A Death Revisited: Solidarity and Dissonance in a Muslim-Christian Palestinian Community

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Many observers of - as well as many participants in - the first Palestinian *intifada* (literally 'shaking off') saw the harbingers of a new Middle East in the radical forms of social and political organization thrown up by West Bank and Gazan Palestinians against the continuation of Israeli dominion over their homeland . Edward Said saw the disappearance of social fragmentation, the marginalization of old forms of social organizations, and the elevation of women in the struggle to roles equivalent to those of men as "momentous changes ... [which will] surely have an effect throughout the Middle East as the twentieth century approaches its end" (Said 1989: 21). Such enthusiasm, however, began to erode as the *intifada* changed character in its latter years and after the *intifada* was called off following the secret Oslo Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. Glenn Robinson's *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, written in 1995, expresses in its title the frustration felt by many as the Palestine National Authority began to consolidate its rule and halt that early radicalism's already faltering momentum. By 1998 Lisa Taraki was noting that despite the radical reworkings of Palestinian society effected by widespread communal mobilization against the occupation the changes were not irreversible: "Traditional forces may assert or reassert themselves in different times and different forms....there are some indications that there may be a revival of the hamula [clan or extended family][1] structure in the areas of social support and political life" (Taraki 1998: n.p.). This paper gives particular attention to 'the revival of the hamula structure' in the dynamics of everyday life in the period between the first and second *intifada*s, and attempts to show how political decisions on the national and international level shaped and constrained local political decisions so as to defeat moves

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towards using radical *intifada*-period means of envisaging community and dealing with conflict. In stressing that the ascendency of traditional forces in community life was - and continues to be - deeply contested, I seek to show the local community as an active, deeply political arena for assessing situations and engendering solutions and suggest that there is nothing inherently stable about the current hegemony of the 'traditional'. To once again cite Taraki's assessment of the state of contemporary Palestinian society, the "hegemony [of traditional forces] over political life is not a matter that has been settled, even in the short term" (Taraki 1998: n.p.).

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The sheer brutality of the events remains. Sometime between eight and nine p.m. on the 23rd of March, 1981, Basem Rishmawi left his fiancee's home in the West Bank town of Beit Sahour to walk the short distance to his family's house. He never arrived. Five days later a late night call from the Bethlehem offices of the Israeli military police announced to his family that Basem's body had been found on the 25th in the vicinity of the town dump. According to the Shin Bet officer who called a military investigation had revealed that Rishmawi had been killed while preparing a bomb which had exploded prematurely. He announced that the body would be delivered that night to the Greek Orthodox church for interment. Soldiers, arriving before the body, allowed only around a dozen people - immediate family members and a priest - into the church and it was these who were able to briefly examine the corpse when it was delivered at approximately 1:30 a.m. on the 29th. It was immediately clear that there was something wrong with the officer's story; although the body had been dismembered by an explosion, there seemed to be no connection between the damage that force had caused and other wounds such as heavy bruising on the face, multiple penetration wounds, and deep

gouging - seemingly caused by brutally tight binding - on the wrists. As the mourners whispered amongst themselves that it appeared as though a bomb had been set off in or next to the body after death, armed soldiers watched over the brief funeral and the subsequent entombment in the family plot.

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I first encountered Basem's name and image in January 1990 after members of one of the town's numerous *intifada* 'committees' had smuggled me into the town past roadblocks erected by the military authorities to enforce a siege imposed in response to Beit Sahour's protracted maintenance of a tax strike[2]. Hung in a place of honour on the wall of the reception room of a house my 'guides' had brought me to was a picture of a solemn-looking young man. When I asked about it, I was told the story of Basem's killing, and it was made clear that - although no one knew whether he had been killed by Jewish settlers or by Israeli soldiers - he was an arbitrarily-chosen victim of Israeli oppression of Palestinians: "it could have happened to anybody, and by chance the victim was Basem"[3].

I would come across Basem's picture again and again in the following days as I interviewed people whose houses and shops had been stripped by squads of soldiers led by tax collectors, whose husbands, fathers, sons or daughters had been imprisoned or were moving from house to house avoiding arrest, and whose will to revolt was fanned by the government's attempts to break a town Jerusalem Palestinians characterised as "tougher than Gaza". During that week informants repeatedly asserted that all Beit Sahourans - and by extension all Palestinians - were rendered the same by the hostile activities of a occupying force which did not distinguish between Muslim or Christian, male or female, young or old, rich or poor. A Christian shopkeeper told me "there is no difference; we are under the same

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conditions, the same oppression, the same hopes, the same policy...the occupation does not differentiate between Muslim and Christian" and later a Muslim schoolteacher said "we live together as the same people; we feel there is another one who is enemy to us both".

Basem - who had apparently been kidnaped, tortured to death, and then dismembered by his Israeli captors so that his remains could bear the brand 'terrorist' - stood as a sort of Palestinian Everyman. He - like other Beit Sahouris before him - had already suffered the martyrdom Palestinians under occupation could see as their fate so long as the logic of the Zionist occupation of Palestine held sway. When a soldier dropped a building block from a guard post on the roof of a three story building onto the head of Edmond Ghanem on the 18th of July 1988, Beit Sahouris saw yet more evidence a systematic programme of extermination mobilised against them and strengthened their resolve to protect themselves by uniting to fight the common enemy. Symptomatic of this collectively espoused resolve was the 1993 calendar published by the Arab Orthodox Club[4] displaying, beneath an image of Beit Sahour with its mosque and Catholic and Orthodox churches, photographs of seventeen Beit Sahouris who shared not their religious affiliation but the fact that they, Muslim and Christian alike, had been martyred (six in 1992) by the forces of occupation.

The idiom of martyrdom became the language of community during the early days of the *intifada*. One man, speaking of hearing of the Gaza killings which had sparked the *intifada*[5], claimed his first thought was "why am I not this man?". He knew Israeli soldiers killed Palestinians simply because they were Palestinians, and as a Palestinian he was sure it was just an accident of time and place that prevented him from being one of the victims: "we see that one day it is one person, and the next day another. The following day it may be us, so we say *hellas* [enough] and begin to work to stop it". The soldier's (or settler's) undifferentiating gaze here creates a defensive 'Palestinian' identity out of a society which, without that antagonism, might not have discerned a unity within the congeries of identities constituted by allegiances to family, class, religion and locale (Bowman 2003: 322-327).

