conclusion. Namely that the change and the expected impact, if detected are the result of higher education. If the educated married couples were picked from here and there, randomly I would have a larger number of variables to control.

The married couples I interviewed shared very similar backgrounds and had been married for at least two years.

Findings of the study: Analysis/Assessment of the relationship between more education and tension in the marriage

If the main contention for this study is that more education for wives leads to a change in their role expectations of spouses in the marriage (from the traditional ones), my assumption is that a similar change in men's role expectations does not occur. Thus I am assuming that with more education for women comes the likelihood of greater instances of disagreement among spouses on gender role expectations in the marriage.

I compared the answers of the educated husbands and wives, on the several indicators I thought measure best the relationship between the variables. The fact is that two of the corollary hypotheses point to a similar relationship as the main hypothesis. The other two findings point to a need to modify the main hypothesis. As such, I provided a reformation of the main hypothesis as I thought should be done in the light of the findings.

The decision to say that data support a corollary was made on the following basis. If answers of more than fifty percent of the group of wives confirmed a change from the traditional expectations, as stipulated by the statement, I assumed that the corollary holds. The decision to say there is disagreement between spouses on role expectations was made on the following basis. When answers of more than fifty percent of the group of husbands, and answers of more than fifty percent of the group of wives, on one role indicator, point to a similar change as stipulated in the statement, I assumed that there was no disagreement on that issue. Thus I concluded that the main hypothesis regarding that role does not hold.

*** Finding # 1: More educated wives do expect their husbands to participate in the housework and childcare.**

I asked the spouses whether they thought an equal

division of household tasks was possible. The answers I received were never a straight "achievable" or "not possible". Nevertheless analyzing the content I think one can come up with the following description:

Table 1: Percentages of answers of interviewed educated wives and husbands on the question:

Is an equal division of labor between spouses in household chores achievable or not possible?

	% of wives	% of husbands
An equal division of labor is achievable	63.33 %	43.33 %
An equal division of labor is not possible	36.67 %	56.66 %

The table shows that about 63.33% of the 15 wives said that they thought that an equal division of household work was achievable. More educated wives expect more involvement on behalf of husbands in house related work. However, the fact is that less than half the group of men share this expectation of themselves. Less than 50 % of husbands say that sharing the domestic role is achievable. This means that there is disagreement between this group of educated wives and husbands on who should do how much, and what, of the housework and childcare; men remain rather reluctant to become effectively involved in household tasks .

The fact that there is disagreement among educated spouses on the domestic role appears in the following finding, in table 2:

Table2: Percentages of answers of interviewed educated wives and husbands on the question:

What would you do if both of you were working and you start realizing that the housework is not done the way you expect it to be?

	% of Wives	% of Husbands
The couple will hire a housekeeper	13.33 %	60.00 %
The wife will take a less demanding job	56.67 %	26.67 %
The husband will help in the house tasks	23.33 %	13.33 %
The wife will stop working	6.67 %	–

The fact that 60% of the educated husbands do not suggest that a woman should stop working or find a less demanding job in the assumed situation is revealing of a change in role expectations in men from the traditional ones. More than 50 % proposed a housekeeper to be the solution. This means that they don't look at the marriage from the traditional perspective- that the housework is something a wife should do. This tells of a change in what educated men could expect of women in the domestic sphere; nevertheless this change is creating a situation of tension as a result of disagreement, at least in this sample.

When the above changes seem to have occured regarding the domestic role, the childcare role is still perceived by the respondents as a core role to be played by wives, as the following table indicates:

Table 3: Percentages of answers of interviewed educated wives and husbands on the question:

When do you think that a married woman should stop working

	% of Wives	% of Husbands
In case she is pregnant/ until children start going to school	63.00 %	39.00 %
As long as she has children who go to school/ when she starts spending less time on child care than she had done before	20.00 %	60.00 %

Around 60 % of the husband respondents expect the wife to give priority to her role as mother over other roles. This is quite different from the trend detected in the answers of wives on the preceding question.

In 90 % of the cases childcare is exclusively the wives' responsibility. She is literally still responsible for everything: daily chidcare, doctors' appointments, school related tasks etc.

As for the housework, the pattern is rather similar; sharing is not reported. In all of the cases, actual manual housework is done by a helper (housekeeper) supervised by the wife. Only two husbands of the fifteen help wives with cooking, washing the dishes (if there is no help), putting the children to bed, etc.. Some husbands used to help early on in the marriage, but they had to reduce any kind of participation as their business grew; the wife found herself responsible for all home management.

Having said all this, it is important to note that men do not seem to expect wives to sacrifice their career for housework. They expect them to do so for childcare. The educated wives on their part, are still ready to be flexible on the issue of career for the sake of better home management. (56.67 % said they would take less demanding jobs in case household gets messy). Still that is no sign of agreement.

The situation is rather indicative of an underlying disagreement on role expectations between educated spouses. Educated wives expect equal degree of involvement of spouses in the roles to be played in the marriage. That is not what they seem to be getting, nor what their husbands expect of themselves.

*** Finding #2: More educated wives do expect to play the role traditionally recognized as the husbands' (the work role)**

From the accounts of spouses, I could identify one role that husbands expect the wives to play, and the wives expect themselves to play, the work role. As in the literature, educated women do turn out to be high on the achievement need as they go up in higher education. As Hoffman pointed out in a study (Edwards 1969), feelings of achievement tend to be tied with having a job. The role of housewife and mother, however important to society, is not enough to cater for the woman's sense of achievement, competence and contribution.

In this sample, only 33.33 % of the educated wives who are still in their reproductive age, did not express an intention to have more children if their spouses agree; they all have a maximum of three children so far. Similarly, educated husbands do not expect women to invest exclusively in the mother role. Only 13.33 % of the group of husbands said that they agreed to the idea of more children if their wives agree.

Indeed there seems to be an underlying agreement among educated spouses on the centrality of a new role to the life of educated wives. Even those who preferred to just say that a married woman could work if she wanted to implied that wives are rather expected to do so.

Men do not seem to expect wives to sacrifice their career for housework

Table 4: Percentages of answers of interviewed educated wives and husbands on the question:

Do you think that a married woman should work and why?

	% of Wives	% of Husbands
for the same reasons a man should work	13.33 %	33.33%
so as not to feel frustrated, bored, and marginalized	66.66%	26.66%
to be able to appreciate the efforts of her husband who works to support the family	0%	13.33%
in order to make use of the knowledge she invested all those years of her life to acquire	20.00%	0%

Wives are expected and expect themselves not just to earn a salary and help support the family. Rather they are expected to do so because there is some agreement that through higher education they have acquired skills that husbands have, and thus can contribute to the marriage in the same meaningful manner.

It is true that more than 50 % of the educated wives interviewed do not work, but they have always had part-time jobs or have done voluntary/social work. The rest, except for one, are currently working and have always worked. As for the exception, she confirms the above conclusions: before having children she had always had a full time job. Now she regrets the time she is wasting on building a career but given what she calls her 'perfectionist tendency', she has been unable to handle both a career and motherhood.

It is important to note that the husband of that wife like most husbands has not encouraged his wife to invest her efforts in a job for a variety of reasons mentioned above. In addition to the advantage of an extra income, some husbands of nonworking wives said that unless a woman works she can never get to understand the difficulty of financial support of the family, or be careful in handling expenditures.

Summing up on the first two findings

Among the sample of educated couples, first order pri-

ority is given to top quality in child raising (nurturance/socialization/emotional support role) rather than the housework.

This is supported by the above account on the time a married woman who is working is expected to stop working. It is also supported by the fact that when asked what they thought the idea of having a housekeeper, 60% of the group of husbands said they were for a maid unconditionally. 80% of the wives supported the idea in general, and 46.66 % among them emphasized that a housekeeper is a must especially when the couple have children. This will give them the time they need for adequate childcare and a 'meaningful' pass time.

On the whole, the reports of educated couples interviewed in this study do point to an agreement of spouses on the work role. Gender expectations on work for husbands and wives are rather met. The expectation of men is still rather traditional. They still expect themselves to be the main (if not sole) breadwinners of the household, and are expected to do so by the wives. This supports research findings (like Silberstein,1994) and theorists contentions like Parsons. The traditional gender linked division of roles persists in one form in the marriage, despite change. Work is rather more important for men and the domestic role is rather more important for women.

However, at the same time, a change pointed at Douglas, Moghadam, Marsot, Mernissi, Galdwell and others (in Edwards, 1969) did occur. Women do turn to perceive themselves to be rather active participants in society, and they do come to seek self fulfillment through non domestic occupations. As such there is agreement in marriages on this role; educated husbands do expect their wives to be other than good homemakers.

As expressed by husbands of this sample, work, even the unpaid form of it, does meet their expectations of their wives. For the majority of the wives too, work that serves the purpose of 'meaningful' contribution to marriage does not necessarily mean competition with men in the formal employment sector (it could be so, why not), but part time jobs too allow them to meet the expectation of being in the first place good wives and fit mothers. Social work is another good choice for the majority of the respondents. What matters is that the wife does not remain isolated in the household. The concern is that she interact with other human beings, and thus does not become marginal to society.

