

**Affection and Mercy: Kinship, State, and the Management of Marriage in
Jordan**

by

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Introduction

“And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.” –Qur’an Surat ar-rum (30:21)

In 1995, the above Qur’anic verse was added (with little fanfare) to the top of the form marriage contract issued by Jordan’s government-run Sharia Courts, which are responsible for regulating the family life of the 97% of Jordanians who are Muslim. The addition of the verse highlights the sectarian and confessional role of the state Sharia Courts, which operate in parallel to a number of analogous courts for the different Jordanian Christian minority communities. The verse comes from an early chapter of the Quran that was revealed after the monotheistic Byzantines were defeated in 615 CE at the hands of the Zoroastrian Sassanians. Reassuring the beleaguered early Muslim community, the revelation posits a rational and ordered universe under God’s sovereign dominion that operates on the basis of fixed, immutable principles, which often exceed the surface appearances that so often beguile humans. It prophesizes that just as humans will rise from the dirt of their graves on judgment day, so the monotheists will rise again in their battle with the polytheists. The “affection and mercy” (*mawida wa rahma*) of Islamic marriage that wedding contracts now emphasize emerges from God’s creation of humans “from dirt,” and their subsequent ‘dispersing’ or ‘multiplying’ (30:20). The phrase also carries with it the promise of transcending “the diversity of your languages and colors” (30:22), potentially uniting all humans in a community that transcends race, ethnicity, nation, and tribe. Believers are instructed not to mourn ‘Rome’s’ (*ar-rum*) loss, because only a society founded on *Islamic* principles and

relationships could truly aspire to permanence. Yet as this dissertation argues, there are powerful forces that militate against the idea of marital relations as an unambiguous source of social unity.

In fact, the Quranic verse at the top of the contract has an uneasy relationship with the rest of the form, which epitomizes the conflicting notions of kinship and personhood that make up the subject of this dissertation. On one level, the verse is a completely anodyne statement that any believer would readily agree with: that marriage and the concomitant “affection and mercy” between the spouses represent one of the innumerable facets of God’s benevolence and the miracle of His creation. Yet one could just as easily imagine an emphasis on individual rights and self-actualization or, conversely, an emphasis on the social reproduction of the community as a whole, entailing a need to attend clearly and unromantically to the property and labor relations that enable such social reproduction¹. In fact, this is precisely what much of the rest of the contract concerns itself with—ironically putting the rest of the document at odds with the verse’s idealization of a form of companionate marriage in which the two spouses instantiate “tranquility” in a relationship of “affection and mercy.” The existence of such contradictions within the contract form foreshadows how conflicting ideals of kinship and personhood alternately dissolve into one another and reassert their fixity and antipathy to alternative modes of relating.

In this dissertation, I track how a diverse set of institutions (like the Sharia Courts alluded to above) have promulgated a range of social engineering projects with different ideological agendas in an attempt to manage the collectivities they encounter and to produce new types of

¹ Indeed, most of the contract is dedicated to dealing with both broader processes of social reproduction and the participants as individuals with at least potentially divergent interests. As I will discuss in Part II of the dissertation, the contract consists of a single page form, binding a man and a woman (identities painstakingly documented) in a marital relationship that involves a pre-set alimony should the relationship fail, the permission of the bride’s male guardian, any requirements the bride might stipulate (for instance, asserting her right to work, her right to an autonomous dwelling, or her right to forbid her husband from taking another wife), and the signatures of two witnesses and the judge.

people and communities. Yet rather than thinking of such attempts to re-work personhood and community in terms of increasing individuation (or its “failure”) I point instead to more subtle re-workings of the person and the family in contemporary Jordanian society and beyond. As the title of the dissertation implies, I found that the most vocal and articulate of these modes of relating at the time of research was a form of companionate marriage championed by Islamists² (working inside and outside of government) that I term, “Affection and Mercy,” following the Arabic *mawida wa raḥma*. Ironically, as such Islamist revivalists reach back to ancient texts, they find themselves acting as some of the most effective agents for the promulgation of modern individualism and the dissolution of pre-modern modes of sociality associated with tribal, non-state forms of social organization. However, as we will see, despite attempts to re-center attention on the affective needs of individuals—Muslim or consumer or otherwise—broader kin groupings are not simply ceding their prerogatives. Instead, companionate marriage, individualism, and tribalism continue to coexist in productive tension, with companionate marriage emerging as more of a compromise between more divergent modes of kinship and personhood than a fully coherent mode in its own right.

As in most places, the close examination of Jordanian marriage practices yields an incredible amount of insight into how people structure and contest the social worlds they inhabit. The Jordanians I met, for all of their diversity, were nearly unanimous in thinking of marriage as a key moment for the social reproduction of families, communities, and Jordan itself as a nation-state. What’s more, marriage has repeatedly presented itself as a target for institutional initiatives and projects because it is so central to property relations, labor relations, notions of personhood, and political affiliation. To transform marriage is to transform the very foundations of legitimacy

² While the term Islamist (*islāmī*) can be pejorative in both English and Arabic, I merely use it to differentiate those who see Islam as a political project from those who adopt some notion of secularity (cf. Asad 2002) but still consider themselves to be observant Muslims.

within Jordanian society, ensuring marriage's continued relevance and centrality to broader conversations about the politics, economy, and culture of Jordan. This dissertation is about people in Jordan getting married, the institutions and political movements that seek to remake those people through marriage, and the continuing importance of the extended kinship networks that these movements seek to marginalize.

The organizations I studied, which included the Sharia Courts, the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), and an Islamic charity called The Chastity Society (*jama'iyat al-'afāf*) are persistent. They have demonstrated a willingness to invest decades of trial and error into their efforts to reshape Jordanian marital and family life—with some success. These institutions and political movements have not set out to transform marriage disinterestedly. What they offer and what they demand of individuals and their families reflect their broader respective social visions. For their part, Jordanians have alternately resisted and embraced these initiatives, at times using marriage to strengthen kin-based relationships and identities or, alternatively, at times using marriage to replace kin bonds with relations based on political, ethnic, national, or religious affinity. Jordanian kinship networks continue to be able to not only survive these initiatives, but even at times to co-opt them for their own ends. The resilience of extended kin groups can be partly ascribed to the various programs' lack of coherence, but it can also be attributed to the multi-faceted nature of the marriage process in Jordan and even to the rising standard of living in rural Jordan, which has tended in recent years to increase individuals' dependency on their kinship networks for financial assistance.

While the idea of marriage as a key facet of social reproduction was once a theoretical mainstay of classical anthropology (Bourdieu 1977; Evans-Pritchard [1966] 1990; Levi-Strauss 1949; Morgan 1871; Needham 1973), my interest in marriage grew largely from my engagement

with my Jordanian interlocutors, who treated marriage's importance as commonsensical and forced me to reckon with the consequences. From the perspective of most of the families I met while living in Jordan, marriage represented a huge financial burden³ that was nonetheless necessary to promote and sustain the family itself. Housing would have to be obtained. The very space of the relationship (and the family) would have to be constructed from scratch—and gendered, classed, and charged with the proper ethnic and political affinities. They would have to engage other families and enter into various forms of exchange and indebtedness, most notably the presentation of a significant bridewealth (*mahr*) payment to the bride and a promise of significant alimony in case of divorce. Finally, there would be a wedding to serve as the communal recognition and legitimation of this reproductive relationship between a man and a woman and their respective families.

The immense cost of marriage—especially weddings—may be familiar enough to an English-speaking readership. Yet the focus on legitimacy needs to be emphasized since American and British notions of kinship and filiation tend to focus so heavily on their “biogenetic” component (Carsten 2004; Holy 1996; Schneider 1972; Strathern 1992). In the Arab world, however, the anthropologist Morgan Clark has demonstrated forcefully through his study of Islamic legal opinions on New Reproductive Technologies (NRTs) that the Arabic concept of *nasab* (otherwise similar to English-language concepts of filiation and ‘consanguinity’) is “dependent on being conceived and born within wedlock, not mere ‘biogenetic’ relatedness.” “Sexual propriety,” and the nuptial rituals that constitute the idealized legitimate sexual relationship’s social recognition are, “A material condition with regard to

³ In her ethnography of Cairo’s popular quarters, Diane Singerman showed that marriage is the largest “intergenerational transfer of wealth” for most working-class Cairene families (1995:74-75). Both anecdotally and based on Salem’s (2012) working paper showing that Jordanians report spending on average JD 9,000 on marriage (the average salary is JD 300 per month), the same can be said for Jordan.

kinship relation” (Clarke 2009:198). Men in most of the region are not obligated (legally or religiously, whether Christian or Muslim) to recognize their illegitimate children. Furthermore, since citizenship is conferred on the basis of the father’s nationality alone, children born out of wedlock risk not only lack of *paternal* support, but citizenship and the attendant right to the support of the state⁴. The fear of statelessness, in turn, is all too real for many Jordanians, a country with two million registered Palestinian refugees, 1.4 million Syrian refugees and a dwindling Iraqi refugee community. Such juridical strictures are obviously matched by a complementary set of norms, which entail an intense commitment to aggressively legitimating sexual relations.

For most Jordanians, both kinship and the marriages that are so central to legitimate filiation cannot possibly be a merely “natural,” “private,” or “domestic” matter⁵. Marriages are exceedingly public affairs and, without them, mere biological “facts” and especially “blood” (the core symbol of contemporary Anglo kinship ideologies) would remain necessary but insufficient to establish a bond of legitimate filiation. This attitude contrasts sharply with kinship ideologies that tend to erase kinship’s social construction while working to relegate it to its own “domain” (Franklin and McKinnon 2001; Yanagisako and Collier 1987; Yanagisako and Delaney 1995). As feminist studies of kinship have demonstrated forcefully in recent decades, this ability to contain and delimit the powers of sexual reproduction within the bounds of a specific domain like the household (or the natural order itself) is a formidable technique of social control.

Jordanian society, of course, is no exception in lending itself to such techniques of social control,

⁴ Hasso (2012:11) discusses the ramifications of citizenship laws in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates that only recognize the children borne of women married to their citizens as citizens. Catherine Warrick (2009) devotes a chapter to the topic in *Law in the Service of Legitimacy: Gender and Politics in Jordan*.

⁵ Mirroring Clarke’s account of his research in Lebanon, I was repeatedly asked by concerned Jordanians how Americans could possibly know who their father’s were given the levels of sexual license they saw depicted in the media. However, my invocations of paternity testing were universally dismissed as woefully inadequate to the task at hand, an even more dismissive attitude than the one documented by Clarke in urban Lebanon (2009:200-204)

but it is important to explore how precisely Jordanians choose to partition their social worlds—rather than applying *a priori* social domains lifted from contemporary life in the English-speaking world. Jordanian understandings of legitimate filiation are notable for their insistence on cutting *across* certain domains, linking the biological and the social as well as the domestic and the public. Taken together, the resulting juridical strictures and norms push Jordanians to invest an enormous amount of time, money and prestige in every step of the marriage process from the house to the bridewealth and the wedding.

As I quickly found, the most thriving institutional initiatives for the transformation of marriage were concentrated on exactly these major expenses: housing, bridewealth, and wedding celebrations. Powerful forces in Jordanian society like the Islamic Movement, the Jordanian government, and major banks were committed to the transformation of marriage. As elsewhere in the region, marriage has become a site for what Frances Hasso has called, “postcolonial legal and pedagogical projects absorbed with managing, developing, and protecting the national family’ (2011:3). These were the kinds of social engineering projects I set out to study. In her comparative sociological study of marriage and family crisis discourse across the Middle East, Hasso terms the prevailing logic, “corporatist,” implying a sort of “vision” which, “posits families, states, or communities as naturally hierarchical systems in which members harmoniously play their assigned roles” (2011:14). Yet the manner in which banks, the Islamic Movement, and the Jordanian government set out to order these nested hierarchical systems could quickly put them at odds—both with each other and with the families they sought to reorder. I explore the tensions between competing visions of the family by using each of the three major financial outlays required for marriage (housing, bridewealth, and wedding celebrations) to look at specific institutions that have become caught up in transforming

Jordanians through marriage: the Housing Corporation, the Sharia Courts, and the Chastity Society, which is most famous for its mass weddings.

Marriage as a Site of Social Engineering

In fact, aspects of this broadly corporatist vision should be relatively familiar to a European and American audience—as should the attendant sense of anxiety and crisis around marriage, the family, and social change. Changes to marriage and the family have been central to the winding path that has taken us from the feudal world of the *Ancien Regime* to the increasingly globalized and technologically-enhanced aspirational consumer worlds of the contemporary capitalist North. This makes my descriptive task both easier and more difficult, since similarities may prove alternately revealing and misleading. On the one hand, if the Foucauldian vocabulary of governmentality, biopolitics, and pastoral power seems apt, it is because the same Napoleonic codes that inspired Foucault’s social theory were enthusiastically picked up and reproduced in the Middle East by local elites as early as the mid nineteenth century⁶. Yet as Partha Chatterjee has argued, the nature of the colonial state in many ways exaggerated key features of the forms of statecraft we associate with modernity. Because the introduction of liberal democracy would have compromised colonial rule and the color line, colonies could never fully follow the same capitalist developmental trajectory as, say, France⁷. Instead, Chatterjee argues that indigenous resistance to colonial powers and their postcolonial inheritors retreated from the heavily regulated “public” and “exterior” domain of the colonial

⁶ A range of scholars working in countries across the region have written intersection of the Napoleonic Code and family law in the Middle East, most explicitly Amira Sonbol’s (2008) work on marriage contracts. The Code Napoléon was the model for laws of “personal status,” which have proliferated across the region since the 19th Century.

⁷ Recent historical works focusing on colonial Egypt have documented what this confluence of religious, racial, and gender boundaries under colonial rule did to cultivate particular colonial subjectivities (Jacob 2011) and particular colonial approaches to extant scientific disciplines (El-Shakry 2007). These studies show that the states that emerged under European colonial rule that constituted and then drew from these forms of knowledge and subjecthood were, as a result, of a qualitatively different nature from their creators.

state into the “interior” domain of the colonized society, finding strength in its spiritual and familial dimensions (1993:3-14). Even if Jordan escaped the comprehensive colonial reorganization of countries like India and neighboring Egypt, its postcolonial history has shown a similar tendency to turn to this domestic and interior domain into not just an instrument of social control but also a wellspring of institutional legitimacy⁸.

As Jacques Donzelot has shown in his study of the history of the shifting relationship between the state and the family in France, the nature of the family in Europe was fundamentally transformed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The transformation came as a result of a “tactical collusion” between families troubled by “adulterine children, rebellious adolescents, women of ill repute—anything that might be prejudicial to their honor, reputation, or standing” and states worried by “the squandering of vital forces, the unused or useless individuals” (Donzelot 1977:25). Especially in the aftermath of the French revolution and subsequent displacements, the physiocratic ethos of those in power (which sought to use the state to maximize production and minimize consumption) was brought face-to-face with widespread vagabondage, prostitution, and general social unrest. The social planners of the time hoped that men would be enticed back into the factory by being given back their patriarchal position as chief breadwinners for the family. If the man were diligent, the thinking went, his wife would be given the opportunity to retreat from the dangerous and demeaning toil of the factory into a more domestic domain. The wife, meanwhile, would have every incentive to keep a watchful eye on her husband lest she find herself back at the convent, a sort of religiously-inflected workhouse

⁸ Yoav Alon (2009), Andrew Shryock (1997), and Joseph Massad (2001) have all written extensively about collusion between the British, East Banker Tribesmen and the Hashemite monarchy. Edited volumes by Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostner (1991) and Pierre Bonte, Édouard Conte, and Paul Dresch (2001) provide broad regional overviews of kin group-state relations in the region. Potentially useful individual country comparisons include Baram’s (1997) work on Iraq, Paul Dresch’s (1994) work on Yemen, Mounira Charrad’s work in North Africa, and the work of Evans-Pritchard (1949) on Libya. Jessica Watkin’s (2014) work on tribal mediation in Jordan covers aspects of the history of these institutional arrangements right up to the present.

that had emerged in response to the simultaneous abandonment of large numbers of girls and a high demand for industrial labor. Donzelot refers to this as “familializing the popular strata.” He writes, “the woman was brought out of the convent so that she would bring the man out of the cabaret” (Donzelot 1997:40). In post-revolutionary France, marriage would serve as a tool of social control for the maximization of society’s vital energies.

Of course, the role of marriage as a tool of social control (trading male patriarchal prerogatives for greater labor discipline) is rarely articulated so baldly. As Michael Shapiro notes, this exchange of patriarchal prerogatives for labor discipline is generally submerged beneath a “mythic values story instead of a money story” (2000:279). Yet the ‘money story’ remains unavoidable. The modernizing state needed the money that the labor power of the popular strata would produce. Meanwhile, the popular strata needed the basics of life: food, shelter, social security, and protection. As Donzelot continues, in the attempts to compel the men back to work, the wife “was given a weapon—housing—and told how to use it: keep the strangers out so as to bring the husband and especially the children in” (Donzelot 1977:40). The result was to be a hybrid of barracks and hovel. The social housing of the period employed the hygiene of the latter with its attention to segmentation and separation of functions. However, the aggregation of the poor in barracks (a veritable ‘invitation to riot’) would be halted. Instead, husband and wife would be awarded their private bedroom, the nucleus around which the children and the rest of the small household would turn. The house would be just big enough to separate parents and children, but not so big as to enable sub-leasing to ‘strangers.’ As an added benefit, threats to public order could be punished with the confiscation of housing. Responsibility for actualizing this schema was foisted upon the wife. As Donzelot writes, “if the

husband preferred the outside, the lights of the cabaret, and the children the street, with its spectacles and its promiscuity, this would be the fault of the wife and mother” (1977:44-45).

The same kinds of pressures which inspired the elites of Western Europe to enlist women in the reorganization of the family were also operative to the East, in what was then the Ottoman Empire. As the historian Eugene Rogan argues, after suffering a string of military defeats at the hands of the Russians and the Hapsburgs while fighting off internal insurrections, the Ottoman regime found its sovereignty challenged. It was also running out of money and seeing its territory and the base of workers necessary to exploit it shrink. This was the Ottoman instantiation of what Michel Foucault has called “the emergence of the problem of population.” No longer would the patriarchal family merely “model” all other relations of authority. Rather, the family would become “an element internal to population... a fundamental instrument in its government” (Foucault 1991:99). The result of this attempt to revitalize the empire, known as the *Tanzimāt* or “reorganization,” came in the form of a series of administrative reforms. The reforms sought to professionalize the army, reform land tenure, expand the bureaucracy, and impose a “personal status code” (*code du statut personnel*): the French term for the set of regulations governing the family. Significantly, what the Ottomans had previously considered insecure frontier regions not worth governing became key resources for a state in search of new revenues and subjects to support its growing bureaucracy. Thus much of present-day Jordan, which had remained outside the Ottoman administrative fold for most of the empire’s history, came to be increasingly integrated for the first time in the late nineteenth century (Rogan 1999:3-8).

The *Tanzimāt*’s focus on the family, however, was neither novel nor solely a product of “western” influence. To the contrary, as Judith Tucker has shown in her work on Palestinian and

Syrian Sharia Courts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries⁹, local judges and muftis had already been grappling with the problems of the family for centuries. In the process, they had built up a large body of legal commentary that subsequent generations continued to reference and debate. This corpus of exegetical texts was supplemented by the organization of scholars into four major guilds or schools (*madhāhib*), of which the Hanafi School enjoyed the most patronage under Ottoman rule. Yet their explicit concerns were primarily moral and ethical rather than governmental. They sought to promulgate a model of gender complementarity in which women were nurturers and men served a protective, breadwinning role. In place of the physiocratic concern for maximizing the vital energies of the territory and population in service of the state, Sharia practitioners seem to have limited their concerns to social harmony and the protection of certain vulnerable categories of person (especially women and children) against the depredations of the powerful—even as they maintained a relatively rigid status hierarchy¹⁰.

In the words of Mounira Charrad, such family law is “a mirror of the polity” (2001:109). Emphasizing the strength of tribal forms of political organization in the North African *Maghrib* as well as their perdurance, she focuses on dominance of the Maliki School of Islamic jurisprudence and how its adoption was tied to its being the best suited of the four schools to mediate between the universalizing aims of Islam and the particularistic commitments of the tribes. She emphasizes the ways in which “the thrust of Islamic law in general is to permit the

⁹ Since Jordan has historically been more agriculturally marginal, it does not have a long indigenous court tradition despite being no more than a few hundred kilometers from some of the oldest known states and urban agglomerations. With the expansion of agriculture and state control into present-day Jordan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the denizens of Syria and Palestine brought their courts with them, hybridizing those traditions with the more kin-oriented traditions of the previous inhabitants. Over the course of the twentieth century, more than half of the population of Jordan has come from people driven from Palestine and Syria. For a more thorough treatment of this hybridization of different strains of law, see Jessica Watkins’ (2014) work on the persistence of tribal law and Ahmad Uwaid ‘Abaddi’s (2006) *Bedouin Justice*.

¹⁰ The historian Judith Tucker (1998; 2008) has written extensively on the Palestinian Sharia Courts of the pre-modern era. While, as elsewhere (cf. Gerber 1980), court officials seem to have tended to side with the “weaker” party (especially women and orphans), they often did so in ways that reified the social hierarchy. For instance, Islamic legal scholars devoted a good deal of effort to defining the precise dietary and sartorial needs of women from different “classes” (Tucker 1998:42-43).

control of women by their male relatives and to preserve the cohesiveness of patrilineages.” She also argues that Islamic law generally, “tolerates a fragile marital bond” and “identifies ties among agnates... as the critical bonds for individuals even after marriage” (Charrad 2001:31). Through a three-part comparison of the implementation (or lack thereof) of a reformed and liberalized family law in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco respectively, she correlates reform with a stronger central state and less reliance on tribes for social control. The inverse of this is that a weak central state dependent on tribes for support will likely struggle to reform its family law in the face of opposition from a mix of religious authorities and tribal power brokers. That has certainly proved true historically in Jordan (cf. Welchman 1998). Yet, as Charrad herself notes, there are also important disjunctures between Islamic and tribal law in North Africa (and elsewhere) and there are longstanding Islamic legal traditions that take aim at precisely the tribal prerogatives she identifies.

For instance the historian Amira Sonbol (2008), who has conducted extensive archival work on marriage contracts in the Nile delta going back to the fourteenth century BCE, shows how Islamic and pre-Islamic legal structures provided women with ways to contest the prerogatives of tribes and their male relatives. She documents the ways in which women in what is now Egypt were treated as legal persons and rights-bearing subjects in ways that Western women would not be for over 1000 years. She portrays women representing themselves in court and often having their prerogatives upheld by the courts against recalcitrant husbands. Women often stipulated elaborate conditions in their marriage contracts (as they continue to do in Jordan to this day), which provided grounds for divorce and the payment of bridewealth/alimony. Sonbol argues that the introduction of French legal theories to Egypt both through direct colonial rule under Napoleon and later indirectly via the *Tanzimāt* reforms of the late Ottoman Empire

weakened the status of women in the region. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ability of Egyptian women to stipulate conditions for their marriages was curtailed and wifely “obedience” became legally enforceable.

As Hasso argues, the reordering of marital life in the Middle East in the postcolonial era has generally been less a function of “more democratic and antipatriarchal orientations” than of “governance agendas... [that] compete with the still relevant values and norms associated with shari‘a and tribal authority systems, themselves often in tension and responsive to sociohistorical conditions” (Hasso 2011:25). In fact, Sharia and tribal authority systems may even provide the raw materials for new governance agendas. Hasso develops a useful contrast between the Arabic words for “family,” *usra* and *‘ā’ila*. The former connotes, “a modern spatial understanding of confinement” and the nuclear family, while the latter represents a more relational mode of family associated with patrilineal extended kin groupings¹¹. In general, the tendency has been to posit the *usra* as the replacement for the *‘ā’ila*. However, this has been complicated in the case of countries such as the United Arab Emirates (and Jordan) where sovereignty has been seized by the most powerful *‘ā’ilas* themselves (2012:26). As in Charrad’s North African example, Jordan would seem to bear out the hypothesis that a tribal coalition led by a monarchy is unlikely to undergo a major reform of its family law through legislation. Nonetheless, despite the obvious collusion with a state dominated by extended kin groupings, the Sharia courts, the broader Islamic revival movement, and the even broader Islamic political discourse they help to format all become sites of struggle between the-family-as *usra* and the-family-as *‘ā’ila*.

Scale and Scope of the Study: Marriage and Ethnic Identity

¹¹ There is a certain skittishness about the use of the word “tribe” to describe these patrilineal extended kin groupings because many are still working (implicitly or explicitly) within a progressivist unilineal evolutionary framework where such “traditional” forms of social organization are supposed to give way to more “modern” forms. I choose to thwart this form of chronopolitics by using the term “tribe” and its many more euphemistic renderings interchangeably.

The idea for conducting an ethnographic study of marriage in Jordan emerged during my time in the Peace Corps, when I was an English teacher in a recently sedentarized Bedouin community in the south of Jordan from 2006 to 2008. I returned in 2010 for preliminary fieldwork with a plan of study. In order to allow myself the flexibility to move between rural patrilocal compounds and urban institutions engaged in the transformation of marriage, I based myself in the province of Madaba, a one-hour commute from the capital where the HUDC and the Chastity Society were based. Having obtained permission from these institutions and an invitation to live in a village near Madaba, I returned the following summer for sixteen months of fieldwork with a seasonal plan. A subsidiary benefit of choosing Madaba was its mixed Jordanian-Palestinian demographics, which are common in the north of the country but rare in the south where I had previously been based. Amidst the dominant East Banker tribes in the area (Shawabkeh, ‘Ajarmeh, Aziydeh, Fayez-Sakhur) who had traditionally claimed the land¹², were a mix of Palestinian tribesmen (Saba‘awi and Ta‘amiri) and more settled Palestinian folk, who tended to live in the town of Madaba itself or the more recently incorporated Madaba refugee camp, which was built in 1956. There is also a sizeable Christian population in Madaba—although I only encountered them to a limited extent. I lived on a hilltop where a third of the community saw themselves as Palestinian and the rest considered themselves Jordanian. My neighbors were tribesmen who had married Palestinian wives while down the block were Palestinian men who had married Jordanian wives¹³. Madaba accentuates Jordan’s ethnic

¹² Not all land claims relied on claims of autochthony or claims reminiscent of Lockean ideas of ownership through the mixture of the land with one’s labor. In an interview with a senior member of the Fayez-Sakhur tribe, he insisted that I note that the Sakhur had come from the desert and taken the area by force in the early twentieth century because it was the best land available. Lest I doubt him, he invited me to his family compound of mansions where he showed me where he had hosted various members of the royal family and boasted of his close kin ties to a recent head of the General Intelligence Directorate (the *mukhabarat* or secret police).

¹³ That being said, the patrilineal bias was such that (for instance) a young man with a Palestinian mother and paternal grandmother could belittle his cousin for being Palestinian with minimal cognitive dissonance so long as his father had the proper tribal lineage.

diversity and upsets overly-simplistic East Banker/West Banker dichotomies as Palestinian and Jordanian families intermarry, take collective ownership of the land, and find themselves increasingly woven together through webs of mutual obligation.

These shifting ethnic and kinship affiliations have attracted the attention of powerful institutions that see great geopolitical import in their development. Leaked US embassy cables indicate that US officials have become quite involved in engaging local kin networks in their efforts to aid the intensely pro-US Jordanian government in thwarting the opposition Muslim Brotherhood's political party, Islamic Action Front. Both the embassy and regime loyalists were clearly concerned that the IAF would expand from its perceived base in the Palestinian refugee camps in places like Zarqa (deemed by the embassy a "hotbed of Islamist Activity" and the IAF's "natural constituency") to more "tribal" areas like Madaba. It is these rural areas that have traditionally helped fill parliament with independent pro-government candidates who see their function as fighting for their constituency's share of largesse. Usually, such candidates run primarily on their last names to signal their tribal affiliations to potential constituents (Antoun 2006; Shryock 1997). Of particular concern to the embassy in the 2007 mayoral elections in Madaba was a member of the Shawabkeh intent on running with the IAF. In the cable, embassy officials claimed, "Observers count 8000 votes as his base - 4000 from his family and home turf, 3000 Palestinian votes from IAF sympathizers in the camp, and 1000 scattered IAF votes among other demographics." The problem the embassy and regime loyalists found themselves in was that the two "independent tribal candidates" had threatened to throw their support behind the IAF candidate "if regional power brokers support the other." While some of these power brokers go unnamed, the cable goes on to report:

Local Christian power brokers told poloffs [Political Officers] that they had the support of key figures close to the central government, including former Prime

Minister Faisal al Fayez, and claimed some Muslim candidates are prepared to ally with them in order to stop the IAF. However, they will not launch their campaign without a green light from the government - which is to say, the General Intelligence Directorate (GID). Such a go-ahead does not appear to be forthcoming. A well-placed observer and supporter of Shawabkeh told poloff a Christian candidate could not win because moderate Muslims would align against said candidate, even if that meant supporting the IAF. "Christians can be king-makers in Madaba," he said, "but not the king" (Amman Embassy 2007).

The cable is merely an artifact of what residents have long assumed: that the US embassy is closely monitoring (if not outright manipulating) the ethnic and tribal dimensions of local Jordanian politics and that the status quo depends to a great deal on the ability of the General Intelligence Directorate and the rest of the state apparatus to strategically punish and reward different families to build sustainable governing coalitions along kin lines. However, the long-term viability of this divide and conquer strategy and the ethnic and kin-based categories it has helped to reify are dependent on the ways in which everyday people in Jordan come to construct their own social worlds. The cable tempers the somewhat common assumption in Jordan of the embassy's omnipotence. Clearly, "power brokers" treat the embassy's political officers as fellow power brokers. But they also talk back. Take, for instance, the major IAF backer who taunts the embassy official by saying, "Christians can be king-makers in Madaba, but not the king." Understanding these various competing efforts to remake Jordanian politics requires careful attention to the making and breaking of kin bonds through research grounded in everyday life, emplaced communities, and face-to-face interactions.

During the first summer, I limited myself largely to the village, paying special attention to how village sociality is constructed and reproduced before branching out to study institutions that shape those realities through the systematic pursuit of their own highly elaborated social visions. I helped oversee the construction of the house I would be living in for the rest of my time there, availing myself of the wedding season in the evenings to allow for further participant

observation. All told, I estimate I have attended over seventy weddings and engagements in Jordan since 2006.

During the fall and spring, I began research at the HUDC, returning to the village in the evenings to the usual talk of real estate speculation, construction, farming, and, of course, marriage. While I had initially hoped to study a royal initiative to build 100,000 housing units in five years called *Decent Housing For Decent Living*, the corporation had placed the project on hold by the time I returned, encouraging me to focus on archival work. Through the archives, I came to understand how the construction projects of my neighbors and myself were shaped by the corporation's subtler project of engineering the creation of a housing market in an attempt to alleviate shortages.

During the winter, I conducted fieldwork at the Sharia Courts, where I attended over 100 marriage contract signings. I paired this mode of participant observation with archival work on Jordanian marriage contracts. I collected and coded a representative sample of 377 marriage contracts taken from the Amman Courthouse covering the years 1926-1953, the period during which the court had jurisdiction over all of central Jordan, including Madaba, and a representative sample of 433 contracts taken from the more recent Madaba Courthouse, covering the years from its opening in 1954 to 2011. I also spent time working with the Jerusalem courthouse registers (1517-1917).

During my final summer and fall, I continued to attend weddings and conduct participant observation at building sites while studying the Islamic Charity 'the Chastity Society.' I attended their mass wedding and training course for newlyweds, allowing me to speak with beneficiaries, volunteers, and leaders of the organization—many of whom were prominent members of the

IAF. I also took advantage of their thriving publishing enterprise, which has produced study after study tracking what they term a “crisis of marriage.”

While I met powerful leaders of the East Banker and West Banker communities, with various ties to the Islamic movement, the security services, and some of the most powerful kin groupings, I tried to chart a middle course between the two communities and vying power bases by focusing my attention on the struggles of everyday people. I found that the everyday lived realities of most Jordanians are shaped by kin and non-kin relations that bridge these putatively ethnic divides and point to alternative possible futures. The ethnicization of these tensions and the resultant political malaise are not inevitable. In this regard, despite the fact that many of the most powerful people in Jordan clearly benefit by promoting virulent interethnic mistrust, I tended to see the embassy officials, senators, parliamentarians, and sheikhs I met as seeking to marshal forces that were hopelessly beyond their control. Despite their (often cynical) machinations, however, I have gone out of my way to present my research in a way that carries the least risk of revealing the identities of anyone who is not a published interlocutor and intellectual. I would hope that readers would avoid trying to “out” participants as the region’s instability and ever-shifting alliances could potentially put people at risk when their main intention in talking to me was friendliness, hospitality and a curiosity about the world around them.

Positionality

“Are you married?”

“Why not?”

“When do you want to get married?”

From the beginning of my time in Jordan, first as a Peace Corps volunteer and schoolteacher and then as a graduate student researcher, I was struck by the frequency with

which such questions were posed to me. At various points, I responded with bemusement, annoyance, dread, and even relish. Sometimes the subtext was playful, even flirtatious. At other times, such questions were underpinned by a good deal of suspicion. At still other times, I felt like people were asking about my marital status to size me up. Finally, there were those times when such questions were posed out of commiseration, borne of the assumption that any normal young man would experience bachelorhood as a form of suffering. I will deal with each of these four subtexts in turn. Taken together, talk of marriage became an opening into a world that I could never have imagined prior to my engagement with it. More importantly, the longer I stayed in Jordan, the more I came to agree with my interlocutors that marriage was in fact the primary problematic I should be dealing with: that marriage was the lens through which everything else made sense and, hence, an important topic to be broached, preferably within five minutes of meeting someone. Here, my positionality becomes incredibly salient. By that I mean the strange set of privileges and opportunities that led me (a white, able-bodied cisgendered male from an upper middle class academic background) to Jordan. It was through the attempts of my Jordanian interlocutors to piece together who I was and what I was doing in their community that I became aware of how marriage was utterly central to all forms of social attachment in Jordan.

Why, after all, was someone with my education and obvious social advantages working as a Jordanian schoolteacher with a salary of about \$300 per month? My stated—sincere—answer (that I felt a moral obligation to better understand the human toll of the geopolitical machinations of my government and its regional proxies) was alternately touching and suspicious: was I a bleeding heart or a spy? But even assuming my sincerity, such an answer did nothing to explain how I had the luxury of satisfying the moral demands I had apparently placed upon myself as an individual. How could someone take such a detour from the “normal” life

course: childhood, adolescence, marriage, and, finally, adulthood and the assumption of my own fatherly duties? It is crucial to understand that this was the point of departure for most of the relationships I formed in Jordan that undergird this account.

I should immediately add that almost no one who asked about my marital status was of the appropriate gender or age to actually marry me. Those who asked were generally male peers, children, or older women. Yet the question often did contain within it a hint of wanting to pursue a longer-term relationship. If nothing else, marriage to a US citizen would extend citizenship to the wife and then her family. Such questions were often paired with others like, “would you marry a Jordanian?” “Do you have a sister/aunt/cousin?” “How can I marry an American woman?” Needless to say, this was wonderful fodder for teasing. Friends might try to set me up with an elderly spinster from the village or I might try to set them up with my grandmother. Such joking reflected a social context in which most marriages were still arranged—or at least presented that way to outsiders. A young man might artfully express his resignation that he would only be able to marry ‘when salt emits light’ (*lama yanawar al-milih*) or at least, ‘when the apricots are ready’ (*fī al-mishmish*), to the laughter of everyone around him. An older woman might snap back, “enough! The apricots are here! We’re going to marry you [off]!”

Yet the interest in marriage was not just source of mirth. To the contrary: this was potentially deadly serious business. Here I was, a single male, barging into a relatively insular community. Was I a threat? Might I become overwhelmed with masculine passions, taking advantage of some vulnerable member of the family and, in so doing, ‘spoil their house’ (*yikhrab baythum*)? My employer in those early years, the Peace Corps, was highly cognizant of just this concern when placing me and other volunteers in small, conservative villages throughout rural Jordan. As our superiors declared during our orientation in a bland hotel conference center in

Northern Virginia, “you’re *all* virgins now... well, at least those of you who aren’t married...” According to local sensibilities in Jordan, marriage, sex and procreation were intimately bound together in ways that had a powerful impact on gender relations. As a result, gender was a constant topic of conversation among the volunteers—and an inability or unwillingness to conform to local gendered expectations of behavior was widely cited as a reason for quitting among the approximately 50% of volunteers (equally male and female) who did so during those years.

However, just as often the interest in marriage simply reflected the fact that talk of marriage provided a canny way to size people up. My very perplexity at the question in those early years probably gave away a lot about my family background, our social and economic class, and my own long-term prospects for social advancement. My interlocutors were often highly cognizant of a new model of family: rather than having as many children as possible, I was told that “westerners” now delayed marriage, having two or even just one child but then investing large amounts of time and money in them. Meanwhile, such interlocutors would continue (with characteristic self-deprecation), ‘we just let our kids run around in the streets. Nobody cares because the more kids you have the more of a man you are.’

Unlike the villagers who would ultimately so graciously invite me into their dense matrix of kin ties, I was disconcertingly unattached. These were communities where most men spent their whole lives being referred to relationally, transitioning from *ibn fulān* (the son of so-and-so) in childhood to *abu fulān* (the father of so-and-so) once they had given birth to their first child¹⁴, thereby solidifying their status as adults. To be unmarried and far from home, aside from embodying a kind of assumed helplessness (unable to cook or clean, so the belief went), further

¹⁴ In keeping with the more general patrilineal bias of Jordanian kinship, if a man’s first child is female, his name will change to reflect his eldest son’s name as soon as he has one.

implied a kind of supreme vulnerability: without kin, who would protect me now or, more ominously, when I grew older? Needless to say, I was often genuinely touched when my hosts would tell me that I was like family and that they would stand up to protect me should any harm befall me.

This takes us full circle to the final subtext: commiseration. My hosts' inquiries were based on the (in retrospect clearly correct) assumption that my family was engaged in a strategy of delaying my marriage to avoid downward social mobility while investing in my further education and career advancement. This often led my hosts to pose questions that left me dumbfounded by how clear of a glimpse they could get into my family's finances back in America—even without ever meeting another member of my family. The uncanny perceptiveness of my villager interlocutors served as a reminder that, even as I often felt I was living in a different world, my own life back in America remained strikingly legible in ways that opened up space for meaningful dialogue. People might tease or be suspicious or just overly curious, but much of the talk about marriage I engaged in came from a place of genuine concern. For Jordanians, marriage indexes forms of social disruption that have come with broad macro-level social transformations that people refer to using terms like “modernization” (*taḥdīth*) and “globalization” (*awlama*). With a current median age of marriage of 23.8 for women and 28.7 for men, it is not always clear whether there is even a marked change over time in marriage patterns (Salem 2014:193), yet nonetheless such statistics have still come to give voice to a sense in the region in the past two decades that there was a “crisis of marriage”. In a sense, such numbers have historically been both cause and effect of a bevy of social engineering projects seeking to build new kinds of people, relationships and communities that have exerted a

powerful transformational effect on Jordan for over a century. Such projects alternately sought to catalyze or halt transformations to sexual mores, subsistence strategies, and political alignments.

My concern for the everyday struggles of my Jordanian interlocutors led me to marriage and, from marriage, to a set of social engineering projects that sought to remake their everyday lives by transforming their marital relations. By tracking these contradictory and conflicting projects, I became aware of a mode of world-making centered on marriage to which my peculiar positionality had previously left me oblivious. In many cases, the worlds that these projects are intended to prefigure are certainly not worlds that I would expect most of my Anglophone readers to want to emulate, yet I would argue that this only accentuates the salutary demystifying effects of exploring these unapologetic attempts to instrumentalize marriage. As these projects unromantically attempt to remake gender, labor, and property relations, they reveal how heterogeneous and malleable these relations are—and how they can and cannot be remade. In place of overblown nostrums about the uniform adoption of a global monoculture or the stubborn resistance of the “local,” we can instead imagine subtle reworkings of kinship and personhood to create all sorts of different partial, overlapping worlds that impinge on each other but also resist homogenization.

Worlding Jordan

The term *world* in this context is intended as a technical term: the simultaneous context for and product of *worlding*. This is the process by which human societies create and equip their immediate surroundings (*umwelt*). Rooted in Heidegger’s conception of the relationship between history and *technē*, the term draws our attention to the fact that each society creates its own world and that it does so with the physical and conceptual tools immediately at hand. In recent decades the concept has proved useful in postcolonial studies (Spivak 1990; 1999), feminist

anthropology (Haraway 2008), geography (Benjamin and Raman 2012; McCann et al 2013) and ethnographic theory (Da Col and Graeber 2011; Descola 2010; de Pina-Cabral 2014). I have found the concept useful because it focuses my attention on the tools immediately available to Jordanians and the historical processes by which those tools became available. It requires that those seeking to understand current institutional arrangements in a place like Jordan must look to their historical antecedents—because this is the world that has molded the institutional actors themselves. In the case of Jordan, this means careful attention to Islamic, tribal, Ottoman, and British precedents. The term also forces me to acknowledge the fact that the analytical tools I bring to my work have developed in a somewhat different world and that my capacity for understanding Jordanian society will be seriously limited if I fail to grasp the historical process by which these tools developed and came to be at my disposal. The point of historical analysis is to bring back into view the hidden pre-conditions and assumptions underlying the creation of the worlds we see today.

The worlding of Jordan in the aftermath of two world wars and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire has witnessed large swaths of semi-arid steppe transformed into nation-states and ever-larger urban agglomerations under the guidance of the Ottomans, the British and then a whole bevy of international ‘development’ experts. Starting with the Balfour Declaration and the Sykes-Picot agreement, Jordan was cut out of the broader Ottoman territory and given over to the Hashemite Dynasty, longtime allies of the British Empire who helped overthrow Ottoman rule in World War I. In the 1940s, it became its own country at the same time that its most desirable territory to the west was being eaten up by the Zionist movement and the indigenous population of that territory was being pushed into Jordan. By the 1970s, tensions were rising between the indigenous population of Jordan to the east and the newcomers from Palestine to the West, most

of whom had fled Israeli forces in either 1948 or 1967. Over time, Palestinian and Jordanian populations have come to make up even portions of the population¹⁵ and the Hashemite monarchy has promoted its brand of soft-authoritarian rule as the only way to mediate between the competing interests of the Palestinian and Jordanian populations.

Over the course of centuries of Ottoman rule, governance was generally more vigorous towards the north, along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and the coast to the west: the famed ‘fertile crescent.’ Towards the south and the east, one would pass the fertile lands of Syria and Palestine into ever more arid steppe, eventually reaching the Hijaz (present day Saudi Arabia), where the more urbane and sedentary peasant populations of Syria-Palestine gave way to nomadic Bedouin (*badū*). For most of the history of the empire, most of what is now Israel, Palestine, Jordan and southern Syria fell under the administrative control of the *wilayah* (province) of Damascus. In reality, effective administrative control south of Damascus was limited to the coast in the *sanjuqs* (districts) of Lajun, Nablus, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Gaza and Ramla (the latter two were theoretically detached from the province of Damascus in 1742). These districts were prosperous enough to pay taxes to the empire (all dutifully preserved in notebooks) and support towns with rudimentary manufacturing industries and courts (Cohen 1973:144-172). Across the Jordan River, moving from the West Bank (Palestine) to the East Bank (present-day Jordan), Ottoman control quickly dissipated. Without much to tax, there was little reason to provide security or courts. The chief concern of the Ottomans was to pay off the local tribesmen to “protect” the annual *haj* pilgrimage to Mecca and provide camels, lest they decide to raid it instead (Rafeq 1966:70-72).

¹⁵ Demographics are notoriously politicized in the region—especially where Palestinians are concerned. The Jordanian government refuses to even conduct an official count of Palestinians (Brand 1995:46-47; Yitzhak 2004:74).

Already in the nineteenth century, the region was in the midst of the modern state-building project known as the *Tanzimāt*, which would lay the foundations for the future Jordanian state. On the southern frontier, the reforms meant major initiatives to pacify raiding groups on the periphery, reorganize taxation, convert communal property regimes into an individual freehold property regime, and individuate its subjects to hold them personally responsible for their actions. Following a number of unsuccessful attempts to pacify the region, the Ottomans slowly began to extend communications infrastructure (roads, bridges, a ferry, railroads, telegraphs) and a security presence east of the river. They encouraged refugees from places like Chechnya and Circassia to settle and farm the area and only recognized the land claims of those who held a title and paid taxes. The apparent stability helped attract merchants (Rogan 1999:1-20). In 1867, Mehmed Rashid Pasha finally succeeded in appointing administrators and judges in Salt (Rogan 1999:69). There was, of course, resistance. Karak revolted in 1910, burning all of the property records (Fischbach 2000:31-32). The “Great Arab Revolt” of 1916-1917 cemented the alliance between Jordan’s future Hashemite rulers and the British war effort against the Ottomans.

With the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, old identities of profession (peasant, Bedouin) and confession (Sunni Muslim, Christian) gave way to new identities, which were increasingly tied to the emergent nation-states the European powers were carving out of the old empire. The most infamous impetus for this was the Sykes-Picot Agreement between Britain and France to divide the Ottoman Empire between them. Britain received Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine (which would be promised as a Jewish homeland). France, meanwhile, took the northern swath of the empire, which would become Syria and a new, French-backed Christian homeland in the region: Lebanon. Jordan would become the buffer between the emerging Jewish

homeland and Iraq and Saudi Arabia (Barr 2012; Hourani 1991:318-322; Wilson 1987). In time, Jordan would become a major destination for refugees fleeing conflicts in most of these neighboring countries. However, even before Jordan's indigenous population was joined by refugees from its more urbanized and heavily governed neighbors, the British were zealously pursuing their own state-building project. As Eugene Rogan argues, much of this (land reform, individuation of subjects) was a continuation of the *Tanzimāt* and what he calls (following Michael Mann) Ottoman "infrastructural power": bureaucratic technologies allowing for the greater 'penetration' of 'society' to increase tax collection and support ever-larger military apparatuses (1999:3-13). The British would later continue these efforts with an aggressive land registration campaign in the west of the country (Fischbach 2000) and successive changes to Jordanian family law and the "personal status law," which placed ever-greater emphasis on the individuation of citizens (Welchman 1988).

From the 1920s onwards, Jordan and its leadership could not help but be drawn into the midst of the controversy in neighboring Palestine between the indigenous Arab population and Jewish settlers. Conflicts over land sales and future infrastructure projects only escalated as the relationship between the two groups increasingly soured. All the while, the British sought to buy the quiescence of the Hashemite Emir Abdullah however they could (Wilson 1987:103-127). Yet buying the Emir's quiescence would be far from sufficient to allow for the orderly management of Britain's post-World War II withdrawal. Having failed to broker an agreement between the competing sides, Britain simply left. Fighting broke out and the settlers quickly gained the upper hand against the indigenous population. In response, neighboring Arab governments occupied the primarily Arab portions of Palestine. Egypt was left with the Gaza strip and Jordan annexed the West Bank. In the process, two-thirds of the Arab population of Palestine became refugees,

settling primarily in Arab controlled parts of Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Under the direction of the United Nations, the various sides reached an armistice agreement in 1949 (Hourani 1991:358-363). However, the conflict continues to define Jordanian politics.

While the British Mandate in Jordan ended in 1946, it was replaced by a rentier state dependent on foreign aid, military aid, and remittances with close ties to Britain and the United States. Relatively easy access to funds without the need to tax its population has allowed the Hashemite state to build up an elaborate security apparatus while distributing its largesse to a coalition of supporters: primarily those hailing from the East Bank, but also important capitalists hailing from the West Bank (Baylouny 2008; Brynen 1992; Peters and Moore 2009). Increasingly denied its agricultural base to the west and obliged to accept more and more refugees from those areas, Jordan has developed what Pete Moore (2004) has called a “Political Economy of Acronyms.” The United Nations was involved from the beginning, accommodating refugees and acting on their behalf. The various agencies of the UN have been joined subsequently by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, USAID, innumerable trade deals, and “special economic zones.” Throughout, the Hashemites have worked to maintain, “a highly disparate regime coalition that consists of a Syrian/pre-1967 Palestinian merchant elite and Transjordanian tribes” (Peters and Moore 2009:257). Even the mechanisms (public employment for East Bankers and business advantages for the West Banker ‘merchant-industrialists’) have remained remarkably constant (Peters and Moore 2009:265; Massad 2001:10-17).

Yet there has also been a good deal of antagonism between East and West banker communities. Palestinian nationalists assassinated King Abdullah I at al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem in 1951. The killing sparked rioting by the king’s guard in the old city and sporadic

attacks on Palestinians east of Palestine in Salt and Amman (Wilson 1987:208-209). When Jordan lost the West Bank in 1967, tensions increased greatly. Palestinian *fida'iyin* (guerrillas) continued to operate out of Jordan, calling the legitimacy of King Hussein into question. Beginning in 1970, King Hussein travelled to tribal meetings, rallying support for his cause and transferring funds from the military budget to the tribes so that they could buy weapons. Following an attack on the king's motorcade, Bedouin units began shelling two refugee camps in Amman. Meanwhile, King Hussein went to demand that the tribes of the south evict the *fida'iyin*. Ultimately, foreign journalists put the death toll for the civil war, known as "Black September," between 7,000 and 20,000. Following the war, officials commenced with a wave of newspaper closings, mass arrests, and a purge of Palestinians from the bureaucracy. By the 1980s, the Palestinian portion of the armed services had fallen from over half to less than a quarter (Massad 2001:204-245).

The war and the subsequent purges of Palestinians from the government bureaucracy led to resentments. This included nativist "Jordan for Jordanians" sentiments, but also the sense that the East Banker population had abandoned their Muslim and Christian coreligionists and fellow Arabs (Massad 2001; Shryock 1997). To some degree, at least, this was mitigated by an explosion in employment opportunities in the Gulf Region. Talented Palestinians leveraged their educational credentials and Arabic language skills to move into lucrative positions in the oil industry and subsidiary development projects, funneling billions back into Jordan in the form of remittances. Thus there emerged a Palestinian community that could be divided into four parts. First, there were the poor camp-dwellers who were most averse to adopting a Jordanian identity. They made up the nucleus of the new urban underclass. Above them lay the middle-class of low-level government employees and small merchants, who were more apt to adopt a Jordanian

identity. Next were those most successful in the bureaucracy or business and hence more enthusiastic about the Jordanian project. Finally, there were those most integrated into the world economy, for whom their Jordanian passport was primarily a passport of convenience. The latter group, however, was hit hard in 1991 following Saddam Hussein's defeat in Kuwait. In retaliation for the Palestinian Liberation Organization's support for the invasion, Kuwait expelled all Palestinians, leaving many with nowhere to go besides Jordan (Brand 1993:49).

If the Palestinian population has largely been sustained through aid, remittances, and government support for well-connected merchant-industrialists (cf. Reiter 2004), the native Transjordanian population has been sustained by the military—and selling their lands to Palestinians. Members of the armed services in Jordan enjoy access to steady pay, free education, subsidized housing, healthcare services, special stores stocked with low-cost goods, and retirement benefits. The pay may not be good, but it has always been sufficient—at least for those who own their own homes. The dual nature of the economy for Palestinian Jordanians and native Jordanians adds an important economic dimension to these identities. Jordanian and Palestinian identities have increasingly been mapped onto the division between public and private sector employment¹⁶. Yet despite direct governmental support, the East Banker population has also been the most restive in recent years—especially when inflation (often brought on by the influx of new refugees and their money) threatens to erode the social position of public sector employees (Baylouny 2008:288-291). Furthermore, because they predominate in the public sector, native Jordanians are hit especially hard by Jordan's frequent economic liberalization pushes—and tend to experience them as a morally inflected sleight. As in most places, Jordanian public sector employees consider the stability afforded by their steady (if

¹⁶ See also Joseph Massad's account in chapter four of *Colonial Effects* ("Nationalizing the Military") for a fuller discussion of how Palestinians came to be consciously excluded from the military.

modest) prerogatives to be their just compensation when compared to groups who are allowed to strike it rich in high-risk/high-reward economic pursuits centered on investment and remittances. It would be a mistake to explain East Banker-West Banker tensions solely in economic terms when clearly both sides have invested a good deal of their identities in particular moral, political, and historical accounts.

As Andrew Shryock (1997) has shown, current events are zealously read back through centuries of conflict between farmer communities to the west and the nomadic desert tribes to the east. Prominent politicians construct coalitions through genealogical claims, publishing their own histories and family trees to endow ancient rivalries with contemporary relevance. The Hashemite monarchy for its part has zealously promoted this and inflected it with its own mode of patriarchal rule, which allows it to play the various factions off against each other, alternately providing succor and treating them as ‘unruly children.’ Shryock terms the resultant political form, “dynastic modernism,” in recognition of the manner in which, “modern institutions and technologies are resources leaders (and their subjects) can use to organize, resist, revitalize and dominate ‘traditional’ identities” (2000:67-72). Within the schema provided, Palestinians are to be interpellated through a self-narrative of loss and betrayal by Arab regimes while native Jordanians are urged to see themselves as gracious but overwhelmed hosts (Brand 1995:52). With the death of King Hussein, this has found a particularly relevant embodiment in kinship relations as torch has been passed to King Abdullah II, whose marriage to a Palestinian woman (Queen Rania) becomes emblematic of the ongoing effort to work through Jordan’s ethnic tensions through the idiom of marriage.

Armed with a large security apparatus and substantial government revenues from abroad, the Hashemite monarchy has little need or incentive to extend democracy or civil rights to the

population. Parliament becomes little more than a calculative device for determining which coalitions are well-organized enough to warrant the distribution of largesse (Brynen 1992; Peters and Moore 2009; Shryock 2000). The situation is analogous to Egypt where the anthropologist Diane Singerman notes in her study of the lower classes (known as the *sha'ab*), “the government has reduced the realm of politics to distribution... From their end of the bargain, the *sha'ab* participate in formal politics [by consuming]” (1995:39). So while elites may criticize the materialism of the common people as they find themselves subject to demands from foreign patrons for fiscal discipline, it is a crisis of their own making. Because access to a decent standard of living is the price people extract from elites for quiescence, they are highly sensitive to even small fluctuations to the cost of living. This leaves the regime’s international backers to determine the price they are willing to pay for quiet in Jordan.

If (as Singerman argues) politics in the Middle East under various pro-US authoritarian regimes becomes increasingly reduced to questions about the distribution and consumption of resources, and marriage represents the key moment for transferring resources from one generation to the next, then it should come as no surprise that marriage crisis discourse has swept the region. It certainly would not be the first time. In *For Better or Worse: The Marriage Crisis that Made Modern Egypt*, Hanan Kholoussy (2010) documents how anxieties about colonialism, economic turmoil, and social change converged on the topic of marriage to create one of the first vibrant national publics within Egypt. She argues that marriage crisis discourse in turn of the century Egypt allowed an emerging Egyptian middle class to see its anxieties mirrored in print for the first time. Debunking such discourse or revealing it to be a form of false consciousness starts to seem like missing the point.

Marriage crisis discourse is a symptom of marriage's far-reaching implications and its sensitivity to any lapse in the state's ability to facilitate a wide range of possible forms of consumption. Furthermore, when we see the centrality of extended kin groups (tribes) to the maintenance of the political order, drawing attention to the government's role in facilitating marriage starts to seem downright canny. The financial outlays associated with marriage are needed to facilitate different modes of family alliance-building. This makes those outlays some of the most ideologically fraught forms of consumption for most Jordanian families. Whether they have sought to weaken or strengthen such modes of alliance-building, a range of individuals, families, institutions, governments and even international bodies have all taken part in these long-term processes of trial and error to hone family configurations that serve as ever more effective modes of social control. In fact, many of the strategies of control through marriage that I describe were first developed in Europe, making this a story that is not just about a distinctive Jordanian or Arab "World" but also about a broader shared world in which East and West continue to objectify their sense of difference at the same time that they enthusiastically borrow from one another.

Organization of the Dissertation

In part one, I focus on how issues of debt, labor, and property have interacted with processes of urbanization, industrialization, and state formation to transform gendered conceptions of space within and beyond the home. Historically, communally defended lands populated by peasants living in stone houses and Bedouins living in tents gave way to public housing projects and government land sales. In the 1980s, such welfare state programs gave way in turn to World Bank assisted squatter-settlement standardization programs and then the current era of neoliberal "public-private partnerships" and debt schemes. The Housing Corporation has

emerged as the culmination of decades of government policies for dealing with the housing needs of the rapidly growing indigenous population of urbanizing peasants and sedentarizing Bedouins—along with sizable landless refugee populations from Palestine and, more recently, Syria and Iraq. Of the institutional sites I studied, the Housing Corporation was perhaps the most reluctant social engineer of Jordanian family life—although this did not prevent its activities from affecting the marital prospects of today’s youth. Hamstrung by a lack of funds for locally appropriate housing initiatives, employees of the Housing Corporation repeatedly found themselves bumping up against the contradictions between the ready-made model housing solutions on offer from Western development experts and the local population’s expectations about marriage and family life. I show how issues of debt, labor, property, and gendered space (with all of their shifting, contradictory and ultimately unstable distinctions) have increasingly been impacted by liberal conceptions of distinct and coherent private (*khās*) and public (*‘ām*) domains.

In Chapter one, I analyze how Jordanians have come to construct marital space. I describe the efforts of contemporary family units to organize house construction in the context of a historical account of government housing policy and pre-modern modes of domesticity. At the same time that male refugees were encouraged to work abroad or start their own businesses in rapidly urbanizing zones of the capital region, the rural indigenous male population was encouraged to maintain their ancestral land claims while working in the public sector, especially the military. I compare pre-modern modes of domesticity associated with goat hair tents woven by women with their peculiar gendering of labor, property, and space with contemporary building practices. As men have been enticed to work further and further from their home communities, contemporary building practices have replaced non-monetary subsistence patterns

centered on the communal defense of land with concrete houses built with male wage labor on government-recognized “private” property.

In chapter two, I use the archives of the Housing Corporation to track how communal lands were converted into private property to facilitate the Corporation’s attempts to constitute and expand a housing market. Desert wasteland became valuable urban real estate for a generation of newlyweds in the 1980s and 1990s—many of whom had overgrown the refugee camps that hosted their parents. I argue that, in the process of overseeing these particular modes of enclosure, the government planners were alternately challenging and bolstering the idea of property as an object of collective communal defense, often connected to housing patterns marked by the prevalence of multi-generational patrilocal compounds¹⁷. Nowadays however, available land is increasingly scarce. Many indigenous Jordanians have been selling their lands to Palestinian newcomers for generations. As a result, Jordanians as a whole increasingly find themselves at the mercy of banks when they want to start a new household. The high cost of land and the bank’s demands for interest force people to choose between celibacy and foregoing the longstanding ideal of the sole male breadwinner to re-imagine women’s place both within the classical domestic domain and beyond its threshold.

In part two, I examine changing contractual dimensions of Jordanian marriage practices, focusing on the traditional wedding delegation (*jāha*) and government Sharia Courts, which are responsible for drawing up and enforcing marriage contracts and their attendant bridewealth payments. As Hasso has argued, marriage contracts are powerful “technologies of governance” (2011:45) that presuppose and entail particular gender relations and family dynamics. Central to

¹⁷ Even the World Bank could support some of these schemes, like the Military Housing Corporation’s program offering generous benefits to encourage government retirees to build houses in their rural communities of origin, surrounded by their extended families. As one report boasted, this “re-ordered social groups in a more natural fashion” (Shelter Unit 1987:24).

the current corporatist order is a model of “gender complementarity” and male guardianship (*qiwāma*) that, despite drawing on traditionalist and Islamic antecedents, is practically ensured by the “rationalized family law of most postcolonial Middle East and North African states” (Hasso 2011:4). These rigid juridical standards become highly relevant when it comes to women’s consent to marriage, but also in settling disputes and adjudicating the financial duties of the husband and the state toward a given woman and her children.

In chapter three, I show how both the oral contracts of wedding delegations and the written contracts of the courts produce types of moral agents that are complex and distributed across multiple individuals, putting them somewhat at odds with ideals of individual autonomy and romantic love. Yet if the bride and groom are all but lost in the pageantry surrounding the delegation, contemporary courthouse rituals exert a powerful individuating influence on participants as they become increasingly concerned with documenting individual consent. However, much as the Jordanian bureaucracy has worked only haltingly to transform communal property arrangements into private, freehold property, so too has the state only somewhat sought to individuate its subjects through the court bureaucracy and the marriage contracts they issue.

In chapter four, I turn to other, more subversive effects of novel court procedures. Court procedures produce all manner of categories that enable and facilitate new forms of individual voice (within the bounds of the contract ceremony) and collective voice (through the circulation of statistics about marriage and the accompanying social criticism). In particular, the spinster and the woman divorced before consummation emerge through the knowledge practices of the courts and further research facilitated by those courts drawing on techniques like the survey. Yet the abstracted and individuated moral agents produced by the courts do not always win out over the moral agents produced by delegations. Increasingly, they struggle with each other for legitimacy.

In part three, I take up the final ritual for ensuring a legitimate marital bond: the wedding. I compare three types of wedding: the “traditional” three-day outdoor wedding, the new distinctly urban abbreviated two-hour affair in a wedding hall, and mass weddings being promulgated by the Islamic movement. Once again, issues of debt and labor figure prominently—as do struggles over the construction of moral authority, gendered space, and the boundary between public and private. While the wealthy increasingly pursue closed off weddings in elite hotels that intimidate their poorer relatives into not attending, there is a concomitant revival of interest in traditionalist wedding practices—especially among those with ties to the security services or rural political ambitions. The Chastity Society, in turn, portrays traditional weddings as promoting all manner of masculine excess: too expensive, too violent, too salacious, and too gaudy. Weddings too reflect many of the animating desires, fears, suspicions, and tensions which drive the proposal and the building of the home. Chief among these is the problem of legitimacy, which here requires harmonizing a self-sustaining correspondence between filiation and political order.

In Chapter five, I analyze *how* Jordanians use weddings to promote competing forms of legitimacy. The feast, as a grand act of shared commensality, helps create a sense of kinship and ‘shared substance’ (Kelly 1993) through food. The assembly of people, in turn, reifies family bonds at the same time that it helps constitute broader networks of patronage. In choosing a brief inexpensive wedding, a five-star hotel wedding or a multi-day outdoor extravaganza, Jordanians make choices about what kind of families they want to be, what kind of children they want to have and, of course, who they hope to exclude.

In Chapter six, I use the Chastity Society’s mass weddings to explore *why* weddings have become a privileged site for competing notions of legitimacy, pitting Islamist, liberal, and tribal

ideologies against each other. I argue that weddings help people work through the contradictions between widely shared corporatist familial ideals and the increasing inability of the Jordanian economy to provide the material preconditions for those ideals due to rising commodity prices for things like housing and food. This kind of flexibility in Middle Eastern gender roles is nothing new (cf. Charrad 2001; Mir-Hosseini 1999; Sonbol 2008; Tucker 2008). Yet the precise modes through which changes in gender roles are catalyzed, perpetuated, and (at times) abandoned reveal the remarkable plasticity of social worlds in the region and beyond.

Jordanian institutions may be impacted by many of the same broad political and economic forces as those institutions more familiar to an Anglophone readership, but the former are not without their specificities. For starters, key aspects of the postcolonial order in Jordan like the Muslim Brotherhood and particular politically powerful extended kin groups grew (of necessity) from precisely those social domains that British colonial institutions defined themselves in opposition to—namely religion and the family. So while an emphasis on legitimate filiation is quite widespread and always has important implications for property and labor relations, it takes on added political salience for governance agendas based on Islamism and tribalism. As a result, Jordanian families struggling to meet the material preconditions of their own reproduction do not necessarily reproduce the increasingly familiar American and European model of the autonomous, self-actualizing individual or, at their most collectivist, the isolated nuclear family. While such a model (the *usra*) is instantly recognizable even among the most provincial Jordanians, a more expansive model (the *'a'ila*) remains dominant within the central halls of power and along the margins. Where generations of social scientists have confidently predicted the decline of the extended kin group and the rise of ever more individuated, self-actualizing consumers, this study sounds a note of caution. Jordanian modes of making and

breaking kin bonds—kinning and dekinning (Howell 2006)—remain creative, complex and difficult to reduce to a simple narrative of progress towards the spatially confined nuclear family or *usra* and the autonomous individual and away from the broader and more relational *'a'ila*.

Part I: The Home: Building a House and a Housing Market

Chapter 1: The House

After a week in which my friend Omar's family compound had seen a flurry of activity, with a new concrete and steel rebar structure springing from what had been a vacant lot, I saw him on the street, greeted him, and took the opportunity to teasingly ask him when he was going to get married. As a man in his mid twenties with a prestigious job in the military¹⁸ who was the eldest son in the family, he immediately grasped the subtext and smiled back, "I want to wait until I finish the house." Continuing with a line he had probably been using all week, he winked a bit and said, "I want to bring a girl the size of the house," reflecting the local common sense that the more prestigious the house, the more prestigious (bigger, so to speak) a bride he would be able to marry. A year later when he finally got engaged as the house was nearing completion, he eagerly described his bride to me in terms of her job (an engineer), her salary, and the combined household income he was looking forward to when her salary was added to his sizeable military salary and benefits package. His good news here was accompanied by a palpable sense of exhilaration and relief at the prospect of being able to support a large and prosperous household that would meet the high expectations that his family and neighbors had for him.

Despite the ubiquity and banality in Jordan of this kind of status competition and conspicuous consumption around housing and its direct connection to the marital prospects of

¹⁸ To get a sense of how normal this involvement with the military is, consult the list of occupations for the men involved in marriage contracts in the appendix and Table 14. Over a quarter of men in the Madaba sample of marriage contracts were employed by the security services.

young men, it is all based on an incredibly novel set of assumptions—which in many cases are not even half a century old. In Part I of the dissertation, I will argue that the quest of the Jordanian middle and upper classes for bigger, more elaborate, and more permanent houses is transforming gender and kin relations across the country—not least because of the economic activities that are increasingly required to actualize such houses. When Omar’s respective grandparents married half a century ago, they initially lived in goat hair tents made by the female relatives of his respective grandfathers on patrimonial lands they claimed on the basis of having worked it themselves and their collective willingness to defend it with force if necessary. To the degree that family relations have now grown to conform to the model of men like Omar and his father (creatures of an external “public” world) who perform wage labor, acquire capital and use it to house women (here associated with a cloistered, “private” or “domestic” realm), the contemporary Jordanian home reifies this conceptual gendering of space, materializing it in the built environment.

Yet money and commodity circulation increasingly suffuse village sociality to the point where even this model of men housing women is growing outdated. There is something quite novel in Jordan about a man who would describe his prospective fiancée to another in terms of her occupation and salary—although it is increasingly the norm. In contrast, a number of Omar’s uncles and grandparents remarked to me at various points that, “I never touched money until I served in the army.” The statement was intended to emphasize that their access to money—even as military aged males—was viewed thirty to fifty years ago as a challenge to the preexisting gerontocratic order in which senior men had claimed (not always convincingly) the right to dispose of the family’s capital as their sole prerogative. One man, to emphasize the shift in expectations around gender, age, and money continued, “my [ten year-old] son doesn’t even ask

for a schilling anymore. He says ‘give me two schillings!’ Seriously!” Yet such complaints among older generation of changing expectations about the role of money and other commodities in mediating relations between generations and genders tended to fall on deaf ears. That is because current expectations that increasingly valorize market relations even within the household were at least partially encoded in the spatial, labor, and property relations of the home and the family itself, lending these emergent expectations an aura of fixity, which proved quite convincing to the younger generation. As living standards and commodity prices rise while wages stay stagnant, there is a growing literature in English and Arabic detailing the ways in which this is affecting people’s marriage prospects in the Middle East. Fewer and fewer men are able to provide a house and financial support to a wife (if women even necessarily want that), leading to the possibility of higher marriage ages or even growing populations of people who never marry at all (Adely forthcoming; Badraneh 2009; Badran and Sarhan 1999; Hasso 2011; Masarweh 2010; Schwedler 2010). Most intriguingly, as land prices and living standards continue to outpace wage increases, the entire edifice of housing as an expression of masculine competence begins to crumble as women and women’s labor comes to the fore once again as undeniably central to the construction and maintenance of the physical space of the home.

Part one of this dissertation is located at a point of doubled liminality: on the threshold of the home itself as well as its construction, which is arguably a key obligatory passage point for social reproduction in any community. When the succeeding generation constructs its homes differently, it is also constructing its families differently. To track this transformation in the relationship between gender, labor, property, and space, I attempt to trace two phenomena in this section: chapter one considers the construction of a house while chapter two considers the construction of a housing market. Chapter one focuses on house construction through

ethnographic research in rural Jordan, building on a growing literature on “house societies” (Bahloul 1999; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Levi-Strauss 1987) and a number of previous studies which foreground the construction of those houses (Dalakoglou 2010; Melly 2010; van der Geest 1998). Chapter two focuses on the construction of a housing market through ethnographic and archival research at the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), building on a growing literature that has shown how economic markets are quite literally constructed—much like houses (Callon 1998; Mackenzie 2009; Zaloom 2006). Initially, market relations in what is now Jordan were of limited import to daily life, with men and women traversing gendered space and engaging in common and divergent forms of more or less gendered labor to sustain the life of the community. Over the course of the twentieth century, public market relations remained masculine even as they proliferated with the coming of urbanization, influxes of refugees, labor migration, the expansion of the military, land registration, and new financial instruments like the interest-based mortgage. The result was the increasing confinement of women to the physical house as men were drawn out of the home in order to sustain the household through their participation in the labor market. Increasingly however, the rising costs and expectations associated with the home and market relations that undergird that home’s construction are pulling women into the workforce, reworking notions of personhood, gendered space, labor, and property in the process.

Chapter one uses the structure of the conjuncture between the tent (which was a common form of housing in Jordan as late as the 1960s) and the various implements of “public policy,” to produce a strange funhouse-mirror effect that emphasizes the peculiarity of contemporary houses and housing markets and their role in radically shifting the gendering of labor, property, and space in Jordan in a relatively short time. When tracking between the experiences of Omar and

those of his grandparents' generation, ideas of public and private serve as an important pivot for recent shifts in the gendered political economy of the Jordanian household and its ramifications for broader national and international political economies. These shifts in logics of gender, labor, property, and space are leading to the transformation of the modes through which so-called public and private “spheres” or “domains” (cf. Cannell and McKinnon 2013; Chatterjee 1993; Collier and Yanagisako 1987; Franklin and McKinnon 2001; Strathern 1988) are co-constituted.