Loss and victimisation at the hands of the collective enemy became, in the context of *intifada*, elements of a prestige economy. As I stood in the midst of scattered clothing, bedding, and broken furniture left behind after a tax raid on the apartment of a couple who ran a small electrical goods shop, the woman told me that "the people who have not had their

things confiscated by the tax men are envious of those who have; it's like building a new house". In this *potlatch*-like counter-economy

[insert note: . Potlatch designates a competitive system of gift exchange practiced amongst north-west coastal American Indians in the course of which lavish gifts were often destroyed in the pursuit of prestige (see Mauss 1969: 31-45).]

status accrued to those who 'gave freely' (and aggressively) to the enemy (Mauss 1969: 31-45), and 'new houses' - stripped and desecrated by predatory military assaults - took the place of the tidy apartments and small houses of the pre-*intifada* years. Over the previous twenty years Beit Sahour had extensively developed an infrastructure of small local industry (much of it finishing clothing for the Israeli market) which had considerably raised the general standard of living above that of other West Bank communities. In 1990, however, people prided themselves in throwing back at the Israelis wealth which had come to seem no more than payment for accepting occupation. Beit Sahourans played a vanguard role in the uprising by refusing to pay taxes to the occupying government and by systematically disengaging from the Israeli economy. The Israeli response was draconian, but a recently-plundered pharmacist told me that "if the bedouin can live in tents, so can we. We have our agriculture and it is very good. The *Jerusalem Post* called us the 'Japan of the Palestine/Israel' but we can lose all that and go back to the fields"[6].

Landscape, history, sectarianism, and social organization were reworked in popular discourses which circulated through and constituted the self-professedly revolutionary community of that period. Parts of the town which had previously been designated by topographic features or by the names of important persons or families who had lived in the area were renamed so as to resonate with the myths of Palestinian resistance. The town's highest sector (previously known as the *ras* or 'head') was renamed 'Shqeef Castle' so as to recall a famed Palestinian victory while other sectors of the town became 'Tell al-Za'ter' and 'Shateela' to evoke militant refugee camps in the Lebanon[7]. When people spoke of local history they accentuated stories of coordinated resistances by the townspeople to earlier oppressions. I collected numerous accounts of Beit Sahour's resistance to the Ottoman draft during the First World War, of Muslims and Christians marching together to the shrine of Nebi Musa to oppose the British Mandate, of an Orthodox priest who cached arms to fight the

British during the 1936-1939 revolt, of Baathist, Nasserite and finally Communist demonstrations against the Jordanian occupation, and of the long history of Beit Sahouran support for the Popular and Democratic Fronts during the period of Israeli hegemony. In these the 'we' of an historic and enduring community was reified and affirmed[8]. Underplayed in - or simply excluded from - these narratives were past clashes with local Bedouin communities (the *ta'amra)*, disputes over land ownership, struggles between classes, feuding between family groups, and the divisive responses of local Christians and Muslims to the differentiating policies of the various colonizing powers which had dominated the town. These stories celebrated Beit Sahour's overcoming of the temptation to divide along the lines provided by the towns persons' various religious affiliations. In 1984 the Beit Sahouri population stood at 8,900 persons of which 17% were Sunni Muslim, 67% were Greek Orthodox, 8% were Roman Catholic, 6% were Greek Catholic, and 2% were Lutheran (Pena 1984)[9]. An Orthodox member of the medical committee which had smuggled me into town (itself made up a Muslim, two Orthodox Christians and one Latin) made the following representative statement:

> It is you outside who try to make a difference between the Christians and the Muslims. We are a people, we all go to each other's feasts, we visit with each other, we live the same life. We are one people.

That intercommunality was evident in public manifestations of solidarity such as the annual joint Christian-Muslim scout marches on Christmas day and the decision of the committees organizing the 'Day of Prayer for Peace' on 5 November 1989 to invite Shaikh Said al-Din al-Alami, Mufti of Jerusalem and head of the Islamic Council, to announce from the pulpit of Beit Sahour's Orthodox Church a *fatwa* (religious ruling) against the purchase of confiscated Sahouri goods Israeli tax officials were putting up for auction in Tel Aviv. It was also marked in the Municipality's decision to erect a non-denominational municipal shrine over the site of recent apparitions of the Virgin Mary (Bowman 1993: 448-451). That shrine's caretaker, an Orthodox man employed by the Municipality, asserted "we are here Muslim and Christian, there are two Christian groups. The Municipality builds for all the people and the people all own and use the well".

During the *intifada* local political activities were organised by thirty five 'neighborhood committees' representing thirty five neighborhoods. The activities of these committees were

coordinated and issues pertaining to the whole of the town were dealt with by the *Sulha*, a parallel municipal authority established in 1989.Previously Beit Sahour's internal political structures had been based on the town's clans. Issues arising within a family or between families were debated in family forums and then forwarded through a clan elder to the Municipal council (constituted of representatives of the eight major families, six of which were Christian and two Muslim). This familial locus ensured that municipal engagement in local issues pertained either to interfamilial or intersectarian disputes. Neighborhood committee membership was, however, decided by local elections which - in a town whose considerable twentieth century expansion had ensured that most neighborhoods were made up of two or more clan groupings - blunted the salience of *hamula* groupings and focused committee discussions on concerns determined by place rather than kin affiliation; health care, security, water, water, electricity, food, income for the families of people killed, injured or imprisoned, *etcetera*. The *Sulha's* executive was elected by representatives of the twenty-two major political, cultural and social organizations in the town and was concerned with issues pertinent to the town's entirety; raising money to support the needy, settling disputes, coordinating responses to *intifada* situations, *etcetera* (Robinson 1997: 80-81). Thus the idiom of identity shifted from one of *hamula* and sect to one of political struggle and nation.

Basem Rishmawi, although he was Greek Orthodox and a member of the al-Qazaha *hamula*, was throughout the years of *intifada* a symbol for Sahouris of what it meant to be a Palestinian under Israeli occupation. His martyrdom was a spectacular instance of what Palestinians learned from Likkud's Sharon and then from Rabin's 'iron fist policy' (with its policy of breaking the bones and bulldozing the houses of stone throwers) was the fate they too could expect if the occupation were to continue. Basem's sad yet severe gaze joined those of other Sahouri martyrs gazing from the secular iconostases of the poster-bedecked streets,

the walls of portrait-dense household reception rooms, and the illustrated calendars (where the dates of martyrs' deaths seemed simultaneous with those of people's presents and futures) over the people of Beit Sahour as they struggled to find ways of celebrating Palestinian identity without following Basem's path to a terrible death in a back road dumping ground.

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Basem's name began to circulate again two years after the Oslo Agreements had brought the *intifada* to a close. In the summer of 1995, soon after Israeli troops withdrew from the Bethlehem region (leaving it under the control of the Palestine National Authority), a Sahouri named Faez Qumsiyyeh was arrested by Palestinian security for non-political criminal activities. Under interrogation Faez confessed to having been involved - along with his cousin Sammer Qumsiyyeh and a local Muslim - in Basem Rishmawi's murder.