For women who can afford a housekeeper and agree on having one round the clock, the disagreement is downplayed- to the point that the tension it causes is barely felt at all. However, when there is no housekeeper to take over the manual housework, it becomes impossible for many women to meet expectations on the work role, thus be the wives they want to be and their husbands expect them to be.

A couple of wives only recently hired a housekeeper. Before that they used to do all the housework. The husbands helped when asked, but never managed to fully share the responsibility. On the whole, men are still reluctant (to the point of refusal sometimes) to genuinely and effectively share with their wives in the performance of the domestic roles.

More education is having a differential impact on the traditional domestic role expectations. However, the disagreement on who ought to do what of the household tasks, is masked in this sample. They all have a helper who does the manual housework. As such, I think that the situation among married educated couples seems to be, in part, rather similar to what Khalaf describes as adaptive modernization (in Obeid, n.d.). Women are working and are doing less house work (if they do any). Yet the fact remains that no genuine change towards effective sharing regarding the domestic roles has taken place.

Thus one could say that role expectations of educated men, either do not change at all; or through education and along the process of modernization, these roles only get to be reconfirmed.

Men still derive their identity from the work role much more than women do from the house roles. As for educated women, they identify with the work role in addition to the traditional one.

*** Finding # 3: More educated wives do expect their husbands to treat them as friends.**

Among the educated spouses interviewed, the understanding of friendship corresponds very much to the descriptions of companionship marriages available in the literature. Educated spouses tend to consider open communication and expression of emotions and sharing of thoughts to be signs of a healthy marital relationship.

Reality as reflected in the answers on the educated spouses to a set of questions indicates a similar set of expectations regarding interaction in the marital relationship.

Only 13.33 % of the husbands said that it was not necessary that spouses be friends. The rest of the respondents unanimously identified friendship as a major component within the marriage. Only one said "not

necessarily" (this couple has been married for 28 years- hence this different answer could be due to the fact that for the generation he belongs to expectation on this issue was still traditional).

That the interviewed spouses gave rather similar answers as to who is the first person they would go to when they had very good news they wanted to share or when they felt down, is indicative of a shift in the marital relationship towards friendship.

Table 5: Percentages of answers of interviewed educated wives and husbands on the question:

When I have very good news and/or feel down

	Good News		Feel Down	
	%of Wives s	%of Husbands	%of Wives s	%of Husbands
I would go to my spouse first	73.34%	66%	59.99%	53.33%
I would go to a parent/friend first	-	-	33.33%	13.33 %
Depending on the news, I decide to tell who	26.67%	33.33%	6.66%	33.33 %

More than fifty percent of the husbands and wives said that they would behave in a way that is in line with their understanding of friendship in the marriage. More than fifty percent of them as the table shows mentioned the spouse to be that person.

In reports of both groups, wives and husbands, all respondents emphasized that they felt free to criticize each other and that there was rarely any topic that they did not discuss. However, almost all emphasized that, if they said this it did not mean they agreed on everything. They do disagree but feel secure enough to discuss almost any topic.

I tried to probe the respondents more on this question in order to make sure that they are not just trying to get over with this question. However, there is one fact that is indicative of change, the fact that all husbands, except three said they discussed work with their wives.

Those who said that they did not discuss work, emphasized that it is particularly work related problems that they don't discuss so as not to worry their wives. One husband gave a different answer. He said he avoids discussing work with his wife because she risks influencing his professional judgment of matters, "women tend to be more biased in their judgment" he said.

The change from the traditionally expected pattern of interaction, identified in the above, is not one sided as the findings of this study suggest. Husbands seem to expect the same of themselves and of their wives. Like the wives they regard each other as friends and companions. A similar conclusion was already suggested in a study done by Stafilios-Rothschild on Greek and French couples in the nineteen sixties.

*** Finding #4: More educated wives tend to expect to participate in decision making processes**

I asked wives as to what they would do if the following situation arises: the couple had to buy a piece of furniture for the house, and it so happens that the husband disagrees to his wife's choice (and vice versa). All of the wives' answers veered rather towards imagining the decision to be shared; that they will keep looking for another alternative until they agree on one choice or until one convinces the other of the choice. The answers summarized as follows tell of such a situation :

Table 6: Percentages of answers of interviewed educated wives and husbands on the question:

If the spouses disagree on the choice of a piece of furniture

	%of Wives	%of Husbands
keep looking until we agree on a choice	*80.00%*	*60.00%*
wife decides last	13.33%	26.66%
husband decides last on the appropriate price	6.66%	13.33%

As the table above shows, more than fifty percent of the husbands also point to a greater likelihood that a household related decision is to be reached by agreement upon negotiation (some couples emphasized that they will do this for as long as it requires).

This, I believe to be rather indicative that the wives' participation in decision making is at least thought of as plausible, if not expected or is what actually takes place.

This is true that, even if the wife works, and if the husband is the breadwinner. Still in all the cases, expenditures of the family were from an account that the husband finances and to which the wife had open access. She could draw from it as needed since all wives have a check book to access that account. There was no suggestion that she cannot draw unless the husband allowed it. Most of the couples even expressed a

dislike for the idea of separate accounts; some had tried it and had decided to give it up.

Couples where wives work do not report that wives have to contribute a percentage of their income to the household expenditures. If they don't have an income of their own, they can draw from either a joint account or a separate one as they deem necessary. If they worked, they all said that they disposed of that income as they saw best fit. They all said that the manner they used their income was their own decision without their being influenced by the husband's opinion. Two husbands particularly added that they were not bothered at all by the fact that they did not know how their wives spent their income.

Though subtle, this fact backs up my conclusions above, on the participation of women in decision making. I said in the above that all of the respondents said that a married woman should work. This drives one to conclude that the fact that more than fifty percent of the educated wives do not have jobs, is , not an imposed decision. Their husbands do not think that they must stay home. They could work if they want to. If they decide not to, they are not made financially dependent in the traditional sense (allowance imposed by husband for all expenditures, even personal purchases). In case of budgeting, in more than fifty percent of the cases, the amount to be spent, (provided by the husband,) is decided by both. The same applies to the decision of being just a housewife; it is the result of agreement or sometimes the wife's choice.

In most of the cases, some kind of a deal was reached between the spouses. The wife is to be in charge of the home management and the husband will be the provider. This is just an adaptive measure given the reluctance of men to become more involved in the domestic chores. Most of these women do expect more involvement from the husband in house tasks. They agree to this choice because, as they all say, even if a husband goes with the idea of sharing house tasks, the wife can never find a job that pays enough to allow the husband to give up his demanding job in order to devote more time to domestic work.

Summing up on the third and fourth findings:

Based on the above, educated persons of both genders expect to treat their partners in marriage as friends and companions, and expect to be treated as such.

The fact that the university educated women of this sample do report in their answers on role expectations, a deviation from the traditional type of marriage, comes in support of the earlier study mentioned above, the one done by Stafilos-Rothschild. Educated husbands of this sample do show a departure from the traditional ideology of male dominance. They show a willingness to yield some decisions to women and consult them about others. The other change is that both wives and husbands, expect each other to be companions and friends, to be treated as equals, and to consult on family decisions. These findings confirm Stafilo-Rothschild's findings in the study done on Greek couples in the 1960s.

As such the main hypothesis to this study needs to be modified to acknowledge the fact that more education for women does not lead to tension regarding two issues: the expectation to be treated as a friend and that of participation in decision making. The educated husbands and wives show in their expectations and conduct a similar move towards rather liberal expectations as far as the interactional roles are concerned, as far as the work role is concerned, but not as far as the domestic role is concerned.

Concluding Remarkes

More confident conclusions on the issue of the impact of education on marriage could have been more informative if the analysis was carried to a third level. Supporting, modifying, or completely opposite findings could have been found had one compared couples where the wife was more educated than the husband, as educated as the husband, and less educated than the husband.

Education is recognized in the social sciences to be a major agent of change; particularly to cause a shift from traditional ways to modern ones. So the question that arises is whether the huge fortunes spent on years of education after high school have improved our lives as adults (instead of going for a technical diploma, or immediately working, or getting married ....), as they claim to do. The question becomes more pertinent when one keeps in mind that modernity allows the individual more control over his/her circumstances; yet, the rising rate of divorce reported in society, especially among modern couples is another case that must be looked into.

Concerning the education men and women receive in university, the assumption is generally that the impact is similar on both. In my model I assumed that education produces a differential impact on husbands and wives in terms of modernization of gender linked expectations (change from traditional ideologies). My findings confirmed my expectations regarding only one role, the domestic one, which also supports findings of the study done by Silberstein, as well as the findings of a number of other studies.

The findings of this study echo Mary Glenn Wiley's views on Western societies, and I think applies to the

educated married couples of this sample (graduates of western universities) (Reynolds, 1993). Wiley found that in Western societies there are two identities of extreme importance: work and the family. Men and women are differentially socialized into the fulfillment of these roles; nevertheless, men end up socialized into the identity of work more than that of the family.