‘Oikonomy’ of Hair, Mud, and Stone

The emergent liberal notion of public and private as a contradictory mixture of oppositions (between individual and collective, interiority and exteriority, market and state) is now fully present in Jordan due to the increasing use of the terms *‘ām* (‘public’ or more literally general) and *khāṣ* (‘private’ or more literally particular or special). Jordanians now speak of privatization (*khiṣkhiṣa*) and the public sector (*al-qatā’ al-‘ām*) just like everyone else who encounters the logics of neoliberal globalization and its avatars. In fact, the Housing Corporation is one of the numerous *bi-bi-bis* (PPPs: Public-Private Partnerships), which are now proliferating across the Arab world and elsewhere. Yet such conceptions of public and private remain in tension with older local conceptions that remain embedded in the physical structure of the household and its peculiar gender, labor, and property relations. This means that certain aspects of these older conceptions continue to exert significant effects—even among young people like Omar. First, I will attempt to provide a brief sketch of the tent’s structure and its animating logic. Then, in contrast to the highly abstracted notion of public and private which these organizations now promote, I will discuss the home’s relationship to literal ‘bread and butter’ issues: the production of wheat, barley, milk, and meat. From these, I will turn to the home’s relationship to a still quite tangible set of concerns around interiority and exteriority, visibility and invisibility.

In the second half of the chapter, I will contrast this pastoral mode of dwelling to modes of dwelling heralded in the latter half of the twentieth century by the arrival of government jobs, concrete houses, and a veritable army of consultants and experts eager to bring their own Anglo-American notions of labor relations, domesticity, and property to the region.

The goat hair tent is a vexed but central image in a diverse array of ideological depictions of Arab heritage and culture. It simultaneously serves as a focal point for certain strains of nationalism and chauvinism (see the widespread popularity of Bedouin soap operas in the Middle East) while being a central trope in orientalist imaginaries of the region. The Bedouin tent has arguably served the same functions in orientalist discourse that the *tipi* has in certain racist depictions of Native Americans by rendering its inhabitants primitive, close to nature and, above all, easily separated from their land and any resources it might hold. Of course, such discourses in fact obscure the subtle but widespread transformation of the landscape by both Native Americans (Berkes 1993; Cronan 1980; Peacock and Turner 2000) and Bedouins long before the arrival of white settlers and resource extractors. My goal here in highlighting the tent is to draw attention to precisely the broader ecology in which it is implicated. While I acknowledge the problematic uses to which the image of the tent has been put in the past, I would argue that the tent can also help put into sharp relief the peculiarities of the gendered political economy of public and private promulgated by various facets of contemporary global governance like the World Bank, State Department, and United Nations.

The basic architectural principles of the Bedouin goat hair tent are relatively simple. The tent forms a vaguely rectangular shape that is achieved by stretching a piece of fabric over a more or less rectangular grid of poles that are held perpendicular to the ground by the tension of

the ropes and the fabric pushing downwards on the poles, arrayed so that a longer center pole¹⁹ (*al-wasiṭ*) is flanked by two shorter poles stretching the length of the tent. I have actually spent a fair amount of time visiting with friends in Jordan who put up such tents (now made out of burlap sacks or repurposed United Nations Refugee Works Administration tent fabric rather than painstakingly woven goat hair) while tending crops on land rented far from their permanent homes. I have been told that passing the growing season like this in a tent can be a good way to save on gas and take advantage of the cooling summer breezes.

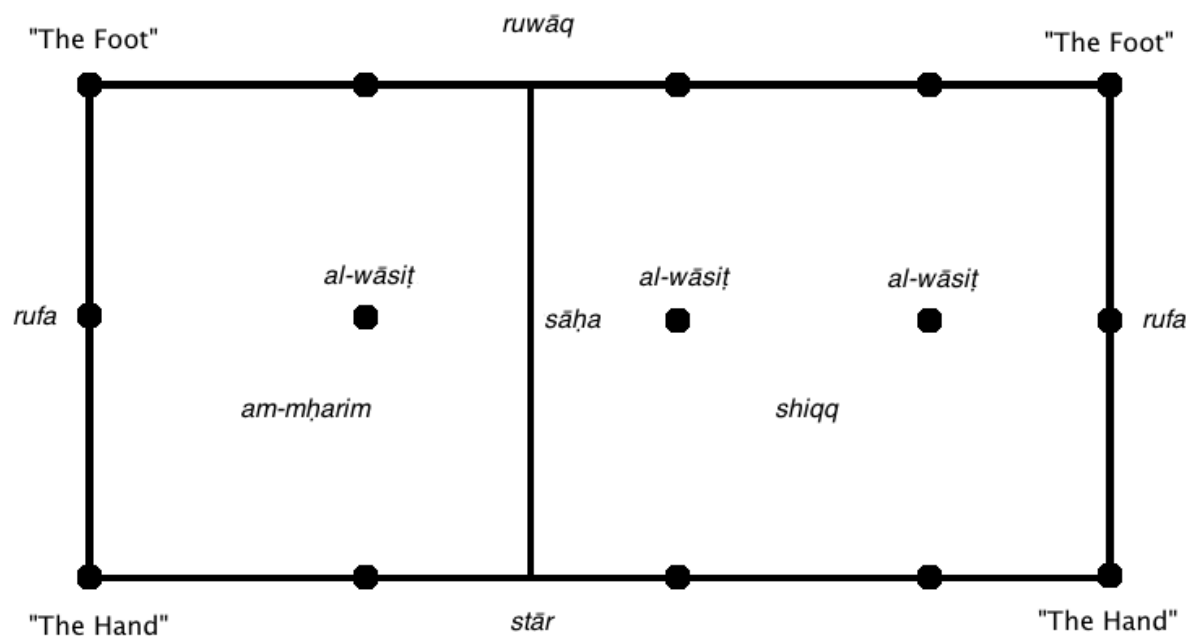


Figure 1: A diagram of a hypothetical tent. It uses some of the most common terms and emphasizing the bodily metaphors and deixis used to discuss the house and its constituent parts. However, there is a lot of variation in terminology—especially when it comes to the names of the poles. For instance, the *sāḥa* is often called the *mu‘and*. The pole on each side in the middle is usually referred to as the *kāsir*, but some people use the term *‘āmr*—despite the fact that this term is more commonly used to refer to poles in the rear. *Zāfir* is another term for these rear poles. Meanwhile, even the terms which evoke parallels with the body are not universally used. For instance, “the hand” (*al-iyd*) is sometimes called the *muqaddim* while “the foot” (*al-rijil*) is often called the *fāhiq*.

¹⁹ One classic index of sheikhly status was the number of these center poles in one’s tent. More center poles meant more room to accommodate guests, which meant the need for more surplus to meet the obligations of hospitality.

I used to make a point of asking elderly Bedouin men in Jordan about the names for the constituent parts of the Bedouin goat hair tent—not the least because everyone seemed to enjoy teaching the foreign anthropologist the obscure minutiae of a bygone era. A number of elderly men were even kind enough to draw me diagrams. At first, I thought it would be useful as a conversation-starter that might lead comfortably into stories, jokes and ad hoc social theorizing. Indeed it did. It soon became clear that there was also a great diversity of experiences and terminologies that people would express through their narrations of the tent. Nonetheless some aspects were ubiquitous: the tent was always conceived of as divided into two parts: the masculine *shiqq* and the feminine *muharrim*. But was the *shiqq* on the right or the left? A man once told me it varied by tribe: his tribe put the *shiqq* on the left. Seeming to contradict his thesis, he then added, “but the path here is on the right so I put the *shiqq* on the right so [male] guests wouldn’t walk by the *muharrim*.”

Nevertheless, there was a certain spatiotemporal ordering of this gendered polarity that seemed to transcend the countless individual experiences of the tent. For my part, I was taught and later experienced the tent as a male. The long sides of the tent would usually be raised up to some degree. The front flap (usually known as the *stār*) would be parallel to the ground while the back flap (usually known as the *ruwāq*) would only be raised enough to allow the wind to enter. I was told in no uncertain terms: dogs and children enter through the *ruwāq*. Men must enter through the front²⁰. Ideally, a man should approach from the back side of the tent, which allows the family to be shielded from his gaze by the lowered *ruwāq*. When he is within earshot, he should call out “peace be upon you” (*salām ’alaykum*), “O protector, O family of the house!” (*ya sātir, ya ahl-al-bayt!*), or some other greeting. With permission granted, the visitor should

²⁰ I have no idea what instructions a woman in my position would have been given, but adults of both genders in fact exclusively entered through the front.

approach one of the rear corner poles known as the “foot” (*shādiḥ al-rijil*) or *al-fāhiq* while making sure to give the various ropes, which are staked in the ground around the sides, a wide berth. Passing the stake jutting out from the front pole (known as the “hand”—*shādiḥ al-iyd*), the male guest could expect to find his hosts waiting to greet him.

Similar accounts of gendered space could be provided for other types of homes both in Jordan and in other times and places. When I have gone for strolls amongst the ruins of the stone houses of the peasantry from the early twentieth century, my Jordanian friends have always described them in terms of the same gendering of space. The examples could be multiplied across the Mediterranean²¹ and across the Arab world.²² Domestic space is treated as though it were polarized into male and female aspects (*shiqq* and *mūḥarrim*) while the home forms a feminine pole (*am-mūḥarrim*) in relationship to the masculine exterior. Admittedly, this is contradictory. To use the language of Susan Gal’s (2002) essay “Language Ideologies Compared: Metaphors of Public/Private,” this is a kind of “fractal recursion and erasure” which happens to be associated with most extant discourses on public and private. In fact, members of both genders move throughout the house and throughout the community over the course of the days, weeks, months and years. Yet so firm is the ideological commitment to the maintenance of these polarities that people can speak of the masculine and feminine portions of the home and then in the next breath declare the home to be wholly feminine vis-à-vis the masculine market, *suq*, *bazaar*, or *agora*. I will return to the gendering of space within the *oikonomy*²³ of hair, mud

²¹ Cohen (1989) offers a relatively nuanced account of women’s movement through various gendered spaces in ancient Greece drawing on a combination of archaeological and textual evidence. Herzfeld’s (1985) ethnography of a town in Crete finds a gendering of the town square itself. Of course the most famous example of the Mediterranean house literature is Bourdieu’s (1977) research on Kabyle homes in North Africa.

²² The gendering of domestic space both internally and in relationship to the exterior is a recurrent theme in ethnographies and histories of the Arab world (cf. Ghannam 2002; Khater 2001; vom Bruck 1997).

²³ As Timothy Mitchell (2002) has argued, the notion of *the* economy is a mid-twentieth century European invention. It presupposes a nation-state as its locus and demands technocratic management. It is “a distinct social sphere.” Prior to the twentieth century, economy was used primarily as a term for practices of maximizing efficiency (Mitchell

and stone, but I would like to begin by describing the activities of a family that, at the time of my research, continued to herd goats and engage in household food production. I hope to use the account to highlight some of the most striking recent changes in the gendering of property and labor relations and their ability to reify new ideas of public and private.

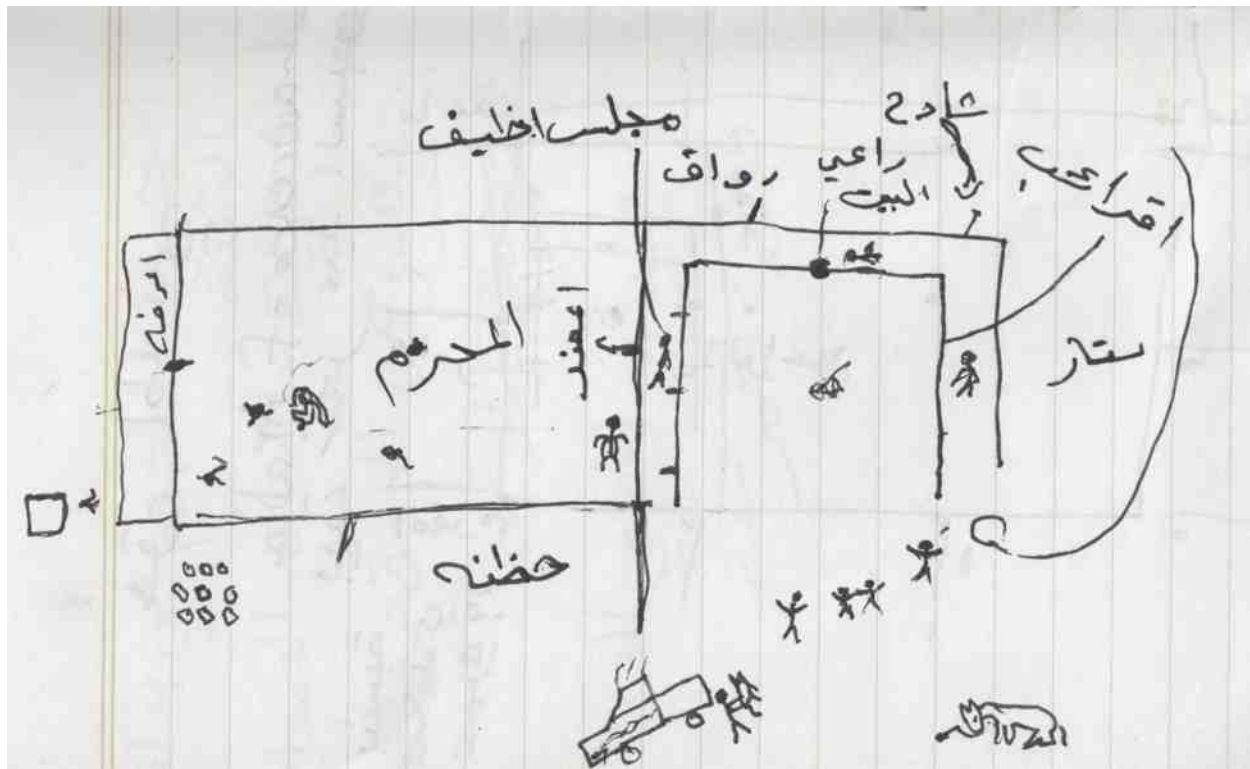


Figure 2: A scurrilous diagram of a neighboring tribe’s tents. It was drawn by a nineteen-year-old to mock them. It features a donkey, pickup truck, a plethora of children, and empty jerry cans of water out front. The *muharrim* is twice the size of the men’s quarters and features chickens running around and an old woman smoking tobacco. The diagram of the men’s section lays out the way status is reflected in seating patterns with the *rā’ al-bayt* (patron/shepherd of the house) in the center facing outwards with his family on the left and his guests

Subsistence, Property and the Gender of Work

2002: 81). It is derived from the ancient Greek *oikos* or house: the original locus of the term. My use of *oikonomy* is meant to re-center economy away from the nation-state and towards the home—at least for the first half of this chapter. This is in keeping with the broader Mediterranean sensibilities I am trying to foreground and should not be taken as any sort of invocation of “The Western Cannon”—most of which was stolen from elsewhere anyway. Of course, the conflation of the two through the term *economy* recalls Foucault’s later work on “biopolitics” and “Governmentality” (1991).

I arose as usual around six in the morning but, instead of going off to work, I set off with my neighbor Abu Aseel for a day of goat herding. He was tall, cheerful and friendly and, having retired from his job as an administrator, enjoyed passing his days tending his flock. He had been suggesting this (half seriously) for a long time and we had always agreed to herd together come spring. The previous evening, we had finalized plans to actually herd goats together the following morning. At seven, I went downstairs to meet him. He was holding the goats while his wife (Um Aseel) milked them and he told me to sit with a glass of tea and wait for him to finish.

Such a marked but simultaneously *partial* division of labor has been historically widespread. Martha Mundy, writing about Yemen in the 1970s, argues, “here as in most highlands, the division of labor stresses the defensive role of men and, correspondingly, the reproductive and domestic roles of women.” In particular, Mundy points out that women in highland Yemen were intimately involved in production but “[did] not direct ploughing, irrigation, or building of irrigation channels and of walls separating fields” (1979:163). This is consistent with my ethnographic data for Jordan. To this day, I regularly see women in the most “conservative” parts of rural Jordan working side-by-side with their husbands, sons, and fathers in the fields or among the livestock. Historically, across the Eurasian landmass, the ability to shelter family members (especially female family members) from such labor²⁴ and cloister them has been a form of *inconspicuous* consumption, which demonstrated indisputable status as members of the nobility. Nonetheless, labor was and is still gendered. For instance, I was repeatedly told that it was shameful (*‘ayb*) for a man to milk an animal²⁵. In many ways, of

²⁴ The cloistering of elite women is a widespread phenomenon that has been written about in different times and places. One particularly rich vein of scholarship on the underlying operative pre-modern social distinctions has focused specifically on women’s inheritance strategies in highland Yemen (Gerholm 1985; Mundy 1979)

²⁵ One common context in which I heard about the shameful of a man milking was when my friends sought out shepherds to tend to animals that they did not have time to watch. Syrian men were preferred for such work precisely because they were willing to milk the animals as well as tend to them.

course, Um Aseel was not so different from a *rabit bayt* or “housewife”²⁶. She relied on her husband for access to money and, by extension, the market while remaining at home in a space that was gendered female. Nonetheless, a normal housewife would be spared this level of intimate involvement in the earliest stages of food production. The more notable economic transformation has been on the male side of the gendered aspects of labor and property relations: Abu Aseel’s ability to use his independently obtained salary and pension to provide food and shelter and render Um Aseel’s intensive involvement in food production less and less integral to the household’s survival. What is unprecedented is the way in which this prerogative was expanded globally to encompass a much larger section of the male population in the post-World War II era²⁷.

The weather was pleasant as we set off with about 10 head of goats. We descended the steep path leading away from the densely-packed settlement and towards Abu Aseel’s grazing areas. We moved through his nephew’s olive trees quickly lest the goats take the opportunity to eat from them. Once we reached the valley, we followed the dry riverbed toward Sid al-mishmish. The grass was lush and green and littered with patches of yellow, purple, red and blue flowers. Various herbs gave off a pleasing smell. Sid al-mishmish itself was a place where the riverbed gave way to a steep limestone cliff followed by a gorge filled with limestone boulders.

²⁶ The term *rabit bayt* is completely absent from my sample of marriage contracts until the 1950s when it suddenly becomes the default designation for women’s employment. In my sample of contracts from the Amman courthouse stretching from 1926-1953, it does not make a single appearance. The majority of women (71%) do not have any occupation recorded, which is primarily indicative of a lack of interest in their economic activities and, relatedly, the assumption that women’s economic activities would likely mirror those of their husbands. The prevalence of the latter assumption is consistent with the fact that most of the remaining women are classed on their marriage contracts (using ditto-marks) as “peasant” or “farmer”—just like their husbands and fathers. Three of the 377 brides were seamstresses. No doubt those three represent a fraction of women who performed such work but their contracts do show some very limited interest on the part of court officials in women’s economic activities during this period. In contrast, nearly 70% of Madaba brides (spanning the years 1953-2011) have their occupation listed as “housewife.” The shift to “housewife” in court documents represents a notable shift not necessarily in women’s labor, but at least in its social recognition.

²⁷ The expansion of a highly gendered conception of wage labor that brought with it a freedom from the constraints of kin bonds is central to the political potency of transnational feminist projects like the “wages for housework” campaign described by Sylvia Federici (2012).

We slowed to allow the goats to begin grazing. Abu Aseel pointed to a patch of wheat about 2-3 meters wide and about 10 meters long and cautioned me to make sure the goats did not eat from it as it belonged to our neighbor Sweilem. A goat would edge toward the wheat. Abu Aseel or I would pick up a rock and toss it at the patch of wheat the goat was eyeing and the goat would back up a little.

I had always thought the shepherd was supposed to protect the livestock. I was surprised to discover that we were actually primarily concerned with protecting the plants from overgrazing. I have to admit that on this point I had paid too much heed to the ways that urbanites have been portraying Bedouins for over a thousand years. As a scholar from an aristocratic Jerusalem family once gleefully exclaimed to me—quoting the 13th century historian ibn Khaldun—*yajid al-‘arab yajid al-kharib* (“where the tribes are found, destruction is found”). There is a common view of pastoralists and other nomads as, if not exactly savages, antithetical to civilization, cultivation and building. The image is of hordes who take what they need and move on, leaving the landscape exhausted. Instead, I was learning about a complex set of overlapping property rights, which rendered the land neither communal nor private: the protection of certain portions was a collective responsibility—but only really due to one person’s insistence²⁸.

Once the goats had moved beyond our neighbor’s wheat, we sat on a boulder and I asked Abu Aseel about the land tenure arrangements in the area and the economics of his goat herding. Facing away from the gorge, he gestured at the steep slopes on either side. He explained that this

²⁸ Andrew Shryock has studied the roots of this confusion in some detail and presents a convincing explanation. He observes that, among the Balga Bedouin, property is generally believed to be obtained by seizing it from another group, being granted it in return for political support or as part of “marital exchanges or as terms of reconciliation between groups in conflict” (1997a: 42). The mistake is that, despite the open acknowledgement that the land was obtained collectively and is constantly defended collectively, various sub-groupings and members can assert much more specific rights—at times by simply working a particular bit of land more intensively.

land was *mushā'* (often glossed as “communal” land) which was technically state-owned (*lil-dawla*) but available for grazing and collecting firewood. He grazed his goats on it for free eight months out of the year. On top of the ridge to our right sat a new farm owned by “the Pasha,” a wealthy capitalist from Amman who was starting to build a mansion. The land had been purchased from Sweilem and presaged the increasing suburbanization of the area as people abandoned barely profitable agricultural ventures and cashed out to the tune of millions of dollars. The valley running perpendicular to us was owned by Abu Aseel’s mothers’ brothers, who rented about 500 square meters to Abu Aseel for 60 dinar²⁹ a year. There he was able to plant enough barley to last his goats two months. During the dead of winter, he relied on feed (*‘alaf*) which he purchased for about 60 dinar. Thus every year, he was able to sustain ten to thirty goats for the cost of JD 120. Given that goats typically reproduce once per year and that a goat could easily fetch JD 200-250 at market at the time, it was a welcome supplement to his pension that kept him active and occupied.

Here, it is important to emphasize that, up to now, I have only spoken of Abu Aseel’s *attitudes* about land rights—not the underlying legal system per se either now or at any time in the past. In fact, property relations have been greatly in flux for the past few hundred years as tribesmen, Ottoman administrators, British colonial officials, Jordanian bureaucrats and World Bank consultants have questioned not only the private or communal nature of various plots of land but also the natures of the categories themselves. Michael Fischbach’s (2000) *State, Society*

²⁹ At the time of research, most people in rural areas made about JD 300 per month--although most owned their own homes. Urbanites tended to make slightly more but not enough to make up for the high rents they had to pay. The official exchange rate was \$1.40 for every Jordanian Dinar. However, goods tended to be cheaper in Jordan so, for instance, a small can of Pepsi would cost JD 0.25, meaning that JD 100 could buy 400 cans of soda assuming no bulk discount. Needless to say, local meat is not one of those cheap goods. One kilo of local meat cost JD 9-11 at the time of research.

and Land in Jordan is a thorough study of the documentary evidence³⁰ which describes an Ottoman land regime in which very little land outside of urban areas was private, freehold land (*mulki*) and the vast majority of land was the property of the state (*mīrī*): it was there to be improved and used by subjects in return for taxes. By working the land, Ottoman subjects gained rights to the fruits of the land (*taşarrif* or usufruct³¹) but the “neck” (*ar-ruqba*: ultimate ownership) continued to reside with the state and served as the basis for taxation.

While this was beginning to change in the late nineteenth century due to the *Tanzimāt* reforms of the late Ottoman empire, Fischbach argues that it was only with the onset of British rule that property relations in Jordan’s agricultural regions really started to shift. He claims that, for the British, there were “two fundamental assumptions. The first was that all land was owned by someone. The second was that land should be managed efficiently in order to maximize its productive potential” (2000: 79). The cadastral surveys the British conducted in the wake of their conquest of the Ottoman Empire sought to institutionalize private property with a precision that had never been attempted before³². All cultivated land was to be assigned by the state to individuals—even if the ownership of uncultivated land remained ambiguous. To be fair, early results were quite partial. Oral historical accounts of bridewealth in the post-Ottoman era are full of examples of land transfers that were not recorded in either government-issued marriage contracts or government-issued land deeds (*sanads*). In fact, to this day the privatization and

³⁰ Lars Wahlin (1988; 1984) and Shryock (1997a) have questioned the degree to which Ottoman records can be trusted—where they still exist (Fischbach points out that the land records for southern Jordan were burned during an uprising in Karak in 1910 (2000: 31)). The case for the veracity of the later records is stronger, but there is probably a degree to which the British cadastral survey of the 1930s both reconfirmed the existing situation (cf. Shryock 1997a) but also became a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. By simultaneously registering property to discrete individuals, effectively putting a stop to raiding and then distributing titles, government jobs and education to many of those same individuals, the British probably tended to ossify social distinctions, labor relations and property rights.

³¹ My neighbors told me that, according to the *sunna* (the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammed), it is permissible to pick fruit from any fruit-bearing plant on anyone’s land as long as it is eaten immediately and not taken away.

³² Mitchell (2002) provides an excellent account of the British cadastral survey of Egypt’s Nile Delta in Chapter 2 of *Rule of Experts* (“Principles True in Every Country”), which emphasizes similar sensibilities.

commodification of land in Jordan remains a partial—if increasingly successful—project, which the World Bank, United Nations and Housing Corporation continue to promote with mixed results.

Abu Aseel's use of the word *mushā'* (so-called communal land) and its conflation with state-ownership (*mīrī* land) is telling and reflects the conflicts which have marked the shift from tents, grains, and goats to concrete houses and government jobs in rural Jordan. Tribes have repeatedly fought to maintain what they call their communal (*mushā'*) lands while the Jordanian State has argued that these lands, due to lack of recognizable cultivation (at least from the perspective of sedentary urbanites and farmers), can be appropriated by the state and privatized as necessary³³. Of course people like Abu Aseel occupy land in a different way: they range over a wider area extracting less from each zone they pass through. They seize, they grift, they submit and, if necessary, they pay. Such people do not really concern themselves with the finer points of property law. They confront land as both individual and collective; public and private. As the day wore on, we moved towards the valley running perpendicular to Sid Al-mishmish. I noticed Abu Aseel keeping the goats away from particular shrubs which had been over-grazed or “tired” (*ta'abān*) in his words. Around eleven o'clock, we headed back to the house to water the goats and eat breakfast. Abu Aseel brought out tea, fresh goat cheese, olives, hummus, and eggs. In contrast to Abu Aseel's labor, I could only be indirectly aware of his wife's contributions. I happened to know that Um Aseel made her own cheese, pickled her own olives and kept chickens. Yet her labor was, if not quite invisible, certainly not particularly visible to me no

³³ Controversies over the privatization of communal lands tend to only receive passing references in the English media (Ziad Abu Rish's 2012 interview with Tariq Tell in *Jadaliyya* is typical). For a sympathetic account of the government's position, see Ranyia Al-Hindi's (2012) article in *Al-rai*, “Business man releases road map to solve the problem of communal lands.” For a more cynical account, see the unattributed article on Gerasa News (2012), “What's the story of the lands which the Kuwaiti ambassador and the brother of Kilani [president of the board of the Amman Municipality] bought!!”

matter how much her family appreciated it. In the next section, I will turn from my discussion of the gendering of property and labor to a discussion of the relationship between gender, space, visibility, and interiority.

The Seed (Al-Bizr)

After weeks of hearing some friends of mine talking about their neighbor, ‘Authba, an elderly woman with a reputation for being a character, they insisted on taking me to visit her. We hailed the men from the road as we walked by their land and they demanded we come and drink tea. Inside the tent, the dirt floor was covered with a brightly colored plastic mat and a number of upholstered foam mattresses. I explained that I was doing research on customs and traditions around marriage and made small talk. Soon enough, ‘Authba burst into the room with her scarf over her face and declared, “I hear there’s a foreigner/stranger (*ajnabī*) here!” I made a slow gesture to stand up while putting my hand over my heart to greet her. She let forth a volley of effusive praise and we all laughed at the mock sycophancy. I repeated my introduction and explained my research focus on marriage. She immediately launched into a story: “In the old days, the man and the woman never saw each other until their wedding night.” She paused for dramatic effect. “So on my wedding night, I was alone in the tent and this man walks up and I covered my whole face except for one eye.” As she did this, she revealed one of her eyes. She continued—raising her pitch by a few octaves, “I said, ‘who are you?’” She dramatically lowered her voice as she let her scarf down, “I am your husband, girl!” Everyone burst out laughing again. She asked me what I wanted to know and repeatedly proclaimed her “expertise” while gesturing with her scarf. In this manner, she held court as she bantered with my friends and her sons. Eventually, I asked her about the names of the various parts of the tent. To this day, I am not sure what she said, but everyone burst out laughing. The men were too bashful to repeat the

precise word she had used, but they explained to me that it was a word for the gap between the *sāḥa* (the piece of fabric separating the putatively masculine *shiqq* from the *muḥarrim*) and the *ruwaq* (the back of the tent). It was clear that she had likened the gap to the human pudendum, a clever play on the anthropomorphization of the tent and an extension of what one would expect to find behind the tent's "hands" and between its "legs." My friends would later refer to it as simply *al-bizr* (the seed). As I pondered its possible significance, a teenage girl's voice rang out from the other side of the divide, "Mom! Your TV show is on!" 'Authba yelled back, "what do I want with my TV when I have a foreigner right here!" That was the first time I realized the laughter was coming from both sides of the tent.

This highlights the inherent difficulties and hazards of rendering the interior exterior and the invisible visible. In this case, it is handled expertly by 'Authba, a gifted performer. She can turn it into a joke. However, as we will see, this is not always the case. Such renderings can be fraught with misunderstandings, arguments, and violence. As I have been intimating, this is not merely a Jordanian problem either. In "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," Mikhail Bakhtin goes so far as to argue the drive to exteriorize and render visible the interior and the invisible is central to the development of literature in general and the novel in particular. I would argue that ethnography itself is ancillary to this preoccupation. Bakhtin argues that, "the public and rhetorical unity of the human image is to be found in the contradiction between it and its purely private content... Although personal life had already become private and persons individualized, although this sense of the private had begun to infiltrate literature in ancient times, still, it was only able to develop forms adequate to itself in the small everyday genres, the comedy and novella of common life" (Bakhtin 1981: 110). In the essay, Bakhtin attempts to illustrate the "historico-literary process" through which various forms of time-space have

developed in literature and the arts from the Greek Romance to the Rabelasian novel³⁴. It is important to note, however, that we have not yet arrived at the liberal notion of public and private, which shifts markedly by dividing market from state and associating the former with the private and the latter with the public. Here, the dialectics of interiority and exteriority, visibility and invisibility still predominate.

Concrete Relations: Building the Cinderblock House

As an ethnographer, and even more so as a male ethnographer, I was always acutely aware of this literary conundrum which Bakhtin has hit upon. When the action was masculine, visible, exterior and collective, I was well-equipped to narrate it. But such action failed to exhaust the ethnographically relevant data. Much like generations of World Bank consultants, colonial administrators and Jordanian bureaucrats, I found myself compelled to consider (if not necessarily understand completely) that which was feminine, invisible, interior and individual—what Bakhtin would call “private.” As he observes, “by its very nature this private life does not create a place for the contemplative man, for that ‘third person’ who might be in a position to meditate on this life, to judge and evaluate it. This life takes place between four walls and for only two pairs of eyes.” Instead, in the following section I will focus on the construction of that

³⁴ While Bakhtin specifically concerns himself with the development of these processes in “the various histories of generic heterogeneity in the European novel,” the distinction is artificial and should most certainly include the literature of *all* western Asia—not just Europe—as well as North Africa. His extensive use of *The Golden Ass* and Augustine’s *Confessions* merely emphasizes the narrowness of his focus on Europe: both works were written by North Africans. Likewise, his discussions of medieval chivalric romances could be compared profitably with coeval *udhri* (chaste) romances of Arabia and Persia like *Layla and Majnun*. The basic plot of *Layla and Majnun* concerns a semi-historical figure who falls deeply in love with a girl named Layla. His infatuation leads him to loudly and mawkishly proclaim his love for Layla in poetry—mentioning her by name. People begin to talk about his strange behavior and label him crazy (*majnūn*). The epithet sticks. When he proposes marriage, the girl’s father cannot abide the idea of his daughter marrying a crazy person. Growing out of the oral culture of the Arabian Peninsula, the story reaches its point of greatest elaboration in the Persian court culture of the thirteenth century in the able hands of the poet Nizami, who draws out its mystical themes by highlighting the parallel between Majnun’s devotion to his beloved and the ascetic’s devotion to God. Nizami’s Majnun wanders the desert and only encounters Layla in secret but *chaste* encounters. When her husband dies, Majnun is so focused on his idealized image of her that he runs away and she dies of grief (Seyed-Gohrab 2009). For a discussion of visibility, invisibility, interiority and exteriority in the earlier Arabic version in *Kitab Al-Aghani*, see Ruqayya Khan’s (2000) “On the Significance of Secrecy in Medieval Arabic Romances.”

space “between four walls” of interiority and invisibility: the home. Yet while my primary focus will be on the logistics of actually building a house from cement, steel, water and gravel, I hope to use the concrete house’s juxtaposition with the pastoralist *oikonomy* of goats and tents to highlight the peculiarities of recent shifts in property, labor and spatial relations—specifically with regards to gender and the creation of the conditions of possibility for male individuality and autonomy within a market context.

Previously, homes were a form of women’s wealth bound up in a subsistence economy where money played a relatively small role in mediating day-to-day social relations³⁵. With the adoption of concrete houses, the home became men’s wealth as males abandoned agriculture, joined the army and bureaucracy (or went abroad to work in industries like construction), and increasingly used their *personal* salaries to pay for the materials and labor necessary to build them³⁶. As British and American military advisors and development consultants poured into Jordan in the mid-twentieth century and set about “modernizing” the country, women became increasingly interiorized, invisible and distant from economic power. As we will see in the next chapter, part of this involved development consultants becoming convinced that there were “individual owner-builders” who needed to be empowered through the creation of a “private” housing market. The elusiveness of actual individual owner-builders has not served as any obstacle here. Despite the fact that house construction remains a collective endeavor concerned

³⁵ Because weaving was effectively dead as a local pastime in the various areas I have lived and worked in Jordan, I can only access this history through interviews with old women and the work of other ethnographers. The best account of “world construction in weaving” (1986: 221) that I have encountered is Brinkley Messick’s “Subordinate Discourse: Women, Weaving, and Gender Relations in North Africa.”

³⁶ In *Colonial Effects*, Joseph Massad (2001) thoroughly documents the fact that the British and, subsequently, the Jordanian government have sought to use the provision of military jobs to Bedouins as a tool for sedentarization and the creation of Foucauldian national subjects. Massad is particularly reliant on the paper trail surrounding the exploits of a British administrator by the name of Glubb Basha. To this day, the man enjoys a good deal of renown across Jordan where, by all accounts, he established himself as a sort of stranger-king for years at the interstices of the British Empire, the Hashemite Monarchy and the upheaval of World War II before being thrown out of the country by the late King Hussein in 1956).

with fashioning the physical house as a corporate *body* for the married couple and their progeny, Jordan's political economy has nonetheless increasingly been designed to serve "him"³⁷—the individual owner-builder.

'For a Relative'

In order to have housing while doing research, I made an agreement with a friend who I will call Harun to build a two-room apartment for the purposes of learning about house construction with the understanding that his teenage son would add on extra rooms once he had finished his studies and found a job. Then he would be able to get married and move in. Effectively, the agreement was that, instead of trying to find a place to rent, I would spend that money to build a new structure. Based on previous research, I was confident that it could be done for less than JD 5000. I had yet to begin work at the HUDC archives, where I would learn of their decades-long project to empower the "individual owner-builder" to build their own homes—and I would probably have scoffed at the premise of someone building their own house alone even if I had not attempted it first. Yet over the course of the house's construction I would learn just how collective house construction remains in rural Jordan to this day.

The process began normally enough by soliciting bids from various subcontractors (*mu'alims*). Harun and I settled on the lowest bidder: an Egyptian by the name of Ahmed who agreed to organize all of the labor of constructing the pillars, roof, and walls for JD 700³⁸. We began by going to meet with him in a downtrodden section of Madaba city. He flagged us down on the street and took us into an alley with a strong, rotten stench. We headed up the stairs to the

³⁷ The use of a male gendered pronoun here is purposeful and reflects the gendered assumptions of those who invented the category of the "individual owner-builder." For more on this, consult the discussion of the category in "Private Housing Suppliers Survey" of the *National Housing Strategy* (Shelter Unit 1987: 10-26).

³⁸ The other bids were JD 800, JD 850, JD 900, JD 1200 and JD1500. The latter bid was fully premised on the buyer having a whole year to collect the money to pay. In effect, it was a loan as much as an offer to work as a contractor.

second floor where we found about thirty pairs of flip-flops and shoes strewn about. Ahmed led us into a dilapidated room with a TV, some worn mattresses, and a few mass-produced plaques bearing verses of the Qur'an. A number of young (and not-so-young) men sat around. Two sat listening to music on their mobile phones through headphones while an older man fiddled with his prayer beads and another young man flipped through satellite TV channels. A bottle of orange soda quickly appeared and the men began to discuss the materials that would be needed. Harun presented a piece of paper that another foreman had written for him. Ahmed spoke at a rapid pace, swerving between his Mansouri dialect (they were all from the Egyptian city of Mansour) and an approximation of Jordanian Arabic. They went through the various quantities of materials one by one as Ahmed fired off multiplication problems. He agreed with the various figures and launched into a brief discussion of steel and cement procurement. After no more than ten minutes, everyone had finished soda, concluded business, and taken their leave.

Harun explained on the way back that he did not trust the foreman at all. Sure, Ahmed was building a house for a cousin's nephew, but the foreman was totally transient. On the bright side, Harun reckoned himself too poor to be swindled. He claimed that the biggest problem was that workmen would steal materials. This was why the family would have to be careful to buy only as much as he needed and make sure it was delivered and supervised in such a way that thievery was kept to a minimum. The first step would be to get the steel. He would buy it by the ton in the form of a kit that included everything from rebar to nails and wire. The next day, once the steel frames were set up, the merchant would have the sand, gravel and cement delivered. Harun was able to provide some evidence of a need to be wary: a Qatari had built himself a home in the area without ever visiting and the neighbors reported seeing trucks coming every night to take away truck after truck of materials.

The next day, we went to the largest cement dealer in town to price materials. Most notable was the fact that, in the last six months, three new cement factories had opened and the state monopoly was now a thing of the past (Lafarge had been the sole purveyor of cement in the country for the last decade on the basis of its ownership of the two formerly state-owned plants). Harun was taken aback to discover that the “Cement of the South” (which he and his family had relied upon for decades and considered better than the cement made at the northern plant) no longer existed as such. However, he was mollified when the trader explained that the government had introduced an industry-wide quality rating. Yet while the trader was quoting the going price for cement paid for in cash, such a distributor would be unlikely to offer good terms for a loan. So with the materials priced, Harun went to buy the materials from his friend, neighbor, and distant uncle Abu Hashim. He generously quoted the same prices as the Madaba distributors and agreed to deliver the materials bit by bit on an installment plan³⁹.

Abu Hashim’s store was emblazoned with a large green sign advertising Lafarge cement and the words “building supplies” (*muwād al-buna*) written in Arabic. To the left of his store were hundreds of bags of carefully stacked cement and down the road there was a cinderblock factory run by an Egyptian man supplying Abu Hashim’s customers with blocks—which could be purchased from Abu Hashim on credit. The interior of the store came in three sections: these included a storage area for white cement and an office for receiving customers with wood paneling, a small desk and a chair (perhaps 6-8 square meters—very cramped). Finally, there was the shop itself, which overflowed with tools and basic supplies for plumbing, painting and

³⁹ Our need to pay for the initial materials on an installment plan was related to a complicated mix-up with my bank in the United States (TCF), which decided to cancel my ATM card without informing me. Harun was able to cover some, but not all, of the shortfall because he did not have a lot of liquid assets. However, such headaches are probably typical when people need a lot of cash at once. It may be difficult to coordinate all factors without such debt. In any event, there was nothing more ordinary than one’s building projects eventually involving Abu Hashim—although I should emphasize that it was very generous of Abu Hashim to offer Harun and me credit on such good terms.

wiring. Out front, there was a wall of paint cans about a meter high and two meters long. Atop the paint cans sat a water cooler and a thermos of Arabic coffee. Abu Hashim could almost always be found out front. He was a light skinned man with a light brown mustache, kind eyes, and a headscarf. He always wore trousers and a long-sleeved dress shirt, which would be rolled up to reveal his muscular arms. Next to him sat his assistant: an Egyptian youth who served coffee, carried supplies, and drove the truck for deliveries.

There were two reasons to buy from Abu Hashim: proximity and his willingness to accept interest-free debts in a Muslim community where *riba* is frowned upon. While the debate about *riba* and its relationship to interest and usury is complex and beyond the scope of this chapter, a few points are key. Specialists on the topic like the anthropologist Bill Maurer are absolutely correct that Christian connotations render these words less than ideal as potential translations (2001: 9). Yet at the same time, these words are ubiquitous whenever the subject of *riba* arises in the literature on Islamic finance and they are more often judged to be similar rather than different—despite the objections of certain politically connected religious authorities. Usually, there is some agreement that *riba* includes the exchange of a smaller amount of money at one point in time for a larger amount of money later. Whatever *riba* actually is, the sayings of the Prophet Muhammed are clear on its permissibility: “God curses the man who takes *riba*, the man who pays *riba*, the two witnesses and the scribe.”

When I asked about his customers, Abu Hashim readily mentioned the importance of proximity but neglected to mention the role of money lending. As we sat one day, he told me what I suspected: with Ramadan approaching in the midst of the building season, an initial burst of activity had given away to rather slow-going. There was no *ḥarika* (movement). He explained, “Summer is a busy season because people come back from the gulf and they want to build. Kids

are out of school so they can help.” He predicted a flurry of activity once Ramadan was over. Of course, it would be difficult to make money in the building supply trade if everyone offered such soft terms for loans as Abu Hashim had. The following example represents a different side of the business:

The customer arrived and asked for an *‘awāma* (a sort of plastic shutoff valve for water tanks). The Egyptian assistant ran inside to find the parts and put it together. The owner asked for five dinar and the man pleaded, “for your relative...” The owner muttered about it being difficult and the man accepted the *‘awāma* and left—presumably with the intention of paying later. After he had left I asked, “where is he from?” The owner pointed across the street: the house with the green windows.” He then added, “he’s military so he gets paid at the end of the month.”

Of course, most people’s need for credit was less urgent than that of the man with a broken water tank, but a steady stream of people had enough of a need to build that they found their way to such provincial suppliers. If they could pay in cash, the customers of such establishments would be in a better bargaining position and would likely go to buy their supplies in the nearest town from the main suppliers. But since they could not, they had to pay a premium to such local proprietors—who inevitably knew exactly how every customer fit into the local kinship structure, what their job was, whether they would pay back their debts, and when they would be able to pay them back. In this sense, the building supply store was primarily a money lending operation—although one that was fully in accordance with Islamic law since it was based on an exchange of material goods for money—not money for money.

Enter “the Egyptians”

Obviously, the figure of Abu Hashim forces us to reconsider the idea of an individual owner-builder. At the time of my research, such building supply stores were virtually ubiquitous—and they all relied on the same business model centered on monetizing one’s kinship bonds and meticulously precise local knowledge by lending money in the manner with

which Jordanian Muslims were most comfortable. However, kinship remains integral to the construction of houses in a number of other highly significant ways. Despite most Jordanian men having some ability to use cash to hire transient migrant labor, the local construction industry in Jordan depends on the labor inputs of the entire family to provide proper food, supervision, and coordination. Furthermore, as construction shifts from the coarseness of gravel and steel to the softer and smoother surfaces of stucco, tile and paint, the labor becomes less anonymous and disposable and becomes increasingly based on the intimate ties of kinship. Yet even in the earliest phases when dealing with foreign guestworkers, there were attempts by all involved to take some of the anomic edge off of the relations—most notably through shared commensality.



Figure 3: Workmen are laying the roof of the apartment. It would eventually consist of a 4x4 meter kitchen (on the left) and a 4x4 meter room on the right with a 2x2 meter hallway and a 2x2 meter bathroom. During the second phase, Harun's family added three more rooms in front.

The workers (hereafter referred to in the problematic, othering, local idiom of “the Egyptians”) showed up about forty-five minutes late at 7:45. Because it was summer and Harun, his sons, and the rest of the family had to take care of the morning’s harvest no matter what, I had been charged with being at the site to receive the workers with tea and provide anything else they might need. Immediately, the requests started flowing. They seemed to have shown up with no tools whatsoever with the exception of two devices for cutting and bending steel rods. They first asked for a hammer (which I went and found) but then clarified that what they really wanted was a sledgehammer (or perhaps *shaqūsh* meant sledgehammer in their dialect rather than generic hammer). They wanted to know where the “owner of the house” was and all I could say was that he was on his way. While I was looking for a sledgehammer and trying to make tea, they announced their displeasure with the nails. I went over and served them tea. One man was on the roof demolishing the cinderblocks that sat over the steel rebar of the columns from the first floor. Because they were building on the roof of a preexisting structure, there was no need for blueprints or consultations. The workers were simply extending the existing columns⁴⁰. The other two were cutting the lengths of steel to form the columns. After drinking the tea and granting that I could (if nothing else) make a good cup of tea, they moved to the roof where they rigged up a table to bend the short lengths of steel into rectangles. They would take six long bars and twelve rectangles to make a column. After spacing the rectangles along the length of the six rods, they would use steel wire to attach four of the rods at the corners and the remaining two in the middle of the long sides. While the foreman worked on this task, his two assistants hammered boards together to make the molds for the concrete they would pour the next day.

⁴⁰ The only question of design that came up while working with the Egyptian crew was where to put the wall between the hallway and bathroom. Harun simply used his foot to draw a line in the debris on the ground and the block-layer’s assistant cleared a path for the wall.

By this point, it was about thirty minutes into the process of building the house and, as I found, workmen would need at least this much attention for the remainder of the process. When they requested a broom, I once again ran next door to Harun's brother. As I was on my way, a man began honking loudly because a truck was parked in the road. I said I did not know who owned the truck, so he kept honking until the owner emerged from Mahmud's house. I went over to ask about the broom. This time, I was ordered to sit down and drink tea as they sent a son to deliver the broom. They asked, "how are the Egyptians with you?" I whined that they seemed to think I was a building supply store and recounted the whole list of things they had requested to Mahmud's guest. Just then, Harun called to ask how many Egyptians there were so he could bring the right amount of breakfast. I said three and then told him about the problem with the nails. I explained that, from what I could tell, they had nails that were short and thin along with nails that were long and wide but that they wanted nails that were long and thin. Mahmud told me what such nails were called and added "just like Harun's" at which point they started laughing hysterically at the idea of treating nails as a phallic symbol.

Harun showed up with a breakfast of bread, two kinds of beans ("Egyptians love beans," he said) and tomatoes. He told me to make sure I did not feed them until 10:30 lest they want another meal. He presented me with the nails and left to take care of his other business. At 10:30, I presented the food and began to make tea. It was clear to Harun (without me having said a word) that everyone was annoyed. The Egyptians wanted a ten-year-old who would snap-to and run errands for them and bring a steady supply of tea. The problem was that I was actually older than them and therefore could not be bossed around the same way. Harun promised to send his ten-year-old son the next day to ease things along.

All of these requests for food, tea and tools were actually integral to the logic of immigration. They would stock up on caffeine and calories at the employer's expense and then go back home in the evening to sleep—saving almost all of the money for their Jordanian work visas and their own marriages back home. After all, they had come all of this way for the opportunity to make JD 15 as laborers or perhaps JD 20 or JD 25 as a skilled ironworker (*hadād*), carpenter (*najār*), block-layer (*tubanji*) or stucco-worker (*kāsir*). Mahmud and Harun understood this, but did not necessarily like it. Mahmud could both complain about the constant requests and hard-nosed negotiating stance and then say, “what can they do? They need a thousand dinar a year for the visa to work here so Harun here can draw a pension from the government and sit here laughing and smoking his water pipe.” However, they were less sanguine about the sudden insistence of the workmen a few hours later that they would need more cement. Harun exclaimed, “just because I wear a headscarf, they think I’m stupid.” He was convinced that they were inflating the amount of cement needed in an attempt to get work for one of their friends loading and unloading the extra materials. Nonetheless, in one day, they had erected eight columns and laid the mold for the staircase. They would begin pouring the cement the next afternoon.

Ahmed showed up the next day with more workmen and a cement mixer, which they used to speed the process of pouring the pillars along. Two weeks later, they were back building a mold for the roof to be poured into, placing cement blocks into it, and fashioning the steel rebar or *‘aṣāb* (nerves). With that, the roof or “back” (*zuhur*) of the house was complete. After the roof, we had cinderblocks delivered and the *tubanji* set to work laying them along with his assistant. In three weeks, Ahmed and his workers had fashioned the steel rebar, poured the pillars and the roof, and built the walls: what my neighbors were often fond of referring to as the “bone”

(*'azim*). Rather than continue with a step-by-step account of house building, I want to focus on the ways in which, as the project wore on and we began to work on the skin (*jilda*)⁴¹, the workers became more and more intimately related to the community. Increasingly, Harun did not solicit bids from strangers so much as he turned to people with whom he had extensive preexisting ties.

Exteriorities

I could go on for pages about the extensive supervision, support and assistance which the various workers expected as they built the house. There is no way they could have worked so diligently and so continuously without the constant supply of water, caffeine, food, and tools—not to mention the frequent need for Harun's sons, nephews, and me to move multiple cubic meters of building materials (cement, tiles, sand, and cinderblocks) into place in preparation for the next phase of building. In between the various stages of the process, there was a need to water (*asgī*) the fresh green (*akhḍar*) cement to help cure it. There was nothing out of the ordinary about this either. If anything, it was strange that there was someone as shorn of kin bonds as myself caught up in such a project. Virtually everyone in the neighborhood helped at one point or other. Much as I have carried cinderblocks, made tea, supervised workers and watered cement for my Jordanian friends and neighbors, they proved even more generous when I attempted my own building project.

With the steel and concrete in place, the men of the village became more and more actively engaged in the construction of the house. Harun and Mahmud's sons set to work doing the electrical and plumbing work. They worked with hammers and chisels carving out a path through the concrete cinderblocks for the wires and pipes. They had already run plastic tubing for the wires through the roof before pouring the cement so they just had to link up the holes they

⁴¹ One extended family I was friends with took this metaphor to its logical conclusion and talked about “dressing” (*lābisa*) the house by adding a stone exterior.

had carved out for the electrical outlets with the ceiling while linking up the holes they had made for the plumbing fixtures with the floor. They would take a healthy swing at the cinderblock, causing the lining of one of the holes in the cinderblock to crumble as it gave way. Then, they would take the chisel and work their way through the solid concrete separating the holes that ran to the floor. However, the mere fact that one was male was not necessarily sufficient to embody this particular sort of masculinity. When I tried to help, I managed to scrape about half of my knuckles to the point of bleeding as the chisel gave way with unexpected force, sending my left hand careening into the rough *hajar* (concrete or “stone”). I managed to do the same to my right hand by misjudging the angle as I swung at the chisel. I also developed some nasty blisters on my palm and the inside of my thumb from the motion of the hammer, no doubt exacerbated by the fact that the handle was made out of steel. Attempting to keep up, I wrapped my hand in medical tape such that each blister was covered. Needless to say, my body was not accustomed to such work. As one of the Egyptian workers had exclaimed with wonder one day as they took turns feeling my hands, “they’re soft and fair like a woman’s.” Eventually, Mahmud’s son Muhammed (age eighteen) arrived. He was faster and better at it than the younger youths. He was also less shy about breaking through to the other side. He told me it was the *kasīr*’s (stucco worker’s) job to “clean up.” Once the wiring and plumbing was in place, they mixed up some cement on the floor and smeared it over the channels they had chiseled out, making sure everything was at least somewhat flush.

As construction neared completion, the labor involved became less and less anomic and more and more driven by bonds of kinship and modes of affiliation based on long-term exchange relations. As Mahmud and his sons helped with the wiring and plumbing, Harun made arrangements with the *kasīr*: the person charged with adding the *kasāra* (the final layer of

concrete or stucco) to the exterior and interior of the house. Here, Harun had much more specific ideas about who he planned to hire. His village had been hiring people from a particular family in Syria to do their stucco for over a decade—largely because they were willing to do the work and then take payment in monthly installments. This would probably be one of the first jobs in the village for which they were paid in cash. Next, Harun’s friend ‘Abed did the tile (his brother Mahmud was very skilled with tile but Harun had already asked a lot of him and his sons) while Harun was able to get the windows from a business associate who ran a *jama‘iyya* (a kind of charitable society or NGO) which owned a window factory, a carpentry shop and a blacksmith’s shop.

The Syrian stucco workers in particular related to the village in a manner that only a specific kind of long-term indebtedness can engender. Unlike the Egyptian team, which involved a shifting cast of characters who tended to be standoffish and quiet, the Syrian stucco workers more or less insisted that the family watch them work. When they finally arrived (a day late), they said they would only be working two hours that day—but would be looking forward to lunch, naturally. It was hard to argue so long as Harun’s brother and a number of his cousins still owed them for work they had long since completed. The assistant mixed the “mud” or *tīn* (which consisted of water, finely ground limestone—*nā‘ima*—and cement) and, occasionally, helped his uncle apply it to the walls. They watered the cement and set to work, covering a palate with the mud and flinging it at the wall with a trowel. Once they had covered the walls with patches of this mixture, they applied thicker swathes in bars on each wall so that, once it had dried, they could get an even coating. When the mud had been applied, they used *marayna* (thick beams) to level it. Through multiple coats and the use of increasingly fine sponges, the texture became smoother and smoother.



Figure 4: Shared commensality. Food, water and tea were crucial to the process of construction. I once calculated that building a house in Jordan required 100 grams of sugar and 2.25 tea bags per square meter.

The addition of stucco represented the completion of the exterior of the exterior and the exterior of the interior. Harun here opted for the most utilitarian finish for his son's future home despite the fact that some of his neighbors opted for paint (inside and/or outside) while others opted for a limestone "face" (*wijih*) for the house. Here, there was a clear status competition in which people were vying for superiority in a couple of different ways simultaneously. A house could be judged on the basis of the stone's quality⁴². At the same time, there were people who only put stone on the front side of their house or on all of the sides except the back. Some people

⁴² High quality limestone is harder and does not turn brownish grey over time like the cheaper, softer stone.

only put stone around their windows and on the corners. Within, Harun once again opted for the simple, durable and inexpensive materials favored by the rural Jordanian working class: concrete floor tiles, wooden internal doors, a steel exterior door, and aluminum windows. As Harun was fond of saying, “everyone cuts *ḥalāwa* [a sugary sesame paste] according to the size of his tooth” (others preferred to describe the calculus of investing in houses by saying “everyone extends their legs according to the size of their mattress”). The point was that, to some degree, houses seemed to provide almost endless opportunities for improvement so long as the money was there. While Harun’s preferred proverb subtly critiqued the overindulgence of some of his neighbors, others framed things in a language of compromise and making do with less. Among the wealthy, houses are increasingly embellished with elaborate plaster (*jibsīn*) designs, wallpaper, curtains, carpets, and overstuffed couches—especially in guest rooms.

These forms of surfacing, smoothing and softening constitute the interior exteriors, which form the backdrop to so much of the stagecraft of hospitality in Jordan. While such stagecraft is clearly discernible in migrant flophouses, construction sites, and building supply stores, it finds its fullest expression in the houses that these other sites seek to actualize. As Andrew Shryock and Sally Howell have argued, contemporary hospitality and “house politics” are “a mode of domination in which families... serve as instruments and objects of power” (2001: 248). This is a distinctly masculine form of power that relies on the invisible but essential work of females and subordinate males to properly execute the performance. It involves the creation of “tactical facades” for “projecting, in a very private place, a very public reputation” (Shryock and Howell 2001:255). However, this is a notion of public and private which has far more in common with the notion of public and private which I have used Bakhtin to epitomize than it does with the notion of public and private that will be in evidence in the next chapter. In chapter two, attention

will turn away from the activities of households and towards the activities of technocrats working for a broad range of development organizations including the UN, World Bank, and the HUDC.

In the latter half of the chapter, the focus has been almost exclusively on the relationship between gender and the emergent opposition between public and private as it relates to labor and the gendered space of both the home and the home in relationship to exterior male work spaces which have grown more important as market relations have become more important. In the meantime, property relations have fallen into the background. Yet they have not been forgotten. Their erasure is more a reflection of the ethnographic context I have been describing: in rural Jordan, residents generally had strong claims to property, which were couched in a language of indigeneity. Such claims were legitimated by a nationalistic discourse which often portrayed those who hailed from Palestine as less deserving of the rights of citizenship (property, access to government jobs, and the ability to organize politically without the fear of persecution) than their compatriots from the east bank⁴³. Sure, it took Harun months after finishing construction to get a building permit⁴⁴, but no one ever had to seriously consider the possibility that they might be dispossessed. Not all people were or are so lucky. For many Jordanians (especially those of Palestinian descent), property relations continue to be a constant source of sorrow (due to the memory of past dispossession) and anxiety (due to the fear of future dispossession). More importantly, housing for those who do not build on inherited land is fundamentally different from what I have been describing. While it is a real stretch for most Jordanians to assemble the

⁴³ Shryock (1997b) and Massad (2001) offer the fullest monograph-length accounts of the relationship and tensions between east bankers and west bankers from the perspectives of the former and latter respectively.

⁴⁴ We finally succeeded in obtaining the permit in November despite the fact that Harun has been cultivating the surveyor for years with food, free tanks of water and small “loans” of a few JD. Harun finally got the house registered by showing up at the surveyor’s office at the municipality building and insisting that he get in Harun’s truck and go to the governor’s office to sign off on the paperwork. This is apparently typical since my more subversively-minded friends at the HUDC (upon learning about my exploits in construction) responded, “sure you managed to build a house last year, but did you manage to get the building permit yet?”

money to build a house, those who lack land are even more dependent for housing on the help of outside institutions like banks, the HUDC and, increasingly, large rental companies.

Chapter 2: The Housing Market

The 1970s and 1980s constituted a crucial time period for the future of housing in Jordan during which large swaths of tribally controlled land were transformed into partible commodities which could be bought, sold, and circulated due to a sophisticated regime of registration, zoning and infrastructure provision. This process of commoditization is at the heart of this chapter. Adopting a sort of “methodological fetishism” (Appadurai 1991), I will show how this particular regime of value came into being by focusing on an international group of planners⁴⁵ who sought to fix what they perceived as Jordan’s housing problem. To do this, I will be drawing on Appadurai and Kopytoff’s dialectic of singularization and commoditization because I find it deeply consonant with what these planners were attempting. After reviewing some of the literature to clarify how these organizations operate and how I became involved with them and their reports, I will explain how the interaction between their policies and the political tensions between Palestinian refugees and the residents of the east bank were crucial in catalyzing a shift in the dominant regime of value in relationship to land, building materials and, ultimately, housing.

In Search of the Individual Owner-Builder

Needless to say, the Jordan of the reports would be almost unrecognizable to most Jordanians. As Michael Goldman (2005) makes clear in his ethnography of the World Bank, *Imperial Nature*, knowledge production at the organization is largely beholden to the

⁴⁵ These planners moved between private consultancies, various ministries, the Housing Corporation, the Amman Municipality, the Housing Bank, USAID and the World Bank.

requirements of providing global financial markets with guaranteed high-yield credit-based investments. The bank has neither the time nor the resources to focus on anything other than generating returns for its investors in the most efficient way possible. Thus major divergences between bank reports and anything which local people might identify as “reality” should not be at all surprising. For example, where the oral historical register in Jordan at the time of research was largely dominated by this narrative of tensions between Palestinian refugees and their Jordanian hosts, the country’s two World Bank-financed National Housing Strategies (from 1987 and 1996 respectively) went out of their way to avoid wading into the controversy⁴⁶--all while making proposals which would ultimately transform the relationship between the two groups. In the discussion that follows, I will be relying heavily on Goldman’s account along with James Ferguson’s widely respected study of World Bank development discourse in Lesotho in the 1980s, *The Anti-Politics Machine*. Of course, there is no particular reason⁴⁷ why events in the 1970s and 1980s in Lesotho (or southeast Asia) should have any particular bearing on events in Jordan. The countries are vastly different and separated by thousands of miles—not that this would be particularly apparent from the reports, which essentially seem to have employed the same framework no matter where they were applied.

The Shelter Unit

⁴⁶ The official position of the Executive Summary of the National Housing Policy on the Palestinian Question deserves to be quoted at length: “Whether or not there is a resolution of the political question, refugee camps in urban areas at least, are clearly becoming permanent features of the housing stock. Government should therefore consider policies for upgrading refugee camps with the view that they will continue to function as permanent urban areas even if a large number of their present inhabitants were to leave” (Shelter Unit 1987: 32). What I find revealing here is the tenacity with which the Shelter Unit attempts to shield property relations from the contagion of ‘political questions.’

⁴⁷ The one notable and important exception is the proximity to a white settler colony. Yet this fact is studiously ignored by the Bank’s discourse on both Jordan and Lesotho—despite its outsized impact on everything under discussion. As Ferguson argues, it would be silly to give an ecological account of why the Bronx is poor in relationship to Manhattan. Yet ecological accounts abound when discussing Jordan or Lesotho. The fact that the residents have been pushed off of the more desirable land is treated as incidental.

As Goldman and Ferguson argue, it is really beside the point that these reports inevitably turn out to be internally inconsistent and factually inaccurate. Ferguson writes, “the statistics are wrong, but always wrong in the same way; the conceptions are fanciful, but it is always the same fantasy” (1994: 55). Yet at times, little bits of interesting and insightful work are simply included along with the more steady stream of the conventional wisdom of development discourse of the 1980s. Most notably, the report itself (once one dives into the minutia) draws on some really perceptive work by indigenous planners working in the Housing Corporation, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, and Urban Development Department, who had already realized the need to model house construction as the work of households long before the invention of the fantasy of the “individual owner-builder” (See Image 5). In fact, one could even argue that Jordanian planners were performing crucial interpretive labor as they assisted consultants and World Bank officials in facilitating the conceptual slippage between the patriarchal household and the idealized “individual owner-builder.”

Ferguson focuses on the ways in which World Bank reports, as the gold standard of “development” discourse, inevitably seek to depoliticize problems by reframing them as technical challenges, which can be met through particular “projects” which consist of supposedly technical solutions: “roads, markets, and credit” (Ferguson 1994:71). The myopic focus on these things helps to stifle discussion about the role of labor, property, and space in promoting and sustaining the existing formations of political power by shunting many of the most contentious questions about them into the “private” realm of the household and, oddly enough, the market as well. Particularly, by pretending that property relationships are a concern of the household and the market and outside of the government’s “public” purview (something any Palestinian or Iraqi refugee would have some opinions about), these organizations can help rule out certain kinds of

political contestation by stipulating submission to putatively apolitical “market” forces, which are in fact nothing of the sort.

Table 3.1: Development of a Hypothetical Family

Year	Age of Head	Family Milestone	Number of Workers In Basic Household	Number of Households
1	25	Household head marries & forms household	1	1
2	26	Birth of first son	1	1
3	27		1	1
4	28		1	1
5	29	Birth of second son	1	1
6	30		1	1
7	31		1	1
8	32	Birth of third son	1	1
9	33		1	1
10	34		1	1
11	35	Birth of last son	1	1
12	36		1	1
13	37		1	1
14	38		1	1
15	39		1	1
16	40		1	1
17	41		1	1
18	42		1	1
19	43	First son starts work	2	1
20	44		2	1
21	45		2	1
22	46	Second son starts work	3	1
23	47		3	1
24	48		3	1
25	49	Third son starts work	4	1
26	50		4	1
27	51	First son marries	3	2
28	52	Last son starts work	4	2
29	53		4	2
30	54	Second son marries	3	3
31	55		3	3
32	56		3	3
33	57	Third son marries	2	4
34	58		2	4
35	59		2	4
36	60	Fourth son marries	1	5
37	61	Household head retires	0	5
38	62		0	5
39	63		0	5

Assumptions:

Males marry at age 25, and enter labor force at age 17. Mature family contains 4 sons with average interval between male births of 3 years.

Source: UDD survey of “D” zoned areas, 1985

Figure 5: Jordanian planners modeling household capacity to build housing. Jordanian planners at the UDD perceptively modeled household capacity to build housing in Volume 7 of the report, entitled, “Existing Housing Situation in Jordan”—only to have it buried far

When I arrived at the Housing Corporation in 2010, I had initially intended to study a royal initiative called “Decent Housing for Decent Living” which sought to build 100,000

housing units in five years. When I returned with grant money in 2011 hoping to continue my study of this project (which seemed to be primarily designed to convince Jordanians to take out bank loans to buy houses) I found that the project had been cancelled. Of the first 8,000 units, they had only sold about 2,500. Luckily, I resisted the urge to panic and continued to spend time at the HUDC, arranging meetings and talking to people about what they were doing. Around this time, through conversations with people in the policy department, I learned that the HUDC maintained a library under the tutelage of Abu ‘Ali, a man who would turn out to be a most gracious host. Here, I found shelf after shelf of English-language reports waiting for me⁴⁸, which had been prepared by numerous different groups of government planners in conjunction with the World Bank and the United Nations. For the employees, these were artifacts from the golden age of the HUDC when, flush with money from the World Bank, they exerted a powerful influence over Jordanian society. The reports in question attempted to document the struggles over housing policy of the 1970s and 1980s in minute detail.

These reports may claim to comment upon the struggles of the 70s and 80s, but the important thing is that they can be clearly studied as indexical traces of those conflicts. It is absolutely essential to emphasize what Ferguson calls “the complex relationship between the intentionality of planning and the strategic intelligibility of outcomes.” Ferguson continues, “outcomes that at first appear as mere ‘side effects’ of an unsuccessful attempt to engineer an economic transformation become legible in another perspective as unintended yet instrumental elements in a resultant constellation that has the effect of expanding the exercise of a particular

⁴⁸ I could never get over the fact that the reports were produced on 8.5” by 11” paper and not A4. Were they produced and shipped all the way from America? Or did they have to find a printer in the eastern hemisphere with American paper? As for the fact that they were written in English, it is important to remember that most people at the HUDC only spoke Arabic and did not really need any English for their job since a couple of key English-speaking department heads in the office were sufficient for the corporation’s operations to run smoothly. In fact, when I had finished with the 24-volume National Housing Strategy from 1987, some of them asked to see my notes since they obviously did not have time to read such a long document in a foreign language.

sort of state power while simultaneously exerting a powerful depoliticizing effect” (1994: 20-21). A particular ad hoc workgroup of planners known as “the Shelter Unit,” in their search for a “Hedonic Index” which would quantify the value of every constituent part of the home, created the powerful (if largely fictitious) figure of the “individual owner builder” who later became the imagined beneficiary of a generation of housing policy. The World Bank-sponsored Shelter Unit is nonetheless merely one constituent of a more diverse set of actors who have worked together to help land and building materials achieve the “commodity candidacy” (Appadurai 1991: 15) which continues to elude the homes of so many Jordanians.

Technologies of Speech

In the mid 1980s, the Shelter Unit, one of many ad hoc groups of international consultants that helped set housing policy during that time period in Jordan, was tasked with writing Jordan’s first National Housing Strategy. Despite the seeming importance of the title, it is hard to say how much of an effect it had. The report advocated the same things that English-language reports stored at the HUDC have been advocating for decades. Fitting in with the Reagan-Thatcher era, the report discouraged housing projects in favor of more laissez-faire policies. The report was especially fixated on issues like ending rent controls, simplifying building codes, encouraging more high-density construction, providing infrastructure, and making it easier to get formal credit. On the one hand, the people I interviewed at the HUDC clearly continue to be flummoxed by these issues: the municipalities refused to subdivide plots, people did not want formal credit, and red tape remained. On the other hand, it is hard to know how much more the housing situation would have been dictated by these sorts of forces if it were not for the persistent orientation towards a specific agenda—which the very compilation of report after report helped engender. In either case, the report fits in with the shift away from

large-scale public housing projects⁴⁹ of the 1970s, which would continue until the royal “Decent Housing” initiative in 2008. What made this particular report notable was that it involved a household survey, which helped formulate the concept of the “Individual Owner-Builder” as the imagined beneficiary of Jordanian housing policy and a rationale for focusing the Jordanian government’s limited resources on engineering a housing market instead of actual housing. As the previous sections on homebuilding imply, this was a strange feat, which required that the household be collapsed into the figure of an individual and that the web of reciprocal exchange relationships between households be ignored. At the same time, the house and its constituent parts would be made commensurable and interchangeable through their inclusion in an overarching regime of value for commoditized things.

To understand the emergence of the Individual Owner-Builder, it is useful to follow Matt Hull in studying not only development discourse’s “division of the world” or “denotational content” but also its various “speech genres,” like the survey (2010:258). The very method of interpellation of the *household* survey helped over-determine the result: an image of a self-sufficient rational individual actor. As Hull points out, the roles of interviewer and interviewee are social roles which must be taught and depend on a whole elaborate series of assumptions. In “Democratic Technologies of Speech,” Hull provides an analysis of a specific survey conducted by the Ford Foundation in India which is highly suggestive and can easily be read into the planning and implementation of the Shelter Unit’s Private Housing Supplier’s Survey as well as a lively genre of stories about how “backwards” (*mutakhilif*) people respond to such surveys. There was a tendency to view the survey as a variation on a “school exam.” People resisted or

⁴⁹ The exemplar of this era is the thriving Middle Class suburb in West Amman known as Abu Nusair which is now home to 70,000 people. When I visited, residents claimed their community was very desirable with high property values and very few vacancies. They cited the great infrastructure (*buna’ taḥṭiyya*) and services (*khidimāt*) like 24-hour street cleaning as particular enticements.

simply could not comprehend the attempts of interviewers to access their innermost thoughts. Most notably, there was obviously a belief on the part of some respondents that their responses would, in fact, “lead to actions of the researcher’s institution directed specifically toward the respondent” (Hull 2010: 268).