For the second time events related to the death of Basem Rishmawi engaged Beit Sahour: one woman told me "it was like he had been killed again, and all the Rishmawis and much of the rest of the town went into mourning". This time, however, the story of his killing did not circulate in the midst of burgeoning nationalist mobilization but instead accompanied a 'winding down' of commitment and solidarity. Since the heady days of the tax strike Beit Sahour's fervor had been substantially diminished by the failure of the Palestine Liberation Organization to bulwark commitment in the face of fiercely punitive measures:

> the PLO in Tunis [had] failed to support Bayt Sahur's [sic] campaign, as it feared
> the political consequences of such grassroots initiatives....[Sahouris felt that]
> Tunis not only did not support Bayt Sahur's efforts but actually tried to thwart
> them by privately urging others to pay their taxes and by more closely aligning
> itself with members of the old elite (Robinson 1997: 88 and 89).

Communal solidarity was unraveling as those who had already lost considerable amounts of

property grew increasingly aggrieved at others who, fearful of finding themselves in similar penury, began covertly to pay their taxes.

After the March 1990 arrests of the remaining committee members of the underground grassroots United National Leadership of the Uprising who had coordinated *intifada* strategy, the leadership of the uprising was directed from outside by various external groups (*Fateh*, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Palestine People's Party) operating semi-autonomously under the PLO umbrella. From then on political activity in Beit Sahour, as elsewhere in the Territories, was coordinated and carried out by competing political factions paid for their activism and remunerated for their losses by the outside organizations. Many argued this took the revolution away from the people and gave it to the politicians who destroyed it: "the *intifada* was made by those on the street and broken as soon as they began 'throwing stones for money'". Tendencies towards fragmentation were aggravated by the Oslo settlement. While this failed to ameliorate day to day deprivations[10], it removed Israeli soldiers from the streets and hid the operations of the Israeli security apparatus behind the proxy Palestinian 'Preventative Security Force'. Everyday evidence of 'another one who is enemy to us both' virtually disappeared, and the collective solidarity with which Beit Sahour had faced its enemy began to dissipate as the focus that antagonist had provided diffused.

To understand the role of the antagonist in the formation - and maintenance - of Palestinian identity one must comprehend the ways in which politicized identities develop out of those forms of identity characteristic of the everyday exchanges of communal life. In the development of Palestinian solidarity, differential aspects of identity - based on religion, class position, *hamula* affiliation, party membership, and even to some degree age and gender - were *subsumed* within an enveloping political and public identity. A contingent political identity came to seem essential, while more ingrained and enduring identities were perceived as secondary or limited in salience. During my fieldwork in Jerusalem's Old City between 1983 and 1985 I observed a discursive shift as Palestinians were forced by increasing hostile attention from soldiers, settlers and tax collectors to recognise that their communality as 'Palestinians' was more salient than the differences religious affiliation opened between them.

People who in the early months of my fieldwork had called themselves 'Palestinian Christians' or 'Palestinian Muslims' pointedly began to reverse the order of the substantive and the adjectival so as to say "I am not a Palestinian Christian; I am a Christian Palestinian "or "I am a Palestinian first, then a Muslim" (Bowman 1986: 5).

Outstanding in such identity transformations is the perceived presence of an antagonist which dissolves the differences between those it threatens. What creates the space of perceived communality are not the routines of everyday life structuring and manifesting systems of difference and orchestrating relations between the variant vertical and horizontal role positionings of age, class, gender, education, appearance, religion, *etcetera* but the presence of an antagonism perceived to threaten all within its purview with either physical extermination or the wholesale extirpation of their differentiated, subsumed identities. Thus, in an example cited by Laclau and Mouffe, "it is because a peasant *cannot be* a peasant that an antagonism exists with the landowner who is expelling him from his land" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 125); without land the practices which make up the *habitus* of a peasant's life are impossible to enact. In such situations the multiplex 'being' the antagonism threatens with impossibility shapes itself into an overarching political identity uniting all those who feel themselves at risk.

Although the threat of death figures centrally in the rhetoric evoking antagonism, it is the danger that communal identity will be destroyed that is more important than actual bodily destruction. The threat Palestinians came to perceive the Israeli state as posing to them was not necessarily the threat of wholesale genocide (although as incidents in the Lebanon showed such genocide was not beyond belief) but what Baruch Kimmerling has recently called 'politicide' (Kimmerling 2003: see also van den Berghe 1990). Thus in the Palestinian instance, as elsewhere (see Pettigrew 1997), the death of the martyr is powerful because it prefigures the potential extermination of the social body for which the martyr's body stands.

Identity formation through antagonism had been evident in Beit Sahour long before the

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outbreak of the first *intifada*. However by the time Faez Qumsiyya confessed to killing Basem Rishmawi consensus on Israel's antagonism was being eroded not only by factionalization but as well by the sense of many that the Palestine National Authority's establishment was the first step of an inexorable progress towards Palestinian statehood. That perception transformed the Israeli state from a force with the disallowal of a Palestinian state and people as its *modus vivendi* to a partner in mutually beneficial contractual relations with a Palestinian entity. 'Palestinian' - when no longer the marker of a domain at risk but instead the collective label of those gathered within the embrace of a territorially defined state - loses its defensive salience, and new articulations of identity, spawned by new perceptions of antagonism operating *within* the Palestinian community rather than *against* that community as a whole, can begin to emerge (see Bowman 1994). It was in such a context that the 'second death' of Basem Rishmawi would be interpreted, and acted upon, in ways very different from those which followed on his 'first death'.

The significant difference between the knowledge which circulated after Basem's 'first death' and that which followed his 'second' is that while the perpetrators of the 'first' were thought to be national 'others' - either soldiers or settlers - those who killed Basem the 'second' time were Sahouris. The devastating implication of that emerges strongly from the response of one informant to my query about the possibility of a revenge killing: "no one in Beit Sahour kills others in Beit Sahour"[11]. The fact that the second killing showed precisely that Beit Sahouris could kill Beit Sahouris not only invalidated that adage but threatened to dissolve the community itself.

The description of Basem's killing which emerged was particularly ugly. As Basem got into a car which had stopped to offer him a ride, he was overcome and bound with wire by Faez Qumsiyyeh, Faez's cousin Sammer, and an unnamed man, a Muslim. The three then

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drove him to a nearby valley where he was subjected to torture motivated not by any desire

for knowledge but by a combination of sheer sadistic pleasure and the fact that Sammer

Qumsiyyeh felt that Basem had once slighted him. Basem was beaten and his face, arms and

body burned with cigarettes. He was cut in his stomach, arms and legs, and chained to the

bumper of the car and dragged along the road. Finally he was stabbed to death. The body was

disposed in valley's rubbish dump as an intentional gesture of degradation and shaming.