In this study I also found that education does seem to free men from the traditional ideology about male dominance in the household and the work role. Thus it supports the findings of Blood and Wolfe's "resource theory"; education does act in this respect as resource for women, just like employment and money (Hicks in N.C.F.P., 1971). All educated men in this sample do expect their wives to have some kind of a non-domestic occupation along the domestic one, and to participate in decision making. They also seem to meet the wives' expectations in that they expect to be treated by their wives like friends and companions.

Indeed as is stipulated in an essay (in DeBurger, 1977), higher education along with the other modernizing forces (agents of social change), do seem to spell the end of the traditional division of sex roles.

Blood reports that five studies found that more employment (education) for women is associated with more participation of men in the domestic division of labor (Heiss, 1969). This potential for conflict, in the case of the Lebanese couples seems to be curtailed by the hiring of relatively cheap housekeepers (as compared to local native help). As long as the couples can afford a housekeeper, the disagreement remains dormant. However, if this luxury cannot be afforded, there is no guarantee to what might happen as a result of the disagreement.

The last remark regards the lingering of disagreement caused by the role conflicts social change brings about in interpersonal relationships, particularly marriage. When society starts to encourage opposing social behaviors in people, roles have to be justified to a number of contingencies. If, for instance, the role conflict modern women are found with as a result of the employment alternative is kept to linger, it may be threatening to the relation. As Jacobson (in Heiss, 1969) points, disagreement on role expectations which remains unresolved can lead to stress. As such a study needs to be developed to see whether stress occurs in the life of educated married couples as a result of women having to take up the domestic role against their expectations and whether this stress can be a sufficient reason for divorce.

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Misyar Marriage

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This article deals with a special kind of marriage in Islam known as the Ambulant marriage or the *Zawaj al-Misyar*. So what is the ambulant marriage? Does it abide by *shari'a* law as applied in the Muslim world? What is the difference between misyar marriage and other recognized Islamic marriages? What do women achieve by entering into such a marriage and what do they lose?

A Brief History of the Misyar Marriage

The first appearance of this form of marriage contract dates back to 1985. The misyar marriage originated in Saudi Arabia, and by 1995 it had become a social phenomenon and had spread to Egypt and to other parts of the gulf region such as Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

The misyar (a word used in the Saudi dialect) marriage or a 'marriage in passing' is the literal meaning of the word (which means visits between neighbors). This form of marriage took the name of misyar because the misyar husband usually visits his misyar wife during the day which resembles to a certain extent visits among neighbors. The visitors do not pay long visits, and the misyar husband does not stay long at his misyar wife's home. In short, the misyar marriage came to be known by the short visits of the husbands in the same way that neighbours pay short visits.

The way to contact the marriage broker is through a fax machine connected to a tape recorder. The voice the caller hears addresses him as such: "My dear brother, may God help you find a wife to compensate for your distressed life. You have to know that your broker will charge you five thousand riyals for a virgin and three thousand riyals for a non-virgin"

What is the misyar marriage all about? How is it conducted? What are the conditions of the misyar contract and when does it become nullified? What is the role of the women brokers? What are the circumstances in which women go through this marriage? Who are those who get into this contract and what do women expect or achieve in the misyar marriage? What is the status of the women who undergo this marriage? What happens if the woman gives birth to a child from a misyar husband? What happens if the man dies? Will she inherit him, or if she dies will he inherit her? What are the conditions imposed by the men and what do they usually expect from this marriage?

This kind of marriage demands firstly, the consent of the misyar wife to stay at her parents' house, which implies absence of cohabitation. She accepts that her husband visit her during certain daytime hours which are specified in the contract. Secondly, the misyar wife consents to the fact that her ambulant husband is not responsible for her economically. This means that the misyar wife will not impose financial responsibilities on her husband. Thirdly, the misyar wife accepts the fact that her marriage should not be publicized and should remain in secrecy. Hence, the misyar wife gives up, of her own accord, her right of cohabitation and *nafaqa* (financial support), which are normally the responsibilities of the man in a patriarchal Islamic society.

Thus, one could say that the misyar is a marriage without commitment. Since the Saudi Arabian government offers financial help for bachelors who want to marry, married men are more naturally the ones who opt for this misyar marriage. The misyar husband is usually a married man and has responsibilities towards his family. Accordingly, he keeps his misyar marriage in secrecy in order not to mess up his relation with the mother of his children .

Because of increasing economic obstacles, the ambulant marriage offers a good solution to the high costs of the *mahr* (bride price) of brides in Saudi Arabia. The women who usually undergo such a marriage are women who have grown a bit behind the marriage age or those who are divorced, and the vast majority of these women belong to the middle and lower classes.

Misyar and the *Shari'a*

The Quran, to begin with, allows polygamy in certain areas and on certain conditions. According to the Islamic *shari'a* law, a man can have up to four wives at any onetime provided that he treats them equally.

Equally, that is, they should all be provided with the same homes and matrimonial visits. The misyar marriage for one does not conform to the law. The absence of cohabitation and support differentiate this marriage from the permanent marriage. If, according to the Hanbali school (which governs the personal status law in Saudi Arabia), the marriage contract recommends publicity, it does not make it legally mandatory, and thus the misyar marriage does not contradict the *shari'a*.

In Islamic law, extra -marital affairs are forbidden and those who commit them are punished by flogging or stoning. Thus marriage is the legal institution in which sexual intercourse between couples is legalized in the eyes of God on the one hand, and the society on the other. Within this context, what is the personal status law concerning marriage and divorce according to Islamic *shari'a* and how much does the misyar marriage abide by the Hanbali school, which governs the personal status law in Saudi Arabia?

For a marriage to take place and be recognized according to the *shari'a* and the Islamic law, the marriage contract should be embodied by a set of pillars and statutes. The absence of the first set, namely the pillars, nullifies the marriage contract. However, the statutes are only considered to be the regulators of the rules that govern the contract. So, the answer as to whether the misyar marriage follows the strict rule of Islam is to be foremost looked upon from this angle.

The pillars of the marriage contract according to the Hanbali School are four. The first is the formula (or the *sigha*) in which the contract becomes legalized. In the contract there should be both declaration (*ijab*) and acceptance (*qubul*). The woman declares that she is entering into a marriage relationship with the man and the man in return accepts her as his wife. The first point is true about the misyar marriage. Within the context of this pillar, the misyar marriage follows this formula where both the wife and the husband declare and accept the marriage. Accordingly, the misyar abides by the rule of the *shari'a*.

The second pillar concerns the persons one is allowed to marry (*mahal*). The candidate should not marry his daughter, sister, nieces, aunts, nor his ex-wife's son, or his father's ex-wife. Here again the misyar marriage also abides by this condition, and, subsequently, is in conformity with the officially authorized marriage contract.

The third pillar of the contract is the presence of a guardian or (*wakil*). According to the Hanbali School, the guardian can give a virgin in marriage without her consent, but he has to take the permission of the women who had already married before. In the case of the misyar marriage, the bride's guardian should be present. In this condition, too, the misyar abides by the *shari'a* rule.

The fourth pillar is the presence of two witnesses when the marriage contract is signed. According to the Hanbali school, the presence of two witnesses is a pillar of marriage and without it the marriage contract is not valid.

Many *fatwas* have been issued concerning the legality of the misyar marriage. At the beginning Sheikh al 'Athemain, who lives in Saudi Arabia, made a distinction between the legal aspect and the moral or social consequences of the ambulant marriage. Nevertheless he did not say that it is against the *shari'a*; however, what scholars fear, are its dangerous and unpredictable social consequences.

According to Sheikh al-'Athemain, the misyar is a lawful marriage since it includes a contract, a declaration and a dowry. However, within this marriage, the fact that the misyar wife gives up her rights of cohabitation and *nafaqa* can have unpleasant consequences.

Sheikh al-Yusef Qurdawi, legalized the misyar in an interview on the Jazirra channel. His justification was that it is in compliance with the pillars of the marriage contract of declaration, acceptance and the presence of witnesses. Moreover, al-Qurdawi says that although *nafaqa* or suport is one of the responsibilities of the husband towards his wife, it does not represent a pillar that would legalize a marriage. For in Islam, men are considered to be in charge of women (*qawama*); nevertheless, when the wife gives up her right of nafaqa voluntarily, the contract becomes lawful.

An important fatwa in 1996 ended the debate on the legality of the misyar marriage when the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, 'Abed al-'Aziz Ibn Baz, legalized it.

In the adoption of the misyar as a legal marriage, Saudi Arabia is not in the process of changing its distinctive conservative society. Keeping in mind that women are still not allowed to drive, to go out without wearing their *chador*, the misyar marriage falls within and under the Islamic *shari'a*, or more specifically the Hanbali Law that governs Saudi Arabia.

According to Sheikh Qurdawi, the marriage is valid since it abides by the rules, yet, one can distinguish between its legal and social implications.Those who oppose the marriage say that the misyar legalizes mistresses and lovers, and the fact that it is contracted in secrecy makes it illegal. However, supporters of the misyar say that the presence of the witness is enough to rule out secrecy.