My interest in this particular survey began quite innocently with an off-handed comment to Harun and his brothers. Harun asked me about my day and so I began to tell him about the documents I was reading at the HUDC. I started talking about some suspicious figures I had been looking at in Volume 13 (“Housing and Residential Land Affordability”). Reflecting on all of the inter-household and intra-household provision of assistance during the various local building projects I had witnessed, I asked Harun if it seemed credible to them that only between 5 and 15 percent of builders in rural areas received assistance from their relatives during the eighties. They recounted their own participation in the construction of various houses in the area that were built during that time period and estimated that, perhaps, all but five or ten percent of people in rural areas relied on their relatives for assistance. Then Harun continued, “Oh those surveys and reports are all lies! They bring the nice girls from the university here. Then they go and talk to the old woman (*khitiyāra*) and she thinks that the state (*al-dawla*) wants to help her and she says she’s poor and needy (*miskīn*) and no one will help her. But it’s all lies. She thinks the state wants to buy her a house.” Surprised by Harun’s statement, I recounted a conversation I had had the previous year with an employee at the Department of Statistics who proudly told me that their interviewers were all women because women did not lie to each other. Everyone laughed and Harun countered, “they use them because they’re girls so they don’t have to pay them a real salary. He’s messing with you. Don’t pay any attention to him.” Harun’s analysis highlighted the fact that interviewees could often fail to grasp the generic conventions of the survey (for

instance, misconstruing a request for information as an offer of assistance), but as I delved deeper into the documentation surrounding the survey, it became clear to me that the specific problem that Harun described was actually by far the largest preoccupation of the planners. There was in fact extensive discussion throughout the report of households' tendency to underreport income with the belief that this would lead to government assistance and all of the strategies planners devised to overcome this tendency.

However, a different kind of misunderstanding seemed to be in play as well: while the Shelter Unit conducted what was, at heart, a *household* survey, they then proceeded to interpret the responses as if they offered insights into thoughts and experiences which were “radically individual and even interior” (Hull 2010: 268). The confusion was partially derived from their attempts to answer a specific set of questions about “the housing market” as cheaply and easily as possible. As such, the sample frame, personnel, and many of the questions were naturally borrowed from the Department of Statistics' household survey initiatives. The survey begins by requesting basic demographic information about the various members of the household before turning to a detailed series of questions about the house itself. Imperceptibly, around the twentieth question about the house, the interview script slips into the second person:

- 215- Have any improvements to the following been made since 1980?
- 216- What following improvements does the housing unit require?
- 217- Which of the Following appliances do *you* have?
- 218- Is it possible to reach the following by foot within 15 minutes from *your* house?
- 219- Are *you* satisfied with *your* house? (All emphasis added, Shelter Unit 1987: Vol. 18, 53-54)

Since the only copy of the survey I have found is in English, I have no way of knowing whether the “you” is singular or plural—much less what the people conducting the survey would have actually asked respondents in Arabic or how respondents would have interpreted the pronoun (if

at all). Of course, in the context of centuries of various states and empires encouraging families to choose a single older male as their collective representative (See Part 2 “The Proposal”), it probably makes little difference.

So even if interviewees were eager to provide comprehensive, correct information, it would be hard to know how to respond to questions like ‘what were the sources of financing?’ or ‘did any family member help in the construction?’ When one is already speaking on behalf of one’s family, what would it mean to ask if a ‘family member’ assisted? Would these be family members outside of the household or outside of the community from which the interviewee was drawn? In either case, only 279 of the 2246 respondents reported receiving assistance from relatives with the building process. But, ultimately, it just did not matter from the planner’s perspective. Even this direct participation of other people can be subsumed within their model of the individual owner-builder. If one looks beyond the Executive Summary of the report, a careful reading of the Housing Suppliers Survey (Volume 9 of the report) reveals that, according to the report’s actual (if incredibly difficult to locate) definition of the individual owner-builder, “he may even contribute his own labor or skills or those of his family or relatives” (Shelter Unit 1987: Vol. 9, 5). No matter what the case, within the World Bank’s ontology, there were markets, market actors, and the commodities that circulated between the market actors in the markets. The rest was extraneous data and, of course, since the World Bank could afford to finance the research, they exerted a lot of influence over the research agenda. Within this agenda, the “Individual Owner-Builder” was merely a placeholder for the abstracted market actor, anyway.

The Hedonic Index

The erasure of the household as a living, hybrid assemblage of people, labor, property relations and space and its substitution with the abstracted individual owner-builder is in keeping with “the conceptual polarity of individualized persons and commoditized things” (Appadurai 1991: 64). In Appadurai and Kopytoff’s processual framework of commoditization and singularization, anything can achieve ‘commodity candidacy.’ The issue is what objects take on these characteristics, under what circumstances and for how long. The oral historical register in Jordan is replete with stories that describe the odd ‘paths and divergences’ through which various things (particularly land) became commodities long before the ‘era of government’ in the 1920s and the later initiatives of development organizations. I will return to this theme in the following section, but for now, one example will suffice:

Harun: Muath’s grandfather Ahmed had a racing horse he would take to weddings and circumcisions back in the days when they had games and races. It was a beautiful horse and he would always win. Suleiman’s uncle Saleem asked to buy the horse but Ahmed was clever. He said he wouldn’t think of selling it. He said, “this is a racing horse” and “look how beautiful it is.” Then Saleem’s brother started talking to Ahmed about buying it. Ahmed was clever though. He knew it was really the brother asking. So he kept saying he wouldn’t sell it. Finally, Ahmed sold the horse to the man for 32 dunnum of land (32,000 square meters). That’s all the land west of the village! The horse died in the snow that winter but in the end, Ahmed had to sell it all because of girls.”

Confused, I said, “what?”

Harun: “Well, in those days, if you didn’t have any money, you could give land as *mahr* (bridewealth). So he had a lot of sons and nephews and every time he wanted to marry one, he would give away some of his land to her father until he had almost none left.”

The story was meant as an object lesson in shifting regimes of value and, of course, as a none-too-subtle way of impugning the neighbors. The story is part of a moralizing genre of oral history that recounts how land, which would now be incredibly valuable, was appropriated via cunning rather than right—only to be lost before the trickster figure could derive any real benefit. While Harun intended to highlight the naïveté and cupidity of his neighbors, it also reveals that

we are not dealing with some pre-commodity age of innocence. Land could be bartered with none of the sentimentality of romanticized ideas of gift exchange. People were perfectly ready to use every bit of cunning to swindle their neighbors—even if they never got the opportunity to become millionaires thanks to the turn of the twenty-first century surge in land values.

Yet as the story makes clear, land was not the same kind of commodity that it is now. Here, the line between singular people and commoditized things is blurred. Land and livestock (much like people) are viewed as a bundle of overlapping rights and responsibilities (cf. Strathern 1985; Weiner 1992). This is all the more true when discussing other people's familial relations. Ownership is perhaps an anachronistic concept here. One does not have recourse to the state to challenge other claims. One merely has the opportunity to defend various rights against other takers. Ahmed (like so many others in these stories) is able to seize property. Unfortunately, just as he takes it, it slips through his fingers as his various family members make all manner of claims on it. In contrast, a Hedonic Index is an exercise in market research, which seeks to understand individuals (who independently control things) in relationship to those things via a precise numerical scale of value. It would be easy to dismiss the exercise as rather pointless (people could relate a horse to land or whatever in precisely those numerical terms decades before the World Bank showed up). However, the index is almost a distraction: even the Shelter Unit did not really believe the results. It was the far broader conceptual work of singularization and commoditization that was truly transformative.

During the latter part of the twentieth century, the World Bank, the United Nations, USAID, and the Jordanian government all worked to house a rapidly sedentarizing Bedouin population and a large population of displaced Palestinians. They formulated the problem as one of creating an efficient housing market, which would provide the credit necessary to meet

demand. Yet land and (by extension) anything on it were anything but the freely circulating commodities that the Bank assumed they were dealing with. Likewise, people were not the fixed, autonomous and grounded (that is singular) “Individual Owner-Builders” that the Bank assumed they were dealing with either. As long as property rights were in question, people would be forced to see property through the lens of communal defense. Reflecting this sensibility that wealth is worthless without people to defend it, I was taught the proverb, “the proliferation of men is better than the proliferation of wealth.” With many people loathe to move away from their families or use land as collateral (not just for religious reasons but also due to familial disapprobation), the dream of an efficient, frictionless housing market was a fantasy. As we will see, the Shelter Unit and its backers found themselves dealing with the fact that large amounts of marginal agricultural communal (*mushāʿ*) land claimed by a large tribe known as the Bani Hasan were sitting next to rapidly growing refugee camps. An organization that asks squatters and people who see themselves as inhabiting ancestral lands how much their house is worth may at first appear to be getting ahead of itself. Nonetheless, the Shelter Unit and its backers still exerted an outsized effect on a key aspect of Jordanian-Palestinian relations by getting deeply involved in the registration of land. In fact, they seem to have tacitly participated in the legitimation of the refugees’ efforts to permanently settle in Jordan—all while generating profits for global financial markets.

Construction as Seizure

For centuries, construction (the material transformation of the landscape) has been one of the primary means by which people in the Middle East construe and establish property claims. Until now, the account has been anchored west of Amman in the transition zone between the Jordan valley and the semi-arid steppe. As attention moves further east towards the Amman-

Zarqa corridor, there emerges a giant, unplanned, and at times downright illegal construction project involving the successive waves of refugees who have sought shelter and legal recognition in Jordan. Amman rises from the fossilized coral (limestone) bedrock as it is ground up into concrete, pressed into cinderblocks and marketed to families who dream of stable sanctuaries where they may safely dwell and prosper. As fathers seek to help build homes for their sons and grandsons, the network of concrete structures becomes denser and more interconnected: male kinship relations and community are materially instantiated in the built environment as each successive generation builds homes for the next generation around the existing structures. Yet the assemblage remains partial, incomplete, and vulnerable to seizure. Unfinished structures litter the landscape: aspirational concrete pillars jut out from people's roofs. Locals frustrate wealthy interlopers by making off with the plumbing in the night. Construction is important, but it must be defended, lest other imagined futures begin to manifest themselves. In this section, I hope to use a combination of oral historical and archival data to illustrate how the HUDC and their collaborators at the UN Shelter Unit and World Bank have gone about facilitating and shaping all of this construction in subtle and unexpected ways. However, by and large, their focus has actually been relatively singular: the creation of a housing market.

“Land Was Free”

As I have argued, there could not be a proper housing market until land had become a different kind of commodity—specifically one which could be defended as property by an individual with access to the repressive apparatus of the state. In other words, it had to become *private* property. In the following section, I will interweave my own oral historical data with that of Omar Razzaz, whose PhD dissertation *Law, Urban Tenure and Property Disputes in Contested Settlements: The Case of Jordan* (1991) I take to be the definitive contemporaneous

account of events. Razzaz would later go on to teach at MIT and run the World Bank's Lebanon office. At the time of research, he was charged with formulating Jordan's national employment strategy. His account will help illustrate how this novel idea of public and private was imposed on Jordanian conceptions of land. This transformation of land into private property has at least temporarily caused cash to loom in importance while the role of communal defense in securing housing has diminished. If cash continues to be the final arbiter of what kind of housing the younger generation can obtain, then they will likely continue to consider favorably the transformations in the gendering of labor, property, and space described in chapter one. Yet the status of land and the nature of property as private prerogative or object of communal defense remains open to contestation.

The fiercest contestation over land in the western part of Jordan near the valley (where I was based during fieldwork) happened in the 1930s when the British performed a cadastral survey and registered agricultural lands. While both Ottoman law and local practice conferred property rights conditional on continued use and improvement of the land, the land near the valley received enough rainfall to ensure that *someone* would be regularly availing themselves of the land. This, of course, was and is more and more difficult the further east one goes. Traveling east on the road to Zarqa, the landscape shifts from green to brown. In Zarqa, it was not even possible to farm the land for three consecutive years: the minimum required to register land under the *musha'* system (often understood as communal property), which outlived the Ottoman and British empires and passed, largely unremarked upon, into Jordanian property law. With the post-independence explosion in the size of the state's bureaucracy (especially in the capital of Amman), the construction of a large military installation in neighboring Zarqa and, of course, the

influx of wave after wave of refugees, this land went from wasteland to some of the most valuable real estate in the Middle East in a matter of decades.

For the time being, there is a pattern in Jordan that involves men hailing from the East Bank (especially in rural areas) who have been absorbed into the security services where they continue to act out a sort of defensive role but now serve new masters (the state rather than their family). In return, they have been able to shore up their individualistic control of property through both the system of private property ownership and their differential access to cash (due to their government jobs). As this rural Jordanian middle class of government employees has emerged and more traditional forms of female labor in agriculture and animal husbandry have increasingly been taken up by foreign migrants, more and more women have become increasingly confined to the home as the older rationales for their movement throughout the community disappeared. Meanwhile, communities of various refugee groups have tended to cluster in urban areas while men travel to the gulf and send back remittances or, increasingly, administer the use of gulf capital within Jordan itself. This shift can be summed up in the widespread notion in rural Jordan that a Bedouin is a man who lives in a house with no door and that, by such a measure, there are very few Bedouin left. Men “these days” can be seen as, “barnyard hens... well fed, but domesticated and ripe for the slaughter” (Shryock 1997a: 45).

Key to this dynamic is the notion of seizure. In the moralizing genre of stories about land, there was always an incredibly heavy taint of illegitimacy. This is to be expected since shifts in property relations tended to track closely with social upheaval. New interlopers were disruptive. Such disruptions were inevitably reconceptualized later in terms of the emergent Jordanian state in relationship to its geopolitical allies and competitors. The stories I recorded had a *geographic* as well as a moral logic. From the east came raiders and extortionists: this was a reference to the

fact that, during the 1930s, certain Saudi tribes would decimate the herds of southern Jordanian Bedouins and then take cover underneath the British defensive umbrella⁵⁰. From the west came swindlers and loansharks: useful villains for a nationalist rhetoric that claims “Jordan for Jordanians” to the exclusion of Palestinian refugees. This example from the moralizing genre of oral historical accounts of land sales is typical:

Mahmud: I remember stories from those days in the past but not clearly. It’s like a dream to me. I grew up hearing about these things in the 1970s. So people would come from Palestine and people would buy all sorts of stuff with land. Dates, olive oil, *ḥalāwa* [a sugary sesame paste], finely embroidered underwear...

I cannot reproduce the uproar that followed, but it was clear to me that one of my neighbors’ ancestors had actually traded land for underwear—despite the fact that it seemed like the height of folly in retrospect. Mahmud continued, somewhat more seriously now:

Mahmud: Land back in those days was basically free (*balāsh*) and the people were hungry. People would die from hunger. So these traders would come from Palestine with dates, olive oil, preserves and *ḥalāwa* [a sugary sesame paste]. Imagine if you were dying of hunger and someone brought you a tank full of *ḥalāwa*. You’d be beside yourself (*imkayif*), right? The [neighboring tribe] sold so much of their land for *ḥalāwa*.

Once again, in keeping with the moralizing genre, it is always about *other people* and the narrative is driven by a combination of licentiousness, venality and cunning on all sides.

The imputation of great cunning on the part of the Palestinian merchants is consonant with a tendency within Jordanian nativism to see rural east bankers as hospitable and naïve in relationship to the depredations of interloping Palestinian city-folk (Shryock 1997a; 1997b). Yet I remained skeptical. I tried to imagine things from the perspective of the traveling merchant. Operating somewhat beyond the reach of the state, in possession of luxury goods, what exactly were his options when the locals wanted things? But from the perspective of the rural east bankers:

⁵⁰ Alon (2007) weaves together oral and textual evidence to provide a thorough account of the conflicts that defined the relations between Jordanian and Saudi tribes during the British Mandate.

Harun: You see, these traders were like [a particular figure that neither man had much respect for who was once the *mukhtār* (village head) and also the *murābih* (moneylender)]. See, he had a store and he would lend money and not harvest the debt (*yidayin wa ma yahsid*). Then he would wait for a bad year and ask for the money. They wouldn't have anything to give him but their land. Isn't that *ḥarām*? But there was a Palestinian who did this even more. His name was [so-and-so] Al-Nablusi. He would let the [neighboring tribe] buy on credit and then suddenly he would ask for his money and take the land as payment. Isn't that *ḥarām*? He ended up with 400 *dunnum* among the [neighboring tribe]! He had three sons and they divided it between them. One of them was a drunk in Madaba who sold all of his but the other two still have all of their shares.

Based on generic conventions, it is certainly only a matter of time until some misfortune befalls the other two or, at the very least, some more of their descendants. But of course, Al-Nablusi and the village head (along with their descendants) would probably have to rank as some of the luckier traders in history. If they had taken possession of such lands at any other time, it would have been the best solution to their disagreements with their customers, but they would not have reaped such outsized rewards. They would have either been absorbed into the community as the land was re-divided to cover all manner of social obligations or they would have simply been pushed off by someone more aggressive with more local support.

The Proliferation of Men

Land is not necessarily valuable. What is the use of having dry, unpopulated space with no electricity, roads or sewerage? There is a popular origin myth about the Bani Hassan (who will figure prominently in the following account) which tells that the people were hungry and thirsty and begged a man from the Bani Hassan to help them find water for their crops. He told them that he would find them water: his cow would walk until it found the nearest well. But in return, he would get all of the land between the spot on which he stood and that well. That, I have been told, is how the Bani Hassan came to own the most land in Jordan: the most land, perhaps, but also the most of the most useless land. So imagine their delight when a city suddenly began to spring up around them after the waves of Palestinian refugees arrived and then

consider the sense of deep betrayal they must have experienced when the government not only tried to stop them from selling their lands to the settlers, but actually challenged their ownership claims. This struggle is at the heart of Razzaz's account, along with his insight that it was in fact the very undesirability of this land that made it so cheap and hence attractive for those aspiring to join the middle class (See Image 6). As far as legally available residential property at the time went, 90% of it was zoned for large upper income plots (Razzaz 1994: 16). Many of these plots could not be legally subdivided any smaller than 1000 square meters. Meanwhile, the government had built Yajouz Road to connect up the two cities of Amman and Zarqa, providing a transportation hookup to a large swath of arid steppe with questionable ownership status. This helped underwrite the massive expansion of the Jordanian middle class and a particular gendering of labor, property, and space. Yet ironically, as the land was connected to infrastructure, zoned and registered, it became the kind of commodity that could be traded by global financial institutions and, as a result, increasingly valued by those institutions at levels far beyond the reach of a typical soldier, bureaucrat, or labor migrant.

Razzaz, my oral historical data, the records at the HUDC and my conversations with employees of the HUDC all agree that people began to build houses along Yajouz road sometime in the 1970s. The materials could be moved into place by vehicle, people could bring in generators for electricity, and there was already a network of water trucks because the water grid was less than ideal anyway. Sewerage could be handled with septic tanks. Members of the Bani Hassan enthusiastically sold plots to all takers using a sale contract (*hujja*) without the government title (*sanad*), which has been required since the Ottoman *tanzimat* reforms. The Jordanian government objected vociferously to such sales, but the Bani Hassan were unrepentant. They watched as tribesmen in the west made millions selling land that was

registered, zoned, and provisioned with water and electricity. Razzaz records one man who reasoned, “Islam tells us... if an unjust father treats his sons differently, feeding one and starving the other, the hungry son is permitted to seize his share, even if he has to steal it from his unjust father to survive. This is all we are doing” (1994:18). When the government tried to demolish the houses of the Bani Hassan in 1983, they took up arms, shot at the security services and burned military vehicles. When tribesmen were rounded up, their families rioted outside the jail. Various attempts at reconciliation followed and building and demolition continued, but with a new rule: if the roof was finished, the house was to be left intact.

By 1985, the area was in the midst of a building boom. People would wait until Thursday afternoon when the police went home for the weekend. If they could finish the roof before the police returned, the authorities would allow the structure to stand. Razzaz reports that people clustered together, often based on kin ties or common place of origin. He gives the example of a “Hebron” community⁵¹ which would take up a collection to bring in more gravel for their road every year and, of course, Razzaz emphasizes the sense of security which living together engendered. There was also a major emphasis on the host/guest relationship. The “hosts” from the Bani Hassan made promises to continue to help the buyers defend their rights long after the sale had been made, although this was no substitute for the certainty which came with official registration and title deed (*sanad*) in addition to the more traditional *hujja* or sale deed. One tribesman explained to Razzaz, “We do not think of a *hujja* as a regular sales contract. It is more like a marriage contract, binding both the buyer and seller for good” (1994:24).

Razzaz understood the concerns of the government perfectly: he reports that discussions with officials inevitably devolved into “a barrage of anecdotes.” He continues, “the situation was always described as chaotic, a ‘grave threat to law and order,’ a ‘potentially explosive situation

⁵¹ Hebron is the name of a Palestinian village in the West Bank that has been occupied by Israel since 1967.

where disputes between neighbors, heirs, and contesting claimants, could turn bloody and set the place on fire” (Razzaz 1994:26-27). In contrast, initially learning about the conflict through development reports, it was hard for me to even explain what I was reading about to the veteran HUDC employees who regularly invited me for tea and coffee to discuss my findings. Based on the World Bank reports, I had zeroed in on the question of property rights and putatively apolitical initiatives of housing market “rationalization.” I wanted to ask them about squatter settlement standardization, but I struggled to even figure out the Arabic word for squatter, which I could not find in any dictionaries. I asked a friend and sociologist who worked down the hall from me in the HUDC, “what do you call someone who builds on land they do not own?” This led to a conversation about land tenure I could not really follow since it was my first real encounter with the Arabic technical vocabulary of property law. What was clear from his perspective was that (no matter the law) land was there to be developed. After being told by a number of bilingual friends that there was no Arabic word for squatter, someone suggested the word *‘ashwa’ī*. With connotations of informality, spontaneity, and randomness, *‘ashwa’ī* was the Arabic word that the HUDC had used to describe Yajouz road. Once I told my friends at the HUDC that I was interested in *sākin ‘ashwa’ī* (chaotic housing), they had a lot to say and began explaining the whole process to me as one of “straightening out the lines,” “widening the roads” and “organizing things.” The property relations were an afterthought. These were increasingly dense settlements with no road signs, unreliable roads, and no services. To make matters worse, they were inhabited by people who disobeyed the government. The settlements were closed off and inscrutable and this worried employees at the HUDC.

It was into this breach that the World Bank stepped. With everyone increasingly accepting that the Palestinians were not leaving Jordan and would expand beyond the refugee

camps and eventually fill in between Amman and Zarqa, the World Bank offered the following solution: Jordan would take out a loan from the bank, subdivide all of the plots in the squatter settlements, officially register the plots, provide some infrastructure, and then make the residents repay the loans. The plan was a wild success. The Bani Hassan could sell their land, the government created all sorts of jobs and opportunities for patronage, and, whether or not any given individual could pay back the loan, there was a delimited commodity asset which could be seized as collateral to either encourage repayment of the loan or sell to clear the balance sheet. As a veteran of that era in the organization recalled, “it was great for everyone... except maybe the people who are still paying off the loans...” Of course, from another perspective, this was the last land within physical reach of regular employment opportunities in the capital that was sheltered from global commodity markets due to its questionable ownership and zoning status and lack of infrastructure. Increasingly, Jordanians must compete in the same housing market as oil sheikhs, technocratic *nouveau riche*, hedge funds, and even their upper middle class neighbors who have high enough salaries to pay off a mortgage while still having enough money left over for food.

Conclusion: They Will Take It

In tracking changing conceptions of public and private in Jordan, I have tried to parochialize the division and simultaneously point to the fact that much of what Jordan’s young-skewing population (the median age is 26⁵²) thinks of as “traditional” gender roles (with men working outside the home to house women within it) are in fact far more fleeting. I have tried to connect this to shifts in labor, property, and spatial relations to emphasize the shortcomings of essentialist explanations and the superior explanatory power of more constructivist approaches. To avoid any impression of a unilineal evolutionary or teleological conclusion, it is useful to

⁵² The median age in Jordan is due to high population growth—not low life expectancy.

consider the “Decent Housing for Decent Living” initiative that first brought me to the HUDC, to highlight the cracks and fissures in this status quo model of gender relations. As I argued in the introduction and throughout the previous chapter, a certain sort of masculine ideal has emerged in Jordan which has valorized a certain kind of *public* man (cf. Carver 1996) who could singlehandedly go out and earn the money necessary to provide for his household and, thereby, assume a sort of sovereign control which came with differential access to cash and full confidence in the state’s willingness to defend his property. This was, in some ways, unprecedented. Many of the ties entailed by older notions of property relations were sundered. Housing became stationary and suddenly switched from being women’s wealth to men’s wealth (although, as we will see in the next chapter as we examine bridewealth conventions, women often continue to own the furniture). Most notably, for the first time, large numbers of previously impoverished men suddenly discovered that they could afford to provide housing and food for their wives and obviate the necessity that the latter circulate through the community. In this, they began to partake in a classic premodern marker of nobility across the Eurasian landmass. However, it may not last much longer.

The global financial crisis has done little to cool down the Amman real estate market. With profits from historically high oil prices working their way into the economy via remittances, banking, and direct investment (Parker 2009), not to mention the likelihood that cement and steel will continue to be expensive due to high energy prices, there is little reason to believe housing will get any more affordable. This was the context in which the “Decent Housing” initiative emerged. When the Jordanian government first announced that it would provide 100,000 housing units that could be purchased on JD 100 per month installment plans, demand was extensive. Over 60,000 applications were distributed in two days. Applicants were

required to be over 18, make less than JD 1000 per month, and not be a beneficiary of any other housing project. Once they had received their new dwelling, they would not have been allowed to sell or rent it (Ghazal 2008).

The program was beset by problems from the beginning, though. The government was never totally clear about how it planned on financing the program. When the program was announced, the government made clear that it would only provide JD 15 million of the JD 5 *billion* project from its own treasury (Petra 2008). In 2009, the popular newspaper *Al-Ghad* published accusations of corruption or, in the subtler phrasing of Jameel Al-Nimry, “a ‘conflict of interest’ between public responsibility (*musuliyya ‘āma*) and private benefit (*munfa’a khāṣa*).” After a 25-day bidding period, the contract for the project was awarded to a company with close ties to the minister of public works. Its director was given a monthly salary of JD 8,000—a princely sum even for an American manager. Due to the resulting outcry, the offending minister was removed from his position—and placed in charge of the Foreign Ministry (Al-Nimry 2009). By the time I was in Jordan doing fieldwork with the marketing department, the government was offering mortgages⁵³ for apartments which would run from JD 110 for an 88 square meter home to JD 168 for a 133 square meter home.

The marketers understood what a tough job they had in front of them. A member of the team told me, “we’re not just selling houses. We’re trying to change the mentality.” Her coworkers quickly agreed: “they don’t want a mortgage.” “They all want to live on the ground floor.” “They want to have a lot of kids.” “They want to have a garden.” “They don’t want to live next to strangers.” “They don’t trust⁵⁴: they want to build it themselves so they know it is done

⁵³ Some of these mortgages were offered by “Islamic” banks, which used financial instruments that have been certified as “sharia-compliant” by particular religious authorities.

⁵⁴ In light of the pervasive concern about corruption in Jordan at the time, the lack of faith in the structural integrity of the dwellings was especially salient. It was a common concern when people I knew explained their lack of

properly.” At the end of the day, even with the government providing land and subsidizing the loans by paying part of the interest and offering guarantees to the banks, the initiative still required households to pay half of a soldier’s income for housing when many homeowners already struggle to provide their families with chicken more than once a week. In return, applicants were being offered close quarters in four-storey apartment blocks on the edge of town. By the time I returned in 2011, the problems with the project were widely known and everyone had an explanation. Employees emphasized the problems with the banks (“the bank has no heart”) and still others argued that the lack of infrastructure and services (no mosques, no schools, no stores) had rendered the housing uninhabitable and that “we have to build communities—not just houses.”

As I discussed the issue with one engineer, however, I got a much more jaundiced answer. I began to lay out my concern that the entire model of the Jordanian household that I had come to know seemed completely unsustainable: with salaries so low, a large percentage of the population could only hope to sustain their current lifeworlds by avoiding the need to pay rent—and the only way to avoid paying rent was to continue occupying whatever sort of diminishing familial patrimony they had left. With the country becoming increasingly crowded and more outside capital pouring in, higher property values seemed inevitable for the foreseeable future. This was presenting couples with a choice: postpone marriage and house construction—possibly altogether for many—or accept serious downward social mobility by choosing to rent or take out a mortgage. In fact, with women now making up the majority of university students, it seemed like the ultimate solution was that women would start working in large numbers to defray the

interest in the *Decent Housing* initiative. Far from a vague sense that a corrupt government would build corrupt (*fāsīd*) houses, a lot of people were incredibly explicit and specific about their concerns. I also know I was not alone in hearing such suspicions because an engineer at the corporation once told me (without prompting) about how he had personally made sure that the correct quantity of steel rebar was in place when the cement was poured—precisely the kind of precaution one would take at a time when iron was trading for JD 600-700 per ton.

cost of housing. Engineer Samir smiled at the prospect and said, “they do not like it, but they will take it.” He began to enumerate all of the complaints I have already listed, adding in plenty of his own like “they don’t want to walk up the stairs,” and lingering on the politics of women joining the workforce before concluding, “they do not like it, but they will take it.” At the time, it seemed logical enough to me that when faced with a choice between celibacy and downward social mobility through debt and renting along with women’s increasing involvement in the workforce, “they will take it.” That is: households will devote more of their time and money to paying for housing and women going to work will be a big part of that. It seemed like I was doing salvage ethnography of the patriarchal household. Yet it is also possible that patrilocality clustering to defend a shared patrimony (with force if necessary) could provide an alternative future—especially as Jordan’s 1.4 million Syrians despair of going home and decide to put down roots like the Palestinians before them in Yajouz. Either way, once Jordanians again transform their gender relations, I would argue that they *will* like it and they will find it difficult to imagine that it was ever any other way.

Part II: The Proposal: Personhood and the Construction of Moral Agents

Chapter 3: The Delegation

A wedding delegation or *jāha* is, at least in theory, a relatively straightforward affair. The delegation from the groom's family would⁵⁵ all pile into cars and drive to the home of the bride's family, where the two kin groups would meet. Each contingent might be as few as thirty people or, in some cases, hundreds of people. Upon arrival, the delegation from the groom's family would divide by gender. While the women would head for the *muḥarrim*, the men would be ushered into a guest room or a tent that had been rented for the occasion. A line of men from the bride's family would be waiting to greet the guests. Each guest from the groom's family would move down the line shaking hands and exchanging greetings with each of the representatives of the bride's family. They would then take their seats in facing rows of chairs and wait for the rest of the guests to file in. When everyone was settled, the representative of the bride's family would offer a cup of coffee to the representative of the groom's family. Demurring, the latter would rise and declare his family's interest in entering into a marital relationship with the family of the bride by marrying 'what's her name?' or 'your noble daughter' or some other circumlocution to avoid saying her name. After agreeing to a bridewealth payment (which is envisioned as a sort of alimony should the marriage end in divorce), the representative of the bride's family would respond by accepting the offer. As the culminating gesture in the pageantry surrounding the delegation, the representative of the bride would again proffer a small cup of coffee to the

⁵⁵ When describing rituals as people tell me they are supposed to happen (rather than as I actually witness them), I use what I like to call the "ritual subjunctive"—as opposed to the "ethnographic present" (Fabian 1983)—to highlight the inevitable gap between the ritual ideal and particular instantiations.

representative of the groom's family. By drinking the cup of coffee, the representative of the groom's family would seal the agreement. Then those assembled would recite the opening verse of the Quran. With that, coffee would be served for all the attendees followed by tea, Pepsi, and sweets. The ullulation of the women would erupt in the *muḥarrim*. When the delegation or *jāha* was finished, the groom's family would file out, shaking the hands of the greeters once again, and return home--often to the sound of celebratory gunfire.

The delegation is about distribution, with cognition, agency and, ultimately, personhood itself being parceled out across the extended kin group and divided between two parallel rituals along gendered lines. From here, amidst taboos around naming and cloistered goings-on happening in separate rooms in parallel, agency and personhood are aggregated (on the male side) in the figure of the senior male at the peak of the ritual's drama and then dissolved once again as the ritual moves on to shared commensality, mutual leave-taking, ullulation, and celebratory gunfire. Increasingly though, with the expansion of Sharia courts into Jordan over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the *jāha* is not the only ritual for the creation and recognition of marital bonds. If the delegation is about the distribution of cognition, agency, and personhood itself through an elaborate set of ritual acts, Sharia court procedures tend to exert an individuating influence by becoming increasingly concerned with recording the ostensibly un compelled volitional acts of embodied individuals. For the most part, the antithesis between the two procedures produces very little concern or cognitive dissonance. Often, the rituals are concurrent, with a court-affiliated notary waiting in the next room at the *jāha* to conduct the contract-signing ceremony while the delegation waits. When legitimating marital bonds, most Jordanians will use all available rituals. However, the delegation and court procedures

nonetheless construct different kinds of moral agents. When these different kinds of moral agents⁵⁶ come into conflict, the results can prove downright explosive.

In chapter three, I contrast the different ways in which delegations and court procedures distribute agency, cognition, and personhood. The first half of the chapter will focus on the preparations and pageantry surrounding two delegations I witnessed during fieldwork, focusing on the collective familial ritual effort necessary to produce a legitimate marital bond. The second half of the chapter will draw on a combination of oral history, participant observation, archival records, and statistical analysis⁵⁷ to show how the Sharia Courts came to introduce form marriage contracts and other bureaucratic technologies into Jordan marriage practices. I will argue that the construction of moral agents through marriage proposals has changed over the course of the twentieth century as the information infrastructure around the proposal has come to rely more and more on the individuating technologies of the Sharia Courts. Turning to the work of historians of Islamic law, I note that this tension between the courts and extended kin groupings evinces a number of continuities with our understanding of pre-modern Islamic jurisprudence—implying that, while these newer bureaucratic technologies certainly have consequential intrinsic qualities, many of them also extend and deepen the reach of preexisting tools of Islamic jurisprudence and administration.

⁵⁶ My concept of "moral agent" is heavily indebted to two sources: Donald Mackenzie's (2009) idea of the "economic agent" and the Sharia's concept of the *wakīl* (agent): in the case of the tribal delegation the two "sheikhs" who represent the bride and groom respectively. What I hope to maintain by echoing Mackenzie is the assemblage's materiality, its emphasis on distribution and its at times cyborg-like dimensions. Mackenzie's theorizations of economic agents tend to highlight the mechanical extension of the human while leaving open the possibility that the machines are taking over. Of course, there is also another important dimension of the comparison: these are agents with purposes. Yet whereas Mackenzie's agents are unproblematically "economic" (they seek to make money), mine seem to serve very different purposes: they all make claims on people's reproductive powers in the name of collectivities founded for the provision of mutual aid to people joined by bonds of more or less indissoluble kinship. Thus the "moral": while this may not exhaust the category of moral, it certainly fits within it and furnishes a relatively transparent analytic category that could be easily translated back into Arabic.

⁵⁷ My engagement with statistics and my attempts at statistical analysis are merely a dimension of my participant observation. As with my engagement with oral history and archival sources, my engagement with statistics takes its cue from the knowledge practices of those I hope to understand.

In chapter four, I will map out some of the ramifications of the specifically *Islamic* aims of the information infrastructure that has emerged to collect and disseminate information about marriage in Jordan. I will show how this information infrastructure has become an active participant in the production of new types of moral agents while working to dissolve older types of moral agents associated with the delegation. The Sharia Court's procedures and— increasingly—its statistics are reifying specific categories of individual moral agents who are endowed with new forms of individual and collective voice that enable them to articulate new forms of social criticism. In narrating an unfolding struggle over the ritual template of the marriage proposal, I hope to show that the more familiar individuating ritual template of the courts is no more or less a logistical feat than the tribal marriage delegation. In Jordan, both continue to coexist in productive tension.

“The problem is women”

I was sitting with my friend Abu Riziq⁵⁸ the night before his son Riziq's wedding delegation and *khutba* (engagement party) trying to gauge his feelings about his son's impending engagement and marriage. We sat on the roof of his son's future home drinking tea as Abu Riziq fielded phone calls and made final preparations. Such negotiations are, of necessity, fraught with mistrust, awkwardness and the potential for humiliation. From the beginning, I had seen how this stage of the process had weighed heavily on Abu Riziq. When he was building a magnificent house for the future couple, he was in his element as he considered every possible detail down to the colored nightlights (“for sex,” he said). Now, however, his son's marriage required negotiations over bridewealth (which is normally divided in two: the amount to be paid upfront or *muqaddim/ma'jil* and the amount to be paid in case of divorce or *mu'akhir/mo'jil*),

⁵⁸ In Jordan, parents are referred to as *Abu* (father of) or *Um* (mother of) their eldest son or, barring a son, the eldest daughter.

engagement festivities and the like—not to mention determining the suitability of the girl herself. Aside from his ongoing concerns about the bridewealth and arrangements for the various festivities (balancing contractual aspects with verbal agreements) he explained that such a distant marriage required a lot of sensitive inquiries: “she could be blind, she could have a genetic disease, she could have bad morals. We had to ask around a lot.”

It is no accident that the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu was moved by his study of North African Berbers to compare matrimonial strategies to a game of cards (1977: 58). Due to the potential for embarrassment and generally *muḥarrim* (protected) status accorded to women, no one person completely comprehends the situation. As an anthropologist, I shared many of the cognitive challenges faced by Jordanians themselves as I attempted to interpret the events unfolding around me. For the most part, marriage negotiations happened in closed family spaces that I rarely visited. Furthermore, due to my desire to be hypercorrect⁵⁹, I tended to avoid using women’s names in conversation—preferring to use various circumlocutions instead. For instance, I could figure out where someone’s wife came from by asking a man about his *nasayib* (in-laws) and figure out where his mother came from by asking about his *khawāl* (maternal uncles). Of course, women were themselves somewhat removed from the discussions occurring on the men’s side. The result was a potentially large number of side agreements emanating from every match—especially when multiple intermediaries are involved who do not even know each other. Given how much remains tacit and diffuse, a certain degree of partitioning or distributed cognition (Hutchins 1995) becomes essential to facilitating a marriage.

⁵⁹ Respecting a woman's *muḥarrim* (protected) status requires a complex set of avoidance rituals involving the gaze (minimize looking), the hands (no touching: instead of shaking hands, the hand is placed over the heart), and the voice (avoid using female names, limit conversation to essential business matters). Such rules were generally relaxed so long as there was a significant age gap and I was well-known to the family. Nonetheless, to utter a woman's name among her male relatives expresses a social closeness—to which one might or might not be entitled and about which I was inclined to exercise caution.

Abu Riziq told me that the match had been made via one of his wife Um Riziq's maternal aunts. This aunt had a friend and coworker in the school where she taught (who happened to be her paternal aunt) who told Um Riziq that their paternal aunt had a daughter in university ready for marriage. Following this initial contact, a number of discrete meetings had taken place to arrange the details. He made a point of telling me that, unlike the old days when the bridewealth was negotiated at the actual delegation, this had all been arranged in advance and would be purely a formality. Just then, he got a phone call from the father of the bride. After an exchange of effusive praise, they began to discuss the arrangements for the delegation. Abu Riziq complained that he was doing his part to keep the event "simple." He had only invited his relatives on his father's side and not those on his mother's side. However, he claimed he was unsure if anyone was coming since various people were inevitably mad at various other people and/or upset that various other people had not been invited. It quickly became apparent that they were arguing about who would be responsible for all of the different expenses associated with the delegation. Abu Riziq had already agreed to spend 100 Jordanian Dinar⁶⁰ on sweets and Pepsi for the event. However, the family of the bride wanted him to contribute more for chairs. Abu Riziq responded by listing all of the things he had already bought to facilitate the marriage (focusing on the house) and complaining that, given the nature of his work in construction, he was unsure how his family would survive through the winter when such work is unavailable. He openly considered doing what would be *ḥarām* (unlawful/forbidden) by taking out interest loans to facilitate the whole thing.

The father of the bride tried to defend his position by focusing on what he had spent. Abu Riziq was none too impressed. When the father said he would be renting a suit for JD 100, Abu Riziq snapped back, "I could *buy* a suit for that much." When he got off the phone (having

agreed to pay for more chairs), he seemed more incensed by the consumption habits of his future in-laws than the financial imposition. “The problem is women,” he said. I pondered the seeming non-sequitur and stared back at him waiting for an explanation. As I suspected, there was a whole extra layer to the dispute: “She wants to spend JD 20 on a slip. Do you understand? JD 20 for underwear! I’ve never paid any attention to clothes⁶¹. What’s the point? If you buy nice clothes, they’re worthless after a year anyway since the style is always changing. But these women get together and they all ask each other [adopting a feminine voice], ‘oh and where did you buy that? How much did it cost? What Salon did you go to?’ ‘Oh, I went to a Salon in Shmeisani [a wealthy neighborhood in the capital city]. I went to *al-bissa al-nayima* (the sleeping kitty).” Abu Riziq's complaints about his future in-laws with their effete and feminized urban consumption patterns emphasize the complexity of the exchanges which surround any match and the ways in which they inexorably draw in a wide range of family members into more or less onerous relationships.

By now, it should be apparent that Abu and Um Riziq's son Riziq and his future wife are rather incidental to this story in many ways. The account will only continue to drag in even more actors. The delegation and the two “sides” it constructs are rather sprawling *agencements* (Callon 2005; MacKenzie 2009) in which agency⁶² is highly distributed. At first glance, the whole ritual seems to work to bolster the position of the most senior male. However, upon further investigation, it becomes clear that many people can only occupy that position through an almost

⁶¹ Generally, the groom's family is expected to provide the bride's clothing. In some cases, it even gets counted as part of the bridewealth. I have seen a number of recent contracts which listed JD 500 for clothing as part of the upfront bridewealth payment. At the same time, I have also noted resistance among the employees of the Sharia Court to including it. In my experience, unless the families were of high social status, applicants were counseled that, “the clothes are between you.”

⁶² I acknowledge that the word “agency” carries a fair amount of baggage with it, but I can think of no less-problematic alternative term. I would only ask that the reader to remember that I, following Saba Mahmood, use the term with the understanding that “it is crucial to detach the notion of agency from the goals of progressive politics” (1995:14). For a thorough discussion of issues of agency and resistance among Bedouin women, I recommend Lila Abu Lughod's (2000) *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Piety in a Bedouin Society*.

complete surrender of self. Following Donald MacKenzie, it is necessary to avoid “focusing exclusively on what one might call action’s glamorous agential peaks” (2009:22).

The Procession (Al-Farida)

The next afternoon, we assembled at 2:45 to prepare for the trip to the bride’s house to make the request. Despite Abu Riziq’s dire predictions, there were soon about 25 men assembled and even more women and children sitting in their area. Abu Riziq had rented a bus for the women who could not fit in the cars. All told, the procession involved a bus, two vans, and about eight cars. As the procession began to move, the women began clapping and singing. It was hard to make out exactly what the words were since the voices of the children tended to overwhelm the older women who actually knew the songs but it was clear that they mostly consisted of lightly risqué⁶³ teasing of various men. This was most clear when a girl began one of the verses “...and bring Geoff...” only to have everyone halt abruptly to consider the propriety of the previous statement. Her father chimed in and they continued with the song—switching next to sing about him.

Arriving, the guests filed into the tent that had been set up for the occasion. We were situated on a hill overlooking high-rise apartments on all sides in a relatively open area. After we were all seated, Abu Yehea (the most senior representative of the community) addressed the representative of the bride: “The messenger of God (peace be upon him) said, ‘A woman is normally sought as a wife for her lineage, wealth, beauty, or religiousness, but choose a religious woman and you will prosper.’ We are from the such-and-such tribe and we have come to you [the such-and-such tribe] to ask for—what’s her name Abu Riziq?” “Noor.” “Noor to marry our son Riziq.” With that, the representative of the bride’s family stood up and asked, “do you accept

⁶³ There are divergent opinions on whether various wedding songs have sexual connotations. So, for instance, some people think that there are sexual overtones to the women’s song about getting ready for “the Indian needle” while others say that it “doesn’t mean anything at all. They’re just words to fit the meter of the song.”

the bridewealth and terms we agreed on?” Abu Yehea nodded and drank the cup of coffee he had been poured to signify his acceptance. With that, they recited the opening verse of the Quran and began pouring coffee for everyone. Soon, the house erupted with the women’s ullulation and the male relatives of the bride began passing out *kanāfa* (a sweet cheese-based pastry) and Pepsi. I made small talk with my neighbors (who quizzed me on what had just happened to make sure I had grasped the significance of each part in the ritual) and was soon put into service entertaining Riziq’s army buddies, who were relative strangers at the event.

Within an hour, we were hurrying out to the car for the ride home. There was some shifting of places such that my friend Abu Riziq’s sisters ended up riding with their brother Abu Mahmud and me. We also ended up with the drum—ensuring a festive ride home. As we began to move, we heard celebratory gunfire in the background as Abu Riziq’s sisters sang songs about their brothers and me--highlighting their traditional matchmaking roles as sisters and female relatives. When they weren’t singing, they were pointing to every non-veiled woman on the street and saying, “look. There’s your girlfriend, Abu Mahmud!”

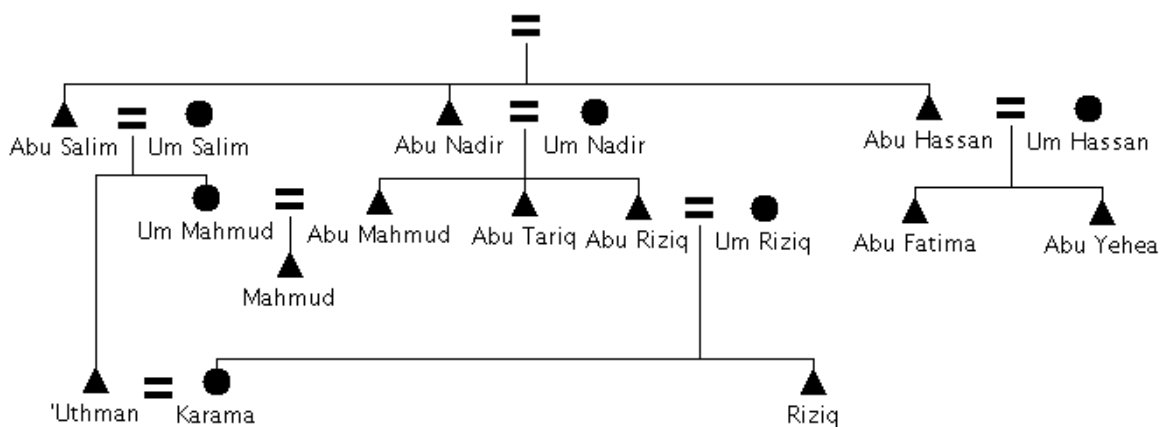


Figure 6: An abbreviated family tree including those descendents of “Musa.” It only includes those relevant to the ethnographic account.

“*He came to me like a thief in the night*”⁶⁴

The *jāha* seemingly distributes agency and cognition while having a hyper-individuating effect on a handful of older male figures. Such a man is called a sheikh, *wijih al-jama‘a* (the face of the group) or simply *al-kabīr* (the big man). In the ethnographic literature on Melanesia, the concept of the “big man” has come in for some useful reconsideration and critique. Roy Wagner describes an outdated view of the big man as “an emperor of social friction who uses society against itself to reinstate the essential individual at the top of the heap.” It is indisputable that some men are able to live up to this ideal. However, I appreciate the manner in which Wagner seeks to draw our attention to other ways of thinking about the relationship between individual and society or collective. He argues that we must keep in mind the possibility of a genealogical view of personhood in which “person as human being and person as lineage or clan are equally arbitrary sectionings or identifications of this enchainment, different projections of its fractality” (Wagner 1991:163). For instance, in this particular case, I found little evidence outside the delimited bounds of the *jāha* that Abu Yehea in his role as “sheikh of the such-and-such tribe” was more than a projection of other agencies. Abu Yehea had no ability as a mere individual to find a suitable match for Riziq--much less marry the couple. In fact, he could only take on his position as sheikh through his surrender of self to the judgment of the group. This fits with a larger pattern in which people are defined relationally⁶⁵ rather than as bearers of distinctive and coherent identities. Relevant here is the tendency of Jordanians to refer to each other as *Abu* (father of-) and *Um* (mother of-) their eldest son. At the same time, Jordanians tend to refer

⁶⁴ The diagram is highly abbreviated and is only meant to display relations between people mentioned in the ethnographic vignettes by name. Siblings are ordered from youngest to oldest (left to right). A full family tree of the descendants of “Musa” would include upwards of seventy people. “*Karāma*” is a name used out of respect on printed materials like wedding invitations to avoid writing the name of an unmarried girl. Here, I use it because, while all names have been changed, I want to highlight the fact that I was never directly told certain people’s names.

⁶⁵ In “Intimate Selving,” (1999) Suad Joseph gives a broader illustration of this phenomenon based on fieldwork conducted in Beirut. She shows how brothers and sisters come to see themselves relationally through a long process of socialization in the home environment.

constantly to their membership in groups named after particular apical ancestors—from each of whom buds a distinct *shajirat al-‘a’ila* (family tree). Thus personhood itself is distributed. So, for example, a fight between Abu Yehea’s grandson and a neighbor angry with the boy for peeping into his house was described to me by the latter as “the problem with Abu Yehea’s house.”

When we arrived home, I went to greet Abu Yehea's brother Abu Fatima who had been unable to attend the delegation. We soon turned to discussing the engagement and the finer points of matchmaking in Jordan. What was interesting about this conversation is the way in which it focused on the need to keep women from the same family together through repeated exchanges and also on the need for marriage exchanges to ultimately be reversed (a family that gives a wife to another family should, eventually, also take a wife from them). Abu Fatima pointed out a very practical reason (at least from a male perspective) for arranging a series of marriages from related women given the patrilocal settlement patterns which predominate in Jordan: “If the mothers are all sisters, then our sons will be able to go into any house they want and not be ashamed.”

We went over to join the festivities at Abu Riziq’s house: so much for his earlier claim that he wanted a “simple” delegation and no engagement party at his own house. Since the party was exclusively for the family, the in-laws would likely never be the wiser. The men were once again seated on the roof of his son’s house chatting, smoking and drinking tea. I took the opportunity to engage Abu Riziq in conversation about the whole affair. I began by asking if he could write down the *hadīth* or saying of the prophet that his cousin Abu Yehea had used to make the proposal. First, however, Abu Riziq made clear to me that that was not the *sīgha* (formula) that he would have used. He continued, “Abu Yehea is older so I couldn’t say

anything. If I were making the request, I would have said, ‘we’d love to request a pony from you. But a pony which eats with her hand—not a pony which eats with her mouth.’ But there are many of these formulas. They all mean the same thing. There’s no difference. It’s like ‘welcome,’ ‘hello,’ and ‘good morning’: they’re all greetings. How would you make this kind of request Salameh [Abu Mahmud]?”

Abu Mahmud, however, instead explained the history of his own marriage and what his older brother Abu Riziq had said to his bride’s father (their father’s brother): “Abu Riziq said, ‘He doesn’t have a house, he doesn’t have a job, he doesn’t have any money, and he can’t give you any bridewealth but you can have him if you want.’” Abu Riziq explained, “Salameh [Abu Mahmud] is a troublemaker now, but he’s not like before. Salameh was a wild animal. He would go and sleep in the caves. He would do whatever he wanted. He was like February: hot/cold, hot/cold. He’s a lot like that young man over there.” At this moment, Abu Riziq pointed to Abu Mahmud’s brother-in-law ‘Uthman: a young man who was obviously courting Abu Riziq’s daughter and would later marry her (see the family tree above). Abu Riziq continued, “‘Uthman came to me like a thief in the night.” Abu Riziq smiled as he adopted a groveling, sycophantic tone and, looking at ‘Uthman, said “How are you doing uncle. I’d like to marry your daughter, uncle. I don’t have any money, uncle.” Everyone laughed at this, but nobody laughed harder than ‘Uthman himself.

The conversation soon took an unexpected turn as people began to enquire more about the family of the bride and Abu Riziq mentioned that, “ten years ago, there was nothing in [their rapidly developing neighborhood in Amman]. Now you see how it’s all built up, right? Well, that old man has a lot of land. The men will get five dunums each (5,000 square meters).” This raises an interesting question about the degree to which the vagaries of the Amman real estate market

are driving marital strategies. Is this an opening gambit by Abu Riziq meant to give one of his younger daughters the option of marrying someone with tens (or more likely hundreds) of thousands of dollars worth of property and, by extension, ensuring some of his grandsons a place to build their homes?

The forces driving the marriages of young men like Riziq, Uthman, and Salameh far exceed the men themselves—or even the senior males who act out the ‘agential peak’ of the ritual drama surrounding the delegation. This applies, differentially, in distant marriages like Riziq’s and closer marriages like Uthman’s and Salameh’s. Whereas the latter two matches obviate many of the cognitive challenges posed by the former by offering matches where the woman and her family are well-known to senior males, they also introduce higher stakes for various relatives and junior males—who may have their own reasons for promoting a particular match. Women may want to ensure they marry in such a way that they can reside with close kin who can serve as allies. Young people may develop intense affective bonds and demand that their families accept their choices. Entire families may decide a close marriage is preferable because it obviates the need to observe higher standards of modesty and/or preserves family property intact. More distant marriages introduce different economic considerations (like the possibility of acquiring land and titles through savvy marital strategies), but might also be shaped by many of the same considerations as a close marriage—although motives become more opaque as the number of interested intermediaries between the two families increases. No matter what the arrangement, though, it is very hard to imagine such a ritual for the creation of a marital bond as an exchange between *individuals* (whether the couple or the senior males) operating with full information and the absence of constraint.

“I would have spit in their faces”

Yet this type of marital rite is an exchange nonetheless and as such it seems important to, following Marilyn Strathern, ask about *The Gender of the Gift*. Continuing with some of the Melanesian literature on personhood, it is important to note that, “the multiple, paritable nature of persons’ constitutions is revealed in its internal relations. In the mother’s case, this is made explicit in (say) the further contextualization of herself within enveloping male exchanges. It is only in retrospect that identification with the mother can be revealed as having had an effect on the life of the nurtured object of her regard” (Strathern 1988: 321). The key point is that gender is less an identity and more of a relationship. This relationship can involve bodies, it can involve things, and it can even involve relationships themselves: marriage itself can become gendered. In the conclusion of the previous vignette, there was a focus on patrilineal (agnatic) parallel cousin marriage (the matches between Abu Mahmud and Um Mahmud and Uthman’s impending marriage). The following vignette will focus on a matrilineal (uterine) marriage involving Abu Fatima’s daughter. Notably, the sheikh’s claim to speak on behalf of the group becomes far more contentious on the men’s side when the marriage is designed to strengthen female kin bonds. For some, the ritual’s near-failure even calls the entire legitimacy of the match into question.

We arrived at 6:45 in the evening to await the arrival of the visiting *jāha* at 7:00. When it got to be about 7:30, we were informed that they were still a good hour away—and probably more with the traffic. I did my best to try and figure out the relationships between the attendees, quickly ascertaining that the bride and groom were cousins through the mother’s side. Finally, at 9:00, the guests arrived. This was late even by Jordanian standards. Everyone stood as the dignitaries filed in and the younger men stood in the doorway and greeted the guests. For the life of me, I could not tell who the groom was supposed to be. We sat down and Abu Yehea (the elder brother of the bride's father), welcomed the guests and poured them coffee. Attention

focused on two elderly men who sat at the far wall facing the door. The man in charge took the coffee and said, “okay, let’s get on with this. We’re here to discuss the marriage of [name of groom] and... what’s her name?” A number of people quickly said, “Fatima.” The old men then began to talk about all manner of unrelated things: the weather, goats, and similar pabulum. At some point, Abu Yehea interjected: “we still haven’t discussed the bridewealth.” The old men asked, “how much are you asking for?” I was pretty sure this was not how it was supposed to work. Abu Yehea told them 3000 Dinar and they protested that it was too much and began trying to negotiate.

The tension was so thick you could cut it with a knife, yet it was also totally sublimated beneath a polite veneer. One of the other guests joked that he had asked for far less for most of his daughters—with the exception of the one who married through the matriline (for whom he required far more). Most people looked uncomfortable. Nonetheless, soda and sweets were passed around and the trills could be heard in the distance. The gathering dragged on to the point where I felt like I was being rescued when my friend Abu Tariq beckoned towards me from the doorway. When I went to visit Abu Tariq's house the next day, he said not to write anything about it because it was completely wrong. I protested that sometimes people can learn a lot about what’s right from what’s wrong. Abu Tariq began to enumerate the shortcomings of the delegation for me. He noted that the other side arrived late and tried to negotiate the bridewealth. He said that, if he had been in his cousins’ places, he would have spat on their faces and kicked them out. He also claimed that the blame should go to his cousin Abu Yehea—who as the family’s representative was responsible for the debacle. Intrigued, Abu Tariq's sisters (who were sitting with us) asked for more details. When Abu Tariq added that they talked about goats everyone roared with laughter. Of course, I would later realize that there was more to Abu

Tariq's displeasure than mere felicity to the ritual template. The way Abu Tariq saw it, Abu Fatima, with two daughters and no male heir, was allowing his wife and her family to take land away from the family. Abu Tariq said, "Abu Fatima's wife is laughing at him. She's just happy he has some goats to keep him busy, but there's no *nātij* (product, productivity) so he can't marry another woman and have a son." As it stands, at least⁶⁶ half of his land and other assets will go back to his wife's family via his daughter when he dies.

While it is useful to enquire about the "gender of the gift," I must strongly emphasize that the Melanesian comparison can only be taken so far because what these authors oppose to the "Melanesian" conception of personhood (the so-called "Western" conception of the person as individual) finds its own forms of expression in contemporary Jordan in courthouse procedures. In this section, I have described the *jāha* in relative isolation from any sort of Islamic context because the delegation or *jāha* is, of course, a continuation of a pre-Islamic ritual practiced today by Muslim and Christian Jordanians alike. In many ways, the *jāha* fits uneasily with an increasingly articulate and textually-based Islamic revival that has produced zealous advocates for concepts like the individual, the collective and society. Energetic adherents of the Aristotelian tradition, they see their most cherished ideas as anything but hegemonic as they fight what they perceive as a prevailing culture of *jahiliyya* (ignorance) and *shirk* (polytheism). Saba Mahmood describes adherents of the Islamic revival as providing an "account which privileges neither relational nor the autonomous self so familiar to anthropologists... but a conception of individual ethics whereby each person is responsible for his or her own actions" (2005: 173). The *jāha* and the cultural logics it represents and instantiates must contend with forces like the Islamic revival that seek to exert an individuating influence. For members of the Islamic

⁶⁶ Assuming his wife outlived him, it would be more than half since his wife would also be entitled to a share according to Islamic law.

movement, individual choices take on a moral weight that they are seen to lack in either a purely tribal context or the *laissez-faire*, anything-goes, individualistic context they perceive to be emanating from the West. Nonetheless, in Jordan, the Sharia Courts are often foremost in counteracting tribal forms of moral agent like those constructed through the delegation with their emphasis on individual responsibility.

Court and Contract

The Jordanian Sharia Courts have grown out of a certain kind of a search for order. Yet their attempts to exert an individuating influence, to clarify the terms of marital agreements, enumerate the bridewealth and prevent the eruption of open tribal conflict have never been completely successful. To the degree that the courts have had this effect, it is a result of concerted effort over a long period of time. From Ottoman times to the present, courts have insinuated themselves more and more deeply into people's lives. Once an arbiter of last resort, Islamic courts now have the opportunity to have their representatives interact with virtually every married couple in the country. Yet to quote Ian Hacking, the Islamic regime of enumeration, record keeping, fact-finding, and arbitration has had "subversive effects" as well because, "enumeration demands *kinds* of things or people to count. Counting is hungry for categories. Many of the categories we now use are byproducts of the needs of enumeration" (1982: 280). As the marital exchange has been abstracted into a relationship between embodied individuals over a numerical quantity of bridewealth, it has yielded new moral agents. Aided by a new kind of artifact (the publicly stored contract which records a legally enforceable alimony payment) the marriage contracts of the Jordanian Sharia courts have become entangled in conflicts between the types of collective moral agents constructed by the delegation and the various embodied individuals court procedures tend to reify. In the next chapter, I will track the

ever deeper and more systemic ways in which the information infrastructure of the *contemporary* Sharia Courts are influencing Jordanian family life—especially as new procedures for the aggregation, storage, and circulation of data about marriage produce their own novel forms of collective voice and social criticism through statistics.

Contracts on the Margins

Jordan's marginal status in the Ottoman, colonial, and postcolonial periods has shaped the development of its Sharia Courts and their techniques for the legitimation of marital bonds and the collection, storage, and dissemination of information about those relationships. Historically, the courts repeatedly came into conflict with tribal marriage customs embodied in the delegation as they expanded their geographic jurisdiction to encompass Jordan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather than abating, such conflicts have continued as the courts have expanded their reach more deeply into the lives of Jordanian citizens. For instance, using itinerant notaries to encourage people to register their marriages represents both a compromise with local custom's constructions of gendered space and a challenge to those constructions. Yet the greater problem for the courts has always been enforcing their writ when conflicts emerge. The courthouse's ability to construct new kinds of moral agents does not mean those moral agents will win out against older ones. While such conflicts between differently constituted moral agents are not necessarily the norm, they can range from the mundane to the spectacular. Such conflicts provide an opportunity to better understand the conflicting forms of moral agents that these two contrasting procedures for the social recognition of marital bonds help produce.

Associated with urbanity, Sharia courts have generally taken considerably more interest in individuals in general and women in particular than tribal wedding delegations like the ones I

have described. In certain urban centers in the Middle East, the practice of writing marriage contracts actually goes back to pre-Islamic times. Highlighting such continuities between pre-Islamic and Islamic contractual procedures, the historian Amira Sonbol (2008) uses contracts and other court records to great effect to show how women in what is now Egypt were treated as legal persons in ways that Western women⁶⁷ would not be for over 1000 years. She portrays women representing themselves in court and often winning against recalcitrant husbands. Her archive of marriage contracts shows that women often stipulated elaborate conditions in their marriage contracts, which provided grounds for divorce and the payment of the *mahr* (bridewealth/alimony). Working closer to Jordan with a focus on Ottoman Syria and Palestine, the historian Judith Tucker (1998; 2008) notes that jurists saw themselves as continuing a reformist project epitomized by the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammed.

Arguably, key aspects of this reformist project (especially in the realm of marriage) were aimed at preventing abuses by powerful senior males and extended kin groups against figures like the girl of marriageable age—who were perceived by jurists as particularly vulnerable to exploitation. These jurists “took the notion of consent seriously” (Tucker 2008:43) and worried extensively about the malign influence that senior males might have on a woman’s marriage prospects (Tucker 1998:40-52). One of the four nineteenth century Palestinian jurists who Tucker profiles in *In the House of the Law*, “waged a campaign of sorts” against the various ways in which rural women often saw their *mahr* eaten up by their families and, especially, senior males (1998:54). Once married, jurists place the responsibility for the provision of the wife’s maintenance (*nafaqa*) squarely on the husband. If the husband was unable or unwilling to

⁶⁷ Sonbol makes a convincing case that, to some degree, the introduction of French legal theories both through direct colonial rule under Napoleon and later indirectly via the late Ottoman system and particularly the *tanzimat* (reorganization) reforms of the nineteenth century weakened the status of women. She notes, “this mention of ‘giving’ the bride’s ‘body’ to the groom constitutes the most important difference between French and Islamic contracts” (Sonbol 2008:109).

pay, the court would go so far as to empower the wife to borrow money on his behalf in the market—and then compel him to pay it back (Tucker 1998:58-62). Palestinian jurists in Ottoman times also took aim at more explicitly tribal customs that “reduced women to chattel, whose sole worth lay in their usefulness to immediate family honor or gain” (Tucker 1998:70). Among the more frequent targets in this regard were ‘marriage by capture,’ ‘bartering brides’, and attempts to annul marriages on the grounds that a bride’s broken hymen invalidated her claim to virginity (Tucker 1998:67-69). In each of these cases, a vulnerable individual becomes the rationale for checking the prerogatives of the broader kin group and its members.

The situation was certainly somewhat different in Jordan at least until the end of the nineteenth century⁶⁸. Surely, going to the trouble of recording a marriage with the courthouse in Jerusalem (about half a day's journey on-foot from the westernmost point in what is now Jordan) must have seemed a bit superfluous to people living across the river in Jordan where--by most accounts--the Ottomans could not even seem to prevent brigandry, tribal warfare and extortion. From the sixteenth to the late nineteenth century, a single Ottoman Sharia court in Jerusalem was theoretically responsible for all of what is now Jordan. Nevertheless, one could go to a courthouse and have one’s marriage recorded using a simple formula explaining that ‘so-and-so in the presence of their legal agent (*wakīl shira’ī*)’ was present for a marriage involving some amount of bridewealth/alimony. Much like Sonbol’s Egyptian contracts, the contractual arrangements in the Jerusalem registers could be quite detailed for important people. Yet even

⁶⁸ Lynn Welchman’s (1988) review of Jordanian family law draws attention to a number of key divergences between the Jordanian and Egyptian cases in the twentieth century. Strikingly, it turns out that the JLPS (Jordanian Law of Personal Status) lacks a number of the colonial-era practices that Sonbol critiques (namely with regards to preventing women from stipulating requirements in the contract and being compelled to obey their husbands by the state): requirements are not only allowed but have a dedicated space on the contract form and ideals of female “obedience” (*tā’a*) are unenforceable. At the same time, Welchman observes, “there appears to be an interesting tendency, in the JLPS in particular, towards achieving equality of the spouses under the law with regard to the claims they may raise, although this takes the form, paradoxically though it may seem, of provisions benefiting the husband rather than the wife” (1988:872).

after new courthouses were built in Salt, Ajloun and elsewhere, there is very little evidence of a rush to take advantage of them. Even with the consolidation of the courts in the 1920s under British colonial rule, they seem to have merely continued their visible but by no means ubiquitous presence in the marriage process (unless one believes that there were only about four to five thousand marriages happening every decade in central Jordan in the 1920s and 30s). During this period, the courts worked primarily through a system of itinerant notaries known as the *ma'dhunun*⁶⁹.

For some families, the *ma'dhun* may have seemed like a wonderful way to conduct the marriage contract without requiring the women of the house to leave the *muḥarrim* or protected space, yet not everyone has been so sanguine about the process. These men were (and are) respected members of the community recognized for their piety and learning. In general, employees at the Sharia Courts explained that the more *muḥāfiẓ* (conservative) families preferred to use the *ma'dhun* rather than take a female family member to the courthouse. Even here, however, there were sensitivities involved that continued to cause friction at the time of fieldwork. For instance, while the contemporary courts have tried to introduce a rotation for the *ma'dhunun*, I often observed in my fieldwork that people would discard the business card they had been given by the courts and choose a *ma'dhun* who was a friend of the family. In doing so, families challenged the state's attempt to mandate that female members interact with a strange man of the state's choosing. In one case, a man boasted to me that his family was powerful enough to get married using the *ma'dhun* with whom they had a preexisting relationship—despite the fact that the most recent enlargement of the Greater Amman Municipality had pulled

⁶⁹ My information on the history of the itinerant notaries comes from a mixture of oral history and the documents themselves. Many of them come from families that are still respected in the area to this day. For a few, I can even track their peregrinations from village to village as they move along discernible circuits that I continue to use to travel to this day.

them into a completely different administrative district from the courthouse with which the notary was associated. There was one kin group in particular that was widely understood to share a collective familial dislike for the entire concept of the *ma'dhun*: the Saba'awi tribe from Bir Saba' in Palestine. As I heard a surprising number of times from members of the group and others in the community, this family preferred to go to the courts rather than bring a representative of the government into their homes. Various Saba'awi explained to me (often with some pride), that their family had not even used the courts until the 1980s.

Even members of groups that were quicker to adopt the use of government-issued paper contracts expressed some skepticism about the whole process, implying that it was invasive, coercive, and infringed on the family's independent prerogatives. One man suggested, it was the introduction of public services like schools in the 1950s and 1960s which made the marriage contracts so important: "you take your child to school and the principal asks, 'where is your family notebook'⁷⁰ (*daftar al-'ā'ila*)?' You go to the Interior Ministry and they ask you 'where is your marriage contract?' Then they send you to the Sharia Courts." Here, three post-independence state-building projects conspired to push families to incorporate the Sharia Courts into their marital arrangements: the move towards universal compulsory schooling, the 1951 Jordanian Law of Family Rights (the basis for the revamped contract form) and Law 32 of 1966, which established the contemporary Civil Status and Passport Department and the system of family notebooks for which they are responsible. Over time, most families have responded by opting to get official marriage contracts. Even the earlier Saba'awi practice of going to the courts for a certificate (*tasdiq*) of marriage to obtain the family notebook has fallen into disuse.

Graphic Artifacts

⁷⁰ When children are born, they are added into their father's family notebook. Upon marriage, they are moved from their father's family notebook to a new family notebook for the newly formed family.

The contemporary marriage contract is, in fact, far more than a mere record of marriages. The contract is a pre-printed form which, to quote Matthew Hull, “precipitate[s] the formation of shifting networks and groups of people inside and outside the bureaucracy” (2003: 291). There is much to be gained by studying *sajilāt* and marriage contracts as what Hull has called “graphic artifacts.” Hull argues that, for too long, there has been a tendency to treat bureaucratic documents as merely more stable instantiations of the spoken word without paying attention to the broad diversity of genres of bureaucratic communication and the fact that, “each genre has its own pattern of use, distinct formal discursive characteristics, orienting frameworks, interpretive procedures, temporality, and sets of expectations through which readers produce and make sense of it.” This is to say nothing of qualities of the document like size, shape, and the way in which it is allowed to circulate (Hull 2003: 292-293). Following Hull, it is useful to inquire about local “graphic ideologies” that, like semiotic ideologies (Keane 2003) and language ideologies (Silverstein 1979), have constituted Islamic court documents as socially meaningful artifacts. To the degree that the courthouse is largely a site for the production, storage, retrieval, and interpretation of graphic artifacts, it implies that *sajilāt* and marriage contracts play an important role in catalyzing these new forms of moral agent⁷¹.