It is difficult to discern the source of these details as it seems unlikely that Faez - except

under extreme duress - would have divulged such information. Many attributed the

knowledge to a file alleged to have been left behind when Israeli security abandoned the

Bethlehem police station. This was said to indicate that the three men, under instructions from

Sammer's father, Bishara Qumsiyyeh, had kidnaped and executed Basem because of Basem's

association with *Fateh*. Regardless of whether or not the file existed, no one doubted Bishara

Qumsiyyeh's involvement. Bishara Qumsiyyeh was, throughout the eighties, leader of the

Bethlehem region 'Village League'[12] and commanded an Israeli-armed 'militia' of thugs and

criminals which imposed a reign of terror on Beit Sahour and neighboring sites of nationalist

sentiment such as Bethlehem University. The League was well known for collaboration and

acts of intimidation; in 1987 League members raked the Arab Orthodox Club with gunfire.

One of the great victories of Beit Sahour's *intifada* was the defeat of the Village League; in

March 1988 Bishara Qumsiyyeh was forced to mount the pulpit of the Orthodox church to

confess his collaboration before a capacity crowd and to renounce any further association

with the military government.

Rishmawi's murder fitted the Village League agenda perfectly. Unbeknownst to most at

the time of the 'first death', Basem had, six months before his killing, joined *Fateh* and been

trained, during a putative family visit to Jordan, in Syrian guerilla camps. It is not clear, in

light of this, why Sahouris did not assess the killing as a straightforward (albeit mediated by proxies) act of the Israeli military. Yet despite clear indications that Basem had been executed by agents carrying out an explicit Israeli policy of eliminating PLO operatives in the Occupied Territories, the town took the killing as very much an intra-communal concern.

The town had been given little choice. The Palestinian officials who had overseen Faez's confession refused to try Faez and his accomplices for collaboration and murder, and instead instructed the Rishmawi and Qumsiyyeh families to settle the case between them by *Atwah*, or tribal law. Many Beit Sahouris believe that unpublished agreements behind the Oslo Accords prevented the Palestinian judiciary from prosecuting important collaborators. Bishara had been named in Faez's confession and would have been implicated had a trial been allowed to proceed. As the families involved knew of Faez's confession (he had repeated it to his parents and asked them to arrange reconciliation with Basem's family), the only way to quiet the case and its dangerous ramifications was to hand it over to them, through the medium of tribal law, for extra-judicial settlement.

The problem posed to the town by the case being handled under tribal law, rather than pursued via governmental channels, is that the former refers to collective responsibility whereas the latter deals with individuals. *Atwah* negotiates the payment of blood money in cases of inter-group rivalries so as to effect a reconciliation between two groups forced into hostilities by the actions of individual members[13]. Beit Sahour, however, did not represent itself as constituted by separate groups, and many were aware of the implications of treating the acts of individual agents under the rubric of collective responsibility. Relations within Beit Sahour - particularly amongst the Christian families - were tightly imbricated, and although one could distinguish nominally between distinct *hamulas* (and within each of them between individual *'ailahs*, or constituent extended families) the interrelations between these were formally and informally dense. While any murder in a small town is potentially explosive, the murder of a Rishmawi by a Qumsiyyeh was particularly divisive insofar as both are *'ailahs* of the al-Qazaha *hamula* (to which forty percent of the town's population belongs) and both families are almost exclusively Greek Orthodox (the religious community to which two thirds of the town's population is affiliated). Were extended family loyalties to predominate over wider communal loyalties a wedge would be driven through the midst of one of the town's two major clans and - insofar as intermarriage between members of the two *'ailahs* are not uncommon - nuclear families would be riven. Furthermore, although parallel cousin marriages occur in Beit Sahour, marriages between Christian families often not only cross *hamula* boundaries but also knit together couples (and thus families) across sectarian

divides[14]. People stressed that almost every Christian in the town was related - directly, through ties of god-parenthood, or both - to the Qumsiyyehs and Rishmawis. The children of one of my primary informants (who was of the Al-Jaraysah clan) were god-parented by Rishmawis, while his brother's children were god-parented by Qumsiyyehs. A feud between Rishmawis and Qumsiyyehs would impede, if not block, the operation of a number of kin and patronage networks linking Christian Beit Sahouris across a multitude of fields. The Orthodox community, which currently shares a single church, would risk a split. The Arab Orthodox Club, with representatives of each of these 'ailah in its governing positions, would be seriously disrupted by hostilities and, if it survived, would no longer represent the whole of the (male) community. Finally, the town itself - which has a minority Muslim population yet is sited in a region with a Muslim majority - might be placed at risk if the issue of the third man - who no one would name and many would not even indicate was Muslim - opened hostilities between Muslims and Christians.

As a result, when representatives of the families of Faez and Sammer Qumsiyyeh[15] approached the Rishmawis to request a truce so that negotiations over blood money could be initiated, a number of moves were made by towns persons and community organizations to bridge the gaps prized open by the violence of the events. The elders of other Qumsiyyeh families in the town renounced Faez Qumsiyyeh and reiterated their 1988 rejection of the family of Bishara and Sammer[16]. Although it was generally held to be inconceivable that anyone other than a 'psychopath' would think of taking vengeance on the families, form was followed and the delegations which approached the Rishmawi elders to sue for peace did not include Qumsiyyehs but were made up of spokesmen from other Sahouri families through which the families of the killers had chosen to speak. The guarantors confessed the guilt of their clients and promised that an agreement on blood money payment would be reached. In response elders from the Rishmawi family guaranteed that no revenge would be taken. The Rishmawi response was far from unanimous. The Rishmawi 'ailah is large, and in the crowded maglis[17] in which the representatives of its many households gathered discussion went on far into the night over how the case would be handled. The divide lay between two camps. One, which contained many intifada activists, argued that the killing was a political act carried out against 'the nation'. Negotiations should therefore be handled by a committee made up of representatives of the political parties active in the town. The other camp was made up of two groups with distinct agendas which could be met by threating the matter as a family affair. The larger was concerned to ensure that Basem's family got the greatest possible settlement out of the negotiations. Basem, his parents's eldest son, would have been their chief support, and the family - since his death - had been impovershed by his father's subsequent stroke. This group was concerned that while a settlement between the Qumsiyyehs and a bloc made up of the national parties would serve to 'build bridges' and reduce the threat of factionalization, it would result in only a nominal payment to Basem's family of blood money, leaving them little better off than at present. The other party was that of the traditionalists, and although their 'anti-national' stance was neither popular nor powerful it was held by several old men who felt their authority had been eroded through the years of popular mobilization[18]. They wanted things done 'properly', and were anxious to prevent yet another 'coup' by the political forces they felt had usurped power which belonged to the community's traditional leadership.