The Debate for and Against the Misyar Marriage

The debate for and against the misyar was discussed overtly in the year 1998. In the intervening time, it faced strong opposition from scholars within Egypt and especially from al-Azhar University. Nevertheless, its defenders say that as long as it is in conformity with Islam and gives a chance for women who cannot find husbands, it is a good bargain.

Those in support of the marriage say that recent social developments and the new mode of life has postponed the marriage age of women, which has resulted in many women ending up unmarried. This is why people who hold this view justify such a marriage by quoting the Quranic verses: "Do not prevent women from marrying." Hence, in order not to allow them to commit sins it is better for them to marry.

Furthermore, many businessmen support this marriage. Men believe that it provides them with a lawful marriage in a conservative Saudi society where sex outside the institution of marriage is considered a great taboo, and for many women it is better to be married than to remain spinsters or divorcees. Furthermore, this marriage offers a better solution for women since women in the patriarchal society are not protected unless they are married and unless they give birth to children. Men too are not opposed to the marriage since it goes along with their right to marry up to four women at the same time.

Those against the marriage say that women are being abused. In return for a husband, she is made to willingly give up her right of cohabitation and *nafaqa*. Intissar al-'Ageel, a female columnist, says that the misyar is an insult to the institution of marriage. For her the misyar marriage is a marriage that deceives women, turns them into legalized mistresses, and disregards their rights.

Furthermore, those against the marriage say that conflicts might arise if the first wife learns about the marriage, which means another breakdown of family bonds. Another problem is that its secrecy is a hindrance to Islamic jurisprudence. The misyar is a marriage with no publicity and declaration. However, according to the Hanbali school the husband can marry without telling his first wife, unless it is an inherent clause in the marriage contract that she should be told. Furthermore, those against the marriage say that a secret marriage, which means a secret sexual relation, is not acceptable particularly that it does not provide cohabitation.

Social Implications of the Misyar Marriage

Does the structure of concealed marriages for women in the Arab world, especially in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf region and Egypt, provide women with security or a degree of communal satisfaction? The misyar marriage does away with the familiar roles played by men and women, the man being the provider and the head (*qawama*) of his family, and the woman being the mother of the children.

As early as 1996 the Saudi Sheikh Mohammad Ben Saleh al-Athemain refused to allow the continuation of this marriage because of the dangerous social impact or consequences of such a marriage. In his view, the best form of marriage is that in which the couple stay together and the husband enjoys his wife, the mother of his children. For in the case of the different misyar marriages and the many possible children, the father do not know his children, and the children do not know their father or their brothers and sisters. There is also the possibility that children from the permanent marriage will make fun of the misyar children and accuse their mother of immorality. What many people do not like about this marriage is that it is contributing to a change in values and to what is considered socially appropriate or not.

Conclusion

Finally, one could say that within the ambulant marriage, a woman is at a disadvantage in the sense that she has to give up her rights of *nafaqa* and cohabitation knowing that her husband is there with another women who is at the same time deceived thinking that her husband spends his days at work.

In such a marriage, the woman will always be at the man's mercy or to put it more bluntly, she will always be there according to his whims. The mere fact that she has accepted to marry without her rights of mahr, nafaqa, etc. will be a constant reminder that she is desperately in need of a man, and has accepted to be treated as a sexual object.

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Testimonies

By Miriam Sfeir
IWSAW Staffer

Yasmina

I met my husband, Tarek, in a party in London. The party was a typical get together for Arabs to show off their daughters and sons and marry them off. We started dating and after a while we got engaged. My father was not thrilled about the marriage since several family friends and relatives warned him about Tarek and his unethical and money hungry family. Besides, Tarek's mother was well known for being domineering and cruel. The gossip bothered my father and he had a bad feeling about the union. He advised me to take my time and get to know him better but I turned a deaf ear because I was very much in love. I was 19 years old when I got married.

After the wedding we left for our honeymoon and after coming back we spent two weeks in Lebanon after which we moved to Saudi Arabia. At that time Tarek was working in Saudi Arabia and his mother was living with him. Being a widow she had to live with someone and given that none of her children wanted her to live with them, she ended up living with Tarek. Three days after we arrived in Saudi Arabia my mother in law followed us. And I have to admit that throughout our married life, 11 years, the only time we spent on our own was during our honeymoon.

My relationship with my mother in law was stormy; we often argued because she was always rude and impolite to me. She went out of her way to make my life miserable. She ridiculed my parents, criticized my manners, and made it clear to me that she was the mistress of the house. Tarek knew nothing about our arguments. I didn't dare tell him for fear that he would side with his mother. He was so obsessed with her to the extent that I often felt I had a co-wife. Tarek made it very clear that his mother was his priority. He used to tell me: "I love my mother more than anything in the world, then God then my siblings and then you and the kids." He used to insist on spending every waking hour with his mother. He used to wake up early to drink his morning coffee with her and after returning home from work we were supposed to sit with her until she retires. By the time we are together I would be too exhausted to open my eyes.

Other than the fact that I had no authority at home or any privacy with my husband, living in Saudi Arabia was not an easy endeavor. I was robbed of my freedom, confined to the house, had no friends, and was living with a lady who insisted on making my life miserable. Despite all that I didn't dare complain because I loved Tarek and didn't want to lose him. My marital problems started the day our daughter was born. Tarek was very jealous of the baby. He wanted my full attention, but it was not possible given that I had a new born to take care of, a house to clean, and food to cook. Our house help couldn't handle things on her own and I had to help her. Tarek expected me to stay up all night attending to the baby, and at the same time be attentive to all his needs. We often argued and my mother in law always sided with her son. She used to tell him in my presence: "If I were you I would leave her, she isn't a good wife."

I was very unhappy and was heading from a nervous breakdown, so I decided to visit my parents in London. Tarek didn't want me to go but I went anyway because I was so drained and needed a break. I suffered a nervous breakdown as soon as I arrived in England. I was supposed to be hospitalized but my parents refused to admit me for fear that my mother-in-law would take that against me. Given that she often accused me of being crazy, my being in a hospital would give her the proof that she needed. I was treated at home under the supervision of doctors. I stayed in England for five months during which Tarek never called nor tried to see his daughter. I called instead because I didn't want my daughter to grow up without her father. Besides, I loved him very much and wanted to give it a second chance. My parents were very worried about me and discouraged me from going back, but, ofcourse, they couldn't stand in my way. It was my decision and they respected it.

I went back and all was well for a while then the problems started recurring. Tarek convinced himself that I was having an affair and became obsessed with the idea without even confronting me. He started mistreating me, monitored my every move and acted so mean and hurtful to a point where I decided to leave him. I didn't know what the problem was and whenever I asked him he would say: " You know what is wrong." Other than the fact that he was very paranoid and jealous, Tarek was a violent husband. He hit me on several occasions and tried to strangle me twice. For example, once we had a big fight and while arguing he grabbed my neck and tried to strangle me. I managed to free myself and ran towards my bedroom but he got hold of me again. I was saved by our hired help who jumped on him and saved me. I still remember what she told him that day: " If you ever touch her again I will kill you." My mother-in -law tried to stop him, but she had her son's safety in mind not my own. She warned him: "Tarek leave her alone, if you kill her you will go to jail."

After everything he did to me, I was expected to continue my wifely duties to the full. I was very miserable and lost so much weight to the point that I started looking like a skeleton. Ever since the day he hit me a wall started coming between us, and our relationship was no longer the same. At times Tarek and his mother were so sweet and considerate to a point that I forgot everything they did to me. However, the bliss didn't last for long and I was often reminded how cruel and unethical they could be. When I think about everything that happened I realize

that I should have left him years ago. He turned me into a nervous wreck. I feared him, felt very insecure while living with him because I felt that I had lost all self confidence. I threatened to leave him and he threatened to take away the girls. I felt trapped because I didn't want to lose my children.

Tarek was very stingy, selfish and insecure. He didn't want me to succeed in anything. He felt threatened when I wanted to join a computer course and he refused to pay the fees. He believed that it was a waste of time and money; however, I insisted and paid for the course myself because I wanted to feel alive and useful again. Despite all problems, I decided to get pregnant. My eldest daughter was five years old and I didn't want her to grow up on her own. I wanted her to have a brother or sister. When Tarek and his mother found out that I was having another daughter they lost interest in the unborn baby. They both wanted a boy and they blamed me for not producing one.

My life went on in pretty much the same manner when Tarek decided to move to Lebanon. I was so happy because for once I was going to live alone in my own house. I furnished the house and it looked beautiful. Tarek loved the house, but, his mother was not very thrilled. She was very jealous and we started fighting because she wanted to interfere in my life. During one of those fights I answered her back and Tarek tried to punch me. I left the house that day and went to live with my parents. Tarek felt very guilty afterwards, apologized and begged me to go back home. Even though my father often encouraged me to leave him, he advised me to try one last time for the sake of my girls.