⁷¹ All of this begins to paint a picture of the *sajilāt* and contracts as a tantalizing source of data for social history which, nonetheless, defies a naïve reading. As Dror Ze’evi, Annelies Moors, and Judith Tucker argue, contracts cannot be taken at face value. Ze’evi writes that the *sajilāt* are in fact “carefully constructed legal narratives in which the legal aspect, although invisible to the reader, is still the essence of the record” (1998: 38). This legal aspect, however, is itself open to investigation as there is no reason to believe that a single uniform set of precepts prevailed across the Ottoman Empire and much reason to suspect hybrids of Islamic law and parochial custom (Layish 1991). Ze’evi explores some of the problems with various methodologies for studying contracts. Quantitative methods are problematic because we have no way of knowing what kind of sampling of the larger population they provide. Most importantly, numbers like bridewealth and age may actually reflect public perceptions of what court officials want to hear—not the details of actual historical marital arrangements between families. The use of court records to construct narrative history is at least as problematic. The *sajilāt* and contracts provide a sort of factual Rorschach test: a series of disjointed bits of information that verily cry out for narration. Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, we can actually be pretty sure that the various scraps of data that we find in court records were carefully curated to construct a ‘legal narrative’—the conventions of which we almost certainly fail to comprehend at the moment.

The moral weight of court procedures and their ability to produce new kinds of agents became apparent to me long before I arrived at the courthouse. When I expressed an interest in marriage and social change in Jordan, I was repeatedly told by men of the increasing prevalence of *zawāj urfī* (literally customary marriage)—or the related, *zawāj friend* (note the code switch). The terminology reflects the shifting familial dynamics and assumptions about governance that this chapter is meant to interrogate. "Customary" here simply refers to the fact that no copy is registered with the government. But in the context of rapid urbanization, sexual revolution and the decreasing power of the extended family in certain quarters, the meanings attributed to different kinds of archival procedures surrounding contracts are not the same as they would have been 100 years ago. I was told that both customary and "friend" marriages were marriages which, while ostensibly Islamic (with witnesses, a contract, etc.) were fundamentally exploitative since, crucially, the signing was conducted in secret and the contract was not registered with the government—thus giving the woman very little recourse if her "husband" grew tired of the relationship.

Yet there is an increasing polarization of what such a relationship looks like, with "customary" marriage standing in for the threat of tribalism leading to women's exploitation while "friend" marriage stands in for the threat posed by liberalization and westernization. With "customary" marriages, it is assumed that couples are not registering their marriages with the state because of illiteracy, suspicion of the state, or adherence to traditional patriarchal values. With regard to the threat posed by "friend" marriages, two relatively novel scenarios figured prominently—both of which could be taken directly from a racy Egyptian soap opera. In the frequent impassioned denunciations I heard of marriages involving these relative cosmopolitans that were nonetheless either secret or merely unregistered, my interlocutors differentiated

between cases where 1) “This is something that happens among the ‘open-minded’ (*infītāhī*). You have college students and a kind of love story (*qisat-al-ḥub*) and they want to have relations so they make an agreement with their friends acting as witnesses” and 2) “This is a form of exploitation. You have a boss who wants to have relations with his secretary. But he’s married and he’s afraid of his wife so he won’t marry the secretary. But he also doesn’t want to commit adultery (*zinā*). He wants to ease his mind so he makes her sign a piece of paper. When he’s tired of her, he can tear it up. He thinks he can laugh at our Lord but really he’s only laughing at himself.”

For residents of a highly bureaucratized society, it is easy to take for granted the idea that a piece of paper could bring the repressive powers of the state to bear on a recalcitrant husband-- or forestall the imposition of those repressive powers. No doubt, that is part of the appeal of a secret marriage contract that can be pulled out should the couple be discovered. Yet in Jordan, as elsewhere, this has only been accomplished through a long period of negotiation as various precedents have emerged for understanding the complex entailments of court documents. Even government-backed legal documents may prove no match for the prerogatives of the extended kin group. The anthropologist, sometime intelligence officer and sometime opposition politician Ahmad ‘Uwaid ‘Abaddi offers one example of this process of negotiation in his doctoral dissertation:

In the summer of 1980, a Bedouin (A) became betrothed to a Bedouin girl (B) for a stated bridewealth (*mahr*). The contract (*aqd al-nikah*) took place according to shari’ah law (which made her legally his wife), but the *mahr* was still as yet unpaid to her father (C), so according to the ‘*awayid* [customs] they were still unmarried).

(A) had sexual intercourse with (B) while she was living at her father’s home before the wedding had taken place. After a few months it appeared that she was pregnant. Her father was furious, and, went to the civil courts to complain. They rejected the case since it was within the shari’ah’s jurisdiction. The shari’ah

refused to hear the case, since (B) was legally (A)'s wife. (C) finally went to the *Muhafiz* [Governor] of Amman to report the incident. The *Muhafiz* took action to prevent the dispute from getting out of hand, and referred the case to three arbiters. By chance, I was in his office for my fieldwork. He invited me to act as the fourth arbiter. The final decision we arrived at was that:

“although A's action was theoretically legal, correct behavior is not to have intercourse with the fiancée until after a public wedding (*urs*)... Since (A) committed this act secretly at (C's) house, (A) must pay all the outstanding *mahr* [bridewealth] and should send a big *jahah* to (C) and make a feast of conciliation, with food, contributed by the notables of the two parties. He also had to pay a fine of 300JD for *hurmat al-bayt* [inviolability of the home] of C. He was required to swear an oath that he had not had sexual intercourse with (B) before the marriage contract was signed, so as to secure her and her sisters' reputation, otherwise the sisters chances of marriage would suffer because of his action. (A) must take B to his house, as a wife, immediately after the *Jahah*” (Al-Abbadi 2006: 103)

A couple of things are striking about this passage. First, the bureaucracy appears completely uninterested until the matter rises to the level of a threat to public security. However, once activated, government officials are forced to contend with the gap between “theoretically legal” and “correct behavior.” A whole string of obligations and entailments involving various networks and groups of people emerge: the bridewealth, the wedding, the father's sense of entitlement to *hurmat al-bayt* and the sisters' reputations. As late as 1980, these are ultimately determined not according to *sharia* but rather according to an explicitly tribal framework which relates these prerogatives to the enactment of non-documentary as opposed to documentary rituals. When faced with a potential riot by the outraged family of the bride, the governor is quick to rule that the wedding and the transfer of bridewealth take priority over the paperwork.

Even when I was conducting fieldwork in 2012, the governor's office continued to serve an integral role in solving problems for which the documentary procedures of the courts were ill-equipped. One of the most notable sources of tension was the Court's requirement that a female virgin must have her legal guardian (*wāli 'amr*) present to sign his consent to her marriage on the

contract⁷². The early 21st century system of the creation and legitimation of marital bonds is striking for its individuating tendencies and the ways in which it keeps the extended family in check. The Islamic regime of marital obligations highlights individual consent: without the consent of both bride and groom, there can be no marriage. The contract works to constitute explicit undeniable indexical linkages (signatures, thumbprints and stamps) between all of the concerned parties and a written rendition of the agreement. The codification of male privilege remains through the requirement for the consent of the *wāli* 'amr, but in a much more limited sense: once a woman has ceased to be a virgin, she can act on her own behalf as her father no longer has any legal standing. Even as a virgin, the broader prerogatives of her extended family are completely unrecognized. For a virgin to marry, she needs nothing other than the consent of her guardian (*wāli*). Yet whereas a woman is supposedly represented (if at all) by the nebulous figure of the *sheikh* in the delegation, the *wāli* is an incredibly well-delimited figure in contemporary Jordanian law. It is her father. In the absence of her father, her guardian is her brother. In the absence of her brother, it is her father's brother and, should there be no father's brother, following the patriline by degrees of separation potentially ad infinitum. While reform-minded Muslims envision the guardian as defending the woman's rights by checking the excesses of a preexisting tribal order that they view as backwards and oppressive towards women⁷³, difficulties may emerge when a woman and her guardian disagree about her marital prospects. Without this concurrence between the woman and her guardian, the Sharia courts generally refuse to involve themselves, necessitating the intervention of the governor's office.

⁷² As Sonbol notes, there is actually a difference of opinion on this point among the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence: Malikis and Shafi'is require a male guardian's consent for *all* first marriages while the Hanafi school allows women to marry on their own behalf once they have reached majority (*bulugh*). As is generally the case, the current Jordanian family law privileges the Maliki view.

⁷³ Sonbol's treatment of pre-Islamic marriage contracts and her convincing arguments about the continuities between pre-Islamic and Islamic contracts in what is now Egypt seriously problematizes this characterization (2008:87-94).

When I met Muhammed (an employee at the governor's office) while visiting with a friend from the Sharia courts, he immediately drew the connection between my interest in marriage and his office. As everyone knows, the governor's office is where people go when they want to elope. We sat together discussing the basics of the procedure: "If you want *'zawāj shara'ī* [note: this means both a Sharia marriage and a legal marriage], you need the permission of the girl's guardian (*wāli 'amr*). But sometimes, a boy and a girl run away from their parents and they come to the office of the governorate and the governor marries them to prevent a tribal conflict. Then they have to leave and go live somewhere else. They're married, but it's not an Islamic marriage." Another guest was incredulous, but Muhammed explained, "See, she's already been opened [lost her virginity]. Then they come to us and we try to fix the problem before it widens."

Khaled: But it's not *shara'ī* (legal/Sharia-compliant)?

Muhammed: No. It's not. [Turning to me] Who told you about this? Did [Muhammed's cousin] tell you about this?

Me: I mean, I've seen it. This one time I was sitting with Hussein [a contract writer and key consultant] and he got a phone call. There was a case like this at the Governorate office. There was a problem between the families but the father had agreed to come and give permission so Hussein hurried over to give them a *shara'ī* marriage. Maybe you remember this case? It was a few months ago...

Muhammed: Yes. I do.

Me: So how many people marry this way every month?

Muhammed: It differs. We get more when the weather is hot. It warms the blood... I'll give you an annual rate: 8-10 per year.

Me: Only in Madaba? What about other places like Amman? It must be more, right?

Muhammed: See, you have to remember that this is a tribal area. Amman is different. It's more like America with autonomous families. In Amman and Zarqa, they have different procedures (*ijra'āt*). Normally, there, a girl will go with a man

for a while. Later she wants her rights and she goes to the police and says he raped her (*ightasha*). Then it's a case of rape (*ightasab*) and it's a criminal case and it has to be solved using criminal procedures. Here if, God forbid, there was a rape, it would widen quickly. The whole tribe would stand up. There would be killing. So we have to solve the problem quickly. If a girl disappears, they go to the police immediately. The police come and they talk to her mother. Normally, the mother knows who her lover is. The father doesn't know but the mother does. Then the police go and find her lover. They bring him to the police station and talk to him. Then we bring the two to the governor's and we marry them. It's not a legal solution (*hāl qānūnī*) it's an administrative solution (*hāl idārī*). To give you an example: if, God forbid, someone from the Showabkeh [tribe] *khatifa*⁷⁴ (kidnapped/eloped with) someone from the Azaydeh [tribe], there would be tribal clashes (*mushājira 'asha'iriyya*). We would have to find them quickly before the problem widened. Each area is different with its own customs and traditions and so the procedures of each governorate is different.

Unable to accept certain tribal mores but not powerful enough to suppress them, the Sharia Courts are forced to yield some of their jurisdictional prerogatives to the Governor's office to this day. The attitude of Muhammed and the Governor's office more generally is at odds with that of the courts insofar as it elides or outright dismisses concerns over individual consent (of the woman, but also her father and her prospective husband). Yet this was viewed by such officials (whatever their religious commitments) as a necessary compromise with the regime of personhood epitomized by the *jāha*. Here, the Jordanian state reveals itself to be unsure as to whether or not (and to what degree) every group member's sexual liaisons are a collective concern.

Conclusion: 'The strong among us ate up the weak'

Such tribal sensibilities are far from hegemonic in the Jordanian context. In fact, plenty of people find them constraining and backwards in relationship to what they see as a progressive

⁷⁴ There is an urgent need for more ethnographic research about *khatifa*. As Cynthia Werner's (2004; 2009) exemplary ethnographic work shows, "a number of ambiguities make it difficult to determine whether or not a kidnapping case is 'consensual' or 'nonconsensual.' There is no single question that gets at this issue" (2004:82). Currently in Jordan, there is growing controversy about Jordan's Article 308, which allows an accused rapist to avoid prison by marrying the woman. While some women's groups are now organizing to change the law, others argue that changing the law will take away women's ability to lose their virginity in order to force their parents to accept a particular match that they would otherwise oppose (Hattar 2012).

and empowering Islamic revival. For most Jordanians (and most contemporary Muslims in the Arab world), Islam does not exist in a void: it enters the world historically in a context of extreme ignorance while promising avenues for progress. As I will argue in part three, in the language of the contemporary Islamic movement, this pre- or un-Islamic world is a world of *jāhiliyya* (ignorance), defined by male forms of desire, aggression, and sociality run amok. In Jordan especially, tribalism is an especially salient manifestation of this *jāhiliyya*. In contrast, the Islamic golden age of the Prophet Muhammed and the rightly-guided caliphs is taken to represent a particular historical moment which transcended the base injustices which came before it and after it. Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, one of the companions of the prophet, famously described the shift thusly:

"We used to worship idols and eat carrion flesh; we practiced fornication, we disregarded family ties, we neglected the duties of hospitality, and the strong among us ate up the weak. Thus we continued until Allah sent us a Messenger of our own number, of whose descent we know, and whose truthfulness, faith and chastity are unquestioned. He summoned us to Allah, to believe in Him as One God, to worship Him, and to repudiate what we and our fathers worshiped apart from Him in the way of stones and idols. He bade us tell the truth in our conversation, observe good faith in ties of kindred, be faithful to our hospitable duties, and refrain from eating the forbidden foods and blood. He forbade us to practice fornication and to use false speech, to eat up the property of orphans and to slander chaste women."

In quoting this passage, the Muslim Brotherhood thinker Said Qutb adds that, since this description was uttered in the presence of two envoys from the Quraish (the foremost tribe amongst the erstwhile persecutors of the early Muslims) and they did not object to Abi Talib's account, "this must be a true and reliable description of the former state of affairs and of the new" (2000 [1953]: 174).

It is no accident that the passage turns on the repudiation of what 'we and our fathers worshiped... in the way of stones and idols.' As early as Al-Kalbi's eighth century scholarship on

pre-Islamic religion, *The Book of Idols* (Kitāb Al-Aṣnām), Muslims have drawn a strong connection between pre-Islamic idolatry and tribalism. According to this account, Mecca was a market town and cult center that hosted a number of tribal totems representing the various patriline⁷⁵. Due to its religious association, it was supposedly a sort of island of tranquility in the midst of a Hobbesian war of all against all. The world of the "Age of Ignorance" was, I have been told repeatedly, a world in which families would bury their newborn daughters alive lest they suffer the shame of having them kidnapped and raped in subsequent raiding. In the stories contemporary proponents of the Islamic Revival tell themselves about themselves, the Age of Ignorance was an era of male privilege run amok which could only be corrected by divine intervention in the form of God's messenger Muhammed.

For those who support the contemporary Islamic revival, ignorance is a recurring problem that must be defeated once again. Just as Al-Kalbi narrates the devolution of Abrahamic monotheism into a perverted and exploitative state of perpetual warfare, Qutb and other contemporary Islamic activists see themselves as heirs to a luminous Islamic tradition, which has become tarnished over the years and needs revitalization. As we will see, employees at the Sharia courts took this duty to protect the weak (here defined as women and children) quite seriously. The system of guardianship is deeply paternalistic, but its proponents justify it as a necessary response to the realities of power differentials within actually existing family structures. As employees of the courts made clear to me, women and men may be equal before God, but the exigencies of their lives require that they be treated differently by the courts. In promoting such a rationale for the formation and expansion of Sharia Courts, the production of

⁷⁵ Ghada Karmi (1996) challenges this mainstream view of pre-Islamic Arabia, arguing that there was in fact a diversity of kin forms prior to the advent of Islam and that Islam catalyzed a shift away from matrilineality and matrilocality.

increasingly abstract and individuated moral agents like the virgin and the guardian continues to challenge and be challenged by the forms of personhood that the delegation embodies.

Chapter 4: The Courthouse

Where the tribal delegation no doubt seems picturesque and unfamiliar, the procedures at the courthouse might initially appear quite mundane and commonsensical to those otherwise familiar with bureaucratic state societies. Yet a closer examination reveals the deeply subversive effects⁷⁶ of the contemporary system for the collection, storage, aggregation, and dissemination of information about marriage. Whereas the last chapter focused on the individuating tendencies of marriage contracts and court procedures more broadly, this chapter will focus more on the ways in which the knowledge practices of the courts array these individuals in a very precise configuration that enables the emergence of different *kinds* of people. The knowledge practices of the Sharia Courts have tended to replace the more or less chimerical figure of the tribal sheikh with that of six key individuals (the legal guardian, the wife, the husband, two witnesses, and the *ma'dhun*) and a very particular kind of paper trail. The technological shift from the *jāha* to the written and government-stored contract has further enabled the aggregation of information about marriage in the form of courthouse statistics. These statistics, in turn, have aided and abetted the further abstraction and elaboration of particular categories of person. Over time, courthouse officials have developed an increasingly specific analytic vocabulary for talking about participants in marriage contracts and related knowledge practices. As these knowledge practices themselves have helped reify such categories of person (inciting the production of ever more

⁷⁶ Following Foucault but also diverging from him, Hacking (1982) argues that Foucault followed a polarization in the governance of life between *anatomo-politics* (focused on the individual body) and *bio-politics* (focused on the species body). He cautions against an overemphasis in the erotics of the former at the expense of paying proper heed to the mundane and subtle but nonetheless pervasive powers of the latter, which he describes in terms of “subversive effects)

research, statistics, and analysis) they have helped enable the construction of new forms of moral agents endowed with new forms of individual and collective voice.

Towards a Textual Polity

Drawing on an analysis of 877 marriage contracts from central Jordan written between the years of 1926 and 2011, and the over 100 marriages I witnessed in a Jordanian courthouse in 2012, this chapter continues to contrast the tribal delegation with the emerging regime of enumeration and record keeping around marriage. After a discussion of the spatial layout of the courthouse and the office of the contract-writer, I will explain the ritual template associated with the contract. This idealized ritual template will then be contrasted with oral historical, archival, and ethnographic examples that highlight the particular kinds of infelicities (Austin 1975) associated with extended kin group family dynamics that contemporary court officials seek to overcome. As in Brinkley Messick's *The Calligraphic State*, these court procedures are implicated in the foundation and perpetuation of a sort of "textual polity" which remains in productive tension with the kinds of politics embodied by the tribal delegation. In the latter half of the chapter, I will show how these textual practices produce radically new--not to mention unexpected--grounds for political contestation. Dissident intellectuals associated with the Islamic movement are increasingly using the court's own statistics to call into question the legitimacy of not just tribal forms of marriage, but also specific court procedures and the Jordanian state itself.

'Put your hand in the hand of your father's brother': Court Procedure in Theory

If there are many contrasts between the tribal delegation and court procedures, there is one I would like to caution against: a simple opposition of orality and literacy (cf Goody 1986; Ong 1982). To follow Messick in exploring the ways in which Sharia constitutes a "textual polity" means attending to the material and embodied dimensions of both the spoken and written

word in ways that, until recently, Western scholars have been reluctant to. Such a political assemblage requires "both a conception of an authoritative text, involving structures of authorship, a method of instructional transmission, institutions of interpretation, and modes of documentary inscription, and a pattern of textual authority" (Messick 1993: 6). Scholars like Goody and Ong (who rely on a parochial teleology in which Euro-American textual conventions represent the developmental apex) mistake the Sharia's practical concerns about felicity for evidence of a cultural time-lag. In fact, as Messick argues, Sharia's suspicion of writing as somehow lacking has direct analogues in the logocentrism of the Western canon stretching all the way from Plato to Saussure to Ong himself. Perhaps a language like Arabic, which relies on a script without vowels (known as *harikāt* or movements), might exaggerate this by emphasizing the interpretive labor of recitation—but only slightly. All written languages force the speaking subject to make editorial decisions⁷⁷ to some extent as she vocalizes and thereby animates the text (Messick 1993: 25-26). What makes Sharia distinctive is the way in which the legitimacy of a text tends to be constituted through its relationship to particular kinds of face-to-face interactions and complex practices for modulating presence and absence as well as proximity and distance in response to sophisticated readings of gendered and age-based power dynamics within families. To fail to attend to the hybrid oral-literate character of court procedures (or see them as necessarily part of a social configuration which represents an intermediate stage on the path to full literacy) is to fundamentally lose the plot.

The local courthouse was tucked away near the marketplace on a quiet side street in a large two storey concrete structure faced with white stone. The first floor consisted of a series of

⁷⁷ Adding vowels to a written word can substantively change its meaning. For instance, the plaque in Hussein's office contained a special diacritic over the first letter lest people confuse *ra'īs al-kutāb* (the head of writing) with *ra'īs al-kitāb* (head of the book). Such ambiguities are ubiquitous in Arabic although context generally mitigates the problem.

mostly empty storefronts with only the one on the far right being used (there, two retirees sold forms and photocopied documents for a fee). To access the court, citizens would mount the dark staircase in the middle of the building, passing an ashtray and arriving at the second floor. There, they would be greeted by a guard from the General Security forces sitting at a weathered wooden desk in a small foyer bathed in the glow of fluorescent lights reflecting off of walls painted an institutional shade of white. The courthouse itself consisted of a single long corridor with rooms branching off on either side. Two narrow doorways defined the foyer where the guard sat. To the right, there were (moving clockwise) the break room, the head of writing's (*ra'īs al-kutāb*) office, a storage closet overflowing with files, the accountant charged with collecting fees, the storeroom (*al-mustawda'*) for the contracts, "the pen" (*al-qalam*) where the scribes worked, Head Judge Sayyed's office, the office of the accountants in charge of executing inheritance cases, and Judge Ahmed's office. To the left of the foyer there were rooms for (again moving clockwise), Judge Abdullah's office, the head accountant's office, more storage, the head of implementation's office, and a room where the female guard passed her days sitting behind a desk next to a black cage that was perhaps two meters long and three meters wide. The court was a strikingly self-contained disciplinary apparatus, with mixture of tools for working on both the individual body (like the prison cell and the guards) and the population as a whole (through the collection, storage, and reproduction of documents and aggregate information about the community).

Ideally, those hoping to marry were expected to arrive with the groom, bride, her father, two witnesses (optimally one from each "side"⁷⁸), ID cards for all involved, the family notebooks for the two sides, the results of medical tests for genetic risk factors and a marriage request form

⁷⁸ In fact, witnesses were often drawn at random from the crowd of courthouse applicants, which would (under normal circumstances) make them quite difficult to find if the contract was ever called into question. This was ameliorated to some degree, however, by the incredible standardization and precision of the contemporary court procedure and the more or less unassailable integrity of contemporary court officials--who are generally too distant from the affairs they handle to be considered interested parties.

from the storeroom on the first floor. Assuming a relatively standard marriage involving a virgin "girl"⁷⁹ over the age of eighteen marrying a man with no other wives, there was no need to gain the permission of a judge or have a scribe write out special letters. The couple and their families could proceed directly from the copy machines on the first floor to the office of the head of writing (*ra'īs al-kutāb*). There, a sheikh (in the religious rather than tribal sense) was ready to officiate. His office was somewhat spacious with a large wooden desk, computer, printer, filing cabinets and coffee table. The walls were lined with armless pleather chairs. Normally, the sheikh would sit in the far left of the room behind the desk and I would sit to his right. I would introduce myself, explain that I was studying marriage and ask if I could observe. No one ever objected⁸⁰. At first, the sheikh would begin by filling out an elicitation form, which would later be painstakingly hand-copied by a scribe onto the actual contracts using his beautifully formed yet legible and precise penmanship. The documents themselves provided most of the relevant personal information⁸¹ (name, age, place of birth, place of residency, marital status, occupation, national ID number), but the sheikh would usually double-check. One potentially touchy subject was the individuals' "social status": the sheikh would ask, "have you been engaged?" If not, a man would be classified as a [celibate] bachelor (*'azb*) and a woman would be classified as a virgin (*bikr*). If someone had been engaged, it was up to court officials to determine if men were currently married, widowed, divorced or divorced before consummation and whether women

⁷⁹ In the parlance of the contemporary courts, virgin, never-married woman and girl are synonymous.

⁸⁰ People did, however have interesting theories about why I was there. My favorite was, "that's the supervisor from the US embassy." Everyone involved was aware that US imperialism makes my research possible, but that did not mean that people were necessarily pessimistic about its outcomes. Most believed that my honest attempts to understand Islam could only have positive effects: perhaps it would increase cross-cultural understanding, help humanize the victims of US military aggression in the eyes of my countrymen, or even lead to my personal salvation by showing me the true religion.

⁸¹ I could go on at length about the various manipulations which documents prevent, but given space constraints I will mention only the most notorious: lying about the bride's age, pretending the groom is gainfully employed when he is not (although this is still possible to some degree under the current documentary regime) and trying to mask the existence of particular individuals lest they become subject to taxation or conscription.

were widowed, divorced or divorced before consummation. Unsurprisingly, any socially adept contract-writer would try to make some sort of comment or joke about a few other aspects of the paperwork while filling it out to lighten the mood a bit and put everyone at ease.

With the basics out of the way, the sheikh would ask that the door be closed so he could begin the proceedings in earnest. He would usually ask the woman a number of times if she consented to the marriage, following the initial "do you agree?" with increasingly pointed formulations: "No one is coercing you?" "You're not being required to do this?" "You're sure?" If there was a large age difference, the man had another wife or the woman was still in school, the sheikh would explicitly raise these as possible objections that the bride might have before moving on. Next, the sheikh would ask about bridewealth and requirements--making sure to note whether or not the bridewealth had been received. Then, the sheikh would instruct the bride, groom, witnesses and guardian to sign the relevant forms including the sheet for eliciting the details of the contract (blue ink) and the three copies of the official contract (black ink): one for the woman's side, one for the man's side and a "stable copy" (*al- qasīma thābita*) which would remain in the courthouse.

With that, the sheikh would begin to recite the formula (*sīgha*) for marrying the couple. He would start with a verse from the Quran (30:21). "In the name of God the compassionate and the merciful: 'And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought' (trust in Almighty God)." The sheikh would then transition to a popular *hadīth*: "and the messenger of God (peace be upon him) said, 'A woman is normally sought as a wife for her lineage, wealth, beauty, or religiousness, but choose a religious woman

and you will prosper⁸².’ He would then ask the groom to "put your hand in the hand of your father's brother⁸³" so that the bride's father could repeat the following formula: "I married you, my son [so-and-so], to my [virgin] daughter [so-and-so] for the agreed upon bridewealth and according to the book of God and the practices of God's messenger (Peace be Upon him)." Then the groom would be asked to repeat, "and I married your [virgin] daughter [so-and-so] for the agreed upon bridewealth and according to the book of God and the practices of God's messenger (Peace be Upon him)."

After completing the formula, the sheikh (and myself) would congratulate the men and shake their hands. The Sheikh would tell the groom, "a thousand congratulations! Remember today's date: the date you cast off *‘azubiyya* (bachelorhood/celibacy). The sheikh would ask the couple if they prayed. Normally, the bride would say yes and the groom would stammer out some sort of excuse. Sheikh Hussein (the contract-writer with whom I worked most closely) was fond of seizing on this and chastising the young man by referring to a popular *hadīth* which teaches that, "marriage is half of religion but prayer is the other half" before smiling, turning to the bride and instructing her, "you need to buy a whip and get him up every morning for the dawn prayer." As a final admonition, the sheikh would warn them that they were now married and that they should beware of divorce. He would explain that the contracts would be available for pickup the next week and then instruct them to pay a 35 Dinar fee "for the state" and "whatever you want" for the employees.

Much of the court procedure is concerned with constituting and preserving evidence of the presence of the participants in all of its fully embodied dimensions. Here, the face, voice and hands figure prominently. Messick’s work on Yemeni court practices exaggerates and

⁸² This is exactly the same formula that Abu Yehea used in the *jāha*

⁸³ While many men do marry the daughter of their father's brother, the employees at the courthouse explained that, by marrying a man's daughter, all young men become their fathers-in-law's nephews.

accentuates some of the constitutive features the Jordanian case. He defines the *muwajaha* (the unimpeded face-to-face encounter) as the primary mode of governance in pre-republican Yemen. He notes a whole genre of social criticism which turned on derivations of the Arabic root h-j-b with its connotations of seclusion, concealment and, of course, veiling (*hijab*) to critique the tendency of rulers to grow distant from their subjects. Messick writes, "proper and just 'masculine' conduct is enacted through the regular presentation of one's face and through the secure medium of speech" as opposed to a "feminine" mode, which "relies on the concealment of the face and works through the dangerous medium of writing" (Messick 1993: 173). This gendered structural opposition of the masculine seen and the feminine unseen also extended to types of evidence. According to Yemeni legal manuals and mirroring aspects of the distribution of cognition described by Abu Riziq in the first part of chapter three, "contracts... conversion, witness evaluation and death" were the purview of men while "female virginity, childbirth, menstruation, breast feeding, and [female] physical defects under clothes" were part of the domain of women (Messick 1993:180). While Messick falls into the use of the English-language public/private dichotomy, it would perhaps be better to preserve the original Arabic vocabulary of *zahir* (seen) and *batin* (unseen) to keep close to the analytic categories of key social actors and, notably, the deeply embodied dimensions of that vocabulary.

Infelicities

What renders contracts believable and admissible as evidence under Islamic law is not some fetishistic regard for the written word but, to the contrary, a recognition of the way in which a contract emerges from an agonistic and highly visible face-to-face encounter and carries with it the undeniable indexical linkages of stamp, fingerprint, handwriting and/or signature which connect it to the bodies of known individuals and, by extension, the outward performance

of volitional acts by the various principles (Messick 1993: 209-230). These, in turn, are connected to the hand which gives and the hand which receives. The best way to illustrate this orientation of court procedures towards the prevention of subsequent conflict is to focus on cases where participants disagree openly and vociferously about the nature of their relationships. Such conflicts (which I refer to here as infelicities) help illustrate the powers and limits of court documents and procedures. J.L. Austin developed the idea of infelicities to understand how utterances like ‘I do’ (in the context of a marriage ceremony, say) can actually ‘make it so’ or fail to—given certain “felicity” conditions. A focus on infelicity highlights the both the strength and frailty of social orders in the face of various “abuses” and “misfires” (1962:14-15). To borrow from a more materialist tradition, one could also look at these infelicities as “breakdowns” in the “information infrastructure” of the courts. As Susan Star argues, such infrastructure, “becomes visible upon breakdown... the server is down, the bridge washes out, there is a power blackout. Even when there are backup mechanisms or procedures, their existence further highlights the now-visible infrastructure” (2000:382). By focusing on tension, conflict, breakdown, and infelicity, it is possible to see the courthouse’s antagonism towards the power of extended kin groups and their delegations as well as the coexistence of the two rival rituals for contracting a marriage.

At the most basic level, there were moments during fieldwork when the requirements of presence created more or less insurmountable obstacles to those hoping to marry. These ranged from the silly to the tragic. At the latter extreme was the case of the Syrian bride trying to marry a Jordanian man and escape the civil war tearing her home country apart. The Syrian embassy had sent her brother (her legal guardian) back to Syria to get some documents. While en route, he was apprehended by the police and held incommunicado. The groom tried to put on a good face

and initially told Hussein that, “her father is dead, her brother is in Syria, but her cousin (father’s brother’s son) and mother are here.” Hussein said that none of these would suffice. “Would you let your mother marry your sister?” he snapped. The man then snapped back, explaining the situation and ending by pointing to her (rather lanky) cousin in the hall, “they held that man for one month! He was 100 kilos (220 pounds) before!” It was only by obtaining written proof from the Ministry of the Interior that she had no male relatives from her immediate family in the country that she could be married--"in the name of the court." At the more ridiculous extreme was the case of the man who declared that the woman's guardian was "really fat... too big to fit through the staircase.” More intermediate were cases where fathers were far away on business for long periods of time. Mirroring the logic of the tribal delegation, families would generally try to cover up this discrepancy by multiplying relatives--as if a mother, two brothers and a father's brother should make up for the lack of the father. I never saw this gambit succeed.

The insistence on physical presence and face-to-face encounter is tied to particular assumptions about power relations and constellations of interest within the family. Of course, the courthouse as an interactional space for contracting marriages is a rather recent phenomenon⁸⁴ (see figures 8, 9, and 10 in the first appendix). Men and women could encounter more or less coercive conditions in the setting of the contract. While even their presence in the courthouse (normally surrounded by mother, father and other relatives) might not seem like the ideal context for judging consent, it probably opens up more opportunities for dissent than the setting established within the home for the traveling contract-writer. A man once emphasized this to me by relating stories 'from long ago,' of families who dealt with reluctant brides by having a sister impersonate her recalcitrant sibling and consent to the marriage from behind a door or screen to

⁸⁴ Precisely mirroring recent developments in Yemen (Messick 1993:195), there is a movement of Jordanian court activities from people's homes to officially sanctioned, single-use spaces (courts) in keeping with a broader movement among many political actors worldwide to implement a Weberian division of person and office.

fool the *ma'dhun* into believing the marriage was lawful. Such stories emphasize the fact that Sharia (much like other systems of law) is forced to operate at the level of surface-level facts (the seen) while refusing to delve deeply into motives, intent and the subtleties of indirect speech-- thus Hussein's insistence that women loudly declare their intentions in contravention of other gendered ideals of feminine comportment. At times, Hussein would say, "raise your voice my sister!" Yet the system of guardianship still relies on the assumption that the interests of the bride and her guardian are aligned, if not unproblematically, then at least more so than they are with any other figure who could be defined in the abstract for legal purposes.

Of course, no one believed for a second that a woman's interests *necessarily* coincided with those of her guardian. In fact, employees at the Sharia Courts often took it upon themselves to shame and cajole wayward guardians. Such men were often accused of "selling their women" and neglecting their financial obligations to them. Employees were aided in such activism by court procedures that required additional paperwork (in other words, threw up additional hurdles) for marriages which were known to involve a high probability of abuse and exploitation: polygamy, young brides, and marriages involving foreigners. Yet despite their attempts to drag out the process and give women the opportunity to voice their displeasure, I never saw it happen. In fact, I remember a number of cases where the male staff of the courthouse seemed much more scandalized than the women in question. In one particular case that sticks out in my mind, Hussein created hours worth of paperwork for a particular guardian who had married one of his other sisters to a man who later proved to be quite abusive. In this case, however, the sister seemed happy to be marrying a wealthy old man who would likely be dead soon anyway-- thereby freeing her from her brother once and for all.

If the face, voice, and hands are intimately connected to the validity of the contract, so too are the conditions of its storage. The system of three contracts distributed amongst the two sides with a final "stable copy" held by the court was designed to render documents like marriage contracts more convincing as evidence. However, as the following exchange illustrates, both employees and applicants of the court were quite nuanced in their appraisals of putative evidence:

Two women (a mother and daughter) walked into Hussein's office. The mother wore *jilbāb* (a kind of hood which drapes down to the stomach and back) and a matching dress with a green floral pattern. Her daughter was about nineteen and wore a *hijjāb*. The daughter began, "There was a familial problem and they divorced me." Hussein replied, "ignore it." (*la taruddī*: lit. "don't respond"). He then began to ask a series of questions to settle certain matters of fact while trying to put their minds at ease:

Hussein: Is there consummation (*dukhūl*)?

Women: Yeah

Hussein: Is there pregnancy?

Women: No

Hussein: What does your husband say?

Mother: He didn't say anything. But he only responds to his father.

Hussein: Ignore it. Did you marry his father?

Mother and Daughter (smiling a bit): No

Hussein: Then ignore it. What's the bridewealth?

Mother: You had 3000 upfront and 5000 delayed.

Hussein: And you received it?

Daughter: No. I didn't receive anything. Even the clothes!

Hussein: If he divorced you all of that is on his head.

Mother: But there are connections (*wasṭāt*)... Can you make sure he hasn't already divorced her?

Hussein: No, Haji. There aren't any connections. That's impossible. No one can be divorced without knowing it.

Daughter: I'm military. Thank God nobody is coercing me [to marry] (*fīsh ḥada yaghaṣibnī*) but I have been engaged before—I divorced before consummation.

Hussein: Don't be afraid. If you're a lawful woman and a woman of the people, don't be afraid.

Daughter: How am I going to bring my possessions?

Hussein: Ask. And if he doesn't respond bring the police.

Mother: That will destroy everything. There's nothing without connections...

Hussein: What's his name?

Mother: _____

Hussein: Oh. His relatives are in “the pen” [*al-qalam*: they are scribes]. Don’t respond (*la taruddī*). The judge won’t respond to him. The judge only listens to the two partners.

Mother: But connections!

Hussein: He’s just a scribe. Don’t be afraid of talk like that...

At this point, Hussein took the unusual step of talking to the employees who were related to the man in question (one of whom happened to be taking a sick day) and intimating that "with all of these corruption investigations" they should be careful and might want to consider getting a lawyer should they choose to involve themselves in this matter. Yet even acknowledging such potential weak links in the chain of authentication should not mean reducing such documents to mere fetish objects whose power is merely a condensation of arbitrary social relations. Contracts are stored in bound books and numbered--making them difficult to remove or replace. The handwriting of the contract-writer is distinctive and it would certainly raise eyebrows if different copies of the same contract were written in different hands or had signatures which looked markedly different from one another. Valid contracts must also bear official seals which, while perhaps more vulnerable to appropriation by wayward employees, are also even harder for outsiders to forge.

More striking than the possibility of forgery, however, is the notion that the contract can be understood as false in a certain sense about the prior particulars of the future arrangement (in this case that, while the contract claims the bridewealth has been paid, it in fact has not been paid) yet still fundamentally valid. The reason is that, once again, assumptions about the felicity of documents in Islamic law are always conditional on the manner in which they emerge from face-to-face encounters. So while a contract might be taken as sufficient proof of marriage (assuming no obvious signs of forgery), this does not mean that the particulars and especially the payment of bridewealth will be taken at face value. Nor will the acceptance of the fact that the

bridewealth was fraudulently recorded on the contract as already paid invalidate the contract. Such moves, while perhaps more in keeping with Anglo notions of contract law, would be seen as an unacceptable abridgement of the woman's rights--no doubt compounding the oppression (*zulim*) she suffered in being denied her right to bridewealth in the first place.

In short, the contemporary system of Sharia in Jordan is deeply concerned with establishing particular kinds of evidence of the agreement of particular individuals within a particular interactional context and then registering that consent via indexical linkages that connect the document to the bodies of those present. The system then relies on the ability to securely store such documents and prevent their manipulation by relying on the assumed divergence of interests between the two "sides" to create a self-policing system in which neither the bride nor the groom's side can alter the document without the other crying foul and immediately presenting compelling evidence to back up the accusation of forgery. The acceptance of documents as evidence, however, is always done with reservations and this should not be taken as a sign of backwards enthrallment with the spoken word but rather as part and parcel of the jaundiced view of human behavior characteristic of Sharia practitioners which has been gained from over 1300 years of hard-won experience.

Changing forms of Individual and Collective Voice

As Messick himself emphasizes, though, Sharia is a diverse and often surprisingly polyglot legal discourse which is highly sensitive to time and place and endlessly adaptable. There are crucial divergences between the historical context of the Jordanian case and that of the Yemeni case. Where Messick's interlocutors describe a deep history encompassed by the phrase *The Calligraphic State*, my own interlocutors emphasized the neglect of Ottoman rulers and the subsequent entry onto the political scene of the Hashemites and the British. More importantly,

even during the twentieth century, there has been a good deal of change in Sharia court procedures. By focusing on the development of three fields on the marriage contract template in my archive spanning the years 1926-2011, it becomes apparent that Sharia courts have come to assert themselves more and more in the face of customs associated with the delegation. Whether focusing on the development of field for "the agent," the field for "the bridewealth," or the field for "requirements," the courts appear to be ever more directly and pointedly targeting many of the practices of extended kin groups that Islamic jurists have been criticizing for centuries. Foremost among these are questions surrounding women's consent to marriage, the payment of her bridewealth, and the insurance of her proper maintenance after marriage. As they problematize such issues, court procedures respond to and facilitate the elaboration of new forms of moral agent endowed with new forms of individual and collective voice. While these more individual forms of moral agent and voice assert themselves in the interactional space of the courthouse, the more collective forms of moral agent and voice tend to work through the aggregation and dissemination of statistics and the accompanying social commentary. In the last twenty years in particular, the knowledge practices of the courts have contributed to the emergence of two new forms of moral agent in particular: the spinster and the person divorced before the consummation of their marriage.

Genealogies of the Contract

As explained in chapter three, the first form-contracts in Jordan were introduced during the late-Ottoman period in an explicit bid to conform more closely to Western notions of textual authority and bureaucratic administration. While my systematic engagement with court records begins with the year 1926, my piecemeal and unsystematic knowledge of earlier Ottoman

contract forms⁸⁵ leads me to suspect that the trends I discuss hold true beginning somewhere around the 1880s. Throughout this section, I recommend referring liberally to Figures 8, 9, and 10 in the appendix and the accompanying translations. The early contracts are striking for how little of the involvement of the couple they evince. In many cases, there is no signature, stamp or thumbprint from either bride or groom. For some, the consent of the two parties is not even mentioned: we merely learn of an agreement between the *wakīl* (agent) of the bride and the agent of the groom. Yet even the earliest contracts attempt to elicit a fair amount of information about the various participants: name, age, place of residence, employment and religion. The early contracts already ask about the date of the contract, the witnesses, and the contract-writer along with the bridewealth. Yet attempts to properly classify and enumerate nuptial exchanges have also had subversive effects as categories proliferate and—at times—come into their own as fully-fledged moral agents.

Perhaps one of the most notable shifts in power relations catalyzed by court procedure is the change from *wakīl* (agent) to *wāli* (guardian) over the course of the twentieth century and the accompanying emergence of the bride as an indispensable party to the marriage contract. While the earliest forms tend to downplay the role of the bride, they make no mention of the guardian at all. The forms simply request that the contract writer record that the marriage was "accepted as legitimate as issued from" agents representing bride and groom. At the bottom of the earliest form, there are spaces for the "[agent of] the groom⁸⁶" and the "agent of the bride and receiver [of the bridewealth]" to sign. This signified the assumption at the time that bridewealth would

⁸⁵ A number of Jordanians have kindly shared marriage contracts with me from their family archives that date back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries that were issued by the Jerusalem courthouse. I also had an opportunity to look through the archives of the Salt Courthouse during my preliminary research, where I found bound notebooks of contracts dating back to the 1880s.

⁸⁶ Note that the sample contract from the 1920s in the appendix actually asks for the groom's signature. In the earliest contracts, contract writers would add the word "agent" to the form above the stamp, thumbprint or signature of the groom's agent as necessary. This changed with the revamping of the contracts in the 1950s and has remained the same subsequently: the form is now phrased, "the groom or his agent."

not go to the woman but rather to her agent. This was further emphasized through the use of the formulaic phrase "received in the hand of the agent of the bride [so-and-so] with her permission" following the bridewealth in the majority of contracts. In fact, my sample of 377 contracts from the Amman courthouse spanning the years 1926 to 1953 shows that in most cases, the agents were what would now be considered guardians (see Tables 17, 18 and 19 in the appendix for more information). Over half of brides' agents were fathers. There are also a number of boundary cases where the agent might very well have been what the contemporary court would consider the guardian given the low life expectancies of the era: 21% of agents were brothers of the bride, 8% were father's brothers, 1% were grandfathers and 1% of agents were father's brother's sons. In 17 cases the bride represented herself and in five cases she represented herself along with her father or brother acting in some sort of guarantor capacity. Yet there are a sizable minority of contracts in which the agent clearly diverges from the guardian. In fully 11% of contracts, I can discern no relationship between the bride and her agent despite the fact that every Arab name includes the names of the person's father and grandfather along with a family name. Additionally, two contracts list the *ma'dhun* as the agent and six list the mother's brother—neither of which has ever had any particular standing in Islamic law. Even where the agent is listed as a relative through the patriline, there are clear examples where the father appears in the contract as receiver of the bridewealth but not as the agent. Whereas the bride's role as an active agent in the contract process is muted in the early years, the groom's position has been more pronounced throughout the twentieth century. A full 88% of men in the sample of contracts acted as their own agent--clearly reflecting the gendered assumptions about autonomy and consent.

Yet a statistical approach and the discovery of regularities should not overly bias our understandings of the shifting role of the agent and the emergence of the guardian. Even if 90%

of contracts involved the bride's guardian, her ability to marry without her guardian (for better or worse) is significant in understanding the grounds for the social recognition of marriage.

Moreover, even a single contract can expand the definition of what is possible. In this regard, the most striking of the contracts in my sample is contract number 12175. This contract concerns a young couple from Mahata (a village which was later incorporated into Amman) who married in 1952. The man was a 21 year-old carpenter and the woman was an 18 year-old virgin. No occupation is listed for her. Yet in this contract, she was not only listed as receiving her own bridewealth (a practice which was becoming more common at the time) but also as acting as her own agent despite being a virgin—a practice with which current court officials refuse to involve themselves. Her father and brother's presence is attested to but, unlike other contracts, they served as mere witnesses. It is, of course, hard to know what circumstances led to this unique document's genesis, but it should serve as a reminder of how enumeration and record-keeping can create new social possibilities.

The bridewealth field of the contract shows similar tendencies of regimes of enumeration and classification to produce new categories and help elaborate older sets of concerns among court officials about the status of emergent moral agents⁸⁷. Up until the 1940s, the category of bridewealth is rather boring in the sample. With the exception of three contracts, it simply lists the amount of money or gold. The three outliers include: "12 *'amm asōda*" (black headwraps), "Plot of land worth 20 Palestinian Guineas and 15 head of goat worth 10 Palestinian Guineas," and "5 plots of land rented for 2 years at a price of 16 lira; 4 lira of wheat, 20 lira of labor." As figures 36 and 37 show, the amount of bridewealth paid is surprisingly consistent during the

⁸⁷ For more on how women in the Arab world have long pursued complex and intricate strategies to maximize their bridewealth and secure it for posterity, see the work of Martha Mundy (1979), Diane Singerman (1995:109-121), and Homa Hoodfar (1997)

early years—suspiciously so. No matter the currency (Ottoman Lira, Palestinian Guineas, Palestinian Lira), the amount of upfront bridewealth remains within a consistent and narrow band. It actually converges ever more closely on the number 30 over the course of the twenties and thirties before exploding in diversity during the 1940s. The recurrence of one number over and over in the contracts implies that the field was being treated by officials and applicants at court as pro-forma and not taken seriously. In at least one case, I was actually able to find the son of a man who was a party to one such "30 in bridewealth"⁸⁸ contracts. Without any prompting, the man told me that his father "was an expensive man. He gave 35 *dunnum* (35,000 square meters) of land as bridewealth." When I told him the amount of bridewealth written on the contract, he seemed unconcerned with the discrepancy ("a *dunnum* was like a *lira*"). In fact, after looking through 67 contracts involving members of a single local tribe, I found that every single one of them had the same bridewealth (30 Palestinian Guinea received in the hand of her guardian with her permission) and there was no evidence whatsoever of the ubiquitous mentions of land transfers as bridewealth which I found in the oral historical record.

In the 1940s, everything changes, implying an explosion of interest on the part of applicants and court officials about bridewealth: suddenly, bridewealth payments are all over the map and many include long and involved lists of home furnishings. The following entry is perhaps the most precise, but also indicative of the era: "50 Guinea Wardrobe with mirror; 18 Guinea for 6 chairs; 40 Guinea Carpet; 10 Guinea Bed; 30 Guinea for 2 Wool Mattresses, 2 Cotton Blankets, 4 Wool Pillows, 3 small tables; 50 Guinea radio; 1 kilo" (I can only assume the

⁸⁸ I often asked myself (and anyone who would listen): why 30, 300 or 3000 (the most common numbers)? No one had any idea. The number three shows up with alarming frequency for reasons no one can explain. Initially, I was convinced I must have been entering the data incorrectly. But after double and triple-checking, I determined that the discovery must be an effect of the confluence of the peculiar knowledge practices of both the courts and myself. The number three does have a lot of significant resonances: the number of days of the wedding and the number of days one is expected to provide hospitality, but no one ever made those connections without my mentioning them.

contract-writer got impatient at this point in the list of bridewealth). My initial hypothesis was that, as the state grew in power, it would begin recording the arrangements of those outside of the cash economy--providing a record of "traditional" bridewealth exchanges. In fact, the early contracts show no such evidence. When people *do* begin enumerating the bridewealth in detail, it is not peasants or farmers (those who it turns out are most likely to record 30 whatever) but rather those members of the community most closely aligned with the market and the state: merchants, soldiers, and government employees. By the 1950s, this practice of listing the various objects had fallen out of fashion but the new forms also introduced a new category: *tawāba‘a* (non-monetary bridewealth). These were inevitably recorded in monetary terms (so many dinar for clothes, so many dinar for furniture, so many dinar for gold). There seems to have been an insistence that some amount of money be placed in the monetary field, which led to the practice of writing "one Jordanian dinar" in the field for monetary bridewealth and then enumerating the actual bridewealth in the *tawāba‘a* field. During my fieldwork, nearly a decade after the category of *tawāba‘a* was abandoned, people were still regularly showing up to court and specifying the "one Jordanian dinar" in addition to much larger amounts of furniture, gold and clothing, implying the depth of the mutual adjustment between courthouse officials and applicants.

Much as with the "bridewealth" field, the "requirements" field seems to indicate that people tend to abhor an unused or underutilized field on a form almost as much as they abhor and overly baroque field. The "requirements" field appears with the 1950s revamp of the contracts and, to say the least, never made up a large percentage of the contracts: there are only 13 contracts involving requirements in the primary Madaba courthouse sample out of a total of 355. In addition to this, there is a single contract from the Amman courthouse dated 1945 (prior to the introduction of a dedicated field for requirements) involving a local trader, which

stipulates "2000 Guinea [extra bridewealth] if they leave Amman." Counting this contract as an early attempt by applicants and a particular *ma'dhun* to add a requirement to the contract, that makes a total of about 14 contracts out of 732 involving requirements. Yet the very existence of the field seemed to exert marked effects. When I broached the topic of requirements, men would often scoff that no one should marry someone if they trusted them so little that they felt the need to stipulate requirements. Others felt it was an abridgement of their rights to marry four women or move around as they saw fit. Yet the mere requirement that court employees ask about such issues obviously provoked intra-familial discussion and influenced the course of events as the following exchange illustrates:

Hussein: How much is the bridewealth?

[Silence]

Hussein: You agreed beforehand, right?

Groom: Put one Jordanian dinar... Five thousand dinars gold for the ma'jil (upfront bridewealth) and 10,000 *mo'jil* (bridewealth in case of divorce)...

Witness (a random person from the courthouse): Blessings, God Willing⁸⁹.

Groom: Actually I requested it. They said three thousand, but I said five thousand

Hussein: Requirements?

[Silence]

Hussein (not sure if this was serious): Should I put that he can only marry once?

Uncle: Can you do that?

Hussein: It just means that marrying a second wife would divorce him from his first

Mother: Put "finish her studies"

Hussein: She's in university? What year?

Bride: Fourth year

Hussein: Has the bridewealth been received?

Groom: Not yet.

As this exchange shows, an initial impetus to enumerate and document bridewealth has, over time, dragged the government ever-more deeply into internal familial dynamics while opening up new grounds for contesting the legitimate role of various moral agents.

⁸⁹ This seems like a none-too-subtle insult: there's a saying of the prophet *khifif al-mahr kithir al-baraka* which basically means "lessen the bridewealth increase the blessing." Men went to great lengths to exert social pressure on each other to avoid inflating bridewealth payments. In fact, most men told me not to pay attention to bridewealth at all. At the same time, women went out of their way to emphasize the importance of attending to bridewealth.

The increasing interest of courthouse procedures in brides, guardians, bridewealth, and requirements puts the courts somewhat at odds with the goals and aims of the delegation. The emergent courthouse procedures are designed to foster new forms of ever more individuated voice within the interactional setting of the face-to-face encounters so central to all marriage contracts involving the Jordanian Sharia Courts. Following on centuries of juridical commentary about the depredations that tribal customs are believed to inflict on women, court procedures increasingly fixate on questions of consent, the payment of bridewealth, and requirements for the wife's appropriate maintenance after marriage. Whether or not brides (or their male guardians or grooms) are able to effectively articulate their individual aspirations through these voicing mechanisms represents another matter—one that I am hesitant to adjudicate. In many respects, it is impossible to do so without also looking at the forms of *collective* voice that emerge as data about marriage is aggregated through statistics and turned into fodder for new modes of social criticism that claim to speak on behalf of social categories constituted largely through court procedures themselves.

The Islamic Movement and the Reappropriation of Sharia Court Data

The impulse for enumeration, at times coming from applicants and at times coming from court officials, has slowly enmeshed the Sharia Courts, the Jordanian state and something we can only call "Jordanian Society" within a system of accountability not fully of their own devising. An Islamic NGO called the Chastity Society (*al-'afāf*) epitomizes this trend as it uses the published statistics of the courts to highlight and develop two novel moral agents: the spinster and the person divorced before the consummation of their marriage. The Chastity Society's publications are filled with direct references to the statistics contained in the annual reports produced by the Sharia Courts as the Society seeks to raise awareness about what they see as a

"crisis of marriage." Certainly, the Chastity Society is quite willing to take statistics from anywhere to bolster their case: the Jordanian Department of Statistics, the United Nations and the Sharia Courts of neighboring countries all figure prominently in their bibliographies. But what makes this form of marriage crisis discourse notably different from earlier iterations⁹⁰ is the way in which the Sharia Court's system of record keeping focuses attention on processes of governance and the state itself. It also molds the terms of the debate into a more Islamic cast and, with the idea of a crisis of 'divorce before consummation,' the knowledge practices of the courts become the condition of possibility for significant aspects of the emergent marriage 'crisis.'

One of the first indicators that activists working with the Chastity Society tend to use in publications about this "crisis of marriage" is the annual number of marriage contracts. 'Adal Badraneh's (2009) *The Guide: Indicators of Marriage and Divorce in Jordan (Al-Dalīl: Mu'shrāt Al-Zawāj wa Aṭ-ṭalāq fī Al-Ordan)* is typical. He begins with the "First Indicator: General Rate of Marriage." This is calculated using the following formula: $1000 \times (\text{The Number of Marriage Contracts in a Particular Year} / \text{Population in the Same Year})$. Beneath Badraneh credits his sources: "Sharia Courts and Churches." In the early years of the Chastity Society, the figures were quite compelling: in Faruq Badran and Mufid Sarhan's (1999) *Spinsterhood: The Reality, The Causes and The Solutions (Al-'anūsiyya: -Al-Wāqa' -Al-Asbāb -Al-Halūl)*, the first table details a secular decline from a rate of 10.1 marriages per year per 1000 people in 1993 to 8.1 in 1998.

However, by 2009 when *The Guide* was published, the rate of marriage was increasing and, it should be added, the political opponents of the Chastity Society were responding with

⁹⁰ In Hanan Kholoussy's (2010) *For Better or Worse: The Marriage Crisis that Made Modern Egypt*, statistics are notably absent, which does not stop people from complaining about a crisis of bachelorhood or spinsterhood. Yet it seems to render the crisis more diffuse. As a result, the culprits seem more like the stuff of quotidian family dramas. The colonial state is largely ignored in favor of critiques of over-protective parents, feckless young men, and finicky young women.

their own reports. In 2010, Professor 'Issah Masarweh at Jordan University (a Christian and self-described liberal), explained to me that this "crisis of marriage" was little more than an attempt by the Muslim Brotherhood to make the regime look bad. He gave me an article he was working on for the Higher Council for Population Growth to emphasize this point. In "Delayed Marriage and Celibacy among Women and Jordan: Celibacy or Spinsterhood! Is there Reason to Worry? Analysis of Marriage Trends in the Last two Decades" (*Ta'akhir Al-Zawāj wa Al-'Azūbiyya bayn Al-Unāth fī Al-Ordan: 'Azūbiyya um 'Anūsiyya! Hal Hunāk ma Yabirir Al-Qalaq? Tahlīl Lil-Itjāhāt fī Al-'Aqidayn Al-Maḍiyayn*) Masarweh (2010) Masarweh gleefully throws the general average rate of marriage back at his political opponents and argues that the "crisis of marriage" is a sort of ideological displacement of broader anxieties about social change in the region--specifically relating to shifting gender roles, new technology and economic challenges. Of course, by the late 2000s, the debate had already shifted with writers from the Chastity Society focusing more and more on statistics which divided marriage rates by age (available through the Department of Statistics and the Civil Status Office). By focusing only on those over 15, the declining rates of marriage reappeared⁹¹ and the trends towards higher rates of spinsterhood (defined by all involved as being an unmarried woman over the age of 25) seemed highly likely. By 2011, even Masarweh admitted that the data spoke for itself: there were in fact increasing rates of spinsterhood--although as someone committed to fighting population growth Masarwah saw this as a positive development and continued to council against any action to facilitate marriage⁹².

⁹¹ The distortion is due to a particularly large age cohort (basically an Arab baby boom) finally reaching marriageable age. While this increases the overall number of marriage contracts and even the overall rate, the decline in the relative number of unmarried--and unmarriageable--pre-teens tends to mask the overall decline in marriage rates among those actually capable of marriage

⁹² Masarweh's stated opinions on marriage seemed at odds with the *hadīth* he used at the beginning of his paper: "O young men, whoever among you has the ability should marry; for it helps him lower his gaze and guard his modesty, and whoever is not able to marry, should fast."

Keeping track of the number of marriage contracts makes it possible for outside groups to hold the state accountable in ways that would otherwise be unthinkable. The issue is more than the mere existence of an embarrassing set of figures here or there. The fact that activists from the Chastity Society continued to foreground the number of marriage contracts and the rate of marriage long after it ceased to unambiguously bolster their argument calls into question a simple reading of their appropriation of official statistics as opportunistic. Building on the earlier work of Jürgen Habermas, Michael Warner (2002) has proposed the concept of the "counterpublic" to describe the ways in which the circulation of media can help construct both communities and oppositional associations of critics. I would argue that contracts are one such media: the circulation of contracts helps construct various categories of moral agent (the agent, the guardian, the spinster, the person divorced before consummation and even, perhaps the Jordanian citizen) who can then hold the state accountable to various Islamic standards. It could further be argued that quantifying media like contracts (perhaps more than other media) can help create such moral agents because, as Theodore Porter notes in *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life*, "adequate measurement, clearly, means disciplining people as well as standardizing instruments and processes" (1996: 28). As Badraneh makes clear, the point of the exercise is to understand "the effect of economic and social factors in interpreting this phenomenon" (2009: 36). Yet without a state collecting such data in such a minutely disciplined fashion, it would be much more difficult to argue for the existence of a coherent "economy" and "society" which should be refashioned in accordance with a specific political agenda. In this case, it turns out that the state's systematic collection of data about the population serves a coordinating function for potential dissidents, political opportunists and malcontents alike.

A second highly abstracted moral agent, which owes even more to the court's knowledge practices, is the person divorced before the consummation of their marriage. In recent years, the court's *Annual Statistical Report (Al-Taqrīr Al-Iḥṣā'ī Al-Sinawī)* has included a breakdown of divorces into four categories: divorce before consummation (*aṭ-ṭalāq qabl al-dakhūl*), revocable divorce (*aṭ-ṭalāq al-raja'ī*), and two levels of irrevocable divorce (*aṭ-ṭalāq al-al-bā'in*). In this case, two things are striking: the increasing prevalence of divorce (representing a 25% increase from 12,000 per year in 2006 to 15,000 per year in 2010) and the increasing precision with which people's "social statuses" are being recorded and taken up as sociological categories by activists and relatively apolitical citizens alike. This is not to imply that the interest in social status is novel. To the contrary: despite the lack of an actual field for social status in the early contracts, my sample of contracts from the Amman Courthouse only includes 13 contracts which failed to reveal some information about this topic. Yet of the 377, 348 used one of two terms: 270 brides are classified as virgin (*bikr*) and 78 are classified as previously married (*thayyib*). Nine are classified with euphemistic circumlocutions like "girl," "woman" or "woman of the house." What's striking is that, out of all 377, only four women are classified as divorcees and only one woman is classified as a widow: these terms only came into regular use in the 1950s. In another case, we learn that the woman was previously married to the same man⁹³. The circumlocutions are gone now, but divorce before consummation has become a recognized social category since the late 1990s, joining the categories of divorcee and widow that came into wide use in the 1950s. All of them now appear in court documents as well as every day conversation. People who are divorced before consummation occupy a liminal status: they *could* have lost their virginity, but claim that nothing transpired in the time between the signing of the contract and the

⁹³ Presumably, he divorced her, they separated and he never completed the three utterances of the wish to divorce necessary to render it irrevocable. However, he did wait until the 3-menstrual cycle waiting period had ended to reconcile with his estranged wife--thus necessitating a new contract and a new bridewealth payment.

wedding that never happened. Divorce before consummation is a new and growing category, which is attracting attention and focusing broader and more diffuse anxieties: according the above chart, it made up over 40% of the total divorces in 2010.

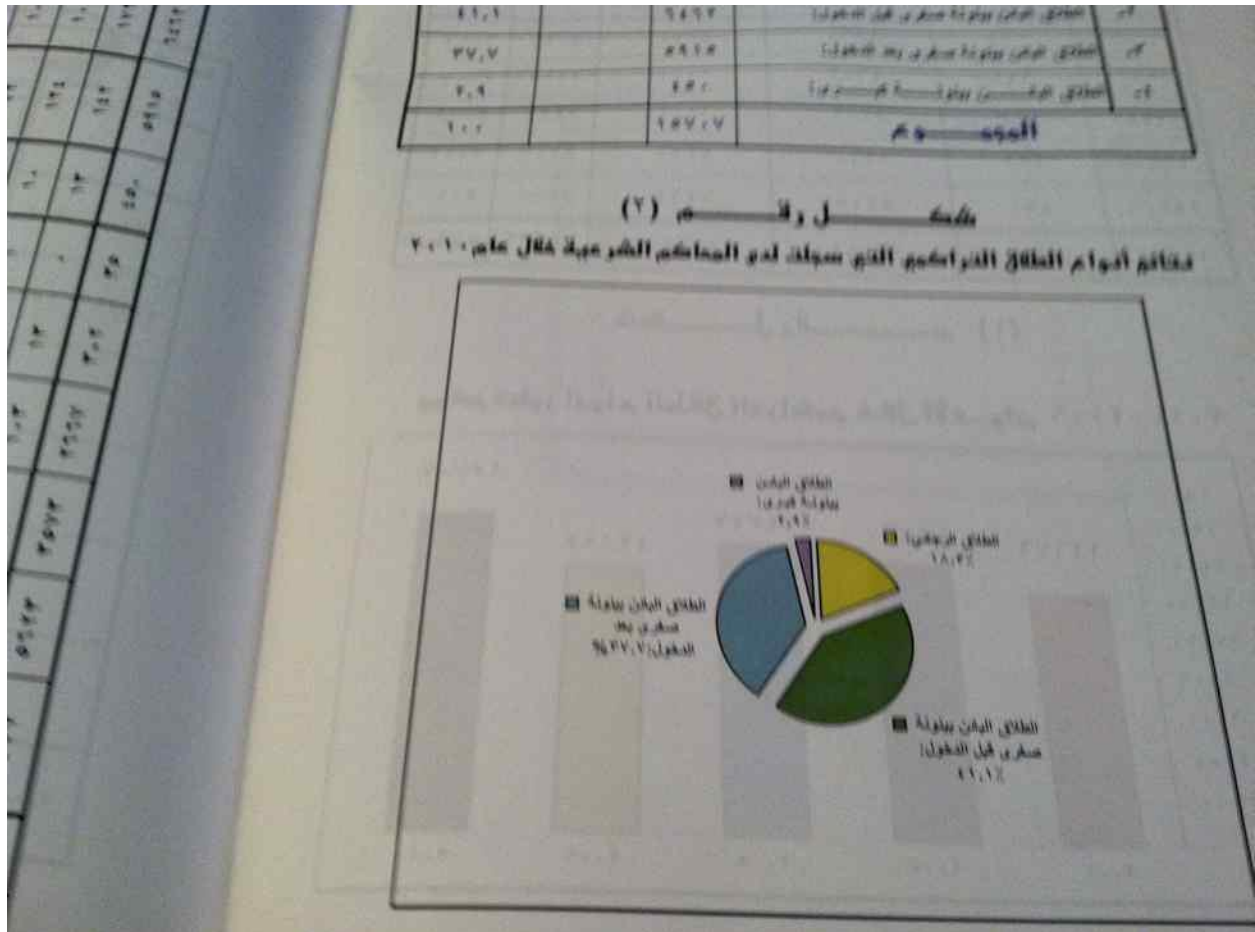


Figure 7: A pie chart displaying the relative prevalence of different kinds of divorce

The category of divorced before consummation represents a new stage in the ongoing negotiations between the ritual of the delegation and that of the court-sanctioned marriage contract. Unlike the temporal dilation implied by the customary model, which creates a liminal waiting period for the couple between the delegation and the wedding when their social status is ambiguous, court officials are adamant that the contract itself creates a marital bond. Nonetheless they continue to be forced to accommodate the practices of people who insist on treating the

wedding and consummation as the final constitutive act forming the legitimate marital bond. To understand the significance of this compromise, it is important to attend to the role of female Islamic activists in working with the courts to construct those divorced before consummation as the kind of moral agent endowed with collective voice that can make demands on the courts, families, the state, and society more broadly.

It would be a mistake to overplay the tensions between Islamic activists and the courts: much as the proliferation of categories can be used to critique the Jordanian government, they can also be used to critique Jordanian society. In this, activists and the courts can actually prove to be great allies. One example is Amal 'Abdeen's *Divorce Before Marriage and in the First Year of Marriage: Social and Psychological Causes and Effects (Aṭ-Ṭalāq Qabl Al-Dakhūl wa fī As-Sinna Al-Owla min Al-Zawāj: Al-Asbāb wa Al-Ithār Al-Nafsiyya wa Al-Ijtimā'īyya)*⁹⁴. Her study for the Chastity Society, which she makes clear was possible due to the support of the Supreme Judge, attempts to understand the troubling increase in the divorce rate and particularly the increasingly prevalent phenomenon of divorce before consummation. After giving some background statistics from the usual sources, she gives the results of her survey of 50 women divorced before consummation and 50 women divorced in the first year. According to 'Abdeen, "the findings indicate that the most important reason for divorce among the divorced is a bad match, followed by familial interference, then lack of bearing responsibility, followed by subordination of the husband to his mother or another member of his family" (2010: 17). 'Abdeen ultimately advocates "consciousness-raising" (*taw'īya*) through the media and the relevant ministries, including more "guidance for willing individuals" from the courts "before the case gets to the Judge," and, of course, more research (2010:152). Through her use of survey

⁹⁴ This was originally written as a master's thesis at Jordan University before being published by the Chastity Society.

technology, she gives further voice (after a fashion) to the aspirations and concerns of a particular sort of moral agent, itself an emergent effect of the knowledge practices of the courts as they seek to come to terms with the local practices.

‘Abdeen provides an eminently contestable diagnoses of "the problem" of divorce before consummation in Jordan, but her work is part and parcel of a kind of contestation that has only become thinkable through a long-term engagement with particular kinds of knowledge practices for enumeration, individuation and data storage. The Islamic Movement may try to position itself as a critical interlocutor vis-à-vis the state, but it also seeks to position itself as a moral alternative to the "tribal" system exemplified by the delegation which was described in the beginning of part two. Islamic activists, like Islamic jurists, work to redistribute agency, cognition and personhood itself within and outside of kinship structures. The goal of this chapter has not been to deliberate on the best distribution but rather to understand the practical, material and embodied means by which various individuals, collectivities, institutions, and political movements attempt to wrest people from their preexisting relationships and commitments and reconfigure their affiliations. In contemporary Jordan, these court and delegation rituals continue to coexist with each other despite the obvious tensions.

Part III: The Wedding: Greedy Institutions and the Privatization of Joys

Chapter 5: The Feast

“Tonight we set up the tent. Tomorrow there is dancing and tea and coffee. Then on Thursday we will have the wedding procession (fārida). We will drive to... the bride’s house. The bride and her mother will come back to [our village] with us. When she is here, we will shoot guns and there will be more singing and dancing. Then we will have the groom’s shower (hamām). We will eat kanāfa [a kind pastry made with phyllo dough, sugar and cheese] and drink Pepsi⁹⁵ (bibsī). After the shower, we will go back to the tent for more dancing and tea. Then comes the procession (zafāf): we will carry the groom to the women’s area. Then he goes in and dances with the bride. They go to his room. He sometimes serves her some food. Sometimes some juice. Sometimes, they wait 3 days. Sometimes it happens that night. Then, on the last day of the wedding, everyone eats mutton.”

-Hamed, describing an upcoming wedding to a foreign anthropologist

As in most times and places, weddings in contemporary Jordan serve as a rite of passage tied to the legitimization of marital unions and the children those unions produce. Yet weddings in Jordan are also increasingly used to embody particular sets of commitments to competing visions of Jordan’s future. The model of wedding described by Hamed (which aligns itself with objectified tradition and the prerogatives of the extended family) no longer goes unchallenged. With the elite leading the way, a growing percentage urbanites from across the economic spectrum have come to prefer abbreviated two-hour weddings at purpose-built wedding halls or hotel ballrooms. Meanwhile, participating in a trend in the broader Muslim world, the Islamic Charity the Chastity Society has begun organizing mass weddings that are even more pointedly and explicitly designed in opposition to traditional models of wedding. The emergence of new, competing models of wedding represents dynamism in what could be called, following Lamia Karim (2008), an “economy of shame” around weddings and marriage in Jordan, challenging not

⁹⁵ In rural Jordan, Pepsi is sometimes used as the generic term for carbonated beverages.

just the norms of hospitality at such events, but the very essence of the relations that such event are supposed to produce. With the emergence of multiple, mutually antagonistic ritual frameworks for marriage, the grounds of social struggle and contestation expand from being primarily indexical (who has the *most* meat and the *most* guests) to encompass important choices about iconically representing one's allegiance to a certain vision of Jordan's future and accompanying networks of patronage, care, and mutual defense.

