

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 forty-one first wives and forty-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 arm-chairs 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", "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 permitted.

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 consummated (one of God's blessings according to Um Hussein) and the girl was returned to her family, which made Amira, her counterpart in mokayada, do the same.

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