I decided to go back and give it one last try. As soon as I walked into the house I knew that I made a grave mistake. At first, as usual, all went well; however, as expected things started to go wrong. I had to cater to all his needs as well as the needs of his family and no one appreciated the effort. Then his mother started suffering from Alzheimer's and Tarek couldn't face it. He was very depressed and started taking it out on me. It was then that I realized how attached and in love he was with his mother. His mother was a big responsibility and I had to nurse her, feed her and stay at her side because she couldn't be left alone and I had my two kids to take care of. I couldn't cope and was to blame for everything.

The reason why I left and never looked back was when he forbade me to invite my sisters to our house. He explained that the house was his, and he didn't feel like seeing my sisters. I thought he was joking, but when I realized he was serious I told him: "This is our house not your house," and his answer was: "No this is my house, if you want a house of your own have your father buy you one." When I heard that I felt so hurt, and knew that this time it was over for good. I left home with the girls and never looked back.

Tarek tried his best to convince me to return. We talked several times but I was adamant about going on with my life without him. He was enraged at first but then he got used to it. My girls are living with me and visit their father during the weekend. After leaving him I went back to college and I graduated this year. I never regretted leaving him. Even though I still loved him when I decided to leave, I knew that I couldn't live with him anymore. In fact, until now I can't understand why I was in love with him.

Faten

Growing up, my sister and I felt very schizophrenic because there was a duality in our upbringing. We were encouraged to pursue our education, yet at the same time we were supposed to respect our values, customs and traditions. The education we received contradicted directly with the societal norms we were supposed to abide by. We were brought up in a very conservative atmosphere, and my parents expected us to uphold the traditions and values even when living in Washington DC.

I often felt that I was living at home in Egypt despite the fact that the outside world was the United States. Even though my parents instilled in me a lot of good values, yet, they also taught me how to master deception. Trust was non existent between us because they often feared I would go down a bad road. My parents lived in their own cocoon. To them the United States represented sex, drugs and rock in roll, and they had to protect their two daughters from such evils. As a result, my sister and I became very clever at deception. I was never proud of all the lies we uttered; nevertheless, we adapted well to the life of deceit because it protected our new found freedom. There were attractions on the outside and we wanted to have relationships with the other sex.

I could never tell my parents how I felt, who were my friends and who I was going out with. Dating was out of the question. That is why I had to live a double life, one inside home and a totally different one outside. I lied to my parents all the time, but finally when I got too tired of leading a double life I decided to tell them the truth. One day I announced to them that I would like them to meet a special male friend. I wanted them to be a part of my life. They masked their rage and encouraged me to invite him to dinner in order to find out more about the relationship. The evening was a nightmare. Even though my parents are diplomats, they forgot all tact that evening. They were very rude and impolite, and I was so mortified and couldn't believe what they had done. After my friend left, my parents informed me that I was no longer entitled to a car nor was I allowed to continue university. I was supposed to stay home until summer, and then they were planning to send me to Egypt. They took away my car keys, my house keys, etc.

After that incident, I decided to leave home and live on my own. There were so many things that were bottling up and the fiasco evening was the straw that broke the camel's back. I felt very insulted and hurt because I took a courageous step and told them the truth, but they threw it right back in my face. The key issue was that my friend was a Christian. According to my parents faith was more important than nationality. My future husband had to be a Muslim. At the time I had no intention of marrying the man and I never ended up marrying him. They just thought the worst. So to cut a story short I packed up my things and left. I didn't have the courage to walk out in

front of them so I wrote them a letter telling them that I was leaving the house and left my phone number in case they were worried about me. At that time, I was 18 years old. I worked for an American family. I took care of their children from 4-7 in the afternoons. In return, they offered me a place to live.

My parents were furious when they found out that I had left. They did everything in their power to bring me back. They contacted the Egyptian ambassador, the police, as well as the University, but they failed to bring me back because I was of age, and in the United States that made a difference. They tried to have me expelled from university but it didn't work either because I had good grades, and my full tuition was paid. They used to call me daily just to insult me, and I still recall all the horrible things they said to me. The more they did so, the more I was determined not to go back. What kept me going was my determination to prove them wrong. It was a challenge, and I had to win.

Even though I struggled on my own I was able to stand on my feet. I finished my undergraduate degree and then completed a masters degree. Throughout that time friends tried to bring us together but the attempts failed. Then for a number of years I had no contact with my parents. Back in Egypt I really don't know how they explained my disappearance to the people around them. I guess they made up stories that I was studying and working and everything was fine and dandy. They never really told anybody the truth because they wanted to save face. What will people say was always the big issue. We never talk about the rift nowadays, and we act as if it never happened.
My parents never apologized for what they did to me and given that they will never admit that they were wrong I never confronted them.

I have been married for the past sixteen year. I met Tod, my husband, through work. We worked for the same organization and became very good friends in a short a period. After a while we started realizing that there was more to our relationship than just friendship so we decided to get married. We both worried about our parents' reaction. Given that Tod comes from a conservative American family, his parents were not very thrilled about him marrying a Muslim. I was not the exact image of the daughter in law they wanted. However, his parents were smarter than mine; they realized that if they didn't want to lose their son they had to accept me. As they got to know me they changed their opinion.

As far as I was concerned I had an idea about how my parents would react. Yet, I still wanted them to know that I was getting married. Being an Arab I was brought up to feel part of a community, a family, a tribe and it wasn't easy to cut myself off totally. So I called them up and told them, and the first question they asked was what his religion was. Once they knew he was Christian all hell broke loose. They didn't come to the wedding.

Being a Muslim woman, it was an unforgivable sin to get married to a non Muslim. However, I couldn't ask my husband to convert to Islam when I wasn't prepared to convert to Christianity myself (if asked). I had nothing against Christianity. On the contrary given that my heritage is Judeo-Christian, I had to believe in and understand the Jewish and Christian faith in order to be a real Muslim. Even though we had a civil marriage we wanted our union to be blessed by God, so we decided to incorporate Christian and Muslim vows in our religious ceremony. We found an open minded priest who had an appreciation of both faiths, and who agreed to do the service.

During the first three years of our marriage we had no contact with my parents. Then out of the blue we received an invitation to Egypt from my parents. They decided to go to Mecca for Pilgrimage and in order for their pilgrimage to be accepted they had to resolve their problems, and I was one of them. I was shocked and thrilled at the same time. It was a dream come true. I wanted to go because I missed my family and Egypt. Besides, I hated being cut off, and always felt that there was something missing in my life. Even though I went through a period where I didn't want to be Egyptian, didn't want to speak Arabic, and absolutely didn't want to have anything to do with that part of me because my parents treated me very badly, however, there were always these roots that I couldn't just eradicate. There was always this yearning and this dream that things would go back to the way they were and they would accept me as part of the family. Now was my chance so we accepted the invitation.

My parents met us well and we enjoyed our stay. While in Egypt my husband did something very strange: he got up one day and told me he wanted to convert to Islam. Even though no one asked him to convert he did it for many reasons. He feared that some one from my family might hurt me (commit a crime of honor); he wanted to be accepted, and to help my parents save face. I felt very grateful and my parents were elated.

My husband and I come from very different backgrounds. I am a very cosmopolitan kind of a person. I was born in Japan, I speak many different languages and being the daughter of a diplomat I have lived all over the world. My husband on the other hand, grew up in a small conservative town in middle America, never traveled outside the United States, and speaks English only. I can sense a war between the two cultures, and it does come out in the relationship. There are things in me that are very Eastern and vice versa.

My relationship with my husband started deteriorating when I accepted a job in the Middle East. I was and still am very happy living in Beirut and before that in Egypt because I was able to strike a balance between East and West. This balance created a conflict between us. My husband was very unhappy in the Middle East because he felt isolated. This put a lot of pressure and tension on our relationship and led to numerous fights.

He recently went back to the US along with the children. He gave me two choices either to go back with him or stay here until I complete my assignment. My assignment is for two years, so after that I am supposed to go back. Even though he encouraged me to take the job now he wants me to leave. I am faced with a problem that is overwhelming, and I don't know how to deal with it. I am an Egyptian American, and now I am challenged by my husband to choose. According to him I can't be both, but I disagree with him.