Unfortunately for participants, consciously pressing weddings into the service of such an ideological struggle carries with it certain hazards of representation (Keane 1997). For one thing, the necessity of actually enacting rituals like weddings ensures that all sorts of exigencies tied to their materiality can impinge on the consciously ideological projects that increasingly motivate them, like a can of Pepsi or a car in the midst of and otherwise rustic and traditionalistic tableau. In Jordan, just as houses and marriage proposals have been and continue to be large communal projects that create various kinds of social affinities, debts, and antagonisms, so too are weddings endlessly generative sites through which the social order either produces and reproduces itself or gives way to something new. In the case of weddings, the chief constraint is currently conceptualized as material.

Looking back at Hamed's description of the wedding from the perspective of people who often make \$400 per month or less, the extravagance of the event looms large: the tent, the tea and coffee, the gas for the cars, the bullets, sweets, Pepsi, and meat. Such commodities circulate globally and, in many cases, track global commodities prices closely: the price of tea, coffee, gas, bullets, and Pepsi in Jordan is comparable to that in the United States despite the disparity in wages. So while even middle class Americans might balk at the prospect of providing such hospitality for hundreds of people, the relative cost for most Jordanians is downright exorbitant.

In some cases, most notably when it comes to meat, the high cost of food and land in Jordan conspires to make commodities far more expensive in Jordan than they would be in the United States: the cost of local meat in the market in Madaba rose from eight dinar per kilo in the summer of 2010 to thirteen dinar per kilo in the summer of 2012 (or from \$11.28 to \$18.33: one dinar was \$1.41 at the time of research). As a result, the role of meat in weddings represents a powerful and oft-remarked upon indicator of the economic restructuring that Jordan is undergoing. It is an effective metonym for the ways in which population growth, urbanization, refugee influxes, privatization, and austerity create a denser, more crowded polity in which the struggle for resources and survival demands ever more in terms of money, time, and energy.

In the first chapter of part three I argue that, in the context of this broader economic transformation, weddings increasingly emphasize ideological struggle and enter the mass-mediated realm of global public culture. Elites in particular participate in the elaboration of an “economy of shame” around weddings through which older notions of honor and shame are “instrumentalized” (Karim 2008) to serve a novel, increasingly capitalistic order. In a cruelly ironic twist for the rural poor, those with differential access to capital are suddenly able to exceed their more parochial neighbors in their fealty to certain aspects of traditional standards of honor—both because they can afford it and because they can then use aspects of traditional standards of honor against those already marginalized. The proliferation of distinct, antagonistic models of wedding and the discourse around them indicates a high degree of self-consciousness about the ways in which weddings legitimate not just individual marital unions but an entire social, economic, and political order. The increasing focus on the wedding as a tool of ideological struggle may even magnify the hazards of representation associated with weddings, as it has with other forms of ritualized hospitality in Jordan (cf. Shryock 2004b). Just as promise

and hazard are two sides of the same coin, so it is easy to see how the promise of welcome entails the hazard of trespass; the promise of affinity entails the hazard of antagonism; the promise of honor entails the hazard of shame; the promise of generosity entails the hazard of greed. When weddings are expected to legitimate not just individual marital unions but an entire sociopolitical order on an enlarged stage, the stakes are perceived as even higher and any incidence of trespass, antagonism, shame, or greed is all the more explosive for its publicity. In chapter 6, I show how the Chastity Society has taken the wedding ritual as a relatively popular, grass-roots phenomenon and reorganized it to draw out these very hazards and opportunities in a way that undermines the rural, tribal, traditionalist sociopolitical order with which it contends. Yet where the members of the Chastity Society portrayed themselves as freeing youths from parochial bonds of debt obligation, their detractors portrayed the Society as nothing but a competing network of patronage. Enactments of Jordanian weddings thereby become a form of semiotic⁹⁶ struggle over the future of their participants and Jordan as a whole.

The Wedding as Semiotic Struggle

To emphasize the sheer geographic scope of the shift in wedding practices, it is useful to contrast the changes unfolding in Jordan with a perceptive study of weddings among Greek Cypriots entitled *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle*, which the anthropologist Vassos Argyrou (1996) conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He argues that Cypriot weddings, “have been transformed from rites of passage to rites of class distinction.” Argyrou focuses on four major changes to Cypriot weddings: a shortening in

⁹⁶ My preference for the phrase ‘semiotic struggle’ in place of Vassos Argyrou’s “symbolic struggle” (1996) should be seen not as a critique of Argyrou but rather as an attempt to disassociate Argyrou’s contributions from the older “symbolic turn,” which has tended to produce ethnographic studies that ignore exactly the forms of materiality which are crucial to both Argyrou and my own ethnographic analyses of ritual.

duration, an increasing number of guests⁹⁷, the abandonment of the “ritual display of the bride’s virginity,” and a polarization of wedding types between two poles. The rural and urban working class “village” wedding is increasingly contrasted with a new truncated ceremony preferred by urban elites that is hosted in a hotel and eschews a full meal in favor of light snacks and beverages (Argryou 1996: 10-11). Both Cyprus and Jordan also have a third type of wedding (favored by urbanites who aspire to join the upper classes), which mixes elements of both—normally involving the division of a more open celebration in a hall for one’s acquaintances from a more intimate gathering for purposes of shared commensality. All of this tracks remarkably closely to similar changes that have come about in Jordan—arguably for many of the same reasons: because wedding celebrations in Jordan, like Cyprus, increasingly express “antagonisms, mainly between social classes, but also between villagers and city dwellers, as well as between the generations” (Argryou 1996: 171). That being said, at least in Jordan, many of these antagonisms are both long-standing⁹⁸ and have their limits—especially when they bump

⁹⁷ It is easy to overestimate the lavishness of pre-modern Jordanian weddings. I collected many accounts like the following: “My wedding lasted a whole week! People came from all around. Everyone was there. They came from Jurayna, Hisban, Mushagar and Ghornata. We slaughtered goats, and sang and danced. There were races. The women made bread. It was the sweetest thing!” It is easy to overlook a couple of key points here: the population density was very low in the 1950s, the poor quality of transportation infrastructure would have made it difficult to have a short wedding, and, most notably, the guests of the wedding performed all of the labor themselves—almost always during a lull in the agricultural cycle after the goats had stopped producing milk and the grain had been harvested. More intensive questioning often revealed that people’s weddings were modestly sized and heavily reliant on guests to bring meat, grain, coffee and sweets—even if those guests might linger with their hosts for days on end.

⁹⁸ Weddings tend to emphasize unity, but disunity, antagonism and conflict generally linger just beneath the surface. As A.R Radcliffe-Brown noted, marriage is a “rearrangement of social structure” (1950:43) and it is hard to imagine such a rearrangement ever being free of conflict, whether between generations (cf. Boellstorff 1999; Cho 2009; Lash 2006) or between affines (cf. Bristol-Rhys 2007; Carsten 1997; Nguyen and Belk 2013). More generally, as Nadia Yaqub has argued in her review of the prominent place that weddings hold in Palestinian cinema, “the integrity of the wedding as a Palestinian event to be conducted in a Palestinian space is disrupted... filmmakers question the existence and the efficacy of various binaries (public/private, cultural/political, spiritual/material) and explore the ramifications of defying these divisions” (2007:58). While it is the context of Israeli occupation that gives these films their rhetorical force and narrative arc, Yaqub points out that weddings often help to build up these kinds of binaries independently of such specific political conditions—only to necessarily break them down in order that the ritual may successfully affect a change in the social order. Thus while weddings may seem to embody the essence of propriety, there is (somewhat paradoxically) generally something at least a bit transgressive about them.

up against the continued necessity of maintaining older networks of clientage as well as the persistence of the wedding as rite of legitimation and passage.

My introduction to Jordanian weddings as part and parcel of that rural system of clientage was almost imperceptible. As a Peace Corps volunteer, I attended engagements and weddings on a regular basis from virtually the moment I arrived since they were one of the primary venues for village sociality. All told, I would estimate that I have attended over fifty Jordanian weddings in my lifetime. The vast majority have been large, outdoor weddings, which lasted multiple days and involved hundreds of guests, dancing, pyrotechnics, and a lot of meat. While such weddings are increasingly rare in Jordan, it is easy for a foreign anthropologist to end up at one: they are highly open events, they welcome all guests and most importantly, Jordanians immediately recognize them as the kind of thing an American visitor can and should be interested in.

Weddings exist somewhere along the borderlands of a zone of “cultural intimacy” which produces a mixture of social solidarity and acute embarrassment vis-à-vis the potentially judging gaze of outsiders (Herzfeld 1996; Shryock 2004a; 2004b). Yet despite receiving invitation after invitation to such weddings, I am highly cognizant of the fact that they represent a dwindling minority of weddings as new commercial wedding halls have continued to open their doors on a regular basis across Jordan year after year. It was much more rarely (here, my sample size is four) that I attended weddings in such wedding halls that normally lasted a few hours. These ranged in size from 80 guests to hundreds. Aside from these two types of wedding typical among average working Jordanians, I have attended one mass wedding, which I will discuss in great detail in the next chapter.

It is no accident that I, a foreigner, saw far more of the rarer outdoor weddings than the more quotidian indoor weddings. The former are widely believed to epitomize what Jordan

University's resident anthropologist Mahmud Na'amneh calls the country's "intangible cultural heritage" (2009). Matching Professor Na'amneh's enthusiasm for weddings, colleagues, acquaintances and near-strangers frequently invited me to *taqlīdī* (traditional) or *sha'abī* (popular) weddings—often promising me *fulkur aṣlī* (authentic folklore). It would be easy to take aim at the authenticity claims of my hosts and point out the irony that these multi-day outdoor weddings are becoming fodder or "local content" for what Andrew Shryock has called "a cultural interzone that, in Jordan, is framed and continually remodeled using concepts drawn from the English language and the globalizing policy discourses that flourish in it" (2004b:44). However, it is more fruitful to follow Shryock's approach and try to understand the struggles, accomplishments and even pleasures of Jordanian elites and commoners as they position themselves carefully in regards to this cultural interzone.

Emerging norms around weddings increasingly impose somewhat contradictory imperatives on Jordanians, demanding the display of proper deference to tradition before certain (predominantly local, lower class) audiences⁹⁹ while simultaneously demanding space for ironic or analytic distance in relationship to other (primarily upper-class, cosmopolitan) audiences. My own positionality as more of the latter than the former made me intensely aware of the balancing act people confronted in this regard. I will begin by describing the kinds of promises and hazards of representation with which the lower classes contend (the life cycle, reproduction, bounty and scarcity) and how these drive people to either have a multi-day outdoor wedding or a brief wedding in a hall. I then turn to the outdoor weddings to which powerful families have invited me. Since I have never been invited to a wedding in a five-star hotel, I will avoid discussing

⁹⁹ If one is going to go to the trouble of hosting such a public spectacle to emphasize one's deep connections to Bedouin identity, the American anthropologist is one such audience. Aside from the deep complicity of British and American colonial projects with the Hashemite monarchy's promulgation of Bedouinism (Massad 2001), there is a widespread recognition that cosmopolitans like myself often crave the kinds of authenticity that the properly-packaged wedding seeks to enact.

them in any great detail, although my primarily middle class friends and collaborators tell me all manner of stories about the depravity of such weddings. Gender mixing, drinking and fighting figure prominently in many of these accounts.

The goal is neither to capture the full diversity of Jordanian wedding celebrations (or opinions about that diversity) nor is it to fully elucidate the “normal” wedding. Rather, the goal is to show how various forms of social antagonism have rendered a few discrete models of the ideal wedding as competitors for the status of ideal type and the legitimacy-conferring powers that such a status would entail. Given the task at hand, the modest achievements of most Jordanians will figure much less prominently than certain feats of ritual acumen and certain notable failures. No doubt, weddings remain for many Jordanians a joyous rite of passage tied to sexuality and hospitality as well as individual and collective senses of honor with all of the long-standing antagonisms and solidarities entailed. However, the very existence of competing models of wedding re-contextualizes all weddings, rendering them ideologically charged no matter the intent. In this way, the wedding’s power to exacerbate preexisting antagonisms and sunder old bonds and block the formation of new relations is greatly augmented.

“Slowly, Slowly”

At the time of research, a middle class family needed thousands of Dinar to replicate an approximation of the “traditional” wedding immortalized by Bedouin soap operas and folklorists. Many middle class families still did. In the first example, much like the description above, the initial building of the tent was followed by a night of dancing¹⁰⁰ on Wednesday and then the *zifāf*

¹⁰⁰ Most weddings I have attended include some combination of *debka* and *samir*. Both are line dances, but while the former is associated with the peasants towards the west, the latter is associated with the Bedouins of the east. In *debka*, participants hold hands and perform various sets of kicks and stomps to Arabic pop songs based on drum machines and synthesizers. According to local lore, the *debka* was originally performed to tamp down the roof of the house. In *samir*, participants clap, sway from side to side and stomp while chanting poetry. The goal is to display one’s rhetorical virtuosity by composing verses mocking one’s opponents. Because *samir* is an interactive, agonistic genre, it is at odds with a mass-mediated pop culture industry and has fallen into disfavor. However, the introduction

(procession) on Thursday and a feast on Friday¹⁰¹. It would be easy to point to all of the innovations as evidence of its inventedness as tradition and, of course, the footnotes will do just that. However, despite it all, some Jordanians still perform weddings which fully replicate older models both in broad form and substance: to embed the newly formed household within a preexisting matrix of mutual obligations by forming a multiplicity of exchange relations with a large number of people simultaneously. People can also have a lot of fun in the process—all while studiously reproducing the kinds of antagonisms which old men recalled¹⁰² as central to older weddings: antagonisms¹⁰³ between patron and client, between guest and host, between the generations, and even between the new affines.

The actual procession (*zifāf*) occurred Thursday night. A group of about fifty people left in the afternoon and drove¹⁰⁴ to pick up the bride from her home and take her and her mother back to the village. Following a practice that the old men told me dated from time immemorial, the family of the bride did not attend the wedding—since, the logic goes, who could bear the thought of celebrating the loss of a sister or daughter to another family¹⁰⁵? Upon arrival, we

of *samir* “teams” who produce mp3s that people can chant along with have led to a recent resurgence in popularity of the genre. For a fuller analysis of poetry, verbal repartee and mocking in Arab wedding celebrations, see Stephen Caton (1993; 2005).

¹⁰¹ Some tribes (like the Palestinian *bir Saba*’ tribes) have the feast on Thursday night.

¹⁰² Their recollections of weddings of the past were remarkably uniform and in keeping with the ethnographic record. See, for instance, Elizabeth Fernea’s (1965) classic *Guests of the Sheik*.

¹⁰³ This focus on antagonism avoids reducing the pervasive conflict, contestation, and negotiation around weddings to self-interest. Instead, antagonism identifies a deeply felt condition marked by a form of mutual repulsion between *antagon-ists*, which often resists articulation—despite the prominence of antagonism within the examples that follow.

¹⁰⁴ Obviously, cars are a relatively recent addition to the ritual. As if to mock the idea of going back to the use of livestock like camels or horses to transport the bride, a number of Jordanians, playfully planning my own Jordanian wedding, have suggested I bring the bride to the wedding from the airport via camel.

¹⁰⁵ The underlying mixture of antagonism and mutual dependency between the groups engaged in any marriage exchange has been central to anthropological understandings of marriage and kinship ever since Levi-Strauss’ classic argument in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* that, “mankind has always dreamed of seizing and fixing that fleeting moment when it was permissible to believe that the law of exchange could be evaded, that one could gain without losing, enjoy without sharing... of a world in which one might *keep to oneself* (Levi-Strauss 1949:497, emphasis in the original). A wide range of anthropologists, many deeply critical of Levi-Strauss’ larger project, took up the tension in competitive exchanges between “wife-givers” and “wife takers” as an object of study in the following decades (Dumont 1970; Fox 1967; Leach 1961; Needham 1971). This literature is marked by a

divided by gender. Going with the men, we were greeted by a delegation of the bride's male relatives, who sat with us and served us coffee and sweets. Soon, we took our leave and, saying our goodbyes, left the bride's family. We drove away from her family's house to ululation, gunshots and honking. Once back in the groom's village, his family commenced with ululating (among the women) and celebratory gunfire (among the men). The men gathered in the tent and our hosts (the family of the groom) served us coffee. Once all of the guests had arrived and the sun had begun to set, we went to groom's uncle's house for the shower (*hamam*)¹⁰⁶. As we walked, we sang "popular" rhymes like the following¹⁰⁷ while the men hoisted the groom aloft:

Daraj ya ghazali / Ya Riziqa halali
 Daraj nuna nuna / 'Arustak Mazyuna
 Daraj nuna nuna / 'Arustak hanuna

(step O my Ghazelle / O lawful sustenance)
 (step slowly slowly /your bride is pretty)
 (step slowly slowly /your bride is tender)

Shin al-qalayla Shin al-qalayla
 Allah Yil'an hathihi al-layla
 Hana wa irbut baab al-dar
 Hata tatla' bint mukhtar
 Ikhra' wa izra' bayt injan
 Yil'an ras abu za'alan
 Shamim rihat handaqq
 Shila't qalbi hali fuq

Start a little start a little
 God Damn this Night
 Here tie the door of the house
 Until the daughter of the mayor leaves
 Take off your clothes and plant eggplant

preoccupation with hierarchy, subordination, and the idea of the wife as a form 'tribute.' Of course, few today would argue that concepts like 'the exchange of women,' the 'wife-giver,' and the 'wife-taker' are universally applicable (Rubin 1975; Strathern 1984). As Peletz (1987) provocatively proposes, why not "The Exchange of Men?" Nevertheless, the aspect of conflict between the groups involved in marriage exchanges has proved to be an enduring theme in anthropological analyses of marriage (see also Carsten 1997).

¹⁰⁶ I was not actually present for the literal washing of the groom. While I have never participated in this aspect of the ritual, I have seen video.

¹⁰⁷ The first of the rhymes is commonly featured on both state television and the radio—relatively novel modes of dissemination for wedding songs.

Damn the head of the angry father
Smell the scent of handagug (an herb used in the wedding feast)
My heart has risen upwards

As with the description of a future wedding which began this chapter, it is easy enough to analyze such a wedding as a classic rite of passage with its corresponding phases of separation (the bathing of bride and groom, parading the latter around the village), liminality (the eventual sequestration of bride and groom alone) and reincorporation (during the feast the following day). One can even see examples of what Victor Turner would call “the reduction of culture into recognized components of factors... their recombination in fantastic or monstrous patterns and shapes; and... their recombination in ways that make sense” (Turner 1967: 106): the eggplant and the “head of the angry father” as phallic symbols, the gazelle as metaphor for an over-eager groom, the ‘heart rising upwards’ as a euphemism for sexual release. However, there is no sense that there is a temporary embargo on the discussion of social antagonisms at weddings—as evinced by the casual discussion of the bride’s family’s unwillingness to attend and, as we will see, the anguish the mother is expected to perform in recognition of the “loss” of her daughter. I emphasize these points because I want to make clear that I am arguing for a shift in the terms of social antagonisms rather than presenting the idea that weddings were once harmonious occasions before they became desacrilized and key sites for ideological struggle and the expression of status distinction.

Under that older system of clientage, the wedding marked a major shift in social persona from girl/youth (*bint/shab*) to woman/man (*mira/rājul*), which entailed a significant degree of freedom to operate independently of one’s parents. Today the shift in the balance of parental authority is, admittedly, as gradual as it is interminable—even if most young people still do not leave home until marriage unless their education or employment absolutely demands it. With the

arrival of mass schooling and formal employment (not to mention rising marriage ages), Jordanian youth now have a large number of smaller rites of passage that they experience before and after marriage. Graduations, final exams, dorm life, first jobs, distant postings, engagement parties, working abroad, and promotions have all become major life events that now compete with the wedding for significance in the lives of many young people. Yet the wedding remains very important to people as evinced by its size and expense¹⁰⁸. While final exam scores, engagements and promotions are also occasions for festivities, the amount of time and money a young person's family will invest in these pales in comparison to the wedding. Not even funerals come close to attracting the level of spending, discussion, and innovation that Jordanians have put into weddings in recent decades, which raises one of the central questions posed by the dissertation: why are weddings the rite of passage *par excellence* in Jordan? In the next chapter, I will take up this question in-depth and argue that Jordanian weddings loom large in importance because filiation remains fundamentally "biosocial" in Jordan and, as Morgan Clarke has argued, "legitimacy is a material component of filiation" (2009:198) in this common formulation. Put slightly differently, 'questions of substance' are inseparable from questions of propriety and both must be worked out in very specific ways through wedding rites.

In the midst of day two of the four-day extravaganza, following a triumphant return, the men congregated at the groom's uncle's house where they were seated in plastic chairs and

¹⁰⁸ This is significant. The wedding need not be figured normatively as the most important, costly, and elaborate rite of passage in a community's social life. For instance, Turner's classic study of rites of passage focused on a puberty rite, which (ironically) he found more significant to how women worked through the social tensions involved in marriage and women's accompanying migration to their husbands' villages than the wedding itself. In many parts of the world, people deem funerals more significant than weddings, reasoning that one might marry many times over the course of a life—but that everyone only dies once. Richard Kisiara (1998) illustrates this vividly in his work on the Luo of East Africa when he describes relatives who must store their deceased loved ones in the morgue for months until they can afford a proper burial. Gillian Feeley-Harnik describes how, for the Sakalava of Madagascar, "royal deaths now involve... proscriptions on work, washing, and the maintenance of personal appearance" that can affect over half of the week (1985:5). Depending on the time and place any event from a baptism to a bat mitzvah to a confirmation to a *quinceañera* might prove more significant to the life of a given community than a wedding. One could argue that the four-year liberal arts college experience represents one of the longest, most elaborate, and most resource-intensives rites of passage ever adopted on a large scale.

served *kanafa* and Pepsi while they sat and talked¹⁰⁹. When the shower (*hamām*) was over, some of the young men hoisted the groom on their shoulders and began to walk back, clapping and chanting as they went. They paused in front of the women's section on their way as more ululating and gunfire erupted. The groom's father's brother stood in front of the open gate such that the men were prevented from seeing inside the women's area by the high walls. After a bit of chanting, they quickly moved down to the tent. Everyone settled into their seats in the wedding tent and the hosts served more rounds of tea and coffee. It was at this point that the groom's father began sitting various relatives down with his son Ali to give him final words of advice. I was sitting to the left of Ali's uncle when his father seated Ali to his right. He leaned over and spoke for a while in hushed tones. He then reclined a bit and said, "slowly slowly" (*shway shway*). Ali stood, shook his hand, and walked away. Soon, I noticed Ali telling his father, "I'm ready." Calls went around that it was time for the wedding procession (*zifāf*) and that we were going *ziff*¹¹⁰ Ali. We stood up and began to gather together. Now under cover of darkness, Ali was hoisted aloft and we took him up to the women's section once again. Here, the mother of the bride presented herself and there was a brief back and forth between her and the men (still chanting the same bawdy rhymes) as she acted out an acute expression of distress over the loss of her daughter. The men then set Ali down and virtually thrust him through the gate and into the women's section.

Such antagonisms are at the heart of the conscious and explicit archetype of the "traditional" marriage ceremony. The primary antagonisms expressed through such weddings

¹⁰⁹ Needless to say, Pepsi is a relatively recent addition to wedding rites. However, even *kanafa* is novel. It is an urban specialty associated with the West Bank of the Jordan River—specifically Nablus. However, like Pepsi, it is a sweet and widely-enjoyed foodstuff which can be given out as a way for the hosts to honor guests and demonstrate their generosity.

¹¹⁰ The verb *zif* means both to conduct a procession and to be married off. Words like *zaffa* (procession, wedding procession) and *zifāf* are also derived from the common root z-f.

and commentaries about them are those between the family of the bride and the family of the groom as well as those between the generations and, as we will see, hosts and guests as well as patrons and clients. Yet these are the antagonisms of people who are intimately *related* to one another—not the antagonisms of abstract sociological types. They are also part of a heady mix highly ambiguous and even contradictory emotions that accompany rites of passage like weddings: *farah* (joy, happiness, wedding), but also *huzn* (sorrow), and even *ghadab* (wrath). As a general rule¹¹¹, the bride’s family was not *actually* outraged by the prospect of their daughter marrying. Rather, they were experiencing the same kinds of overwhelming and conflicting emotions that mark weddings in other parts of the world while engaging in prescribed activities designed to emphasize the bride’s value to them and the great honor that her husband and his family should feel at being offered the opportunity to marry her. Far from dampening the potential for explosive conflict, however, the highly stylized nature of these expressions of emotions merely raised the stakes. These stakes were perhaps the highest when the rules of hospitality demanded acts of shared commensality. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that this involved a kind of antagonism that was both a product of intense social solidarity (among family members) and an impetus to further social solidarity: the creation of new families and family members to build new alliances against common foes while mitigating the potentially dangerous effects of unchecked antagonism. In so doing, such weddings engage with *karām*: the broader ethic of hospitality, honor, reciprocity and generosity.

“*Is Everybody Full?*”

¹¹¹ I say this because, when I asked people about the bride’s family refusing to attend the wedding or the bride’s mother crying over the loss of her daughter people always seemed eager to emphasize that men *used to be* angry about the ‘loss’ of a sister or that they felt like they *should be* angry about the ‘loss’ of a sister. I have never recorded an empirical example of someone actually expressing this sense of loss as a personal feeling. This is not to imply that people never miss their female relatives after they marry. Rather, that sense of loss is tempered by the joy that one’s female relative has become a woman, wife and mother with all of the increase in social status that the assumption of those roles entails.

The next morning came the inevitable feast: the grand unifying gesture of reincorporation which ties together the whole wedding and its participants: the sharing of “bread and salt” (*‘aīsh wa miliḥ*)—substances widely reputed to create bonds of mutual protection and obligation through the act of shared commensality. Yet if sexuality is a major cause for anxiety with the twinned necessities of displaying and hiding it in order to increase the honor of one’s group (thereby increasing the size of the group, the resources at their disposal and their ability to perform acts of hospitality) then hospitality and generosity provoke similar kinds of anxieties. A clumsy display of hospitality, like a clumsy display of sexuality, brings great shame while successful displays bring respect and renown. However, it is important to note certain shifts in the discourse of honor and shame. Jordanian weddings have become an important site for the production of an “economy of shame” in which older notions of honor and shame are “instrumentalized” to serve novel, capitalistic ends (Karim 2008).

In this formulation, the discourse of honor and shame remains for many of the rural poor a “symbolic covenant with God” and “moral resource through which they view themselves as superior to rich and urban people.” Yet while the discourse of shame has always been a key “instrument of social control,” it is increasingly useful as a repertoire of traditions and institutions (in the broadest sense) for powerful social actors working at the interstices between the kin-based patronage economy and the world of transnational capital accumulation. This shift has come at the expense of the power of the discourse of shame to serve as a leveling mechanism and a mode of redistribution. Elite actors increasingly co-opt the idiom of tradition and its ritual forms to “instrumentally violate local norms of cohesion and community” (Karim 2008:7-9). Ironically, elite Jordanians can even bolster the grounds for their differential access to foreign capital through elaborate weddings (because of that differential access to foreign capital) at the

same time that they can cast aspersions on the honor and authentic belonging of their more parochial neighbors. Much like the new systems of microcredit indebtedness¹¹² that Karim studied in Bangladesh, the new economy of shame in Jordan around weddings produces distinct winners and losers and exacerbates the differences between them. This process of transforming family honor into capital and capital into family honor in contemporary Jordan increasingly plays out through spectacles of commodity consumption like the wedding, which combine displays of generosity with displays of modesty. This comes at the expense of other facets of the older discourse of honor and shame like the collective defense of land and organized feuding.

The men began arriving for lunch after the noon prayer on Friday. I took my place in line to greet and congratulate the host (in this case the groom's father) along with the groom himself and a number of his uncles and brothers. I exchanged handshakes, kisses and wishes of future success as I passed from one greeter to another. Following protocol, I slipped a bank note (known as the *nuqūt*: a wedding gift which, at the time of research, generally consisted of a 10 JD note) into the groom's hand as I shook it and kissed him on either cheek. The amount of money can vary depending on one's financial means, one's relationship to the family and any number of possible strategies for the production and alleviation of social debt. In principle at least, the *nuqūt* is a wedding gift to be returned at subsequent weddings: perhaps for the giver himself or kin of his. I once went to a wedding where the groom's father emphasized this principle of reciprocity by joking that, "you [bestowed *nuqūt*] upon us. So now I have to come to your wedding and [bestow *nuqūt*] upon you. But I'm an old man and I can't ride on an airplane

¹¹² In Karim's study, she shows how microcredit institutions in Bangladesh have figured out how to turn family honor into collateral (by offering poor women "collateral-free" loans and then threatening them with highly gendered forms of shaming ranging from gossip to prison and mob violence should they refuse to repay them). When Karim terms this a process of instrumentalization, she is highlighting the manner in which preexisting institutions (ranging from gossip to "house-breaking" or *ghar bangha*) become tools of transnational capital accumulation above and beyond their better-established role in long-running conflicts between local notables and their dependents.

so you'll have to do your wedding here.” The elite take this one step further: at the largest weddings, there is a man who stands next to the groom with a ledger entering the names of the various guests along with the amount of their gifts.

Once assembled, the 150 or so men were treated to heaping plates of *mansaf*: Jordan's national dish of mutton boiled in a yoghurt sauce served atop bread and rice¹¹³ with parsley and nuts. A man took out a pistol and began to shoot it in the air to announce to everyone, far and wide, that lunch would now be served. The brothers and cousins of the groom¹¹⁴ first brought out about thirty to forty waist-high metal stands and knee-high plastic tables, placing four individual servings of bottled water¹¹⁵ atop each table. Next, the men returned with giant platters heaped with meat and rice¹¹⁶. When the platters had been distributed amongst the metal stands across the length of the tent, our host exhorted us to eat until we were full. The men arose and clustered around the platters in groups of four or five. After saying ‘in the name of God’ (*bismillah*), we rolled up our sleeves and dug in with our right hands, forming the meat, yoghurt sauce, and rice into balls and then tossing them into our mouths. While each person limited himself to an equivalently sized triangular sliver of the platter, we pushed choice morsels on one another as we all ate rapidly. Had the women and small children been served yet¹¹⁷? Best to eat quickly just in

¹¹³ For more on Jordanian culinary nationalism and the emergence of *mansaf* as a peculiarly *national* dish, see Sally Howell's (2003) “Modernizing Mansaf.”

¹¹⁴ In rural Jordan, it would be considered scandalous for women to serve food to large groups of strange men. Thus when it comes to weddings and other displays of hospitality, it is incumbent upon men to take on much of this work of what autonomist feminists have called “affective labor” (cf. Hardt 1999).

¹¹⁵ Jordanians, like people in many parts of the world, can be highly distrustful of the public water supply. So-called “health water” (*maya-saha*) is incredibly popular even among the relatively poor. This sits uncomfortably with observations that the public water supply is ostensibly safe and that people often refill bottles of water with tap water.

¹¹⁶ As is often the case, the men prepared the meat while the women prepared the rice.

¹¹⁷ There is a widely-remarked upon set of norms about the order in which people are supposed to eat at feasts. In most cases, women and children eat as they prepare the food. When it is ready, the male guests are served first. Then, the food is taken to the women's section. Hosts are expected to eat last so that they can ensure the comfort of their guests and in case there is not enough food to go around. However, I have been reassured at feasts that the women and children were already eating in an attempt to make guests relax and take their time. Who knows whether or not they were telling the truth.

case. Relatives of the groom's family circulated through the room, encouraging us to eat, offering bread and more yoghurt sauce. Upon finishing, the guests signified their content by saying, "praise God" (*al-ḥamdulillah*) and went to wash up. Meanwhile, the groom's father walked through the scrum of men waiting for soap and water anxiously asking, "are you full? Are you full? Is everybody full?" When the guests were seated again, the groom's brothers and cousins began serving tea and coffee as people slowly wandered off to other obligations, wishing the groom and hosts well as they left.

When I asked my hosts why they had chosen this type of wedding rather than the truncated indoor wedding, they seemed confused: why would they do anything different unless they were too poor to properly provision their guests? They simply saw their son's wedding as the way any self-respecting man would mark such an occasion: with singing, dancing, and acts of generosity. However, it is hard not to interpret this wedding as making a number of powerful statements about the family's allegiances and commitments when placed in a broader context, which includes radically different models for weddings. When compared to other popular or "traditional" weddings, the primary mode of comparison is indexical: how many days? How many guests? Most importantly: how much meat? In the subsequent examples, however, whole new axes of comparison emerge. Increasingly, the wedding is not a simple index of one's honor and generosity within widely agreed upon "traditional" terms but rather an icon of the hosts' adherence to or rejection of that tradition—as opposed to other possible visions of Jordan's future which might give precedence to nationalism, liberal capitalism, or Islam over older tribal patronage networks.

"In his Face"

If middle class families like Ali's struggle to continue having reasonable—if modest—weddings along the same lines as their ancestors, the wealthy and the poor must contend with various challenges as well. When looking at what constitutes success and a failure for people from the socioeconomic extremes, it is important to note the complex ways in which different kinds of wedding both take on and subvert various class resonances. To do so, however, will require that I overcome a certain amount of “ethnographic refusal” (Ortner 1995) on my part. I have received nothing but kindness and warm hospitality in my travels across Jordan. All invitations should be cherished and it would be ungrateful of me to criticize my hosts—especially when they have such humble means when compared to my own. However, as Argyrou points out, traditionalist weddings and the honor that they can confer on their hosts turn on the assumption of the existence of a kind of uncalculated generosity that is all the more cruel because it, “disregards economic inequality and proceeds as if generosity and ‘good heart’ were the only relevant factors” (Argryou 1996: 78). Yet a “good heart” is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for a successful wedding. First I will ask the reader to imagine that, at times, I encountered young men who simply lacked the means to perform the proper wedding. To the degree that I can surface suppressed narratives of their marginalization within the Jordanian wedding complex, one must imagine the even greater degrees of marginalization to which lower class women and children may be subject. Their silence in this chapter is designed to be unsettling.

To critique the system as a whole without casting aspersions on my hosts, I will try to help the reader imagine a comparison of two brothers of humble means who chose radically different types of wedding (a multi-day outdoor feast and a two-hour event in a wedding hall) and then lay out how their neighbors might respond. Next, turning away from this mode of

highly distanced, obscured writing on those who do not fit into the system, I will compare two large, outdoor weddings hosted by transnational elites to show the opportunities that such weddings promise. In providing the ‘local content’ for Jordan’s ‘cultural interzone,’ Jordanian elites and commoners are driven at least as much by the logics of consumer capitalism with its global dreamscapes and prestige goods as they are by their more parochial commitments. At its most cruel, this combination of kin structures and transnational capital accumulation can prove “toxically synergistic” (Karim 2008:15)—especially for the poor who must conform more assiduously to its shifting strictures. This leads to all manner of anxieties as social actors seek out protected, legitimacy-conferring signs which they can use to guard against attacks on the forms of legitimacy which wedding rituals must enact. This attempt to mobilize new forms of consumption fits seamlessly into the wider economy of shame, serving alternately as shield or bludgeon.

“This is a Simple Wedding”

Mahmud and Mo’tasim, despite being brothers, chose very different styles of weddings. Their parents divorced when they were children and their father has not supported either them or their mother financially since. Even after their mother’s remarriage, they were heavily reliant on their extended kin for support. Forced to leave school and support themselves from a young age, they went in different directions. While Mahmud was drawn to agricultural labor, his brother Mo’tasim primarily worked as a shop boy in various urban centers in Jordan¹¹⁸. Neither one of them had much formal schooling, but Mo’tasim continued to work on his English and follow cosmopolitan fashions—developing a reputation as something of a dandy in the process. So when the time came for the two of them to marry, they opted for markedly different weddings.

¹¹⁸ The urban-rural contrast is not accidental: as I have argued in previous chapters, urban labor, property and kin relations in Jordan are far less dependent on these complex norms of hospitality than they are in rural areas.

To be clear: neither could have possibly carried out an elite wedding at a five star hotel. Even if they had the money (which they most certainly did not), their relatives and friends would have been too intimidated to attend¹¹⁹. Working-class villagers across Jordan were unanimous on this point: “it’s not comfortable,” was a common refrain. One man wondered, “can you smoke in a hotel wedding? I don’t know. I would be afraid to smoke.” Yet another asked, “what are you supposed to wear? If I was the only one wearing a headscarf and robe, people would laugh at me.” However, while Mahmud opted for the “village” wedding, Mo’tasim opted for something different: he rented a wedding hall for two hours and, rather than serving his guests dinner, he only served them coffee, Pepsi and sweets. The two approaches provoked markedly different responses. While Mahmud’s attempt at a traditional wedding provoked mockery and condescension, Mo’tasim’s wedding happened and was never discussed again. The comparison highlights the economic factors provoking what I call (to the amusement of my Jordanian interlocutors) the privatization of joy/the wedding (*al-farah*). Part of this is about gaining the ability to better insulate oneself from the effects of social inequality. The other part is about gaining the ability to express one’s uniqueness through wedding ritual.

When the subject of Mahmud’s wedding was first broached, his uncle Abu Saleem was mostly annoyed. His first reaction was, “Mahmud doesn't even live here. When I invite people, they're going to ask, who's Mahmud?” Nonetheless, he and his brother Nasser agreed to host despite the huge amount of effort such a wedding entails. They brought a sound system, a tent, chairs, and plenty of tea, coffee, and assorted nuts and seeds for the guests. Mahmud brought two goats for slaughter—each of which must have cost him about a month’s pay. The first night, no one danced and there was no poetry. The next night, I got home in the evening and found Nasser running behind schedule with the feast. They told me that there were men down in the tent and

¹¹⁹ See similar complaints in Argyrou (1996: 132-137)

that I should go sit with them since “there's nobody from us down there.” I arrived to find one of Mahmud's friends and one of their second cousins. I served them coffee and sat with them until we saw Mahmud's truck arriving with his guests. As they approached, we looked around and realized the tent was in shambles. Some children had strewn the plastic tables and chairs about and many of the tables were sticky and stained with tea from the previous night. We quickly set about rearranging the chairs and tables in preparation for the arrival of guests. The evening prayer was wrapping up and the main contingent of relatives and neighbors was beginning to arrive en masse from the mosque. Mahmud's brother Mo'tasim tried to get him to sit in the appropriate seat on the edge of the tent so he could greet his guests but he demurred. Perhaps he was starting to see how the celebration was going to turn out and could not bear to stay. In any event, I hardly saw him after that. Since dinner was running late, everyone spent a fair while sitting and drinking tea in preparation for dinner. In what would become the leitmotif for the whole wedding, guests repeatedly referred to the celebration as a “simple wedding,” the condescension virtually dripping from their lips. Time seemed to drag on and on as the food failed to materialize. I felt flush with a shame as I imagined what catastrophes might be unfolding in the makeshift kitchen above.

Finally, the plates of food arrived—although it was painfully obvious that the hosts were stretching the meat to accommodate the fifty or so men assembled. Each platter had about four or five hunks of meat to adorn large piles of rice and yoghurt sauce. Unfortunately, there were about six people per platter. As a host of sorts, I begged off offers to eat but relented under pressure from Nasser and Abu Saleem. I joined a platter with four other men and a child. Rolling up my sleeve, I dug in with my right hand, forming balls of rice and yogurt sauce and placing them into my mouth. Normally, it would have been incumbent upon me as a host of sorts to push

the meat towards my guests and insist that they eat more. Unfortunately, there was hardly enough on the platter and it would have seemed ridiculous to try. Instead, I watched the delicate dance of five people competing for four pieces of meat (I had already resigned myself to a meal of rice and yoghurt). Despite my modest sacrifice, there was no way around it: the poverty in the community was on display for all to see and everyone was implicated in it. The father tore off pieces of meat for his son and reassured him, “eat, eat. Don’t be ashamed. Don’t be ashamed.” The father probably would have behaved in a similar manner if the platter had been overflowing with meat. Nonetheless, his repetition of *la tistahī* (don’t be ashamed) rankled. Again mindful of my role as host, I continued to pick at the rice (lest my guests be ashamed that they were eating alone) right up to the bitter end when the child was done eating. Who knows what was left over for the women and younger children. Then we washed up and came back for coffee and tea. Before I had even finished my cup, almost everyone had left.

The lack of meat was over-determined by recent transformations to the pastoral economy discussed in part one, which have contributed to the rising cost of local meat (from eight dinar per kilo in 2010 to thirteen dinar per kilo in 2013). Population growth has meant more demand for meat at the very moment when arable land (used both for grazing and for growing feed) is being given over to urban sprawl. As a result, many middle-class Jordanians¹²⁰ have been reduced to eating chicken no more than once per week and sheep and goat meat are now almost exclusively consumed at wedding and funeral feasts. While there is some talk of using imported meat from Romania (six dinar per kilo at the time of research) or the Emirates (eight dinar per kilo at the time of research), people can taste the difference. The most obvious difference in taste appears to be the result of freezing the meat for shipping—although it is also no doubt partly a

¹²⁰ Baylouny noted as early as 2006 in “Creating Kin: New Family Associations as Welfare Providers in Liberalizing Jordan” that the “near poor” were forgoing meat. This phenomenon has subsequently moved up the economic ladder.

result of the questionable diet of such animals. On top of concerns about the safety of the meat and adulteration, observant Muslims must ask themselves whether they trust butchers in far away places (as opposed to their hosts) to provide genuinely *ḥalāl* meat, which has been killed in a humane manner and bled fully from the jugular “in the name of God” (*bismillah*). As a result, such products have had a hard time gaining traction in the Jordanian marketplace with most people saying something to the effect of “I would rather not serve meat¹²¹ than have my guests be unsatisfied with it.”

For the next week, I felt like people were going out of their way to bring up Mahmud’s wedding and make invidious comparisons between it and the ideal type. The refrain was always the same: it was an *‘urs basīṭ* (simple wedding) for *nās basīṭa* (simple people). One man called Mahmud, a “needy youth” (*shab miskīn*) and referred to his family as “eating wind” (*makilīn ḥawa’*): in other words¹²², broke. While no one explicitly mentioned the paucity of meat (I was probably too close to the hosts to hear a criticism *that* scathing), I heard plenty about the size of the tent and the small number of guests. Another man told me that a “real” Bedouin wedding might have, “a thousand people” and “a hundred head [of goats]” (as opposed, presumably, to Mahmud’s wedding). It was pointless to bring up the factors that over-determined this outcome. Mahmud was not only uniquely unable to meet the minimum requirements of a traditional wedding due to a lack of parental support, but he also needed to strengthen ties with distant kin all the more urgently to compensate for the lack of parental support and ensure some degree of protection against the vagaries of the agricultural economy with its mix of unpredictable weather, landlords, and investors. Caught up in a ‘toxically synergistic’ combination of kin obligations

¹²¹ Chicken, while served at the weddings of certain peasant groups for generations, is viewed as being beyond the pale by most who would consider hosting this kind of wedding. Those with this tradition are mocked by others who claim such people, ‘are what they eat.’

¹²² I should also note that *hawa’* (wind) is a common euphemism for *kharra* (shit).

and entanglements with larger forces of transnational capital accumulation, Mahmud found himself spending all of his savings and going into debt while failing to succeed in impressing any of the people he needed to impress. While Mahmud had undoubtedly set out to perform his newfound role as a generous man, it only emphasized to his neighbors that, wife or no wife, he was still a ‘needy youth.’

In contrast, Mahmud’s younger brother Mo’tasim opted for a brief, two-hour wedding. It happened and I never heard a word about it again. It provoked some grumbling in the run-up—almost exclusively from his uncles—the same ones who had complained about his brother’s wedding plans. The men had two criticisms of such weddings: first, that a guest should be entitled to dinner if they were going to go to the trouble of congratulating someone on such a happy occasion. Second, the men claimed that putting the men’s and women’s sections so closely together often led to needless “problems” (in other words, fights). Otherwise, everyone simply stated matter-of-factly that the wedding would happen in a wedding hall. By now, the idea that people marry in wedding halls and do not provide their guests with a full meal goes without saying. This may violate the rules of traditional hospitality, but it provokes little commentary at this point and no outrage. Everyone drove to the village of Mo’tasim’s bride dressed in their best clothes, picked her up, and drove in a loud procession with her family to a wedding hall where they divided themselves by gender: the women inside and the men outside. The men lined up to greet the groom one by one. As the guests shook the groom’s hand, they slipped him the *nuqūt*—most likely 10 JD each. After greeting the groom, everyone took their seats and listened to the din of music from the women’s room. As we sat, Mo’tasim’s younger cousins brought us coffee, Pepsi and store-bought *kanāfa*. I took each and thanked them responding, *fī ‘ursak* (as in, ‘I’ll repay this at your wedding’) and the inevitable reply, *mowjūdak!*

(you'll be there!). An hour and a half later, we went home and, as I have said, that was the last I heard of it. Mo'tasim had, through his rejection of tradition and embrace of the privatization of weddings, successfully managed expectations and avoided public shaming.

Key to his success was the clear low-risk, low-reward proposition he was offering his friends, relatives, and guests through his adoption of the abbreviated model of wedding. He was asking very little time of the latter and very little labor of the former. The goal was less the kind of social extension and intensification of ties associated with the traditional model of wedding and more a sort of modest box-checking which was qualitatively different. For disadvantaged young men like Mo'tasim who are working in the contemporary service sector in urban Jordan, much like their American compatriots, there is a growing need for the kinds of "weak ties" (Granovetter 1973) that they would never be able to afford if those ties had to be cemented through healthy servings of meat and rice. At somewhere between eight and thirteen dinar per kilo, provisioning a substantial number of men with meat in the hopes of someday landing a job paying JD 200-400 per month increasingly seems like a losing proposition—if not the height of folly. Today, the actions of people like Mo'tasim are increasingly re-framing the abbreviated indoor model of weddings as lower-class rather than cosmopolitan. At the same time, elites are increasingly the ones working to keep traditional modes of wedding ritual (and the patron-client relationships they entail) alive.

The Lieutenant

Admittedly, the preceding description is a somewhat extreme attempt to write about the shameful, repressed and uncomfortable side of the Jordanian wedding complex within its own terms, highlighting the marginalization of subordinate males and hinting at the kinds of cruelties that women and children may encounter in cases of divorce, abandonment, and illegitimacy. The

fact is that economic conditions are militating for an increase in the number of these bad weddings that nobody and everybody wants to talk about. Nobody, including this ethnographer, wants to be directly associated with bad weddings. From the perspective of most Jordanians, if I knew a friend was having a hard time putting on a wedding, would I not be expected to lend him some money or take responsibility for some aspect of the wedding? It would make me a low and stingy person not to—the very opposite of the persona of generosity and *qalb ṭayyib* (good heart) that I ought to cultivate. While Jordanians from across the socioeconomic spectrum feel the increasing effects of poverty and income inequality within their own friend and kin networks, they tend to exteriorize and disavow the problem—much like the preceding account. The acknowledgement of the exclusionary aspects of the system within the system mirrors my own elliptical and defensive explication in the text. To do otherwise is to accept being polluted by the contagion of dishonor one describes in others.

The following account is at the other extreme: Lieutenant Salama’s wedding was a model of disciplined image-management which was well-financed, widely supported in the community and actually somewhat amazing—even for someone who makes it his business to attend weddings. I heard about the wedding through his mother’s family. They were excited to invite me to the wedding and made sure to emphasize his good family and rank: he was not just any old lieutenant—he was a lieutenant in the Air Force, which implies prestige, a high salary and lots of opportunities to travel abroad for training. They even took me to his house: a two story white stone-faced home. His relatives enthused about the fact that the kitchen was “on the American system” (*‘ala al-niḡām al-amrīkī*). Yet the wedding itself was studied in its down-home parochialism.

We arrived at the wedding to find a tent, which could accommodate 500, reasonably filled with people talking amidst plush chairs in a steel-framed tent with a colorful canvas tarp. After greeting the hosts, we took our seats and accepted our small cups of coffee from a man who had been hired¹²³ to dress in traditional garb and fulfill the role of the *qahwahjī*—a dependent quasi-slave who would serve coffee to guests of the pre-modern sheikh. After shaking the porcelain cups to signify that we had drunk our fill, we stood up to get a better view of the proceedings. We positioned ourselves behind a sea of smart phones intent on recording the events unfolding. The older men were up front dancing the *sāmīr*. They stood in a line shoulder-to-shoulder and swayed slightly back and forth, bending their knees and clapping in time with the music and chanting Bedouin poetry in the old dialect. They sang about the hospitality and honor of their hosts with a minimum of the mockery and verbal repartee that often marks such poetry. As the line of men clapped and swayed, various individuals would break off from the group from an excess of enthusiasm and swirl their fine summer capes, walking sticks, or ceremonial swords.

In a pattern that would repeat itself for the rest of the night, the old men yielded to the young men, who were now rested from their previous bout of dancing at breakneck speeds in a spiraling, circular motion. As they retook the dance floor, one group was hard to miss: the lieutenant's men formed a distinctive bloc in their army fatigues. They danced the Iraqi *chōbī*, holding hands and stomping in time with the music. Once again, men would break away from the group, swinging ceremonial swords and exhorting their comrades to greater levels of exertion. Meanwhile, other men strolled around with pistols, shotguns and M16s, shooting in the air to express their joy at the happy occasion in a manner that nonetheless underlined their ability to

¹²³ Note the contrast between the use of wage laborers here and the poor and middle class families who use family members to serve their guests.

live up to a very specific masculine ideal of aggression, martial prowess, and assertiveness in the face of any antagonism. So it went for the rest of the evening: we danced *debka*, *sāmir*, and *chōbi* while consuming cup after cup of tea and coffee. When I was shaking from the caffeine but could not bear to dance anymore, I found a ride back to my village. My hosts, however, would stay out for hours more, catching no more than a few hours of sleep before they began the massive task of preparing the next day's feast.

The next day, I arrived early and found the men hard at work over pot after pot of boiling meat, which they had set up in a half-finished house. The amount of *work* that goes into such events cannot be understated: I counted at least ten pots large enough for me to sit in atop massive gas stovetops. The heat was intense as the men described to me how they had butchered the animals at dawn on very little sleep. From my own experience butchering for weddings, it would have taken at least 20 men a half of a day to do the job. They were exhausted and still had hours-worth of gracious hospitality to enact. Not wanting to be in the way and sweating profusely, I expressed my admiration for the hard work they were doing and joined the old men chanting poetry by the tent. As night came, the crowd swelled into the hundreds. The dance floor was soon covered with over 100 plastic tables. Next, a line of men came out bringing platter after platter of meat, each of which was at least a meter in diameter and about half a meter high. My video of the procession of platters went on for five minutes. When each table had been topped with meat, bottled water, and yogurt sauce, a round of gunfire went off as the hosts invited their guests to eat their fill. The crowd fanned out across the sea of platters. Four or five men gathered around each platter, urging their compatriots to eat from the huge piles of meat atop rice, parsley, nuts and flatbread. When we were done, we went over to wash up and then sat down for tea as

people began to drift away. The plates were then whisked away and I thanked my hosts profusely for putting on such a wonderful display of hospitality.

The lieutenant and his family had succeeded in pulling hundreds of people into exchange relations of mutual hospitality, enacting a feast which most would struggle to match, and thereby rendering their guests in their debt. The family had done so in a manner that mobilized both local kin networks (to provide both labor and attendees) and their highly visible involvement in transnational networks: here most notably those tied to the security services with its global flows of employment opportunities, military hardware, and training opportunities abroad. The promise of access to these different sources of wealth and power conspired to bolster the legitimacy of their position within the local system of patronage. These advantageous labor and property relations allowed them to continually exceed their neighbors in hospitality, producing a virtuous cycle (for the family in question) as the reverse image of the toxically synergistic forces ensuring that men like Mahmud would never rise above their station. Yet not all elite wedding spectacles cement relations with local kin groups so effortlessly or seamlessly. Access to money and foreign sources of power does not necessarily ensure a successful wedding.

“A Villa in Dubai”

In fact, weddings can exacerbate tensions and alienate kin due to their divergent attempts to inhabit the emerging ‘cultural interzone’ that necessitates a careful mix of deference to local norms and the maintenance of an ironic distance from them. Too much ironic distance can lead weddings (and their hosts) to be evaluated negatively as polluted through their connections to external sources of power. Clumsily executed weddings can even pollute the very forms of tradition whose authenticity elites seek to co-opt. In this final example, which is by no means unique, it is possible to discern some of the excesses associated with such weddings and why

they might motivate a good deal of antipathy on the part of both individual Jordanians and more politically organized groups like the Chastity Society (the focus of the next chapter). This focus on the mixture of attraction and antipathy that liberal and tribal values produce is a necessary corrective to the current Western fixation on why various facets of the broader Islamist project might or might not be appealing. As Roxanne Euben observes, “few observers seem to have the same difficulties understanding ‘democracy’ as a value capable of inspiring an action as they do entertaining the possibility that Islamic fundamentalists may also seek an intrinsically compelling ideal” (1999:14). Thus, to use Laura Pearl’s language, they fall back on “structural functionalist” explanations of Islamist appeal—as if there is no need for a symmetrical account of the appeal of liberal, democratic ideals (2006:34). Whether labeled western or liberal or traditional or tribal, those aspects of weddings marked as specifically un-Islamic also strike Jordanians as alternately wholly appealing and wholly unappealing.

My neighbors told me with pride that the groom, Yassin, “works with a prince” in the Gulf. When I got there, they had already set up a traditional goat hair tent and had padded chrome chairs stacked in the corner in preparation for the wedding. Yassin wore name brands from head to toe: a Burberry hat, a Porche-branded t-shirt and tight, distressed jeans rolled midway up his shins. His tight shirt revealed large, muscular biceps (no doubt the product of weight training and protein shakes rather than manual labor) and the bottom half of a tattoo. His uncles wore white robes and red headscarves. Obviously, one of the main attractions of the village wedding (for Yassin at least) was the prospect of shooting guns in the air—as he said repeatedly. He had a pistol tucked in his jeans against his back the whole time. Others, however, seemed to have different ideas on the matter. While the prospect of shooting guns in the air appealed to the men from the city as a way of enacting a certain kind of transgressive masculine

aggression, it clearly concerned the neighbors—who were experienced enough with guns to fear the possibility of property damage and the loss of life.

I arrived before sundown and greeted all of the family of the groom (most of whom worked in the entertainment industry in the gulf). The feast was limited to the groom's family and the family of the bride—thus, they reasoned, no *nuqūṭ* so as to keep it in the family. Like the family of the lieutenant, the hosts had hired men to dress up in traditional garb and serve tea and coffee to the guests out of traditional-looking coffee pots. Sporting white robes with leather straps filled with bullets, the hired help circulated with brass coffee urns which they heated atop coals. At first, they worked with three porcelain cups (offering each guest a drink and then taking the cup back to serve the next person in line once the previous person had indicated they were satisfied by shaking the cup) but, as more guests arrived, they switched to plastic—both to handle the larger number of people¹²⁴ and due to people's newfound concerns about the sharing of cups spreading disease. Around sundown, the relatives of the bride arrived and the family of the groom stood to greet them.

Soon after, tables were brought out and bedecked with Pepsi, water, and giant plates of *mansaf*. The hosts let off a volley of machine gun fire (to announce the feast). But before the host had actually invited people to eat and before the yoghurt sauce had been poured on the meal, people rushed towards the food. My hosts described this to me as an embarrassing breach of etiquette as we participated in the minor stampede. After dinner, we washed our hands and took our seats as we let our food settle. Soon, my neighbors were fulfilling their standard roles at

¹²⁴ Etiquette has traditionally dictated that, until the guest shakes the cup, the server must continue to refill the cup. So long as the server is armed with two or three porcelain cups, this is all the more true since he cannot serve others without getting the cups back from his guests. At times, I have seen men use this fact to emphasize the subordination of the server by drinking cup after cup of coffee: holding up the line and daring the server to break protocol and chastise the guest for doing so. This is especially common when host and guest are roughly the same age grade but the server is younger and known for being impudent towards his elders. Of course, plastic cups foreclose these kinds of negotiations over power relations: you get one plastic cup and the server moves on.

weddings: dragging people up to dance and trying to get the party started. Over the course of the evening they would perform songs allowing for the now-familiar genres of dance, *sāmir*, *debka* and *chōbi*.

As the dancing got underway, Yassin pulled out his gun and shot a few rounds into the air. A couple of men did the same over the course of the next twenty minutes. Eventually, one of the family's patriarchs made his way up to the stage and said, 'Welcome our honored guests. We respect you. Dance and enjoy yourselves. We say welcome but if you're going to shoot welcome and goodbye.'" With that, the dancing continued as it had before. We stood in a line shoulder to shoulder doing the *sāmir* or *daḥiyya*. Those who were more enthusiastic would break out of the line and try to encourage the dancers to greater levels of exertion. Occasionally people would grab at the crotch to tease. The hired singers meanwhile sang to congratulate the groom and those who knew the words sang along: in the old days, the participants would have had to produce the verses themselves. All throughout, there were occasional bursts of gunfire from the dancers as well as from people more towards the fringes. The former tended to shoot pistols while the latter favored shotguns and rifles.

The music stopped and I went to sit down, socializing a bit with some people from out of town. The Debka began. Sporadic shooting continued. At some point, our hosts stopped the music and the patriarch stood up on stage again, taking the microphone: "Because of God! Because of Muhammed! Don't shoot! Don't Shoot. Don't shoot at our houses. Don't shoot at our market! Because of God don't shoot! Because of Muhammed don't shoot! By God if you shoot [unintelligible]! Don't shoot!" The dancing went on for hours and it was all good fun. Around midnight, someone tried to put a gun in my hand to shoot. My sense of horror at the prospect turned to relief as I saw an old man summoning me from the sidelines. I sat down to talk and,

once again, we were exhorted to refrain from shooting. This time, it was the groom's father, Abu Yassin. He gave a more articulate, if equally impassioned plea to avoid gunfire. This was followed by a volley of 6 shotgun bursts.

At the time, my video camera was in my friend Abu Samir's hands and what it recorded was him asking repeatedly, "was it in his face?" (*fī jakhimu?*: basically, is this a direct challenge to the man's authority and honor?) The next thing I knew Yassin, the groom, (believing his father had been disrespected) began running towards the shooter before throttling him while his relatives ran in to break up the ensuing fight between the groom and his new in-laws. The men were separated and the band quickly began playing--although the party never really recovered. The man I had been talking to said, "I always like to leave occasions early while they're still happy. You don't want to stay too long." The music briefly paused but the crowd demanded that the band play through the fight. At this point, I said goodbye to the older man and I started walking towards the site of the altercation, sensing things had calmed down. The music stopped (this time for good) and the band said good night. I heard a man behind me exclaim, "praise God it ended with happiness. Now let's go home." I found Abu Samir and he gave me my camera and asked if I was ready to leave. We picked up his wife and kids while I asked what happened: "oh the people from Amman were drunk. Their cars were full of liquor." The kids got in the car and they pointed to a box on the ground: "that's 700 dinar whiskey! Chivas¹²⁵," said one of the boys. The wife muttered about drunken troublemakers as well. As we drove out, Abu Samir waved to one of the few remaining guests "from Amman." He waved and says, "this family only drinks Chivas!"

¹²⁵ At the time of research, Chivas was the only brand of alcohol (whiskey to be precise) with which my largely teetotaling neighbors in the village seemed to be familiar. It was used alternately as an index of urban decadence and decay as well as luxury and sensuousness. Chivas is in fact a decent upper mid-range blended scotch whiskey which does not cost anywhere near JD 700 per bottle—even in Jordan where taxes on alcohol can approach twice the cost of the alcohol itself.

While the hosts seemed relatively pleased with the event, it is easy to see how such weddings could be exceedingly alienating to others: drinking, fighting, and firearms at weddings can and do lead to injuries and even deaths—often involving innocent bystanders. Shooting in particular is nearly archetypal in Jordan as the epitome of irrational tradition. The exclusionary practices and sexual license of elite hotel weddings, in contrast, were seen as foreign imports to be treated with suspicion by large swaths of the public. The best illustration of this set of anxieties around elite hotel weddings is the fact that, in almost four years living in Jordan, no one has ever invited me to such a wedding. No doubt, the five-star hotel is the *real* zone of “cultural intimacy” for cosmopolitans who are increasingly alienated from the rural social networks through which I primarily moved during fieldwork. Elite celebrations are increasingly inaccessible (behind metal detectors and blast walls¹²⁶ in five star hotels) while the poor increasingly wish their guests would stay home and spare them the cost and condescension. Perhaps it is even a sign of the increasing levels of inequality within Jordanian society that these class antagonisms have led to the emergence of distinct forms of weddings aimed and producing qualitatively different kinds of relationships. This emergence of distinct and coherent competing models of wedding adds a separate dimension to the social conflicts that have long played themselves out through weddings. At stake is the relative legitimacy of distinct pathways for enmeshing people in qualitatively different sorts of networks of affinity and alliance aimed at realizing qualitatively different futures.

¹²⁶ The deadliest terrorist attack in recent Jordanian history targeted five-star hotels. Most of the victims were attendees at a wedding celebration at the Radisson hotel in Amman (Fattah and Slackman 2005). By all accounts, the vast majority of Jordanians considered the attack an outrage and a particularly low blow. Fifty-seven members of the self-proclaimed mastermind Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi’s tribe (the Khalayleh section of the Bani Hassan) including his brother and first cousin responded by taking out half-page ads in Jordan’s three major newspapers to publicly disown him (Howard 2005).

The Islamic movement pushes this to an extreme, railing against both liberal and tribal excesses in the realm of marriage and family. A close analysis of their alternative framework for weddings will go a long ways towards fleshing out many of the marginalized critiques latent in this chapter's exploration of the wedding as part rite of passage, part exercise in self-aggrandizement, and part tool of ideological struggle. The Chastity Society no doubt hopes to provide beneficiaries with the same things, but it also brings the emphasis of weddings squarely back to broader questions of legitimacy at a time when people in many parts of the world increasingly see this as almost irrelevant to marriage. While the Chastity Society itself with its mass weddings and strident anti-tribal and anti-western stances will never become hegemonic, it represents a well-funded and articulate alternative that is not going to disappear any time soon.

Chapter 6: The Chastity Society

“The success of married life is a success for the whole community, because the successful individual is the one able to consolidate the success of his family, and the successful family is the one able to consolidate the foundation of an ascendant community.”

-Sharia Court Judge Dr. Samir Qabah, ‘And Live with them (f) in Kindness’, pg. 9

In the previous chapter, I explored how families use weddings to promote (and index their commitment to) competing visions of Jordan’s future. This chapter poses a closely related question: why weddings? Of all the rites of passage (birth, puberty, marriage, and death), why do weddings receive such a disproportionate amount of commentary, innovation, and resources in contemporary Jordan? The activities of the Chastity Society provide something of an answer. As an organization that has distributed millions of dollars to help thousands of Jordanians marry, their mass weddings and the accompanying training course for beneficiaries serve as yet another example of a clear articulation of a social vision centered on marriage. As its intellectuals like Judge Samir make clear, the Society views marriage as central to the foundation of an Islamic community. As a result, it is unsurprising that they believe that much is at stake when it comes to weddings. Yet while tribesmen and rural patronage networks valorize weddings as helping emphasize the importance of reckoning widespread patterns of descent and alliance through lines of male filiation¹²⁷, this need not be the primary focus of the rites of legitimation tied up with

¹²⁷ It would be interesting to study the relationship between the relative investment in different rites of passage and the degree to which the society in question can be considered to have a matrilineal or patrilineal kinship system.

weddings. In fact, if the Chastity Society's concerns are any indication¹²⁸, one of the biggest threats to legitimate male filiation in contemporary Jordan (at the level of the individual household especially) may in fact be men themselves—as individuals lacking restraint, prone to tribalism and other vices that divert resources away from the all-important household-level economic unit. In short: men may suffer from *jāhiliyya*: a state of being that is often likened to ignorance with connotations of immoderation¹²⁹. As a result, Jordanians are increasingly exhorted to use weddings to enact one of a number of conflicting notions of legitimacy that emphasize either privileging the household or the extended kin group at the expense of the other. The conflict itself further destabilizes the link between legitimate filiation and property relations, labor relations, and political affiliation more broadly, making weddings and a respect for their various ritual hazards seem all the more important to the maintenance of the social order.

The Chastity Society's mass weddings, training courses, and literature (like Judge Samir's quotation and book title) had a decidedly male addressee. This reflected an assumption that men posed the greatest threat to the family's ability to serve as a foundation for legitimate sociality. Challenging the forms of male sociality that were normatively valued in the previous chapter, the Society endorsed the two-hour wedding format, transformed it into charity, and scaled it up to include thousands from families ideally drawn from across Jordan. All of this worked to systematically disrupt the use of weddings to promote tribal affinities, debt relations, and patronage networks, portrayed by the Society as greedily preying on household finances and

¹²⁸ Frances Hasso (2011) also writes about indigenous critiques of masculine excesses within the Arab world, but shows that these may take on either a secular or a religious idiom, making the important point that many of these critiques are more a product of women's contestation of these masculine excesses than innate qualities of a given discourse. Here, the focus is more exclusively on how critiques of excessive masculinity are articulated through a particular, explicitly Islamist, organization.

¹²⁹ William Shepherd writes in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Thought* that *jāhiliyya* (now commonly glossed as "ignorance" and used to describe pre-Islamic times) also means, "a tendency to go to extremes of behavior, whether in violence, revenge, boasting, drinking, or even generosity, and was sometimes even considered a virtue." Citing the Quran, Shepherd turns to verse 48:26 where, "we read the fierce arrogance of *jāhiliyya* in contrast to the 'self-restraint (*taqwā*)' imposed on the Muslims" (Shepherd 2013:269-270).

all but snatching needed resources from the mouths of women and children. The speech at the mass wedding by Dr. Abdul-Latif Arabiyyat, former head of Jordan's main opposition party (the Islamic Action Front) was particularly explicit in its denunciation of "tribal" and "familial" weddings. In contrast, he promoted the Chastity Society's celebration as "the wedding of the nation." As tribesmen and Islamic activists concerned themselves with realizing their positive social visions, they competed for the loyalties of the same people and (occasionally) came into conflict, making their respective organizational forms reminiscent of what the American sociologist Lewis Coser (1974) has called, "greedy institutions," fighting for the "undivided commitment" of their constituents. Arabiyyat made even more explicit many of the antagonisms of the last chapter (between different classes, generations, and affines) as well as antagonisms between town and country and conflicts between Palestinian refugees and "native" Jordanians. He also returned to the central theme of Judge Samir's lectures and writings: the role of Islam in constituting a legitimate order, which binds together the individual, the family and the community.

Tracing the Limits of Legitimacy

In tracing the limits of legitimacy, I am particularly indebted to the recent work of Morgan Clarke. In *Islam and New Kinship*, he challenges the focus of much of the new kinship studies on the presence or absence of a "biogenetic" dimension to kinship and instead points to the importance (in the Middle East at least) of the presence or absence of legitimacy. Mirroring Euben and Pearl's move (discussed in the previous chapter) to use Islamic practice to problematize liberal democratic orthodoxy, he notes, "the Islamic focus on legitimacy, on being born in wedlock, throws into relief the extent to which this element of kinship has diminished in importance in 'the West', and thus perhaps helps explain the relative prominence of kinship's

‘biogenetic’ element in Western discourse” (Clarke 2009:16). In this chapter, I extend his argument by showing that legitimacy here is not merely a family matter because filiation is still foundational to all other facets of legitimacy within society. Note, for instance, the powerful role that filiation plays in the governance of the Middle East at the highest echelons both *de jure* (in monarchies like Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, the Emirates and Bahrain) as well as *de facto* (the Assads in Syria, the Hariris in Lebanon).

Yet while the symbolic role of legitimate filiation in constituting the political order is important¹³⁰, it is the much more quotidian dimensions of the phenomenon that deserve special attention. As I argued in part one of the dissertation, access to housing in Jordan is heavily dependent on accepted lines of male descent. A wealthy father can provide his son with land and, in many cases, the logistical support and a good portion of the money needed to build a house. Those who lack such a father figure must choose between renting or taking out a mortgage—both of which exhaust the monthly salaries of all but the most handsomely remunerated Jordanians. In the wedding, again, having a father or some other senior male relative who is invested in a particular young man is crucial for enacting a proper status-conferring marital rite. This is to say nothing of the labor that goes into such a wedding, which must be either purchased or finagled from a large pool of willing kinsmen. Moving beyond the marriage process, it is clear that many fathers play an important role in providing their children with business contacts, education, and even employment—and that those young men who lack such a father figure (like the brothers Mo’tasim and Mahmud in the previous chapter) suffer for it. Filiation also plays a

¹³⁰ I would even go so far as to argue that, for many Americans, a focus on this symbolic importance of legitimate filiation at the highest levels of power is distracting, since it reproduces these tensions and concerns as something people worry about in “other” “non-meritocratic” societies. In fact, legitimate filiation remains crucial in Americans’ (often unacknowledged) projects for multi-generational wealth accumulation that, as in Jordan, tend to involve substantial investments of time and money in amassing property and various kinds of social capital (especially educational credentials).

role in foundational aspects of the modern order that the more privileged members of the contemporary global order tend to overlook, like citizenship¹³¹. Clarke illustrates this most poignantly when he relates the stories told by his Lebanese interlocutors about how Palestinian refugees, denied citizenship, the right to own property, get an education or join the professions, might abandon their children on the steps of an orphanage because it is better to be a Lebanese bastard than a stateless Palestinian (2009:81).

If the ramifications of legitimate filiation extend far beyond the family, the legitimacy-conferring powers of the wedding do so as well. Commentators in the region are known to refer to upcoming elections as the *'urs waṭani* (national wedding) and, while they most likely mean to draw a simple parallel between what should be two different types of happy occasion, talk about a wedding celebration thrown by a local parliamentarian in one of my fieldsites provided some alternative readings. As it happened, I was sitting with two of the MP's relatives watching the cars go by one day when one of them asked, "Have you heard about the lunch at the representative's?" I replied in the negative and asked about the occasion. 'Awadh responded, "He wants to marry off his son Muhammed... *everyone* is invited! His son is going to marry a girl from... [the] in-laws of Prince so-and-so !" His uncle Ahmed Sweilem chimed in asking, "is it going to be a big occasion?" to which 'Awadh responded, "*ya salām!* (oh yeah!) He's going to make *mansaf* like no other!" However, if that was how his relatives explained the event, their neighbors had other ideas:

Me: Are you invited to Abu Muhammed's lunch on Friday?