As it was, this latter group 'settled' the issue by taking it out of the hands of the family.

After a night of unresolved argument, some of its members drove to the neighboring Bedouin village of Ta'amra where they told its elders, who traditionally would have served as *qudaa* (judges), that the national bloc within the Rishmawi family had insulted them. The Ta'amri demanded an apology, implying that without one they would not be available as *qudaa* for Beit Sahour in the future. When the representatives of the national grouping heard this they walked out of the negotiations in disgust.

These events made it impossible to deal with the case directly in national political terms. Nonetheless, despite the translation of the terms of the dispute into the traditional familial idiom, the community - including all Qumsiyyehs not in Faez and Sammer's immediate families - remained in fervent opposition to those implicated in the killing. Over the next several days men representing various non-familial collectivities in the town (the Orthodox Club, the political parties, the churches, the unions, the scout groupings, and so on) met with Rishmawi family elders to familiarize them with the implications of the case for their groups, for the town, and for the national cause in general.

Anxiety escalated as the conditions for the *sulha* (reconciliation ceremony) were discussed because of fear that the amount of blood money the Rishmawis would demand might prove so high that the Qumsiyyehs would refuse to pay, thereby breaking the truce and initiating feud. *Atwah* is not a coercive system backed by state power but a system of reconciliation grounded on the assumption that those who embrace it consider continued sociality to be more important than the occasional expenses accrued in maintaining it. Traditionally blood money payments ensure peaceful relations between groups placed in a state of potential war. They disarm the warring groups by establishing commensality between them, binding them with formal ties of obligation through the arrangement of a number of deferred payments which, is is hoped, will in time be replaced by less onerous ties of

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friendship and even marriage (see Peters 1990: 64-65 and 170). In this instance the severity of

the crime was exacerbated by the extremely long delay between the crime's commitment and

the approach of the delegates of the Qumsiyyeh families to the Rishmawi *maglis*. While the

calculated infliction of pain and humiliation rendered the crime more heinous than either an

undeliberated act of passion or, as is often the case behind blood money negotiations, a

simple accident[19], the long delay between when the murder was carried out and when its

perpetrators confessed (or, as many suspected, were forced to confess) suggested that the

perpetrators' commitment to peace with the Rishmawis was at best pragmatic. It was clear

that the spirit of desired reconciliation which should accompany *atwah* was absent, and many

feared that the Rishmawis would respond with what would in effect be a compensatory act of

violence by demanding full compensation for the loss and dishonoring.

On the night of the *sulha*, the "whole town" gathered in the hall of the Greek Catholic
convent because "everyone - even [other members of the Qumsiyyeh] family - had suffered
badly under the league" and all were concerned about how the affair would be resolved. The
meeting was convened under the jurisdiction of a noted *sheikh* from Hebron, a major
Palestinian city twenty miles to the south, who had been chosen to act as *qaadi* (judge) by the
Rishmawis with the agreement of the representatives of the Qumsiyyehs[20]. The size of the
meeting, its public character, and the prestige of its arbitrator were all unusual, as was the
character of the negotiations. Usually arbitration was simple, quickly effected, and, finally,
convivial:

normally, even when a person was killed, the killer's representatives would go to

the family of the person killed, apologise profoundly (how can you refuse when the

old men are humbling themselves and the entire family is putting itself in your

debt?...) and then work ritually through 'we need a million shekels', then 'and here

is 100,000 for Mohammed and 100,000 for Jesus' until there was nothing to be

paid. This is about good will and needs to be done within at most three days (see

also Granqvist 1965: 122-123 and Haddad 1920: 107).

Here, however, good will was lacking. The Rishmawi family made an initial demand which,

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while high, would have allowed a series of reductions to a price which could easily be paid, even by Faez's family which - unlike Sammer's - was not well off. In response, however, the representative of Faez's family and that of Sammer and Bishara made a counter offer which was ludicrously low for intentional murder (*i.e.*, 9000 Jordanian dinars or $12,750). This hostile bargaining breached convention and threatened negotiations with. After interventions by the extra-familial spokespersons an agreement was finally reached (and approved by the *qaadi*) that each Qumsiyyeh family would each pay 20,000 Jordanian dinars[21] as a first payment with subsequent payments adding up to no more than 18,000 dinars each. Faez's negotiators spoke with his father and returned to announce his agreement. Those who spoke for Sammer left the hall to relay to Bishara the *qaadi's* decision and returned a few minutes later to announce that Bishara claimed Sammer had been beaten into confessing, that he'd not been involved, and that the family would pay nothing.

The response was immediate collective outrage. Bishara's initial representatives as well as the negotiators he appointed had repeatedly admitted that the family accepted Sammer's guilt and its own responsibility for making blood payments. The last moment renunciation broke the truce, and while some said the *qaadi* announced that any Rishmawi had the right to kill any of the males of Bishara's immediate family others claimed there was no need to announce it since everyone knew it. *En masse* the crowd - including other Qumsiyyehs - broke from the church hall and headed for Bishara's house to burn it down. A neighbor who worked for the Palestinian security forces knew that women were living in the house and, fearing they might be killed, hid in a field in front of the house and fired his machine gun in the air. The crowd - assuming Bishara and armed supporters were in the house - dispersed while PNA forces came in to clear the house and establish order.

For the next couple of weeks an uneasy peace reigned. Arrangements had been reached

with the father of Faez Qumsiyyeh, and although he was unhappy at having to sell land to pay

blood money there was no feud between his family and the Rishmawis. Bishara, from within

Israel, 'sold' his house to his son-in-law the so as to protect it from feud vengeance. Sammer,

though safe in prison was, like his father, liable to be killed by any Rishmawi that saw him[22].

No one spoke of the third man other than to say he was safe in a collaborators' village in

Israel. Most, if not all, of the 20,000 dinars was given to the parents of Basem.

Two weeks later Faez died in prison. The official PNA version was that he died of
natural causes, but Beit Sahouris believed that Bishara had had him killed to lift the onus
from his son and, indirectly, from himself[23]. Faez's father claimed, regardless of who had
killed Faez - and he implied it was a Rishmawi, that Faez's death satisfied the principle of
'blood for blood' - a death had been followed by a death. He demanded, even before Faez's
funeral, that the Rishmawis return his 20,000 dinars.