Islamic Family Law Tabulated*

Countries	Marriage Age and Guardianship	Polygamy	Divorce
Algeria	21 for males and 18 for females/ guardian not permitted to marry his ward by compulsion or without her consent, and may not withhold consent if marriage is in the ward's interests as judge is empowered to authorise such a marriage in case of guardian's opposition	reason for contracting polygamous marriage must be justified and prior notification of existing wife/wives required; any co-wife may petition for divorce on grounds of harm if her consent was not obtained	only established by judgement of the court; judgement must be preceded by reconciliation efforts by the judge; wife may obtain a *khul'* in return for compensation (not to exceed proper dower) if husband consents
Bahrain	personal status laws remain uncodified administered by *shari'a* courts which apply classical Islamic personal status law		
Egypt	18 for males and 16 for females/ guardianship governed by civil code; wali cannot prevent ward from marrying for reasons of status, amount of dower, etc.; judge may authorise marriage if wali refuses	notification of existing and intended wives required; existing wife can petition for divorce if she sustains such harm as makes cohabitation as husband and wife impossible (up to one year from date of her knowledge of the polygamous marriage)	talaq (divorce) expressed indirectly, while intoxicated or under coercion, or conditionally with coercive intent is ineffective; repudiation to which a number is added verbally or by gesture effective only as single revocable *talaq* (except third of three); written and notarised certification of *talaq* must be obtained within 30 days of repudiation and notary must forward copy of certificate to wife; certain financial effects of talaq suspended on her knowledge thereof if husband is found to have concealed it
Iraq	18 for men and women; judicial permission may be granted at 15 years if fitness, physical capacity and guardian's consent are established / no relative or third party has power of compulsion; marriage contract concluded by coercion is void if not consummated; likewise, no relative or third party may prevent person having legal capacity from marrying, Iraqi Law of Personal Status (ILPS) provides penalties of fines and/or imprisonment for non-compliance	only permitted by judicial permission to be granted on two conditions: financial ability and lawful benefit; permission not to be granted if judge fears unequal treatment of co-wives; ILPS provides penalties of imprisonment and/or fines for non-compliance	*talaq* must be confirmed by *Shari'a* Court's judgement or registered with Court during *'idda* period; *talaq* by man who is intoxicated, insane, feebleminded, under coercion, enraged, or seriously ill or in death sickness is ineffective, as is talaq that is not immediate or is conditional or in form of an oath; all talaqs deemed single are revocable (except third of three); wife may obtain khul' from husband in return for consideration that may be more or less than her dower
Jordan	16 for males and 15 for females, court permission required for females under 18 to marry men older by 20 years or more / guardian's consent is required for marriage of a female under 18 years, but not for a divorcee or widow over 18 years	no constraints aside from classical injunctions that a man must treat all co-wives equitably and provide them with separate dwellings; man must declare his social status in marriage contract.	*talaq* uttered while asleep, drunk, in a faint, overwhelmed (*madhush*), or under coercion have no effect; oaths on *talaq* and conditional *talaq* intended to coerce someone into committing or refraining from a particular act are invalid; *talaq* accompanied by a number in word or gesture, or repeated in a single session, gives rise to a single revocable repudiation.
Kuwait	no substantive minimum marriage age identified; capacity to marry requires parties to be of age (puberty) and of sound mind, however, no notarisation or registration of marriage permitted where female has not reached 15 years or male 17 years / marriage concluded by wali's offer and groom's acceptance; woman who has been married previously or has attained 25 years has "freedom of choice" in marriage, however, cannot conclude contract herself (must still be concluded by her wali); invalidity of marriage under coercion or intoxication	governed by classical law; may be subject to stipulations in marriage contract	*talaq* uttered by man who is insane, feeble, under coercion, intoxicated, mistaken, disoriented, or enraged shall not be effective; statement of talaq must be immediately effective; talaq to which a number is attached effective as single revocable only (except third of three); rules on *khul'* include explicit prohibition of coercion in khul' and invalidate any condition by father stipulating his custody over children from the marriage

* This information is based on the global study of Islamic Family Law implemented by the Religion and Human Rights Project of Emory University School of Law, directed by Professor Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, and funded by the Ford Foundation. For full statement of the scope and results of this study, visit the project's web site at www.law.emory.edu.ifl

Reasons Wife May Petition for Divorce	Post-Divorce Maintenance/Financial Arrangements	Child Custody and Guardianship
non-payment of maintenance; infirmity preventing conjugal relations; husband's abstinence from sexual relations for over four months; husband's imprisonment for over a year for offense that brings disgrace to his family; husband's absence without provision of maintenance or valid reason for over a year; any legally recognised harm (e.g., relating to maintenance, treatment of co-wives, etc.); and any grave moral impropriety	judge may award wife damages if husband found to have abused his right of *talaq* (divorce); no indication of levels of compensation given in the law	divorcée's right to custody ceases at age 16 for boys (or 10 if she remarries) and until legal age of marriage (18 years) for girls (so long as mother remains single or marries someone within prohibited degrees to the daughter), with proviso that decision to terminate custody is subject to ward's best interests; full guardianship reverts to mother upon father's death unless his will provides otherwise
serious or incurable defect of the husband (unless woman married in full knowledge of such defect or defect occurred after the contract and she implicitly/explicitly accepted it), harm making cohabitation as husband and wife impossible, if harm is proved and reconciliation efforts fail, material or moral harm if husband marries polygamously and such harm makes cohabitation as husband and wife impossible (up to one year from date of her knowledge of the polygamous union), husband's absence for a year or more without reasonable justification; husband's imprisonment for three years or more, after one year of sentence has passed, non-payment of maintenance; and discord if reconciliation efforts fail, with financial settlement proportionate to allocation of blame as determined by arbitrators; wife may also obtain a divorce on the grounds of incompatibility, but will not lose all financial claims against her husband; a divorce requested by wife on the grounds of incompatibility must be granted within six months	divorcée repudiated by husband without cause or consent on her part entitled to compensation (*mut'a al-talaq*) of at least two years' maintenance (no maximum stipulated); maintenance claims for *'idda* not to be heard after one year from date of divorce; divorcing husband required to provide independent accommodation for former wife having custody of their minor children	divorced mother's custody ends at 10 years for boys and 12 years for girls; judge may extend custody to 15 years for boys or until marriage for girls if ward's interests so require
if husband is imprisoned for three or more years; if husband abandons wife for two or more years without lawful reason; if husband does not consummate marriage within two years of contract; husband's impotence or affliction (if after consummation, must be confirmed by medical report); husband's infertility if wife has no living son by him; husband's serious illness which would cause wife harm; non-maintenance after grace period of up to a 60 days; non-maintenance due to husband's absence, disappearance, concealing his whereabouts, or imprisonment for more than one year; and if husband refuses to pay maintenance arrears after 60-day grace period; wife may also request judicial separation before consummation in return for any dower and proven expenditure on husband's part for purpose of the marriage	husband obliged to maintain divorcée (even if nashiza) during 'idda; 1983 legislation provides that repudiated wife has right to continue residing in marital home without husband for three years, so long as she was not disobedient, did not agree to or request divorce, and does not own house or flat of her own	divorcée entitled to custody of boys or girls until age of 10 years, extendible to 15 years at which time ward may choose with which parent s/he wishes to live
failure to maintain, physical desertion or husband's absence for one year or more, husband's prison sentence of three years or more; both spouses may petition on grounds of 'discord and strife', breach of a binding stipulation of the marriage contract, and various grounds associated with spouse's mental and physical health.	compensation for arbitrary talaq of a maximum of one year's maintenance; classical rules requiring former husband to pay the divorcee for breastfeeding and undertaking custody of their children are maintained	divorcee is entitled to custody of her children until they reach puberty, subject to classical conditions; other custodians till 9 and 11 males and females.
husband's non-maintenance; *ila'*; husband's absence of one year or more without good reason, giving rise to injury to wife; and husband's imprisonment for three or more years; either spouse may apply for judicial divorce on grounds of injury/prejudice caused by such word or action as makes continued matrimony impossible, established by testimony of two male or one male and two female witnesses (after reconciliation efforts, with possibility of award of appropriate compensation to aggrieved party); annulment available on following grounds: defect of either spouse such as makes cohabitation harmful or hinders conjugal relations (e.g., disease, impotence); and difference of religion arising after marriage that renders marriage invalid according to rules of shari'a and either party may demand dissolution on grounds of non-compliance with any valid stipulation recorded in marriage contract	maintenance obligatory during 'idda for divorce, annulment, irregular contract or invalid marriage; divorcée entitled to compensation equal to not more than one year's maintenance in addition to maintenance during 'idda, except for cases of divorce for non-maintenance due to husband's poverty, divorce for darar caused by wife, divorce by wife's consent, or annulment at wife's request	divorced mother's right to custody ceases at puberty for boys and majority or marriage for girls