Abu Saqir: Who's that?

Me: He's the member of parliament

Abu Saqir: No. Are you?

Me: No.

Abu Saqir: What's the occasion?

¹³¹ Since Jordan, like most countries in the region, only confers citizenship upon the children of its male citizens, those born out of wedlock with no father willing to recognize them risk statelessness.

Me: His son is marrying from the...

Abu Saqir: Oh. They're from Amman. They're Prince so-and-so's in-laws. But it's not really an invitation for his son's wedding. It's an invitation for himself. The parliamentary elections are coming up at the end of the year. This way he can start the campaign early

Whereas Abu Muhammed's relatives portrayed the event as an act of generosity, a distribution of largesse by a pillar of the community with a good heart, others took a more jaundiced view. No doubt, Abu Muhammed's relatives were fully convinced of their account: such acts of generosity have a purifying effect, banishing questions about where power or resources come from through generosity and, of course, helping to cow curious interlopers into silence. Nonetheless, attacking such gestures of shared commensality and wealth redistribution as cynical ploys (electoral or otherwise) was quite common in the caddy world of village gossip about weddings.

Furthermore, lest one think that Abu Saqir's cynicism was merely a matter of petty village rivalries, he interpreted the Chastity Society through the same lens. When I discussed the Chastity Society with him, he wanted to know where the money came from, how much the beneficiaries paid, how people found out about it and whether one had to be a part of the Islamic Movement to benefit. I could tell him confidently that the beneficiaries of the Chastity Society paid little to nothing, and that local businesses¹³² and the Jordanian Islamic Bank bore most of the cost. I asked the charity's director, Dr. Mufid Sirhan, how beneficiaries found out about the Society and he replied that it was advertised in advance and "everybody knows." Told this, Abu Saqir sniffed, "I've never seen an ad. I've never seen an invitation. How do people know when to sign up?"

My response, that beneficiaries were heavily concentrated in the refugee camps (where the Islamic Movement's social services are stereotypically concentrated), only heightened his

¹³² After the celebration, the Society published a quarter-page ad thanking and listing their donors in all of the major newspapers. Many of the businesses in question had names involving phrases like *al-nūr* or 'light' that indexed allegiance to the Islamic Movement.

suspicion that this was a privilege reserved for supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. The man was a veteran of the security services, a proud Bedouin tribesman from the East Bank of the Jordan River, an ardent nationalist, and a frequent critic of the Islamic Movement—as well as the neighboring tribe and its political representative. Abu Saqir was no secularist, though: as he once told me: “If there was a *real* Jordanian Islamic Movement, I would be the first to join. But there is no real Jordanian Islamic movement—just a Palestinian Islamic movement!” It was only when I described the educational levels and generally negative attitude among the beneficiaries that he became unsure about how it might fit in with the Muslim Brotherhood’s electoral machinations. Reflecting my own uncertainty, though, I backtracked and offered, “I really wish I could talk to the women. They seemed more satisfied with the Society. Maybe they’re the ones who are with the Brotherhood” Abu Saqir replied: “girls just want to get married. They don’t care how.” He continued, “every man wants a wedding which is three days long with dinner every night and a dance team and a big tent.” They want to be that kind of man. If they don’t it is a material (*mādi*: financial) problem.”

People could be forgiven for seeing the stakes in the contemporary Jordanian marriage scene and throwing up their hands: there is no winning. Hosting a big wedding provokes envy. *Not* hosting a big wedding provokes pity. The Chastity Society offers a particular kind of escape hatch—although one that seems to be primarily appealing to certain segments of the urban poor. But if the Chastity Society is about opting out of certain circuits of exchange based around conspicuous consumption among related males, it preserves and augments the position of marriage in general and the wedding in particular through a concerted scaling-up of the crowd into the thousands and, of course, a rhetoric which places marriage at the center of social life. Through its training course and wedding, the Chastity Society unfolded a complex social vision

for the largely poor young people who were attracted by the prospect of getting married for free. The Society had identified a number of threats to its broader social vision—and wanted to counteract them through training. Justifying the skepticism of tribesmen like Abu Saqir somewhat, chief among those perceived threats were men themselves and, particularly, their perceived lack of self-restraint, which was tied to a belief that they would withhold resources and support from their family in the service of the forms of extravagant male sociality valorized by many of the celebrations in the previous chapter.

“Training for Every Institution”

I arrived at the offices of the Jordanian Engineer’s Association¹³³ at 9:30 for the Chastity Society’s annual training course for couples. I greeted the director, Dr. Mufid, who was standing with one of the “intellectuals” (*muthaqifūn*) who his organization publishes: Dr. ‘Adl Latfi. Dr. ‘Adl was tall, white-haired and kindly. Dr. Mufid soon left me with Dr. ‘Adl, who began talking to me about the significance of the course: “There’s training for every institution: the bank, teachers, of course the army. The army has lots of training. So there has to be training for marriage as well since marriage is the most important institution. It should be as important as the medical test [required for marriage in Jordan]. One day, people will go to the courthouse and they will bring a medical test and a certificate from a course like this.” In total, there were four sessions, the first of which was given by Judge Samir entitled “The rights and duties of the Spouses.” I will supplement a more careful narration of his lecture (largely drawn from ‘*And Treat her with Kindness*’) with additional material from lectures given by Muhammed Al-Aswad (a tall, slim man in his thirties with an immaculate beige suit with burgundy accents on the cuffs) and Mona Kalil (also in her thirties, a dentist and trainer who had studied psychology). Much

¹³³ The site was unsurprising—as the Engineer’s association is one of the many professional associations in Jordan run by members Islamic movement and The Chastity Society is one of the numerous charities associated with the movement.

like Dr. ‘Adl’s statement about the military and Sheikh Samir’s interpellation of the male head of household (‘and treat *her* with kindness’; ‘*his* family’) as central to the maintenance of the social order, the course had a largely male addressee. Men were seen as expecting too much, insufficiently capable of restraint, and prone to divert resources from their families towards various forms of male homosociality. These sentiments were reiterated throughout the day before a mixed audience, with women asked more or less explicitly at certain points to assert their presence. In the final portion of the course, participants were divided up by gender for a frank discussion of what they could expect on their wedding nights. The male session was provided by a gynecologist named Dr. Nidal Tariq. I highlight the first and the last sessions to emphasize the two major sources of authority: Islam and biomedicine, which were nonetheless intermingled throughout the day.

I entered the room and surveyed the crowd. Most appeared to be in their early twenties. The women mostly wore colorful headscarves, although a few wore black and covered their faces. Some wore floor-length skirts while others opted for the more traditional *abāya* (a robe which runs from the neck to the floor and down to the wrists). The young men wore the latest in working-class youth fashion: tight jeans, dress shoes and the kind of button-up shirts made to be worn un-tucked. I took my seat and waited. The men’s side of the room was largely silent, while a number of women on the other side of the room chatted quietly, producing a good deal of subtle laughter. Dr. Mufid entered the room looking incredibly annoyed. “Brothers and sisters: no one is to remain except the brides and grooms. Could the chaperones please come to the other room we have for you?” He then walked out. A few mothers shuffled out. He came back (more annoyed), “I told you a week ago. Please. Look! They’re all sitting here together!” Another mother left. Finally, he summoned a young man to come talk to him in the hallway—who in turn

summoned his bride. The bride came back in, went over to her mother, and coaxed her out of the room.

It is doubtful that the mothers were reluctant to leave because they feared for their daughters' honor. It seems far more likely that the mothers simply wanted to know what exactly it was that this organization was teaching. Perhaps they were right to worry and resist the organization's attempts to shut them out. If the Chastity Society took pains to position itself in relationship to the class antagonisms I described in the previous chapter, championing the poor, it also positioned itself in relationship to antagonisms between the sexes and generations. Broadly speaking, the training sought to take the *jahiliyya* (ignorance) of unreflexive tradition and replace it with scientific knowledge and the correct practice of Islam. Parents, far from being allies in this endeavor, were probably better off not knowing—at least from the perspective of the activists.

One of the central goals of the training and the larger social transformation being affected by the Chastity Society was the promotion of highly specific gender roles. I focus here on its vision of masculinity. To be sure, this vision was grounded in critiques of male behavior with deep histories not just in Jordan, but also throughout the Muslim world. As Michael Peletz has argued, Islamic masculinities often portray men as quintessentially rational (possessors of *'aql*) at one [ideal] level while simultaneously acknowledging their nearly universal shortcomings in that regard at another, more practical level. According to Peletz, rationality here is not simply “about” gender. Rationality helps define all sorts of socially salient contrasts. It is what separates humans from animals. Children, non-Muslims and the weak-minded all lack restraint and thus remain vulnerable to manipulation by the forces of evil: bad people, *jinn* and, of course, the devil himself. Religious practice, in a vital sense, is about developing one's reason to avoid such

snare—regardless of gender. As we will see, however, “practical representations of gender portray men as less reasonable (i.e., having less ‘reason’), and less responsible than women both with regard to managing money and other household resources, and in terms of honoring basic social obligations associated with marriage, parenting and kinship generally” (Peletz 1994:152). What was potentially scandalous to the parental guardians was the manner in which the contemporary Islamic movement in Jordan mobilized these practical representations to highlight the propensity of men to put their tribal loyalties, their masculine aggression, and their commitments to the forms of male sociality valorized in the previous chapter ahead of their own families—thereby undermining the basis for legitimate social relations both within and beyond the household.

Dr. Samir’s talk was entitled, “the rights and duties of the spouses” and it recapitulated many of the same critiques that religious scholars have been making for centuries (see chapters three and four). He readied the first substantial PowerPoint slide: a wall of yellow text on black background. Rather than read from it, he said, “in all things you have to prepare yourself. When you want to pray, you must do your ablutions (*wuḍū’*). A soldier going into battle must train, have a plan, have supplies. A teacher before going to the classroom needs a plan. Marriage is like that. In order that you do not oppress.” Turning to the first slide, he said, “the first material right (*haq māḍī*) of the woman is the bridewealth. So sometimes, maybe the man gives the woman 1000 dinar in front of the people and she returns it to him on Sunday?” People nodded along. “You know this is *ḥarām* (forbidden). The Bridewealth is her right (*haq*: note that this word means both “right” and “price”). If she returns it this is what?” The women’s side of the room replied in unison, “*ḥarām!*” “That’s right,” the sheikh continued, “it is what? Unrighteous (*āthim*).” “The bridewealth is... for the woman. Her person remains autonomous (*yabqa*

shakhsiyyat-ha mustaqila). Many young men don't understand this." The sheikh moved on to the next slide, which was headed by a saying of the prophet about bridewealth being "to enrich the *sidqa* (trust/friendship) of his wife" and not to create "enmity." The Sheikh posed a question, "does it do to request a high bridewealth?" The room was quiet. "Young men?" Again, silence. The Sheikh tried another tack: "How many of you have bridewealth?" Dr. Mufid replied, "they all have bridewealth." The Sheikh continued, "How many of you have bridewealth over 5000?" No one raised their hand. "How many of you have bridewealth under 2000?" No one raised their hand. Attempting a joke, he asked, "How many grooms think their bridewealth is too much?" I saw a number of people glowering. "How many women think their bridewealth is too little?" I looked over to see a bit of fidgeting. The sheikh went on to say that it was important that the woman be respected but that the bridewealth not be more than the man can afford so that he begins to hate his wife.

He moved onto the second material right: *nafaqa* (allowance). He asked, "How many of the men don't work?" One nearby man raised his hand a bit but thought better of it. No one else raised a hand. The Sheikh continued, "Anything you eat, give some to your wife to satisfy her. As you dress, dress her. Not in pants and shirt!" The room laughed at this. Pleased with himself, he Judge smiled and continued, "I mean from the same class. The husband is the one who brings the wealth and the wife is the one who preserves it." He switched the slide to the next one: "obedience" (*al-ta'a*) before continuing: "If a man goes out every day and eats barbequed lamb while his wife buys her own bread, is this right?" The room replied, "NO!" The Sheikh continued, "and if the wife eats barbequed lamb and the husband eats bread?" The room replied, less enthusiastically, "No." The sheikh said, "Actually that's fine. As long as he's satisfied: it's his choice." Next, he asked, "If a woman's father gives her 100 dinar, can the husband take it and

hide it or spend it? No. It's her autonomous (*mustaqila*) wealth." All of this was, of course, the stuff of village gossip in that everyone knew that excessive feasting and "borrowing" money from one's wife constituted forbidden forms of oppression which were, sadly, all too common.

He switched to his next slide: "The woman leaving the house." He asked, "Can the woman leave the house without permission?" The room replied, "No." The Sheikh continued, "Will you young men give permission?" The room was quiet but one man said, "According to the request (*ḥasab at-ṭalab*). The Shaykh then went through the reasons why women could leave the house with or without permission—in direct contradiction of the general opinion among his audience:

- To request their right
- To request their allowance (*nafaqa*)
- To ask questions of scholars
- Because of emergencies in the spousal residence
- To receive permission for divorce
- For familial visits

The judge said that it was important to ask permission anyway and to do so nicely since, "a son of people (a good person) would never say 'don't visit your family.'" He added that a woman has a right to visit her parents every week and her aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers and sisters (*maḥalim*) once a year. Summing up, he said, "There is mercy in the Sharia." The women let out a long and spirited note of ascent: "aaaa."

He switched the slide forward and yet another block of yellow text on a black background appeared. At the top, it read, "The right of discipline." Once again, the sheikh emphasized the need for male restraint. He explained to the men: "first, talk with excellent words. Say that the house is dirty and that you would like it to be clean." He supplied a number of ways a man could register his displeasure while showing the proper degree of respect before continuing, "second, distance your face from her (*tiba 'id wjihak minha*). Let's say you return

and the house is dirtier than ever. Keep away from her so that she knows the reason and knows that you want the house to be clean.” He trailed off and paused before continuing, “Third, a justifiable blow (*darib mubarira*). Not with a stick or something hard.” A man from the audience chimed in, “a hose!” The sheikh continued, “this is supposed to be light. Just so she knows that you are angry.”

A good portion of the day was devoted to modeling and practicing appropriate forms of sociality for married life. As Mona said at the climax of her presentation, “dialogue (*ḥuwār*)! Dialogue is the basis of everything! The salad, the rice, the fried tomatoes; if the food doesn’t please you, tell her. Otherwise, it’s all *waysting ṭiyam*¹³⁴. If the salad doesn’t please you, tell her!” In his presentation, Muhammed counseled, “talk with her like you talk with your friends,” as he first mimicked the solicitous way men often talk with their friends (‘my lover,’ ‘my age’) before barking orders as he mimed a telephone with his hand. “Remember: she has left her father and brother!” He continued, “and the male is not like the female—in body, mentality and self.” He led the youths in an exercise where they made lists of nice words they could say to their fiancées. A few men grumbled and claimed they did not know any while others seemed downright enthusiastic. One man became frustrated and exclaimed, “This is something of the heart!” Muhammed replied, “you must change then!” When they were done, one group had eight, another twenty-four and another eighteen. Muhammed told a man get up and read his group’s list. He came to the front and read, “my honey, moon, my age, my lover...” When he was done, Muhammed instructed us to clap. A second man stood up to read and looked directly (if bashfully) at his fiancée as he read his list and the women giggled. The women were not asked to

¹³⁴ Mona’s frequent code-switching into English, while bolstering her authority as a well-educated member of the upper classes, was probably unintelligible to the mostly working-class crowd she was presenting to.

read their lists, but Muhammed counseled the entire group, “accustom your tongue to them... this is not shameful.”

In all three sessions, men’s wrath was foregrounded and problematized and trainers sought to develop strategies and rationales for helping men deescalate conflicts, which could jeopardize the marriage. In a certain sense, this merely reflected a set of assumptions about power relations and antagonisms between the genders that should be familiar from Chapters three and four—especially the work of Amira Sonbol (2008) and Judith Tucker (1998; 2008) on pre-modern conflicts between Sharia courts and forms of male privilege otherwise enshrined in local custom. There, the diligent employees of the courts were convinced that there was an intrinsic potential for the *zulim* (oppression) of women in marriage—and that it was up to pious Muslim men like themselves to prevent it. So in the same way that the Sharia Courts have designed procedures of guardianship, enumeration, stipulation, and consent, the Chastity Society seeks to promote its own interventions in the name of fighting women’s oppression. In this particular case, the Society chooses to work primarily on male notions of agency and self-worth, promoting the idea that men hold a good deal of the power to nurture or destroy their relationship with their future wives. In the case of the courts, it seemed that some women were able to manipulate these assumptions and the resultant procedures for their own benefit while others were victimized and found that the discursive elaboration of their own powerlessness came to contribute to their actual powerlessness. Such observations apply, perforce, in the context of such discussions of domestic violence and masculine restraint.

After the sheikh’s elucidation of the concept of a “justifiable blow,” silence settled over the room. The sheikh asked, “how many of you read the Quran daily?” No one raised their hand. “Yearly?” A few hands went up. “Who doesn’t pray?” One person raised his hand. He repeated

his questions for the women: some read the Quran every day. Most read it every year. They all prayed. He said, “it’s important to read the Quran to know about your creation.” The Sheikh then said, “there are hormones (*hormonāt*). Do you know what hormones are? Sometimes she’s angry without reason when she’s pregnant, after she gives birth, before she gives birth. She says, ‘I’m mad. Why are you wearing black.’ Just say you’re sorry and walk with her.”

The English loanword *hormonāt* was repeated throughout the day and, as we will see, constituted an important aspect of the repeated appeal to nature (*tabi ‘a*). It should serve to emphasize Peletz’s caution that rationality and its absence are qualities of both genders. Yet if female passions were dismissed as manifestations of *hormonāt*, they were not seen as in need of transformation in the same way that male passions were. As Muhammed counseled the men, “mercy is not weakness and it is not against romance.” His PowerPoint slide clarified things further, “it’s called the days of fertility.” He claimed that, “According to a scientific study in Europe, 90% of divorce happens in this period of the woman’s monthly cycle¹³⁵. But our lord created woman like this. Her body temperature rises by one degree... You need to lighten up on her during these days... If she’s angry, let her talk until she’s finished... Memorize the monthly cycle of your wife... This is the natural order.” Mona, for her part, told the men at one point, “I’m going to talk to you about adrenaline (*adrenalīn*). So you know what adrenaline is? If there is danger it makes you *fiyṭ ūr fliyṭ*. Understand? Decrease the distribution of adrenaline to the spouses... Don’t put gas on the fire! You need to be kind. You want to increase self-acceptance and *silf-isfīm*. This means *watsh yūr wūrds!*”

¹³⁵ As noted at the end of chapter four, the perception of divorce as a growing issue has some empirical basis to it, with court statistics showing a 25% increase from about 12,000 divorces per year in 2006 to 15,000 per year in 2010. With 6.5 million people, that makes the crude divorce rate as a function of population increasingly in line with Western European and American levels of divorce.

The sheikh concluded his presentation by saying, “marriage is religious duty for us. Prayer is the first duty, but marriage is very important,” and soliciting questions. Not receiving any, he began to quiz the audience. He asked, “what are the rights? I want to hear from the men.” There was more silence. A few people shouted out: “obedience, respect.” Then a woman said, “being able to leave the home.” The sheikh said, “when can the woman leave the home?” Unlike the men, who had not written anything on the paper they had been provided, a number of the women had taken careful notes—especially on key points like reasons for leaving the house and the protocol for the husband striking his wife. Reflecting the broader participation of women within the Chastity Society (as authors like Amal ‘Abdeen, presenters like Mona, and especially as volunteers) the female beneficiaries gave verbatim accounts of what had been said on these topics. Dr. Mufid responded, “See young men? These women have been taking notes on the paper we gave them. I will give them prizes after this is over.” A man said, “Thank you for your presentation. But you didn’t talk about one important point. Sometimes women bring bad guests to the house. Their female friends cause problems. Is this not allowed?”

As he said this I wondered how many men were starting to see the Chastity Society as a ‘bad guest,’ which they had unwittingly admitted into their relations with their future wives, upsetting the customary balance of power between the spouses. The sheikh replied, “Yes. The man can forbid any woman... or man! From coming to the house if he isn’t satisfied with them.” With that, the Sheikh said “congratulations, God willing” and the men responded in unison with a spirited, “God bless you too.” The women left first to get their refreshments. Once they had finished and gone into the designated women’s break room, the men burst forth to get their coffee and escape outside where they could smoke. I found about 7 of the 23 men standing in a group talking. They all told me they were from the Jerash refugee camp when I introduced

myself. Then I listened as they complained about the session, “damn this course. It’s not teaching anyone but my ass.” They made fun of the Sheikh’s language and mannerisms a bit and then headed back down for the next session.

“You’re all so Educated!”

At the end of the day, we were divided by gender for the sexual education portion of the course. The men were directed towards a room with a large conference table. When Dr. Nidal finally arrived, he brought with him a poster of the human reproductive system and a plastic model of the female reproductive system. He was a jovial and rotund man with a white beard and a light grey suit. He set up his visual aids and began by saying, “there are the days of marriage and the days after. You’re all so educated, young men,” he said with a bit of knowing intonation. “What God Wills,” he continued with a devious smile, “you have the internet. You have the Satellite. You have Facebook.” The men began to laugh. “All of you are educated.” He turned a bit more serious and said, “You should take information from respectful places.” He explained to them that, of the religions, “our religion is the only religion that gives the woman her rights.” He continued, “and marriage is a religious service/worship (*‘abada*) in our religion. Marriage is very important for Muslims. It’s not like Europe. Now they have marriage between a man and a man—a man and an animal!” He continued, “a lot of youths think marriage is just for looking at her like a game. No. Marriage is worship.”

If the day had started with appeals to religion bolstered by appeals to nature, it would end with the reverse: appeals to nature bolstered by appeals to religion. I found this appeal to nature to be particularly striking, and particularly emblematic of how modern the Chastity Society was in its outlook. It did not simply adopt modern technology (PowerPoint) or institutional forms (the NGO). The Society also exhibited a marked tendency to substitute nature (in the form of a

particular construal of biomedicine) for God as what Marilyn Strathern, writing in *After Nature* (1992) has called, a ‘grounding conceptualization for knowledge.’ Such a shift, a ‘figure-ground reversal,’ should not be seen as modern in the sense of contemporary or co-eval but rather as a latent potentiality in a myriad of longstanding symbols, tropes, and organizational forms (cf. Latour 1993; Wagner 1987). Just as Strathern has argued that nature has ceased to serve this “grounding function” for English kinship, the Chastity Society appears to have emerged as a creative attempt to stabilize *something* (‘nature,’ ‘God,’ or whatever). The necessity is simply that there be something, “At once intrinsic characteristic and external environment, constitut[ing] the given facts of the world and the world as context for facts, thereby providing a ground to the life of persons and results of social enterprise” (Strathern 1992:194-195). This seemed central to Judge Samir’s search for foundations (epitomized in the epigraph) and carried throughout the course—relying alternately on appeals to God and appeals to Nature. Dr. Nidal began his presentation by turning to his poster and listing off the various parts of the male anatomy using proper medical terms: prostate (*muwatha*), testicles (*khiṣītīn*) etc. He explained how the testicles contained *ḥīywān minawī* (sperm), which were released from the penis. The penis, he explained is, “like a sponge” which collects blood—growing “from five or six centimeters to fifteen or sixteen centimeters.” He attempted to explain the female anatomy as well—skipping rapidly upwards toward the birth canal (*qanāt al-wilāda*) and womb (*raḥam*).

With this out of the way, we got to the heart of the matter, “our women, what God wills are shy. They’re not like European women you see¹³⁶. Some of them are afraid. Slowly slowly.” This point was emphasized so extensively that at a certain point I stopped writing it down in my notes. It was a continuation of Dr. Samir’s attempt to inculcate restraint as a masculine virtue, as

¹³⁶ The mention of “European women you see” is a reference to the ubiquity of Western pornography in contemporary Jordan.

well as a continuation of the nuptial advice given to Ali in the previous chapter, evidence that the Chastity Society was drawing on a deep reservoir of “practical representations” of masculinity. Dr. Nidal continued, “there was a man down in the [Jordan] valley who tried and tried to enter the girl. And finally he tried violently (*bil-‘unf*) and the girl died.” He continued, “think about the girl the night of consummation. You haven’t slept the night of the wedding or the night before. And a man can bare more... Some people forget nice words, ‘enough! Cut his head!’” Everyone laughed hysterically at this. A young man raised his hand and said, “pray two *rakāt* (bows) and then enter slowly slowly—calmly.” The doctor nodded. Returning to his cautionary tale he said, “it was all because he hurried. And it was worst in the old days. People would be looking from the windows, they came early in the morning. It was bad. But now they go to a hotel by themselves. This is a better way.”

Talk of consummation quickly led to talk about the hymen (*al-bukāra*) and its significance or, more accurately, its lack thereof to legitimate marital bonds—another long-term concern of Islamic reformers stretching back centuries. He said, “there are some women who don’t have a hymen. Maybe 10% of women don’t have one. Remember: it is a very small hole, but it can grow to 12 or 14 centimeters in childbirth because of the head of the baby. But there isn’t always blood. My first daughter didn’t have blood. This is very serious. This could affect the other daughters too.” The men were hushed and concerned and nodded. The doctor continued, “and my daughter is an absolutely lawful girl. Luckily, we went to the doctor and brought a report and the other family accepted it.”

At this point, he was obviously running out of things to say. He reminded the men, “before you join take a shower,” and, of course, he returned to his mantra: slowly slowly. He said, “try one or two times only. If no blood comes out, don’t try five times! If there’s a lot of

blood coming out, go to a doctor. It's getting better now... but people used to die. Are there any questions?" The director, Dr. Mufid, also asked, "are there any questions?" The room was quiet. Dr. Mufid said, "and if any of you have questions later..." One of the men blurted out, "give me your phone number!" Immediately, every man had pulled out his phone and began to write down the number. Dr. Nidal tried to return to important points: "take [information] from cultured and religious sources." He also emphasized, "give her her right. She is your partner (*shārik*) in all things—even sexual matters. One way or the other it's important she's happy. She can go to the judge [and ask for divorce on these grounds]... And if she doesn't have religion she will go because of the tension to another by the unlawful (*harām*) path."

Dr. Nidal spoke to us how he had participated in the founding of the organization in the 1990s when he saw young men putting off marriage and the government's unwillingness to address the problem. He said, "God willing, the situation will develop slowly. We could do one wedding every three months with 30 people. That's 120 in a year." The doctor talked about the financial barriers: "1500 for furniture, 3000 for bridewealth." He recommended, "a marriage fund like social security: put one dinar in it every month and invest it... Dinner alone can be 3000 dinar!" A young man said, "the Everest hotel [an upscale place for a wedding] is 2500!" The doctor replied, "I know, what God wills." Someone else said, "and her father isn't content until he brings 1000 gold and then the next day he returns it!" Dr. Nidal agreed and said, "a lot of people damage their daughters. Now with the phones and Internet and Facebook the men and women can meet (*ta'ārif*). Thank God! In every house there's a spinster." Seeing me writing frantically, he said, "what are you writing?" "Notes," I replied. The men explained that I was a researcher and I told him about my project. He asked me whether spinsterhood was a problem in the west. I replied, "well, there are many women over 25 who aren't married, but people don't

see it as a problem.” He asked, “do you have a word for spinsterhood?” and I assented but told him the word had fallen out of favor. There was a bit of silence and then Dr. Nidal said, “The woman thinks of sex last, young men... Where does she want to go? We’re not like Europe here. A woman who is 25 takes a man who is 65.” A young man asked, “if everyone took two [wives]? Isn’t this the reason this is permitted in our religion?”

Dr. Nidal nodded and, betraying his own fondness for figure-ground reversals, explained my research to the young men thusly: “What is interesting about Geoffrey’s project is that he is doing it in the Western way. The Westerners start with the economic and move to the social and the ethical. We begin with religion and move to ethics.” He then launched into his own family history. Studying medicine in Germany in the 70s and living on the cheap, he met a “lawful girl” and her father “thank god” said, “it is enough that you are a good Muslim.” He described their wedding, “we made *maqlūba* (chicken and rice) for maybe ten or fifteen people and got an apartment.” Later, he was inspired to start the charity by all of the unmarried men and women¹³⁷, “when I saw the problems of the girls not marrying and the young men studying until they were twenty-four, twenty-five.” Arriving back at the macro-economic level from which he saw my research project as springing, he repeated his advocacy of a national marriage fund—which he said has been successful in Malaysia: “When a young man turns 18 he gets a thousand or two to marry.”

The Chastity Society is forthright in arguing that its project is, at least in part, a reaction to outside influences. In Dr. Nidal’s formulation, this includes new technologies like the internet, TV, and Facebook—as well as new values: the diminution of marriage, secularism, and the expansion of the bounds for the expression of legitimate sexual desire. However, these values

¹³⁷ As discussed at the end of chapter four, the question of whether rates of singlehood are actually rising has proved more controversial than the question of whether divorce rates are rising, but here as well evidence does point to a modest uptick—although likewise not out of keeping with broader global trends.

and technologies confront preexisting antagonisms between the sexes, generations, classes, different ethnicities and, of course, various categories of kin. Such outside influences do not confront people directly; rather, they are fed through preexisting antagonisms and affinities and affect people differentially. These kinds of internal family dynamics can push an Islamist intellectual like Dr. Nidal to advocate that young people take what would otherwise seem like drastic measures: in this case, using new media to circumvent their parents' attempts to enmesh them in marital strategies that are less about their development as pious Muslims and more about the maintenance and elaboration of extended kin groupings. In other words, the Islamic Movement is no mere reaction to a broad-based unsettling of the grounds of legitimacy—it is an active participant in that unsettling. Between nature and God; husband and wife; parents and children; rich and poor, the Chastity Society positions itself. It is looking for volunteers, for people who want to be extricated from kin-based forms of sociality that have proved either stultifying or neglectful.

The Wedding of the Nation

On the strength of the didacticism of the Chastity Society's training, it is easier to understand the Society's symbolic rejection (via the mass wedding) of the forms of male homosociality valorized in the previous chapter—especially when supplemented with Arabiyyat's metapragmatic commentary in the midst of the festivities. Tribes and the Islamic movement find themselves in competition at times for prospective loyalists. Coser's paradigm of "greedy institutions" likens this form of competition to the "competition among users of scarce resources in economic affairs." He argues that, "various groups having a claim on individuals' energies and time compete with one another to draw as much as they can, within normative limits" (Coser 1974:1). Key to Coser's notion of the greedy institution is that, like Erving

Goffman's notion of the "total institution," it seeks to transcend modernity's partitioning of the world, in which people "sleep, play and work in different places with different co-participants" (Goffman 1961:4-5) or in which a man is "a father, an employee, a trade unionist, and a church member" (Coser 1974:4). Where Coser seeks to differentiate his concept from that of Goffman's is the nature of the institution's action upon individuals. Where the total institution works through compulsion and isolation, the greedy institution is liable to work through various blandishments, which are used to exhort participants to go forth into the world and act upon it.

A recurrent theme here is the control of human sexuality. Coser proceeds from a discussion of eunichism to an analysis of 'greedy families' and finally to an analysis of 'greedy collectivities,' concluding with an essay comparing the celibacy imposed by the Catholic Church to the promiscuity imposed by certain leftist revolutionary organizations like the Communist Party, where he shows that monogamy was a more common cause of censure than promiscuity. In both cases, the dyadic relationship was seen to detract from the individual's loyalty to the cause, possibly putting the greedy institution in question at risk. For this reason, Coser claims that promiscuity and celibacy are "sociologically equivalent" values in their mutual rejection of the dyadic marital bond. However, one could take Coser's insight one step further: if the breaking of dyadic bonds can be instrumentalized by 'greedy institutions,' why would they not avail themselves of dyadic bonds as well?

Rather than serving as a threatening competitor to the institutional project, marriage could just as easily be used to sunder preexisting loyalties and re-orient new adherents towards a novel institutional context. In fact, one of Egypt's most scandalous and notorious Islamist splinter groups became famous for attempting to do just that. The self-proclaimed "Society of Muslims" (known in the press as *takfir wa hijra* or 'excommunication and retreat from the

world’) became infamous in the late seventies not simply for kidnapping and murdering the former minister of religious endowments, but also for enticing youths to run away from home and enter into “Muslim marriages” without parental consent. At its height, the group included no more than a few thousand members living communally in seedy furnished apartments on the margins of urban society, but it made terrific tabloid fodder nonetheless (Hasso 2011; Kepel 2003:86-89). While Kepel argues that the actual events of the case were completely distorted in the press, the surrounding moral panic is itself instructive. When Dr. Nidal celebrates marriages that blossom on social media without parental involvement and accuses his fellow countrymen of “damaging” their daughters by preventing them from marrying, he is courting similar censure—even if he does so with almost all of the imaginable of the trappings of respectability.

It is hard to overemphasize the degree to which Chastity Society had the distinctive feel of a Kawanis Club gala or some other wholly mainstream charitable event. It promoted its agenda for social transformation robustly, but it promoted it with alacrity nonetheless. Relations with families were cordial—if at times strained. It was clearly not a sex-negative organization like the Catholic Church—nor did it license the sexual hedonism of the revolutionary left in the West. In fact, it held up the dyadic relation of husband and wife as integral to its own organizational strategy. This strategy only makes sense against the backdrop of broader tribal affinities portrayed in the previous chapter, which its intellectuals universally denigrated, preferring to idealized the husband-wife bond. The Chastity Society constructed the mass wedding to strengthen dyadic bonds between husband and wife at the expense of bonds with their extended kin networks.

“This is strange, isn’t it?”

When I arrived at the mass wedding the following week, I found a large number of boys dressed up as scouts in matching uniforms, standing for pictures. There were two groups: the Jerusalem Troop and the Badr Troop. While they would be helping with the wedding in the way that all young boys do (as ushers and gophers), the adult leader gave their mission a special urgency. He said, “the Chastity Society is a charitable society that helps people get married if they don’t have the money. We are here to help them. We will bring people food and water and help clean up. We will also try to fix any problems. This one time, someone started shooting at one of these weddings. It wasn’t anything with the wedding. It was a problem from before. But, God forbid...” The boys fidgeted and roughhoused a bit as their leader was suggesting that they might be called upon to step in and mediate some sort of tribal violence. I smiled at the scene and turned to survey the rest of the grounds of the Islamic school that had donated its facilities to the mass wedding.

I inspected the various banners—all of which said “The Chastity Society welcomes our honorable guests”—an interesting variation on the ubiquitous wedding banners which read, “The sons of ____ welcome our honorable guests.” I reflected on the social and political significance of such a shift in the locus of hospitality. Soon, Dr. Mufid came over and took me to the press area. There, journalists from local as well as international media (including South Korean and Kuwaiti TV) were set up to film the couples arriving. Knowing the event was being filmed, I focused on chatting with the male volunteers: four men in neatly pressed shirts, who came from the Jerash refugee camp. The men told me they had come at the urging of Muhammed, the second presenter from the week before. Like the director, they seemed a bit defensive when I asked them specifically how people found out about the organization. They exclaimed, “everyone knows about the Society!” “They come to us.” Pushing my luck, I asked what kind of

role Muhammed played in the community. They told me he was a *mandūb* (emissary) for Jerash and, more generally, a driving force behind recruitment.

My elicitation here was quite clumsy and the volunteers knew what I was after immediately. On one level, everyone (including the rather suspicious Abu Saqir who was prone to denouncing the country's "Palestinian Islamic Movement") knew that the camps were full of not just of Palestinians but also members of the lower classes from the East Bank desperate for housing. That does not mean, however, that there were not sensitivities around the relationship between place, ethnicity and political affiliation—and I had just tipped my hand. Asking the obvious sociological questions like, 'yes, I know you are theoretically open to anyone, but organizationally speaking, who do you serve? You seem to be drawing a lot from Jerash. Would you care to elaborate?' was rude, even if I tried to dress it up in a way which did not directly imply that I was dismissing their political vision as particularistic rather than universalist. They saw me reducing them to another patronage network, for Palestinians, Muslim Brothers, camp dwellers, or perhaps Muhammed himself. I appreciated their graciousness in changing the subject to cars.

A more or less expensive car festooned with white fabric and flowers (the cars ranged from late model BMWs to early 90s Kias) would arrive in the *fārida* (wedding train), trailed by cars honking behind them. Each car contained a male relative of the groom to drive, the bride's mother and the couple in the back seat. The female volunteers would jump to help the women out of the car with their long, billowing white dresses and veils while the men would kiss the grooms on the cheeks and direct them in the same direction. The couples were supposed to gather here and eat their "light dinner" first. Meanwhile, the press would frantically try to catch

every moment. In the absence of arriving couples, I continued chatting with the volunteers about cars, the difficulties of getting married, and my research.

Once all the couples had arrived, it was time for the *zifāf*. In the last chapter, the most dramatic *zifāf* involved Ali being foisted aloft, carried, and shoved through the gate into the woman's section—the last we saw of him before he became a married man in the eyes of his community. In this case, the bride and groom walked side-by-side—often tripping over the huge dresses, which covered the women from head to toe in gauzy white. They stepped, under the glare of international media, into the women's tent together where they stood on a large stage in front of a large crowd of women, surrounded by trilling and the standard wedding music. The journalists followed enthusiastically, so much for 'lowering their gaze' as the prophet's injunction goes.

When the journalists were finally pushed out along with the grooms, we began the next phase of the procession towards the men's section. A group of boy led the march—singing many of the same songs people sing in the village on such occasions. We were accompanied by a man carrying a drum and, as we exited onto the street, a growing number of onlookers and family members of the grooms. We were soon taking up the entire street as we walked towards the men's tent. People began to hoist grooms on their shoulders. As we entered the school's courtyard, we were sprayed with foam from shaving cream cans and bursts of confetti. A musical team sang popular wedding songs and there was general merriment between the stage and the seats. I ran into Dr. Nidal from the lecture the previous week and he greeted me warmly. After the dancing ended, we took our seats.

Muhammed took the stage and welcomed us. He spoke at length about the Jordanian Islamic Bank, their services in providing loans for those hoping to marry, and their general

contribution to the development of Jordan. He then introduced Dr. Abdul-Latif, who spoke about the achievements of the Society. He spoke of the “over 1000 couples” married by the Society in the last 19 years and its soon-to-open permanent offices—which would include a library dedicated to the social sciences, printing press, scientific [research] center, and a hall for holding these mass weddings. He also emphasized that this was “a national wedding” (*‘urs waṭani*)—that it included people from all over Jordan and transcended local and familial bonds to strengthen the nation as a whole. People’s attention wandered a bit, but the atmosphere was largely respectful. I will return to his speech in greater depth in the following section.

As soon as he was done, they switched back to music and a Debka team came out to perform the famous Levantine wedding dance. The men wore traditional robes with headscarves. They held hands and the swirling line dance—left to right, stomp, kick etc. Meanwhile, the boy scouts passed out water and off-brand Kit Kat bars. When the team had finished, Muhammed got up again and thanked all of the sponsors of the wedding. He then asked Walid Shabsuk (president of the society) and a representative of the Jordanian Islamic Bank to present a check to every groom as a “prize and support” (*ja’iza wa da’am*). With this concluded, another round of dancing began. This time, some of the grooms left the stage and were carried around by their relatives. Circles for different sets of grooms began to form in the crowd. With this, the wedding singers sung the grooms out as they were carried away by well-wishers. Familial bonds reasserted themselves a bit even within the bounds of the Chastity Society’s own ritual, although in highly attenuated form in the final moments. I lingered and spoke with the organizers as the chairs were quickly stacked. Dr. Nidal walked up to me and asked me what I thought, “it’s strange, isn’t it?” Not thinking about the fact that I was talking to a man who (as he had said the week before) was educated in Germany and was surely addressing me as a fellow cosmopolitan,

I replied, “No, you have the *fārida* (wedding train) and the *zifāf* and the musical team and debka. It’s actually a lot like a traditional wedding but with more people.” We parted ways and I began walking towards the main road as the couples sped away, honking and blasting music as they went.

Of course, Dr. Nidal was right. This wedding was strange. Rather than enticing households to expend precious household resources bolstering extended kin networks of debt and patronage through a celebration of male filiation, the mass wedding used economies of scale to save on costs while deemphasizing the extended kin group. Most dramatically, these bonds were dissolved by the large crowds of (supposedly unrelated) Jordanians. But it is also notable that the Society, its representatives, and the Islamic Bank could stand in for senior males as financial backers. The cost and labor of the wedding were borne primarily by relative strangers to whom the bride and groom would theoretically owe nothing in return—even if men like Abu Saqir could be rightly forgiven for wondering if the Society did not merely replace one kind of patronage network with another. Challenges to more traditional wedding practices continued with the training course, as sexual education and marital etiquette were made topics of open discussion outside of the family. By acting to check male passions and questioning certain forms of male homosociality and male privilege, the Society was not simply challenging tribalism. These political forms are too inexorably bound up with deeper moral and aesthetic commitments to allow for such a simple line of causation to be drawn—despite the strong feelings on the matter of people like Arabiyyat. If the wedding itself had a positive vision, it was largely tied to Islam, modernity, and efficiency. Nonetheless, in all of these ways, the mass wedding worked to destabilize the grounds of tribal legitimacy.

“By Themselves and For Themselves”

At the height of the wedding, after Dr. Abdul-Latif had finished thanking the extensive list of groups that had helped make the wedding possible, and sharing his vision for the future headquarters of the group, he began a didactic explanation of the aims of the ritual. He said, “I know, that with the repetition of this work (*‘aml*), we are building a higher value in this community.” As he said repetition, he paused and made a cyclical motion with his hand. He had more effusive praise for the brides and grooms and then said, “when I saw them in this hall, I said to myself, ‘this is a national celebration!’ People celebrate familiarly; people celebrate tribally; people celebrate by different names, but this celebration is a national celebration—and the national celebration isn’t like these other celebrations. We greet in the name of the nation!” The emphasis on nation (*waṭan*) seemed a direct challenge to people like Abu Saqir who would portray the Chastity Society and the Islamic movement more broadly as a foreign entity. Rather, he wanted emphasize to the crowd his desire to seize the mantle of essential Jordanian identity from the tribes.

More praise and good wishes for the brides and grooms followed and then he said, “welcome brothers and sisters and welcome to the group and I say to you that you have built and we are building a higher social good. And this is its meaning: leading all of the merit, your project succeeds, and your project succeeds in this country, leading change.” Arabiyyat became more passionate as he stuttered, “And I-and I-and I... there are places in Salt. There are tribal and familial marriages, which waste huge amounts. And all of the other resources go to the celebration, making food or for shooting fireworks and bullets for the occasion. And it’s all an exorbitant cost. And it’s all an ignorant (*jāhil*) cost.” He waved his hand dismissively as he listed off the excesses: fireworks, bullets, exorbitant cost, ignorant, unrestrained costs. The mention of Salt was interesting, as it was a suburb of Amman dominated by families that tend to maintain

large patrilocal compounds and the accompanying nuptial rituals described in the previous chapter. Its representatives in parliament in recent years have been invariably tribal and tend to openly run on their last names (cf. Shryock 1997). However, this was more than an urban-rural or urban-suburban conflict. What Arabiyyat was articulating was also quite familiar: for instance, a friend and devoted tribesman once rolled his eyes at the sight of men shooting off assault rifles at a wedding and said, “each one of those [bullets] costs a dollar, but if you asked them to give the money to the couple, they would refuse.”

Dr. Abdul-Latif, homing in on the theme of selfishness, concluded with a blistering denunciation of the “tribal” (*‘ashā’irī*) forces that he saw arrayed against the attempts of his movement to work for the betterment of all. He said,

Those doing this are doing it by themselves and for themselves. If you told them that door was good for the nation they wouldn’t know whether or not to advance. But we say when we see this work that we have worked with these previous celebrations for a very strong popular charter—that we are celebrating with it, that we are celebrating a higher value for the community and the prevention of wastefulness, and the image of brotherhood for the group. I’m very sorry conversely that I am creating opposition against others but there is selfishness, there is self-interest, there is distance from the general meaning of national service, there is distance from its representatives and for the youth from the real sons of the nation, which deserve respect and deserve a celebration from the sons of the nation. To all of you brothers, welcome and respect with your celebration. And I say to you, with your help, you are leading *khayr* (goodness, benevolence, welfare) in this country and you, God willing, you will say this country, in other places [in the future], sates the hunger of this community, in order to win *khayr*, win its meaning of *khayr*, brotherhood, and love between the people, and in order to raise the purpose of the truth with the permission of the Most High, and bless you and peace be upon you and the mercy of God.

Arabiyyat concluded his remarks with a detailed dissection of the self-interested motives embedded within the tribal wedding, connecting his organization’s efforts to a broad “popular charter” to provide a blistering denunciation of the political order. With that, he handed the microphone back to Muhammed and descended from the podium to applause as the latter

repeated, “Yes, it is a celebration and a national celebration. Husband and wife; affection and mercy: its product is excellent progeny, and a happy house.” Muhammed, homing in on the dyadic relationship between husband and wife as key to the Society’s mission continued, “we established in the Chastity [Society], bringing delight into the heart of every young man and young woman. And we draw for them a smile for tomorrow, a partner; [a partner] of their quality, of the chastity of themselves, to call them to their sides. The Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him, said, ‘I love the people for God most beneficent, and love the acts for God which bring pleasure to the heart of the Muslim¹³⁸.’ He concluded, Yes, it is the wedding of the nation, and the wedding for all Jordanians, and now for the second act, an artistic team and popular debka...”

Conclusion

In this chapter, I sought to explore the question of why weddings have taken on so much importance within contemporary Jordanian society. Having previously postulated that they could be used to produce (and index commitment to) competing visions of Jordan’s future, I wanted to understand why weddings might be such an effective place to do so. The answer I put forth was that weddings were key to constituting a broad range of legitimate social relations within Jordanian society—more so than elsewhere. The Chastity Society and its intellectuals clearly said as much. However, even their detractors seemed to agree with their basic analysis: they too saw the wedding as key to legitimacy, broadly understood. When taken together, the weddings of rural tribesmen, the aspiring urban middle class, transnational elites and the Islamic movement all evinced what William Roseberry has called a shared “language of contention,” “a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social

¹³⁸ In other words, since marriage is a form of *‘abāda* (religious service), which is supposed to bring pleasure to Muslims, the Prophet Muhammed loved it and would have approved of these efforts to facilitate it.

orders characterized by domination” (1994:361). This common framework was concerned with legitimacy, broadly understood, and involved a shared ritual template: the careful and highly stylized mediation of the relationship between affines through which husband and wife were brought together and, in the process, more or less alienated from their families. It included as well a relatively uniform theory of exchange, where powerful networks were believed to distribute material rewards (up to and including various forms of sexual access) in return for loyalty. This was widely understood to be the grounds for domination. Whether or not it might be “legitimate” remained an open question.

It was the production of webs of loyalty through weddings, webs of loyalty that overflowed and extended beyond direct lines of filiation, which rendered Jordanian weddings and their concomitant modes of legitimacy thoroughly political. This political conflict expressed itself in a manner that, at first, I found very odd: as a conflict between religion and family. This was surprising because, for all of their enthusiasm for ‘domaining’ (Yanagisako and Collier 1987; Delaney 2004; Cannel and McKinnon 2013), contemporary Americans like myself tend to see religion and “family values” as isomorphic, something easy to believe for those in the ideological thrall¹³⁹ of nuclear families. However, where larger family units can pose a challenge to religious movements in the electoral arena as well as in the competition for adherents and the provision of social welfare, antagonisms are bound to surface between them. To emphasize this point, Coser borrows an extreme example from Luke (14:16) where Jesus exclaims, “If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” As I argued in Part two of the dissertation, this antagonism between religion and family asserts itself in Islam as well. Leading lights of the

¹³⁹ Of course, nuclear families have never made up the majority of American households and have grown less and less relevant to the lives of most Americans over time. Conversely, extended families have and remain an important safety net for many Americans.

Islamic revival like Said Qutb have promoted quotations from the Prophet Muhammed's era which portray pre-Islamic Arabia as a society dominated by warring patriline, each of which served its own God. It was a society in which, 'the strong among us ate up the weak'—largely due to the fact that men allowed themselves to be seduced by an excess of masculine passions, falling into the thrall of their patriline in the process.

I would argue that the Abrahamic tradition¹⁴⁰ has always struggled to work out the contradiction between religious and filial organizing principles for communities—at least from the perspective of Sunni Islam. Take the three great prophets of the major heavenly religions (*dīyūn simawī*): Musa for Judaism, 'Issah for Christianity, and Muhammed for Islam. All three have a fraught relationship to the patriline and, of course, produced no uncontested lineages of male descendants¹⁴¹. Musa was found in a basket, 'Issah had no human father at all, and Muhammed was an orphan who had many daughters but no sons. When I have shared this observation with Jordan's Muslims, a number have gone so far as to attribute this to divine will: the men in question saw it as inconceivable that Islamic religious authority could be completely harmonized with patrilineal descent¹⁴². To be precise, they saw it as inconceivable that Muhammed could have ever produced a male heir.

This attempt to differentiate religious and familial authority places the Islamic Movement in Jordan *between* tribalism and liberalism, criticizing both and, in many ways, contributing to

¹⁴⁰ The term "Abrahamic" itself reflects the tension between filial and confessional conceptions of community within much thought about religion in the contemporary world.

¹⁴¹ Because Muhammed's only son (Ibrahim) died in childhood, those who sought to graft a dynastic lineage onto the late prophet after his death were forced to champion his son-in-law and cousin Ali, leading to the schism that generally defines the broad Shia-Sunni split within the Islamic tradition. Aspects of the Jewish tradition that attribute two sons to Moses (Gershom and Ezekial) and even (in some cases) a short-lived priestly lineage to Moses' firstborn Gershom are largely absent in the Islamic tradition. There is no sense that Moses was celibate (like Jesus), but any progeny of his are largely irrelevant within Islamic cosmology.

¹⁴² While these statements occurred against the background of the Sunni-Shi'ite conflict, which has become ever-more vicious since the US-led Iraq invasion descended into sectarian conflict, this merely highlights that the tension between religious and familial foundations of authority are quite longstanding in Islam—even if they may assert themselves more strongly in certain eras.

the destabilization of the grounds of legitimacy for both. Ironically, it destabilizes at the same time that this destabilization drives at least some of its own activities—like the Chastity Society. As we saw, especially in Dr. Nidal’s presentation, the encounter with “The West” has upset much of what was previously taken for granted, forcing people to think more seriously about what, in fact, was the ‘grounding conceptualization for knowledge.’ But with the extension of the horizon of the possible, people seem not to linger on simplistic narratives of East-versus-West or religion versus science but rather set about re-making the grounds of legitimacy in their own community through everyday quotidian ritual work. Weddings, in this regard, are simply a ritual high point, with the amounts of time, money, and thought invested in the ritual enactment of marriage and the concomitant production of families making weddings a privileged site for such analysis.

Conclusion: Affection and Mercy

An early formative moment of ethnographic insight came to me, quite unexpectedly, while I was still a young Peace Corps volunteer teaching English in a Jordanian public school. On this particular day, I was riding home from school with the principal and some teachers, including a new teacher who was submitting to the principal's stern questioning. *Was he married?* Engaged. *When was the wedding?* A long time from now: Money was tight; the parents could only afford so much. The wedding would have to wait. *Did his fiancée work?* Yes, she was a teacher at another school. The questioning and the facts of our new colleague's biography were unremarkable: he was in the same position as the rest of the teachers in the car. But instead of simply commiserating, the principal urged the young man to take action. Pointing out what the couple's combined income would be if they both continued to work, the principal urged his new colleague to forget about his parents, marry his fiancée now, host a "simple wedding," and lease¹⁴³ an apartment instead of waiting on the house. As things stood, the principal observed that the couple ran the risk of being led into temptation and spiritual ruination. The principal intoned that it was not natural for a young man to be unmarried and pointed to the dire seriousness of the divine retribution that awaits adulterers who have sex outside of wedlock.

¹⁴³ The word *ista'jar* can mean "to rent" or "to lease." The issue of Islamic finance was not broached, but it goes without saying that such a devout community leader would have meant either renting or taking on a Sharia-compliant lease. In many cases, these leases can be structured to end with the lessee owning the asset, which makes these leases quite mortgage-like. The crucial distinction is that, whatever the asking price of the underlying asset tied to the Sharia-compliant lease, no matter how exorbitantly greater it may be than the normal market price, it cannot be figured as "interest" in the sense of being calculated on the basis of time to repayment and it cannot compound (cf. Obaidullah 2005:79-93).

In this conclusion, I would like to focus on the dynamics that led some Jordanians to take action to change their own family's marital practices as well as those of their broader community. I use the Quranic phrase "affection and mercy" to emphasize the degree to which these ideas had little to no need for Western inspiration because they were already so firmly embedded within the Islamic discursive tradition—often unconsciously so. However, I also suggest that these dynamics run far deeper, actually predating Islam and arising out of much more longstanding and widespread forms of kinship structures. I ask what sorts of meanings this phrase conjures up and what sorts of lifeworlds it might partake of. Throughout the dissertation I have argued that marriage in Jordan serves as a singularly privileged nexus between agnatic kin ties, lines of legitimate male filiation, property relations, labor relations, and political authority. But I also want to focus on what Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney have called marriage and procreation's "ontological dimension." As they point out, "Issues of gender and procreation—marriage, family... are not just about the private, domestic domain, but... the entire cosmological order" (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995:9). As I argued in the introduction, the relatively recent addition of a Quranic verse¹⁴⁴ to the marriage contracts of the Jordan's government Sharia Courts indexes a subtle, semi-conscious shift that is afoot in the cosmological order for a wide swath of Jordanians. "Affection and mercy" stands in here for an impetus championed (although not exclusively) by the Islamic movement to shift the focus away from the extended kin group and towards the husband-wife dyad.

The phrase "affection and mercy" allows me to talk about contemporary notions of companionate marriage without ignoring their Islamic precedents or falling back on the more

¹⁴⁴ The Jordanian Sharia Courts made a statement about their (possibly growing) commitment to emphasizing the ontological stakes of marriage in 1995 when they added to the top of their form marriage contracts the Quranic verse, "And of [God's] signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy..."

loaded and value-laden idea-concept of romantic love. In fact, the word “affection” (*mawida*) in “affection and mercy” is sometimes translated as love. But the concept of romantic love generally implies forms of chivalry and courtship that are much more carnal and immediate than what is at stake here. Such forms of desire, which have long been widely disseminated in Jordan and throughout the Arab world through poetry and song, no doubt contribute a lot to companionate marriage’s allure. Indeed the sense of allure is only heightened by the manner in which these media provide free range for fantasy and play by largely ignoring questions about the marital household’s division of labor, its finances, and its political representation. Yet these are precisely the matters of the greatest import to the constitution of a coherent cosmological order by harnessing marriage’s procreative powers.

This “affection and mercy” was a part of both of the Islamic social engineering projects I studied, yet it was not their primary objective. It formed the background, the unremarkable wallpaper, for much of my research. Amira Sonbol argues that the phrase has clear, pre-Islamic precedents (2008:93). It was part of the formula used to conduct marriage contract signings at the courthouse. It was a favorite Quranic adornment to the frontispiece of all manner of books about marriage. It was directly invoked in the Chastity Society’s rhetoric around mass weddings. Yet it was not merely *of* these social engineering projects. It pre-dates them by well over 1,000 years and, as I will argue, it encompasses a set of concerns that extend far beyond the current purview of Jordan’s contemporary Islamic movement. Chief among these is the idea that marriage, crucial for forming the lines of multi-generational filial bonds necessary to transmit wealth and power from one generation of male agnates to the next, could actually itself come to eclipse those broader agnatic kin ties in importance. To allow it to do so would have far reaching effects—equal parts quotidian and cosmological.

Yet while the more narrowly defined kin formations that embrace this mantra of “affection and mercy” challenge the more extended kin groupings that they react against, they remain beholden to those extended kin groupings in a number of important ways. The three social engineering projects I studied had mixed results when it came to providing young people with pathways for disconnecting from their families and thereby hijacking their own procreative potential away from the kin groupings from which they had emerged. Despite the best efforts of the Sharia Courts, Housing Corporation, and Chastity Society to enlist individuals in their projects, the extended kin group retained a good deal of control over the marital prospects of most Jordanians I encountered. Families had a disproportionate impact on the choice of spouse, when the marriage happened, what the wedding looked like, and the nature of the couple’s subsequent housing and employment situation. The latter represented the most enduring and material set of linkages and logics that kept couples tied to their families. Housing and communal defense repeatedly proved to be key concerns driving people to organize along lines of agnatic kinship. This was precisely where the Islamic movement remained the weakest—although this is beginning to change. One initiative in particular that is worth watching is the Jordan Islamic Bank: the major sponsor of the Chastity Society’s mass wedding and one of the leading purveyors of Islamic home mortgages, which brings me back to the principal’s unorthodox ideas about marriage.

In retrospect, I should not have been surprised by the principal’s unapologetic attempts to undermine parental authority (and the younger man’s future authority as breadwinner) so much as his brazenness. Certainly all of his suggestions were possible—desirable even. But how could one blithely suggest a simple wedding without considering how the family would ever live down the shame? Who could propose renting and sending the wife to work without considering how

this would alienate the couple, their resources, and their labor from the extended kin grouping anchored to its ancestral lands? How could the extended family survive if younger men started taking the initiative, putting their own sexual and spiritual needs first? In short, how could someone just casually upend what seemed like thousands of years of painstaking negotiations over the transfer of authority and wealth from one generation to the next?

To be fair, the principal himself had helped put precisely these questions in my head over the course of a number of prior conversations as he struggled to understand how I could be so nonplussed by the idea of extramarital sex and I struggled to understand the problem. As he would urgently ask me, “how else would we know/recognize (*na ‘rif/ na ‘tarif*) our fathers [without marriage]?” It was only because I had come to take the authority of these patrilineally-reckoned kin groups over their members so much for granted that I could be shocked by the impertinence of an authority figure telling a young man to simply go his own way. But what if kinsmen had become fundamentally unable to reinforce the kin group’s authority by following its actual dictates and found that they had to disobey those dictates to preserve the broader kin group’s authority—and perhaps even its very existence?

I would argue that it was precisely as a result of this double bind (cf. Bateson 1969; Fortun 2001) that these projects tended to gain traction. For all of their modernizing rhetoric and enthusiasm for planning, the Housing Corporation, Sharia Courts, and the Chastity Society only flourished where they could legitimate pre-existing relationships that were relevant to the sexual, property, and labor concerns of larger kin-based collectivities. Especially in the case of the latter two projects, their sometimes fraught relations with the extended kin group belied the degree to which their whole *raison d’être* was to further cement the very bonds of male filiation upon which the extended kin group was based. In the face of such seeming paradoxes, I want to

emphasize that the resulting practices that I hope to highlight here lacked the ideological purity or coherence needed to reduce them to a simple outgrowth of either the Islamic revival movement, tribalism or, emphatically, Western/colonial liberalization initiatives. Nor were these practices reducible to any simple interaction between such rival ideologies. Rather, they emerged from the interaction of belief systems with the material constraints that Jordanians encountered and the systems of meaning and affinity that they created to overcome those constraints.

Part one approached marriage as a fundamentally housed relationship, emphasizing the forms of embodiment, spatial practice, labor, property, and gender associated with contemporary Jordanian houses. It focused on the diverse and changing nature of the Jordanian marital abode and divergent possibilities for its future. In recent decades, forms of dwelling based on the collective male defense of land have promised to give way to increasingly independent household units that rely on the government to protect their claims. Where kin bonds primarily intended to support the communal defense of land do atrophy, those resources and energies can be devoted to following consumer fashions—by embellishing the home, for instance. For those who embrace this lifestyle, women’s involvement in the workforce becomes an attractive option for increasing the household’s purchasing power to better project the image of success and respectability that consumerism promises. Yet a repudiation of consumerism, private property, and obedience to the state has never quite ceased to be an alternative possibility. Older men in particular see the increasing replacement of kin bonds with market relations as a threat to their authority. Rural and working class people continue to valorize the strength, endurance, and self-reliance associated with securing one’s own housing free from state interference or assistance. Most importantly, when Jordanians lack the money to secure land through the market, they have shown a willingness to unite with their agnates and unrelated neighbors to seize it.

Islamic or even mainstream finance could potentially upend this state of affairs—if young people, their kin networks, and capital markets were amenable. Already in the “Decent Housing” initiative described in part one, two Islamic Banks were available for customers in search of Sharia-compliant mortgages. Whether or not Islamic finance will ultimately be successful in extending market relations into the very heart of the attempts of families to reproduce themselves is another matter. But there are a number of factors that make this an obvious and appealing move. As I have argued, marriages—especially where they involve housing—are incredibly economically significant events for the finances of the larger extended kin group. While older men may not sign over the deed to the land to their children for decades after their marriages¹⁴⁵, dwelling in a house on one’s ancestral lands makes a powerful claim to ownership at the same time that it implies a whole host of obligations to one’s senior kinsmen, encompassing demands for political allegiance, care, communal defense, and other forms of labor.

These dynamics around the intergenerational transfer of wealth help to constitute strong social norms, enhanced through their association with Islam, which directly militate against the elaboration of a thriving market in home mortgages in Jordan. All manner of debts proliferate over the course of a couple’s marriage. Yet these remain largely unregulated from the standpoint of Islamic finance because such debts are largely limited to kinsmen and, at least ideologically, these are gifts, given unconditionally. As I argued in Chapter One, transactions that involve the exchange of a smaller amount of money at one point in time for a larger amount of money later are considered *riba*. There is a good deal of social stigma attached to such transactions, even though they continue discretely. These sentiments against *riba* find expression in sayings of the prophet like the one that declares that God damns not only the person who takes or “eats” *riba*

¹⁴⁵ Often, property is only officially transferred from one generation the next via the Sharia Courts as inheritance once the original owner is deceased.

but also the person who pays it, the two witnesses to the contract, and the scribe. While those who study Islamic finance are correct to argue for nuance in understanding words like *riba*, there are nonetheless somewhat specific and well-defined explanations of the concept, like the rather concrete definition of the prophet in the *hadīth* literature, “gold for gold, silver for silver, wheat for wheat, barley for barley, dates for dates and salt for salt be exchanged, like for like, equal for equal and hand to hand; one who demanded extra or paid extra, indulged in *riba* (interest).” (Muslim cited in Islahi 2004: 51). Here, we have an enumeration of the six most important commodities in the markets of pre-Islamic Arabia, including the two commodities that most closely approximate the abstract money form and four essential foodstuffs for the early Muslim community. Were these forms of indebtedness formalized, marketized, and institutionalized through the medium of money, a powerful set of forces would arise, struggling against the sundering of “individual and local limitations” on the way to direct, promiscuous, and increasingly abstracted “money for money” transactions that define unbridled contemporary capitalism (cf. Marx 1976:207).

Market relations are subjected to a rigorous spatiotemporal discipline in Islamic law that regulates all associated exchanges. In the case of money, the standards are the most exacting: ‘like for like, equal for equal, hand to hand.’ These are not pedantic points, either. They are common knowledge and people do not need extensive schooling to take them seriously. In some cases, Quranic injunctions like, “when you contract among yourselves a debt for a named period of time, then write it down” (2:282, quoted in Dresch 1998:118) seemingly have no need whatsoever for metaphysical speculation as justification. A farmer friend who decided against secondary school rehearsed these points without prompting when I asked him about his dealings with Islamic Banks by saying, “the important thing in Islamic finance is that there has to be a

particular [concrete] commodity (*sala'a ma'ayana*)... One time, I took a loan from the Jordan Islamic Bank for a bedroom [furniture set]. They didn't give me the money." So far so good: according to the dominant strain of analogical reasoning within Islamic law, they should only give him some sort of commodity in exchange for the money or "gold" (in this case, Jordanian Dinars) that he would have to repay later on an installment plan. Exchanging money now for more money later would be *riba*. However, he then proceeded to tear into the Islamic Bank on exactly this point. He complained, "The employee came with me to the store and stood outside while I bought the goods. We came out and he signed the receipt. You see? It's all lies. He didn't see the furniture, its cost, its quality. He didn't see if I took it. See? It's all lies." My friend's outrage was borne of his understanding that, the second one introduces strangers, money, and institutional responsibilities into the work of financing social reproduction, the complexity of those transactions and their ritual hazards (Keane 1997) are greatly exacerbated.

Yet with a bit of attention to these strictures that mandate this rigid spatiotemporal discipline around the exchange of money, the mavens of Islamic finance could use housing, land, and building materials to structure loans that could be assimilated into the categories of mainstream finance. As I pointed out in part one, this is already happening on a small scale in building material stores across Jordan as those with access to capital leverage their knowledge of local kin networks, extending credit to relatives and neighbors in return for selling their wares for higher asking prices than urban merchants. For such operations, building materials make a good counterpoint to money because, like money, they have a standardized value and form, generally tied to the transformation of cement, aggregate, water and rebar into square meters of dwelling space. What's more, from the perspective of finance, housing makes for great collateral: it is durable, immovable, hard to hide, and, unlike so many other commodities, its depreciation takes

decades rather than years. So, for instance, has been unsurprising to watch the Saudi Al-Rajhi group (the largest Islamic investment group in the world) move aggressively into both home finance and the production of building materials. Al-Rajhi was one of the first companies to open a cement factory in Jordan after liberalization and the company has also been an enthusiastic advocate for the enactment of the first mortgage law in its native Saudi Arabia (Khan 2013).

Yet more remains to be done from the perspective of Islamic Finance. The cost of Sharia-compliant capital can be quite high and people remain reticent about borrowing from banks. When I spoke to Sharia Court judges, many of whom sit on the advisory boards of these banks, they blamed the high cost of borrowing on a lack of “political will.” However, there is also a question of making sure the loans are eventually repaid—or that the underlying asset can be extricated from delinquent borrowers. In the case of the HUDC’s ‘Decent Housing’ initiative, when it was time to collect on all the loans, employees complained of supplicants who came to them looking for help because, “the bank has no heart.” So while Jordan’s own leading Islamic bank has moved aggressively into the mortgage market and proudly publicizes its involvement in providing access to housing in its annual *Social Justice Report*, the JD 236 million in loans for housing 2012 only represented about 10 percent of its JD 2.3 billion in investment activities (Jordan Islamic Bank 2012:38). Nonetheless, with over 17,600 beneficiaries of these loans, the bank has learned how to entice twice as many people into taking out loans as the “Decent Housing” initiative—every year.

If these ventures into home finance push the Islamic movement and the larger, predominantly Palestinian banking sector into real estate (one of the last bastions of economic dominance for East Banker kin networks, cf. Reiter 2004), then the Jordan Islamic Bank’s role in hosting mass weddings also seems like a play for the kinds of political dominance that East

Banker tribes have worked to reify through their own wedding rites. As I noted in chapter six, the mass wedding was heavily branded as being connected to the Jordan Islamic Bank, which also earned plaudits from the organizers as they distributed cash gifts to the young couples from the stage. The Chastity Society represents one of the largest charitable initiatives of the Jordan Islamic Bank, to the tune of 4.6 million Jordanian Dinar (Jordan Islamic Bank 2012:6). By offering to house young people, host their weddings, and even teach them about marital etiquette and sex, the contemporary Islamic movement is poised to replace many of the most important roles that kin play in the lives of young people. Yet it remains to be seen how many young people will take them up on the offer. The activities of the Islamic movement are predicated on the notion that there is something onerous about having to rely on one's kin. As we have seen, where money is tight or young people's sexual desire is ignored, this is undoubtedly the case. Yet having kin remains an intrinsic good for many, who cannot even imagine the point of a wedding if not to embed oneself within complex webs of indebtedness.

In contemporary Jordan, an objectified past of tents, communal lands, female seclusion, and powerful associations of male agnates persists in the present day in talk, ritual, story-telling, and aspects of the built environment. This is despite its logics appearing increasingly inscrutable to many young people who dream of disconnecting from their family obligations and becoming more independent consumers. For its part, though, we have seen that the Housing Corporation's focus on engineering a housing market instead of providing housing to individual citizens has tended to encourage people to rely on agnates—*despite* their intense concern with registering land to individuals. Those working for a more Islamic society—both inside and outside of government—have also had fraught relationships with extended kin groups. Islamic facets of the Jordanian state like the Sharia Courts have been forced to compromise with extended kin groups

and local tradition, altering their procedures to take the prerogatives of extended kin groups into account. While the Chastity Society is nongovernmental and independent and hence free of a lot of the pressures that have been brought to bear on the Sharia Courts, it remains a significant but politically marginal alternative to more powerful regime loyalists who emphasize their tribal pedigrees. Historically, it is only in moments of liberalization that the Islamic movement can pose a threat to regime-affiliated notables who mobilize agnatic kin as their base of support (Baylouny 2008; 2010; Brynen 1994; Peters and Moore 2009). In contrast, the expansion of military aid and uncertainty around housing has the potential to bolster networks of agnatic kin. If rival state-building projects in neighboring areas continue to send new waves of refugees towards Jordan and provoke a more aggressive response from the Jordanian state, the most likely beneficiaries will be precisely those extended kin groups that contemporary states are generally so concerned with monitoring and managing (through careful attention to property relations, the registration of populations, and the organization of patronage networks). No matter what, though, Jordanians will likely continue to develop and adopt various institutional initiatives designed to free themselves from onerous kin obligations—as they have throughout Jordan’s short history.

Appendix: Findings of the Statistical Survey of Marriage Contracts

This study would not have been possible without the support of countless employees of the Jordanian Sharia Courts who, in keeping with their warm sense of hospitality and their sense of religious duty to support scientific research, helped me collect a representative sample of Jordanian marriage contracts from two sites. The Supreme Judge granted me permission to conduct research in the courthouse and, most generously, allowed me to collect data on marriage contracts. The contracts were collected from the Madaba Sharia Courts and the archives at Jordan University.