The Rishmawi response was furious. The negotiations in the church hall had left them

substantially slighted, not only by the initial Qumsiyyeh offer of 9,000 dinars and the

violation of ritual that offer effected but also by the relatively small settlement agreed. Faez's

father's demand that the blood money be returned came across as more violence against the

concept of community underlying both *atwah* and Beit Sahour: "the point of blood money is

not about the cost of a crime (for instance the medical care of a victim) but about making a

statement of apology and reconciliation. Faez's family's demand for the money is an

obscenity". This event was, for some Rishmawis, the last in a series of provocations directed

towards their family by the Qumsiyyehs and they increasingly voiced the opinion that the

killing and the events which followed were neither political nor criminal but antagonistic

expressions of one 'lineage' towards another.

One impediment to feud, however, was the presence of a substantial number of

Qumsiyyehs in the bloc mobilized against Sammer, Bishara and Faez. Qumsiyyehs had been

as much persecuted by the activities of the Village League as other Beit Sahouris, and one

informant told me that Bishara - in the heyday of his powers - had made a particular point of refusing favors to kin to show that he was beholden to no one. For the identity politics of the situation to move fully into the idiom of family and lineage such situationally-drawn delineations had to be effaced, and this erasure was effected during Faez's funeral by a Rishmawi who photographed the Qumsiyyehs who attended and then circulated the 'incriminating' photographs amongst the Rishmawis. According to the photographer, and those who took him seriously, the presence at Faez's funeral of a large percentage of the town's Qumsiyyehs was testimony to the fact that they were loyal to Faez despite having escaped responsibility for the murder by renouncing him. The photographer's charges seemed to be given even greater credence by the fact that those Qumsiyyehs who had been ostentatiously photographed leaving Faez's funeral were understandably nervous about attending the funeral two days later of an elderly Rishmawi[24]. Claims were made that Qumsiyyehs had chosen to attend the funeral of a killer of Rishmawis rather than to offer condolences to the Rishmawis for the loss of one of their family.

Despite the fact that not all Rishmawis and Qumsiyyehs accepted their allocated places in the newly polarized social terrain, the charge served to constitute two antagonistic camps made up respectively of all Rishmawis and all Qumsiyyehs. Those Rishmawis who felt that family honor had suffered in the course of the *Sulha* and what ensued were able, through mobilizing a rhetoric of hostility to 'those' who had humiliated them, to reassert the strength and honor of the Rishmawis (see Stirling 1960 for an analogous case). The members of Faez's immediate family, who resented being left to carry the financial burden of paying off the Rishmawis, in turn found it in their interest to implicate other Qumsiyyehs in the burgeoning feud so that the money Faez's father had been forced to pay would be returned as a consequence either of a strong bloc of kin support consolidating behind him or because an

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eventual outbreak of feud violence would abrogate the terms of the settlement.

Between 1995 and 1999 violence broke out at several points between Rishmawi and Qumsiyyeh youths, and while careful counsel has prevented these eruptions of underlying hostilities from developing into more extensive feuding nothing was resolved. Faez's father continued to demand his 20,000 dinars back while the Rishmawi elders continued to assert not only that that demand is a violation of the *Sulha* agreement but also that the failure of Faez's family to make the final payment (*teyba*) programmed into the agreement means that the reconciliation process has broken down. Things rested, in effect, in abeyance, and although no substantial violence between Qumsiyyehs and Rishmawis broke out, causing the suspended antagonisms to coalesce into open feud neither had any move by nationalist or trans-familial forces in the town succeeded in breaking the deadlock and restoring commensality between those involved.

* * * * *

Throughout my research into the way Beit Sahouris negotiated the dilemmas thrown up by the murder of Basem Rishmawi, none of my informants would tell me the name of the 'third man' implicated in the killing. It is not that people didn't know who he was, or where he had lived, or where he was at present; it was just that people didn't want to talk about him. The 'third man' was beyond the bounds of the story, and his family had not been called to account in the course of the *sulha* negotiations. People would say he wasn't important either because he had lived outside of Beit Sahour or because he had disappeared and couldn't be tried for the crime. Others would however let slip in passing that he was a Beit Sahouri who had lived quite near to Bishara Qumsiyyeh and had recently been seen living in a collaborator village on the road between Jenin and Afula. When I repeated this information to those who contended he was unlocatable, or when I played the devil's advocate by reminding them that

according to the rules of *atwah* it didn't matter whether or not the culprit could be located if his family could, they would look uncomfortable and change the subject.

In the summer of 1999 I met with a friend who, in the course of gossiping, asked me if I'd heard about an episode which had occurred that winter which "had the whole town in an uproar"? A Beit Sahouri woman - "a bad woman, but Orthodox" - had surreptitiously married a Muslim man (whose name or provenance was not proffered, although the location of the place where they lived immediately after the marriage implies he was Beit Sahouri). When her family found out it tried to get her back, but she and her husband fled to Ta'amra where they took shelter with a Bedouin family. Elders from her family, along with the town mayor, went to the PNA in Bethlehem to complain and were told by the authorities (who are very sensitive to Muslim-Christian issues) that they had no right to interfere. My informant concluded:

> the Sahouris see this as an expression of the threat to them of the Muslims. It used to be that we were separated by the mountains from Obadiya [a neighboring Muslim village] but now its mosques are on our borders, the Jews are on Jebel abu-Ghneim, and Bethlehem is mixed. Everyone is taking over, and now they are beginning to take the women.

In this discourse Beit Sahour has become a very different place from that described in the discussions related in the first part of this paper. There Beit Sahour was a Palestinian village made up of Christians and Muslims who shared in everything, and particularly in their solidarity in the face of the national enemy (who was 'Israeli', not 'Jewish'). Here, on the other hand, "we...the Sahouris" are Christian and deeply threatened by other religious communities ('Muslims' and 'Jews') pressing on our borders from all sides and now, most frighteningly, "beginning to take the women".

What is invisible in this discourse is the Beit Sahouri Muslims who constitute a minority population within the borders of a largely Christian town which is located within a national territory in which Muslims are the majority population. The man in this story, who has stolen the daughter of his Christian neighbors and, by marrying her, turned her into a Muslim, is, like the third man in the killing of Basem Rishmawi, the internal trace of an antagonism which Beit Sahouran Christians rarely discuss, and then only as something 'outside'. Neither of the two, however, acted from 'outside'; it was from within Beit Sahour that they had effaced Christian identities through murder and seduction.