Countries	Marriage Age and Guardianship	Polygamy	Divorce
Lebanon	age of capacity is 18 years for males and 17 for females; scope for judicial discretion on basis of physical maturity and wali's permission from 17 years for males and 9 for females; real puberty or 15/9 with judicial permission for Shi'a; 18/17 or 16/15 with judicial permission for Druze / mature female of 17 years may apply to the court to marry and requirement of guardian's permission may be waived if his objection appears unfounded; wali's right of ijbar retained for Lebanese Ja'faris	express recognition of validity of stipulations inserted into marriage contract restricting husband's right to marry polygamously and effecting divorce of one or the other co-wife	invalidity of talaq uttered while intoxicated or under coercion; husband who repudiates his wife obligated to inform *Shari'a* Court of his exercise of talaq within 15 days and then Department of Personal Status for registration of divorce; failure to register with Department of Personal Status does not invalidate repudiation, but husband is subject to criminal penalty; for Shi'a, classical rules relating to specific formula and requirements apply
Libya	minimum marriage age is 20 years for men and women; judicial discretion for marriages below that age on grounds of benefit or necessity and with wali's agreement / guardian may not force ward of either sex into marriage or prevent ward from marrying; if guardian withholds consent, ward may take matter to court to obtain permission	permitted with prior judicial permission based on grounds of financial and physical capacity; written agreement of wife may authorise husband to marry polygamously or authorisation may be given by court for certain reasons	Article 28 states "[i]n all cases divorce shall not be established except by a decree by the relevant court" whether by *talaq*, mutual consent or judicial divorce; *talaq* uttered by a minor, insane, demented or coerced husband or without deliberate intent is invalid, as is suspended or conditional *talaq*; *talaq* to which a number is attached considered single revocable (except third of three); wife may also obtain *khul'* from husband for appropriate compensation, which may include deferred dower or custody over children; if husband retracts offer of *khul'* "due to obstinacy" court is empowered to rule a *khul'* in return for appropriate compensation
Morocco	minimum marriage age is 18 years for males and 15 for females; judicial discretion for males under 18 if there is fear of immorality; compatibility of age in marriage is defined as wife's right / no coercive guardianship; ward may take matter to court if her guardian refuses consent to her marriage; ward who has reached age of legal majority and has no father may contract her own marriage	polygamy not to be permitted in case of fear of unequal treatment; requirement of notification of prospective and existing wives; woman who did not insert stipulation limiting husband's right to marry polygamously in marriage contract and whose husband does so may seek judicial divorce on grounds of harm	*talaq* must be registered at court, normally in presence of wife; if *talaq* is found to have been exercised while wife is menstruating, judge shall oblige husband to revoke it; *talaq* uttered while intoxicated, under coercion, enraged, upon condition, by oath or with intention to coerce not effective; *talaq* to which a number is attached effective as single revocable only (except third of three)
Oman	personal status laws remain uncodified. Classical Ibadi Fiqh is applied to matters of personal status		
Palestine (West Bank and Gaza Strip)	West Bank - 15 female, 16 male under the JLPS; Gaza Strip- LFR 1954 required puberty and made 9 (female) and 12 (male) minimum ages; Palestinian Qadi al-Quda issued administrative decision in 1995 raising these to 15 female and 16 male. All ages by lunar years / West Bank- see under Jordan. and in practice consent of guardian registered in nearly every marriage; Gaza Strip- In Gaza the LFR assumes guardian gives consent and that's where there is no guardian, the qadi exercises guardianship in marriage.	governed by classical law. Both laws specifically permit a woman to stipulate in contract that husband will not take another wife while married to her and to petition for divorce on the basis of this stipulation if he proceeds to break the terms of the stipulation. (Muslim Palestinians in East Jerusalem cannot marry polygamously under the terms of Israeli law).	West Bank- see under Jordan. Gaza Strip-standard reforms to Hanafi rules as implemented in Egypt in 1920's, reducing effect of many forms of triple talaq to a single revocable and denying effect to others (eg those spoken as an oath). Extra-judicial talaq valid but registration is mandatory.
Qatar	personal status laws remain uncodified. Classical Hanbali Fiqh is applied to personal status matters		
Saudi Arabia	personal status laws remain uncodified. Standard Hanbali Fiqh is applied to personal status matters		

Reasons Wife May Petition for Divorce	Post-Divorce Maintenance/Financial Arrangements	Child Custody and Guardianship
husband's failure to consummate marriage; infirmity or illness making cohabitation without harm impossible; insanity; failure to maintain and his concealment of his whereabouts, absence, disappearance, or intermittent cohabitation with wife; and both spouses may apply on grounds of marital discord (after reconciliation efforts) where judicial decision determines fault and appropriate recompense for aggrieved party; for Druze, divorce only possible by decision of Madhhab judge and if Madhhab judge finds no legal justification for divorce, husband must pay damages to wife; Druze accept annulment by mutual consent before judge and two witnesses; among Druze, divorce creates permanent indissoluble bar between former spouses	governed by classical law	Sunni divorced mother's right to custody ends at 7 years for boys and 9 for girls; 2/7 for Shi'a, unless mother remarries and subject to wards' best interests; 7/9 for Druze
husband's failure or inability to maintain without cause; absence without justification; grounds of defect preventing fulfilment of aims of marriage or other grave defect; ila' or hajr, after appropriate grace period; most of above grounds available to husband as well; if parties do not agree to talaq by mutual agreement, court will appoint arbitrators; if reconciliation efforts fail and harm is established, judge issues decree of divorce with financial effects proportionate to relative fault; annulment effected due to difference of religion in cases of conversion after marriage where this affects validity of marriage according to shari'a	wife may be awarded compensation by court if husband is considered to bear responsibility for causes of talaq	governed by Maliki principles; mother's custody ends at marriage for daughters and puberty for sons
husband's non-maintenance; husband's grave and incurable or long-term defect; harm caused by husband making cohabitation impossible (after reconciliation efforts); husband's absence for over one year without valid reason; husband's oath of abstinence if he does not comply with judicial decision allowing four month grace period; all judicial divorces irrevocable except divorce granted because of husband's oath of abstinence or inability to maintain	divorcing husband obliged to pay compensation if talaq was on his part; qadi may award wife compensation for talaq without good reason, with no upper or lower limit of compensation specified	divorced mother has right of custody until puberty for sons and until marriage for daughters
West Bank- see under Jordan. Gaza Strip- the same, except that women may petition for divorce on the grounds of injury and does not allow the husband to petition on grounds of 'discord and strife'.	West Bank- see under Jordan. Gaza Strip: classical rules, no compensation for arbitrary talaq and no arrears pre-dating submission of the maintenance claim.	West Bank- see under Jordan; Gaza Strip- classical Hanafi rules allowing limited extension of mother's custody of girl up to eleven years and boy up to nine.

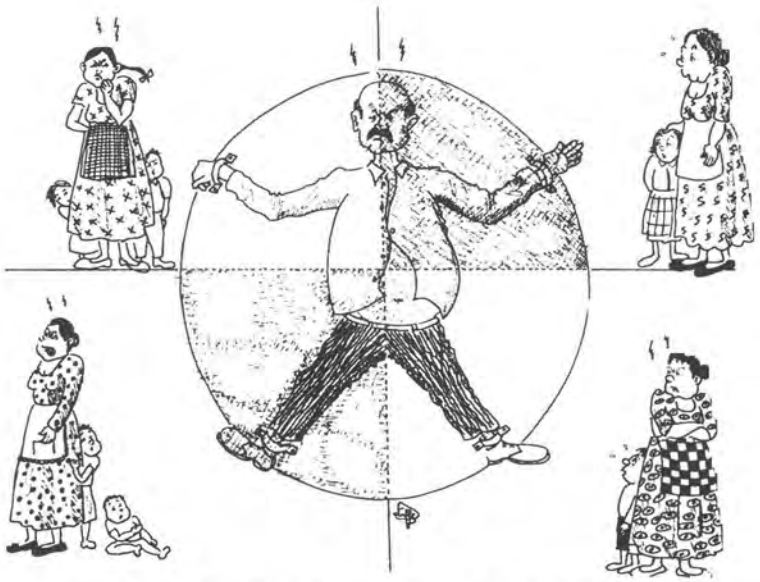
Countries	Marriage Age and Guardianship	Polygamy	Divorce
Syria	minimum marriage age is 18 years for males and 17 for females; judicial discretion for males of 15 years and females of 13 years; judge may withhold permission for marriage if court finds incompatibility in age between betrothed parties / under age of full capacity, both parties need permission of wali; wali's objection to marriage of girl under 17 years may be overruled by judge	judge may refuse permission for polygamous marriage unless husband establishes lawful cause and financial capacity	*talaq* uttered while intoxicated, disoriented/enraged, under coercion, during death sickness or grave illness, or in order to coerce deemed ineffective; *talaq* to which number is attached shall be considered single irrevocable (except third of three)
Tunisia	minimum marriage age is 20 for males and 17 for females; scope for judicial discretion with *wali's* consent and for compelling reasons and apparent benefit for both parties; if *wali* withholds consent and parties are adamant, matter must be taken to courts / marriage of males or females below legal age of discernment requires *wali's* consent (or judicial decidion overruling *wali's* refusal)	prohibited; penal sanctions for polygamous husband and wife who knowingly enters into polygamous marriage are one year's prison sentence and/or fine	extra-judicial divorce prohibited; irrevocable divorce becomes permanent impediment to remarriage between divorced spouses
United Arab Emirates	personal status laws remain uncodified. The *shari'a* courts apply classical Islamic personal status law		
Yemen	minimum marriage age is 15 for males and females / invalidity of marriage by coercion; judge can overrule guardian if his objection to marriage of ward is considered unjust, with proviso that the wife receive her proper dower from husband of equal status	permitted subject to equitable treatment of co-wives, financial means, lawful benefit, and notification of prospective co-wives	talaq ineffective if uttered while intoxicated or with intent to coerce; talaq to which number is attached only effective as single revocable (except third of three)