This choice reflected the exigencies of the organizational structure of the courts. Contracts are stored in the nearest courthouse to the bride's family. For most of the Ottoman period, the only court documents consisted of *sajilat*: a catch-all record-book for marriage, divorce, inheritance and anything else that might come before the court in Jerusalem. In the early twentieth century, there were various efforts to open new courthouses east of the Jordan River and implement some sort of printed contract form, but the procedures were not sufficiently stable and formalized to enable a statistical analysis until 1926. This was an important turning point in Jordan's history because it marked Emir Abdullah's move from Salt to Amman (due to conflicts with the Saltiyya) and the intensification of Britain's investment in the Hashemite monarchy. The establishment of a courthouse in Amman responsible for processing all official marriage contracts in central Jordan (stretching from the Jordan River to Madaba to Amman to Zarqa) represents the condition of possibility for this study. However, by the 1950s, courthouses were proliferating. Here, I made the decision to focus on the courthouse nearest to my primary

fieldsite in Madaba. The total sample includes 877 contracts. However, these must be divided into four separate samples which are not fully commensurable:

1. Amman Courthouse Sample (1926-1953): 377 contracts
2. Showabka Sample (all contracts from the Amman Courthouse involving the tribe I was living with contracted between 1932 and 1936): 67 contracts
3. Madaba Courthouse Sample (1954-2011): 355 contracts
4. Extra Madaba Contracts Sample (1954-1981): 78 contracts

I collected a representative sample in the following manner: all contracts were stored in bound volumes—most of which contained 50 contracts each (at the archives these had been photographed and stored on microfilm). At the archives, I took the middle contract (either contract number xx25 or xx75) from every book. In the Madaba Courthouse, I took the middle contract from every other book. To correct for the small pre-1980s sample size, I took the middle contract from every book from before 1981 and stored the extra data in a separate spreadsheet. This ensured that I had at least thirty contracts per decade for the purposes of showing change over time. I chose the middle contract because it was far less likely to be damaged than either the first or last contracts in the book.

The Form

« عقد الزواج »

عدد ٨
انه في يوم
بعدي في انا
اجريت عقد نكاح
على خالتيها
على مور لدره
لظال منه مبلغ
وذلك بايجاب وفيه شرعيين صادرين من
بعد تعريضها للمرأة الشرعية والتحقق من خلو الطرفين من كل مانع شرعي ونظامها شهادة اشهود المذكورين بظاهره
ادضا آت الشهود تأويكاته والبقدر

من شهر ١٢٤٤ سنة ١٢٤٤ الموافق
من شهر ١٢٤٤ سنة ١٢٤٤ الموافق

وكيل الزوجه العالده
الزوج

Figure 8

The front of a 1920's era contract

- 1) Number 8
- "Marriage Contract"
- 2) That on the Day___ The Occurrence__ Of the month___ Of the year 124_ Concordant with__ Of the month___ Of the year 192_
- 3) With my presence I
- 4) Implemented the nuptial contract of [The rational virgin girl Ms. ... From]
- 5) To her fiancé
- 6) For the bridewealth of the quantity of
- 7) The remainder from it the total of
- 8) And that is obligatory and accepted as legitimate as issued from [The husband and the agent of the wife her father]
- 9) Afterwards their acquaintance is a legitimate acquaintance and the verification of the two sides is free of any legitimate and systematic objections according to the testimony of the aforementioned witnesses by their demonstration.
- 10) Completed the witnesses of the agency and the contract The Husband The Agent of the Bride for the contract and the receipt
[of the bridewealth] The Judge

الاسم	العمر	عمل الإقامة	المشقة	التعب
الزوج				
وكيله				
الزوجة				
وكيلها				
الشهود				


Figure 9

The back of a 1920s era contract

Record of Marriage Contract

	Name	Age	Place of Residence	Employment	Sect
The Husband					
His Agent					
The Wife					
Her Agent					
The Witnesses					

A 2000s Era Contract



المملكة الأردنية الهاشمية

المحكمة الشرعية في

القسيمة الثابتة

من كيان من خلقك من أنفسكم أزواجاً لتسكنوا إليها وجعل بينكم سواداً ومحرمين مما كان الآباء قدّموا بغيركم

صلّى الله العظيم

تاريخ العقد _____ مكان العقد _____

الرقم الوطني	المهنة	الحالة الاجتماعية	الديانة	الجنسية	مكان الإقامة	مكان الولادة وتاريخها	العائلة	الجد	الأب	الاسم	الزوج	الزوجة
التسليمات												
										المعجل	التهنئة	
كنفية دفع المهر المباشر لتسليمه الشروط الشهود الكفيلات موافقة الوالي أو المحكمة صيغة العقد												
قد اجريت هذا العقد على الوجه المفضل اعلاء بعد التحقق من استكمال الشروط وعدم التواي قدا لغير ما تؤول عقود الزواج في												
تسلم تسلم الزوج أو وكيله الزوجة أو وكيلها الوالي الشرعي المأثور تصديق القاضي												

Figure 10

In the name of God the compassionate and the merciful
 {And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought} Trust in God the Mighty

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

The Sharia Courts in _____

Date of the Contract _____

Place of the contract _____

Stable Copy

	Name	Father	Grand-father	Family	Place and date of birth	Place of Residence	Citizen-ship	Reli-gion	Marital Status	Employ-ment	National Number
1	Groom										
	Bride										
2	Documents										
3	Bridewealth	Upfront									
		Delayed									
4	Payment of the bridewealth										
5	Those Present:										
6	Requirements										
7	Witnesses										
8	Agreement of the guardian or permission of the court										
9	Formula										
I am _____ [Judge] [Contract-Writer] in _____ I implemented this contract on the itemized side above after verifying the completion of the requirements and without prohibitions											

Witness Witness The Groom or his Agent The Bride or her Agent The Legal Guardian The Contract-Writer Certification of the Judge

While the contract has grown in size and become more robust as a tool of data management, there is a good deal of overlap between the most recent contracts and the earliest contracts.

Where possible, I tried to code data using categories that maintained as much of the original

granularity of the data while minimizing issues of commensurability as the form and related bureaucratic practices have developed. In fact, the dividing line of 1954 for my two main data sets served me well in this regard since the post-independence expansion of the bureaucracy proceeded along two axes: a proliferation of courthouses and an elaboration of the form of the contract. What follows are two lists of variables. The first lists the variables used to code the Amman Courthouse Sample while the second lists the variables used to code the Madaba Courthouse Sample. Some of these (Contract Number and Courthouse) were simply collected to ensure that the data remained properly structured and . The rest will be handled in the following section

Amman Courthouse Sample Variables

Contract Number, Courthouse, Month, Year, Contract Writer, Groom's Age, Groom's Residency, Groom's Marital Status, Groom's Occupation, Bride's Age, Bride's Residency, Bride's Religion, Bride's Marital Status, Bride's Occupation, Bridewealth Word Count, Ottoman Lira, Palestinian Lira, Palestinian Guinea, Dinar, Gold (Ottoman Lira), Furniture, Clothes, Other Bridewealth, Amount Paid, Mo'jil (divorce insurance: also divided into columns which denominate the payment in Ottoman Lira, Ottoman Gold, Palestinian Lira, Palestinian Guinea and Dinar respectively), Recipient of the Bridewealth, Bride's Agent, Groom's Agent, Number of Fingerprints, Number of Stamps, Number of Signatures, Requirements, Ingroup/Outgroup.

Madaba Courthouse Sample Variables

Contract Number, Courthouse, Place of Contract, Month, Year, Contract Writer, Groom's Age, Groom's Place of Birth, Groom's Residency, Groom's Transience, Groom's Nationality, Groom's Marital Status, Groom's Occupation, Bride's Age, Bride's Place of Birth, Bride's Residency, Bride's Transience, Bride's Religion, Bride's Marital Status, Bride's Occupation,

Bridewealth Word Count, Dinar, Gold, Furniture, Clothes, Other Bridewealth, Mo'jil (divorce insurance), Requirements, Requirements Word Count, Autonomous House, Bride Must be Allowed to Work, Bride Must Finish University, No Extra Wives, Keep Children from First Marriage, Live in Specific Place, Guardian, Number of Fingerprints, Number of Stamps, Ingroup/Outgroup.

The Variables

What makes the contracts so interesting is that they can be used in three very different ways: 1) as a source of historical data on life in Jordan in the twentieth and early twenty-first century 2) as records of unique interactions between families and the state 3) as the product of the specific knowledge practices of the Jordanian Sharia courts. As I will argue, the contracts are most useful for the latter of the three purposes—although they make contributions to our knowledge of Jordan's history in all three ways. All graphs were made using RStudio.

Month (*ash-shahar*)

Wedding contracts are not evenly distributed over the course of the year. Employees at the courthouse note that summer is the busy season while winter is the slow season. Knowing this, I specifically scheduled my research at the courthouse in the winter to minimize the degree to which I would get in the way of the court's important work.

Distribution of Contracts by Month (Amman)

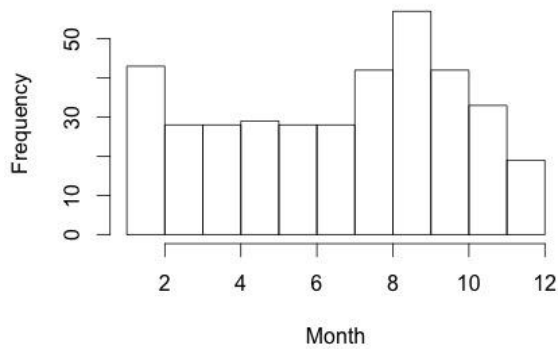


Figure 11

Distribution of Contracts by Month (Madaba)

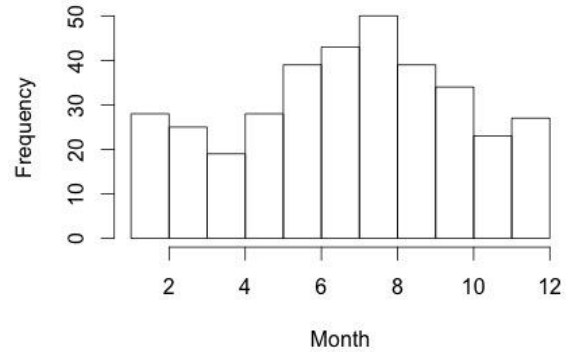


Figure 12

Year (as-sinna)

Change over time is, of course, one of the most important and compelling variables. However, it is also important to understand the ways in which change over time could skew one's interpretation of the data. This is especially true since, due to growing population and greater participation on the part of the public, the samples are inevitably weighted towards later time periods.

Distribution of Contracts by Year (Amman)

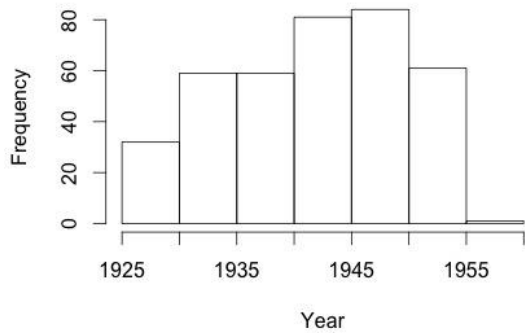


Figure 13

Distribution of Contracts by Year (Madaba)

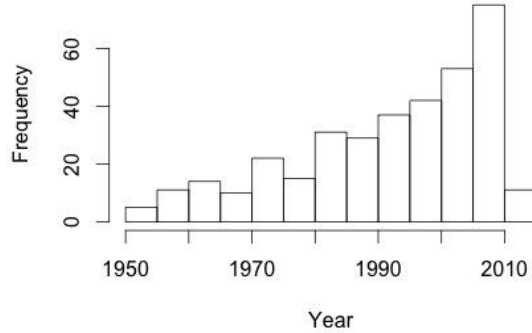


Figure 14

Place of Contract (makan al-'aqd)

In the early days, there is little evidence of contracts being written in the courthouse itself. Initially, contracts were the responsibility of a corps of itinerant contract-writers known as the *ma'thunun*. This was seen as a way to involve the government in the process without forcing

women to leave the *imharem*: the protected space of the home. As you can see, the vast majority of contracts are conducted in this manner with the father of the bride serving as the most common host for such gatherings. In this way, the *ma'thun* fits seamlessly into the ritual presented at the beginning of the chapter on the proposal. For many people, the contract involves nothing more than a short break in the festivities surrounding the *jaha* (delegation) or *khatba* (engagement party) where the relevant parties are brought into a room to sign the paperwork.

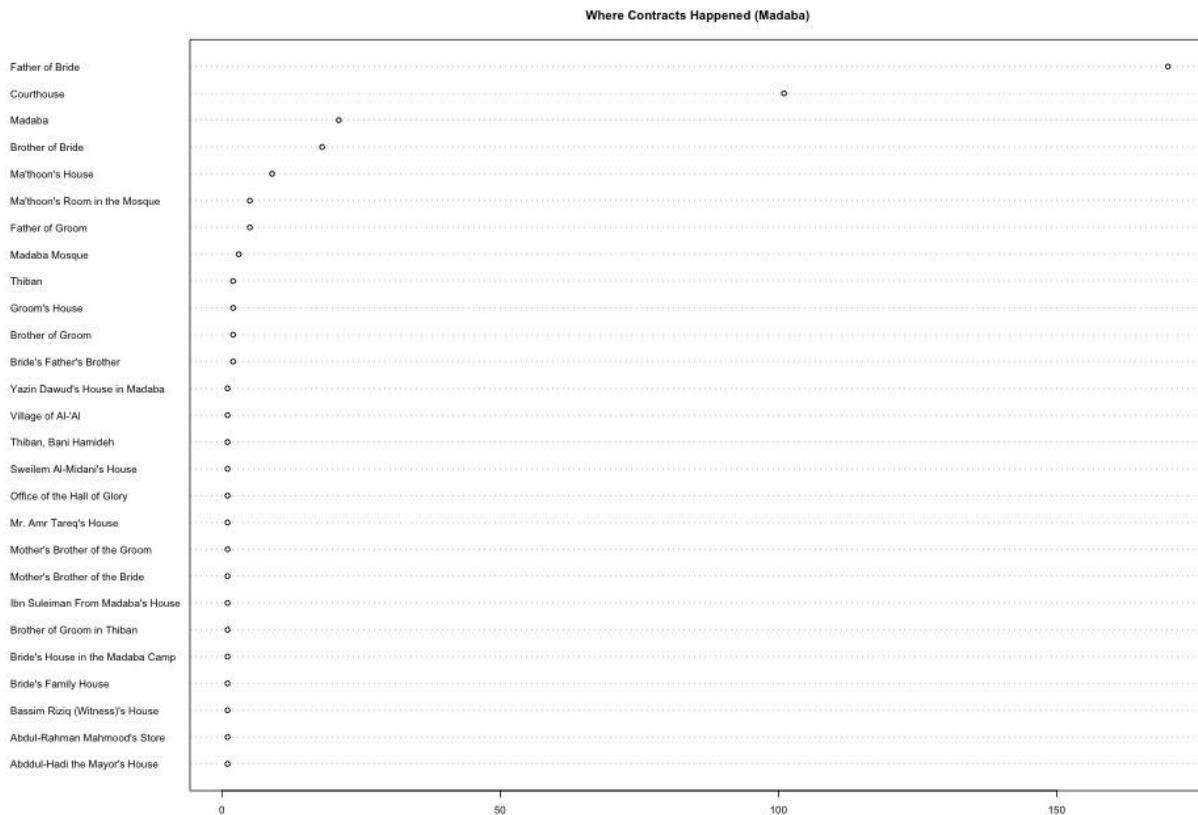


Figure 15

Table 1: Top Ten Places for Contract Signings (Madaba)

Place	Number	Percent
Father of the Bride's House	170	45.09%
Courthouse	101	26.79%
Madaba	21	5.57%
Brother of the Bride's House	18	4.77%
Ma'thun's House	9	2.39%

Father of the Groom's House	5	1.33%
Ma'thun's Room in the Mosque	5	1.33%
Madaba Mosque	3	0.80%
Bride's Father's Brother's House	2	0.53%
Brother of the Groom's House	2	0.53%

By the 1950s, people had the option of going to the government instead of bringing a representative of the government to their house. The courthouse is now the second most common place for contracts to happen—far surpassing the homes and shops of other relatives and strangers alike. Despite the problems associated with such small per-year sample sizes, a simple plot of the frequency of Courthouse contracts over time demonstrates the unmistakable emergence of the Courthouse as a ritual site in its own right:

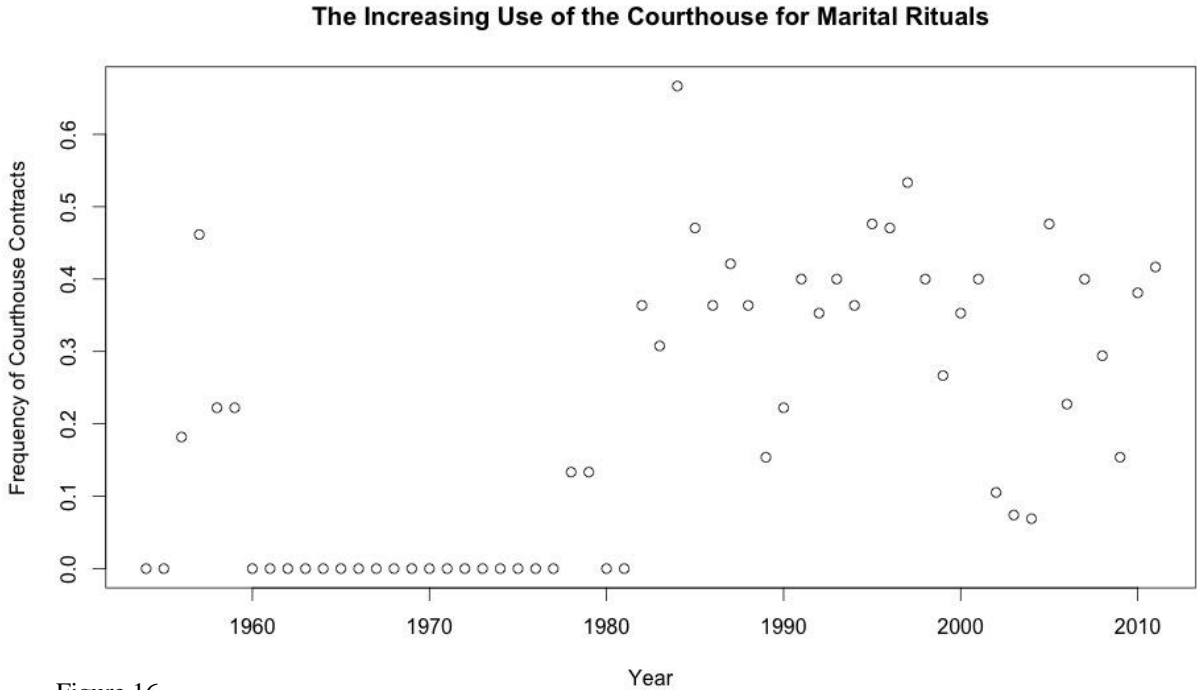


Figure 16

Contract Writer (*al-ma'thun*)

The contract writer represents a consequential figure in the history of the development of Jordanian marriage contracts. Every book of contracts is the responsibility of that contract writer who must fill them out sequentially and, if they retire, turn over the book to the next contract

writer. Far from faceless bureaucrats, these men were respected figures in the community who were widely known for their piety and learning. For instance, years after his death, my neighbors and friends at the courthouse continue to refer reverently to Mustafa Al-Atrash as a “friend of religion” (*sahib al-din*). During my time in the archives, I came to know the various contract writers as individuals: their handwriting, their favored turns of phrase and where they came from. In one case, I realized that my daily commute recapitulated the seasonal peregrinations of a contract writer. While doing a close reading of some specific contract books, I remember marveling at the similar succession of names and places: Showabkah tribe, ‘Ajrami Tribe; Jurayna, Mushagar, Hisban and then back again. As you can see, a handful of men in both samples have exerted an outsized influence on the process. Most notably, one man (Ahmed Fakhr Al-din) was responsible for about one seventh of all contracts stored in the Amman courthouse from 1926 to 1953.

Table 2: Top Ten Most Prolific Contract-Writers (Amman)

Contract-Writer	Number	Percent
Ahmed Fakhr Al-din	55	14.59%
Mustafa Abud Dhamra	38	10.07%
Abud Al-Dhamrawi	27	7.16%
Saleh Ibrahim	27	7.16%
Muhammed Sa'id Idris	20	5.31%
Muhammed Abdul-hadi Al-Qadumi	16	4.77%
Musa Al-Muhatri	16	4.24%
Riziq Abdullah Al-Hussein	15	3.98%
Mahmud Saleh	13	3.45%
Abdullah Sharif	10	2.65%

A Ranking of the Most Prolific Contract-Writers (Amman)

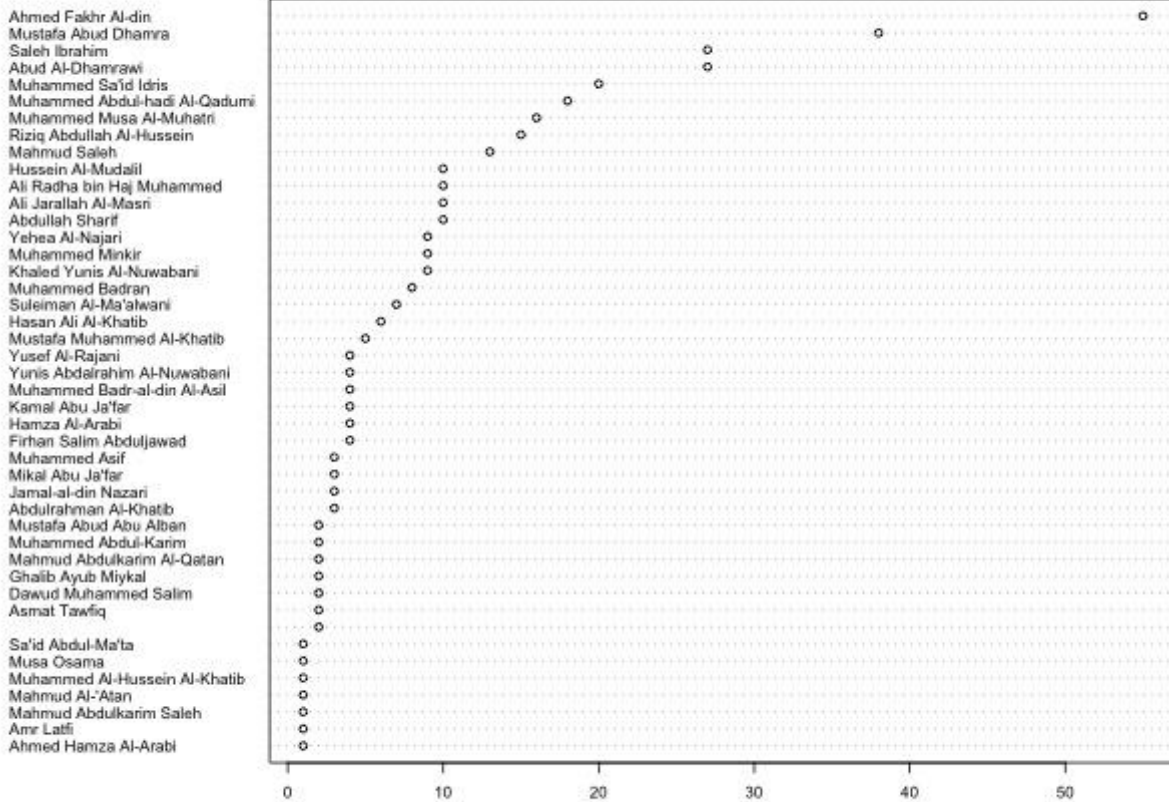


Figure 18

Table 3: Top Ten Most Prolific Contract-Writers (Madaba)

Contract-Writer	Number	Percent
Jibril	30	8.45%
Abu Said	30	8.45%
Al-Hurut	26	7.32%
Al-Nuwabani	25	7.04%
Al-Aqtash	24	6.76%
Showabkeh	23	6.49%
Abu Asif	20	5.63%
Khalil Abdul-Hafith Al-Rabuteh	16	4.51%
Abdul-Qadir Ibrahim	15	4.23%
Kanana	13	3.66%

A Ranking of the Most Prolific Contract-Writers (Madaba)

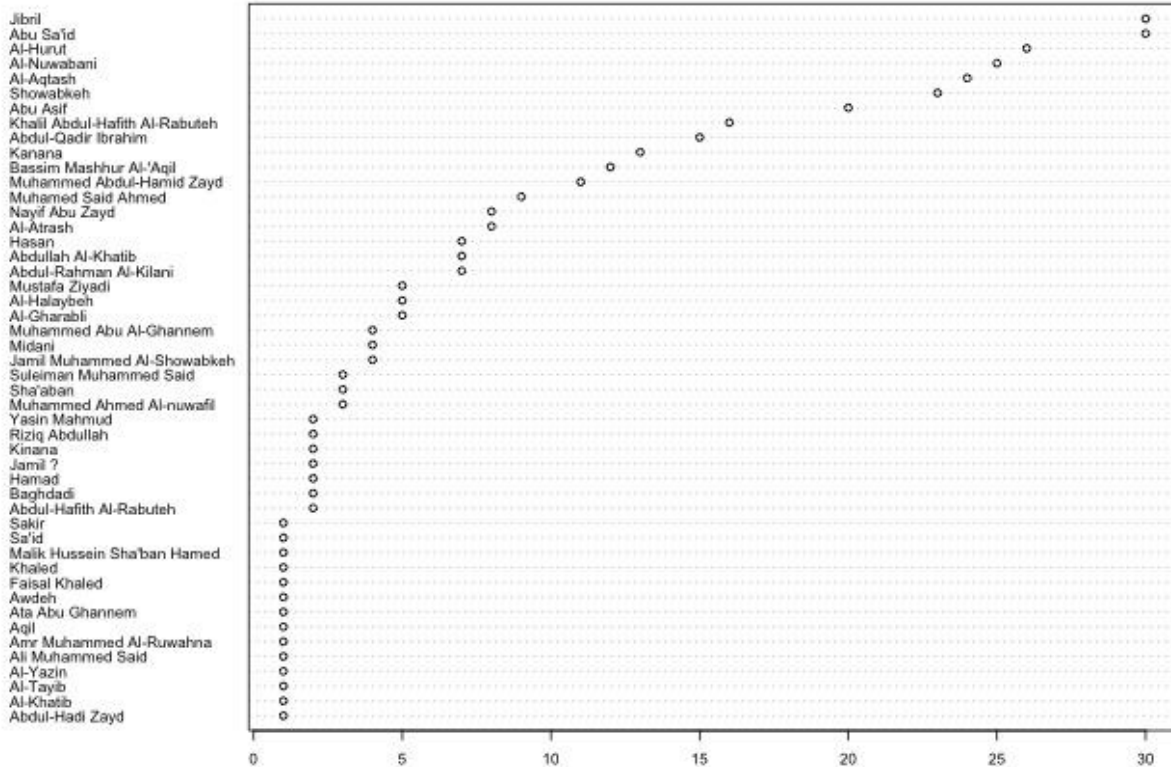


Figure 18

Age (al-'amr)

While the issue of spinsterhood looms large in talk about marriage and court records provide a window into the challenges that women face if they want to marry after 25, the records provide little evidence for rising marriage ages. The median age for men in the two samples is 25 while the median age for women has risen from 19 in the Amman sample to 20 in the Madaba sample. Various Jordanians proffered a number of explanations for this somewhat strange finding. A (female) employee at the archives was convinced that people were simply exaggerating women's ages because the authorities were seen to be disapproving of marriages involving young girls. She explained, "they would marry women at the age of fourteen! My mother married at fourteen. But they would lie about it to the judge. What could he say?" A (male) friend in the village offered a very different explanation: "women were really valuable at that time. You wouldn't

want to lose a daughter or sister unless you gained another woman in return. So women often married late.” This, however, is largely not seen as a problem. At one sitting, a group of men explained to me that, “in the past, a lot of men never married. These men were the kind of men who don’t deserve the hoof (*ma yahuquq al-dhilf*). Do you understand? While some men honored and given the choicest bits of meat, others are not even given the inedible portions of the animal.” It should also be noted that a closer look at the grooms’ ages begins to draw into question the facticity of the various numbers that the contracts present: note the way that the histogram registers a certain man who purportedly married at the age of 135.

The Distribution of Grooms by Age (Amman)

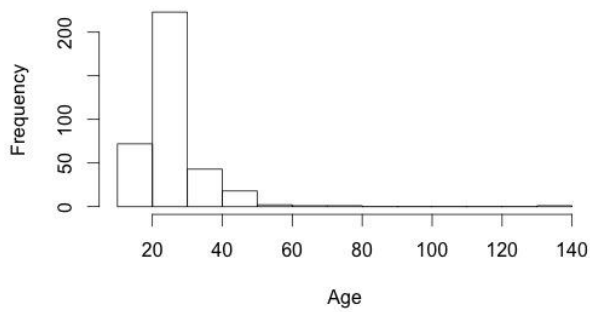


Figure 19

The Distribution of Grooms by Age (Madaba)

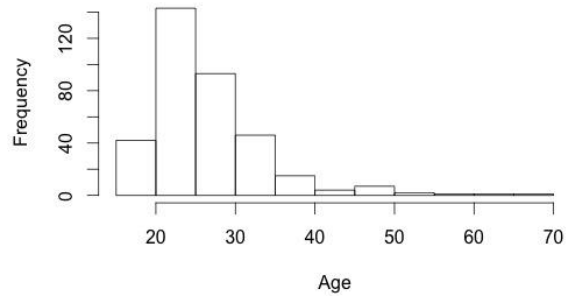


Figure 20

The Distribution of Brides by Age (Amman)

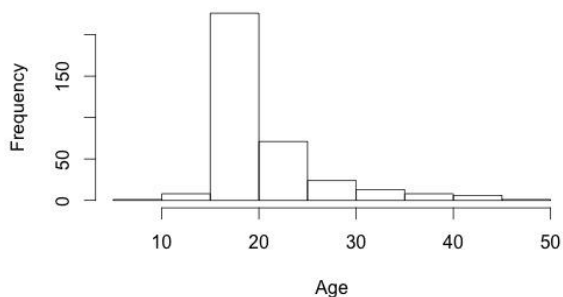


Figure 21

The Distribution of Brides by Age (Madaba)

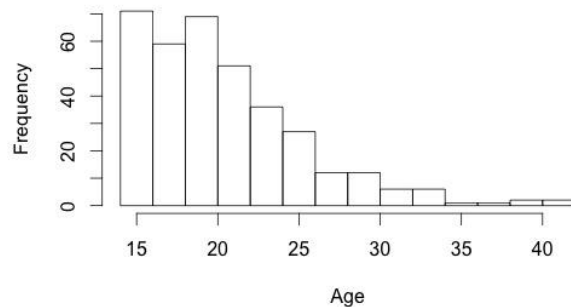


Figure 22

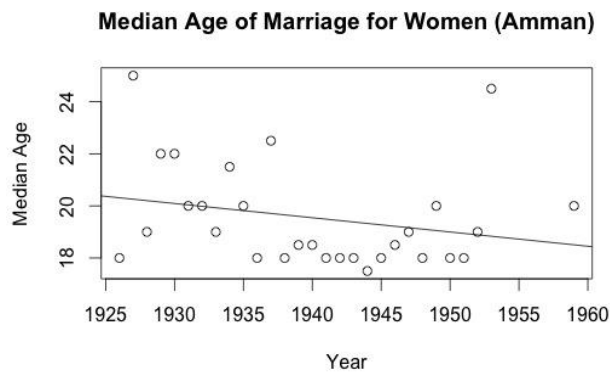


Figure 23

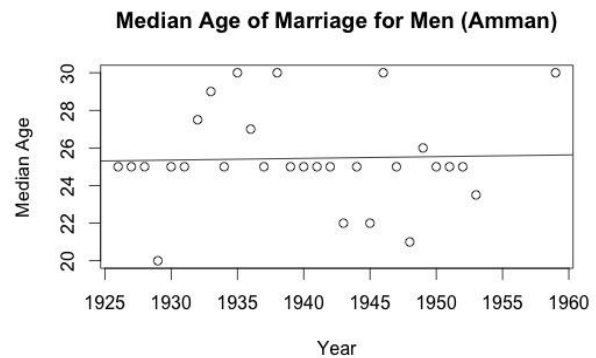


Figure 24

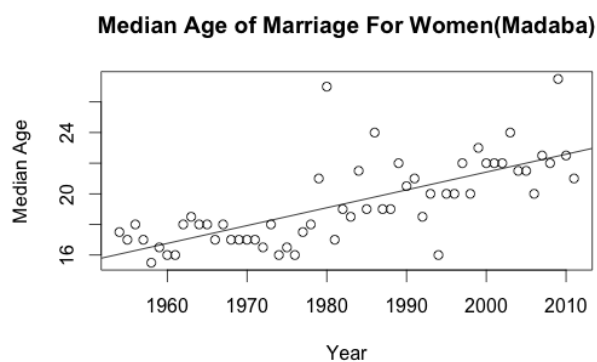


Figure 25

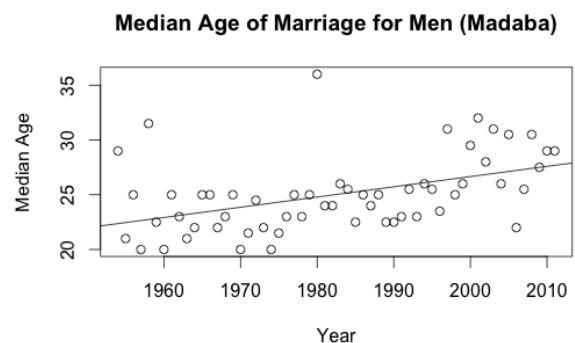


Figure 26

Place of Birth and Residence; Transience (*al-makan al-walada wa al-aqama*)

The jurisdiction of the Sharia Courts is determined by the place of residence of the bride so it is little surprise that the places of birth and residency tend to cluster closer to the courthouse for brides than they do for grooms. This is merely an artifact of the court's regulations. Nonetheless, for both genders, the number of unique place-names in both samples is so large as to make any attempt to visualize the data difficult. In the Amman sample, there are 94 unique places of residence for the groom and 85 for the bride. Amman is listed as the place of residency for a plurality of applicants (125 grooms and 120 brides) followed by unknown for brides (46) and *bayt sha'ar* (tent) for grooms (52). The following Table lists the top ten entries for bride and groom:

Table 4: Residency in the Amman Sample

Bride's Residency	Groom's Residency
Amman (125)	Amman (120)
Unknown (46)	Tent (52)
Al-Zarqa (24)	Al-Zarqa (21)
Tent (20)	Wadi Sir (9)
Wadi Sir (12)	Ziyud Tribe (8)
Sahab (9)	Sahab (8)
Sweileh (8)	Sweileh (7)
Munasir Tribe (8)	Mahata, Amman (7)
Marka (8)	Unknown (7)
Mahata, Amman (8)	Munasir Tribe (6)

A Good deal of the remainder of places of residency also index people's status as either nomadic or semi-nomadic. For many, the "place" is actually a tribe's name (either specifying "tribe" or using the appellation *bani*/'sons of'), which reflects the migratory circuits the tribe is known to follow over the course of the year. The later contracts add another dimension by recording both place of residency and place of birth.

The Madaba sample has a similar diversity of place names although nomadism is obviously much less prevalent given the later time period. As one would expect, Madaba figures prominently as a place of birth and residence. However, the various surrounding villages are also well-represented. There are 80 distinct places of birth listed for the brides along with 113 for the grooms. The prominence of Kuwait as a place of birth reflects Madaba's sizeable Palestinian population, many of whom were expelled from Kuwait following the first Gulf War in 1990. The number of distinct places of residence are somewhat more manageable in the Madaba sample: 39 for brides and 78 for grooms.

Table 5: Place of Birth in the Madaba Sample

Bride's Place of Birth	Groom's Place of Birth
Madaba (149)	Madaba (97)
Amman (31)	Amman (33)
Ma'in (16)	Thiban (13)

Faisaliyya (11)	Ma'in (12)
Lib (10)	Al-Qariyat (10)
Thiban (8)	Lib (8)
Ghornata (6)	Bir Saba' (Palestine) (7)
Kuwait (6)	Ghornata (7)
Al-Jadida (6)	Faisaliyya (6)
Mushagar (5)	Hasban (6)

Table 6: Residency in the Madaba Sample

Bride's Residency	Groom's Residency
Madaba (256)	Madaba (180)
Ma'in (14)	Amman (28)
Madaba Refugee Camp(10)	Ma'in (10)
Faisaliyya (7)	Thiban (10)
Lib (7)	Al-Qariyat (7)
Ghornata (6)	Madaba Refugee Camp (7)
Hasban (5)	Hasban (6)
Mushagar (5)	Al-Zarqa (5)
Thiban (4)	Ghornata (5)
Al-Jadida (3)	Lib (5)

In the Madaba sample, the presence of both a Place of Birth and a Place of Residence for almost all of the contract participants allows for a sort of rough index of transience: if the Place of Birth and the Place of Residence are the same, one could argue the bride or groom is more "stable" while different listings imply that the person is more "transient." In fact, the Madaba sample includes 218 stable brides out of 355 and 215 stable grooms out of 355. Those who are transient could be economic migrants, or, as alluded to earlier, they could be refugees. The following graphs should emphasize that even the more "rural" population represented by the Madaba sample has experienced a good deal of deracination over the course of the last half century. There seems to be some evidence that people are becoming more transient, although the sample sizes for the various years would have to be larger to say anything with certainty.

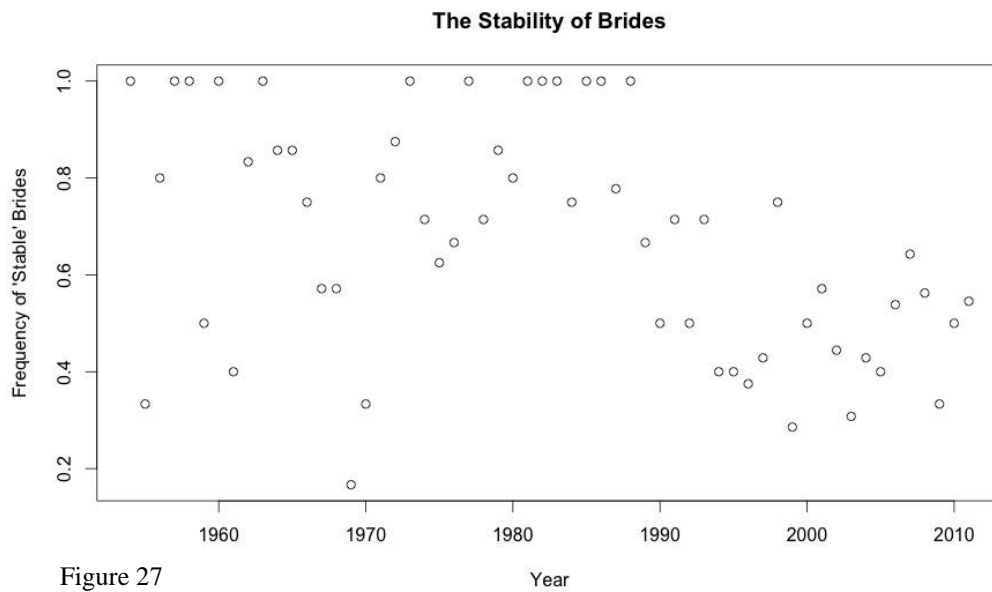


Figure 27

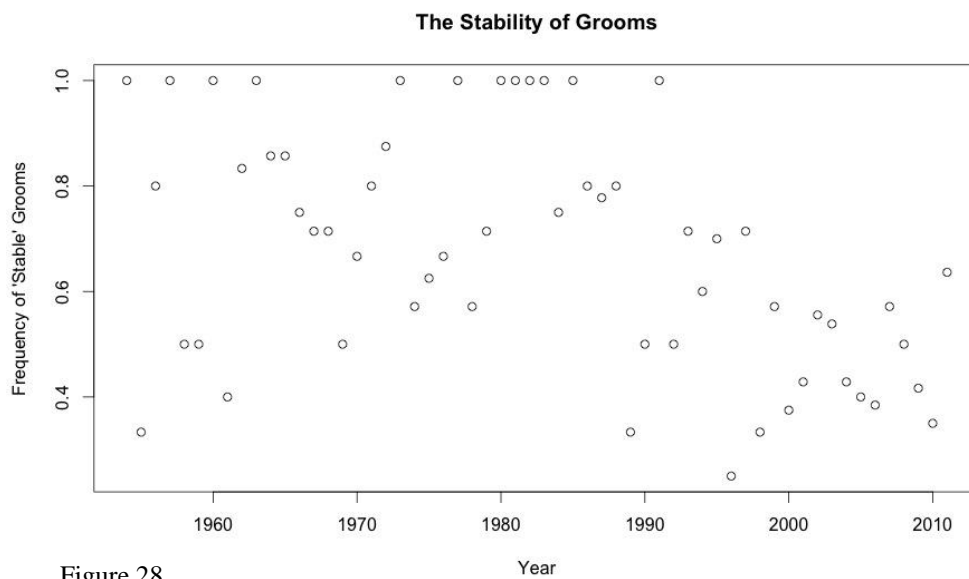


Figure 28

Social [Marital] Status (*al-halla al-ijtima'iyya*)

The most revealing aspect of the Social Status category is the enthusiasm with which contract-writers have sought to record the data for people depending in their gender. In the early contracts, there was no dedicated field for this information and, as a result, information on the marital status of men is scant bordering on non-existent. This is not the case for women,

however. Court officials have always been quite diligent about defining the marital status of brides. Yet even here, the terminology has grown richer over time. Whereas early contracts for the most part simply divide women into the categories of *bikr* (virgin) and *thayyib* (previously married), more recently the official vocabulary has been expanded to specify those who are widowed, divorced, or divorced before the consummation of their marriage.

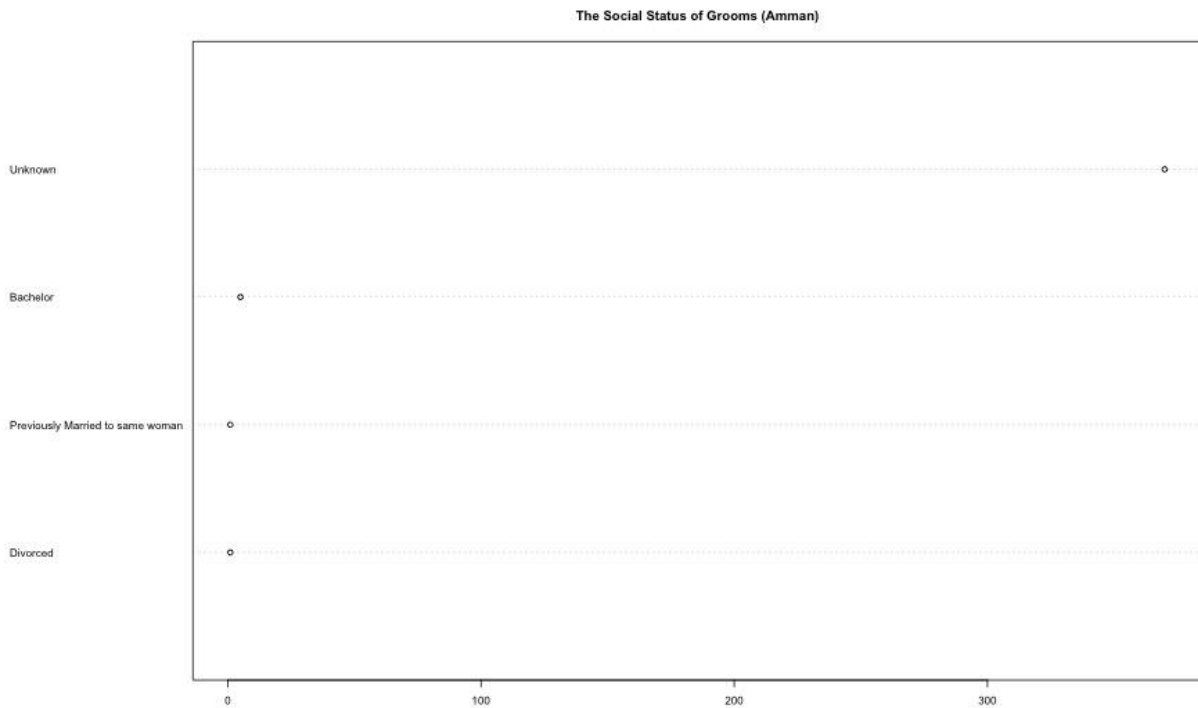


Figure 29

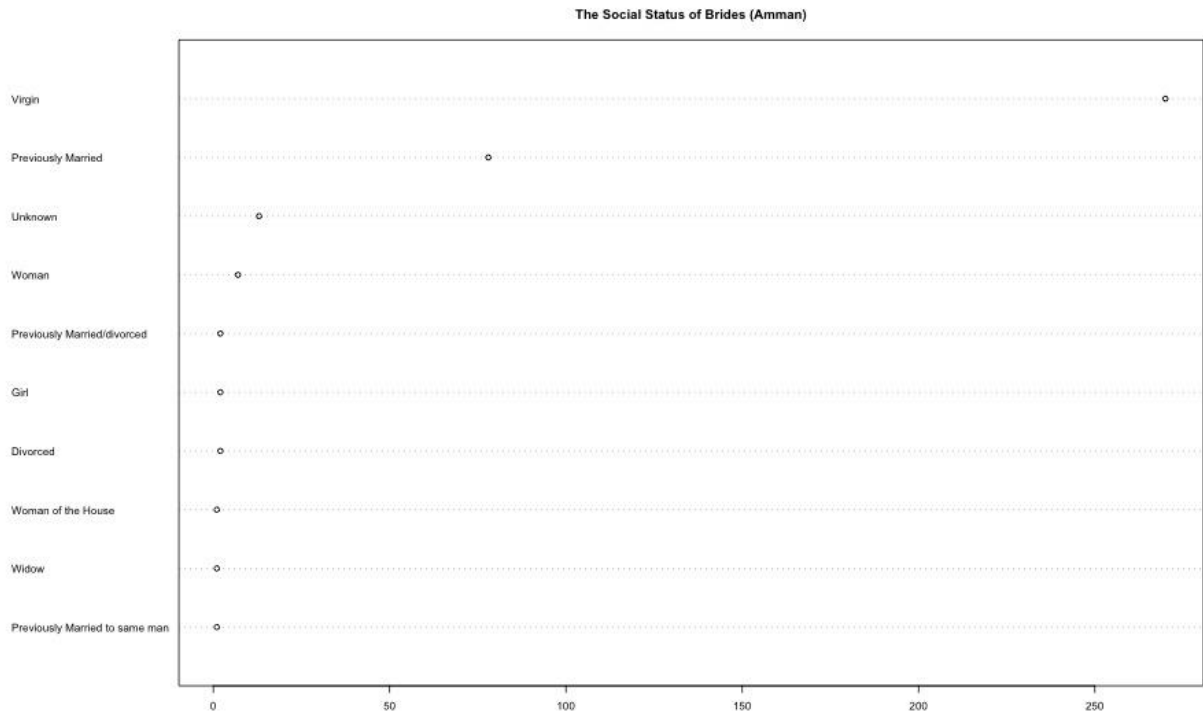


Figure 30

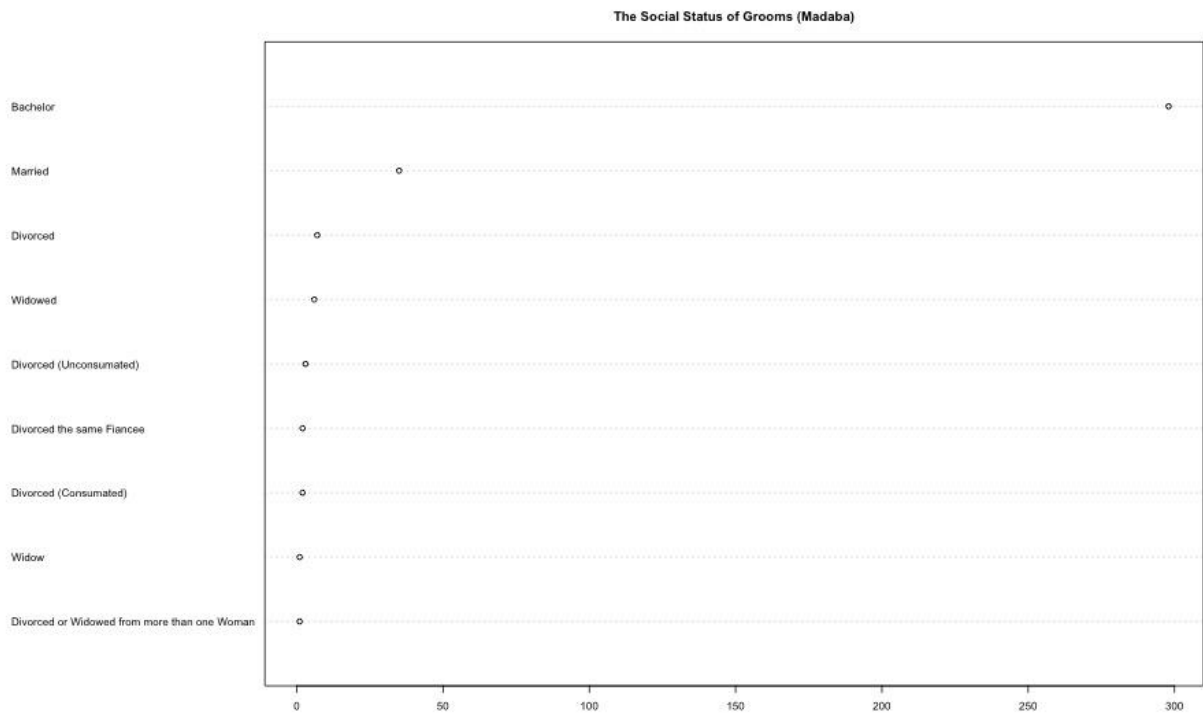


Figure 31

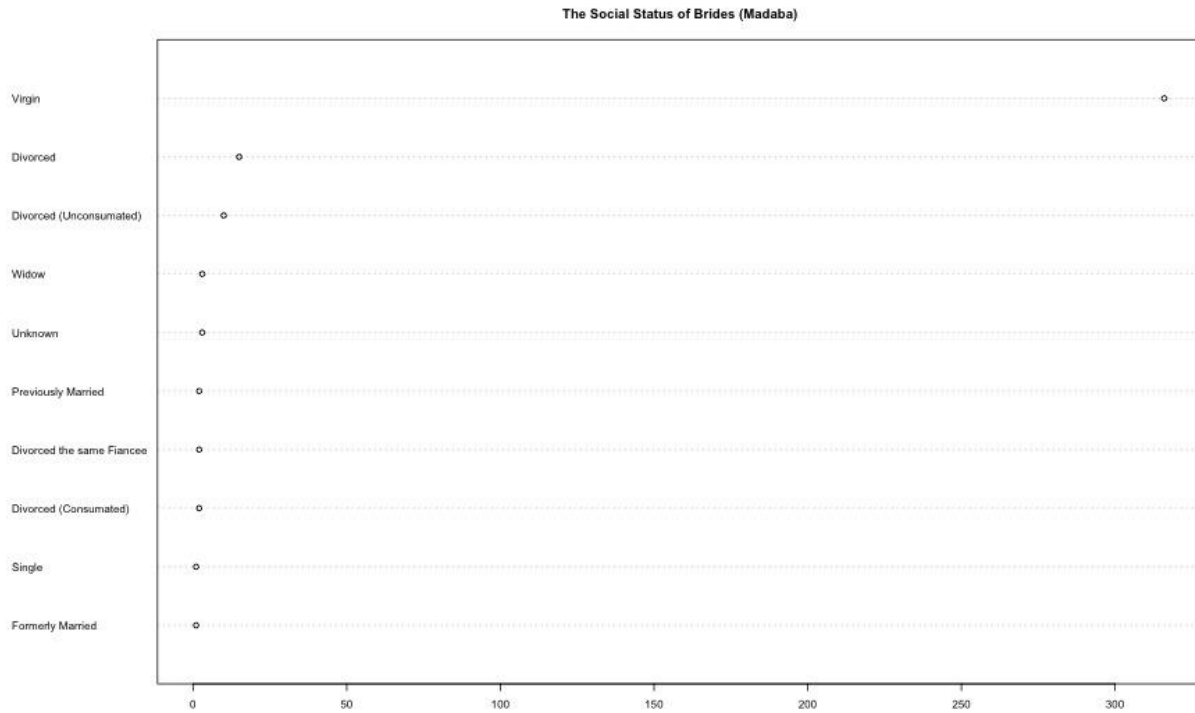


Figure 32

Table 7: Social Status of Grooms (Amman)

Social Status	Number	Percent
Unknown	370	98.14%
Bachelor	5	1.33%
Divorced	1	0.27%
Previously Married (Same Woman)	1	0.27%

Table 8: Social Status of Brides (Amman)

Social Status	Number	Percent
Virgin	270	71.62%
Previously Married	78	20.69%
Unknown	13	3.45%
Woman	7	1.86%
Divorced	2	0.53%
Girl	2	0.53%
Previously Married (Divorced)	2	0.53%
Previously Married (Same Man)	1	0.27%
Widow	1	0.27%
Woman of the House	1	0.27%

Table 9: The Social Status of Grooms (Madaba)

Social Status	Number	Percent
Bachelor	298	83.94%
Married	35	9.86%
Divorced	8	2.25%
Widowed	6	1.69%
Divorced (Unconsummated)	3	0.85%
Divorced (Consummated)	2	0.56%
Divorced the same Fiancee	2	0.56%
Divorced or Widowed from more than one Woman	1	0.28%

Table 10: The Social Status of Brides (Madaba)

Social Status	Number	Percent
Virgin	316	89.01%
Divorced	15	4.23%
Divorced (Unconsummated)	10	2.82%
Unknown	3	0.85%
Widowed	3	0.85%
Divorced (Consummated)	2	0.56%
Divorced the same Fiancee	2	0.56%
Previously Married	2	0.56%
Formerly Married	1	0.28%
Single	1	0.28%

One of the most striking differences between the four graphs is the much higher number of previously married women in the Amman archives sample. Multiple people suggested to me that this was the result of the large numbers of widows produced by the two world wars and the raiding and tribal clashes which followed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. However, my data fails to provide any real evidence either in favor of this hypothesis or against it. Rates of previously married women seem to have been higher in the Amman sample without much discernible variation over time.

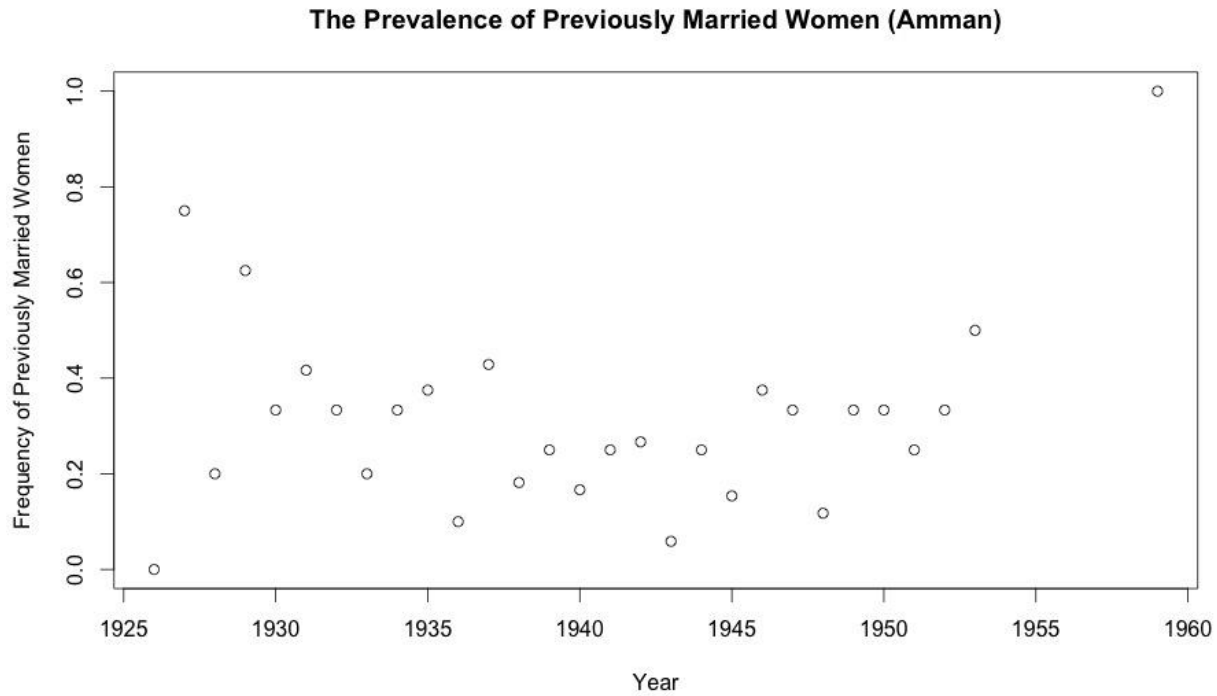


Figure 33

Religion (*al-din*)

The religion category only covers brides since Muslim women can only marry Muslim men and Christians do not use the Sharia Courts. In the Amman sample, 284 women are categorized as Muslim and 93 women are not categorized in terms of religion. In the Madaba sample, 156 contracts list no religion for the woman (as a field on the contract, "Religion" drops out in the 1950s and only reappears much later). In the absence of a specific field, most contract-writers do not bother to list this information. Where my sample does have data to work with, 198 women are listed as Muslim and one woman is listed as Christian: an American woman from Ohio.

Nationality (*al-jinsiyya*)

The later Madaba sample also includes data about nationality. The vast majority of applicants are Jordanian (347 brides and 342 grooms out of 355), but there are notable exceptions. Among the men, there are 5 Saudis, 4 Egyptians, 1 Brazilian, 1 Palestinian, 1 Pakistani and 1 Syrian. Among the women, there are 3 Egyptians, 3 Palestinians, 1 Pakistani and 1 American.

Occupation (*al-mihni*)

The lists of occupations provide a detailed and amusing look into the development of the Jordanian economy over the course of the twentieth century. One notable feature is the way in which the record of people's occupations mirrors the gendered assumptions which underlay the collection of data about people's social status: whereas early contracts are quite remiss in recording the groom's social status, they enthusiastically seek out data about his employment status. In comparison, the bride's employment is often ignored completely or merely treated as an extension of her husband's: in most cases where there is an attempt to mark the wife's employment, it is through the use of ditto marks. There are 56 distinct occupations listed in the Amman sample (listed from least to most commonly written): "Appointee in the Airplane Company", "Banner Writer", "Blacksmith", "Building", "Car Driver in the Army", "Cattle Trader", "Chauffeur", "Clerk", "Coffee Maker", "Craftsman", "Customs Service", "Deputy in the Army", "Garage Owner", "Imam", "Iron Foundry", "Iron Laborer in the ? Works", "Kanafamaker", "Mechanic Soldier", "Military", "Military Police", "Nothing", "Officer in the Army", "Painter", "Police officer", "Police Officer in the Arab Army", "President of The Royal Court", "Ruwas/Peasant who operates the irrigation works", "Scribe", "Soldier in the Army", "Soldier Officer", "Stucco-Laborer/Qasar", "Student of Knowledge", "Sweeper", "Teacher", "Traveling Salesman", "Treasurer in the Jubeihah Inventory", "Baker", "Driver", "Employee of the New Railroad", "Industrial Work", "Landowner", "Mechanic", "Carpenter", "Scavenger/Homeless", "Shepherd", "Shopkeeper", "Car Driver", "Mason/Stonecutter", "Soldier in the Arab Army", "Employee", "Laborer", "Unknown", "Soldier", "Trader", "Farmer", and "Peasant." Needless to say, the majority of these occupations are only listed once. Those which are listed more than once include:

Table 11: The Most Common Occupations for Grooms (Amman)

Occupation	Number	Percent
Peasant	125	33.16%
Farmer	87	23.07%
Trader	23	6.10%
Soldier	21	5.57%
Unknown	19	5.04%
Laborer	17	4.50%
Employee	9	2.39%
Soldier in the Arab Army	7	1.86%
Mason/Stonecutter	5	1.33%
Car Driver	4	1.06%
Carpenter	3	0.80%
Scavenger/Homeless	3	0.80%
Shepherd	3	0.80%
Shopkeeper	3	0.80%
Baker	2	0.53%
Driver	2	0.53%
Employee of the New Railroad	2	0.53%
Industrial Work	2	0.53%
Landowner	2	0.53%
Mechanic	2	0.53%

Table 12: Occupations for Brides (Amman)

Occupation	Number	Percent
Unknown	268	71.09%
Farmer	47	12.47%
Peasant	33	8.75%
Female	9	2.39%
No Occupation	6	1.59%
None	3	0.80%
Seamstress	3	0.80%
Trader	2	0.53%
Employee of the New Railroad	1	0.27%
Laborer	1	0.27%
Mason/Stonecutter	1	0.27%
Scavenger/Homeless	1	0.27%
Shepherd	1	0.27%
Soldier First	1	0.27%

While it seems as though the woman's occupation is treated in the Amman sample (where it is treated at all) as an extension of her husband's occupation, the later Madaba sample creates a new

category for the bride *rabit bayt* (housewife). In fact, the only female-gendered form of employment in evidence in the Amman sample is the category of seamstress. By comparison, the later Madaba sample reflects women's increased participation in the workforce both in terms of the attention to women's employment and the diversity of jobs which women in the sample list as their occupations:

Table 13: Occupations for Brides (Madaba)

Occupation	Number	Percent
Housewife	248	69.86%
Unknown	59	16.52%
Student	20	5.63%
Teacher	9	2.54%
Employee	3	0.85%
Armed Forces	2	0.56%
Engineer	2	0.56%
Bank Employee	1	0.28%
Civil Service	1	0.28%
Farmer	1	0.28%
Government Employee	1	0.28%
Health Services	1	0.28%
Housewife and Student	1	0.28%
Lawyer	1	0.28%
None	1	0.28%
Nurse	1	0.28%
Pharmacist	1	0.28%
Secretary/Employee	1	0.28%
University Student	1	0.28%

The diversity of male occupations also increases in the Madaba sample to a total of 71. At the same time, the increasingly urban, industrial and commercial character of Jordanian society is highly visible in the sample. The category of "peasant" is completely gone. It is replaced by a proliferation of specialized occupations and the ever-increasing numbers of men who seek employment with the security services. The full list (from most to least common) includes: "Farmer", "Employee", "Soldier", "Driver", "Laborer", "Trader", "Armed Forces", "Teacher", "Corporal in the army", "Company Employee", "Engineer", "Free Labor", "Military", "General

Security", "Government Employee", "Independent Worker", "Mechanic", "Police Officer", "Student", "Accountant", "Electrician", "Retired", "Soldier in the Arab Army", "Carpenter", "Coiffeur", "Doctor", "Industrial", "Nurse", "Officer", "Police Officer in General Security", "Army Sergeant", "Shopkeeper", "Agent in the General Fund", "Army Officer", "Assigned Soldier", "[Auto] Body Work", "Captain General Security", "Civil Defense", "Company Worker", "Concrete Technician", "Contractor", "Corporal", "Corporal in General Security", "Corporal in the Arab Army", "Corporal in the Civil Defense", "Correspondent in General Security", "Couch Repairman", "Distributor Sales Representative", "Electrical Engineer", "Employee Accountant", "Employee of the Municipality", "First Lieutenant in the Army", "Imam and Preacher", "Industrial Qualification", "Lawyer", "Mechanical Engineer", "Painter", "Pharmacist", "Plumber", "Private Sector", "Private Sector Employee", "Sergeant General Security", "Sales Manager", "Salesman", "Sergeant", "Soldier (Second)", "Soldier in the Armed Forces", "Sweet Maker", "Tile layer", "University teacher", "Worker in the Armed Forces."

Some of the class resonances are peculiar to Jordan: while "worker" signifies working class, terms like "employee" and "free labor" denote a middle to upper-middle class status. The top ten occupations in the Madaba sample for grooms are:

Table 14: The Ten Most Common Occupations for Grooms (Madaba)

Occupation	Number	Percent
Farmer	62	17.46%
Employee	48	13.52%
Soldier	37	10.42%
Driver	23	6.48%
Laborer	20	5.63%
Trader	17	4.79%
Armed Forces	14	3.94%
Teacher	11	3.10%
Corporal in the Army	8	2.25%
Company Employee	6	1.69%

Bridewealth (*al-mahr*)

Of all of the fields on the contract, bridewealth encompasses the most diversity of possible kinds of discrete information. Depending on the time period, the contract-writer and the circumstances, the bridewealth field contains information about the when, what, and for whom of bridewealth payments. In the earliest time period, there is simply the category of bridewealth and it either has or has not been paid. As with later contracts, there are two lines but they are defined differently: as "Bridewealth" and "that which remains" instead of the later "upfront" (*ma'jil*) and "delayed" (*mo'jil*) (as a result, what might later be considered *mo'jil*--the delayed payment--is included in the bridewealth numbers in figure 27 for some of the earliest contracts from before 1930). As table 16 reveals, there are a whole host of intermediate points on the continuum between upfront and delayed, between *ma'jil* and *mo'jil*, between the pre-wedding gift and what the husband has to pay to be relieved of his responsibilities towards his wife: "after a year," "after 4 months," "upon her request." In one case, a trader from Amman was bound by his marriage contract to pay 2000 dinar [extra bridewealth] if he and his household were to leave Amman. Yet for the most part, contract writers seem to enforce the following discipline: those seeking a marriage contract should be comfortable averring that what has been exchanged has been exchanged and no other exchanges need be recognized legally except in case of divorce and the payment of the *mo'jil*. Thus the complexity tends to be limited to producing 2 numbers (the upfront and delayed payments), a denomination for those numbers like a currency or some set of objects like furniture, clothes or gold.

One way to analyze the complexity of the Bridewealth field is to look at the word counts. This reveals three distinct periodizations. First, there is the pre-independence period where contracts almost always specify upfront and delayed bridewealth while adding on some sort of formula

about how the bridewealth was "received in the hand of her father her agent with her permission." In the 1950s, this formula disappears completely and word counts get shorter. Finally, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, the length of the bridewealth arrangements begins to grow again as people begin to specify furniture, clothes, gold, jewelry and other goods rather than simply recording a monetary value. It is almost enough to make up for the very brief entries of the 1950s and 1960s--most of which only list some given amount of dinar: the median word count for the Madaba sample is 16 and the median for the Amman sample is 19.

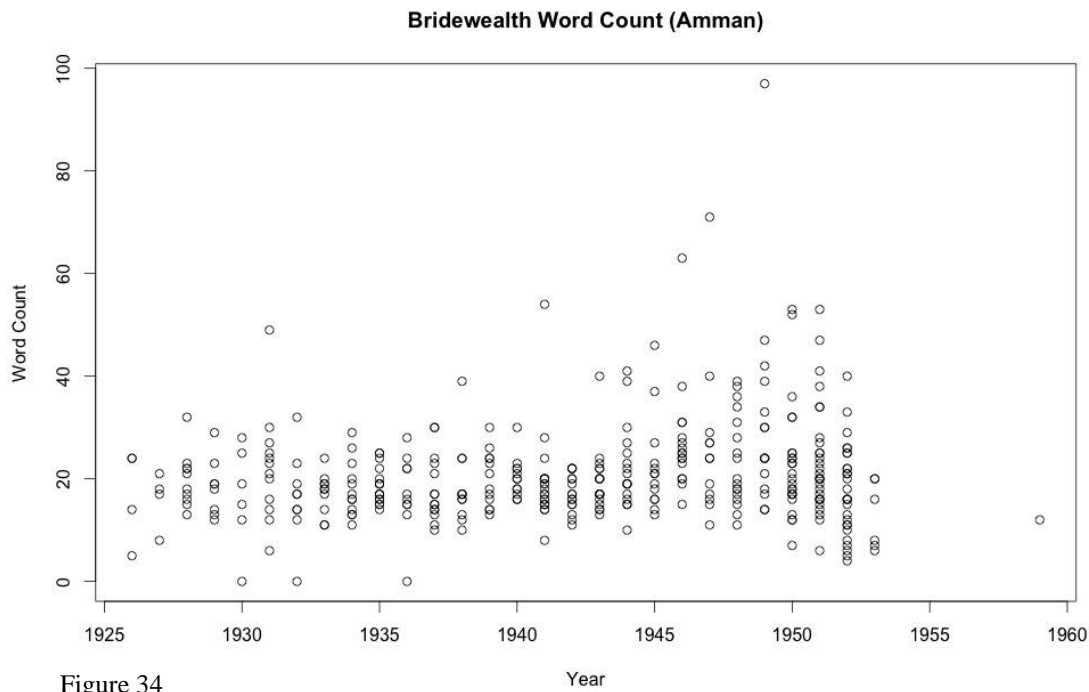


Figure 34

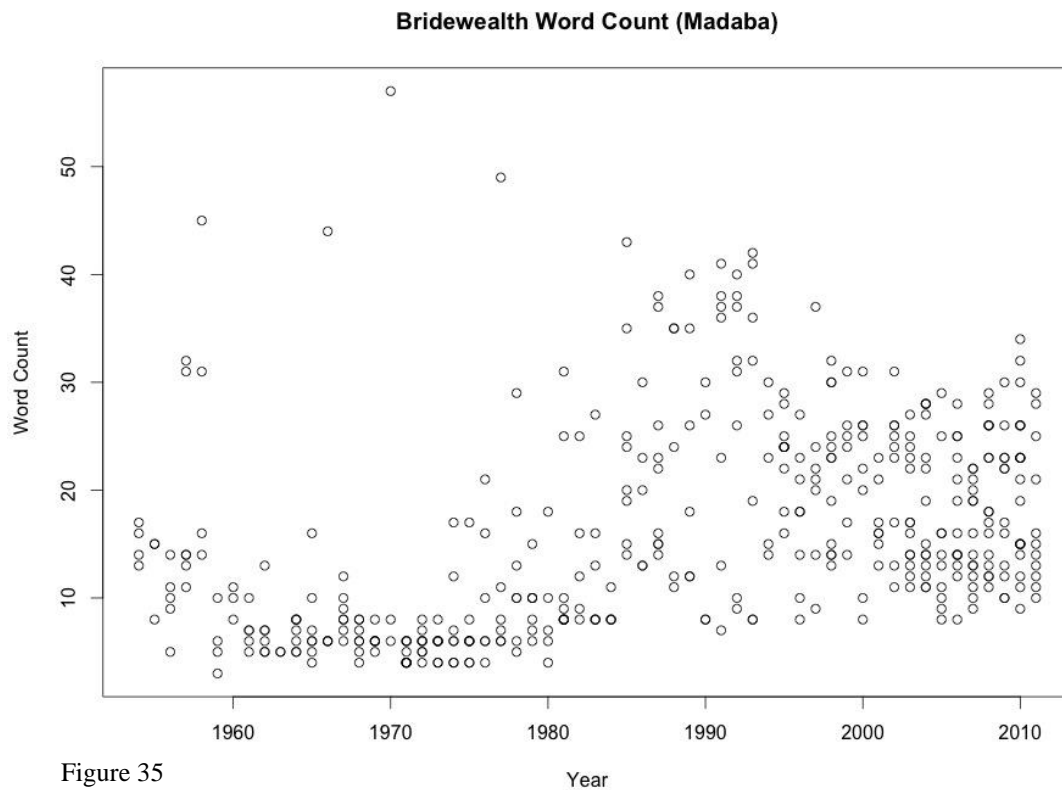


Figure 35

Looking at a plot of the amount of bridewealth received--regardless of currency--is much more revealing than one might think. The trend is compelling: after some movement within a tight range, bridewealth payments across Jordan settled into an extremely tight band around the number 30 during the 1930s. Out of my sample of 377 from Amman, 112 listed the upfront bridewealth as 30 of some currency. It really does not seem to matter what the currency is: the numbers are clustered around 30 until 1943 when all of a sudden there is an explosion in the diversity of numbers being used for bridewealth payments.