Throughout my notebooks as far back as my earliest *intifada* work in Beit Sahour there is a shadow discourse which haunts Sahouri assertions of strong commensality and communality between Muslims and Christians. Christian Sahouris spoke - in tones which in 1990 were hushed and somewhat embarrassed yet which, by the late nineties, had become more open and assertive - of the threat of the Muslims elsewhere in Palestine, of their covetousness about Christian wealth, of their intolerance for religious and cultural difference, and of the impossibility of coexistence with them. This material was always just under the surface, but it didn't predominate and only served to organize perceptions (and assertions) at certain moments - and then only in relation to Muslims outside of Beit Sahour. Even today it is extremely rare to hear a Beit Sahouri Christian say something negative about a fellow townsperson who is Muslim, and when they do it is criticism of particular individuals which link them to a generalised *outside* collectivity (e.g., 'so and so is like a Khalili [Hebronite]'). I have never heard a Beit Sahouri Muslim criticise a Beit Sahouri Christian *as* a Christian.

The unnamed and unpursued 'third man', like the unnamed and unlocalized Muslim husband about whom everyone in Beit Sahour was allegedly talking (but not to me), is a reminder of what must not be brought into the open. Although Sahouris had always been

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Christian Sahouris and Muslim Sahouris, a chilling realisation was growing in the late nineties as the threat of Israeli military dominion appeared to recede. Without the presence of 'an enemy who is enemy to us both', forms of self and communal assertion which had previously been sublimated in the interest of asserting solidarity were coming to serve as "models of" and "models for" the social (see Geertz 1973: 93-94). To be reminded that the antagonism between Muslim and Christian, which the ideologues of both religions increasingly assert, is not simply an antagonism between an inside and an outside but even more saliently an antagonism within Beit Sahour is to be reminded of the impossibility of community. That counterfactual knowledge is simultaneously known by all, and universally disavowed.

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I have attempted through this ethnography to show how 'ways of telling' shape the possibilities of response to events in the life of a community. The 'first death' of Basem Rishmawi articulated, for the majority of inhabitants of Beit Sahour, a model capable of giving shape to a Manichaean world made up of an imagined community and another grouping antagonistic to that community. It impelled strategies of social consolidation and resistance appropriate to the maintenance of the community it helped to bring into conscious being. However, as the context in which that story circulated was transformed by political and social developments so too was the story's significance. Although one might argue that what happened in 1995 was that 'people got their facts right' and therefore a 'true story' replaced a 'false story', what I have tried to show is that the rectification of the 'facts' - the realization that Palestinian collaborators working for the Israelis killed Basem rather than Israelis themselves - would have had little if any effect had there not already been a very substantial shift in the perspectives of Beit Sahouris on issues of politics, identity, nation and community. Within the

terms of nationalist discourse the question of whether an Israeli soldier following the orders

of his superiors kills a Palestinian or whether a Palestinian collaborator following the orders

of his Israeli superiors does the deed, is moot; in each instance the deed is a political

assassination carried out by an agent of the national enemy in accordance with that enemy's

plans to eradicate the nation. That the 'second death' of Basem Rishmawi came instead to be,

for many, an expression of the antagonism of one Beit Sahouri family grouping for another

demonstrates the ascendency of a different mode of interpretation. Antagonism, which I have

argued serves to construct solidarities amongst those who perceive it as threatening, came to

be seen as inter-familial in the post-Oslo context, and the ascendency of that idiom 'muted'

interpreters who continued to argue that the real antagonism came from the Israeli state. That

muting, however, did not simply silence voices but engendered situations in which a

nationalist response was seen as inappropriate and extraneous.

The hegemonization of the familial idiom of interpretation and the overturning of the

nationalist idiom was not a simple matter of will, choice, and the fickleness of interpreters.

Through the details of the story of a story which I have relayed above we can see the

operations of the convoluted logic of contingency. The contexts within which various

interpretations of the torture and murder of Basem Rishmawi are situated and elaborated are

themselves dense with the accretion of a multitude of other articulations as well as with the

institutional structures (some active, some latent) which have taken shape as persons in the

past and present have used those articulations as models for activities. An event in the process

of being interpreted and fixed in its meaning by consensus has to 'negotiate' a multitude of

switching points, and at each of these shifts can be effected in the way the event is interpreted

and in the consequences it will come to have. If the inequities of power underlying the Oslo

Accords hadn't led to the PNA's vow not to prosecute collaborators..., if the old men in the

Rishmawi family *and* of the Ta'amra hadn't been resentful of the undermining of traditional structures of authority..., if Faez hadn't died in prison..., if the photographer hadn't had the equipment or the will to photograph the persons at the Qumsiyyeh funeral...things would not have developed as they did. Some of those 'switching points' are more stable than others; the decision of the PNA to turn the case over to tribal law inserted the deliberations on the significance of the case into a traditional structure which could only work in familial terms. The translation of the events into the idiom of family which that time-honored institution had effected can in turn be seen to over-determine the far more idiosyncratic decision of the photographer to extend the borders of the antagonism to the limits of the Qumsiyyeh '*ailah.*

Although after more and more interpretative decisions are made the range of options is substantially reduced, the force of contingency still prevails. Although over the period narrated above the logic of events substantially closed down the ways in which the community could negotiate the implications of the murder of Basem Rishmawi, the historic context in which that logic operates still retains the power to transform its course and its meaning. During my last bout of fieldwork in Beit Sahour, in the summer of 2003, the various tellings of Basem Rishmawi's killing were still in occasional circulation, but their salience had been blunted by Israel's violent reoccupation of the territory, by its building of the massive settlement of Har Homa on the town's borders, and by the land loss, impovershment and social isolation effected by Israel's erection of 'the wall' through and across the municipality (see Bowman 2004). Against this backdrop the story of Basem's death (the site of the dumping ground is now beneath 'the wall') seems not so much inconsequential as disjunct, as though it deals somehow with a place and time to which one cannot get from the present. The latent feud, though still unresolved, was clearly in abeyance, and no one was talking of tensions or hostilities between Muslim and Christian Sahouris. This was not,

however, a return to the community of the first *intifada*; although, even more than then, the antagonism of the Israeli occupation was visible to all, there was little sense of political solidarity outside the offices of institutional groups dependent for support on the 'outside'. It appeared as though the logic of fragmentation which had begun to operate when 'people began throwing stones for money' had ineluctably carried on to the point where nuclear families were struggling, with little help from others, to find a way to survive in the face of a state machinery set on exterminating them not only as Palestinians but even as individuals. Although it is likely that the telling of the 'second death' of Basem Rishmawi played some part in weakening the bonds of Sahouri community, it is also possible that the lesson of his 'first death' will be recalled, and a new solidarity in the face of 'one who is enemy to us both' will emerge.

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Endnotes

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1. See Rothenberg 1999 on the Palestinian *hamula*.