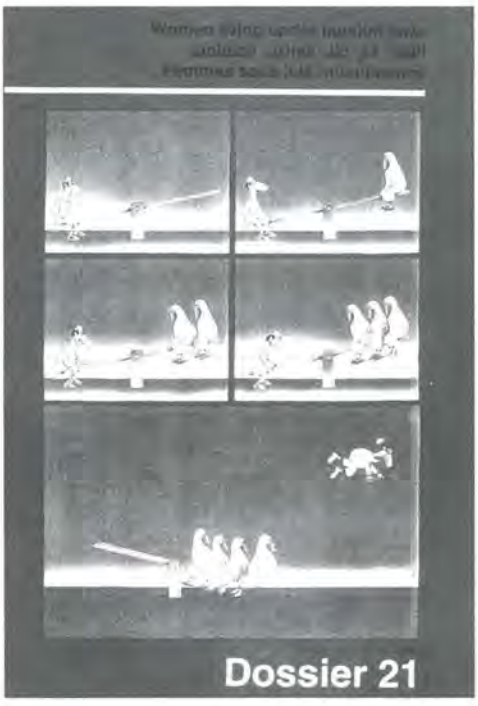
Forthcoming

Incarcerated Arab Women

Reasons Wife May Petition for Divorce	Post-Divorce Maintenance/Financial Arrangements	Child Custody and Guardianship
defect in the husband preventing consummation (though such right is forfeit if wife accepted defect except in cases of husband's impotence); husband's insanity; husband's absence without justification for one year; husband's sentencing to three years' imprisonment after serving one year of sentence; and husband's non-maintenance – if non-maintenance is due to husband's inability, judge shall grant grace period of up to three months; either spouse may seek judicial divorce on grounds of discord causing such harm as makes cohabitation impossible (after reconciliation efforts)	husband obliged to pay maintenance for *'idda* after *talaq*, judicial divorce or annulment, up to maximum period of nine months; divorced wife may be awarded compensation of up to three years' maintenance (in addition to maintenance during 'idda) if judge finds husband's exercise of talaq to have been arbitrary	defect in the husband preventing consummation (though such right is forfeit if wife accepted defect except in cases of husband's impotence); husband's insanity; husband's absence without justification for one year; husband's sentencing to three years' imprisonment after serving one year of sentence; and husband's non-maintenance – if non-maintenance is due to husband's inability, judge shall grant grace period of up to three months; either spouse may seek judicial divorce on grounds of discord causing such harm as makes cohabitation impossible (after reconciliation efforts)
available (after reconciliation efforts) at request of either party; in issuing decree of divorce, courts shall also assess maintenance, custody, housing and visiting rights	husband obliged to provide maintenance during *'idda* or, if there is an infant, until the child is weaned; if divorce was husband's will, judge may determine what financial compensation is due to wife (or vice versa if divorce was at request of wife)	divorced wife has right of custody over boys until age of 7 and girls until age of 9, after which custody reverts to father if he requests it, unless judge considers child(ren)'s mother better suited to maintain custody
dissolution available to either spouse on grounds of defect (right is forfeit if defect was accepted explicitly or implicitly, except for insanity, leprosy and other communicable diseases difficult to cure); and inequality of social status; annulment effected if husband becomes Muslim and wife is not kitabiyya or if wife becomes Muslim and husband refuses conversion to Islam or on grounds of either party's apostasy; wife may request decree of dissolution (lesser irrevocable) on following grounds: husband's non-maintenance; husband's absence or disappearance for one year if husband left no provision for maintenance or two years if he provided for wife's maintenance; husband's imprisonment for three years or more after one year of sentence; husband's breach of maintenance or accommodation obligations towards co-wives; incompatibility (after reconciliation efforts, and if husband refuses to pronounce talaq, in exchange for wife's return of her dower); husband's proved addiction to alcohol or narcotics	husband required to pay maintenance during 'idda; judge may award compensation equivalent to up to one year's maintenance to wife who is arbitrarily divorced without just cause	mother's custody ends at 9 years for boys and 12 years for girls; unlimited (i.e., undefined) possibility for extension of mother's custody if it is deemed in wards' best interests, and wards may choose which parent they wish to live with once period of custody ends

No Comment





Picture Credit: Daiffa, Women's Algeria, Women Living Under Muslim Laws

Conference Report

By Aida Naaman
Director, Learning Resources Center
Lebanese American University

On June13, 2001 I arrived in San Francisco to attend the 125th American Library Association Annual Conference. I was the only Lebanese librarian and the only woman librarian from the Arab countries.

This year the conference attracted 23,000 American librarians and 200 "international" librarians from all over the world. The exhibition that accompanied the conference included 4500 publishers, book dealers, database vendors and specialized information networks promoters.

In addition to the professional sessions and the exhibition, around two hundred poster sessions were held over a period of three days. My participation consisted of giving a poster session on the special collection kept at the Lebanese American University Library (Beirut) that serves the educational, informational and research needs of the Institute for Women Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW). This special collection does not only serve the Institute and local researchers, but also students as well and researchers abroad who can make use of our holdings through our Document Delivery Services.

The poster session was titled "Lebanese American University Library Collection: Media on Arab Women". The promotional material needed was shipped beforehand and was prepared basically by the IWSAW staffers with the help of some librarians.

My poster session included displayed book covers strictly on Arab women or by Arab women, promotional materials on some of IWSAW's activities, publications by IWSAW, fliers and pamphlets. A special section had also photos and publications on pioneer Lebanese and Arab Women who made a difference in our lives.

I had a chance to meet librarians, publishers, professors of women's studies and feminist activists. The queries posed by a variety of visitors were noteworthy. Some researchers in women's studies from Singapore and the US had numerous questions about the status of Arab women and the Institutes' activities. Interest in books on women and the law in Arab countries was frequently expressed and concern by many participants was voiced especially about the plight of women in Islamic countries and particularly women in Afghanistan.

I answered questions on Lebanon and the turmoil in the Middle East and drew attention to works of fiction by Lebanese women who experienced the war in Lebanon. Many people expressed their wish to have copies of al-Raida, a journal that normally deals with sensitive issues related to the Arab/Islamic world.

Dunyazad

By May Telmissany
Translator: Roger Allen
Eng. Translation 2000 Saqi Books
Reviewed by: Abir Hamdar

One of life's greatest tragedies is the loss of a child. At least that's what Egyptian writer May Telmissany's *Dunyazad* tries to portray. The novel, which in March 2001 was short-listed for the Independent Foreign Fiction prize, is an intense and moving account of the psychological and physical trauma that befalls a family at the death of their stillborn child. It is also the story of their slow and painful recovery.

Written in the first person narrative and in simple, poetic language, the 95-page book opens with a very powerful scene that sets the tone and mood of the novel. A little baby wrapped in a "tiny white shroud," with a "round bluish face," (1) is brought to her half-anesthetized mother. The child is dead, but the mother (narrator) does not notice. All she can think of is how much her baby looks like her. Yet, it is only upon learning of Dunyazad's death and the manner in which she died that the real tragedy unfolds. The narrator, who is herself a writer says, "She had emerged from my womb-grave to be placed into her own grave," (23). This idea haunts the latter every minute of every day and drives her to write about the ordeal.

As the narrator recollects the months of pregnancy, anticipation and expectation, the reader is given an intimate glimpse into the inner workings of a mother who cannot accept or acknowledge the death of her baby. The narrator asserts:

> *I am determined not to forget; on every possible occasion I name things once more. So she was Dunyazad, but from today she'll only ever be those few lines on a page. Now I recall the image of her when for the first time I saw her thigh on the screen in the doctor's clinic, the screen they use to measure the embryo's age; and then the second time, with the cluster of dots for measuring how long she was. Everything was just as it should have been. I can remember other things too, many things I haven't said. Now my nipples hang loosely. When I undress, I turn away form the mirror. (25)*

For the narrator of *Dunyazad*, the only way to handle the loss of her little infant is to shape her world according "to the laws of what is not there" (25). It is a world where everything evolves around the presence of the dead baby. The reader is told of the manner in which the absent Dunyazad sleeps quietly beside her mother, of the single white tooth that is visible between her lips and of the way she plays with her brother and flies through the corridors and walls. Although Dunyazad has died, she continues to live in her mother's memories and imagination.

While the main narrative of the book revolves around the narrator' s relationship with her dead child, the author still portrays the strain the child's death has on other members of the family, notably the father. After all, it is he who is to make the burial arrangements, to break the news of the death to his wife and to offer comfort. Indeed by blending both parents' reactions to the baby's death and the manner in which they try to recover, Telmissany highlights the domestic and marital anxieties they are subjected to as they try to overcome the tragedy. Even in their lovemaking they find themselves thinking of the day the baby was conceived.

Telmissany's novel is beautiful in its portrayal of the simple, moving details that roam through the consciousness of the characters as they recall the baby they have lost. Yet, it is also a novel that gives an illuminating picture of the social scene in Cairo. For example, the decision of the narrator's in-laws to sell the old family home and buy a new apartment reveals the social changes occurring among middle class Egyptians at the time. Also references to figures such as Nasr Abu Zayd- a prominent Egyptian intellectual who was declared a heretic after the publication of a book entitled *Critique of Religious Discourse* (1992) brings up some sensitive political issues.

Dunyazad is effectively a novel about family relationships and motherhood. Yet against the backdrop of this world is a subtle reference to some social and political issues. It shouldn't be missed!