Amount of Bridewealth Received

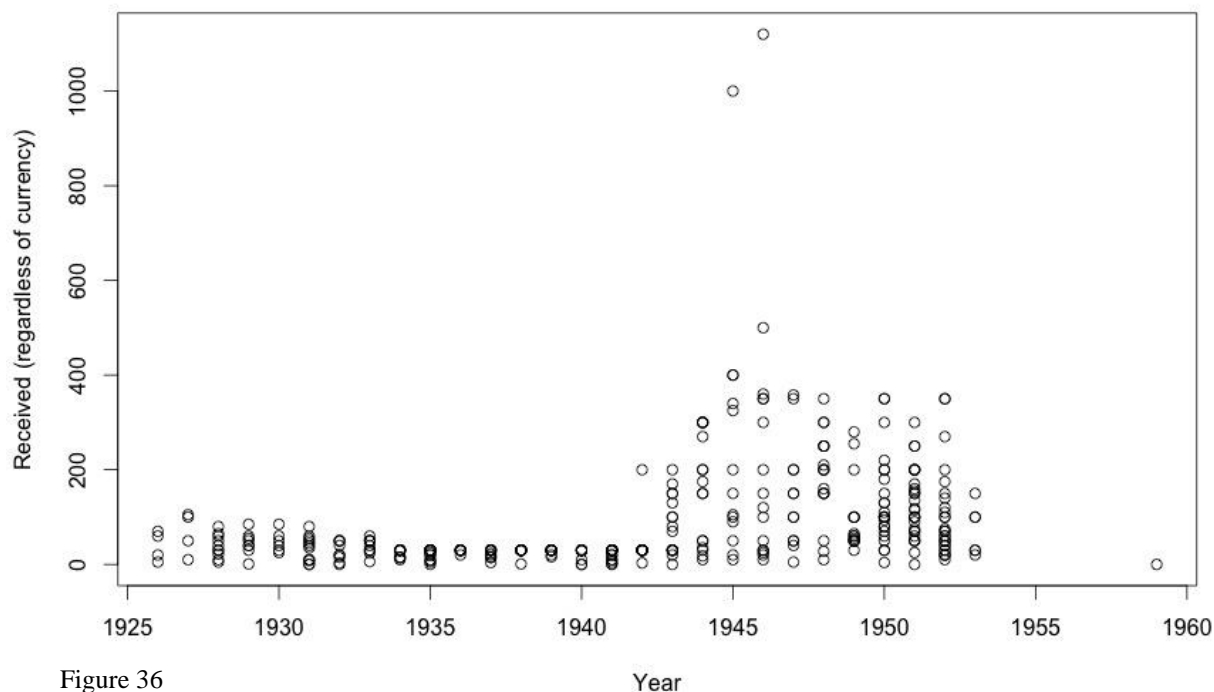


Figure 36

So what happens when we divide them up by currency? The five main currencies (Ottoman Lira, Ottoman Gold, Palestinian Lira, Palestinian Guinea, Dinar), are each associated with a given time. Ottoman money is mostly present in the 1920s and makes occasional appearances thereafter as some sort of heirloom. Palestinian Guinea and Lira Both predominate in the 30s and 40s such that neither one can be associated with either the uniformity of bridewealth pre-1943 or its diversity post-1943. Dinar make their appearance with the end of World War II and the coming of Jordanian independence.

Of course, this does not exhaust the diversity of the contractual arrangements in the sample. The following bridewealth payments were too unique to fit elsewhere:

- "The Agreed upon",
- "1 Palestinian Lira Gold "
- "10 Ottoman Guinea",
- "10 Palestinian Papers",
- "10 Sheep; 10 black goats; 10 kids; 10 young sheep; camel; bull",
- "10 Silver Dirhams",

"100 Dinar Couch set and the Jewelry after 1 year",
 "12 head wraps ('Am soda)",
 "15 goats; 15 white baby sheep; 15 sheep; 15 kids; 2 cows; 1 lamb; 10 bags of wheat",
 "2 blankets 2 wool mattresses, 2 rugs, 2 wool covers, 4 wool pillows, 10 rings, 2 couples silver bracelets, 2 bracelets of Ottoman quarters",
 "2 mattresses; 2 blankets; 4 big pillows; 6 chairs; wardrobe; 2 head wraps",
 "2 mattresses; 2 blankets; 4 pillows costing 10 dinar", "2 mattresses; 2 blankets; 4 pillows; 2 carpets; bed",
 "2 mattresses; 2 blankets; 4 pillows; bed; wardrobe; 6 cane chairs",
 "2 mattresses; 2 blankets; 4 pillows; box",
 "2 mattresses; 2 blankets; 4 pillows; cupboard; medium table; half dozen cane chairs",
 "2 mattresses; 4 pillows; 2 blankets; bed; wardrobe; 2 mirrors; 6 chairs",
 "2 pairs of sleeping beds; medium ajami (turkish) rug; 2 blankets; 4 pillows",
 "2 wool mattresses; 2 Cotton blankets; 4 wool pillows, 2 rugs, pair of ottoman gold earrings; 2 gold rings; box",
 "2 wool mattresses; 2 wool blankets; 4 pillows; box; pair of silver platters; 4 silver rings; ",
 "20 head of goats; 20 head of female sheep", "20 Lira new bed, 2 wool mattresses, 3 blankets, 4 pillows for 40 Lira, 40 Lira carpet; 30 Lira gold bracelet; 20 Lira chairs",
 "20 Lira Palestinian Gold",
 "20 Palestinian Lira (must be paid within the year)",
 "2000 Guinea if they leave Amman",
 "250 currency unspecified",
 "3 big wool mattresses for beds; 3 wool blankets; 3 wool pillows",
 "3 mattresses, 2 blankets, 2 rugs, 4 pillows, ",
 "4 wool mattresses; three blankets; 4 wool pillows; 2 balga cloths; 'ajami carpet; gold ring; box; silver bracelet",
 "5 plots of land rented for 2 years at a price of 16 Lira; 4 Lira of wheat, 20 Lira of brideservice from ma'jil",
 "50 Guinea wardrobe with mirror; 18 Guinea for 6 chairs; 40 Guinea carpet; 10 Guinea bed; 30 Guinea for 2 wool mattresses, 2 cotton blankets, 4 wool pillows, 3 small tables; 50 Guinea radio; 1 kilo ",
 "55 head of dark goats; pair of ploughing cows; 100 3.5 kilo bags of wheat",
 "6 Suits and a silk belt", "blankets; 4 pillows; spun carpet; wardrobe all costing 50 JD",
 "Clothes and furniture (unspecified)",
 "Furnishings; carpets; wool mattresses; blankets; 4 pillows; box; iron bed",
 "Furniture (value unspecified)",
 "Furniture and clothes (value unspecified)",
 "Gold Ring worth 3 JD; pair of gold earrings worth 3 JD",
 "Mattress; blanket; 2 pillows",
 "Plot of land worth 20 PG 15 head of goat worth 10",
 "Sewing machine; wardrobe; mattress; blanket; six cane chairs; tibrizi carpet",
 "Wardrobe with three mirrors; Karaki carpet; 6 cane chairs; 2 mattresses; blankets; 4 wool pillows; 50 JD "

Color Code For Currencies for the Amman Contracts:

Ottoman Lira- Green
 Ottoman Gold- Yellow
 Palestinian Lira- Blue
 Palestinian Guinea- Red
 Dinar- Violet

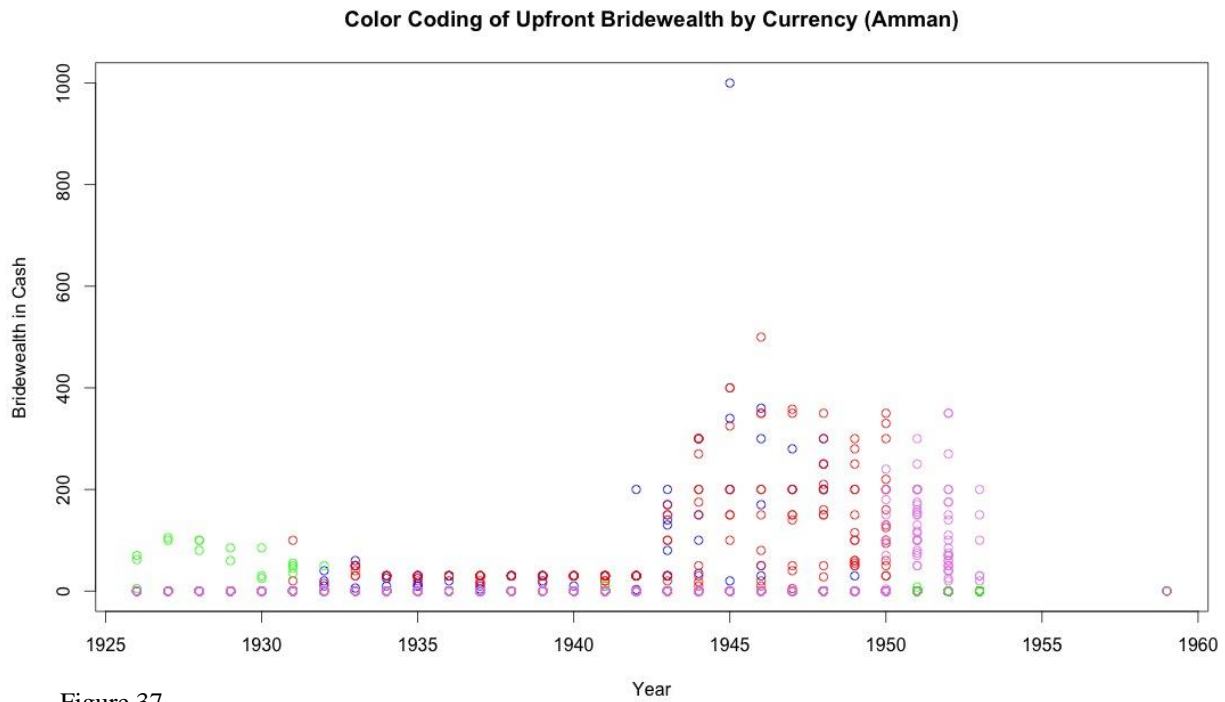
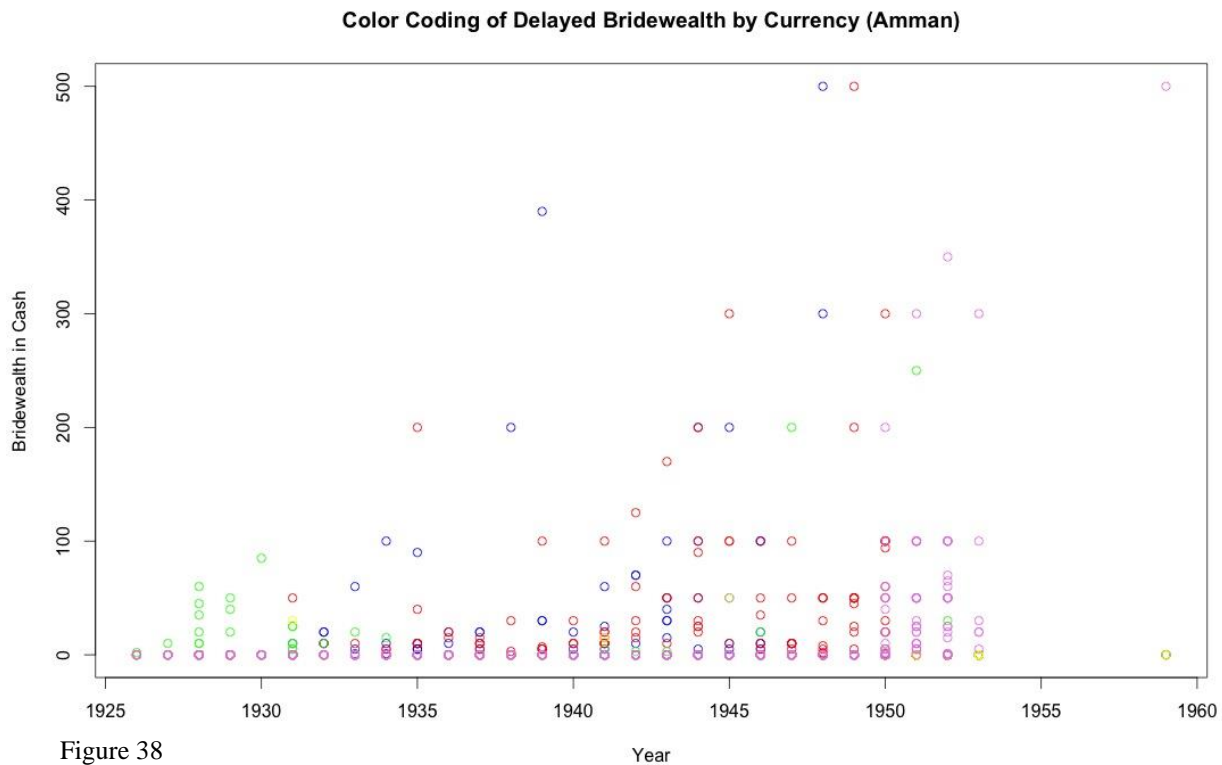


Figure 37

The most striking aspect of the *mo'jil* (delayed) bridewealth in the Amman sample is its absence: out of 377 contracts in my sample, 116 did not list any *mo'jil*. Of those contracts that do list a delayed payment, there is a similar but less pronounced trend towards greater diversity in bridewealth amounts over time. As with the upfront payment, the currencies seem to correlate not with the amount of bridewealth but rather with specific time periods: Ottoman being earlier and Dinar being later with Palestinian Lira and Guinea in the middle.

Color Code For Currencies for the Amman Contracts:

- Ottoman Lira- Green
- Ottoman Gold- Yellow
- Palestinian Lira- Blue
- Palestinian Guinea- Red
- Dinar- Violet



As alluded to earlier, the Sharia Courts were very concerned during the 1920s 30s and 40s with recording the hand which received the bridewealth. Fathers and brothers accounted for the majority, but 13% of women in my sample purportedly received their own bridewealth in their hands. In other cases, it was divided up between the father and the bride. In two cases, the contract writer acted as the woman's agent (see below) and also received the bridewealth. The 16 cases where it only says "the agent" received the bridewealth are meant to indicate that there was no discernible relationship (father, mother's brother, grandfather etc) between that particular agent and the bride. This could be based on the contract writer's specification of a kin relationship or on a comparison the names of the party to the contract and their agent. Since all Arab names contain a unique first name followed by the father and grandfather's name and then the name of the tribe, it is often relatively simple to tell the relationship even if the contract-writer has omitted it.

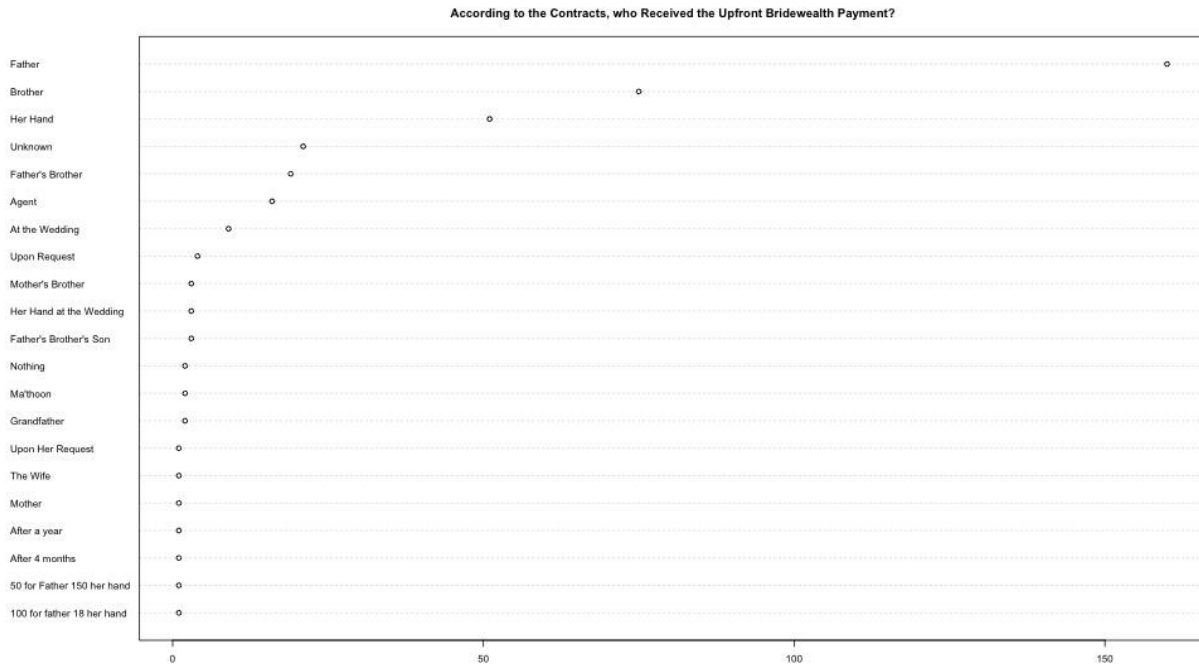


Figure 39

Table 15: Receiver of the Bridewealth (Amman)

Receiver	Number	Percent
Father	160	42.44%
Brother	75	19.89%
Her Hand	51	13.53%
Unknown	21	5.57%
Father's Brother	19	5.03%
Agent	16	4.24%
At the Wedding	9	2.39%
Upon Request	4	1.06%
Father's Brother's Son	3	0.80%
Her Hand at the Wedding	3	0.80%
Mother's Brother	3	0.80%
Grandfather	2	0.53%
Ma'thun	2	0.53%
Nothing	2	0.53%
100 for father 18 her hand	1	0.27%
50 for father 150 her hand	1	0.27%
After 4 months	1	0.27%
After a year	1	0.27%
Mother	1	0.27%
Wife	1	0.27%

Upon Her Request	1	0.27%
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In the Madaba sample, there are no real concerns with the commensurability of the currencies in assessing changes to upfront bridewealth payments. The dinar is used throughout and follows a relatively stable upward trajectory of inflation. Yet unlike the Amman sample where there seems to be an explosion of diverse bridewealth payments, here, a plot of bridewealth payments seems to produce a compelling image of social stratification. There seems to be a tendency towards relatively rigid tiers of bridewealth payments which increase over time: 1000, 1500, 2000 and 3000 seem well-established with 5000 now setting the new high point. There also seems to be a strong tendency away from the dinar and towards commodities denominated in dinar like furniture, gold jewelry, gold, and clothes. One bit of caution: the following plot disaggregates the upfront payment into its constituent parts. That means that a contract involving 3000 in furniture and 3000 in gold will produce 2 different colored dots on the plot at the level of 3000. In this era, there are also a number of contracts which were not particularly fit for coding. Five contracts listed furniture but failed to specify an amount. Four contracts listed a Golden Rashidi Lira as part of the bridewealth and 5 listed simply "Gold Lira." The following were only found in one contract:

"Bedroom",
 "1 Framed Gold Guinea",
 "10 Golden Rashidi Lira for 45 JD; 2 wool mattresses for 10 JD; 2 wool blankets for 5 JD; 4 pillows for 4 JD; 64 JD Total",
 "100 JD for something unspecified",
 "100 JD worth of Rashidi Gold",
 "150 of the 200 now and 50 before the wedding",
 "2 Mubarim (solid gold bracelet molded in the shape of rope) worth 400 JD",
 "250 JD bedroom; 6 couches worth 60 JD; 4 wool mattresses worth 50 JD; 3 wool blankets worth 50 JD; 4 wool Pillows worth 20 JD; cooking tools worth 70 JD; for 600 JD total",
 "300 JD kitchen tools",
 "5 Rashidi gold coins word 30 JD; pair of beds worth 7 JD; formica cabinets on three sides worth 40 JD; 2 wool mattresses worth 10 JD; gold bracelet and ring worth 20 JD; six chairs worth 25 JD; 4 wool pillows worth 4 JD; wool blankets worth 5 JD; For a total of 141 JD",
 "5 Rashidi gold coins worth 22 JD",
 "6 saliyat (gold)",

"80 JD of the bridewealth must be a wardrobe and gold",
 "Gold" (value unspecified),
 "Lira of gold worth 50 JD",
 "Mubarim (solid gold bracelet molded in the shape of rope); 60 3 kilo bags of wool"

Color Code For Types of Bridewealth for the Amman Contract

- Dinar- Red
- Gold- Orange
- Furniture- Green
- Clothes- Blue
- Jewelry- Indigo
- Bedroom- Violet

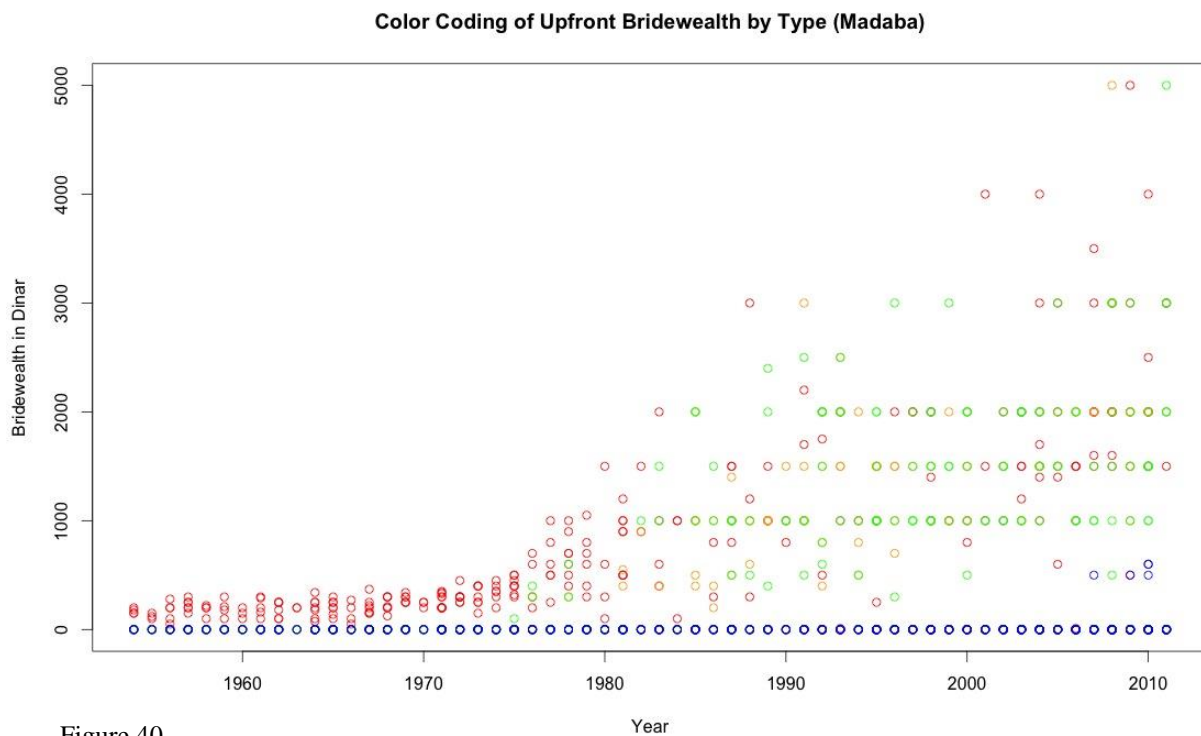


Figure 40

Unlike the upfront payment for the Madaba sample, which is proffered as a range of goods denominated in Jordanian Dinar, the delayed payment is inevitably given in dinar only.

Nonetheless, the delayed payment shows the same tendency as the upfront payments in the Madaba contracts towards relatively rigid tiers. The most common bridewealth amounts are 2000 Dinar (63/433), 3000 Dinar, (63/433), 5000 Dinar (61/433), 0 Dinar (50/433), 1000 Dinar

(50/433). These five amounts account for 287 of the 433 contracts. Other common amounts include 50 Dinar (24/433), 4000 Dinar (19/433), 200 Dinar (17/433), 100 Dinar (16/433) 50 Dinar (14/433), 1500 Dinar (14/433), 300 Dinar (10/433) and 400 Dinar (7/433). Other amounts are represented no more than twice in the combined Madaba Contracts and Madaba extras sample.

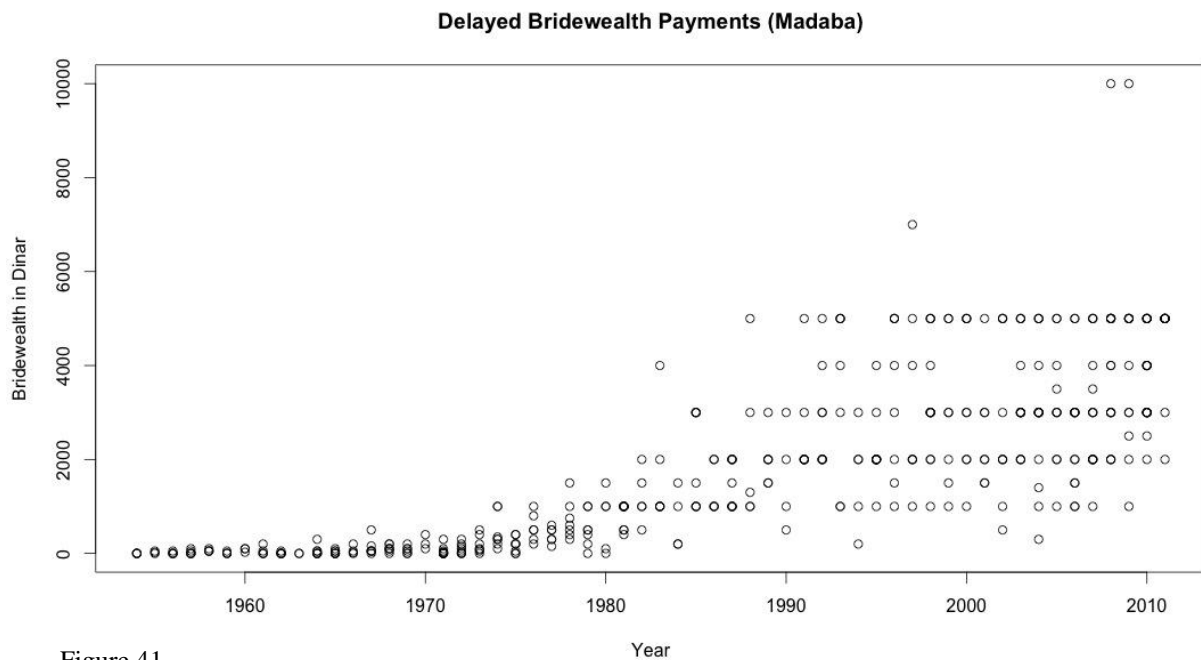


Figure 41

Agent (*wakil*) and Guardian (*wali*)

As discussed in the chapter on the proposal, the category of "agent" (*wakil*) has become much more delimited over time. While the father of the bride has always been the most common agent, in earlier times there was no concern with some other senior male serving that function. In a full 42 out of 377 cases, there is no discernible kinship relationship between the bride and her agent. In other words, it is none of her close patrilineal relations including father, brother, father's brother, father's brother's son or grandfather (based on a comparison of the names). Even men availed themselves of agents in the early contracts--although this practice was never particularly

common with only about 12% of men using an agent in the Amman sample. The practice of agents for men seems to have quickly fallen into disuse with men being urged to act on their own behalf in court rituals. Over time, however, the agent (*wakil*) has lost standing in favor of the guardian (*wali*) who is defined as the bride's father and, in his absence, her brother, and father's brother, moving along the bride's patriline by degrees of separation.

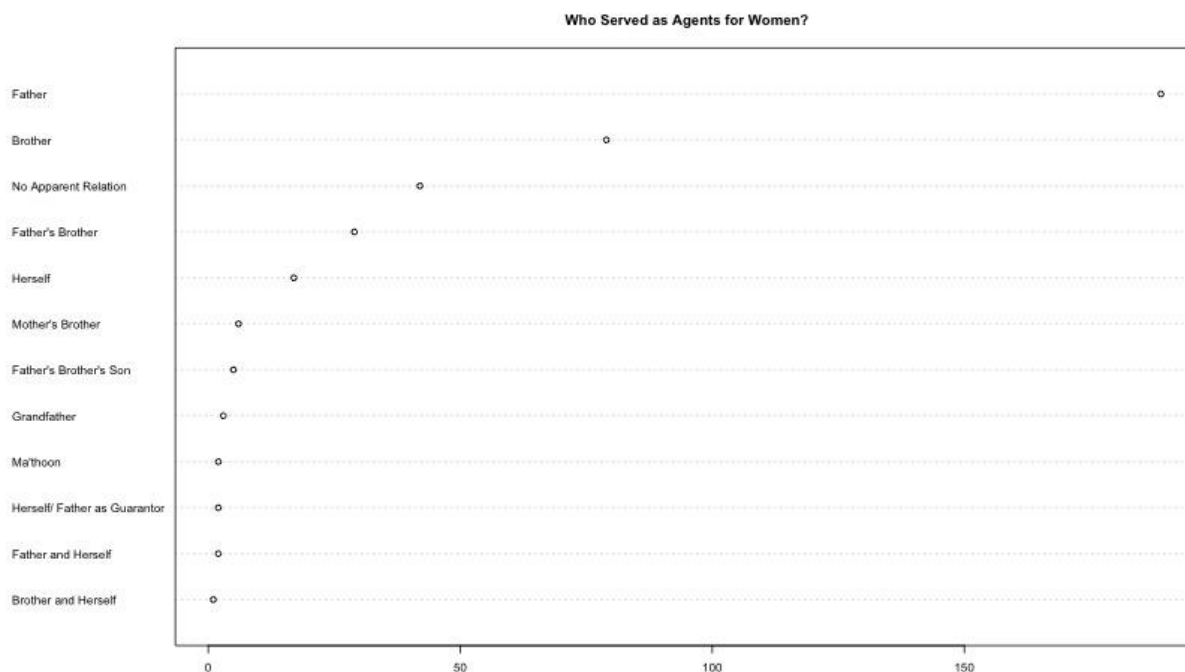


Figure 42

Table 16: Agent of the Bride (Amman)

Agent of the Bride	Number	Percent
Father	189	50.13%
Brother	79	20.95%
No Apparent Relation	42	11.14%
Father's Brother	29	7.69%
Herself	17	4.51%
Mother's Brother	6	1.59%
Father's Brother's Son	5	1.33%
Grandfather	3	0.80%
Father and Herself	2	0.53%
Herself/ Father as Guarantor	2	0.53%
Ma'thoon	2	0.53%
Brother and Herself	1	0.27%

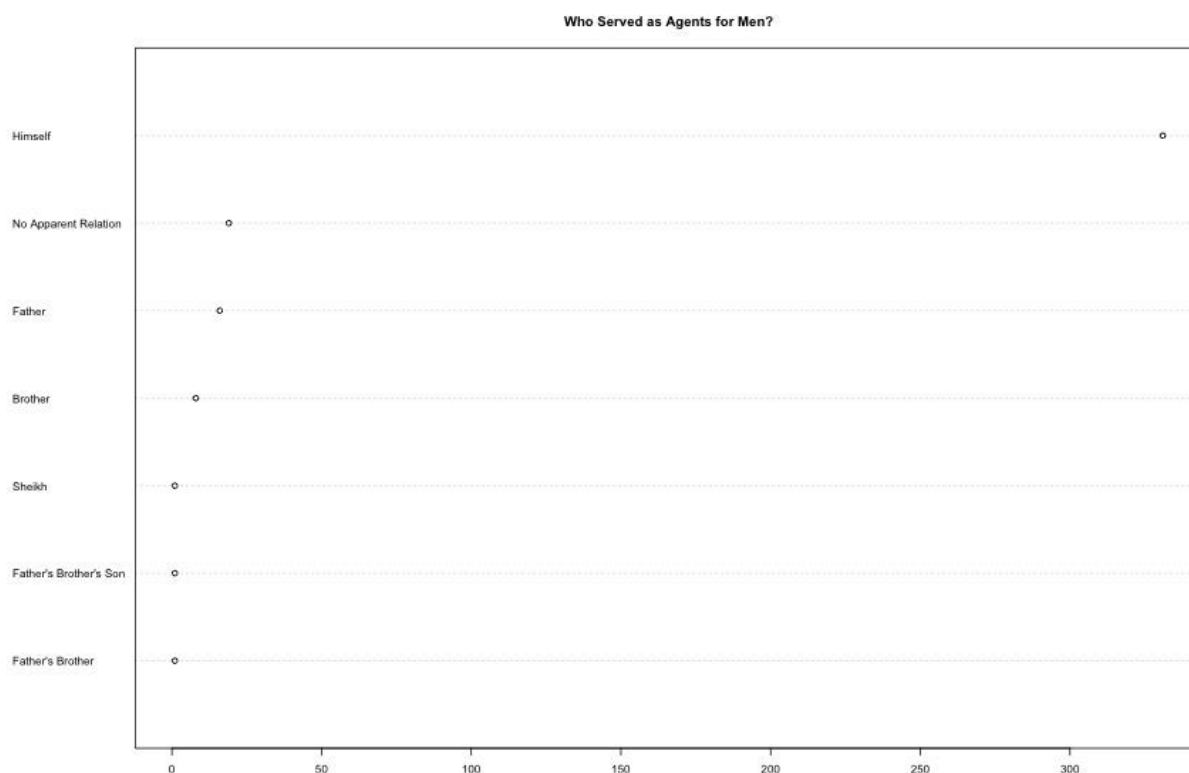


Figure 43

Table 17: Agent of the Groom (Amman)

Agent of the Groom	Number	Percent
Himself	331	87.80%
No Apparent Relation	19	5.04%
Father	16	4.14%
Brother	8	2.12%
Father's Brother	1	0.27%
Father's Brother's Son	1	0.27%
Sheikh	1	0.27%

The greater insistence of contemporary contract-writers on the prerogatives of the guardian (*wali*) as opposed to the agent (*wakil*) is apparent in preponderance of Madaba contracts which list some combination of father and brother as the agent. Such contracts account for well over two thirds of the sample. Even the definition of the field is different in the post-1950s contracts. Whereas early contracts simply enquire, " And that is obligatory and accepted as legitimate as issued from," later contracts ask for, "agreement of the guardian or permission of the court."

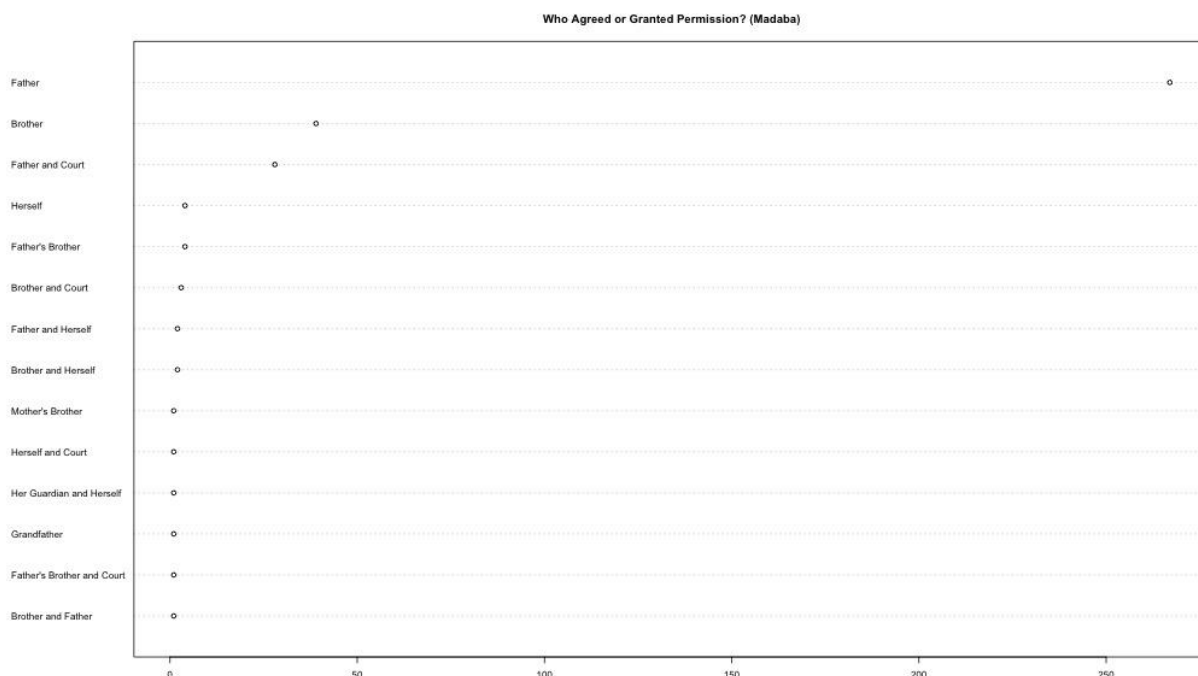


Figure 44

Table 18: Who Agreed or Granted Permission? (Madaba)

Permission/Agreement from:	Number	Percent
Father	267	70.82%
Brother	39	10.34%
Father and Court	28	7.43%
Father's Brother	4	1.06%
Herself	4	1.06%
Brother and Court	4	1.06%
Brother and Herself	2	0.53%
Father and Herself	2	0.53%
Brother and Father	1	0.27%
Father's Brother and Court	1	0.27%
Grandfather	1	0.27%
Her Guardian and Herself	1	0.27%
Herself and Court	1	0.27%
Mother's Brother	1	0.27%

Requirements (*shurut*)

Requirements are incredibly uncommon. Out of all 877 contracts, only 14 show evidence of requirements. Only one of these comes from before independence (the previously mentioned contract which stipulates 2000 Guinea in extra bridewealth to be paid if the Husband moves the

family away from Amman). The remaining 17 include 6 which stipulate an autonomous house (*bayt mustaqil*), 2 which stipulate that the bride be allowed to work, 2 which stipulate that the bride be allowed to finish university, 1 which stipulates that the woman be allowed to keep her children from her first marriage and none which forbid the man from taking more wives. Seven stipulate something about the disposition of the house. One stipulates "Stone House," which is to say, not a tent. One stipulates that the bride live 'far from the other wife.' This one is particularly amusing because it used a word for "second wife" from the local dialect which also means enemy (*dhirra*). Two specify that the couple live in Madaba (the bride's hometown) while one stipulates the couple live in Qatrana (a village about an hour south of Madaba). One contract stipulates that the woman live with her husband in his hometown of Tabuk in Saudi Arabia.

Signature (*tawqiyy'ah*)

There are three main forms of indexical linkage between the contract and its participants: signature, stamp and thumbprint. In the Amman/pre-independence sample, there are blanks for the [two] witnesses, 'the wife or her agent', and 'the husband' for a total of four distinct marks in most contracts. In the later Madaba/post-independence sample, there are blanks for the two witnesses, 'the wife or her agent', 'the husband or his agent' and the 'legal guardian' for a total of five distinct marks. Some caution is necessary in analyzing the following graphs--especially in the Amman sample. Signatures do not necessarily mean that the person was literate--nor do stamps mean a person was illiterate. Stamps, in fact, were generally issued by the authorities to specific people to whom the British and Ottomans tried to outsource local administrative duties. Signatures, in turn, are not necessarily the work of the person whose name is listed on the contract. Rather than engage in the forensic work of determining which signatures were "authentic," I have chosen to use this field as a rough metric of social position vis-à-vis the state.

Those with government stamps were held in the highest esteem and exercised the most power while those with signatures held a more intermediary position. Those who used a thumbprint occupied the lowest status. I first became aware of this association between the use of thumbprints and the loss of dignity when my host refused to have any guest of his 'dirty himself' by providing fingerprints to the local police department (as is required of those hoping to obtain an extended 3-month tourist visa). Surprisingly, I was able to renew my visa five times without ever providing fingerprints to the authorities. Just as I was able to avoid providing my fingerprints because of my privileged status, many in the Amman sample were able to avoid providing fingerprints in similar ways. As far as I can tell, this only holds for the Amman sample.

Color Code for Marks on Contracts:

- Red- Stamp
- Blue- Signature
- Green- Thumbprint

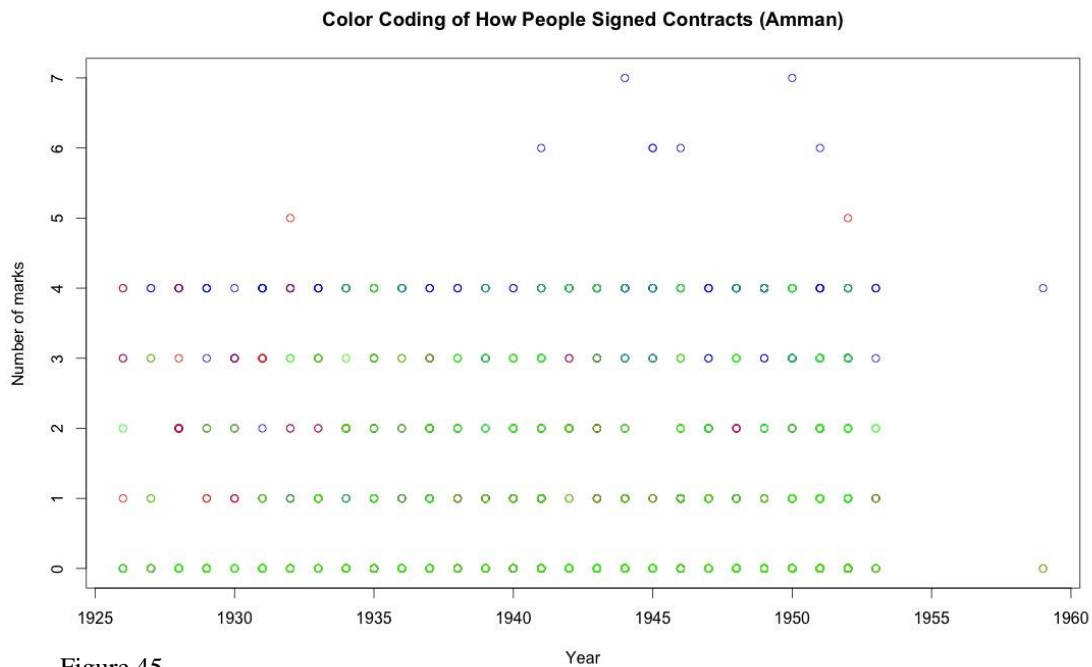


Figure 45

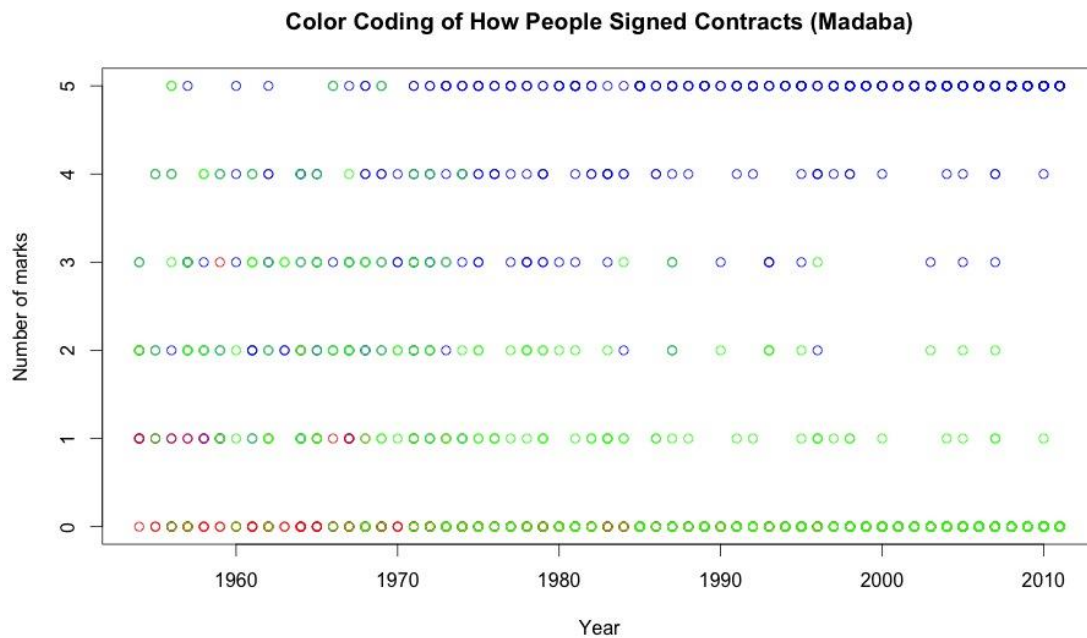
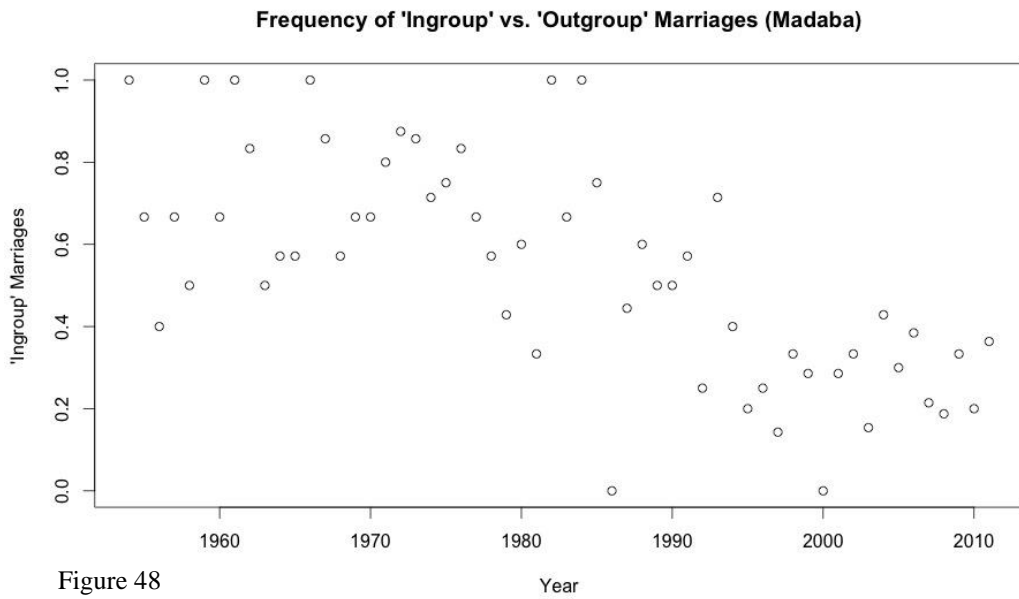
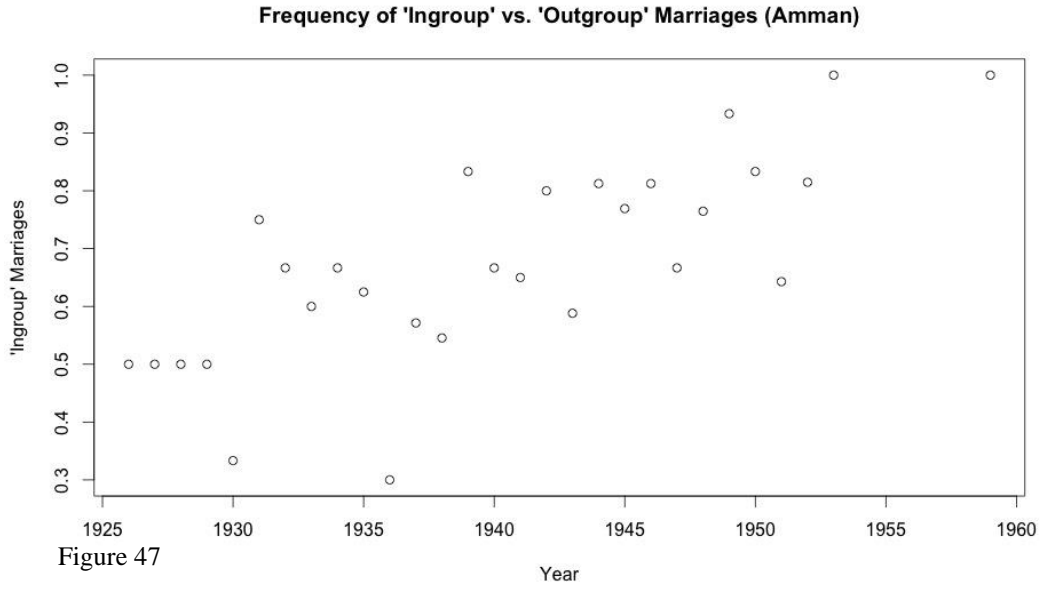


Figure 46

Ingroup/Outgroup

The category of ingroup/outgroup is a synthetic category I have created that must be used with a good deal of caution and caveats. I designed it to get at the issue of "close" marriages. However, these resist simple definition. As explained earlier, Arabic names contain within themselves a record of patrilineal relations so one could compare the names of bride and groom and record whether or not they came from the same tribe. Yet this tells us nothing about possible matrilineal ties. Instead, I opted to compare the places of births for the couple to approximate this variable. The obvious problem is that, with so many people living in specific urban centers, there are likely to be plenty of people in "close" marriages who are not relatives. Here, I have simply chosen to define "close" more in terms of physical proximity than kinship. Yet nonetheless, the category is an imperfect gloss on a complex phenomenon. One sign that it is a robust category, however, is the fact that "close" marriages seem to be becoming less common in the Madaba

sample despite the obvious trend towards urbanization, which could conceivably mask such an effect.



Documentation:

All figures were produced using RStudio and the R programming language. R is an open-source project. Its creators conceive of it as a “data visualization environment.”

R can be downloaded from <http://cran.r-project.org/>

RStudio can be downloaded from www.rstudio.org

Ultimately, all data was stored in four files for manipulation in the R environment:

mdata.csv: A spreadsheet of all of the data from the Madaba courthouse

mcontracts.csv: A spreadsheet of the data from the 25th or 75th contract collected from every-other book of fifty contracts in the Madaba courthouse.

mextras: A spreadsheet of the data from the 25th or 75th contract from *before 1980* collected from the other pre-1980s book of fifty contracts in the Madaba courthouse. This was a response to the way population growth could warp results by biasing the sample towards contemporary contracts. Mainly, this data is used to increase the sample size of early contracts for the purposes of investigating change over time.

archives.csv: A spreadsheet of the sample of the data from the 25th or 75th contract from the Amman courthouse archives at Jordan University.

Figure 11: Distribution of Contracts by Month (Amman)

```
>hist(archives$Month, main="Distribution of Contracts by Month (Amman)", xlab="Month",  
ylab="Frequency")
```

Figure 12: Distribution of Contracts by Month (Madaba)

```
>hist(mcontracts$Month, main="Distribution of Contracts by Month (Madaba)", xlab="Month",  
ylab="Frequency")
```

Figure 13: Distribution of Contracts by Year (Amman)

```
>hist(archives$Year, main="Distribution of Contracts by Year (Amman)", xlab="Year",  
ylab="Frequency")
```

Figure 14: Distribution of Contracts by Year (Madaba)

```
>hist(mcontracts$Year, main="Distribution of Contracts by Year (Madaba)", xlab="Year",
ylab="Frequency")
```

Figure 15: Where Contracts Happened (Madaba)

```
> p <- tapply(mcontracts$Courthouse, mcontracts$Place.of.Contract, length)
> psort <- sort(p, decreasing =FALSE)
> dotchart(psort, labels=row.names(psort),cex=.5, main="Where Contracts Happened
(Madaba)")
```

Figure 16: The Increasing Use of the Courthouse for Marital rituals

```
year <- c(mdata$Year)
court <- ifelse(mdata$Place.of.Contract=="Courthouse", "Court", "Not Court")
courthouse <- cbind(year,court)
court_sort <- courthouse[order(courthouse[,1]),]
court_sort1 <- unique(unlist(court_sort[,1]))
court_frame <- cbind(court_sort1, matrix(0,58,2))
for(i in 1:58)
+ {court_year <- court_frame[i,1]
  indx = which(court_sort[,1]==court_year)
  court_frame[i,2] <- sum(I(court_sort[indx,2]=="Court"))
  court_frame[i,3] <- sum(I(court_sort[indx,2]=="Not Court"))}
court_frame1 <- apply(court_frame, 2, as.numeric)
court_ratio <- court_frame1[,2]/(court_frame1[,2]+court_frame1[,3])
plot(court_frame1[,1], court_ratio, main="The Increasing Use of the Courthouse for Marital
Rituals", xlab="Year", ylab="Frequency of Courthouse Contracts")
```

Figure 17: A Ranking of the Most Prolific Contract-Writers (Amman)

```
> Ma.thoon_freq <- tapply(archives$Courthouse, archives$Ma.thoon, length)
> Ma.thoon_sort <- sort(Ma.thoon_freq, decreasing =FALSE)
> dotchart(Ma.thoon_sort,labels=row.names(Ma.thoon_sort),main="A Ranking of the Most
Prolific Contract-Writers (Amman)", cex=.5)
```

Figure 18: A Ranking of the Most Prolific Contract-Writers (Amman)

```
> Ma.thoon_freq <- tapply(mcontracts $Courthouse, mcontracts$Ma.thoon, length)
> Ma.thoon_sort <- sort(Ma.thoon_freq, decreasing =FALSE)
> dotchart(Ma.thoon_sort,labels=row.names(Ma.thoon_sort),main="A Ranking of the Most
Prolific Contract-Writers (Madaba)", cex=.5)
```

Figure 19: The Distribution of Grooms by Age (Amman)

```
> hist(archives$G.Age, main="The Distribution of Grooms by Age (Amman)", xlab="Age")
```

Figure 20: The Distribution of Grooms by Age (Amman)

```
> hist(mcontracts$G.Age, main="The Distribution of Grooms by Age (Amman)", xlab="Age")
```

Figure 21: The Distribution of Brides by Age (Amman)

```
> hist(archives$B.Age, main="The Distribution of Brides by Age (Amman)", xlab="Age")
```

Figure 22: The Distribution of Brides by Age (Madaba)

```
> hist(mcontracts$B.Age, main="The Distribution of Brides by Age (Madaba)", xlab="Age")
```

Figure 23: Median Age of Marriage for Women (Amman)

```
> bcount_by_year <- with(archives, split(B.Age, Year))
> bmedian_by_year <- sapply(bcount_by_year, median, na.rm=TRUE)
> fix(bmedian_by_year)
> b_age_median <- c(18, 25, 19, 22, 22, 20, 20, 19, 21.5, 20, 18, 22.5, 18, 18.5, 18.5, 18, 18, 18,
17.5, 18, 18.5, 19, 18, 20, 18, 18, 19, 24.5, 20)
> years <- c(1926:1953,1959)
plot(years, b_age_median, main="Median Age of Marriage for Women (Amman)", xlab="Year",
ylab="Median Age")
> regression<- lm(b_age_median~years)
> abline(regression)
```

Figure 24: Median Age of Marriage for Men (Amman)

```
> gcount_by_year <- with(Archives, split(B.Age, Year))
> gmedian_by_year <- sapply(gcount_by_year, median, na.rm=TRUE)
> fix(gmedian_by_year)
> g_age_median <- c(25, 25, 25, 20, 25, 25, 27.5, 29, 25, 30, 27, 25, 30, 25, 25, 25, 25, 22, 25,
22, 30, 25, 21, 26, 25, 25, 25, 23.5, 30)
> years <- c(1926:1953,1959)
plot(years, g_age_median, main="Median Age of Marriage for Women (Amman)", xlab="Year",
ylab="Median Age")
> regression<- lm(g_age_median~years)
```



```
> abline(regression)
```

Figure 25: Median Age of Marriage for Women (Madaba)

```
> bcount_by_year <- with(mdata, split(B.Age, Year))
> bmedian_by_year <- sapply(bcount_by_year, median, na.rm=TRUE)
> fix(bmedian_by_year)
> b_age_median <- c(17.5, 17, 18, 17, 15.5, 16.5, 16, 16, 18, 18.5, 18, 18, 17, 18, 17, 17, 17, 17,
16.5, 18, 16, 16.5, 16, 17.5, 18, 21, 27, 17, 19, 18.5, 21.5, 19, 24, 19, 19, 22, 20.5, 21, 18.5, 20,
16, 20, 20, 22, 20, 23, 22, 22, 22, 24, 21.5, 21.5, 20, 22.5, 22, 27.5, 22.5, 21)
> years <- c(1954:2011)
> plot(years, b_age_median, main="Median Age of Marriage for Women (Madaba)",
xlab="Year", ylab="Median Age")
> regression<- lm(b_age_median~years)
> abline(regression)
```

Figure 26: Median Age of Marriage for Men (Madaba)

```
> gcount_by_year <- with(mdata, split(G.Age, Year))
> gmedian_by_year <- sapply(gcount_by_year, median, na.rm=TRUE)
> fix(gmedian_by_year)
> g_age_median <- c(29, 21, 25, 20, 31.5, 22.5, 20, 25, 23, 21, 22, 25, 25, 22, 23, 25, 20, 21.5,
24.5, 22, 20, 21.5, 23, 25, 23, 25, 36, 24, 24, 26, 25.5, 22.5, 25, 24, 25, 22.5, 22.5, 23, 25.5, 23,
26, 25.5, 23.5, 31, 25, 26, 29.5, 32, 28, 31, 26, 30.5, 22, 25.5, 30.5, 27.5, 29, 29)
> years <- c(1954:2011)
> plot(years, g_age_median, main="Median Age of Marriage for Men (Madaba)", xlab="Year",
ylab="Median Age")
> regression<- lm(g_age_median~years)
> abline(regression)
```

Figure 27: The Stability of Brides

```
> year <- c(mdata$Year)
> btrans <- c(mdata$B.Transience)
> btmatrix <- cbind(year,btrans)
> bt_sort <- btmatrix[order(btmatrix[,1]),]
> bt_sort1 <- unique(unlist(bt_sort[,1]))
> bt_frame <- cbind(bt_sort1, matrix(0,58,2))
> for(i in 1:58)
  {bt_year <- bt_frame[i,1]
  indx = which(bt_sort[,1]==bt_year)
```

```

    bt_frame[i,2] <- sum(I(bt_sort[indx,2]==1))
    bt_frame[i,3] <- sum(I(bt_sort[indx,2]==2))}
>bt_ratio <- bt_frame[,2]/(bt_frame[,2]+bt_frame[,3])
>plot(bt_frame[,1], bt_ratio, main="The Stability of Brides", xlab="Year", ylab="Frequency of
'Stable' Brides")

```

Figure 28: The Stability of Grooms

```

>year <- c(mdata$Year)
>gtrans <- c(mdata$G.Transience)
>gtmatrix <- cbind(year,gtrans)
>gt_sort <- gtmatrix[order(gtmatrix[,1]),]
>gt_sort1 <- unique(unlist(gt_sort[,1]))
>gt_frame <- cbind(gt_sort1, matrix(0,58,2))
>for(i in 1:58)
  {gt_year <- gt_frame[i,1]
   indx = which(gt_sort[,1]==gt_year)
   gt_frame[i,2] <- sum(I(gt_sort[indx,2]==1))
   gt_frame[i,3] <- sum(I(gt_sort[indx,2]==2))}
>gt_ratio <- gt_frame[,2]/(gt_frame[,2]+gt_frame[,3])
>plot(gt_frame[,1], gt_ratio, main="The Stability of Grooms", xlab="Year", ylab="Frequency of
'Stable' Grooms")

```

Figure 29: The Social Status of Grooms (Amman)

```

>gstatus <- tapply(archives$Courthouse, archives$G.Soc..Status, length)
>gstatus_sort <- sort(gstatus, decreasing =FALSE)
>dotchart(gstatus_sort,labels=row.names(gstatus_sort),main="The Social Status of Grooms
(Amman)", cex=.5)

```

Figure 30: The Social Status of Brides (Amman)

```

>bstatus <- tapply(archives$Courthouse, archives$B.Soc..Status, length)
>bstatus_sort <- sort(bstatus, decreasing =FALSE)
>dotchart(bstatus_sort,labels=row.names(bstatus_sort),main="The Social Status of Brides
(Amman)", cex=.5)

```

Figure 31: The Social Status of Grooms (Madaba)

```

>gstatus <- tapply(mcontracts$Courthouse, mcontracts$G.Soc..Status, length)
>gstatus_sort <- sort(gstatus, decreasing =FALSE)

```

```
>dotchart(gstatus_sort,labels=row.names(gstatus_sort),main="The Social Status of Grooms (Madaba)", cex=.5)
```

Figure 32: The Social Status of Brides (Madaba)

```
>bstatus <- tapply(mcontracts$Courthouse, mcontracts$B.Soc..Status, length)
>bstatus_sort <- sort(bstatus, decreasing =FALSE)
>dotchart(bstatus_sort,labels=row.names(bstatus_sort),main="The Social Status of Brides (Madaba)", cex=.5)
```

Figure 33: The Prevalence of Previously Married Women (Amman)

```
>year <- c(archives$Year)
>virginity <- ifelse(archives$B.Soc..Status=="Virgin", "Virgin", "Not Virgin")
>bss <- cbind(year,virginity)
>bss_sort <- bss[order(bss[,1]),]
>bss_sort1 <- unique(unlist(bss_sort[,1]))
>bss_frame <- cbind(bss_sort1, matrix(0,29,2))
>for(i in 1:29)
+ {bss_year <- bss_frame[i,1]
  indx = which(bss_sort[,1]==bss_year)
  bss_frame[i,2] <- sum(I(bss_sort[indx,2]=="Not Virgin"))
  bss_frame[i,3] <- sum(I(bss_sort[indx,2]=="Virgin"))}
>bss_frame1 <- apply(bss_frame, 2, as.numeric)
>bss_ratio <- bss_frame1[,2]/(bss_frame1[,2]+bss_frame1[,3])
>plot(bss_frame1[,1], bss_ratio, main="The Prevalence of Previously Married Women (Amman)", xlab="Year", ylab="Frequency of Previously Married Women")
```

Figure 34: Bridewealth Word Count (Amman)

```
>plot(archives$Year, archives$Bridewealth.Word.Count, main="Bridewealth Word Count (Amman)", xlab="Year", ylab="Word Count")
```

Figure 35: Bridewealth Word Count (Madaba)

```
> plot(mdata$Year, mdata$Bridewealth.Word.Count, main="Bridewealth Word Count (Madaba)", xlab="Year", ylab="Word Count")
```

Figure 36: Amount of Bridewealth Received

```
> plot(archives$Year, archives$Paid, main="Ammount of Bridewealth Received", xlab="Year",
ylab="Received (regardless of currency)")
```

Figure 37: Color Coding of Upfront Bridewealth by Currency (Amman)

```
>plot(archives$Year, archives$Palestinian.Lira, xlab="Year", ylab="Bridewealth in Cash",
main="Color Coding of Upfront Bridewealth by Currency (Amman)", col="Blue")
>points(archives$Year, archives$Palestinian.Guinea, xlab="Year", ylab="Bridewealth in Cash",
col="Red")
>points(archives$Year, archives$Ottoman.Lira, xlab="Year", ylab="Bridewealth in Cash",
col="Green")
>points(archives$Year, archives$Gol..Ottoman.Lira, xlab="Year", ylab="Bridewealth in Cash",
col="Yellow")
>points(archives$Year, archives$Dinar, xlab="Year", ylab="Bridewealth in Cash", col="Violet")
```

Figure 38: Color Coding of Delayed Bridewealth by Currency (Amman)

```
>plot(archives$Year, archives$Mojil.PL, xlab="Year", ylab="Bridewealth in Cash",
main="Color Coding of Delayed Bridewealth by Currency (Amman)", col="Blue")
>points(archives$Year, archives$Mojil.PG, xlab="Year", ylab="Bridewealth in Cash",
col="Red")
>points(archives$Year, archives$Mojil.OL, xlab="Year", ylab="Bridewealth in Cash",
col="Green")
>points(archives$Year, archives$Mojil.OG, xlab="Year", ylab="Bridewealth in Cash",
col="Yellow")
>points(archives$Year, archives$Mojil.JD, xlab="Year", ylab="Bridewealth in Cash",
col="Violet")
```

Figure 39: According to the Contracts, who Received the Upfront Bridewealth Payment?

```
> receiver <- sort(tapply(archives$Courthouse, archives$Received.by, length), decreasing
=FALSE)
> dotchart(receiver, labels=row.names(receiver),cex=.5, main="According to the Contracts, who
Received the Upfront Bridewealth Payment?")
```

Figure 40: Color Coding of Upfront Bridewealth by Type (Madaba)

```
>plot(mdata$Year, mdata$Dinar, xlab="Year", ylab="Bridewealth in Dinar", main="Color
Coding of Upfront Bridewealth by Type (Madaba)", col="Red")
>points(mdata$Year, mdata$Gold, col="Orange")
>points(mdata$Year, mdata$Furniture, col="Green")
```

```

>points(mdata$Year, mdata$Clothes, col="Blue")
>points(mdata$Year, mdata$Jewelry, col="Indigo")
>points(mdata$year, mdata$Bedroom, col="Violet")

```

Figure 41: Delayed Bridewealth Payment

```

>plot(mdata$Year, mdata$Mojil, xlab="Year", ylab="Bridewealth in Dinar", main="Delayed
Bridewealth Payments (Madaba)")

```

Figure 42: Who Served as Agents for Women?

```

> b_agent <- sort(tapply(archives$Courthouse, archives$Bride.s.Agent, length), decreasing
=FALSE)
> dotchart(b_agent, labels=row.names(b_agent),cex=.5, main="Who Served as Agents for
Women?")

```

Figure 43: Who Served as Agents for Men?

```

> g_agent <- sort(tapply(Groom.s.Agent, length), decreasing =FALSE)
> dotchart(g_agent, labels=row.names(g_agent),cex=.5, main="Who Served as Agents for
Men?")

```

Figure 44: Who Agreed or Granted Permission? (Madaba)

```

> agent <- tapply(mcontracts$Courthouse, mcontracts$Father.s.Permission,length)
> agent_sort <- sort(agent, decreasing =FALSE)
> dotchart(agent_sort, labels=row.names(agent_sort), main="Who Agreed or Granted
Permission? (Madaba)")

```

Figure 45: Color Coding of How People Signed Contracts (Amman)

```

>plot(archives$Year, archives$Signatures, xlab="Year", ylab="Number of marks", main="Color
Coding of How People Signed Contracts (Amman)", col="Blue")
>points(archives$Year, archives$Stamps, xlab="Year", ylab="Number of marks", col="red")
>points(archives$Year, archives$Fingerprints, xlab="Year", ylab="Number of marks",
col="Green")

```

Figure 46: Color Coding of How People Signed Contracts (Madaba)

```

>plot(mdata$Year, mdata$Signatures, xlab="Year", ylab="Number of marks", main="Color
Coding of How People Signed Contracts (Madaba)", col="Blue")

```

```
>points(mdata$Year, mdata$Stamps, xlab="Year", ylab="Number of marks", col="red")
>points(mdata$Year, mdata$Fingerprints, xlab="Year", ylab="Number of marks", col="Green")
```

Figure 47: Frequency of 'Ingroup' vs. 'Outgroup' Marriages (Amman)

```
> year <- c(archives$Year)
> io <- c(archives $Ingroup.Outgroup)
> iomatrix <- cbind(year,io)
> io_sort <- iomatrix[order(iomatrix[,1]),]
> io_sort1 <- unique(unlist(io_sort[,1]))
> io_frame <- cbind(io_sort1, matrix(0,29,2))
> for(i in 1:58)
  {io_year <- io_frame[i,1]
  indx = which(io_sort[,1]==io_year)
  io_frame[i,2] <- sum(I(io_sort[indx,2]==1))
  io_frame[i,3] <- sum(I(io_sort[indx,2]==2))}
io_ratio <- io_frame[,2]/(io_frame[,2]+io_frame[,3])
plot(io_frame[,1], io_ratio, main="Frequency of 'Ingroup' vs. 'Outgroup' Marriages (Amman)",
xlab="Year", ylab="Ingroup Marriages")
```

Figure 48: Frequency of 'Ingroup' vs. 'Outgroup' Marriages (Madaba)

```
> year <- c(mdata$Year)
> io <- c(mdata$Ingroup.Outgroup)
> iomatrix <- cbind(year,io)
> io_sort <- iomatrix[order(iomatrix[,1]),]
> io_sort1 <- unique(unlist(io_sort[,1]))
> io_frame <- cbind(io_sort1, matrix(0,58,2))
> for(i in 1:58)
  {io_year <- io_frame[i,1]
  indx = which(io_sort[,1]==io_year)
  io_frame[i,2] <- sum(I(io_sort[indx,2]==1))
  io_frame[i,3] <- sum(I(io_sort[indx,2]==2))}
> io_ratio <- io_frame[,2]/(io_frame[,2]+io_frame[,3])
> plot(io_frame[,1], io_ratio, main="Frequency of 'Ingroup' vs. 'Outgroup' Marriages (Madaba)",
xlab="Year", ylab="Ingroup Marriages")
```

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