2. See Hunter (1991: 121-128) on the *intifada* tax revolt strategy in general and Robinson (1997: 66-93) for Beit Sahour's role in it.

3. Insofar as the disputes raised by this case have not been resolved, I do not mention informants by name other than when their identities are already commonly known.

4 As of July 2003 the Arab Orthodox Club was still the principle site of men's social gathering in Beit Sahour; Christians, Muslims and atheists are welcomed. Its name refers far less to the neighbouring Greek Orthodox church than to an early 20th century proto-nationalist movement through which Palestinians struggled to wrest control of the church and its substantial properties from a 'foreign' (Greek) priesthood (Bowman 1993: 436, note 8) .

5. On December 8, 1987 an Israeli tank transport vehicle swerved across the road at an Israeli checkpoint to flatten a carload of Palestinian workers waiting for clearance to cross to work in Israel; four residents of the Jabaliya refugee camp were killed. The driver claimed to have killed the men in revenge for the previous day's knifing of an Israeli tax collector in Gaza city.

6. This assertion of the ease with which Beit Sahour could return to its 'agricultural roots' is somewhat idealized, although townspersons did attempt to do so during the first *intifada* to escape dependency on Israeli markets (see Frankel 1994: 42-66, Hunter 1991: 144-145 and 211-212, Schiff and Ya'ari 1990: 247-248 and Robinson 1997: 74-76).

7. Shqeef is Beaufort Castle in South Lebanon. *Fateh* held it from 1970 until 1982, even during the Israeli invasion of 1978. Tell al-Za'ter resisted a several month siege by Maronite militia in early 1976 (personal communication from Rosemary Sayigh). Shateela is, of course, one of the two sites of the notorious Sabra and Shateela massacre discussed in the introduction.

8. Nonetheless the constant emphasis on the town's resistance to the Israeli occupation indicated that it was in this particular struggle that the community realized the quiddity of its identity.

9. Townsfolk, Christian and Muslim alike, consistently stated that the Muslim population was between twenty five and thirty percent. The 1997 census, which collected but did not publicize

figures on religious affiliation, shows a population of 11,250 of which 3,278 were under twelve and 620 over 65 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 1999: 50 and 55).

10. The Oslo Agreements barred access to Jerusalem to all but the very few who could attain permits from the military authorities, etiolated trade links between West Bank businesses, and forced un- or alternative employment onto many workers who had after 1967 become dependent on working in Israel.

11. I was told in 1994, before the 'second death', that "no Christian or Muslim has ever been killed by another here".

12. The *Harakat al-Rawabet al-Filistiniyya* ('Movement of Palestinian Leagues') was established in 1981 by the orientalist Menahim Milson who the new Likud government appointed head of the West Bank Civil Administration. The leagues simultaneously functioned to mediate between the military government and local communities (providing family reunion permits, travel permits, driving licenses, jobs in the civil service, building permits, abrogations of house demolition orders, intercessions on behalf of jailed relatives, and reductions in prison sentences) and to organize and run proxy military units dedicated to the destruction of the PLO and the intimidation and closure of institutions providing civil alternatives to Israeli structures of governance (Tamari 1983, see also Aronson 1990: 248-253).

13. The details of procedure and terminology in tribal law pertaining to murder are laid out comprehensively in Aref el-Aref's *Bedouin Love, Law and Legend* (El-Aref 1944: 86-115) and elaborated in Hilma Granqvist's study of traditional dealings with matters of unnatural deaths in the village of Artas, which borders Beit Sahour (Granqvist 1965: 110-132). See also Cohen 1965: 139-145 and Ginat 1987 for blood disputes in Israel/Palestine, Peters 1990: 59-83 for feud amongst segmentary North African Bedouin and Black-Michaud 1975 for Mediterranean examples.

14. A Catholic informant told me: "It is standard practice to take daughters from the Orthodox and return them to the Orthodox". This arrangement, while not prescriptive, is quite common. Christian-Muslim marriages are rare, usually only involving Beit Sahouris 'outside' in diaspora (but see below for a recent case and its consequences). See Holy 1989, Donnan and Gibb 1993, and Geertz 1979 on

the logic and function of parallel cross cousin marriage.

15. Although the murder had happened fourteen years earlier, the adult males of Faez's and Sammer's immediate families went into hiding since - according to *atwah* - they were liable to vengeance killing by Rishmawis until the terms of a truce were reached. Faez and, by then, Sammer were in prison (and Bishara in Israeli-controlled Jerusalem), but according to *atwah* all males from the killer's clan over twelve and not elderly are vulnerable to attack (Haddad 1920: 105). However, not only did the town's *ethos* militate against anything more than nominal observance of the rules but the other Qumsiyyehs's denunciations of the crime were seen to absolve them of responsibility.

16. Such a declaration by members of the extended *'ailah* of their rejection of the killer is called *i'lan bara'a* (see Cohen 1965: 144, n. 1); among the Bedouin with whom El-Aref worked it is called *tulu'* (El-Aref 1944: 88).

17   The *maglis* is the traditional reception room of a Palestinian house (see Gilsenan 1982: 181-187 for Lebanese parallels). In situations such as those described above, the *maglis* of the elder representative of the family group will serve as the meeting point of all family representatives and those 'outsiders' they host.

18. The accuracy of their feeling is testified to by the statement of one Rishmawi, a member of the national camp, who told me "since the early sixties we had been working to diminish the authority and influence of the *hamula*" [14.1.99].

19. Cohen (1965: 68-71) and Granqvist (1965: 117-123) provide examples of accidental deaths necessitating negotiations and payments.

20. The qaadi's religious status is analogous to that of other blood money arbitrators such as the Cyrenaican *marabtin bi'l Baraka* (Peters 1990: 64) and the Berber *igurramen* (Gellner 1969).

21. $28,170 at the September 1995 rate of exchange. This was a low settlement considering the nature of the crime. It can be compared with the 12,000 dinars a local factory owner was forced by arbitration to pay one of his workers when his gun accidently went off and grazed the man's neck.

22. Although the other adult males of Bishara and Sammer's family were legitimate targets, townsfolk claimed that only Bishara and Sammer were liable to be murdered "because they have not attempted to resolve the case".

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23. Within a week Sammer was released from prison, allegedly because there was no one alive and in reach of the PNA who could testify in the cases for which he had been held.

24. Informants claimed that in the past all Beit Sahouris attended all marriages, baptisms, and funerals, but now people "are required to go [only] to funerals", treating all else as family affairs. Observation reveals that now only friends, families, and members of the same religious community attend funerals, but Qumsiyyehs and Rishmawis are members of the same *hamula* and are affiliated to the same church so failure to attend each other's funerals is a visible assertion of division.